Beliefs, traditions and other perceptions of tribals

During the present study, the entire tribal belt of Balaghat district, specially the interior places of this region were surveyed and visited several times. During these visits a very close interaction with old and young tribal people, a number of interesting things were revealed. They can be considered as their beliefs and sayings that have been observed by tribals for a very long period of time.

Although these beliefs and their observations are not completely based on scientific evidences, tribals have been still observing these things in their life from generation to generation. Such traditions have been in their culture due to accidental uses which became beneficial and therefore set as acceptable beliefs. It may be possible that some of the tradition may have scientific bases with which we are not familiar with due to the lack of scientific experimentation and mind set up.

Such revelations are mostly related to treatment and cure of a number of diseases and ailments, while others can be considered as taboos against unnatural things. As most of the information collected in the present study is not available as document, it seems worthwhile to prepare documentation of such ethnic knowledge possessed by the tribals of the study area. Possibly many things are out of context, sometimes unbelievable, difficult to accept, many a times look like jocks, the present chapter of the thesis describes the interesting experiences shared with tribes.
I wish to state these ethnic events must be mentioned whether they may be useful or not.

**Possession of things causing problems to human**

1. *Mimosa pudica* (Chui-Mui)
2. *Argemone maxicana* (Satyanashi)
3. *Clitoria tinctoria* (Gunnashi (Aprajita))
4. Vidhyanashi
5. Monkey bit

Tribals believe that the above plant and animal materials if kept at home cause irritable behavior such as frequent changes in mind set. It is also said that keeping these materials lead to poverty and quarrels in life.

**Eatable not to be taken together**

1. Milk- Onion
2. Milk – Jackfruit
3. Milk- Sour fruits (except Indian gooseberry)
4. Honey- Ghee
5. Curd- Black gram
6. Black gram- Clarified milk

According to tribals experiences, if the above combinations are taken as food, they lead to ill health and other ailments.

**Treatment for TB (Tuberculosis)**
Black color dog is of special significance in this treatment. The dog is killed and liver is removed from the dog body. The liver is thoroughly washed and fried. After fine chopping, the fried liver cut into small pieces and finally dried. It is believed that a single piece of this preparation administered per day, tuberculosis is eliminated. However, there is precaution related to this treatment. It is said that the killing of dog and preparation of so called medicine from liver should be done in isolation so that nobody can see it. If seen by someone, the effect would not meet as per expected.

For epilepsy
One of the prevailing taboos among the tribal healers for the disease called epilepsy. They suggest by adding 5 knots of bed bug (Cimex lectularius) in a riped banana (Musa paradisiaca), to eliminate epilepsy

Snake bite
One should always keep a root of Pumpkin (Cucurbita maxima) to be used at the time of snake bite and other poisonous insects. A piece of the root is fed to the effected person. Tribals say that it immediately results in profuse vomiting releasing the poison.

For Healthy and Strong body
Tribals prescribe a mixture of the following plant parts in required weight that includes plants material. The process of preparation is also defined.
Plant ingredient

1. Root of *Asparagus racemosus* (Satvaar mool)

2. Root of *Chlorophytum borivilianum* (White muesli)

3. Root of *Withania somnifera* (Ashwagandha)

4. Tuber of *Pueraria Tuberosa* (Vidarikand)

5. Root of *Argyreia nervosa* (Vidhara mool)

6. Seeds of *Mucuna pruriens* (Kaunch)

Dry fruit

7. *Phoenix Dactylifera* (Chhuhara Kharik)

8. *Pistacia vera* (Pistachios)

9. *Prunus amygdalus* (Badamagiri)

10. *Juglans regia* (Walnut)

11. *Cocos nucifera* (Coconut)

12. *Buchanania lanzan* (Chironji)

13. Mishri (Rock candy)

14 Honeys

Plant and dry fruits ingredients are powdered separately and then mixed well. A paste is prepared and it is to be taking in morning and the evening everyday with a glass of milk or water for 3 months. It is said that this will make the human body strong, healthy, make brains sharp and increase fertility.

**Ear pain**

In contemporary time ear pain is cured by expensive allopathic medicines but tribals usually apply 2 drops of juice of *Allium cepa*
(Onion) for its treatment. It is very cheap and easily available at every home.

**Dog bite**

Ethnic people uses three plants which are *Achyranthes aspera* (Apamarg), *Cissus repanda* (Dokar bel) and *Elephantopus scaber* (Ban tambaku) for the cure of dog bite. The mixture of juice of the roots of all three above mentioned plants is given to the patient of dog bite for its cure, infection and pains.

**Hair fall**

For controlling hair fall tribal healer give a paste. This paste is prepared by mixing leaves of *Plumbago zeylanica* (Chitrak) and *Dolichos lablab* (Saem) to apply on hair scalp or head in order to treat the hair fall problem.

In addition, tribal healers also recommend the paste of the whole plant of *Eclipta alba* (Bhrangraj) to apply on the head scalp for the cure of hair fall. This treatment is very popular and often used by the ethnic people, because of its easy availability and has effective results.

**As Cosmetics**

The solution prepared of almonds (*Prunus dulcis*) and milk is commonly recommended to remove facial scalability and to get fair look, now a days it has been commonly used in Beauty Parlors. For this, four almond seeds are soaked in water in the morning and after peeling off of those almonds in the evening and grind them into a little milk and make a paste. This paste is applied on the face in the night until next morning.
In morning the face is washed with lukewarm water. Consistent use of it for the three months will change the color of face.

