

CHAPTER: 4

**TRADITIONAL WAY OF
HEALTHCARE PRACTICES**

4.1. Introduction

Every tribal community has their own culture and social practices to treat various sicknesses. According to them, the cause of illness or disease is related to their activities in the society and to the surrounding environment where he or she inhabits. This traditional knowledge and practices related with the diagnosis of diseases, prevention and elimination of physical, mental or social imbalance and relying exclusively on practical experience and observation is constitute the important part of intangible cultural heritage which held and shared by the people of the concerned community and passes through one generation to the next as a part of their oral tradition (Brown, 1998). It could be the knowledge about medicine, technologies, the environment, the spiritual world or anything else that is important to heal the people of a particular community. It is the holistic concept and is not only limited to the arena of treating disease but includes aspects of religion, socio cultural, economic and environmental domains which includes a wide range of living resources like plant and animal species and various minerals.

In the previous chapter, it has already been discussed that 15.25 percent male and 13.65 percent female among the total population under study is suffering (or suffered in last five years) from various diseases or related symptoms or misfortunes and to get rid of these ailments 16.89 male and 12.24 percent female of the total disease affected persons preferred only traditional way of treatment. Further, 15.25 percent male and 17.35 percent female of the total disease affected person availed traditional medicine along with the modern bio-medicines.

The present chapter will highlight the traditional means of healthcare practices found to be existed in the six selected Rabha villages under the study.

4.2. Selected Case Studies

Considering the availability of the patients, the case studies were taken by following the methods given in the chapter – 1. The relevant cases are given here for the better understanding of the upcoming section.

Abbreviation Used:

Sex: M – male; F – female;

Economic Condition: H – higher family income; L – lower family income;

Religion: A – Animist; C - Christian

Preferences of Treatment: T – treatment by traditional medicine; B^(T) – treatment by both traditional and modern medicines but traditional treatment considered as the first step of treatment]

4.2.1. Treatment by Traditional Medicine

Village: Andu Basti [Category: 1 village located inside the core of the forest and exclusively inhabited by the Animist Rabhas. The village has a modern health institution (Sub-Center) inside it.]

Case : 1

Category: FLAT

Jami Rabha, a 58 years old widow from Andu Basti told that two months back she had been attacked by an evil spirit while returning from her brother's house in a full moon night. Jami Rabha has no formal education and she is even unable to write her name. Jami said, 'I was returning home from my brother's place. The moon was clearly visible and the entire village was lightened by its silvery glow rays. I was about to reach my home but suddenly a small but very glittery substance originated from the forest and directly entered to my body. After reaching home I felt an acute headache along with high fever. I was worried about the matter because I knew it might be a spirit of a dead person (*jourakaal*) that had entered into my body. I narrated the entire incidence to one of my neighbours and requested him to call Jugna Rabha'. Jugna Rabha is a well known *huji* residing in the same village. 'The *huji* gave me some sanctified water (*jalkasha*) to drink and afterward initiated magico-religious activities (*Jhar-Phunk*) with long *Dryopteris* (fern) leaves and one peacock feather collected from the forest in order to

ward off the spirit. It took near about half an hour to complete the process of healing and thereafter Jugna Rabha advised me to arrange the worship of Goddess *Rountuk*. Jami Rabha narrated 'the spirits living in the nearby forest becomes active during the full moon and the new moon night and to get rid of their wrath it is recommended to worship Goddess *Rountuk* in every full moon and new moon night'. Jami Rabha recovered on the very next day after the worship of *Rountuk*.

Case: 2

Category: FLAT

As reported by her mother, Nita Rabha a 15 years old unmarried girl of Andu Basti suffered from jaundice before six months. Her mother Sumitra Rabha sought treatment from Jugna Rabha (traditional healer of the village). Jugna Rabha easily identified Nita as a jaundice patient by her yellowish eye and palm colour. Romeswar boiled some herbal plants together and gave the extract to Nita. He suggested Nita to take the extract one glass per day continuously for 12 to 14 days. Along with the medicine, the *huji* also imposed some food restriction on Nita. According to the advice given by the *huji*, Nita was restricted to consume fish, egg, meat, tea, milk, salt, turmeric, *bathua shak* and *lal shak*. During the treatment, she is allowed to take curd, papaya, wild banana, potato and green potato (pointed gourd). As reported, Nita was completely cured within 15 days.

Case : 3

Category: MLAT

Bapi Rabha, 32 years male belongs to Andu Basti was suffered from *asani* (stomach ache) since last two years. Sometimes it was so painful for him that he even cried out and shouted loudly. Then he visited an *ojha* (traditional healer but from the other community) from nearby. The *ojha* rubbed some oil along with a special herb (unknown) in the belly of the patient and gave him some herbal medicine for oral intake by mixing it with the water twice a day. After few days, when the pain is not reduced, Bapi Rabha went to a local *huji* (Jugna Rabha). *Huji* suggested him to worship Lord *Reshi* by sacrificing two fowls. After performing the worship the *huji* sprinkled holy water on the patient. After that, along with the roots of *jamlau* (local name) and bark of *kaibasa* (local name) the *huji* prepared medicines and gave it to the patient. After three days the patient became completely cured.

Case: 4

Category: MLAT

The right hand of Madhu Rabha, 62 years old man of Andu Basti, has been broken when he fell from a tree about two years ago. Then he went home and binds the affected region with a piece of cloth. At that time he was totally unaware of the fracture. While he went to sleep at night a severe pain has been started. Then he felt that one finger was broken. At next morning his son collected some roots of *harbhanga* from the forest and along with the medicine he rubbed the fractured hand and broken finger. Then along with bamboo strips and cloth he bound the finger. After fifteen days later the bind portion has been removed, but the broken finger was not settled. Then he kept the finger free for few days and after that the finger is cured and he got relief from pain.

Case : 5

Category: FHAT

Moni Rabha, 32 years old married lady of Andu Basti stated... ‘one month before, I was suffering from an acute headache which was probably caused by the attack of some supernatural forces’. No improvement of the situation over a week insisted her to visit a local *huji* for seeking remedy. According to Moni Rabha, the *huji* checked her thoroughly by applying traditional method which includes a bowl of water and a holy basil leaf inside it. The *Huji* said ‘an evil spirit from the nearby forest is trying to harm you and to get rid of the evil spirit you have to worship Goddess *Rountuk* by sacrificing a fowl and a black pigeon’. Following the advice of the *huji* on the very next day she worshiped Goddess *Rountuk* and eventually threw the sacrificed fowl and pigeon in the forest. After two days of worship, she recovered completely.

Village: South Mendabari Forest Rabha Village or Bong Basti [Category: 1 village located outskirts of the forest area and mainly inhabited by both of the Animist and Christian Rabhas. The village has a modern health institution (Sub-Center) just outside of the village.]

Case : 1

Category: FHAT

Maniari Rabha, a 39 years old Animist lady of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village told that she was attacked by some dead person's spirit (*jourakaal*) before three years when she was facing a sudden dizziness. According to Maniari Rabha, one of her clan members died a few months ago of that incident and possibly it was the soul of that person who wanted to harm her. She immediately consulted with Gobin Rabha (*huji*) who suggested her to organise the worship of goddess *Rountuk* by sacrificing a pig. Maniari Rabha performed the worship on the next day as advised by *huji* and after completion of the worship Gobin Rabha binds some small cotton lumps on the free end of *zerfonk*. As Maniari Rabha stated she got relieved within three days after performing the worship.

Case : 2

Category: MHAT

Joshendra Rabha, 23 years old male of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Bong Basti) had been suffering from prolonged high fever, body pain and shivering since several months and because of these he was mentally distressed. His father first treated him with some self-prepared herbal medicines which failed to put any effect on him. The gradual deterioration of Joshendra's health condition compelled his parents to call a *huji* (Gobin Rabha) for healing. *Huji* came and examined him properly and told that Joshendra was possessed by some evil spirits. In order to healing with some magical rites, Joshendra was suggested to lie down on the floor. The *huji* then repeatedly enchanted some holly spells on him and performed *jol-kosha* with a small piece of bark of *pipolo* tree (*Piper longum*). The process was also required to sacrifice two fowls. Joshendra said, after performing the magical rites and sacrifice, it took seven days to become completely cured.

Case : 3

Category: FLCT

Bimala Rabha, 38 years old Christian lady of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Bong Basti), was suffering from ulcer since last three months. She believes in the natural causes of her disease and due to the economic problem she is not able to go for

any modern biomedical treatment. She thinks that she is a patient of ulcer due to the continuous inflammation in her stomach and consulted a known traditional healer belongs to Mech community living in the nearby village of Uttar Mendabari. Bimala Rabha stated that the healer has given her some herbal medicines and suggested her to take the medicines each day on empty stomach. During the field work days the treatment was going on and she regularly visited the healer in every 15 days. According to Bimala Rabha, she already spent Rs. 1800/- for her treatment.

Village: Chhatrampur [Category: 1 village located in the plain land area of Cooch Behar District. Though the villagers are Animist, they are strongly accentuated towards Hinduism. The village has a modern health institution (Sub-Center) just outside of the village.]

Case : 1

Category: MLAT

As reported by his son, Rahim Rabha, a 64 years old male of Chhatrampur is a patient of high blood pressure and suffering from cerebral hemorrhage since last four years and right now he is not able to move properly. As his son stated, he seeks treatment from a Muslim *kabiraj* of Patlakhawa and spent Rs. 5000/- for the treatment. According to him, their economic condition is extremely poor and it was not possible for them to continue the treatment. Rahim Rabha is not cured yet and during the interview it was observed that he was lying on a bed and not in a condition to talk with me.

Case: 2

Category: MLAT

Nearly two years ago Sushil Rabha, 50 years old Rabha male of Chhatrampur was fell down on the village road while he was walking alone after drinking *chokot* (traditional country liquor). As Sushil Rabha stated, he felt severe pain in his hand and it was swelling adversely. Next day Sushil consulted with his maternal uncle who has some knowledge regarding the traditional herbal medicines. He suggested Sushil to bind the affected region with the hot mixture of turmeric and vermilion at least four times a day. According to the advice of his maternal uncle, Sushil Rabha continued the process and it

took seven days to get some relief from the pain. After fifteen days, Sushil Rabha started to lead his daily life and became able to perform the agricultural work.

Village: Rabhaline [Category: 2 village located inside the core of the forest area and inhabited by both of the Animist and Christian Rabhas. The village has no modern health institution inside or in close vicinity of it.]

Case : 1

Category: MHAT

Krishna Rabha, 48 years old Animist Rabha male living in Rabhaline is mainly associated with agricultural work. He stated, nearly four years back he went to the 'Dima forest' (adjoining forest) for collecting fire woods and some edible roots/tubers. Suddenly he felt that a snake had already bitten on his on his right leg. As it was dusk, he was not able to identify the snake. From the tooth mark, he understood that it was a poisonous snake. From the forest, he directly went to Shiven Oraon who is a traditional healer, specifically known for snake bite treatment. Shiven belongs to Oraon community and inhabits in the nearby village called 'Diphu Line'. As Krishna Rabha stated Shiven has some magical powers through which he can extract the poison from the human body. According to Krishna, Shiven instructed him to lie down in his courtyard and then started the magical rites with fire, peacock feather and an iron rod. The entire process took one hour and after completion of the healing process Shiven told him that there was no more poison present in his body. Shiven has not charged any payment for the entire process.

Case: 2

Category: MLAT

As reported by his brother, Ajoy Rabha (22 years) is having some mental problem by his birth. The family members could not understand the problem in the earlier stage and the problem is gradually increasing with the incensement of his age. According to his brother, there may be some supernatural cause behind the disease of Ajoy and for that they have consulted with the local *huji* (Romeswar Rabha). Romeswar told them that Ajoy is attacked by some negative magic and to get rid of the problem *huji* gave him a

holy *tabij*. Ajoy is wearing the *tabij* since last seven years but his condition is not improved till now. Romeswar took Rs. 100 for the *tabij* and due to the economic problem Ajoy's family is not able to go for any further treatment for him.

Case: 3

Category: MLAT

Laksman Rabha, a 45 years old Rabha man of Rabhaline told that around three months ago his neck was suddenly dislocated and he was not able to move his neck in a morning after spending the whole night in his roof-less house situated in his agricultural field. He was also having a very high fever during that time. Lakshman Rabha consulted with Romeswar Rabha who is a very well known *huji* of the same village. After observing his health condition, Romeswar Rabha told him that he was attacked by some forest ghost. According to the advice given by the *huji*, Lakshman Rabha performed *Sarkir Bai-tangi* (worshipping of forest deity) by sacrificing a hen and a pigeon and threw all the worshipped materials in the forest. According to Lakshman Rabha, the *huji* did not demand any fees for his advice and he got relief from the ailment within two days.

Case: 4

Category: FHCT

As reported by Sunita Rabha, a 20 years old Christian lady of Rabhaline, she was suffered from serious leg problem before six months when she gave birth her daughter. She was not able to sense her legs after the cesarean delivery. Returning back from the nursing home (Cooch Behar) she seeks traditional treatment for the weakness of her leg. She went to Falakata and consulted with a *kabiraj* who belongs to Muslim community. The *kabiraj* took Rs 2000/- and gave two small bottle of oil which according to his advice needs to be massaged in the entire leg specifically after taking of bath. Right now she is quite well and can able to perform her daily activities.

Village: Dhumchi [Category: 2 village located outskirts of the forest area and exclusively inhabited by the Christian Rabhas. The village has no modern health institution inside or in close vicinity of it.]

Case : 1

Category: FLCT

Nilshree Rabha, 68 years old widow from the village Dhumchi said that, after the establishment of the Rabha Baptist Convention in the year 1982 and due to the continuous preaching of the Christian Missionaries, she embraced Christianity. She did not have any formal education but has learned to write her name from the missionary workers. She further narrated, 'I have embraced Christianity to reduce the burden of expenses related to the traditional Animistic worships. The worry from the suffering of disease due to non-performing of the traditional worships also compelled me and my family members to embrace Christianity'. She added, 'the nearest health institution (Madhya Rangalibazna Primary Health Center, Shisubari) is situated far away from my village. To reach that health institution I need to hire a vehicle, and this becomes expensive for me. To overcome the situation we have no option other than to keep faith in our supreme God, i.e. Jesus Christ'. While sharing her experience, Nilashree Rabha continued 'Just a month before, I was suffering from severe jaundice. My eyes and palms became yellowish. Generally, in such case it is better to consult a doctor but at that time I did not have enough money to consult a doctor. So, I went to the village Church and prayed for my quick recovery in front of God. Moreover, the pastor sprinkled holy water on me and suggested me to not to consume turmeric, fish, egg, meat, milk and pulses. The pastor also advised me to take bath with the boiled bark of *Totla* and *Gorekchak fung*. I have obtained some psychological strength and returned home accordingly. After seven days, I got a little relief but till now I am avoiding to take spicy and non-vegetarian food items'.

Case : 2

Category: FLCT

As her grandfather stated, Diya Rabha, 3 years old Rabha girl of Dhumchi Rabha village was suffered from jaundice about nearly 6 months ago. Her grandfather Somra Rabha stated, 'I have some traditional knowledge of herbal medicines and have applied the knowledge on my granddaughter.' While elaborating the process of healing, Somra Rabha stated that he tied the root of the *kakar fung* (*fung* = plant) with a black cotton thread and put it into the neck of his granddaughter. According to him, the process can

also be done with the leaf instead of root but it will take more time to cure the patient. Only five days after wearing the root of *kakar fung*, Diaya recovered completely.

Village: Bansraja [Category: 2 village located in the plain land area of Cooch Behar district. Though the villagers are Animist, they are strongly accentuated towards Hinduism. The village has no modern health institution inside the close proximity.]

Case : 1

Category: MHCT

Mahim Rabha, 28 years old Animist Rabha male of Bansraja was bitten by a street dog before six months. He observed that blood is coming out from the affected region. Mahim was aware that there is a *huji* (traditional healer) living in the same village and he has the knowledge of some traditional medicines of dog bite. The name of the traditional healer is Mantu Rabha who was then 37 years old. Mahim directly went to Mantu Rabha and sought treatment from him. Mantu Rabha gave him some dry tablets prepared from the extracts of the insects of *chong* (pumpkin), insects of water, banana stem and the roots of a locally known plant called *vati*. Mantu suggested Mahim to take the said tablet twice daily and advised to restrict some food items like small fishes and brinjal. Mahim was also advised to not to go near the runner beans plant and brinjal plant. As Mahim stated, Mantu has not any fixed charge for treatment but he gave Rs. 200/- to Mantu Rabha for the entire treatment process.

Case: 2

Category: FLAT

Parvati Rabha, 31 years old married Rabha lady from the village Bansraja said, ‘inside my home, I have the earthen pitcher of Goddess *Rountuk* which I have inherited from my mother’. Before marriage, she was living in the Andu Basti of Chilapata with her widow mother and brother. She has availed formal education up to the sixth standard. A love marriage with a boy of the village Bansraja led her to stay in a patrilocal family, it seems to be because of the influence of the adjacent Hindu Bengali population. As her only sibling is an unmarried male, so she inherited the *Rountuk* after the death of her mother. Parvati continues, ‘the cultural value of the Goddess *Rountuk* is considerably

less in her family as the family members mostly rely on the deities of Hindu pantheon, but during the marriage ceremony of any of the family members, it is mandatory to worship Goddess *Rountuk*. While answering to a query about the primary treatment of any sickness caused by the supernatural forces, she answered, ‘of late we mostly believe on the deities, like Goddess *Kali*, Lord *Shiva* and *Maa Shitala* of the Hindu pantheon and in order to seek any preliminary healthcare aids, worshipping of these deities become imperative for us’.

While stating an incidence, Parvati narrated, ‘last year my son was affected with chicken pox and a large number of oozing blisters came out in his whole body’. She added, ‘I have not consulted any doctor because the oozing blisters are the blessing of *Maa Shitala*, popularly known as *Mayer Daya*.’ This kind of beliefs can be found among the Bengalee speaking Hindu population residing in the adjoining areas of the Bansraja village. The process of acculturation (Kroeber, 1948) insisted Parvati to accept this kind of belief system.

Answering a question regarding the immediate steps taken by Parvati to cure her son she replied, ‘I did not have any option other than to worship *Maa Shitala*. I have the earthen figure of the deity in my courtyard and only she has the power to cure any person suffering from chickenpox. I prayed every day in front of *Maa Shitala* in order to cure my son and to protect the other family members as the disease is highly contagious. She further stated, ‘at the time of sickness my son was under complete food restriction. She wanted to give full credit to *Devi Sitala* for the recovery of her son.

4.2.2. Treatment through Both Categories (Traditional and Modern)

Village: Andu Basti [Category: 1 village located inside the core of the forest and exclusively inhabited by the Animist Rabhas. The village has a modern health institution (Sub-Center) inside it.]

Case: 1

Category: MLAB^(T)

Naren Rabha, 23 years old lady of Andu Basti is suffering from tuberculosis since eight months and sometimes facing a critical health issue regarding this. At the very beginning, he had not taken his symptoms very seriously unless blood came out with her cough. Then he discussed the matter with his family members. His family members thought that it may be tuberculosis and called *huji* (Jugna Rabha). According to Naren, the *huji* applied some magical water on his forehead and gave some herbal medicines which are unknown to him. He had taken all the medicines regularly and after five days the symptoms were stopped. Naren thought that he was cured. But after few days he became very weak and was not able to do even the daily works. Then he visited the health sub-center situated in the same village. The doctor of the sub-center advised him DOTs (Directly observed treatment, short-course) which he was continuing for five months and experiencing a better health condition during the interview days.

