

INFANT AND CHILD HEALTHCARE PRACTICES OF KAIBARTAS OF ASSAM

Mrs Jyoti Hazarika,
Assistant Professor
North Bank College

Dr. Lohit Hazarika
HoD & Assistant Professor
Lakhimpur Girls' College

Introduction:

Indigenous way of health care simply means the treatment of health ailments with the help of available traditional medicines and beliefs which is usually referred as ethno medicine. It is an old perception progressing amongst every community since ancient time. Traditional medicine predominantly consists of a folk medicine and any form of a remedial method that has been passed down through generations according to the traditions of a community or the ethnic group (Bhasin and Bhasin (2007). It constitutes a major element in every society and encompasses the whole ethnic attitude and practices towards the health and diseases

Among different communities of North east India quite a good number of research work has already been conducted regarding the uses of traditional medicines by various scholars. Among them mention may be made of Sonowal and Baruah, 2011; Choudhury, 2000; Dwivedi, 2003; Gharami and Sharma, 2001; Sharma and Sharma, 2000; Jain, 1983; Jain and Borthakur, 1980; Das *et al.* 2008; Bhardwaj *et al.* 2005; etc.

Objectives of the study:

This paper intends to understand the existing Indigenous way of health care practices among the Kaibartas of Lakhimpur district of Assam. The study basically focussed on the use of ethno medicines to cure some common health ailments of infant and child among the studied population.

Material and Methods:

The data for the present study were collected from three villages namely Sutimukh Gaon, Kachu Gaon and Subansiri Adarsha Kaibarta Gaon of Lakhimpur district of Assam as they are concentrated in these villages. Information regarding the uses of indigenous medicines, parts used, and method of preparation for the treatment of diseases was collected from both men and women having profound knowledge about traditional medicine with the help of in-depth interview method.

Results and Discussion:

Present study recorded locally available indigenous medicine practices to treat some common ailments such as cough and fever, Pneumonia, diarrhoea, poor digestion, dysentery, vomiting, skin problems etc., of infant and child .

1) Cool and Fever:

They used different local medicines depending on the symptoms of the fever. Normally when cool and fever started first they massage the chest, hands and foots of the child with warm mustard oil (*Brescia campestris*) locally called *mithatel* and garlic greens (*Allium sativum*) or *Boga nohoru*. As cool and fever creates problem in breathing, small amount of it also given to nose and ear to get relief in inhaling problems.

To control high fever gives *Vuron*(that is a layer made on the forehead of the baby).Two different types of plants has been recorded in present study Heartleaf Drymary (*Drymaria cordata*) locally called *Laijabori* and chaste creeper(*Cissampelos pareira*) or *Tubukilata* is used separately to give *Vuron*. For this purpose leafs of the plant have to grind to make paste and applied on the forehead to reduced temperature of fever. This remedy mostly used in case of infant below 1 year of age.

The extracted juice from the tender leafs of Jasmine (*Nyctanthes arbour-tristis*) or *Sewali* is reported to be a useful medicine for fever. In case of infant it is said to give ½ table spoon after an interval of two hour, otherwise it is preferred to drink 1-3 table spoons.

Heartleaf Drymary (*Drymaria cordata*) or *Laijabori* and honey locally known as *Moujul* are other important ingredients used to cure fever with cough. 2-3 table spoon of *Laijabori* juice have to mix with honey and given to the child three times a day to cure fever and cough. This juice is also helpful for jaundice diseases, where instead of honey they mixed palm candy or *talmichiri* for better result.

Fever when shows similarity with the symptoms of Malaria they provided a juice extracted from 7 to 9 younger head leafs of Jasmine(*Nyctanthes arbour-tristis*) *sewali* 1 Grey Nicker(*Casesalpinia bonduc*) or *Letaguti* and 7-12 black paper in empty stomach for three consecutive days to the patients .Number of black paper should be reduced according to the age of the child. For example number of black pepper should be one or half of one paper if it is given to an infant.

