Chapter 8

Observation
Chapter VIII

OBSERVATIONS

Most of the tribal communities in the states of southeastern Rajasthan are fond of animal food, belonging to invertebrate and vertebrate animals. The meat of the wild animals and birds were their primary source of nutrition in early days. The collection of data shows that generally tribals are very much relish meat of wild boar, sheep, sambher, chital, hare, etc. Almost all of the tribes eat birds like pigeon, house sparrow, grey partridge, pea fowl, spotted dove, duck, painted stork, large cormorant and quail either cooked or roasted. Among these, some birds are taken very frequently because of the availability and some are taken occasionally due to the unavailability. Bhil abhor the meat of pea fowl due to religious taboo. Exceptionally Korwa and Saharia tribes are very fond of beef and eat it with profound interest but majority of them abstain themselves from it as they worship cow like Goddess. Interestingly, some of them like Mina, Garasia and Domar also consume snakes, Varanus and Uromastix in roasted form. There are a few tribes like Gameti and Saharia who relish the meat of camel also. While most of the tribes abhor
meat of vulture, kite and crow, the tribes like Bhil, Mina, Saharia and Domar do eat them with relish. Most of the tribal communities also eat the roasted flesh of Pila after removing the shells. A number of tribes also relish prawn and Trionyx. Garasia, Gameti and Mina tribes consume ravine deer and pig also.

Data collected in terms of innumerable drugs derived from various animals / birds and used by the various tribal communities to cure a number of diseases compels us to evaluate that there is a scientific approach in their practices. These medicines are time-proven, safe and cheap and can be profitably exploited after scientific verification. Pigeon is one of the birds widely used as drugs by majority of the tribes. It is utilized in many ways. The flesh of pigeon is consumed and its blood massage is done in paralysis. The feathers of spotted dove are incinerated, powdered, dissolved in water and orally administered for about 3 days, thrice daily in vomiting and abdominal pain. Termite is consumed with cow's milk by lactating ladies for about 15 days, once daily for better lactation after delivery. Fresh urine of pig and wild boar is taken orally in neurotic fits for about one month. Fresh urine of cow is filtered and taken orally with 2 - 3 'Basil' leaves
and black pepper in age stabilizer once in the morning regularly. The massage of fat of Uromastix, Varanus, bat, desert fox and wild boar is practiced in rheumatic ailments. Liver of Chital, desert fox and sheep is taken in different ways for night-blindness. Eggs of red jungle fowl is applied externally in ribs-pain, twice daily. Honey is used as eye-ointment in eye troubles. Flesh of Pila is cooked and consumed in tuberculosis and breathing trouble once daily, for about 21 days. Fat of Chameleon and cobra is warmed and massaged in curing joint-pain. Bhil of Chandanwara village of Dungarpur district use appendages of cockroach in ear troubles, bile of flying frog in hyper pyrexia, gizzard of darter, large cormorant and lesser flamingo in dysentery and saliva of dog in gonorrhea and syphilis.

As aphrodisiac, Rohu is applied externally by some of the tribes whereas a few of them make use of fat of panther, both are used by their male individuals. Oil extracted from the fat of Chameleon, Uromastix and Varanus is applied on male sex organs in impotency. A few of them consume the flesh of house sparrow in impotency of males.

Skin of buffalo is used for making shoes, drums and vessels
for carrying water and skin of Varanus for making purses and small drums etc. Horns of buffaloes are used to make combs and buttons. Skin of snake is used for making belt while skin of desert fox and jackal is used for making ladies purse. For entertainment cock-fight, partridge-fight and sheep-fight are common sight in weekly markets of almost all the tribes as well as on festive occasions like Dussehra, Diwali and Nag Panchami.

All the tribes use dung of cow and buffalo as fuel after drying it and thus lose a huge quantity of manure. Fishes and domesticated animals after death are used as fertilizers.

It is prevalent custom of almost all the tribes to sacrifice buffalo, fowl and sheep as offering to God. After the offering, their meat is cooked, distributed among the communities and taken by them as ‘Prasad’ of God. Usually the blood is also offered to the God like that of meat, but some tribals mix the blood of sacrificed animal with their meat and cook and distribute as ‘Prasad’.