Case: 2

Category: FLAB^(T)

Parvati Rabha is a 29 years old lady of Rabhaline belongs to Animistic religion and engages herself primarily in household work. She lives in a neolocal and nuclear family with her husband and two children. As Parvati stated, before one week, her elder daughter was suffering from severe fever. According to her, the fever may have caused by some supernatural powers and because of that she sought treatment from a local *huji* as well as from the quack. The local *huji* gave some traditional herbal medicines and performed some magico-religious activities in order to cure her child. Parvati also visited the Chilapata health sub-center and collected some medicines. Application of both traditional and modern healthcare practices took five days to get recovery from the ailment.

Village: South Mendabari Forest Rabha Village or Bong Basti [Category: 1 village located outskirts of the forest area and mainly inhabited by both of the Animist and

Christian Rabhas. The village has a modern health institution (Sub-Center) just outside of the village.]

Case: 1

Category: MHAB^(T)

Fulen Rabha, a 20 years old Animist Rabha boy of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Bong Basti) was suffered from severe stomach pain in early 2014. He first consulted with the local *huji* (Gobin Rabha) who gave him some herbal medicines for ten days. The medicine failed to give him any relief and then he sought modern treatment from the local quack of Uttar Mendabari. The quack gave him some little amount of painkiller which was able to give relief only for few hours. Fulen stated that the severe pain insisted him to visit a private doctor in Alipurduar town. The doctor suggested him to do ultra-sonography which may findout the reason behind the stomach pain. Fulen did the ultra-sonography from a private diagnostic center addressed at Alipurduar. It was cost around 1200/- to do so. The report of the ultra-sonography disclosed that there was a stone in the gall bladder of Fulen Rabha and the doctor suggested him to go for an operation. On the very next day Fulen went to Alipurduar Sub-Divisional Hospital (now Alipurduar District Hospital) and visited a doctor in the OPD. The doctor also suggested for operation but the facilities for operating gall bladder stone was not available in the hospital at that point of time. The doctor referred him to North Bengal Medical College. Fulen's family members decided to go to 'Himalayan Nursing Home' for operation. The nursing home is situated in Siliguri (large town distanced approximately 150 Km from the village). Fulen's father took a loan from the bank. He got just Rs. 20000/- from the bank by submitting his 5 years old fixd deposit papers. Fulen admitted to the nursing home on 31st July 2014 and his operation was done on 4th August 2014. Fulen discharged from the nursing home on 6th August 2014. It cost nearly Rs. 30000/- for the entire treatment. Afterwards he got a complete recovery.

Case : 2

Category: MLCB^(T)

Nearly a year before the present interview, Sanjay Rabha, 12 years old Christian boy of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Bong Basti) was suffered from jaundice and primarily sought traditional treatment from a well known traditional healer from the

nearby Mech community. After two days, the family members of Sanjay brought him to the OPD of the Uttar Latabari Block Primary Health Center. Sanjay was under the treatment of Dr. Ekka. Sanjay continued both traditional and modern medicines together and though there were some food restrictions, it took around one week to become completely cured.

Village: Rabhaline [Category: 2 village located inside the core of the forest area and inhabited by both of the Animist and Christian Rabhas. The village has no modern health institution inside or in close vicinity of it.]

Case : 1

Category: MLAB^(T)

Nileswar Rabha, a 45 years old male of Rabhaline is suffering from tuberculosis since last one year. According to him, the severity of the disease would be increased if he engages himself in hard work. As Nileswar stated, he was first seeking the traditional treatment at the very initial stage of his disease. Traditional *huji* (Basar Rabha) first suggested arranging a worship of the Goddess *Raountuk*. The family members of the affected person performed the worship with full vigor but it fails to give any relief to Nileswar. He then decided to go for the modern treatment and visit Alipurduar District Hospital. The doctors of Alipurduar district hospital referred him to Cooch Behar District Hospital from where Nileswar was again referred to North Bengal Medical College located near to Siliguri town. Due to poor economic condition, it was not possible for Nileswar to bear the expenses required for seeking treatment from the North Bengal Medical College. After few days, when the disease was not cured, he sold out twelve cows and arranged some money for his treatment in a private nursing home in Alipurduar town. He was admitted to the nursing home for fifteen days and it has cost nearly Rs. 75000/-. It was not possible for him to continue the treatment for few more days and he took discharge from the nursing home without getting full remedy from the disease. After returning to his own village, he consulted with Birkarna Rabha (traditional herbal healer) who gave him some herbal medicines. At present, he is taking the traditional herbal medicines regularly but he is totally unaware of the composition or the

making procedures of that medicine. After completing the previous course of medicine, he has to depend on Birkarna Rabha for the next course. As Nileswar stated, Birkarna Rabha charges Rs. 100/- for giving a full course of medicine for fifteen days. He is continuing with the traditional medicine since last three months and experiencing comparatively better health condition and as advised by Birkarna Rabha, he quits consuming traditional country liquor, tobacco products pork and sour food items.

Case : 2

Category: FLAB^(T)

As stated by Phulsuri Rabha, a 45 years old widow lady of Rabhaline, her husband Pune Rabha died in 2013. Before taking his last breath, Pune Rabha was suffering from tuberculosis and from the very initial stage he was under the treatment of Basar Rabha (traditional healer belongs to the same village). Phulsuri Rabha stated, no improvement of the situation compelled her to seek modern medical treatment for her husband and in a hope to get some remedy she admitted her husband in Uttar Latabari Block Primary Health Center. Pune Rabha was very sick and the doctors of the BPHC were not so much hopeful with his health condition. On the 4th day of admission Pune Rabha expired.

Presently, Phulsuri Rabha is suffering from some problem with her right hand. She believes in both natural and supernatural powers behind the causation of her ailment. In order to get rid of she consulted with a local *huji* and along with the traditional medicines she is also taking modern medicines from the forest clinic situated just beside the Rajabhatkhawa Railway Station. She is suffering from the problem since last year and already spent Rs. 500/- for the purpose.

Village: Dhumchi [Category: 2 village located outskirts of the forest area and exclusively inhabited by the Christian Rabhas. The village has no modern health institution inside or in close vicinity of it.]

Case : 1

Category: FLCB^(T)

Chimti Rabha, 62 years old Christian Rabha lady of Dhumchi is experiencing arthritis since last 12 years. At the very initial stage of her disease she sought traditional treatment from a Muslim *kabiraj* of Nishiganj. She had continued with the traditional treatment for two years but failed to get any relief from her ailment. She then decided to go for modern biomedical treatment and visited the Primary Health Center (PHC) located at Shishubari. The doctor of the PHC prescribed some medicines to her but the medicines were not available in the pharmacy of that PHC. She purchased the medicines from a medicine shop from outside of the PHC. It has cost nearly Rs. 400/-. She completed two full courses of medicines but again she was disappointed when the pain started with the discontinuation of the medicines. Right now she is only taking medicines from a local quack if the pain becomes severe.

Village: Bansraja [Category: 2 village located in the plain land area of Cooch Behar District. Though the villagers are Animist but they are strongly accentuated towards Hinduism. The village has no modern health institution inside the close proximity of it.]

Case : 1

Category: FHAB^(T)

Santibala Rabha, a 58 years old widow of Bansraja was experiencing inflammation of bodily parts since long back. She thinks that there was some supernatural reason behind her ailment. Santibala Rabha is one among the few Rabhas of Bansraja village having *Rountuk* in their houses. She was scared and called a *huji* from nearby 'Harir Haat' village. *Huji* came with two assistants and said that there is something wrong in the *Rountuk*. *Huji* suggested to re-establish *Rountuk* and arrange a worship for this purpose. Santibala performed the worship in order to appease Goddess *Rountuk* but failed to get any relief from her ailment. *Huji* took Rs. 800/- and in addition to that Santibala spent more Rs. 500/- to purchase the ingredients required for the worship. Santibala then sought modern medical treatment and visited Dr. B. Chakraborty after paying Rs. 250/- as his consultation fees. Dr. Chakraborty is a well-known doctor of Tufanjanj town and

suggested Santibala to go for some pathological tests. The tests disclosed that Santibala is diabetic and the doctor prescribed the medicines accordingly. Dr. Chakraborty also suggested her to not to take sugar and the vegetables which grows under-earth. Till now he is continuing the prescribed medicines and visit the doctor in case of any severe health issue.

4.3. Traditional way of Healthcare Practices

The different forms of traditional medicines popularly practiced by the various tribal populations are as follows.

4.3.1. Use of herbal medicine and medicine derived from the Animal Body Parts

Use of herbal medicine is the science of using herbal remedies to treat the diseased person. It is a form of traditional or folk medicinal practices based on the use of plant and plant extracts that have some curative and palliative effects. Like the other tribal communities, the Rabhas of West Bengal have their vast knowledge of herbal medicines which they still practice in their daily livelihood to get rid of ailments. List: 4.1 will provide a detailed description regarding the frequent usages of the herbal medicines by the Rabha population under the present study.

The animal-based medicines also play a significant role in the traditional healing process. Tribal communities use a wide variety of animal products and animal-derived parts as medicines. The Rabhas living in the Dooars region of West Bengal have their traditional means of healing mechanisms through some animals, its parts or some insects. Some of these ethnozoological practices of the Rabha community of West Bengal are listed below (List: 4.2) for a better understanding of their usages and healing mechanisms.

Chart: 4.1. List of the Herbal Medicines used by the Rabha Traditional Healers

Diseases	Local Name of Plants (Fung)	Parts Used
Body Pain	<i>Parpaunong</i>	Leaf
	<i>Assam Lata</i>	Leaf
Bone fracture	<i>Baima-goda cheter</i>	Whole Plant
	<i>Chuktang</i>	Whole Plant
	<i>Kangka-chingtang</i>	Whole Plant
Diarrhea	<i>Pipolo</i>	Bark
	<i>Thankuni</i>	Leaf
Dysentery	<i>Satmul</i>	Root
Fever with Cough and Cold	<i>Hapak</i>	Leaf
	<i>Gorekchak</i>	Leaf
Gastric	<i>Gifichak</i>	Leaf
Headache	<i>Arshabil pangkur</i>	Leaf
Hydrocele	<i>Gelau</i>	Seed
Jaundice	<i>Dupchap</i>	Leaf
	<i>Gorekchak</i>	Bark
	<i>Jamlau/Churimara</i>	Bark
	<i>Kakar</i>	Leaf / Root
	<i>Kolico</i>	Root
	<i>Taro</i>	Leaf
	<i>Totla</i>	Bark
Malaria	<i>Kukur bangara</i>	Whole Plant
Menstruation Problem	<i>Jatrashi</i>	Leaf
Pain Relief	<i>Teenpati</i>	Bark
	<i>Toukrang</i>	Full Plant
Piles	<i>Peyara + Lajuklata</i>	Leaf Juice
Pneumonia	<i>Kashaida</i>	Root
	<i>Shirmara</i>	Leaf
Skin Disease	<i>Medla</i>	Leaf
Spirit Possession	<i>Pamper-chak</i>	Leaf
Stomach Problem	<i>Dupchap</i>	Leaf
	<i>Khosla</i>	Fruit
Stop Bleeding	<i>Mafakchak</i>	Bark
Swelling	<i>Rasuni</i>	Bark
Urinary Trouble	<i>Jimpani</i>	Root

N.B. English/ Scientific name not given considering the request of the healer

Source: Field Study, 2016

Chart: 4.2. Use of some Rabha traditional medicines derived from animal body parts

Sl. No.	Local Name of the Animals / Insects	Scientific Name	Habitation	Parts Used	Preparation	Life Stage Consumed	Dose	Usages
1.	<i>Haansa</i>	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Both aquatic and terrestrial	Flesh	Cooked	Adult	Once a week	Helps to make bones more stronger and cure arthritis
2.	<i>Mositok</i>	<i>Axis axis</i>	Terrestrial	Horn	Lower part of the horn is rubbed with little water on a stone and the decoction is slightly heated before applying	Adult	Twice daily	Cure chest pain
3.	<i>Samu</i>	<i>Pila globosa</i>	Aquatic	Flesh	Cooked	Adult	Twice a week	Improve appetite
4.	<i>Khugkhrai</i>	<i>Sartoriana spinigera</i>	Both aquatic and terrestrial	Flesh	Cooked	Adult	Once a week	Cure anemia
5.	<i>Mudai</i>	<i>Hystrix indica</i>	Terrestrial	Flesh	Cooked	Adult	Twice a month	To get rid of general weakness
6.	<i>Saro / Paro</i>	<i>Columba livia</i>	Terrestrial	Flesh	Cooked with ghee	Adult	Twice a week	Cure paralysis

Source: Field Study, 2016

4.3.2. Worshipping of Deities

According to tribal belief, worshipping of their traditional deities can heal various diseases which are thought to be caused by the anger of the concerned deities. Among the Rabhas, the deities are known as *bai* and the place of worship is known as *baidan*. In order to get rid of different unwanted health situations, the major deities worshiped by the Rabhas are as follows.

4.3.2.1. Worship of Goddess *Rountuk* and *Bashek*

Rountuk is the household deity and the Rabhas confer her most important place in the pantheon of their deities and spirits. She is thought to be an admixture of Goddess *Laxmi* and *Parvati* (of Hindu religion). Sometimes *Rountuk* is considered as Goddess *Kali* (Hindu Goddess) who helps them to get rid of any kind of unwanted health situation. In the Animistic 'forest Rabha' society, the belief regarding the causation of ailments is largely connected with the worship of Goddess *Rountuk* who generally behaves like a benevolent deity but it could turn to a malevolent one if anybody fails to appease her. If there is any mistake occurred during the worshipping process, then she would harm the family members (specifically the elder female member) to a great extent.

In general, to the plain land 'village Rabhas', *Rountuk* is known as '*thansiri*' which means *sthaneSwari* or *sthanshree*, i.e. deity of the place (*sthan* means place and *swari* or *shree* means deity/Goddess). *Rountuk* is always worshiped with *Bashek* who is considered as the sister and companion of Goddess *Rountuk* and to be placed just left of her. The deities do not have any biomorphic figure. A red coloured earthen pitcher full of paddy represents the *Rountuk* which is slightly larger in size than the earthen pitcher which represents *Bashek*. The pitchers are usually purchased from the market and for purchasing it, a Rabha never bargains with the potter but the pitcher must be without any spot or crack.

While worshipping, *Rountuk* and *Bashek* are placed on a bamboo made platform at the eastern corner of the northernmost room. The bamboo altar known as *chingsangang* is placed at the side of the paddy store. *Chingsangang* is adorned with *jatrashi* leaf

(*Justicia gendarussa*) and cotton wreath. Sitting on *chingsangang*, Romeswar was busy to worship the deities with the help of *maitok* who assists *deoshi* in the entire worshipping process. The pitchers which represent *Rountuk* and *Bashek* are full of paddy and on the neck of these pitchers, one *touche* or egg of hen (*tou* = hen; *che* = egg) is kept. The egg is placed on the acme of rice and marked with vermilion. Sacrifice of pig or fowl, offering of *chokot* (traditional liquor), pieces of new red and white cloth, sunned rice, and banana are required in this regard. The place of sacrifice is situated very close to the *fonkor nugdur*, i.e., the door for entering into the kitchen of the house. At the time of sacrifice *deoshi* utters –

“*Hal Jal Ji Neu, Hal Jal Ji Nai*
Sona Nougou Na Bau, Sona Noktang Na Oau
Hatti Tai Tasay, Ghora Bau Tasay
Hal Jal Ji Neu, Hal Jal Ji Nai”

[**Meaning:** *Rountuk, Bashek*, you are two sisters; *Rountuk*, I am offering you a house made of gold. *Bashek*, I am offering you a house made of silver. Be kind to us. Do not get angry with us and go away on an elephant; do not go away angrily on a horse. Oh, Goddess *Rountuk* ! Oh, Goddess *Bashek* ! Be kind to us]

Rountuk Bai or worshipping of Goddess *Rountuk* along with *Bashek* is an age-old cultural practice which is carried out generation after generation by the Rabhas. Eldest lady of the family regarded as the head of the family and only she holds the right to establish the earthen pitcher of Goddess *Rountuk*. Traditional priest *deoshi* counts the auspicious day for the foundation of these deities. The worship connected with the foundation of deities always takes place at night of the brighter half of the lunar month. The said lady, who has the right to establish the *Rountuk*, only can able to perform all the activities related to the worship. During her existence, her daughter or daughter-in-law has no authority to worship these deities. The earthen pitchers symbolise *Rountuk* and *Bashek* have to immerse if the worshipper dies.

Worship of *Rountuk* may be performed without sacrificing the animals. This type of worship is found among the Rabhas who are not economically well off and are unable to purchase pig for sacrifice. Instead of keeping egg they are using one unbroken betel-nut on top of the paddy inside each pitcher. In this regard *akrai-chak* (*Leucas aspera*) plant and one red fowl are required along with the rice water.

Offering traditional liquor, i.e., *chokot* is the most vital part of the ritual. Generally *chokot* is offered to these deities in *burki* which is a special type of container made up by the outside cover of a gourd. After completion of the ritual, two unmarried young Rabha girls known as *janay* serve the *chokot* to the guests. During this time the Rabhas perform a song in a chorus - '*Hem Toungi Baishini Alek Achar Nougi / Hem Toungi Chai Goy Se*' which means culturally they are able to play *dangshi* (leather instrument) and *kaal* (bamboo made flute) since the long past. After whole night celebration, the worship of *Rountuk* ends at the next morning. The day of the foundation of the deity in a house is celebrated with worship and festivity in each year. Every evening the deity is propitiated with earthen lamp and incense. To the Animist Rabhas, the worship of Goddess *Rountuk* is mandatory during the time of marriage in the family.

