CHAPTER-VII
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND THERAPEUTIC PRACTICES AMONG THE HILL SAORAS

The objective of this chapter is to highlight different therapeutic practices available in the Hill Saora indigenous traditions of healing and to examine their acceptance, efficacy and popularity in the society. The basic aim of this chapter is to explore the existence and validity of some of the useful and practical knowledge (methods and techniques) of therapy, which can be preserved and promoted for the health care services of the community. It also aims to study the Hill Saoras' concept of healing and supernaturalism and how the livelihood and economy are closely interlinked and determined by these ideas. In other words, how the concept of disease and supernaturalism affects the economic life and social well-being of Hill Saoras is the major focus of this chapter.

7.1 THE INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS OF THERAPY

There is a great importance to understand and identify the cause of illness as the nature of treatment is intimately connected with the cause identified. The causes of illness in indigenous communities very often referred to supernaturalism. However, illness believed to be of supernatural cause generally has some supernaturalistic cure. Norbeck pointed out whether illness and injury are deemed as supernatural or natural in the primitive world, curative measure lie principally within the realm of the supernatural. To separate medicine and supernaturalism in the beliefs and
practices of indigenous societies is in fact difficult and it seems they seldom do it in any clear-cut way. The major but far from invariable exception is the violation of taboos, which may inevitably thought to results in illness or death.

In his observation among the Paraja Adivasi of Orissa, Dash has come across two broad methods of healing—magico-religious and herbal or practical medicine. The concept of disease and treatment are very much connected with magico-religious beliefs and practices, though herbal medicines occupy a very important position in their indigenous methods of treatment. Disease is connected with the interference of supernatural agency and naturally the nature of treatment in such cases is made accordingly.

For Norbeck, the first step of therapy is diagnosis. Resting heavily on divination, diagnosis is usually left in the hands of specialists. Once diagnosis is made remedies follow in logical fashion.

Therapeutic measures for illness caused by intrusive spirits or objects are simple in theme: remove the cause. Removal from the body of unwanted spirits may involve any of the personalized techniques of propitiation and coercion. It may also involve any of the forms of magic and any combination of magical and non-magical religious acts. Therapy is by means of mechanical acts of exorcism, sometimes symbolic, but often very real in the sense that they include or consist of physical acts to draw or force out the spirit as if it had sensory capacities like those of man. To cure the patient of this category

---

eve teasing, evil tasting, evil smelling abhorrent ingredients, fumigant of the invalid, starve the patient, wearing the horrifying masks, insulting acts, etc., are the formulas adopted.

There is another thing which Norbeck has observed that hospitable means such as enticing the spirit out by food or other desirable things or promising to grant its wishes as disclosed by divination are employed but appear to be far less common than the inhospitable.\(^5\)

The standard treatment for sickness due to intrusive objects is removal of the objects by suction. Sucking is done by direct application of lips to the body of the ‘invalid’, through the medium of reed, bone, horn, tube, or by symbolic means, ritual songs and dance, etc.

Ailments resulting from violation of rules of behaviour are as varied as human ailments are varied. Like sickness due to soul loss they may require confession, expiation and purification. Where harmful power is transmitted to the body by violations of taboos, rites of contagious magic including lustration and other forms of transference are common remedies.

The disease or injury caused due to witchcraft needs varied treatment. Counter witchcraft supplemented by measures doubtless regarded by the people concerned as being wholly naturalistic—the banishment, physical beating, or killing of the suspected witch.

Bhattacharya and Sengupta noted four remedial measures followed in the healing tradition of Birhor such as magical extraction, administration of medicinal herbs, sacrifices, offerings and prayers to Bonga, and contact with

magical objects like amulets, dietary restrictions. Dash has observed two broad methods of treatment practiced by Paraja. The first technique followed is magico-religious treatment and the second is by the herbal medicines.

Diverse methods and techniques of therapy have been available with the indigenous communities in their healing traditions. The forms treatment found from the above review are supernatural, magical, medicinal-herbal, physical or orthopaedic and other forms of natural therapies. However, before analysing the different therapeutic traditions of the Hill Saoras it is pertinent to give a brief mention about the tradition of shamanism and its role in the healing traditions among the indigenous societies.

7.2 SHAMANISM AS A HEALING TRADITION

Shamanism as a fundamental and striking feature of Siberian and Inner Asian cultures. It is founded on a special technique for achieving ecstasy by means of which the shaman enters an altered state of consciousness (ASC), and on the idea that the shaman is accompanied by helping spirits who assist him in this state. While in a state of trance, the shaman is regarded as capable of direct communication with representatives of other world, either by journeying to the supra normal world or by calling the spirits to the séance.