Pigeon and pea fowl, among birds, are the common pets of the tribes. They are fond of fishing also and as bait use piece of flesh, small frog and small fishes etc. Pila is also considered for fishing. Some of the advanced tribes, who live in the vicinity of
urban areas, are seen catching fish by nets and traps.

Most of the tribal communities believe in forecasting and
witchcraft using a number of wild as well as domesticated
animal. Most of the tribals believe that crowing of crow in the
early morning on the top of the house is a symbol of the arrival
of the guest in the house. But if a crow caws around the mid-
night they consider it as bad symbol. In the same way if cock
crows around the mid-night, there will be definite death of a
prominent member of a community or family and to avoid the
arrival of that misfortune that cock is immediately killed at the
spot. Croaking of the frogs in the rainy season is mere indication
of heavy rainfall in a short while. Some of the tribals use the
nail, skull and blood of owl and tongue of crow for the purpose
of witchcraft. The howling of jackal in the day time and
abnormal barking of dogs are considered to be bad symbol. It
also indicates the death of a person in the nearby area.

A lot of omens are prevalent among the various tribal
community e.g., if a cat, snake, desert fox, jackal, Indian-wolf
cross the way or road from either side in front of a passersby,
then it is considered to be a bad omen. Some of the people
believe that if the blue jay is sighted particularly on the day of
‘Dussehra’, it will be good omen for the whole year. They think that it will enhance the prosperity of the community.

A number of myths and folklores are prevalent among the various tribal communities of south-eastern Rajasthan. Even today, if any of the family members are suffering from small-pox, chicken-pox or measles, they taboo to eat meat, to fry vegetables in oil or fat, to drink wine and to wear shoes in house. They stop these until the patient is completely cured. On the patients demand they have to provide to eat meat, but it is very rare. On the contrary some of the tribes give wine to them to please the Goddess whom they believe reside in the patients during the period of disease. To control or to check up further spread of the incidence of the disease, they hang up the entire carapace and neck of the tortoise in front of the entrance of the house. Nail of owl and bear, hair of bear, bone of camel and teeth of Rohu are used as pendant toward off the evil spirit acting upon the children. Majority of the tribal communities worship the domestic animals on the day of ‘Diwali’ in the belief that the prosperity of the family will be enhanced. Cow is worshipped as the Goddess of wealth (Laxmi). Almost all the tribes of south-eastern Rajasthan state worship snake particularly cobra on the day of ‘Nag Panchami’ in the hope that
it would not harm or bite them during their life time. Snakes are fed with milk on this day keeping milk in an earthen pot outside the house. If this is not done they believe that the snake particularly rat-snake will suck the milk of the cow in night. If python lives nearby the locality or in the fields, they believe that the production of the crops would be better than the other years. Cutting of tails and ears of dogs are very common among the tribes to make it mere active, faithful and healthy. This practice is very common among the tribes of south-eastern Rajasthan. Most of the tribal communities keep the placenta of the cat in the grain pots in the hope of overall prosperity of the house. If two spines of the porcupine are in certain in the house of two neighbours, they start quarrelling and ultimately it leads into severe fighting. Sneezing of the goat while undertaking any journey, it considered to be very ominous sign, resulting into unsuccessful mission. In south-eastern Rajasthan, most of the tribal communities tie the piece of femur bones of camel in the neck of the domestic animals toward off evil spirits and to increase the lactation.

A number of totems and taboos are prevalent among the tribes of south-eastern Rajasthan. These totems and taboos are
very much helpful in the protection and the conservation of the wild as well as domesticated animals. Mostly pea fowl, cow, snake, Trionyx are considered as totems. They never kill them. The tribal people of south-eastern Rajasthan worship particularly cow as the Goddess. Killing of these animals is a great sin. If by the way any of them is killed by mistake or intentionally, the man will be considered as the culprit and is thrown out of the caste.

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