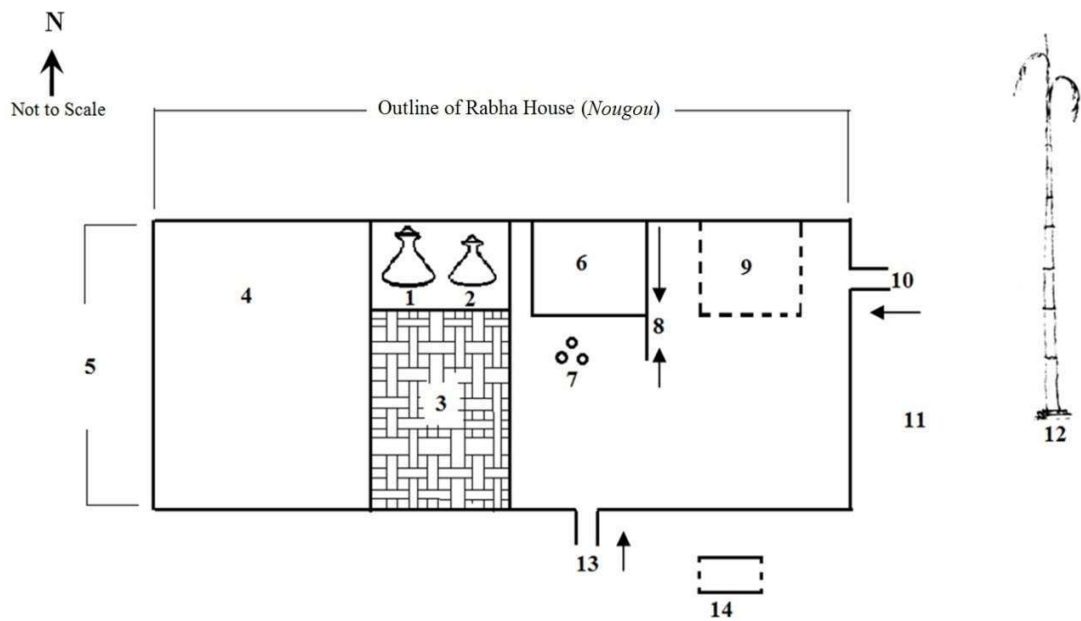


Figure - 4.1: Position of *Rountuk* inside a typical Rabha house (*Nougou*)

1. *Rountuk* – household deity of the Rabhas; 2. *Bashek* – sister/companion of *Rountuk*; 3. *Chingsangang* – the bamboo altar for keeping *Rountuk* and *Bashek*; 4. *Chasang* – place for keeping food grains; 5. *Godou* – Back side of the house, mainly used for drinking country liquor; 6. *Akan* – ceiling; 7. *Fonkor* – hearth; 8. *Dobon* – bamboo made fence; 9. *Akhni Hoga* – place for sleeping; 10. *Nounugdur* – entrance from eastern side; 11. *Hotoknong* – courtyard; 12. *Zerfonk* – bamboo tree; 13. *Fonkor Nounugdur* – entrance directly from kitchen; 14. Place where pigs offer sacrifices

To the Animist ‘forest Rabhas’, the right of worship of Goddess *Rountuk* is considered as an inheritance law which can only be inherited after the death of the previous generation. *Rountuk* has a great importance in their economic and religious life. Ultimogeniture form of inheritance pattern is prevalent among the Animist ‘forest Rabhas’ as per as the inheritance of *Rountuk* is concerned. After the death of the previous worshipper, the rights to worshipping of *Rountuk* goes to her youngest married daughter, failing to do so her daughter-in-law can take the responsibilities according to her own *rasong* (customs) based on her *husuk* (clan). The worship of Goddess *Rountuk* is not performed by the Christian ‘forest Rabhas’ and rarely practiced by the plain land Hinduised ‘village Rabhas’ (Raha, 1989). It was also reported from the village that, the Animist Rabhas sprinkle holy water and *chokot* in their courtyard if a Christian Rabhas visit their house. This process is followed by the worship of Goddess *Rountuk*. The Rabhas believe that the deity may harm them if anyone fails to do so.

Few of the ‘village Rabhas’ have *Thansiri* or *Rountuk* in their households but they do not have *Bashek* (sister and companion of *Rountuk*). During marriage, *Rountuk* has some special importance only to those ‘village Rabha’ families who have *Thansiri* or *Rountuk*. In the morning of the day before marriage, the housewives of the two Rabha families perform the worship with a prayer for the good physical and psychological health of the new couple.

4.3.2.2. Worship of Lord *Reshi*

Lord *Reshi* is the father of Goddess *Rountuk* and *Basek*, also considered as the supreme deity in the Rabha society. He is also recognised as *Mahakal* who is thought to be equivalent of Lord *Shiva* of the Hindu religion. The consort of Lord *Reshi* is known as *Jag*. *Reshi* and *Jag* have no biomorphic figures and are worshipped during various socio-religious as well as health crises.

Lord *Reshi* and *Jag* are worshipped either on the same bamboo platform (*Chingsang-gang*) inside the living room where there are *Rountuk* and *Basek*, or in the courtyard where Lord *Reshi* is represented by a long bamboo pole (*zerfonk*) in front of the house.

This bamboo pole (*zerfonk*) has two branches on two sides of its free end from which two small cotton lumps are tied with a cotton thread. They believe those cotton lumps can heal the family members from any untoward health situations like burning sensation in the bodily parts, head ache, stomach ache and body ache. The Rabhas believe that, sometimes in a very adverse health condition like jaundice, pneumonia and bronchitis, the cotton lumps attached to the *zerfonk* can help to heal the diseases with the proper medication.

Worship is performed by the *deoshi* (Traditional worshipper of the Rabha society) by offering articles like unboiled (*atap*) rice, banana, chapped rice (*chida*) and of course *chokot*. Sometimes on the basis of nature of the crisis, a chicken or a pig is sacrificed.

4.3.2.3. The *Langa* Worship

The place of *Langa* is situated outside of the village boundary which in most of the cases is located inside the forest area or at any nearest river bank. The place of *Langa* worship, according to the Rabha language is known as *Swergei Bai-dan* which means the sacred place of heaven where the deities are living (*Swergei* = *Swarg* = Heaven; *Bai* = Deity; *Dan* = Place).

The worship is mainly associated with the welfare of the entire village and its inhabitants. The Rabhas believe that the annual worship of village will protect them from the animal attack, natural calamities (like earthquake, flood, etc.), and from any epidemic. Not performing the worship causes anger of the various forest living deities and spirits which results severe health problems of the villagers.

The worship starts at the very early morning and all the villagers (except the children of below nine years) are required to present near the *Swergei Bai-dan*. The worship has to be done by the experienced *deoshi* or *huji* of the respective villages and the aged persons belong to the '*Uni Bamun*' *husuk* (clan) assist them in the entire process. The male members of the village sit in a row towards one side of the worshipping place and the female members have engaged themselves in the preparation of *chokot* by sitting together in a row opposite to the male members. Two pairs of white pigeon, one big

container full with *chokot*, *durba* (*Cynodon dactylon*), unboiled (*atap*) rice, vermilion, banana leaf and two small fowls are required for the worship.

The worship has to be done under a big tree (preferably Banyan tree) by making fourteen small house like structure made with tin and wood. On the roof of the every small house there are small white flags which are marked with three round spots of blood collected after sacrificing of two white fowls. According to the Rabha belief it is regarded as very auspicious if the detached head of the sacrificed fowl fixed its position facing towards northern direction. They also believe that abstaining from *Langa* worship can cause adverse health issues because of the rage of the forest living deities or spirits.

The place *Swergei Bai-dan* is still exist in the village Andubasti, South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (category-1) and Rabhaline of Rajabhatkhawa (category-2), but the villagers are not performing the worship inside the forest, instead they are performing the same in their own houses and gradually the community worship became personalised. The Christianised and Hinduised Rabhas are not performing the *Langa* worship as per as the present day context is concerned.

4.3.2.4. Worship of *Noor Bai*

The Rabhas worship *Noor bai* in the matters related to the child welfare. If the pregnant mother or the child suffers from any sickness, the worship of *Noor bai* has to be performed in the same room where the expectant mother or the child lives. The *deoshi* worships the deity in the evening of any day by offering unboiled (*atap*) rice, ripened banana and *chokot*. In order to appease the deity, *deoshi* sacrifices a duck or a pigeon and the blood thereafter sprinkled in the entire household area. Then the rice is cooked with the remaining blood (of the duck or the pigeon) and it has to be offered first to the deity. At last *deoshi* treats the child or expectant mother with the burning incense in order to cure them.

4.3.2.5. Worship of *Michik Bai*

Among the Rabhas, worship of *Michik bai* is also associated with the child welfare. The worship has to be performed by *deoshi* or *huji* by offering unboiled (*atap*) rice, white

flowers, burning incense and *chokot*. The *deoshi* or the *huji* has to be rewarded with new cloths for the worship. One male and female fowl are needed to be sacrificed in this regard. Showing honour to the Lord *Reshi* or *Mahakal* is a very important part of the ritual. During the worship, *deoshi* utters –

Dohai Mama Bowlyani, Dohai Bantorni
Dohai Amburi Dohai Amburi
Dohai Jinyanni, Dohai Mama Bowlyani

[**Meaning:** Maternal uncle *Bowlya* bless him/her, *Bantorni* bless him/her, mother *Amburi* bless him/her]

Worship of *Michik Bai* has to be performed during 5th, 7th and 9th month of the pregnancy. After worshipping of *Michik bai*, the offered products (*prasad*) have to be mixed and given to the expectant mother and other villagers.

4.3.2.6. Village Worship or *Gram Puja*

This deity *Gram Devta* is known for protecting village and villagers from the awful things. If this deity is not worshiped properly, and sacrifices are not made timely, then various sicknesses can occur at any time in the village. *Gram Puja* has to be performed every alternate year. A goat is needed to be sacrificed during the worship. According to the Rabha belief if the detached head of the sacrificed goat takes its position in an upward direction, then it is very bad and awful for them and if the head of that same goat takes its position in the downward direction, then it is very auspicious for them. If the sacrifice has done properly, then they have to do the worship in an alternative year, but if the sacrifice has not done properly then they must have to arrange the worship in the consecutive year.

4.3.2.7. Worship of *Sarkir Bai*

Worship of *Sarkir Bai* or *Sarkir Baitangi* is also a community adoration performed for the well-being of the village and its villagers. According to Romeshwar Rabha (*huji*, Rabhaline), it is the worship of multiple deities like *Mahakaal*, *Laxmi*, *Kali*, etc, (of Hindu pantheon). The forest living Animist Rabhas are still continuing this worship as per as the present day context is concerned. The worship has to be done within January or February of every year. Total twenty one small houses need to be prepared inside the

adjacent forest. These houses symbolises twenty one different deities. Eighteen houses are placed together but the rest three are made a little away because the Rabhas think that these three deities are most dangerous according to their mythology. Two pigs, three goats (red, black and white), nineteen pigeons (red, black and white) and one duck are needed to be sacrificed during the worship.

All the villagers participate in the worship. After completion of the *Sarkir Baitangi* at the evening, one representative from every house bring an earthen lamp along with the blood and skin of sacrificed animals in a small bowl and offer it to their household deity *Rountuk*. The process is followed by her worship throughout the night with the *dhup* (resin of *Sal* tree). The practice is known as *Dhupsangayi*.

4.3.2.8. Worship of *Baima Bai*

Baima Bai is a malevolent deity and presides over birth. It is mainly performed by the Rabhas of lower Assam but rarely it is found to be worshipped by the ‘forest Rabhas’ of the studied region. *Baima* is not appearing every time but as soon as a woman becomes pregnant, the deity appears with its power. After pregnancy, the members of the household worship her and sacrifice a male duck to the deity. The worship is performed by the *huji* in a clean place beside the river or beside any water sources. The villagers believe that after such sacrifices she would not harm to the pregnant women and a healthy baby would take birth without any trouble.

4.3.2.9. Worship of *Jokha-Jokhini*

Only the village dwelling Rabhas of Chhartampur (category–1 village) and Bansraja (Category–2 village) are found to be believed strongly on *Jokha* and *Jokhini*. The deities are mainly associated with child welfare and if a child is crying continuously, it mandatory to worship these deities.

The deities are generally placed in the courtyard and protected with a bamboo made fencing. The worshipping of these deities may be described as a result of culture contact with the Rajbangshi community living in the adjoining areas. The worship is performed by the *Adhikari* (Rajbangshi Priest).

4.3.2.10. Worship of *Thakurain*

Worship of *Thakurain* is specifically found only in the village Andubasti. The villagers believe in a specific deity known as *Thakurain* who is generally a benevolent deity but may convert into a malevolent one and cause different diseases in the human body if anybody fails to appease her. Thus during any diseases like *kansukhantni* (chicken pox), she is always propitiated with proper rituals. According to the Rabha belief, if *Thakurain* attacks someone, then he or she may behave abnormally. The affected person wants to eat everything in a very larger amount. Even she or he wants to eat coal also. Morphologically the Goddess is believed to be a tree marked with some special indication and generally worshipped in *than* or *sthan* which is a specific place inside the adjoining forest.

4.3.2.11. Worship of *Dol-Biti*

Six small tin made houses need to be prepared for the worship during the occasion of *Dol-Purnima*. For the worship, *Abir* (a special kind of pink coloured scented powder sprinkled by the Hindus in the ceremony of *Holi* or *Fagua*), *chokot* (traditional liquor), four pigeons and three fowl of different colours have to be dedicated to different Gods. The black pigeon to God *Reshi*, red pigeon to the Goddess *Thakurain* or *Maa Kali* and two white pigeon to the God *Langa* have to be sacrificed during the worship. As an important part of the worship the blood of these pigeons along with the blood of sacrificed fowls (one red, one black and one any other coloured except red and black) have to be sprinkled towards the Gods in order to appease them. After the worship all the villagers cook the sacrificed pigeon and fowl and take together with the *chokot*.

4.3.2.12. Worship of *Darmang Bai*

According to the Rabha belief, various epidemic diseases like cholera, smallpox, polio, etc. occur due to the appearance of *Darmang Bai*. If the epidemic diseases arise in the village then the *huji* (Rabha traditional healer) worship the deity and sacrifices animals (especially pig) to her. They believe after such worship the diseases will not spread in the village.

4.3.2.13. Worship of *Kon Bakai*

The forest dwelling Rabhas worship *Kon Bakai* to get rid of different health difficulties. Though the worship is not compulsory for every household, it is done in anticipation of the good health of children and often in some cases for the husband. While worshipping *Kon Bakai*, long bamboo is required. Generally, in a family, one bamboo pole is required for one person but the number of bamboo pole can be increased with the increasing number of the persons for whom the worship will be arranged. All the bamboo poles are tied with red thread and white cotton lumps are tied up in between that red thread. Generally, the female members of the family do the worship for the good health of their children and husband and protecting themselves from the incant of black magic. This worship is continued till the person becomes cure completely. Early in the morning, the worship of *Kon Bakai* is held strictly from the outside of the room. After the completion of the worship, the children and/or husband for whom the worship has been organised could not touch any kind of iron materials or implements (like any kind of iron rods or bike, cycle etc.) up to six hours. The bamboo stick has to be kept in the same place where it is worshiped and can only be replaced during the next *Kon Bakai* worship, if necessary for some other family members.

4.3.2.14. Worship of *Mairong Bai*

The deity *Mairong Bai* is the deity associated with chicken pox which the Rabhas called *kansukhantni* in the local language. They believe that it is a critical disease and when someone affected by chicken pox then there is a chance of contamination to the other members. So, to prevent the disease they arrange worship and sacrifices animals for appeasing the deity.

4.3.2.15. Worship of *Noro-Stri*:

During *Noro-Stri* worship, the Rabhas make nude human idols from both the sexes. After making those morphic figures, they carry these idols in the forest, and cover them with cloths. After that, *huji* worships them in the forest in order to maintain good characters of all the girls and the boys of that concerned village.

4.3.3. Worship of Spirits

Traditionally the tribals are Animistic and believe that everything whether living or dead, is possessed by different spirits. In their world-view, mountain, river, rock, tree, waterfall, etc. and every type of diseases like cholera, chicken pox, and fever, etc. are possessed by different spirits and supernatural powers, and for appeasement it is necessary to offer worship and sacrifices to the concerned spirits or supernatural powers in order to protect their life from the evil attack. These worships have to be done with various magical activities by some culturally defines religious specialists.

4.3.3.1. *Bulua Bai*

Bulua Bai is one of the strongest malevolent spirits believed by the Rabhas. The spirit may possess any male or female in order to harm them. The spirit does not have any figure. The *huji* can only determine if a man or a woman is possessed by *Bulua Bai* or some other spirit. The typical expressions and behaviour of the man/woman possessed indicate that she or he has been possessed by *Bulua Bai*. To cure him/her the *huji* performs various magical rites like *telpora* (magical means by oil), *jalpora* (magical means by water) and in order to remove the influence of the spirit the *huji* performs a special worship in the nearby forest. A small bamboo with branches known as *pahla* is represent the deity as the Rabhas believe that this deity looks like a bamboo. The male Rabhas take this bamboo and go to the nearby forest where the *huji* worships it with offerings. Then after taking the offered articles they start for the village silently without looking back. They believe that if they look back or talk, the spirit may accompany them. *Bulua Bai* is a male deity and has two sisters, i.e. *Konch and Paniya* as his companions. They are also worshipped along with *Bulua Bai*.

4.3.3.2. *Bira Bai*

Bira Bai is another malevolent spirit believed by the Rabhas. It is very powerful and has no definite figure. *Bira Bai* can appear in any form and can destroy trees, houses, etc. within a very few moments. If anyone is fear to *Bira Bai*, then she or he will be affected by various health issues. Mental disorder, climbing of tree, attracted by hill or river, etc.

are the common symptoms by which one can be identified as possessed by the *Bira Bai* and during that time it is recommended to tie the possessed person with a strong rope.

In order to appease the *Bira Bai*, she has to be worshiped by sacrificing a black male goat. Before the worship *huji* beat the goat with a branch of *Seora* tree (*Trophis aspera*) followed by some incantation towards the possessed person. After that the worship has to be done outside of the village. Generally odd number of people is associated with the worship.

4.3.3.3. *Dekaal*

The Rabhas consider *Dekaal* as a malevolent spirit which causes various stomach problems in the human body. If anyone suffers from acute stomach trouble, the *huji* suggests him/her for the worship of this spirit. The relatives of the patient construct a platform (*chadang*) made of bamboo splits (*haplak*) where various offerings including rice, vegetables and entrails of the fowl or pig are kept for the spirit. Then the *huji* invokes the spirit. After the worship they throw all these material in the forest without taking the offerings which are forbidden to eat.

4.3.3.4. *Joura Kaal*

Joura is the spirit of the dead person and always malevolent. Only *huji* can determine if somebody is possessed by this spirits through some magical rites. In order to appease the spirit, a bamboo alter is made on the western side of the living room where the spirit is worshipped with the offerings of the rice powder and *chokot*. A chicken has to be sacrificed in this regard. One of the most important things of the worship is that nobody can take the offered materials.

4.3.3.5. *Tikkar Bai*

The Rabhas have a strong belief in the witch and witchcrafts. The witches, according to the Rabha language are known as *Tikkar* or *Daini* who is usually a woman having some magical or supernatural powers. The witches generally harm the people and have the ability to capture someone's free soul during sleeping hours. According to the Rabha

belief system, scratch on body along with the stomach pain, stammering, becoming faint, etc. are considered as the symptoms of witch attack.

Among the Rabhas, if anyone is thought to be attacked by witch, they called a *huji* (traditional magico-religious practitioner) as a primary step of action. *Huji* then tried to find out the name and demand of the witch from the victim by continuous torturing of his or her affected body.

After getting an idea about the witch, the *huji* then tried to free the victim's soul from the possession of the witch and for that he arrange a worship of *Tikkar Bai*. For the worship, the victim's family has to collect a huge amount of fruits, meat and other edible items from the villagers. The worship can be performed in two ways on the basis of animals selected for sacrifice. If they sacrifice fowl, the worship has to be arranged inside the victim's house and if they want to sacrifice goat or hog, then the worship has to be arranged far away from the village territory. After the completion of the worship the *huji* keep the offerings in a specified place for the witch. The witch with her magical power takes all the offerings by imitating the structure of a dog or a cat and leaves free the victim's soul.

4.4. Traditional Treatment of Some Common Diseases (or related Symptoms or Misfortunes)

The Rabhas have their own traditional methods of treatment to get rid of different kinds of diseases. In order to get rid of diseases various types of locally available herbs and leaves of wild plants are used by them as medicines which have some medicinal values. These medicines are prepared by the herbal specialists of the village who have considerable knowledge about herbs and its medicinal value. It has been observed in all the studied villages that many of the aged people know the preparation of such medicines which can cure various common diseases such as fever, dysentery, jaundice, liver problem, stomach ache etc. Some of the traditional treatment procedures used by the concerned population in order to cure various diseases are as follows.

4.4.1. Fever (*cheleng*)

Fever can be characterised by temporary increasement of body temperature. Generally, the Rabhas do not show much attention towards fever if the temperature is not so high. An analysis in all the six villages result that fever is a disease which can be caused by two ways, due to seasonal variation and due to supernatural power. When someone is suffering from fever then at first they are trying to take bed rest. Sometimes during high fever they applied water on forehead and other body parts. For quick remedies they applied several home remedies, viz., lime juice mixed with sugar and applied on the forehead of the patient to get relief from fever. Sometimes they grind bark of *arjun* tree (*Terminalia arjuna*) and give it to the patient. If the home remedies are not able to cure the disease then they used to go to their traditional healer for *jalkasha* or sometimes take medicines from local quack.