When sores appeared on mouth and tongue due to fever continue for more than three days ,1- 3 table spoon extracted juice of 3 seeds of White water Sedge(*Kyllinga monocephala*) or locally called *Keyaban*, 1 Grey Nicker(*Casesalpinia bonduc*) or *Letaguti* ,3-5 whole plant of Asiatic pennywort (*Centella asiatica*) or *Barmanimuni*, 3-5 whole plant of dwarf pennywort(*Hydrocotyle sibthorpioides*) or *Sarumanimuni*, 3-5 tender leafs of Sewer Vines(*Paederia scandens*) or *vedailata* and 5-7 black pepper with little amount of salt is said to eat in empty stomach for two times a day. This medicine is advised to take at least for two days to get total release from fever and other stomach problems.

2) Cough:

When a Child suffering from Cough a paste of 3 to 5 younger twigs of Dark opal Basil or Tulsi (*Ocimum americanum*) or *Kola Tulakhi*, 1 piece of Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) or Ada (approximate measure 2 cm) and 1 table spoon of Honey or *MouJul* is given to eat. In case of infant 1-5 months 1 table spoon honey have to mixed with 1 table spoon juice of black tulsi and given to the mouth of baby for three to four times a day to cure cough.

To heal chronic cough that makes sound inside the chest while breathing a special kind of medicine is prepared. First of all three pieces of garlic green or *BogaNohoru* have to cut from three different cloves that also must be taken from three different garlic, a little amount of *Alandhu* (that is the black dust form above the fireplace) and 1-3 drops of Kerosene oil. These three ingredients are mixed properly and given to eat before going to bed. This medicine is not given to infant.

The juice extracted from one matured betel leaf (*Piper betel*) or *paan*, 1-3 number of black pepper, and root of one *Keyaban* is also an effective medicine to cure cough. This juice has to warm in a flat bamboo stakes that is locally called as *Bah Khor* by keeping above a kerosene lantern or *saki*. Some amount of mustard oil has to apply on the lower part of the bamboo stakes before keeping it above kerosene lantern. When lower part of the bamboo stakes burn deeply its ash should be mixed with the juice and given to the child suffering from cough. This medicine should be continued for three 1-3 days after having meal at night.

Another important medicine used in Cough is made by grinding the one whole plant of White water Sedge (*Kyllinga monocephala*) or locally called *Keyaban*, 1 Grey Nicker (*Casualpinia bonduc*) or *Letaguti* *Keyaban*, 1 *Letaguti* and 5 to 7 black paper. The extracted juice should be taken after food at night time at least for three days to get total relief from cough.

3) Pneumonia:

To cure Pneumonia collect 7-12 black pepper, 8-10 numbers of Clove (*Syzygium aromaticum*) or *longguti*, 5 pieces of Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*) or *dalseni* (each approximately 1 cm,) three tender head leaves of *Cannabis Sativa* or *Vangoss*, 3-5 whole plant of Asiatic pennywort *Centella asiatica* or *barmanimuni*, 3-5 younger head of Indian Madder (*Oldenlandia corymbosa*) or *banjaluk* and Chinese chaste tree (*Vitex negundo*) or *Pochotiya*. At first the juice have to extract from all the collected ingredients, then have to mix with a little amount of salt and boiled for 1-2 minutes. When the juice became little hot then have to give the patients. Amount of the juice varies according to the age of patients, as it has been reported by the population under study that infant of age below one year is said to provide one ½ table spoon of this juice two times a day for three consecutive days while child of age 1-5 years should have 1 table spoon for two times a day for three consecutive days.

4) Vomiting and weak digestion:

In case of infant below 6 month when they vomits the milk frequently maternal uncle stifles a bamboo cylinder (Bahar chungu) with his cloths which is locally called *Mumaikhupa* . One ripened bark of banana (*Musa gigantean*) or *Bhimkol* which is eaten by bat on the tree before cutting the banana tree has to burn and soak in water on a copper bowl for 1-2 hour. After removing the burn banana bark from the water 1 table spoon is given to the baby to cure this problem. Moreover the mother of the baby is given to eat ginger with black salt/salt as the baby eats breast milk of the mother.

On the other hand when a child vomit the bark of jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) or *kothal*, root of Bush tomato (*Solanum indicum*) or *titavekuri* along with 1-3 black pepper and little amount of black salt. This particular juice is provided to the child to stop vomiting.