**Male force and semen: Tribal ethnic people suggests following treatment for the various sexual diseases**

A decoction is prepared out of 5 glasses of water by adding 50 g of Khas (papaver somniferum), 10 g of dry ginger (Zingiber officinale), and 25 g of old jaggery and make its poultice, when the water is reduced to one glass, filtered and drink. This is the booster experiment and recommended to use this only in the month of December and January as it produces the warmth in body.

Continuous eating of wet melon seeds with the sugar candy for one to two years results in good erection.

A paste of honey with onion (Allium cepa) juice increases semen production.

The paste of 10 grams of Urad (Vigna mungo) dough mixed with one teaspoon of cow's ghee and half teaspoon honey when taken for 6 months, improves sexual power.

Eating halwa of Singada (Trapa natans) flour for 2 months increases semen and its viscosity.

**Amritdhara**

Grind celery (Trachyspermum ammi), mint (Mentha arvensis) and native camphor in equal amount and mixed it properly, become the Amritdhara. It is kept and stored in a clean cork vial. This Amritdhara is especially used to get rid off headache, toothache, indigestion, loose motion etc.
**Arandi (Ricinus communis)**

The Arandi (*Ricinus communis*) leaf is considered as painkiller. The stem is burnt and allowed to transform as coal. However, before complete transformation to coal, it is quenched with water. This fine powder is mixed with butter to prepare an ointment. It is used to treat wound and athlete’s foot (a fungal disease common during rainy season) lesions.

**Akona (Calotropis procera)**

The worm juice of Akona leaves is recommended for pain in ear. Paste prepared from roots of the above is used for knee pain.

**Sciatica**

The joint pain which medical science considers as the problematic disease is curable by the herbal drug. Tribal healers recommend the powder consisting Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Cumin (*Cuminum cyminum*), Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), Black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), Black salt, rock salt, Baibideng (*Embelia basal*), young fruit of Harra (*Terminalia chebula*), dry Puddina (*Mentha piperita*), salt, Celery (*Trachyspermum ammi*) (each 50-50 g)

Preparation method- Young fruits of Harra are fried till they become soft and reddish, mixed with mustered oil to form dough. It is dried till it becomes brown in color. It is grind to form a powder.

Dose- 3 spoons of powder with empty stomach per day.

Prohibition – Not to eat oily things

**Cochilla (Strychnos nux-vomica)**

Seeds of above are dipped in cow’s urine for 21 days till they get sprouted. The seed coats are removed alongwith the newly germinating
part as it is considered poisonous. Only cotyledons are to be used. A small piece of cotyledon is administered with Bangla pan (*Piper betle*) to treat paralysis.

**For acne**

Acne is common problem among all the young people. In order to get rid of this, grind leaves of green peppermint (*Mentha piperita*) with 2-3 drops of lemon juice, is applied as paste on the face, after some time face is washed with cold water. It is removes the acne and make the face smooth.

**Joint pain**

10 g celery oil, 10 g pepper oil and 20 g of camphor are mixed and stored. It is considered as a medicine that is immediately give relief in the joint pain, back pain, rib bite, headache etc.

**For cough**

A solution of half a teaspoon of ginger juice in one teaspoon honey, if taken three times a day, provides a lot of relief in cough. Another treatment for the same as suggested by the tribal healers is very common in our day to day life. Spoonful of roasted turmeric in hot milk is used to treat the old cough problem.

**Sore throat**

In order to overcome from the sore throat problem, mixer of dry Ginger with equal quantity of sugar candy with honey, are taken to prepare pills. Sucking of these pills opens throat.
**Ethnic for Collection of Medicinal Plants by Vaidya on Nag Panchami day**

These experiences are noted during field survey. It has been observed that those who are legitimate healers or vaidyas never make a collection of medicinal plants throughout the year, but at the time of some religious festivals like Nag Panchami, Hariyali, Navratri, Dashara Diwali, new moon, full moon etc. Some people also make collections after rain. The present experience is related to collections and gathering of medicinal plants on Nag Panchami.

I went to the forest with these people on the designated day. They go early in the morning to the forest, 4-5 kilometers from intensive forest villages. Before going to the forest, a day before, preparations are done for taking necessary things to the forest such as coconut, agarbatti, vermillion, ral (gum), jaggery, alcohol, and some other things like fresh vegetables such as Karela, Kunduru, Kheera, Pyaz, Aalu, Adrak, Saem, Corn etc.

After reaching the forest on the day of Nag Panchami, all the devotees enter their jungle by praising Goddesses and searching for a plant in the mountainous area which is called big medicine (*Cissampelos pareira* - Badi dava) which is considered as good omen. Unless badi dava are found, they do not collect any other medicines. When badi dava are found, everyone worships that plant for a while and praises his admiration, then takes out the root of that plant, and the plant is again put back at its original place. All the people collect various medicinal plants in different areas, to be used in the form of medicines. After
completion of collection of plants or plant parts, they come out of the forest in open place. In the area, we find Bhimbora (the place of dwelling of snakes) and all the collected medicines/plants are washed and offered to Bhimbora. Afterwards begins the nag worship. Singing begins as puja and to have blessings of that goddess, gods together with medicines collected. After worship is over, together with the green freshly smashed vegetables and other items of worship, they interact with each other. After worship, all the collected medicines are distributed and now they are ready for treatments. These events are repeated every year.