While suffering from fever, the Rabhas of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Bong Basti) generally goes to their traditional healer Gobin Rabha who sacrifices two black pigeon (*kabra ghurani*) to the deity *Vagabati Bashahari* and perform some magico-religious performances with clean water, basil leaves, white flower and *durba* grass in order to check the increased body temperature. No magical spells are required for this purpose.

4.4.2. Cough and Cold (*Sardi and Khanshi*)

Extract of basal (*Ocimum sanctum*) leave is generally given to the patient suffering from cough and cold. They also give garlic to the patient for chewing or sometimes they inhale black cumin.

In Andu Basti, taking of tea along with ginger is a common practice to avoid cough and cold. Warm mustered oil is also rubbed on to the body of the patient. They also grind *haritaki* (*Terminalia chebula*) and use it as a very good remedy against cough and cold. Inhaling *Kerosene oil* sometimes helps to get quick remedy from cough and cold. The Rabhas of Rabhaline of Rajabhathkawa boil the leaf of *Gorekchak fung* and gargle with that water in order to get relief from cough.

In order to cure cough and cold the Rabhas of Dhumchi village mix ginger and black cumin with honey and fry it in mastered oil. The hot mixture can cure cough and cold if it is gently applied on neck and nape.

4.4.3. Jaundice (*Kakar*)

Most of the Animist Rabhas of Andu Basti, South Mendabari Forest Rabha village and Rabhaline think that jaundice is caused by some supernatural powers or by possessing of malevolent deities or by charmed arrow. Few of them have naturalistic belief behind the causation of jaundice. Jaundice can easily be identified by its yellowish appearance on the skin, eyes and palms.

Generally, the extracts collected from the seeds, fruits and barks of *jamlau/churimara* are used for the treatment of jaundice. The whole plant of wild amloki (*Phyllanthus niruri*) is also used for the treatment of jaundice. The Rabhas of Rabhaline boil the plant (wild amloki) and keep the extract in a bottle. The persons suffering from jaundice intake a glass of that extract every day continuously for two weeks. The Rabhas of this village also reported that jaundice can also be cured by magical performances with mastered oil (*tel-kosha*). The *huji* first keeps a bowl of mastered oil near the patient and perform magical rites (*jhar-phnk*) with a feather of a hen. As per the *huji*, the yellow germ comes out from the body just after the performance. The similar kinds of healing practices are also reported from the village Andu Basti.

As informed by the Rabhas of Andu Basti and South Mendabari Forest Rabha village, the mixture of the root of the *Kolico fung*, seeds of cucumber, leaves of *Anaros fung*, talmichari and water is given to the patient twice a day in empty stomach in order to cure jaundice in two days. They also reported that the weakness after having jaundice can be cured if the patient takes bath with the boiled water along with the bark of *Totla fung* and *Gorekchak fung*.

According to Gobin Rabha (traditional healer of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village), jaundice can easily be cured by *Kakar* leaf by tying it with a black cotton thread on the neck of the patient. Chandra Rabha, another traditional healer of South Mendabari

Forest Rabha village describes about a different method of treatment while healing jaundice. He first put a drop of mustard oil on a clean leaf of *taro* plant (*Colocasia esculenta*) and mixes that oil with water. After mixing, he keeps the leaf on the head of the jaundice affected person and does some magical activities (*jhar-phunk*) with seven separate *dupchap* leaf (*Cynodon dactylon*). The oil mixture has to be thrown after sometimes when it becomes an egg-like structure. In order to get rid of jaundice, the process has to be done in empty stomach continuously for seven mornings.

There is some food taboos related with jaundice. A person suffering from jaundice is not allowed to take much oil and spicy foods. Consume of turmeric, chili, salt, tea, fish, egg, meat, milk and pulses are prohibited for them. Going to forest or agricultural field is also restricted for jaundice affected persons.

4.4.4. Malaria (*Chengelutia*)

Though the severity of malaria is gradually decreasing day by day but it was an endemic even before five years. Generally, at the very preliminary stage, wild basil leaf (*Ocimum basilicum*) and black pepper are given to the malaria patient.

The traditional healer of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village gives the extract of *kukur bangara* (is a wild plant) to the malaria patient and sometimes buy medicine from the nearest pharmacy.

4.4.5. Epilepsy

As reported by the traditional healer of Rabhaline, epilepsy can be cured by some insects found in *amlaki* tree (*Phyllanthus emblica*) and in the river water. The insects, in Rabha language, are known as *Jhourangi-bujheni-chong* and *Chongugrei*. During treatment, it is not recommended to take *punti* fish (*Puntius sp.*), mutton, pork, meat of duck and pigeon.

4.4.6. Muscular Pain

Muscular pain may be arises due to injury, stress or due to hard work which causes swelling, tenderness, redness or fever. It can affect any parts of the body. During such

pain, they rubbed the affected portion with mustard oil mixed with ginger and black cumin. Sometimes they advised to drink hot milk with *gur* (molasses) for instant remedies.

The Rabhas of Dhumchi village reported that the muscular pain can be reduced by applying a hot mixture of turmeric and *gomutra* (cow urine) in the affected area.

4.4.7. Stomach Ache (*Asani*)

In most of the cases, it has been found that the Animist Rabhas belong to both of the categories of villages use *dupchap* leaf extract in order to get rid of stomach ache. In Andu Basti, the *huji* is gently massaged the external side of the lower abdomen of the patient with mustard oil and recommend the patient to take the mixture of grinded black pepper, garlic and salt. Sometimes they make lime juice along with salt and *gur* (molasses). The Rabhas of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Bong Basti) usually visits the forest and collects the leaves and barks of *bimalgoda* and *panchaktam* which is very powerful herbal medicine for such trouble. In order to get rid of any types of stomach pain the Rabhas of Dhumchi consume the fruits of *khosla* plant.

4.4.8. Snake Bite

Kashiram Rabha of Andu Basti is the only traditional healer who has the knowledge of treatment of snake bite. According to him, there is a small white coloured stone like structure known as *kouri*. He inherits that *kouri* from his ancestors and does not even know how to prepare it. In the entire village, he is the only person who possesses the *kouri* in recent times. If a person is bitten by any poisonous snake, she or he immediately comes to him and the *kouri* has to be kept over the tooth mark on the skin. The *kouri* has the power to suck the poison and after sucking all the poison it becomes blue in colour. After keeping it in open air for two to three days, the *kouri* again got back its white colour and ready for re-use.

4.4.9. Dog Bite

Considering all the villages under the study, Gobin Rabha of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Bong Basti) and Mantu Rabha of Bansraja village have the healing knowledge of dog bite. According to Gobin Rabha, if a person or any domestic animal is bitten by a dog then Gobin Rabha can heal them only with the fleas (*Siphonaptera sp.*) found in the outer skin of that particular dog. Only one or two fleas are required to eat by the patient in order to keep him away from the risk of a dog bite.

Whereas, Mantu Rabha prepare some dry tablets from the extracts of the insects of *chong* (pumpkin), insects of water, banana stem and the roots of a locally known plant called *vati*. According to Mantu, the said tablet can permanently heal the dog bite patient within 14 days if it is taken twice daily.

4.4.10. Headache

In case of headache, the Rabhas are generally using the leaf of *arshabil pangkur*. This leaf is coated with oil and they boil it in water. In order to reduce the headache, they wash their head with that water.

4.4.11. Diarrhea (*Jeteng-jani* or *Jhipting-jani*)

The usual traditional remedy practiced in diarrhea is the cooked rice added with curd and a little salt. The Rabhas of Andu Basti grind the *thankuni* leaf and *bengsak* (a wild herb) leaf and drink it as juice. Whereas, The Rabhas of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village, generally use the bark of *pipolo* (*Piper longum*) mixed with sugar and water. As reported from Rabhaline, diarrhea can also be cured by *jalkasha* if given with basil leaves.

4.4.12. Dysentery

While suffering from dysentery, the Rabhas generally take the mixture of ginger, ghee and sugar. Sometimes they take lime water along with salt. Ripe wood apple; root of *satmul* (*Asparagus racemosus*); leaves of *thankuni* (*Centella asiatica*); seeds of basil

(*Ocimum sanctum*) and fruit of wild *amlaki* (*Phyllanthus niruri*) are also used as traditional herbal medicines in case of dysentery.

The Animist Rabhas of category – 1 and category – 2 villages often perform the worship of *Maa Thakurain* and Lord *Reshi* in order to get rid of diseases like dysentery.

4.4.13. Toothache

During very severe toothache, the Rabhas avoid very hot and cold food items including water. Sometimes they heat a stone and wrapped in a cloth and keep close to the affected tooth. They also rubbed tobacco powder in order to prevent toothache.

The Rabhas of Dhumchi village uses some different traditional medicines to get relief from the toothache. They consider the latex of *jatropha* tree (*Jatropha curcas*) and *palash* tree (*Butea monosperma*) as very useful medicines against toothache.

4.4.14. Piles

Generally, the Rabhas take only vegetables as food during piles. They also use ripped guava and juice of *lajuklata* (*Mimosa pudica*) leaves as a good remedy against piles.

4.4.15. Pneumonia

As reported from Andu Basti, pneumonia is caused by the attack of some supernatural powers or some malevolent spirits. According to them, worshipping of *Maa Thakurain* can provide some relief to the pneumonia patient. Moreover, both of the Animist as well as the Christian Rabhas make juice from the root of *kashaida* (*Hedyotis lineate*) and *shirmara* leaves (a wild plant) and give it to the pneumonia patient for quick recovery.

According to the Rabhas of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village, pneumonia can also be cured if the mixture of *koshol* leaf, *jaifor* leaf, *pipolo* fruit is taken with some gold and silver dust.

4.4.16. Skin Disease

According to the Rabhas, skin disease may take place due to unhygienic works, insect bite during forest collection or due to an evil spirit. They generally use a paste of *medla* (*Cassia occidentalis*) leaf as a remedy for skin diseases. During bath, the Rabhas mix *neem* (*Azadirachta indica*) extract in the water in order to get rid of skin diseases.

4.4.17. Bone Fracture:

The Rabhas are expert to fix fractured bones with their traditional medicines. As narrated by Jugna Rabha (traditional healer of Andu Basti) *kangkachingtang* plant, *chuktang* plant, *baima-goda cheter* plant, bark of sal (*Shorea robusta*) tree are to be mixed together again and again with the latex of *panpakar* tree. If applied externally, the mixture can reduce the pain and even fix the fractured bone within a few days.

According to Gobin Rabha (traditional healer of South Mendabari forest Rabha village), magical rites (*jhar-phunk*) with *Dryopteris* (fern) leaf and basil (*Ocimum sanctum*) leaf can fix the fractured bone if it has done for continuous fifteen days by keeping the mixture of vermilion and leaf and root of turmeric plant (*Curcuma longa*).

For healing any external wound the Rabhas use the bark of *kalo haldi* (*Curcuma caesia*), leaf of *maprang-chak* and *asalata-chak*.

4.4.18. Treatment of Spirit Possession

Spirit possession can cause most common health problems or symptoms like headache, fever, body ache, stomach pain and mental disorder. According to Romeshwar Rabha (*huji*, Rabhaline), possession of spirit or ghost can be cured through some magical rites (*jhar-phunk*) if it performs with a thin banana stem by inserting nine separate leaves of *pamper-chak fung* (plant) in it.

When anyone is attacked by some malevolent spirit, the villagers together pray - “*hay / sargay taitangi aawa ishwar / na shakti nanag balanang / hasni aawa ishwar / nong ishwamay yii maranangay / heecha sarcha shaytanni baye / buhur lottongi tornang / nong ishwamay dur gasay / ni manchaa ni saktiman / nini balamnang / yii hee chadnang*

/ebakar nangna gatailawyo /jisuni munggay.....’ means, “Respected god, you are the source of power, you please bless the person who are being caught by any bad power and protect him/her from any bad effects, black magic or any kind of sickness or diseases.’

Attack of ghost or spirit has also reported from the Christian Rabhas of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (category – 1), Rabhaline (category – 2) and Dhumchi (category – 2). In such cases, *Palak* and Priest come and spell some quotes of the bible in front of the affected person and sprinkle some holy water (mixed with basil leaf) in order to ward off the spirit or ghost from the body.

4.4.19. Treatment of Charmed Arrow (*Ban*)

While describing a case of charmed arrow practice, Kashiram Rabha, 56 years old man of Andu Basti, stated that his family is ruined by the attack of *ban* (charmed arrow). According to him, his daughter, son-in-law, three grandsons and one granddaughter died in the same year. He thinks that their family is the victim of charmed arrow (*ban*) which was thrown from the nearby Rabha village known as Kodal Basti. Kashiram Rabha told that the person (not disclosed the name) who cast the *ban* has died three years ago at the age of 76 but the effects still exist.

Kashiram explained that if a person is attacked by charmed arrow, it will be easily identified by his or her extreme idleness, cold body temperature and yellowish skin colour. Kashiram told that his only alive grandson Rohit was also attacked by charmed arrow. Rohit is 15 years old and right now protected by *kabaj* and *tabij* (given by Jugna Rabha) which has to be worn all the time. While describing the intention behind the attack, Kashiram told "during the year 1990 my son in law got the job at the forest department and we built a new house. Our economic condition started to improve which became the cause of envy to some people of the village. They contacted with a black magician of Kodal Basti in order to harm my family."

In order to take the curative measure, Kashiram contacted with Jugna Rabha (traditional healer of the village) who performed magico-religious activities with 101 different kinds

of plants followed by the *jhar-phuk* with *bishahari* (*Dryopteris* sp.) leaf. After completion of the entire process it is mandatory for the affected person to eat an incinerated peacock feather.

The same type of healing procedure is observed among the forest living Animist Rabhas of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Category-1 Village) and Rabhaline (Category-2 village) if anyone is attacked by charmed arrow (*ban*). The Rabhas believe that the charmed arrow can only harm the persons belong to their traditional religion i.e., Animism and it becomes one of the most important reasons behind the emergence of Christianity.

4.4.20. Treatment of witch attack

In order to get rid of witch attack, the Rabhas belong to the Animistic religion first call a *huji* (traditional healer and magico-religious performer) who arrange the worship of *Tikkar Bai* in the affected person's house. In Rabha language, *Tikkar* means witch and it is mandatory to worship the deity of *Tikkar* (*Tikkar Bai*) if anyone is attacked by witch. If anybody is attacked by witch, she or he is not allowed to go outside at night for several days.

The Rabhas of the region under study believe that the witch (*Tikkar*) has only the powers to attack the Rabhas belong to the Animistic religion and due to this reason, some of the members of the present day Rabha society embrace Christianity as their prime religion. They think that the witch can only harm on Thursday and Saturday. The 'village Rabhas' living in the plain land areas of Cooch Bihar district rarely believes in witch and if attacked, they consult with the nearest *adhikari* (Rajbanshi priest) for any further action.

4.5. Traditional Healthcare Practitioner: Roles and Position

Every tribal society has their traditional concept of health, disease and treatment and the traditional healthcare practitioners or the traditional healers played a major role in this regard. The traditional healers may be defined as 'all those persons, providing full time or part time, any type of healthcare within an area, without having a recognised

traditional (ayurvedic, homeopathic, unani, naturopathy and yoga) or modern medicinal qualification through institutionalised training programme (Shukla, 1980). The traditional healer, as defined by the WHO (1976), is a person who is recognised by the community in which he lives as competent to provide healthcare by using vegetable, animal and mineral substances and certain other methods based on the social, cultural and religious background, as well as on the knowledge, attributes and beliefs that are prevalent in the community, regarding physical, mental and social well-being and the causation of disease and disability.

Among the forest dwelling Rabhas both *huji* and *deoshi* are recognised as traditional healers but the activities performed by each of them are different. A *huji* can heal any ailment by magico-religious activities whereas *deoshi* performs healing activities through traditional worshipping. In this regard, one mentionable point is that *huji* and *deoshi* may or may not be the same person but they should belong to 'uni bamun' *husuk* (clan) because the Rabhas believe that the people from *husuk* (clan) 'uni bamun' holds the highest position in the Rabha society. Both of them preside over all the Animistic performances attributed to the traditional customs of the Rabhas.

If anybody suffers from serious ailments, the *huji* or *deoshi* directly go to the house of the diseased person. People look forward to their services in case of diseases of a varied kind and his rituals are sought as a means of preliminary aid. The traditional healers enjoy highest position and respect in the Rabha society. The services of the *huji* are sought at the times of healing, Animistic rituals and for communication with spirits of the deceased as well. *Deoshis*, on the other hand, presides over the occasions of marriage, birth and death although. *Deoshis* can also heal the sick person by appeasing traditional Animistic deities through worship.

Both *huji* and *deoshi* have the knowledge of traditional medicines derived from various plants and animals. The position of the *huji* and *deoshi* are not hereditary. The priestly qualities are achieved in dreams. It is believed that during the performance of a ritual, when a *huji* goes into trance, a spirit takes place in his heart and the *huji*'s own soul goes away somewhere. For this reason, they close their eyes. Before his death, the *huji* select a person from his own community and gift him all the traditional knowledge.

Case : 1

Jugna Rabha, 72 years old man of Andu Basti (Category: 1 village located inside the core of the forest and exclusively inhabited by the Animist Rabhas) is the only traditional healer (*huji/deoshi*) of the village. His father was also a well known traditional healer of his time. Jugna Rabha has learned most of the healing practices from his father. He is a soft-spoken and well-hearted people. Generally, he used to practice healing activities not for only cure diseases but also save from the wrath of the supernatural powers. As Jugna Rabha stated, healing practices are more or less depending on the same principle. According to him, some energy is possessed inside his body which he applies during healing. Jugna Rabha is an expert for the treatment of diarrhea, stomach problem, fever and jaundice. Generally, he performs the healing activities with magico-religious practices as well as the worship of respective deities. Besides healing practices, he also has the knowledge of herbal medicines. From the very early age, Jugna Rabha has got the training of collection of medicinal plants from the forest. Thus, from the very young age he became familiar with the names and properties of various trees, stems, flowers, leaves, seeds and roots which have some sort of medicinal importance. He has a good knowledge of bone fracture. He obtained this knowledge of bone setting from other aged persons and healers who are no more alive in recent days. He primarily uses the techniques of massage. Various herbal plants along with traditional oil are also used for the purpose.

Jugna Rabha thinks that the attack of ghost is a matter of ill fate. He can cure the patients if attacked by ghosts or evil spirits. He can also perform the shamanistic activities against the charmed arrow and witchcraft. Jugna Rabha stated if he performs *jalkosha*, it will reverse the effect of charmed arrow and it will harm the same person who throws it.

Jugna Rabha generally meets his patients in his own house and in case of severe diseases he visits patient's house. He immediately starts to perform healing till the patient is not relief from his or her problem. Sometimes sacrifices and worship are also being done. He charges money or equivalent things for his performances and sometimes he does not ask anything from the poor people.

He also stated, his sons are not willing to take this profession and are not at all keen to learn such ideas, values and traditional knowledge. So, now he waits for a disciple who would learn and succeed him.

Case: 2

Gobin Rabha is a well known traditional healer (*huji/deoshi*) of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Category: 1 village located outskirts of the forest area and mainly inhabited by both of the Animist and Christian Rabhas.). He is a 58 years old man and can heal any patient from fever, body pain, back pain, headache, ghost attack, jaundice and any type of stomach problem.