Another medicine that is very much helpful to cure weak digestion and vomiting is 1 table spoon of powder of Chebulic myrobalan (*Terminalia chebula*) that is *Silikha*, 1 table spoon powder of Indian Gooseberry (*Emblic officinalis*) that is *amlakhi* powder, ½ spoon of salt and ½ spoon of sugar. All these ingredients have to mix properly with a glass of lukewarm water and given to eat to get ride from such types of problems. Dry *Terminalia chebula* and *Emblic officinalis* that has been preserved after boiling in salt water are also preferred to take on mouth to stop vomiting.

The extracted juice from the bark of Wild Mango (*Spondias pinnate*) or *Amoral* bark with a little amount of black salt is also provided to cure weak digestion of the child.

The juice of Asiatic pennywort, dwarf pennywort, Heart leafs (*Houttuynia cordata*) or *machandari*, thumbai (*Leucus aspera spreng*) or *Durunban*, *patchouli* (*Pogostemon benghalensis*) or *suklati*, Sewer Vines (*Paederia scandens*) or *Vedailata*, Chinese chaste tree (*Vitex negundo*) or *Pachatia aagh* etc., are also regarded as a helpful remedy for stomach problem. They also intake these plants with rice after cooking in a very little amount of mustard oil with garlic green to improve blood and digestive system.

On the other hand when a child vomit the bark of jackfruit tree, root of Titavekuri goss and 1-3 black pepper is crushes and extracts juice. Little amount of black salt has to mix with this juice and provided the child to stop vomiting.

Another medicine that is very much helpful to cure weak digestion and vomiting is 1 table spoon of *Silikha* powder, 1 table spoon of *amlakhi* powder, ½ spoon of salt and ½ spoon of sugar. All these ingredients have to mix properly with a glass of lukewarm water and given to eat to get ride from such types of problems. Dry *Silikha* and *Amlakhi* that has been preserved after boiling in salt water are also preferred to take on mouth to stop vomiting.

A cup of juice extracted from the root of Spider plant (*Cleome gynandra*) or *vtmola* is also given to improve digestion of child.

5) Dysentery:

For the treatment of dysentery a cup of fruit decoction of *Spondias pinnate* or *Amora* is said to take in empty stomach for three days. Mixed juice of five tender leaf of *Psidium guajava* or *Madhuriam*, three entire plants of Asiatic pennywort or *Bor-manimuni* and three complete plants of *Hydrocotyle sibthorpioides* or *Saru-manimuni* with a little amount of salt is also given to eat in the empty stomach for 3-5 day.

Another important medicine that has been used by Kaibarta population under study is Ten to fifteen pieces of dry fruits of Cow tree (*Garcinia cowa* Rox) or *Kuji thekera* are kept in a cup of water for about 15-20 minutes, and then the juice is mixed with a little amount of salt and given to the patient to eat in empty stomach for three days.

A cup of juice extracted from *Mint (Mentha Spicata)* or *Padina* with some amount of palm candy also prescribed to drink in empty stomach to cure Dysentery problem.

Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis Corniculata*) or *tengechi* and *Roselle (Hibiscus sabdariffa)* or *tengamara* are boiled with salt and given to eat with rice to stop dysentery problem.

6) Skin problem:

To cure skin problem such as itching and rashes, prickly heat (ghamuchi) etc they used *Neem (Azadirachta indica)* or *Mahaneem*, *Aloe vera (Aloebarbadensis)* or *Chal kuoree* and *lemon (Citrus Limon)* or *Nemutenga*. The leaves of *Mahaneem* boiled in water and this is given to bath when the child suffering from itching and rashes. Sometimes they applied the paste of *neem* and *Aloe vera* on the affected area to treat the problem. The pieces of *lemon* basically used when the child suffering from prickly heat (ghamuchi).

7) Diarrhoea.

Half cup of juice of both dwarf pennywort or *sarumanimuni* and Asiatic pennywort or *barmanimuni* given to eat in empty stomach when starts Diarrhoea. Moreover 5-7 younger leaves of *Guava tree* or *madhuri* is grind with a little bit of salt and provided the sufferers. A cup of juice of *Goethe plant* or *dupartenga* is also said to drink to get relief from it.

