

SOME TRADITIONAL HEALTH CARE PRACTICES OF JAUNDICE IN PARTS OF WESTERN
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ABSTRACT: The very old traditional Indian herbal medicinal heritage flow in two streams –one is codified classical stream and the other one is the non-codified or the oral folk. The codified system is more institutionalized and is basically of four types - Ayurveda, Sidha, Unani and Gsorigpa. It is interesting that the non-codified systems are more popularly known as Local Health Tradition (LHT) though it is informal it exists among various ethnic and traditional communities of India more particularly in North East India of which the study area i. e. Western Assam being a part is found to be rich in such traditional herbal system of health care practices. Western Assam is located at the extreme western part of Assam it extends from 89⁰49'20" E longitude to 91⁰48'16" longitude and 25⁰27' N latitude to 26⁰54' latitude covering lower Brahmaputra valley. For primary data collection the fields were visited frequently meeting the local people specially these people who are well experienced with the knowledge of local health practices through interview during 2012- 2013. During data collection it was found that there are many knowledgeable persons in the field of herbal health care practices who often practice their medicinal systems to cure various types of diseases like piles, fever, stomach disorder, eye problem, bone problem including some minor bodily disorders. But in this paper importance is given to one of the very dangerous more common disease that is Jaundice which is caused by an excess of a waste product bilirubin in blood after the removal of iron from hemoglobin; this excess bilirubin may leak out into surrounding tissues saturating them with this yellow substance. Here 5 main herbal recipes are analyzed and presented in a very lucid scientific way. Thus the herbal preparations presented here practiced by various knowledgeable persons in herbal medicines (known as Ojha, Kobiraj, Bej, Healers etc.) which are often found very active preparations against Jaundice. People from various parts come to these persons and found utilized in curing this very dangerous disease. Traditionally they are practicing their knowledge generation by generation as means of their livelihood besides serving mass people at the time of distress.

Key words: Local health tradition, jaundice, herbal, healers.

INTRODUCTION

North East India is a rich diversified part of Indian subcontinent which is rich by its ethno-cultural diversity also. Various health care practices are very common among different tribes and communities of this region of India. The Indian medicinal heritage is very ancient. The earliest recorded evidence of use of herbal medicine in Indian, Chinese, Greek, Roman texts dates back to about 5000 years. The herbal medicinal tradition is very old which we find in classical Indian texts like- Rigveda, Atharva veda, Charak Samhita and Sushruta Samhita. Globally there is a trend that in the recent years people are getting much interested in the traditional system of medicines. The World Health Organization has listed 20,000 medicinal plants globally (Gupta and Chadha, 1995) and India is having about 15-20% (Singh, 2000). The World Health Organization has estimated that about 80% population in the developing countries depends directly on plants for medicines (Pareek 1996; Mukhopadhyay 1998). This holds good in tribal dominated North Eastern part of India and also in the study area more particularly people often use various herbs, flowers, fruits, leaves etc. as prevention or to cure various diseases or simply they take some recipes as tradition in different seasons which are found to have very strong scientific basis.

This very old traditional Indian medicinal heritage flow in two streams –one is codified classical stream and the other one is the non-codified or the oral folk .The codified system is more institutionalized and is basically of four types - Ayurveda, Sidha, Unani and Gsorigpa.It is interesting that the non- codified systems are more popularly known as Local Health Tradition (LHT). Thus the local health tradition though it is informal it exists among various ethnic and traditional communities of India more particularly in North East India of which the study area being a part is found to be rich in such traditional herbal system of health care practices. In this paper an attempt has been made to document or to analyze different type of practices to cure or to prevent one very frequent, dangerous disease that is Jaundice. This practices are serving very actively to the people of rural – remote areas of Western Assam.

MATERIALS & METHODS

To do a survey on the local health practices of the study area a specially designed questionnaire was used which will include most relevant questions that can give data to fulfill the objectives of the work. Questionnaire is thematic in nature and are meant to fulfill and seek very specific information. The questionnaire is a simple one and is having elicit simple answer. Where it is not possible to collect elaborate type of answers for that separate sheets was used indicating the question numbers. So, for primary data collection the fields were visited frequently meeting the local people specially these people who are well experienced with the knowledge of local health practices through interview during 2012- 2013. Focus group discussions were also arranged where there was a group leader with the purpose of collecting information on a designated topic or disease here it is Jaundice.