Like the traditional healer of Andu Basti, Gobin Rabha can cure the diseases by herbal medicines, magico-religious performances and worshipping of traditional deities. As per he stated, he got the knowledge of healing from his father's elder brother who gave all the knowledge to him before his death.

Gobin Rabha has some rare knowledge of healing. According to him, if anyone is attacked by the evil spirit of the forest, he just tries to appease the spirit by worshipping him/her with flower (red and white) and incense sticks and only after the healing, he sacrifices a pigeon inside the forest.

While discussing on the herbal medicines, Gobin Rabha stated, the roots or the leaves of *kakar* (local name) plant can cure jaundice if it can be tied on the patient's neck with a black thread. He also stated that if a person or any domestic animal is bitten by a dog then she or he can be healed by the fleas found in the outer skin of that particular dog. Only one or two fleas are required to eat by the patient in order to keep him away from the risk of dog bite. As Gobin Rabha informed, he applied the process two times on cows but not on the humans.

Case: 3

Romeshwar Rabha, 55 years old traditional healer (*huji/deoshi*) of Rabhaline (Category: 2 village located inside the core of the forest area and inhabited by both of the Animist

and Christian Rabhas) mainly perform healing practices through plants and animal parts as well as worshipping of traditional deities. He learned all the healing activities from his preceptor Basar Rabha who is another traditional healer of the same village. Due to his old age and ill health condition, Basar Rabha is not performing the healing activities nowadays.

As Romeshwar Rabha stated, he first tried to cure the ailments with traditional worshipping of respective deities and if it is not cured, then he performs the magico-religious activities. According to him, not only the Rabhas but the other tribal and non-tribal communities living in the adjoining areas of the village seek treatment from him. In case of the diseases like jaundice, stomach pain and bone fracture, he uses herbal medicines which he collects from the nearby forest. Romeshwar Rabha stated the forest was highly enriched with the herbal plants earlier but at present, the medicinally important plants are rarely found inside the forest. Uprootation of the plants and unplanned afforestation programmes are mainly responsible for the situation.

If in any case, the modern bio-medicine fails to cure jaundice, Romeshwar Rabha can cure it with proper traditional medicine and food restriction. According to him, at one time there were a lot of malaria cases in the village but at present, the incidences of malaria become less.

Romeshwar Rabha stated that generally 10 -12 patients are regularly seek treatment from him but the number of patients decreases during winter. During the time of interview he performed *jalkosha* for a patient who was suffering from acute fever and told him to come after two days. He stated to the patient that if the fever will not cure with in two days, he will perform worship with incense stick and a fowl and if he wil cure then the same worship has to be done with a pigeon. The Christian Rabhas are also come to him and seek herbal medicines for their diseases. As he stated, The Christian Rabhas do not believe in the traditional worships and magico-religious performances.

As Romeshwar Rabha reported he can cure epilepsy with *tabij* prepared from the root of a specific plant (name of the plant not disclosed). He can also cure epilepsy with insects (*jourangi bujheni chong* and *chongugrei*) specifically found in the nearby trees and river

water. Romeshwar Rabha can cure the effect of charmed arrow and witchcraft. He stated, if anyone of the village is growing towards prosperity, he has a high chance to be affected by charmed arrow (*ban*). Romeshwar Rabha knows the black magician of the village but scares to disclose the name.

Romeshwar Rabha also performs the traditional rites needed for the life cycle and related rituals of the traditional Rabhas. He never sells his medicines in the weekly market and takes only *chokot* (traditional country liquor) and *gamcha* (a piece of small cloth) in lieu of his treatment.

Not only the traditional *huji* and *deoshi*, the Rabhas also have a strong faith on the treatment of the traditional healers belong to other communities. In most of the cases it has been found that if the treatment of any disease (or related symptoms or misfortunes) is not cured by the *huji* or *deoshi* or even by the modern doctors, the Rabhas sometimes prefer to visit the *kabiraj* or traditional medical practitioner belongs to muslim bengali community or the traditional healer belongs to Rajbangshi community (*adhikari*) or from the other tribal communities like Mech or Oraon.

The 'village Rabhas' of Chhatrapur and Bansraja (living near to the urban area are mostly absorbed by the Hindu religious doctrine) mostly depend on the Hindu Gods or deities as per as their traditional health seeking behaviour is concerned. These Gods or deities are worshipped by the *purohit* (Hindu priest) or *adhikari* (Rajbangshi priest). *Purohits* are mostly belonged to the adjoining Hindu religious community but among the Rabhas it has been found that they are just the modified form of *deoshis* who belong from the same community and instead of worshipping their traditional deity they are mostly following the ritualistic health practices as performed by the Hindu *purohits*.

The 'Forest Rabhas' (of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village, Rabhaline and Dhumchi) who embraced Christianity are mostly depending on the Pastor of the nearby Church as a means of getting any first-hand health assistance. The Pastors are generally believed to be engrossed by some supernatural powers and their holy blessings can heal the people from any untoward health situation. In case of any ailments, the Christian Rabhas use sacred water offered by the Pastors and if the condition gets worsened the Pastor himself

comes over to cure the sick person. He makes the use of Biblical texts written in the New Testament and prays to God (Jesus Christ) to take out the sick person from the ailments. The need of the person to have faith in the belief in God is also required through which the person could be successfully cured. Among the Christian Rabhas the Pastor holds a position of high importance for not only providing health assistance to the persons seeking his services but also for his role in the Church and as well as for performing various ritualistic practices in the life cycle related rituals.

4.6. Result of Treatment

A comparative analysis of table 3.16 and table 4.1 shows that 16.89 percent male and 12.24 percent female among the total disease affected person seek only traditional treatment in order to get rid of their ailments. The methods of traditional treatment, in this regard, can be classified into three major parts. First, the treatment provided by the Rabha traditional healer (*huji/deoshi*) which can further be divided on the basis of the activities performed by them, i.e., healing through traditional mechanisms performed by traditional worshipping and magico religious performances. Second, the healthcare services provided by the traditional healers belong to other communities (from another ethnic or religious group) of the adjoining areas. The last part is only restricted to the forest dwelling Christian Rabhas where the traditional healing is mainly performed by the Pastor of the village Church with some magical treatment and holy prayer in front of their supreme God, i.e., Jesus Christ.

As per as the availing of only traditional medicines are concerned, table 4.1 shows that 45.95 percent male and 50.00 percent female look for only herbal medicines, whereas, 27.03 percent male and 29.17 percent female preferred to get rid of their ailments by traditional worshipping and various magico religious performances.

The analysis of the table (table 4.1) discloses that there is a good acceptance of the herbal medicines in all the selected villages under the present study whereas, only the villages having belief on their age-old Animistic religion (i.e. Andu Basti and South Mendabari Forest Rabha village of category-1 and Rabhaline of Category-2) go for traditional worshipping and magico religious performances in order to get relief from

their diseases (or related symptoms or misfortunes). Irrespective of religious variations, a good acceptance of herbal medicines by the people of all the categories reflects the highest percentage towards it.

The table (table 4.1) also shows that 21.62 percent male and 12.50 percent female seek traditional treatment from the healers of other communities. In most of the cases, it has been found that the Rabhas have a good faith on the healers of Nishiganj (a nearby village) for the treatment of bone fracture. Only 05.40 percent male and 08.33 percent female belong to Soth Mendabari Forest Rabha village, Rabhaline and Dhumchi from the Christian religious doctrine have a faith on the holy prayer and magical treatment done by the Pastor of the village Church.

Table 4.2 shows that 70.27 percent male and 75.00 percent female among all the studied villages get rid of their ailments after availing only traditional treatment. During the fieldwork, it has been observed that the villagers availed herbal medicines from the traditional Rabha healer, got remedy in most of the cases. It is known from many of the previous studies that the category of treatment depends upon the beliefs regarding the causation of the diseases (Table 3.9 to Table 3.15). Considering the above criteria, it can be said that there are many reasons for pursuing different categories of treatment. In the present study, low percentage of availing traditional treatment was shaped by the availability of the traditional healer, economic condition of the villagers, education and most importantly the religious affiliation.

According to the Rabhas, if any disease is caused by the supernatural forces, they prefer to avail the traditional way of treatment depending on the availability and the ethnicity of the healer. For instances, it can be said that the Rabha traditional healers (*huji* or *deoshi*) are only available in Andu Basti and South Mendabari Forest Rabha village of category –1 and Rabhaline of category–2. If the villagers of these three villages believe on any supernatural forces behind their diseases, primarily seek treatment from the Rabha traditional healers.

The Rabhas of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (of category – 1) and Rabhaline and Dhumchi Rabha village (of category – 2) who have embraced Christianity seek

treatment from the traditional Rabha healer and for any supernaturally caused diseases they mostly depend on the magical treatment of the Pastor and keep faith on their prayer.

The village dwelling Rabhas of Chhatrampur (category - 1 village) and Bansraja (category - 2 village) are mostly accentuated towards the local Bengali and Rajbangshi culture and in most of the cases seek traditional treatments from the traditional healers belong to Bengali and Rajbangshi community.

Despite all the said circumstances, the Rabhas under the study treated by the said treatment are satisfied by the procedure and behaviour of the healer. According to them, the personalistic belief is very helpful for treatment as the patient could say all about his or her ailments and it is also helpful for the healer to realise the actual cause behind the disease.

4.7. Life Cycle and Health Related Rituals

As the Rabhas are matrilineal, almost every ritual related with the lifecycle are centering with the woman in the traditional Rabha society. But the scenario as per as the present day context is concerned has been changed due to the religious conversion directed towards the Hinduism or Christianity. The present sub-topic is mainly dealt with the traditional age-old cultural practices performed by the Rabhas regarding their life cycle and related activities for better understanding of the traditionally institutionalised health related practices engrossed with it.

The ritualistic behaviours related to the life cycle can be well discussed according to the three phases of life, i.e. birth, marriage and death.

4.7.1. Birth Rites

The ritualistic practices related to the childbirth starts with the pregnancy which can only be happened after marriage. It has been observed from the field that the Animistic Rabha villages situated inside the forest region (i.e. Andu Basti, South Mendabari Forest Rabha village of category -1 and Rabhaline of category -2) are fonder of female child than the other villages where the villagers have more accentuated towards Hinduism or converted

their religion into Christianity. Among the Rabhas, looking for a female or male child is completely depend on the present day scenario of the social structure of the concerned village that what types of residence pattern is continuing in the village and who will live with them after marriage to look after them in their old age.

As Raha (1989) stated, the forest and the village dwelling Rabhas irrespective of religious affiliation considered childlessness as a disgraceful occurrence which again reconfirmed in the present study. The Rabhas never accuse a male for sterility. According to the infertility is always caused due to the barrenness of a woman but they are not neglected by the society. A barren woman is called *panmadwa* and her husband is permitted to go for socially approved divorce and allowed to remarry another Rabha girl.

4.7.1.1. Pregnancy and Child Birth

Though most of the Rabhas from all the studied villages have a natural conception about the occurrence of the pregnancy but some of the Animist Rabhas still believe that a child is the gift of their supreme god *Rishi Bai*. The first pregnancy is a very significant and joyful event to a Rabha couple and their family members. A girl first understands about her pregnancy when she misses her regular menstruation cycle along with some vomiting tendency and physical weakness. Then without any shy she discusses all the matter with her husband and other family members. After pregnancy, the women generally lead the normal life but she avoids going outside of the house. The food habit of a woman during pregnancy is found to be similar in all the villages under study. They generally consume milk, different type of fruits, papaya, unripe banana, catfish, *chang* fish and stem of bottle gourd during pregnancy period. The Rabhas believe that intake of *chang* fish and stem of bottle gourd will help to increase the breast milk after delivery. Sex life is completely restricted during the pregnancy period. The pregnant woman is also restricted to go any burial or cremation ground or any house undergoing with the *subodu* (pollution period). She is not allowed to ride ladder or a rope with which the domestic cattle are tied up (Das and Raha, 1967). She is not even permitted to go to the forest, pond, riverside, nor she can take participate in the funeral activities. She is not allowed to carry heavy weights in her waist (like pitcher full of water). She is not

allowed to stay outside of the house after dusk in open hair, nor can accept food from a stranger or give anything to an outsider.

During the first pregnancy, a fowl is offered to the deities in order to protect the pregnant mother from *petrani* (the child catcher). During pregnancy, if any problem (like abdominal pain, etc.) occurs, *huji* performs *Jalkosha* (healing through sacred water) and prepare tin made small houses for *Michik Bai*. For the first child the worship is mandatory but after that, it depends upon the wish of the family members. Such kinds of ritualistic practices are not found among the Hinduised ‘village Rabhas’ and the forest dwelling Christian Rabhas. The Rabhas of Chhatrampur (category – 1 village) and Bansraja (category – 2 village) show respect towards Hindu deity *Maa Shasti* for a safe and uncomplicated delivery. For any unwanted health situation, the village dwelling Rabhas depend on local *kabiraj* (medicine man) or the local quack. It was also observed that a village Rabha woman wears *jap* (sanctified black thread) or armband given by the *kabiraj* in order to protect them from the evil spirits. The pregnant women belong to ‘forest Rabha’ society do not wear *jap* but keep a piece of iron to get rid of the evil spirits. The Christian Rabhas of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (category – 1 village), Rabhaline (category – 2 village) and Dhumchi (category – 2 village) solve all the pregnancy related problems in the nearby Church where the Pastor did some healing rituals with sanctified water and holy spells.

As per as the present day context is concerned, most of the Rabhas who have converted their religion into Christianity generally prefer to opt for institutional delivery but the Animist ‘forest Rabhas’ as well as Hinduised ‘village Rabhas’ are till now preferring home delivery (Table No 5.10 to Table No 5.16) which generally takes place in their own *nougou* with the help of *dhai-ni* (midwife) and other female neighbours of the village. The woman plays the role of *dhai-ni* must be married and must be from their own community. No unmarried woman is allowed to do the role of *dhai-ni* (Sunder, 1895). All the midwives like Rabhabati Rabha, Ujin Rabha, Pabaneswari Rabha of the studied villages are not trained but they are well experienced to handle any kind of untoward situation during childbirth. If *dhai-ni* apprehends that some complications may arise during the delivery, the husband immediately contacts with the nearest *huji* for

healing, but if it is not manageable, then they prefer to admit the concerned pregnant woman in the nearby government health institutions like sub-center, primary health center, block primary health center or hospital.

The Rabhas believe that at the very advanced stage of pregnancy if the woman feels more vibration in the right abdomen, then she will be the mother of a male child and if she feels more vibration in the left abdomen then it is assumed that she will be the mother of a girl child. When the labour pain starts, the expectant mother takes shelter in her bedroom and usually remains there until the end of the pollution period (*subodu*). During this period, *dhai-ni* (midwife) and other elderly women (kin or non-kin) take a good care of her. When the labour pain became acute, the attending women gently massage the lower abdomen of the expectant mother with some lukewarm oil in order to reduce the pain (Raha, 1989). To get rid of abdominal pain or evil eye, the expectant mother often continuously utters the holy spell – ‘*hentering pufonga*’. It was also reported from the village Rabhaline that taking of juice prepared from the leaf of *Astobar fung* (plant) will help to reduce the labour pain and provides strength to the expectant mother during delivery. Gobin Rabha, the traditional healer of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (Bong Basti) informed that in order to reduce the abdominal pain during childbirth, the Rabhas often tie endi leaf (*Recinus communis*) in their neck or in waist with a cotton thread. Sometimes for quick and smooth delivery, the *dhai-ni* performs some magical rites, known as ‘*Jalkosha*’ (sanctified water by magical spells) and gives it to the expectant mother for drinking. The *huji* also tries to relief the woman from acute pain by some magical means. Worship of several deities and spirits, especially the *Michik Bai* is a common phenomenon exists among the forest living Animist Rabhas to get rid of any unwanted situation during the time of childbirth. The worship has to be performed by *deoshi* or *huji* by offering unboiled (*atap*) rice, white flowers, burning incense and *chokot*. One male and female fowl are needed to be sacrificed in this regard. Showing honour to the Lord *Reshi* or *Mahakal* is a very important part of the ritual. During the worship, *deoshi/huji* utters –

Dohai Mama Bowlyani, Dohai Bantorni
Dohai Amburi Dohai Amburi
Dohai Jinyanni, Dohai Mama Bowlyani

[**Meaning:** Maternal uncle *Bowlya* bless him/her, *Bantorni* bless him/her, mother *Amburi* bless him/her]

Worship of *Michik Bai* has to be performed during 5th, 7th and 9th month of the pregnancy. After worshipping of *Michik Bai*, the offered products (*prasad*) have to be mixed and given to the expectant mother and other villagers.

On the contrary, in case of the village or the plain land Rabhas (Chhatrampur of category – 1 and Bansraja of category – 2), *dhai-ni* performs *Solmatrika* worship for the safe delivery and for the welfare of the child. According to Das and Raha (1967), after the worship, the *dhai-ni* gives the expectant mother a little sacred water to drink and also keeps some flowers of the worship on her bed. After child birth all the articles used in the worship even the flowers of the mother's bed are thrown away.

During the time of childbirth the pregnant woman remains in the kneeling position till the baby comes out. As soon as the child is born, *dhai-ni* cuts the umbilical cord with a sharp bamboo strip and welcomes the child with *chokot*.

Among the 'village Rabhas', an interesting ritual has been found that after birth the child has to be touched with the ground first so that she or he can get the blessings of the mother Earth. Sanyal in 1965 highlighted about the same ritual what he observed among the Rajbanshis living in the same geographical niche.

After cutting of the umbilical cord with a bamboo string, *dhai-ni* washes both the mother and the newborn with warm water and buries the placenta (*parr*) in their courtyard just outside the wall of the bedroom by wrapping it in a plantain leaf. The area then fenced with some bamboo stick to protect the *parr* from malevolent spirits and other animals. The Rabhas bury the umbilical cord or the naval string (*otapai*) securely under their bedroom or kitchen by keeping it in a *matak* (container) and put some water into the container. The Rabhas believe that after few days the water gains some healing power and it will be given to the child if she or he would have any physical ailments. This process is like present day umbilical cord bank where the parents can store umbilical

cord for protecting their children from different kind of diseases. The Rabhas never through the *parr* or the *otapai* at anywhere because they believe that if it will be taken or eaten by the dogs or pigs or any other animals then the child will be ill.

4.7.1.2. Pollution and Purification

Among the 'Forest Rabhas', the *subodu* (birth pollution) is observed for five or seven days or sometimes till the detachment of the *otapai* (naval string). But for the 'village Rabhas' the pollution continues up to thirty days from the birth as found among the nearby Rajbanshi population. It has been observed that the Animist 'forest Rabhas' from the core and the fringe of the forest area perform *subodu-pereni* (final purification) on the 6th or the 7th day of pollution. During *subodu-pereni* the brother or any male relative of the mother belonging to her *husuk* cuts a lock of hair of the newborn baby and buries it inside the room. At the same time, all the family members cut their nails and shave their beards (only male members) by themselves and take bath. No barber (*napit*) is observed to be engaged by them for this purpose. After final purification, a cock is killed by the *huji* inside the room in which the child was born and the *huji* utters various spells or mantras in order to satisfy God *Reshi*. The *huji* after taking *chokot* goes to the *husuk-jampiri* (clan altar) along with the family members and some of the neighbours. *Husuk-jampiri* is situated in the nearby forest where the *huji* worships several deities and spirits such as *Jaga*, *Thakurain*, *Maitani*, *Kaltani*, *Michk Bai* and others with offerings and sacrifices for the good health condition of the newly born baby.