Juice extracted from the bark of *Arjuna tree (Terminalia arjuna)* or *Arjun goss* and with salt. 1-3 table spoon of this juice is given to drink to control diarrhoea. The paste of younger leaves of *Arjuna tree* is also considered as valuable medicine for Diarrhoea.

8) Worms:

1-2 table spoon juice of Neem leafs with a little amount of salt is given to the child who were doubt to have worm .It has been reported that due to bitterness of the Neem juice child refuses to eat this remedy, so they fried the leafs with mustard oil and given to eat with rice.

To kill worm of the child is the twig of Chiretta(*Swertia Chirata*)or *Chiirata Tita* is soaked in water and that particular water is provided to drink.

Moreover the paste of three very younger head of pineapple (*Ananas comosus*)or *Matikothal* with palm candy is given to eat in empty stomach continuously for three days to cure worm.

Conclusion:

Thus from above discussion it became evident that Kaibarta population under study have ample faith on indigenous health care practices. Total 41 Varieties of plants and plants parts such as leaf, fruits (both fresh and dry), roots, seed and bark etc recorded in present study. Sometimes they also use the parts of animal for curing many diseases though present study didn't document it. Majority of medicines reported in present study are also given to the adult individuals but in that case the amount of medicine should be increase. As the Socio-economic conditions of the Kaibarta population are not good, they prefer traditional herbal medicine to cure general health problems.

Table 1: Medicinal plants used by Kaibarta population under study to cure infant and child health ailments

Serial No	Local Name	English equivalents	Scientific Name	Parts used	P
	<i>ewali Goss</i>	Jasmine	<i>Nyctanthes arbour-tristis</i>		
	<i>ubuki Lata</i>	chaste creeper	<i>Cissampelos pareira</i>	leafs	L
	<i>aijabari</i>	Heartleaf Drymary	<i>Drymaria Cordata</i>	leafs	L
	<i>emu tenga</i>	Lemon	<i>Citrus Limon</i>	fruits	F
	<i>ola Tulakhi</i>	Dark Opal Basil or Tulsi	<i>Ocimum americanum</i>	younger leafs	Y
	<i>da</i>	Ginger	<i>Zingiber officinalis</i>		

	<i>aluk</i>	peper	Black <i>nigrum</i>	<i>Pepper</i>	
	<i>oga Noharu</i>	green	Garlic <i>sativum</i>	<i>Allium</i>	
	<i>eyaban</i>	water Sedge	White <i>a monocephala</i>	<i>Kylling</i>	R oots and seeds
0	<i>onguti</i>		Clove <i>m aromaticum</i>	<i>Syzygiu</i>	s eeds
1	<i>alseni</i>	mon	Cinna <i>omum verum</i>	<i>Cinnam</i>	b ark
2	<i>da</i>		ginger <i>r officinale</i>	<i>Zingibe</i>	p lumpy part
3	<i>ang</i>	bis Sativa	Canna <i>is Sativa</i>	<i>Cannab</i>	Y ounger leafs
4	<i>arumanimuni</i>	pennywort	dwarf <i>otyle sibthorpioides</i>	<i>Hydroc</i>	W hole plants
5	<i>armanimuni</i>	c pennywort	Asiati <i>asiatica</i>	<i>Centella</i>	W hole plants
6	<i>anjaluk</i>	Madder	Indian <i>ndia corymbosa</i>	<i>Oldenla</i>	Y oung twigs
7	<i>ochotiya</i>	e chaste tree	Chines <i>negundo</i>	<i>Vitex</i>	Y oung twigs
8	<i>rjun Goss</i>	tree	Arjuna <i>lia arjuna W&A.</i>	<i>Termina</i>	B ark and younger leafs
9	<i>himkal</i>	a	Banan <i>gigantean</i>	<i>Musa</i>	B ark
0	<i>mara</i>	Mango	Wild <i>Spondias pinnate</i>		
1	<i>achandari</i>	leaf	Heart <i>nia cordata</i>	<i>Houttuy</i>	L eafs and twigs
2	<i>uklati</i>	<i>uli</i>	<i>patcho</i> <i>mon benghalensis</i>	<i>Pogoste</i>	Y oung twigs leafs
3	<i>urun Bon</i>	bai	Thum <i>aspera spreng</i>	<i>Leucus</i>	Tender leafs