Then the people were taken to the nearby areas to collect the plant specimens which they use in their traditional methods of treatment of Jaundice. The specimens were dried and made into herbarium specimens by following the standard herbarium method (Jain and Rao, 1997). Then they will be identified following some literature and will be confirmed by comparing them with the herbarium of BSI (Shillong) and Central National Herbarium (Kolkata).The specimens were submitted to the Botany dept. Herbarium –Goalpara College (Assam).

STUDY AREA

Western Assam is located at the extreme western part of Assam it extends from $89^{\circ}49'20''$ E longitude to $91^{\circ}48'16''$ longitude and $25^{\circ}27'$ N latitude to $26^{\circ}54''$ latitude covering lower Brahmaputra valley. Within this area we have six districts out of which barpeta and Nalbari districts were visited for extensive data collection. Nalbari with a longitudinal extension of $91^{\circ}15'8''$ E to $91^{\circ}30'52''$ E and latitudinal extension of $26^{\circ}12'.N$ to $26^{\circ}45'10''$ N latitude and an area of 2257 sq. km. Barpeta district $90^{\circ}45'11''$ E longitude to $91^{\circ}50' 4''$ longitude and $26^{\circ}25'5''$ N latitude to $26^{\circ}45''$ latitude with an area of 3345sq. km. The total population of Western Assam is 7074218 which is 27 percent of Assam's total population covering an area of 15,619 sq.km. which constitutes about 20 percent of the total area of Assam. It covers six districts- Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Barpeta and Nalbari.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

During data collection it was found that there are many knowledgeable persons in the field of herbal health care practices who often practice their medicinal systems to cure various types of diseases like piles, fever ,stomach disorder, eye problem, bone problem including some minor bodily disorders .But in this paper importance is given to one of the very dangerous more common disease that is Jaundice which is caused by an excess of a waste product bilirubin in blood after the removal of iron from hemoglobin ;this excess bilirubin may leak out into surrounding tissues saturating them with this yellow substance. Use of some herbs, vegetables, fruits in different forms are found very useful in controlling or curing this dangerous disease , more particularly some specific herbs are found having very positive amazing response against Jaundice. In this work some such herbal preparations are mentioned which are which are in use as traditional medicine with very practical result. Here importance was given to enlist some of the preparations from various parts of Barpeta and Nalbari district of Western Assam.

Preparation of the medicine: Nine(9) main roots of *Sida cordifolia* L. have to collect and these are made into paste along with 9 slices of Ginger(*Zingiber officinale* Rosc.) of about 1cm length. After preparing the fine paste of these two plant ingredients , the is mixed with so much of water that the whole ingredients become available to take for thrice daily , each time 3 tablespoonful i. e. total 9 tablespoonful.

Herbal Recipe-I

Table :1 Plants used:

S.No.	Scientific name	family	local name	parts used	proportion
1	<i>Sida cordifolia</i> L.	Malvaceae	Bor Borial	root	9main roots
2	<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Rosc.	Zingiberaceae	Ada	rhizome	9 slices

In this way the healer himself prepare the medicine and supply it to the patients approach him with Jaundice. The medicine is supplied for 3 days continuously. It was observed that in some cases patients with severe disease symptom also approach to him for treatment even from very far distance like Shillong, Tura of Meghalaya. As restriction during the disease the patients are advised not to take items like –curd , some fishes e. g.Fresh water shark,Swamp barb, Hilsa, all big fatty fishes, meat strictly, Ash gourd, Pumpkin, black gram etc.

Table 2: showing details of treatment:

(1) Preparation of the medicine in detail/procedure	
Liquid/Powder/Parte/Tablet or Liquid	
Name of the preparation/formula, if any	
(2) Dosage and Administration	
How much ? (e.g. one teaspoon or one Table spoon, one pinch, etc.)	3 spoon full
How many times per day ?	Thrice
How many days ?	3 days
Specification on does for children above Months upto Years	Same quantity
Specification on does for infants aged above day(s) upto Months	no
Vehicle/Adjuvant used in the administration and its quantity (if any) Eg: honey/warm water/water/milk or	no
Specification in the mode of administration of the medicine to the patient)Internal or External)	internal
Advice on Diet and Regimen	Some fishes, meat
Any other remarks on precautions	no
Is repeated treatment needed ? If yes details	no

Herbal recipe –II

Table 3: Plants used:

S.No	Scientific name	Family	Local name	Parts used	Proportion
1	<i>Plumbago zeylenica</i> L.	Plumbaginaceae	Agiachit	roots	10 gm
2	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz.	Combretaceae	Hilikha	fruits	02 no.
3	<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> L.	Papilionaceae	Jostimodhu	Dried stem	10 gm

This recipe was given by a well experienced healer of Baska district (BTAD.) of Assam. Here the healer uses plants like –*Plumbago zeylenica* L., *Terminalia chebula* Retz, *Glycyrrhiza glabra* L. etc. For preparing this medicine of Jaundice the three plant ingredients are necessary i.e. 10 gm root of *Plumbago zeylenica* L , barks of two fruits of *Terminalia chebula* Retz. and 10 gm of dried stem of *Glycyrrhiza glaba* L.. Here all these ingredients are pounded and made into paste by mortar and pastel after which the paste is mixed with a cup of water and kept in a bottle. Two (2) teaspoonful of this juice are prescribed to the patient thrice daily for three days if not severe. But patient with severe disease symptom is allowed to take the same dose but for 7 days. For children the prescribed dose is ½ teaspoonful thrice daily.

Table 4: Details of Treatment

(1) Preparation of the medicine in detail/procedure.....	
Liquid/Powder/Paste/Tablet or... liquid	
Name of the preparation/formula, if any	
(2) Dosage and Administration.... 2 tea spoon ful	
How much ? (e.g. one teaspoon or one Table spoon, one pinch, etc.)	
How many times per day ?	Thrice
How many days ?	3 days, if severe one week
Specification on does for children above Months upto Years	½ tea spoon ful
Specification on does for infants aged above day(s) upto Months	
Vehicle/Adjuvant used in the administration and its quantity (if any) Eg: honey/warm water/water/milk or	water
Specification in the mode of administration of the medicine to the patient)Internal or External)	internal
Advice on Diet and Regimen	Spicy food
Any other remarks on precautions	Sufficient rest
Is repeated treatment needed ? If yes details	Occasionally

Herbal recipe –III :

Table 5: Plants used:

S.No.	Scientific name	family	local name	parts used	proportion
1	<i>Lawsonia inermis</i> L.	Lythraceae	Jetuka	leaves	100 gm

In this preparation of Jaundice 100 gm fresh leaves of very common henna plant (i.e.*Lawsonia inermis* L.) are crushed juice is extracted. The extracted leaf juice is prescribed to the patient suffering from Jaundice at the rate of 2 tablespoonful thrice daily. In this way the patients are allowed to take the medicine for 2-3 days in case of patients with mild symptom at initial stage but patients with severe symptom are treated for 1 week if necessary more. In case of children the dose is only 1 teaspoonful twice daily. Here no such vehicle like honey, milk etc. are required. The patients are strictly prohibited to take spices, chilies, fish, meat, egg etc. and they are rest as much as possible and to drink sufficient water.

According to the healer this disease is due to consumption of polluted water and the patients show symptom like yellowing of body as well as eyes, feeling weak.

Table 6: Details of Treatment

(1) Preparation of the medicine in detail/procedure	
Liquid/Powder/Paste/Tablet or... Liquid	
Name of the preparation/formula, if any	
(2) Dosage and Administration	
How much ? (e.g. one teaspoon or one Table spoon, one pinch, etc.)	2 table spoon full
How many times per day ?	Thrice/ after food
How many days ?	
Specification on does for children above Months upto Years	1 tea spoon full
Specification on does for infants aged above day(s) upto Months	no
Vehicle/Adjuvant used in the administration and its quantity (if any) Eg: honey/warm water/water/milk or	no
Specification in the mode of administration of the medicine to the patient (Internal or External)	internal
Advice on Diet and Regimen	Spicy food, meat, fish, etc.
Any other remarks on precautions	rest
Is repeated treatment needed ? If yes details	no

Herbal recipe –IV :**Table 7: Plants used:**

S.No.	Scientific name	Family	Local Name	Parts Used	Proportion
1	<i>Cordyline terminalis</i> Kunth.	Agavaceae	Horisankar	bark	50 gm
2	<i>Asparagus racemosus</i> Wild.	Liliaceae	sotomul	root	50 gm

In this preparation of herbal recipe two plants are used and was found very active preparation of Jaundice. Here 50 gm bark of very common leafy ornamental plant i. e. *Cordyline terminalis* Kunth. and 50 gm roots of *Asparagus racemosus* Wild. are crushed and the extract is collected. The liquid extract is allowed to take internally at the rate of 3 tea spoonful thrice daily after food continuously for three days. The amount is decreased on fourth day onwards to 1 teaspoonful twice daily. The patients are allowed to drink hot water just after taking the medicine. The patients are advised not to take spicy food, they are allowed to have boiled food only as far as possible.