After the completion of the worship, the mother with her baby comes to the worship place and takes a little amount of *maye* (food prepared with rice, vegetables and flesh of the sacrificed bird) and touches a little of it in the mouth of her child. The *huji* then blesses the child and pray for her/his well-being.

Among the 'village Rabhas' the pollution period ends with the *chhua-kaman* (final purification) ceremony as performed by the local Rajbanshis. On the day of final purification (7th or 30th day from childbirth) a barber cuts a lock of hair of the newborn and the mother buries it under a banana or a jackfruit tree. The barber then performs the shaving of the male family members which is followed by *tikkar ceremony*. During this

period they have to wash all the clothes of mother and other family members and only after that the family members are allowed to take part in different socio-cultural occasions. The similar type of rituals is performed by the Rajbanshis living in the adjacent areas.

After purification ceremony the 'village Rabhas' call the *adhikari* (Rajbanshi priest) in order to perform *Balaram puja* in the basil altar (*tulshi mancha*) located in their courtyard. In case of a male child, the *adhikari*, after performing the *Balaram puja* collects a little mud from the basil altar and touches it to the forehead of the child. In case of a female child, the *adhikari* puts a mark of vermilion (used in the worship) in her forehead and blesses her. In both the 'forest' and the 'village' Rabha society, the purification ceremony ends with the distribution of the offerings along with the *chokot* among the assembled persons came from the same or the nearby villages.

4.7.1.3. *Chhumung-tangi* or Name giving Ceremony

Among the Rabhas, the name giving ceremony is known as *chhumung-tangi*. Most of the forest dwelling Rabhas organise it on the same day of *lengju* ceremony or one or two days after that. *Lengju* ceremony is performed by the forest living Animist Rabhas just after a day of final purification. The most important part of the *Lengju* ceremony is *Batangi* worship which is mainly a worship of a sal tree (*Shorea robusta*) performed by the grandmother (from mother's side) for the well being of her grandchild. Four to five *tou-che* (fowl) and some *kokre-par* flowers are required for the worship. Among the village dwelling Rabhas the *chhumung-tangi* takes place on the day of *chhua-kaman* or a little later but it has to be done within three months from the childbirth. Sometimes the name giving ceremony (*chhumung-tangi*) among the forest Rabhas takes place a week after the birth along with the *subodu-pereni* ceremony as observed by Sunder (1895).

Name giving ceremony is performed in the same room of the house where the child is born. After worshipping the *Rountuk* and *Basek* with *chokot*, *sal-dhup*, paddy, *durba*-grass, basil leaf, plantain leaf and earthen lamp the assembled elder persons are requested to make a list of name for the newborn child. According to Raha (1989), the mother of the child will select one name from the suggested name list. He (Raha, 1989)

observed that the *deoshi* holds a cock and ascribes the left leg of the cock in the name of the newborn and attributes the right leg to the name of the lord *Reshi*. The *deoshi* then cuts its head and holds the cock horizontally. If the right leg of the cock (attributed to *Reshi*) gets up on the left leg, then the name selected by the committee of the elderly persons is regarded as very good and auspicious but if the situation is opposite, i.e., the left leg gets up on the right leg, the name is regarded as ominous and a new name is selected.

During the study, it was found that earlier in Rabha society the name of the newborn baby was selected on the basis of cackle comes out from chicken during the time of sacrifice and the names were like – *Chelao*, *Challeng*, *Chelchek*, *Chilang*, *Kantel*, *Nabraw*, *Chabraw*, etc. But in the present day context due to the interaction with the so-called mainstream population and impact of modernisation the Rabhas are avoiding these names and already started to give a modern name to their children.

During name giving ceremony (*chhumung-tangi*) a hen for female child and a cock for male child is required to assume future health condition of the child. The Rabhas believe that after sacrifice if the nails of the cock remain straight and forward facing, then the male child will be very healthy without having any diseases or evil attacks. If the claws became uneven and scattered, then there is a chance of evil attack and the child (male) will be suffered from various untoward health conditions throughout his life. The same type of experiment is done with hen to assume future health condition of a female child.

Presently, in the village Rabha society, the responsibility of selection of the name is given to the *adhikari* (Rajbanshi priest) who selects a suitable name for the newly born baby after consulting the *panjika* or *panji*. Earlier, among the ‘village Rabhas’, there was a different kind of name giving ceremony where the child’s mother’s father or the mother’s brother drops some rice within a water contained pot by uttering the name which will be selected for the child. After that, if the rice floats in the water, the name was regarded as very auspicious and it was selected for the child. If the rice sinks down, the name was regarded as ominous and was rejected.

Among the Rabhas, the name giving ceremony is not organised in the Bengali months of *Jaisthya* (mid of May to mid of June), *Vadra* (mid of August to mid of September), *Pous* (mid of December to mid of January) and *Chaitra* (mid of March to mid of April) as these months are inauspicious for them. The name giving ceremony or *chhumung-tangi* is neither performed in Friday and Saturday of the week nor in the full-moon and new-moon night.

4.7.1.4. Rice Giving Ceremony

Among the 'forest Rabhas' the rice giving ceremony (*tashignai*) is celebrated along with the *lengju* worship on fifth or seventh day of the pollution period where the mother with her baby comes to the worship place and takes a little amount of *maye* (food prepared with rice, vegetables and flesh of the sacrificed bird) and touches a little of it in the mouth of her child. The ritual is followed by the worship *Kon Bakai*. Though the worship is not compulsory for every household but it is done in anticipation of the good health of children. While worshipping *Kon Bakai*, a long bamboo is required. Generally, in a family, one bamboo pole is required for one person but the number of bamboo pole can be increased with the increasing number of the persons for whom the worship will be arranged. All the bamboo poles are tied with red thread and white cotton lumps are tied up in between those red threads. Generally, the female members of the family do the worship for the good health of their children and protecting him/her from the incant of black magic. Early in the morning, the worship of *Kon Bakai* is held strictly from the outside of the room. After the completion of the worship, the child is not allowed to touch any kind of iron materials or implements (like any kind of iron rods or bike, cycle etc.) up to six hours. The bamboo stick has to be kept in the same place where it was worshiped and can only be replaced during the next *Kon Bakai* worship, if necessary for some other family members.

The rice giving or *mukhe-bhat* ceremony performed by the village Rabhas of Chhatrampur and Bansraja village is mostly alike with the ceremony performed by the local Rajbanshi people. The well-to-do families perform a big occasion on 7th month (for female) or 9th month (for male) of child and give cooked rice to him/her.

On the day of *mukhe-bhat* the mother bathes their baby with warm water and only after that the child is allowed to sit on the lap of his paternal or maternal uncle facing towards eastern side. The mother of the child then keeps a book, a pen, some amount of paddy, soil, *durba* grass, turmeric, kajal, some money, and an earthen lamp in front of the child. A plate of rice boiled with milk and sugar (known as *payes*) also kept in front of the child. After that, *adhikari* performs the Balaram puja. After completion of the worship, the maternal uncle of the child takes a little amount of *payes* and feed the baby thrice. The father of the child arranges the ritual and invites the villagers in the occasion. Throughout the entire ceremony the musical instruments are played for enjoyment. The economically weak families do not perform the ritual in a very big manner and confined the ritual within the own family members.

4.7.1.5. Birth Rituals among the Christian Rabhas

The forest dwelling Christian Rabhas perform similar type of birth rituals like the Animist Rabhas but in a different wrap. The pregnant women follow the same types of restriction and they have similar kind of supernatural beliefs as per as the birth related rituals are concerned. The women understand about her pregnancy by the prolonged stoppage of her menstrual cycle. Pregnancy is also determined by the physical change of the body like sickness, weakness, vomiting etc. The pregnant women do not follow much restriction as followed by the Animist Rabhas. She can consume anything whatever she wants. During pregnancy, if a pregnant woman faces any health related problem or disease or illness then her family members call a *palak* from the nearby Church. *Palak* then sprinkles some sanctified holy water to her and suggests her to massage mustered oil on her belly.

The Delivery process is more or less same as found among the Animist 'forest Rabhas'. *Dhai-ni* and other aged women (belong to Christian community) from the village help the expectant mother in the entire delivery process. After delivery of the child, the umbilical cord is buried in the courtyard. Some of the families keep the umbilical cord an earthen pot with some water. In order to get a quick recovery the water is given to the child when she or he becomes sick.

During the time of delivery the ladies present in the labour room pray for the new born-
“*hay sargay timami awa ishwar / ishmai ninimumai dhonibar lawa / ishawnang kulumata na uchung saita / ning dashmangcha / ishwani iray kono hicha bai bohotu tangro / hingsha tarana tangro / ishmay ni gatailowa / nang temeng / prabhu jisunang ishmay / abang ashimay ishan nang na gatailawa / ishnang muyai prabhu jisunuma.. Amen*”. They think that the pray will protect the mother and the newborn from any evil powers

Christian Rabhas have only two days of pollution period. On the 2nd day they simply select a name for their child but the names should be selected from the Christian religious doctrine (e.g., Jhon, David, etc.).

After two weeks of childbirth, parents and the family members of the newly born child go to the Church with their baby and offer some rice as well as some amount of money to the God in presence of the *palak*, pastor other villagers. The pastor then read Bible in the name of the new born baby and after that the family members of the new born baby give a grand feast to their relatives and other villagers.

4.7.2. Marriage Rites

Though marriage has various importances, but to the Rabhas it is the institution for making a socially approved sexual relationship with the partner of opposite sex, continuation of generation and to get a partner for rest of the life. Traditionally the Rabhas are monogamous matrilineal community and after marriage the grooms are generally come into the bride’s house and stay permanently with her (matrilocal). A detailed account regarding the selection of spouse, marriage types and related residence pattern has already been discussed in Chapter – 3. The present section of the thesis will only highlight on the marriage rituals and related health beliefs prevalent among the West Bengal Rabhas irrespective of their geographical habitation and religious affiliation.

Among the forest living Animist Rabhas the first approach for marriage is being executed from the bride’s end or from her family. At the very early stage of selection of

spouse, the girl's father, mother's brothers, some other relatives, the *pare* and the *huji* or *deoshi* go to the house of the boy on a pre-selected day. The *huji/deoshi* and *pare* from the girl's side observe the boy very carefully in order to search evil signs (if any) in his body or gesture. If they find any kind of prominent evil signs, the girl's party stops the negotiation and if they find satisfactory result without any evil sign then they select the boy and request his family to visit girl's house for the same purpose. This process is known as *lam-chnaiya*.

The evil signs are also counted on the basis of some specific omens and for this purpose, they need one fowl. *Deoshi* holds the fowl and ascribes the left leg of the cock in the name of would be couple and attributes the right leg to the name of the lord *Reshi*. The *deoshi* then cuts its head and holds the cock horizontally. If the right leg of the cock (attributed to *Reshi*) gets up on the left leg, then the marriage is recommended and regarded as very good and auspicious but if the situation is reverse, i.e., the left leg gets up on the right leg, then it is thought that the marriage will bring a great misfortune and the marriage is not recommended by the elderly persons of the village. During negotiation it is mandatory to gift two bottles of *chokot* when the bride's or groom's party visit each other's house.

The Rabhas never marry within their mother's *husuk* (clan), *neyoa husuk* (sub-clan) and *saru-husuk* (friend clan). Marriage within the same *husuk* is not permitted as the Rabhas believe that the members of the same *husuk* originated from the same stock and recognise one another as brother and sister. If one gets married in the same *husuk*, they think that their ancestors will be furious which ultimately will spoil the married life with dissatisfaction, disease, unhappiness, miscarriage and even with death. For such an incident the wrath of the ancestors will also fall on the near relatives belonging to the same *husuk* or clan. As the Rabhas are matrilineal, there is no restriction of marriage in father's *husuk*.

After negotiation and counting of omen, the process of final selection starts in both of the houses. During this process, the mother's brother of the groom gives a *shokok* (a piece of cloth) or some money to the bride (*mirsik-cha*) and similarly after few days the groom is blessed by the mother's brother of the girl. During final selection, the bride

fastens a turban with a long piece of white cloth on the groom's head. This process is known as giving of *kur* after which it is not possible to deny from marriage. After giving *kur*, if any of the bride or the groom is not willing to marry each other then they have give proper reason along with some fine in front of traditional panchayet. In any context, it is not possible for the groom to return the cloth through which *kur* has been given. The residence in which the newly married couple will stay is also decided during this period. If any family has only one child then the family members want to keep their child and his or her spouse with them but if both of the bride and groom have multiple brothers and sisters then they can choose any of the houses according to their choice. At the present day context, they can also opt for the neolocal residence.

To the Animist Rabhas, the worship of Goddess *Rountuk* is mandatory during the time of marriage in the family. On the day just before marriage, the bride's mother worships Goddess *Rountuk* for the good physical and psychological condition of the future couple. They believe that *Rountuk* will also protect the new couple from various malevolent spirits. In the groom's house, *deoshi* worships Goddess *Rountuk* before the boy's party starts for bride's house for marriage. After the worship, the boy collects blessings from the parents, village headman (*pare*), *deoshi*, relatives and other elderly persons of the village. Just after the completion of *Rountuk* they must have to perform *Gungur* worship on the same day. It has to be performed with *sal-dhup* (dried latex of *Shorea robusta*) and sunned rice in both of the bride's and groom's house.

In the marriage day, the bride takes bath very early in the morning and wears traditional dress *lufung* and *kambang* along with the traditional ornaments like *nambri*, *lukumpa*, *tokom*, etc. The water should be collected from the nearby river. Use of turmeric is not observed during this time.

The marriage is positively takes place in the bride's house. Some of the aged family members from the bride's end have to go to the groom's house along with the puffed rice, *chokot*, banana, new cloths, *goichotob* (4 betel leaves and 4 betel nuts), etc. and welcome the groom for marriage. Only after that, the groom's party will leave for marriage from their house. The bride's family warmly receives the groom as soon as he reaches outskirts of the girl's house in a bullock cart along with his father, other male

relatives from father's and mother's side, *deoshi*, *huji*, *pare* and other co-villagers. As soon as the bride and the groom take their sit at one side of the courtyard *deoshi* starts worshipping of various deities and spirits connected with the forest living Animist Rabha society in order to appease them. The *deoshi* then places the left hand of the girl on the right hand of the boy and says '*tingi bini-jora saion*' means 'from today both of you became husband and wife and can stay together as a couple'. The *deoshi* then prays for their happy and prosperous future life. The bride and the groom then pay the highest reverence to the traditional deities and confer their respect to *deoshi* and other elderly persons assembled there. The marriage process ends with the exchange of *pan-gua* (betel leaf and betel nut) between bride and groom. After marriage all the persons including the guests and the newly married couple are served with *chokot* followed by a grand feast which includes rice, pork, chicken and other vegetables. Use of vermilion and conch shell is observed during the marriage which might be adopted later on from the nearby Hindu Bengalee or the Rajbanshi population through the process of acculturation.

One of the important marriage ritual *botomai* can be observed in the Rabha society if after marriage, the groom is decided to settle in his in-law's family. In *botomai* the bride's parent promises to the groom's parents that each year they will provide gifts to the groom's family against the service of their son which he provides in the bride's house. *Kambang lufung hutei* is just opposite to *botomai* and it happens only if the bride is settled in the parental house of the groom (patrilocal residence). The Rabhas give *botomai* and *Kambang lufung hutei* by keeping the gifts on *narchak* leaves.

Usually, at the very next day of marriage the groom's party returns along with the newly married couple. After marriage when the groom returns to his parental house along with his wife, *deoshi* worship Goddess *Rountuk* and *Basek* by sacrificing a fowl and after that the groom's family arranges a grand feast for the bride's party and other villagers.

In the present day context, due to the rapid economic diversity, a fraction can be observed in the Animist forest Rabha society. This economic diversity does not support the concept of collective conscience as proposed by Durkheim (1893). The effect of the economic variation can be observed in the arrangement of marriage rituals where the Rabhas have divided it into three kinds according to the economic condition of the

families. The first one is *chhto biya* which only includes the worship of deities and exchange of garlands. Sometimes even the garlands are made with paper to reduce the cost of the marriage. The second one is *mejho biya* which includes worship of deities, exchange of *pan-gua* (betel leaf and betel nut) and sacrifice of fowls. The third one, i.e., the *boro biya* includes the worship of various deities, sacrifice of goat, pig, fowl, etc. and a grand feast for the villagers and relatives.

In a village or plain land Rabha society, the marriage rituals can be understood as a mixed form of Animism and Hinduism. Among the 'village Rabhas' the marriage is mainly done by negotiation. The parents, relatives or the traditional matchmaker (*bhatakh*) search for the suitable boy and girl between whom they can fix the marriage. Like the forest dwelling Animist Rabhas, the village Rabhas also prefer the efficiency and activeness in the agricultural field (for males) and household works (for females) while selecting a mate for their child. Generally, the girl's party (generally, father or mother's brother along with the other villagers and relatives) first come to boy's house for formal negotiation and if the girl's party likes the boy then they invite them to visit their house. If both the parties are interested then they fix a day for *dara-gua*.

According to the field observation and the previous researches of Raha and Das (1967), *dara-gua* can be explained as the blessing ceremony arranged for final negotiation. During *dara-gua*, the girl's party comes to the boy's house and blesses him with some paddy, *durba* grass and kajal in accordance with the flamed earthen lamp. The other persons assembled there can also bless them. The father or the mother's brother of the girl blesses him with some new clothes and some money. Similar kind of ceremony can also be observed after few days when the boy's father goes to the girl's house and blesses her with 'exactly double of the amount' as given by the girl's father during his visit to bless the boy (Raha and Das, 1967). After *dara-gua* ceremony, the final date of marriage is fixed by the *adhikari* (Rajbanshi priest).

In the morning of the day before marriage, the housewives of the two Rabha families perform *Balaram puja* as performed by the local Rajbanshi population living adjacent to the village Chattrampur and Bansraja. This cultural trait seems to be absorbed by the village Rabhas through the process of acculturation (Graves, 1967) because Balaram

puja is a common cultural practice performed by the Rajbangshi population inhabiting in the area selected for the present study (Sarkar, 2015). Worship of *Rountuk* (known as *Thansiri* to the ‘village Rabhas’) is only performed by those have *Thansiri* or *Rountuk* in their houses. The *Balaram puja* is performed by the senior male members of the family in the basil-altar (*tulshi-mancha*) situated in their courtyard. This worship has to be done with a prayer for the well-being of the future couple.

Before commencement of the *Balaram puja*, the *neoya-kamani* ceremony is performed only in the groom’s house. During *neoya-kamani* the shaving of the beard and moustache of the groom along with his family members is done by the barber (*napit*).

After the worshipping of *Thansiri* and *Balaram*, the *adhikari* starts the *adhibas* rites and worships five different Gods known as *Panch-Devta* (*Shiva*, *Ganesh*, *Dinesha*, *Bhrama* and *Narayana*). The worship has to be done by both of the parties by offering several items. At the time of *adhibas* three *bairatees* (married girls) massage the head of the groom with oil and give him a small looking glass, comb and a necklace of shell beads. The groom keeps all these articles with him till the end of the marriage ceremony.

Just after *adhibas*, the *adhikari* or the priest starts to perform the worship of *Basat-Devta* which is also known as *Hara-Gauri puja*. It is performed at the junction where the northernmost wall of the main room meets the floor. The priest keeps five small cowries (*Monetaria moneta*) which represent five different deities of the house (*Basat-Devta*) including *Hara-Gauri* (Lord *Shiva* and his consort, *Durga*) to whom they make different types of offerings.