4	<i>ujithekera</i>	Cow tree	<i>Garcinia cowa Rox</i>	fruits	f
5	<i>othal</i>	Jackfruit	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i>	fruit	B
6	<i>ita Vekuri</i>	Indian Nightshade/Bush Tomato	<i>Solanum indicum</i>	fruits	R
7	<i>edailata or Vebelilata</i>	Sewer Vines	<i>Paederia scandens</i>		
8	<i>odhuri Goss</i>	Guava tree	<i>Psidium guajava</i>	young shoot	Y
9	<i>udina</i>	Mint	<i>Mentha Spicata</i>		
10	<i>engechi</i>	Wood Sorrel	<i>Oxalis Corniculata</i>	ground plant	W
11	<i>engamara</i>	Roselle	<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa</i>	ground leaf	T
12	<i>atikaduri</i>	dwarf copper leaf sessile joy weed	<i>Alternanthera sessilis</i>	young head leaves	Y
13	<i>ithatel</i>	Mustard oil	<i>Breschia campestris</i>	seeds	S
14	<i>aan</i>	Battle leaf	<i>Piper betel</i>	leaves	L
15	<i>ohaneem</i>	Neem	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	leaves	L
16	<i>hirata Tita</i>	Chiretta	<i>Swertia Chirata</i>	twig	T
17	<i>upartenga</i>	Goethale plant	<i>Bryophyllum pinnatum</i>	leaves	L
18	<i>ilikha</i>	Chebulic myrobalan	<i>Terminalia chebula Retz</i>	fruits	f
19	<i>mlakhi</i>	Indian Gooseberry	<i>Emblica officinalis</i>	fruits	f
		Aloe	<i>Aloebar</i>		l

0	<i>hal kuoree</i>	vera	<i>badensis</i>	eafs
1	<i>atikothal</i>	e	Pinapl <i>comosus</i>	Ananas Tender leafs
2	<i>etaguti</i>	Nicker	Grey <i>pinia bonduc</i>	Casesal ruits f
3	<i>utmola</i>	plant	Spider <i>gynandra</i>	Cleome oots r

References

- Bhasin, M.K., and V. Bhasin, 2007, Medical Anthropology: A review, *Ethno-Medicine*, 1(1): 1-20.
- Bhardwaj, S. and S.K. Gakhar, 2005, Ethnomedicinal plants used by the tribals of Mizoram to cure cuts and wounds, *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, 4(1): 75.
- Choudhury, S., 2000, Indigenous belief and practices of herbal medicine among the few Arunachalis, *Resarun*, 26: 72-81, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Department of Cultural Affairs.
- Das, F.A.; I. Barua and D. Dutta Das, 2008, Ethnomedicinal practices: A case study among the Sonowal Kacharis of Dibrugarh, Assam, *Ethno-Medical*, 2(1): 33-37.
- Dwivedi, P. 2003, Demographic profile and Health Care Practices among the Baigas of Samnapur Block of Dindori District, M.P. Unpublished.
- Gharami, Ajay and Sharma A. N. 2001, An Appraisal of Traditional Medicines and Treatment among Nicobar of Little Andaman, Vanyajati 2001: 5-10.
- Jain, S. K. 1983, Ethno Botany and Traditional Medicines, Keynote address. Asian Conference on Traditional Asian Medicines Bombay: March 6-9.
- Jain, S.K. and S.K. Borthakur, 1980, Ethnobotany of Mikirs of India, *Journal of Economics and Taxonomic Botany*, 34: 264-272.
- Sharma, A.N. and Sharma N.M. 2000, Indigenous health practices related to fever among Bharias of Patalkot M.P. *Tribal Health Bulletein*, 6 (1).pp. 6-8.
- Sonowal, R. and I. Baruah, 2011, Ethnomedical practices among the Tai Khamyangs of Assam, India, *EthnoMedicine*, 5(1): 41-50.