There are some other herbal preparations by various knowledgeable persons in herbal medicines which are often found very active preparations against Jaundice. People from various parts come to these persons and found utilized in curing this very dangerous disease. Traditionally they are practicing their knowledge generation by generation as means of their livelihood. Besides these preparations in different parts of the study area some other items are also seen to be used as medicine against Jaundice of which mention may be made of the plants like- *Azadirachta indica* A.Juss.- Meliaceae (neem).

Table 8: Details of Treatment

(1) Preparation of the medicine in detail/procedure	
Liquid/Powder/Paste/Tablet or... liquid	
Name of the preparation/formula, if any	
(2) Dosage and Administration	
How much ? (e.g. one teaspoon or one Table spoon, one pinch, etc.)	2 tea spoon full
How many times per day ?	Thrice after food
How many days ?	3 days
Specification on does for children above Months upto Years	less
Specification on does for infants aged above day(s) upto Months	
Vehicle/Adjuvant used in the administration and its quantity (if any) Eg: honey/warm water/water/milk or	Hot water after taking the medicine
Specification in the mode of administration of the medicine to the patient)Internal or External)	internal
Advice on Diet and Regimen	Boiled food
Any other remarks on precautions	Avoid hard work
Is repeated treatment needed ? If yes details	no

Justicia adhatoda L. (*Adhatoda vesica* Nees.) - Acanthaceae (bahka)

Bacopa monnieri(L.)- Scrophulariaceae (brahmi)-

Costus speciosus (Koenig) Sm. -Costaceae (jomlakhuti)

Euphorbia hirta L. - Euphorbiaceae (gakhiroti bon)

Enhydra flucctuens Lour. -Asteraceae (helochi)

Glycosmis pentaphylla (Retz.) Corr. – Rutaceae (Chouldhua)

Ipomoea aquatica Forssk.- Convolvulaceae (kolmou)

Leucas plukenetii (Roth.) Spreng – Lamiaceae (drun)

Phlogacanthus thyrsoiflorus Nees – Acanthaceae (Titaphul)

Phyllanthus emblica L.–Euphorbiaceae (Amlokhi)

Phyllanthus fraternus Webster – Euphorbiaceae (Bhui amlokhi o Matiamlokhi)

Scoparia dulcis L. – Scrophulariaceae (Gorokhia jaluk)

All these plants are advised to consume in different forms. Some of these are usually consumed as green leafy vegetable like- *Bacopa monnieri*(brahmi),*Enhydra flucctuens* (helochia, *Ipomoea aquatica* (kolmou),*Leucus plukenetii*(drun) etc. Some are used directly as medicinal plants in different preparations like-*Azadirachta indica* (neem) , *Adhatoda vesica* (bahka), *Bacopa monnieri*(brahmi), *Euphorbia hirta* (gakhiroti bon), *Enhydra flucctuens* (helochi),*Phyllanthus fraternus* (Bhui amlokhi or Matiamlokhi), *Scoparia dulcis*(Gorokhia jaluk) etc. Star fruit (*Averrhoa carambola*) is a very common item which is prepared in various forms and consumed by the people of the state of Assam specially it is allowed to consume to persons suffering from Jaundice or to prevent the disease. Flower of *Phlogacanthus thyrsoiflorus* is often consumed after preparing a curry of bitter taste. This is said to be very good in Jaundice.

CONCLUSION

Thus in the study area there is immense use of various plants to prevent or to cure Jaundice and these practices are transmitted from generation to generation as local health traditional practice. The scope for analysis, research, modifications and refinements in such secrecy maintained family based occupation are very limited.

Such secrecy restricted the growth of Indian Traditional Medicinal System besides absence of sustained research and development and gradual erosion of knowledge about medicinal plants have contributed to the decline of traditional herbal health care practices. So, it is very much essential to document such types of practices and steps should be taken to enhance these if necessary scope of modification regarding preparation, dose etc. should be made. It is possible by different types of works at micro level through some research projects, the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can also take active role for promotion of such types of experiences and practices by encouraging people through different seminars, meetings then only it will be possible to keep our long lasting Traditional Herbal Local Health Practices for which there is tremendous demand at global level.

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