In the morning of the marriage day, at first the water from the nearby river or stream is brought for the ceremonial bath of the bride and the bridegroom in their respective houses by the *bairatis* (married women) after touching the water with an iron scythe in order to ward off the evil spirits. At the same time they keep two earthen lamps in the river. If these two lamps are drifted away by the flowing water while touching each other, it is regarded as very auspicious and it is thought that the marriage will bring full of happiness in the future life of the couple. The water collected from the river or the stream is known as *sarak-jal* with which the bride and groom take bath by smearing

turmeric in their body. The turmeric smearing ceremony or the *gaye halud* takes place in both the bride's and bride groom's house independently. After that *adhikari* performs the worship of sixteen different Goddesses (*Gauri, Padma, Sanchi, Medha, Sabitri, Bijeya, Jeya, Devsena, Swaha, Swadha, Santi, Pusti, Dhriti, Jara, Atma Devta* and *Kul Devta*) in both of the bride's and bride groom's house (Raha and Das, 1967). The worship is known as *Solo-Matrika Puja* which may be adopted from the adjoining Rajbanshi population. The worship includes an offering of various articles for the well-being and prosperous living of the future couple.

The marriage rituals generally take place in the bride's house after the sunset. Groom along with his family members, relatives and friends come to the bride's house along with some articles such as new clothes (for the bride's family members and relatives), some cosmetics, *chokot, pan-gua* (betel leaf and betel nut), etc. As the groom's party reaches the bride's house, the *bairatis* from the girl's side welcome the groom and his party and take them in a clean and pre-decorated room.

Marriage starts in a *maroa* (marital booth or *mandap*) which is created on the courtyard of the girl's house. As both the bride's and the groom's party give their consent for marriage, the priest (mostly *adhikari*) starts the *hukur-bhanga* (breaking of earthen plate) ceremony when the groom and the bride's father sit near the basil altar (*tulshi-mancha*) and utter mantras along with the offering of articles to the deities (*Balaram* and *Narayana*) as per the instructions are given by the priest. After that, the priest performs the *Yajneswar puja* inside the *maroa* and at the end of the worship, the bride's father offer dowry (if any) to the groom or the groom's father offer bride price (if any) to the father of the girl. The offering of dowry or bride price in the *maroa* is known as *gao-dhan* in the 'village Rabha' society. The main events of the marriage like *gotra-daan, kanya-daan, angti-bodol, mala-bodol, sidur-daan, ayena dekha, saanti-daan, weading feast, boubhat, athar-bhanga* or the *asta-mangal* are performed by the village Rabhas according to the Hindu marriage rule. The rituals which are performed during this period are adopted from the Hindu caste population (Rajbanshi) living in the adjoining area of the 'village Rabha' society. The same kind of marriage rituals has been reported by Raha (1989), Sanyal (1965) and Sunder (1895).

The forest dwelling Christian Rabhas strictly follow the rule of clan exogamy though sometimes in a very few cases, inter-tribal marriage with the adjoining tribal communities can be observed. During negotiation between two Christian Rabha families, at first, the groom comes to the bride's house to see her. If he likes the bride, then family members of the groom is decided to come to the bride's house in order to negotiate with her family members. If both of the parties become satisfied and decided to execute the marriage then they go for the occasion of *cha-muri* on a selected day in the bride's house. On this occasion, the bride's party offers tea (*cha*) and puffed rice (*muri*) to the groom and his family members in presence of the village headman (*palak*). The bride's family also offer tea and puffed rice to all the villagers during this occasion. After *cha-muri* if any of the bride or groom refuses to marry other then they has to pay Rs. 5000/- to 6000/- as fine.

After the occasion of *cha-muri*, next on a particular day, *palak*, pastor of the Church, bride's parents and groom's parents sit together and select a specific date for marriage. No specific ritual of fasting is observed among the Christian Rabhas. Usually, the bride after woke up from the bed takes her breakfast. Exchange of goods like bride price (*kambang lufung hutei*) and groom price (*botomai*) can also be observed among them.

Among the Christian Rabhas the marriage ceremony is generally held inside the Church where the pastor, *palak* (village headman), bride's and groom's party sit together and pray for their healthy and prosperous future. After exchanging of garland, pastor instructed one of the relative or friend of the bride to tie her *kambang* with the *kambang* of groom. This process is known as *misti-sani*. After social marriage, the Christian Rabhas register their marriage with the help of Church personnel.

The Rabhas are matrilineal and after birth a child ascribes his or her mother's *husuk* (clan). If a Rabha girl marries a non Rabha boy then she has to opt any of the two different choices, i.e., she can live with her husband in a patrilocal family where their child will ascribe the father's clan or the boy will permanently live with her in her house which is obviously matrilocal. In the latter case, their child will ascribe the clan of his or her mother. If marriage happens between a Rabha boy and a non-Rabha girl, then the girl has to lend a *husuk* (clan) from any childless old Rabha lady. The same type of

situation is found if marriage occurs between the same clan members. If it happens then the boy has to lend a Rabha clan from any Rabha lady who is childless and willing to offer her clan in a hope for the continuation of her lineage.

4.7.3. Funeral Rites

The Rabhas believe that after death a person generally goes to heaven and in order to appease the deceased person's soul they have to perform some scrupulous funeral activities. Both for the 'forest' and 'village' dwelling Rabhas cremation is customary except for the infants whose permanent teeth have not yet grown and for the person died in an animal bite or in any contagious or epidemic diseases like smallpox, cholera, etc. In all the later cases burial in the dense forest is the rule. According to Sunder (1895), if anybody died in leprosy or sores or if he is poor and has no friends or relatives, he is also buried.

In any forest dwelling Animist Rabha village, the cremation ground is generally situated at the northern side of the village. For burial, they prefer any place inside the forest vicinity but in the rainy season the Rabhas are generally preferred to bury the dead bodies in their courtyard or household territory. Generally, the process of disposal of the dead body is done in the daytime. If anybody died at night or evening, his or her dead body needs to keep till next morning.

After the death of a man or a woman, the dead body is generally put on a mat or a bamboo frame by placing it from north (head) to south (leg) direction in their courtyard. The process is known as *pir-fatang*. The relatives and the neighbours belong to the deceased person's *husuk* (clan) generally assembled around the dead body and offer him/her *chokot* (traditional liquor), *chika* (water) and other food items. After that, the dead body is shifted on a *moir-sang grang* (a cot made with bamboo specifically used for funeral rites) in order to take it out in their courtyard. Then the family members and the other relatives scatter the reeds of their thatched hut on the deceased person and begin to sing and dance by taking traditional bow and arrow in their hands. According to the Rabhas this special type of dance form is known as *moir-bar-tangi* or *moir-gurungi*. The entire death procession is comprised of the family members, friends, neighbours and

relatives. Women can also be a part of the death canopy. *Huji* selects four to five healthy boys who carry the *moir-sang grang* along with the dead body to the *moir-gandi* (cremation ground). *Huji* continuously sprinkles sanctified water on them so that no spirit can harm them. Before proceeding to *moir-gandi* (cremation ground), the bier-carriers move around the courtyard with the deceased person by lying him on the *moir-sang grang*. In case of a death of a male, they move around the courtyard for nine times and in case of a female, for seven times.

While preparing for disposal the belongings of the deceased person such as clothes, beddings, etc. are needed to be kept near the head of the dead body. From the funeral procession, only two members known as *balai* are selected for placing and kindling the corpse on the pyre. Generally, the pyre is prepared with the forest fire woods and after completion of the making of pyre, the two *balais* by carrying the deceased body move around the pyre twice in anti-clockwise route and place the corpse on the top of the pyre by keeping the head in the northern direction and the face upwards. Before set fire to the pyre, one small fowl is hanged with it with an idea that one should not leave the world alone. Among the forest living Animist Rabhas, it is mandatory to play their traditional musical instrument *kaal-boingshi* throughout the entire cremation process.

The matrilineal relatives such as sister, mother, mother's sister, etc. belong to the same *husuk* (clan) with the deceased offer various foods and articles on the northern side of the pyre. They also proffer *chokot* (traditional liquor) and *chika* (water) to the corpse by uttering some mystical hymn. After completion of the burning process, the charred bones and the charcoals are collected in an earthen pot or in a bamboo container which is then kept hanging in a nearby tree with an idea that the soul (*chailpak*) of the deceased will reside there permanently.

After cremation, the funeral party returns to their home and masticate rice and *kalai* (a type of pulse). After returning home the family members sprinkle sanctified water (prepared by submerging basil leaf, *durba* grass and silver in water) on them in order to purify them. After that, all the attending persons take bath in the nearby river or stream. On the fourth day of cremation, a programme of singing and dancing has to be organised in the deceased person's house. This is known as *chaiba-serengi*.

For burial, at first, the forest living Animist Rabhas search a suitable place where they can able to dig a pit from north to west direction. In most of the cases the place is situated inside the nearby forest but during heavy rain, if it is not possible to dig pit inside the forest then they bury the deceased inside their courtyard. After digging the pit the body is laid down within it by placing the head towards northern direction. The daily belongings of the dead are kept in the pit along with some offerings as given during the cremation. The nearest male relatives like son, father, husband, brother, maternal uncle, etc. of the corpse then cover the pit with the soil and pray for him/her.

Though the mourning period (*chhutna*) is lasts for 5, 7 or 9 days from cremation but for burial, no mourning period is observed among the forest dwelling Animist Rabhas. During mourning period, it is required to make sufficient quantity of *chokot* and the person belonging from the same *husuk* (clan) with the deceased generally avoid sex relation with their partners because they think that if any child is born due to the sexual intercourse which has been done during the mourning period then she or he will be easily affected by the evil spirits and will be suffered from various ailments.

On the next morning of the mourning period is over, the sons and the daughters of the deceased along with other family members go to the nearby stream or river and take a purificatory bath. The *deoshi* or the *huji* then plants a long bamboo pole in front of the house. The long bamboo poles are known as *zerfonk* in front of which *deoshi* starts invoking Lord *Reshi* with some offerings for the safety and security of the house. The worship of *Rountuk* and *Basek* is also necessary during this time. *Deoshi* then makes some food with rice and vegetables (*maya*) and offers it to *zerfonk*. After that the *maya* is distributed among all those family members who have undergone from the mourning period. All these processes of final purification are known as *shanchinbakeya*.

The *shradh* ceremony or the *mai-lesein* is organised after seven days or after a month or even a year after the death. The ceremony is organised in the same room where the death occurs. During the occasion, it is required to offer rice and chicken to the deceased person by keeping it on a plantain leaf. This is known as *mai-judag*. On this occasion, it is mandatory to sacrifice a pig (*bak*) and after sacrifice the Rabhas keep the tail of the pig (*bak-jumei*) on the *mai-judag* for the departed soul with an idea that the tail will help

the soul to cross the *sungi* river (an auspicious imaginary river according to the Rabha mythology). Then they cut the lung of the sacrificed pig into three pieces and keep these on the three sides of *mai-judag*. After that, the women belong to the same *husuk* (clan) of the deceased one after another (according to age) offer *chokot* (traditional liquor) and *chika* (water) to the departed soul. Among the Rabhas, offering water to the departed soul is known as *chika-barai* which must be performed by the women from the same *husuk* (clan) as the deceased belongs. The spells use during the *chika-barai* ceremony is different for every *husuk* (clan).

After *chika-barai* (water giving ceremony) the eldest woman of the house collects all the offered items in a bamboo made container (*hok*) and throws it in the nearby river or stream. The process is known as *mai-lesein bankyati*. During *mai-lesein bankyati* all the women belong to the same *husuk* come out together from the house and go to the bank of river by dancing with the rhythm of *hem* (traditional leather instrument) and *kaal-boingshi* (traditional blowing instrument). During this time two women by carrying talwar and bow lead the procession and all the others should have to follow them. According to the Rabhas, the process is known as *lam-haungi* which clears all the obstacles and helps the soul to reach heaven safely.

In case of any accidental death, *lam-jaraya* is observed on the second day of the cremation where the wife or the other relatives of the deceased person give rice, *chokot*, water (*chika*), meat, etc. on a plantain leaf at the crossing of the road. They prepare these food items in a standing position and give fire to the hearth with leg instead of hand. *Lam-jaraya* can also be observed among the Rabhas if a woman dies with a child in her womb. If it happens, they first take out the baby from the womb of dead woman and then put both of them under the ground and cremate them together.

While taking decision regarding a dead body will be cremated or buried, the village Rabhas of Chhatrampur and Bansraja follow the same way as the forest living Animist Rabhas follow. In case of cremation, the ritualistic performances are mostly performed by the *Adhikari* (Rajbanshi priest). After death, the maternal kin members of the deceased performs '*jalpinda*' which includes offering of water and some food items along with traditional liquor (*chokot*) in the mouth of the dead by uttering some magical

spells. Now, in the present day context, the rituals can also be performed by the paternal kin members but they should have to belong from the same *husuk* (clan) with the deceased. Sometimes, instead of offering *chokot*, the village Rabhas prefers to give sacred basil water (*tulsi-jal*) to the dead.

Before cremation, the body is kept in a bier and it is then brought to the cremation ground with the help of four bier-carriers one of whom become *deori* who directs the chief mourner regarding the methods to be followed during the funeral rites. Before giving fire to the pyre there are some rites like *chita-ghora* and *mukhe agun* which seem to be Hindu traditional rituals and may be adopted from the nearby bengalee or Rajbanshi population. While performing *chita ghora* the chief mourner takes bath and in wet clothes he takes the smoldering bunch of jute sticks from the hands of *deori*. With the burning jute sticks the chief mourner move around the pyre three times in anti-clockwise direction. *Deori* also moves just behind him with a small earthen pot filled with water. After completion of *chita ghora*, *deori* lights a cotton wick and gives to chief mourner. The chief mourner then touches the mouth of the deceased with that by keeping his eyes in opposite direction. All the assembled persons utter “.....*balo Hari..... Hari bol.....*” during this *mukhe agun* ceremony.

After cremation, the chief mourner collects some bones of the deceased in a bamboo container and keeps it in their basil alter (*tulsi-mancha*) for few days and after that, they throw the bones in the nearby river. The same type of ritual is observed by Sanyal (1965) during his study among the Rajbanshis living in the same geographical habitation.

In case of burial, the ‘village Rabhas’ follow the same way like the forest living Animist Rabhas but the *jalpinda* rite is exclusively performed by them before placing the body inside the grave. *Chita-ghora* and *mukhe agun* rites are also performed in case of burial but instead of touching the pyre with the burning jute sticks, the four corners of the grave are touched thrice by the chief mourner and after that, he touches the mouth of the dead with the same jute stick. After cremation or burial, in order to appease the departed soul, the relatives generally hoist a small white flag or sometimes construct a small thatched or tin made hut in the courtyard of the deceased.

After the funeral rites, the assembled persons take their bath for purification. The chief mourner and the other mourners wear a new *dhoti* which is a traditional bengalee dress used to cover the lower part of a male body.

The mourning period generally lasts up to thirty days and during this time the mourners are not allowed to consume non-vegetarian food items. They are not allowed to wear any other clothes and forbidden to attend religious and social occasions. During pollution period the mourners are neither allowed to take water and food items from any outsiders, nor they can give any food items and water to the outsiders (other than clan members). During this period they can only take some fruits and other uncooked vegetarian food items given by the relatives, friends or the villagers. Preparation of *hobisyi* is done on an earthen pitcher. These pitchers, at any circumstances cannot be used for the second time. After completion of cooking the chief mourner offer some *hobisyi* and *pan-gua* (betel leaf and areca nut) to the departed soul.

Like the forest living Animist Rabhas, on the fourth day of disposal the *tailing chei* ceremony is observed among the village dwelling Rabhas but with a different ritualistic practice. During *tailing chei* three *pindas* (obsequial food made of several articles like sunned/*atap* rice, ripened banana, curd, ghee, honey, sweet, etc.) are offered to the departed soul. In *dasha* (10th day) ceremony the chief mourner offer six *pindas* on the tenth day after cremation or burial. *Dasha* ceremony includes several rites like *Kharu* (barber cuts the beard and moustache of all the relatives, friends and villagers who attended the funeral procession); *Praschitta* (basically a propitiatory rite performed by the chief mourner according to the instructions given by the traditional priest. During *praschitta* the chief mourner utters some hymns and take bath in the nearby river for purification); Worship of *Pancha-Devta* (worshipping of five deities, i.e., *Brahma*, *Shiva*, *Parvati*, *Ganesha*, and *Saraswati* with mantras and offerings); *Chita-Karan* (cremation of the collected bones and collection of *asthis*/ashes); *Pinda-Dan* (throwing of *asthi* in the nearby river or stream along with milk, ghee, curd, honey, urine of cow lotus leaf and mud); *Bhairab puja* (worship of deity *Bhairab* only by the economically well off village Rabha families); *Dahan* (the chief mourner boils a small living fish and some rice in an earthen pot known as *dahan-hanri*); *Bhela-Bhasan* (the chief mourner

afloat a *bhela* made with five banana stem in the nearby stream/river and someone breaks the *dahan-hanri* on top of it) and purification (the chief mourner dig a pit near the basil altar and buries the bamboo container in which the *asthi* was kept. After that the chief mourner along with the other assembled persons takes bath in the nearby stream or river).

On the 29th day of the mourning period, the 'village Rabhas' performs final purification (*kheru*) ceremony which is mostly alike with the *kaman* as performed by the nearby Rajbanshis. During final purification, shaving of the hair, beard and moustache of the male mourners is done by the barber. After *kheru* all the male and the female mourners cut their nails and change their clothes after taking bath. The old cloths wore during the mourning period is no longer being used by them afterward. The final purification is done by touching a cow or cow dung, iron, mirror, wooden comb and fire along with some incantation generally utters by the priest or *adhikari*. The entire ceremony ends with an obsequial feast which includes chapped rice (*chira*), salt, curd and molasses. Sometimes it is observed that the obsequial feast is arranged in a large manner and all the villagers, relatives and friends are invited to take their lunch with vegetarian food items. In this regard one mentionable point is that the Rajbanshis living in the same habitation perform similar type of funeral rites as performed by the village dwelling Rabhas.

After the death of a person, the forest dwelling Christian Rabhas inhume the body and ring the bell of the Church. If anyone died at night, the villagers gathered in that house and wait till morning. At the next morning, somebody informed all the villagers about the death. As a very first step, they made a coffin generally of wood or bamboos and keep the body within the coffin by covering the body with a white cloth. After the death of a person, the villagers belong to the same religious group cannot take food till the body is inhumed. In order to inhume the body, they dig up a grave in a specific place like beetle-nut garden, kitchen garden or sometimes in the forest. Pastor of the Church, *palak* and other villagers assembled there and pray for the deceased person and inhume the body. At first head of the family put soil over the coffin of the dead body and then other villagers being preceded. After completion of the said process,

they return home and arrange a small occasion of *chai-muri* for the assembled persons. In order to purify the villagers, the Pastor sprinkles some holy water on them but it has been observed that the Christian Rabhas perform the same rituals like the Animist Rabhas as per as the mourning and purification is concerned.

4.8. Accessibility of Forest and Usages of Traditional Medicines

From the very early days, the Rabhas have a close connection with the forest. The Rabha settlements in most of the cases are seen to be developed in a close vicinity of the forest area and share a conspicuous relation with the forest in terms of health seeking behaviour. Not only the Rabhas, most of the tribal population living in the remote forest areas are getting more balanced food than those living in the remote but non-forest areas. From table: 4.3 It can be seen that the Rabha families from all the selected villages living in the core and outskirts of the forest areas mostly depend on the forest produces and collect their firewood, nutritious food items like roots, tubers, leaves, honey, etc from the forest. Moreover, the forest is the natural source of medicine. It has observed that certain diseases may be common in certain areas but they are controlled because of certain food habits based on the local vegetation.

As per as the present study is concerned, four among the six studied villages are completely depended on the forest for their daily livelihood. They are mainly depended on forest resources in order to collect the cattle food, firewood, nutritious food items like roots, tubers, leaves of some wild plants which also have some medicinal importance. According to table 4.3, 77.92 percent of the total considered families regularly access forest resources and 04.55 percent families occasionally access forest resources for their daily livelihood. The study also discloses that the families living in the core and the outskirts of the forest areas mainly access the forest resources whereas no families have been found to access the minor forest produces from the village Chhatrampur and Bansraja which are situated close to the urban area without having any forest land.

Table 4.3 also highlights that 96.00 percent family from Andu Basti (core forest village of category – 1) and 97.01 percent family from Rabhaline (core forest village of category – 2) regularly visit forest for collecting some minor forest produces but the

percentage is 09.31 and 94.74 in case of South Mendabari Forest Rabha village (category – 1 village, situated outskirts of the forest) and Dhumchi Rabha village (category – 2 village, situated outskirts of the forest) respectively.

It can be noted that the forest Rabha families who occasionally visit forest mostly belong to the higher economic status or the family members are not able to go to the forest due to their old age and ill physical condition. Various studies unfold that regular consumption of nutritious food items like roots, tubers, fruits, rhizomes of different wild plants can help to maintain a good physical condition in the tribal areas (Chaudhuri, 2003; Tarafdar and Roy, 2009).

The Rabha villages considered for the present study mostly belong to different beats of Jaldapara National Park and Buxa Tiger Reserve. Both of the forests are rich with herbal medicinal plants and nutritious food plants like *Jumsok*, *Anjelpar*, *Cheopan*, *Lengharekchak*, *Lenchekam*, *Gangengchak*, *Haan*, etc. After interviewing the local traditional healers (*huji*) and forest officials, a chart (Chart: 4.3) of the medicinally important plants and nutritious food plants available in the local forests has been made in accordance with their scientific names and usages.

Chart: 4.3. List of Locally Available Medicinally Important Plants and Nutritious Food Plants

Sl. No.	Local Name of the Plant	Scientific Name	Parts Used	Medicinal Use
1.	<i>Basoti</i>	<i>Adhatoda zeylanica</i>	Leaf	Use to cure excess release of bile and tumour in placenta Cures cough and cold Useful in eye infection
2.	<i>Bel</i>	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	Leaf and fruit	Cures Chicken Pox Fruit juice cures excess release of bile and tumour in placenta
3.	<i>Raisung</i>	<i>Allium cepa</i>	Leaf	Leaf is warmed with mustard oil

				and applied on the forehead to relieve headache and cough in children
4.	<i>Raisung bakai</i>	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Leaf	Leaves are warmed in mustard oil and massaged over the body and throat for cough in children
5.	<i>Saalkueri</i>	<i>Aloe barbadensis</i>	Whole plant	Used in fever and skin burn
6.	<i>Matikanduri</i>	<i>Altemanthera sessilis</i>	Shoot	Leaf Paste is applied on wound
7.	<i>Matikhutura</i>	<i>Amaranthus spinosus</i>	Shoot	Leaf Root useful in Diarrhea
8.	<i>Anaras</i>	<i>Ananas comous</i>	Young Bracts	Cures Diarrhoea and Abdominal pain caused by intestinal parasites
9.	<i>Chirite</i>	<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>	Entire Plant	Use to cure fever and excess release of bile and tumour in placenta
10.	<i>Daokoia</i>	<i>Areca catechu</i>	Root extract	Use to cure Leucorrhoea
11.	<i>Pochun</i>	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i>	Gall on leaves	Cures Chicken Pox
12.	<i>Satmul</i>	<i>Asparagus recemous</i>	Shoots and root	Shoots and root useful in fever
13.	<i>Neem</i>	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Leaf and Shoot	Affected parts are massaged with neem oil in rheumatic pain and taken orally for worms Effective in fever, cough and cold especially caused by intestinal parasites Also use in infectious eyes and burned skin surface
14.	<i>Puroi sak</i>	<i>Basella alba</i>	Leaf,	Leaves stem and fruits useful in

			Stem	anaemia
15.	<i>Baah</i>	<i>Bambusa assamica</i>	Bud	Bud mixed with <i>colochasia</i> helpful against painful menstruation of women
16.	<i>Panchu</i>	<i>Bombax ceiba</i>	Prickles	Cure Chicken Pox
17.	<i>Thinsengi</i>	<i>Borreria latifolia</i>	Shoot	Leaf juice mixed with seed powder of <i>Piper nigrum</i> and salt used in treatment of tonsillitis.
18.	<i>Basor</i>	<i>Brassica Juncea</i>	Seed extract	Cures Chicken Pox and muscular pain
19.	<i>Bhang</i>	<i>Cannabis sativa</i>	Leaf	Leaf useful in fungal infection of skin
20.	<i>Akon</i>	<i>Calotropis gigantean</i>	Latex, leaf and flower	Latex eaten in cat bites and applies in teeth in toothache. Leaves given for Mumps and also to improve memory Flower extract cures excess release of bile and tumour in placenta
21.	<i>Bhoot jolokia</i>	<i>Capsicum chinense</i>	Seed	antidote for snakebite
22.	<i>Mothopho</i>	<i>Carica papaya</i>	Leaf	Decoction of leaves is taken in case of muscle pain and jaundice
23.	<i>Thankuni / Khudamanapani / Manimuni</i>	<i>Centella asiatica</i>	Leaf	Leaves are boiled and taken to improved poor memory as well as stomach problem
24.	<i>Kaghzi lebu</i>	<i>Citrus aurantifolia</i>	Fruit	Lime juice is applied for sprains of legs and hands
25.	<i>Jamri</i>	<i>Citrus medica</i>	Leaves	Abdominal pain due to intestinal parasites
26.	<i>Mukshi</i>	<i>Clerodendrum viscosum</i>	Young leaves	Cure abdominal pain and fever caused due to intestinal parasites
27.	<i>Narikel</i>	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Fruit	Tender coconut water and milk

				extract are taken for stomach ulcer
28.	<i>Pata</i>	<i>Corchorus capsularis</i>	Dry leaves	Used in Fever
29.	<i>Maicharan / Dhania</i>	<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>	Seed	Seeds are given to cure indigestion, abdominal pain and diarrhea
30.	<i>Barun</i>	<i>Crateva magna</i>	Leaf	Leaf useful in dysentery
31.	<i>Halud</i>	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Rhizome	Paste of ginger and turmeric is warmed and applied on sprains; fresh rhizome of turmeric is given for anemia
32.	<i>Aloklata</i>	<i>Cuscuta reflexa</i>	Entire Plant	Use in Irregular Menstruation, Leucorrhoea and Jaundice
33.	<i>Durba</i>	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Entire plant	Use to cure deep injury
34.	<i>Dhatura</i>	<i>Datura stramonium</i>	Fruit	Paste of fruits is applied locally in canine bites.
35.	<i>Gajor</i>	<i>Daucus carota</i>	Root	Root is taken raw; it is said to increase eyesight.
36.	<i>Kath Alu</i>	<i>Dioscorea alata</i>	Tuber	Tubers useful in anaemia
37.	<i>Kehrosi</i>	<i>Eclipta alba</i>	Leaf	leaf juice is taken in jaundice and extract is useful in cut and wound
38.	<i>Kosal</i>	<i>Elaeocarpus sphaericus</i>	Fruit	Use to cure eye infection and indigestion
39.	<i>Katamasala</i>	<i>Eryngium foetidum</i>	Leaf	Useful in cold and fever
40.	<i>Dimoru</i>	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>	Fruit	Decoction of bark is used in fever
41.	<i>Thekra</i>	<i>Garcinia pedunculata</i>	Fruit	Dried slices of fruits are soaked in water and the given in blood dysentery
42.	<i>Mosandri</i>	<i>Houttuylia cordata</i>	Leaf	Leaf juice is useful in gastroenteritis

43.	<i>Jobaphool</i>	<i>Hibiscus rosa-sinensis</i>	Flower	Boiled juice of flowers is mixed with honey and taken for heart problem Flower extract helps to cure Leucorrhoea
44.	<i>Mesta tenga</i>	<i>Hibiscus subdarifa</i>	Leaf and flower	Leaves and flower juice are used as in gastroenteritis and Dysentery.
45.	<i>Madhoilata</i>	<i>Hiptage benghalensis</i>	Leaf and flower	Leaf and flowers is used in ear pain
46.	<i>Kedar</i>	<i>Jatropha curcas</i>	Latex	Blood dysentery
47.	<i>Jatrshi</i>	<i>Justicia gendarussa</i>	Leaf	Fresh leaf applied in fever, stomach pain and irregular menstruation
48.	<i>Pategoja</i>	<i>Kalanchoe pinnata</i>	Leaf	Decoction of leaves is used in cough and gastroenteritis.
49.	<i>Jiga</i>	<i>Lannea coromandelica</i>	Bark	Use to regularize menstruation
50.	<i>Jetuka</i>	<i>Lawsonia inermis</i>	Leaf	Leaf paste useful in fever, high blood pressure and effective in fungal infection of skin
51.	<i>Kansisa</i>	<i>Leucas indica</i>	Leaf	Abdominal pain due to intestinal parasites
52.	<i>Bunfuk</i>	<i>Leucas plukenetii</i>	Leaf	Leaf useful in dysentery
53.	<i>Vuin tita</i>	<i>Lindernia parviflora</i>	Leaf	Effective in fever and blood dysentery
54.	<i>Bochot / Aam</i>	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Gall on leaves	Cures Chicken Pox and diarrhoea
55.	<i>Lingiri Phool</i>	<i>Melastoma malabathricum</i>	Fruit	Fruits are useful in leucorrhoea
56.	<i>Poduma</i>	<i>Mentha arvensis</i>	Shoot and leaf	Juice is taken against stomach problems, jaundice and fever

57.	<i>Nahar</i>	<i>Mesua ferrea</i>	Flower	Paste of flowers applied on cuts to stop bleeding; also used in piles
58.	<i>Kalkut lota</i>	<i>Mikania micrantha</i>	Leaf	Leaf paste of this plant mixed with <i>Ocimum sanctum</i> to cure various skin infection
59.	<i>Sammojrot / Lajukia lata</i>	<i>Mimosa pudica</i>	Leaf and Prickles	Leaf paste effective in fever Prickles can cure Chicken Pox
60.	<i>Sajna</i>	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	Leaf and Fruit	Juice of leaves are applied frequently to remove black head pimples
61.	<i>Girmi</i>	<i>Morus alba</i>	Young Leaves	Use to cure Jaundice
62.	<i>Narasingha</i>	<i>Murraya koenigii</i>	Leaf	Leaf juice used as tonic, curing many stomach problems
63.	<i>Lai</i>	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i>	Fruitskin	Use in Blood dysentery and female infertility
64.	<i>Kalajira</i>	<i>Nigella sativa</i>	Seed	To cure piles, headache and inflammations
65.	<i>Sewali</i>	<i>Nyctanthus arbour-tristis</i>	Leaf and Seed	Leaves are used in malaria
66.	<i>Amsingiri</i>	<i>Oxalis corniculata</i>	Leaf	It is used in gastroenteritis and piles
67.	<i>Ban tulosi / Kala tulosi</i>	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	Leaf and Inflorescence	Leaves are used in cough and chronic fungal infection. Effective to cure malaria
68.	<i>Tulosi</i>	<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>	Leaf and Inflorescence	Leaves are used in cough and chronic fungal infection caused by intestinal parasites. Effective in Chicken Pox
69.	<i>Paduni lewa</i>	<i>Paederia scandens</i>	Leaf	Extract of leaves given orally to patients for chronic dysentery

70.	<i>Ponomuwa</i>	<i>Peperomia pellucida</i>	Leaf and Stem	The leaves and stem are used in fever
71.	<i>Tita phool</i>	<i>Phlobacanthus thyriformis</i>	Flower	Extract of flower is useful in asthma and small pox
72.	<i>Khejur</i>	<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	Fruit	Fruits take in indigestion and cough
73.	<i>Paramtai</i>	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i>	Fruit	Use to cure eye infection
74.	<i>Bon amlokhi</i>	<i>Phyllanthus nirruri</i>	Leaf and See	Leaf and root juice is effective in jaundice and dysentery
75.	<i>Paan</i>	<i>Piper betel</i>	Leaf	Castor oil is smeared on leaves, warmed and applied on affected areas for arthritis, cold, cough and headache
76.	<i>Pipolo</i>	<i>Piper longum</i>	Fruit and Root	The fruits and the roots juice useful in many stomach problems
77.	<i>Debdaru</i>	<i>Polyalthia longifolia</i>	Bark	Bark given during menstrual disorders
78.	<i>Noltenga</i>	<i>Polygonum bractiate</i>	Leaf	Decoction of leaf is given in Dysentery
79.	<i>Madhu soleng</i>	<i>Polygonum chinense</i>	Leaf	Leaf juice useful in Dysentery and effective in stomach problem
80.	<i>Supur</i>	<i>Psidium guajava</i>	Young Leaves	Use to Cure diarrhea
81.	<i>Bihlengi</i>	<i>Pteridum aquilinum</i>	Leaf	Fresh leaves are used externally in body pain
82.	<i>Hoshi</i>	<i>Saccharum spontaneum</i>	Leaf and Panicles	Relief from muscular pain and cures Chicken Pox
83.	<i>Mitai</i>	<i>Scoparia dulcis</i>	Leaves	Useful in white dysentery
84.	<i>Saulo</i>	<i>Shorea robusta</i>	Dry Resin	Use in burned skin
85.	<i>Tupurilota</i>	<i>Stephania</i>	Leaf	Leaves effective in diabetes

hernandifolia

86.	<i>Chandan</i>	<i>Santalum album</i>	Wood	cures excess release of bile and tumour in placenta
87.	<i>Niltor</i>	<i>Stephania japonica</i>	Leaf and Root stock	Leaf cures fever Root stock relieves from headache
88.	<i>Paroli</i>	<i>Stereospermum chelonoides</i>	Leaf	Used in tuberculosis
89.	<i>Chirta tita</i>	<i>Swertia chirayita</i>		Juice of leaves or infusion of the dried part given in fever, indigestion, skin disease
90.	<i>Laung</i>	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i>	Seed	Powder of fried seeds taken with water for nausea, cholera, gas problems
91.	<i>Jam</i>	<i>Syzygium cuminii</i>	Fruit	Powder of dried fruit pulp with sugar is given in blood dysentery and diarrhoea
92.	<i>Tetele</i>	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	Fruit	Use to cure Fever
93.	<i>Arjun</i>	<i>Terminalia arjuna</i>	Bark	Decoction of bark mixed with milk and water is effective in heart problem
94.	<i>Bohere</i>	<i>Terminalia bellirica</i>	Fruit	Use in infectious eye disease
95.	<i>Potal</i>	<i>Trichosanthes dioica</i>	Leaf	Leaf extract cures eye infection
96.	<i>Methi</i>	<i>Trigonella foenum-graecum</i>	Fruit	Taken during indigestion
97.	<i>Postia</i>	<i>Vitex negundo</i>	Leaf	A drink prepared by mixture of the plant juice and water effective in body pain, headache and earache
98.	<i>Chinku</i>	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Dried Rhizomes	Cures indigestion
99.	<i>Singtai</i>	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i>	Spines	Cure Chicken Pox

Chapter Summary

The Chapter highlights on the various traditional healing mechanisms opted by the population under the study. The traditional knowledge of healing through plants and animal parts as well as worshipping of various deities and spirits (including magico religious performances) are discussed in the chapter. The chapter also focuses on the detailed traditional treatment procedures followed by the Rabhas in order to get rid of their ailments. Further, the life cycle and health related rituals also constitute an important part of the chapter.

Table: 4.1. Methods of Treatment (Only Traditional)

Villages	Name of the Villages	Traditional Healer from the Same Community (<i>Huji / Deoshi</i>)						Traditional Healer from the Other Community		Holy Pray in Church and Magical Treatment by Pastor (For Christian Rabhas Only)		Total
		Herbal Medicine			Worship of Traditional Deities and Magico-Religious Performances			M	F	M	F	
		M	F	M	M	F						
	Andu Basti	08 57.14	06 46.15	05 35.71	06 46.15	01 25.00	01 07.14	01 07.69	-	-	14 100.00	
	South Mendabari Forest Rabha Village (Bong Basti)	-	01 25.00	01 100.00	01 25.00	-	01 25.00	01 25.00	-	01 25.00	01 100.00	
	Chhartampur	01 50.00	01 100.00	-	-	01 50.00	01 50.00	-	-	-	02 100.00	
	Total	09 52.94	08 44.44	06 35.29	07 38.89	02 11.76	02 11.76	02 11.11	-	01 05.56	17 100.00	
	Rabhaline	04 36.36	01 50.00	04 36.36	-	02 18.18	01 50.00	01 50.00	01 09.09	-	11 100.00	
	Dhumchi	03 42.86	03 75.00	-	-	03 42.86	-	-	01 14.29	01 25.00	07 100.00	
	Bansraja	01 50.00	-	-	-	01 50.00	-	-	-	-	02 100.00	
	Total	08 40.00	04 66.67	04 20.00	-	06 30.00	01 16.67	01 16.67	02 10.00	01 16.67	20 100.00	
	Grand Total	17 45.95	12 50.00	10 27.03	07 29.17	08 21.62	03 12.50	02 05.40	02 08.33	37 100.00		

Table: 4.2. Result of Treatment (Only Traditional)

Categories	Name of the Villages	Male				Female			
		Cured	Not Cured	Treatment Ongoing	Total	Cured	Not Cured	Treatment Ongoing	Total
Category - 1	Andu Basti	11 78.57	02 14.29	01 07.14	14 100.00	10 76.92	02 15.38	01 07.69	13 100.00
	South Mendabari Forest Rabha Village (Bong Basti)	01 100.00	-	-	01 100.00	03 75.00	-	01 25.00	04 100.00
	Chhartampur	01 50.00	01 50.00	-	02 100.00	01 100.00	-	-	01 100.00
	Total	13 76.47	03 17.65	01 05.88	17 100.00	14 77.78	02 11.11	02 11.11	18 100.00
Category - 2	Rabhaline	08 72.73	02 18.18	01 09.09	11 100.00	01 50.00	01 50.00	-	02 100.00
	Dhumchi	04 57.14	02 28.57	01 14.29	07 100.00	03 75.00	-	01 25.00	04 100.00
	Bansraja	01 50.00	01 50.00	-	02 100.00	-	-	-	-
	Total	13 65.00	05 25.00	02 10.00	20 100.00	04 66.67	01 16.67	01 16.67	06 100.00
Grand Total		26 70.27	08 21.62	03 08.11	37 100.00	18 75.00	03 12.50	03 12.50	24 100.00

Table: 4.3. Access of Forest

Categories	Name of the Villages	Access of Forest			Total Number of Families
		Yes		No	
		Regular	Occasional		
Category - 1	Andu Basti	72 96.00	03 04.00	-	75 100.00
	South Mendabari Forest Rabha Village (Bong Basti)	48 92.31	04 07.69	-	52 100.00
	Chhartampur	-	-	27 100.00	27 100.00
	Total	120 77.92	07 04.55	27 17.53	154 100.00
Category - 2	Rabhaline	65 97.01	02 02.99	-	67 100.00
	Dhumchi	54 94.74	03 05.26	-	57 100.00
	Bansraja	-	-	37 100.00	37 100.00
	Total	119 73.91	05 03.11	37 22.98	161 100.00
Grand Total		239 75.87	12 03.81	64 20.31	315 100.00