The role of shaman is always to help his or her fellow men in crisis through the supernatural and ancestral spirits. It acts as the mediator between ‘this world’ and ‘the other world’ through its ecstatic techniques and experience. The shaman acts as a healer and as patron of hunting and fertility.

---


8 ibid, p.211.
but also as a diviner, the guardian of livelihoods, and so on. The basic ideology of shamanism may be sufficiently fundamental to the human condition to have favoured its survival over enormous distances in time, space, environment and social context.

The healer specialists among the indigenous communities are varied from community to community. They are called in different names. Some cases the priest and the medicine man are same and some cases specialised for specific diseases and specific healing methods and techniques. The healers are also specialised according to the kinds of supernatural and ancestral spirits or deities that causes and cures illness.

The Birhors of Purulia have two types of traditional healer specialists namely Mati and Charmer (Gunin). The former works as medicine man or herbalist and the later as a diviner which identify the spirits who causes afflictions and provides remedies.  

7.3 THE SHAMAN AS A HEALER SPECIALIST IN THE HILL SAORA SOCIETY

Shamanism is very popular practice in the religious traditions of the Hill Saoras. Without shaman no religious performance is possible. He or she is the communicator between the living Saora world and the Underworld—the living world of their ancestral and supernatural spirits. In the shamanic tradition of Hill Saora both male and female shamans are exists, where female shamanism has a popular and important role to play. The shaman is known as Kudan in Saora. Both the male and female are identified with suffix maran and boi respectively Kudanmar and Kudanboi.

Shaman is the most important religious figure and functionary in the Hill Saoras religious culture. He or she is the specialist, as a doctor, a medicine man, a psychotherapist, a priest, a magician and sorcerer. He or she has not only the power to diagnose the source of trouble or illness but also to cure it. Shaman is a doctor healer as well as magician, the repository of traditions, and the source of sacred and esoteric knowledge.

The primary duty of shaman is that of 'divination' (tedung); in case of illness. The cause of illness can only be explored through trance with possession of tutelary. Every shaman has a tutelary wife or husband, as the case may be, in the Underworld and they come to assist in any perplexity and often guide the shamans in their duties. The tutelary are always of the opposite sex of the shamans who acts as the intermediary to the shamans and the Underworld spirits. The tutelary is called Ilda or Rauda in Sora, who lives in the underworld, mostly benevolent, helps the shamans in all acts of performance.

The role of shaman as a priest as well as psychoanalyst is not necessarily hereditary but is chosen by the direct intervention of the tutelary. To be a shaman, it also sometimes depends upon the wisdom and learning ability of a person to imitate and follow the ritual performance accurately and quickly. Memory also plays an important role for a newly trained shaman because to perform a ritual in Saora religious traditions one has to remember the large number of names of the dead ancestors and genealogy of many families are most essential for every ritual invocation.

The selection of shaman among the Hill Saoras is followed in three different ways: voluntary, call of the tutelary by making ill, and through dream. Those who are willing to choose to become shaman at their own mercy are trained by sitting besides the senior shamans during the
performance of ritual events. The process of learning is made through practical demonstration. But before one begins to learn she or he has to make a small sacrifice in the name of ancestral spirits near the Idital (the icon). Many of the shamans learn from their father or mother in this voluntary category. Second, the number of shamans selected through the call of tutelary is the common customs. These shamans are more powerful and important than any other categories. They basically learn out of trance and possession of spirits. All the important rituals are performed by this category of shamans but with the help of an intermediary whom the shamans marry in Underworld-the abode of tutelary. Third, some shamans learn or selected through dream by supernatural or ancestral spirits.

Shamans are different from one another in the extent to which they are capable of communicating with the spirit world and in the ceremonies to which they are qualified to conduct. However, all the shamans of the Hill Saoras are competent to offer some sort of sacrifice. Majority of the shamans in the Hill Saora society are healer. They are categorized according to their performance of rituals and sacrifices.

First, the most important is known as Raudakumar. The term raud means to faint, to be in trance, to be under the power of spirit. It means the shamans' capability of divination. They are shamans who married to tutelary and learn their duties in dream and divination. They are qualified to perform great rituals like Doripur, Uyungpur, Ratupur and Jamalpur and can deal all the small routine matters that constantly arise. However, Raudakum (male shaman) do not perform or assist in funerary rites except Ajorapur and the ill omen deaths such as suicide, murder or accident. The Raudakumboi (the female shaman) unlike, her male counter part can not perform the rituals like Ratupur, Ajorapur and the ill omen-the very powerful malevolent ghost spirits
especially in healing ceremonies. However, there are some exceptional cases as Elwin observed that the *Raudakummar* who takes part in every rites of the *Saora* tradition.\(^{10}\)

Second, this category of shamans is called *Guarkum*. The work of *Guarkum* shaman is largely confined to funerary rites and name giving ceremony. They learn all the acts of performances through divination at the time of performance but not from dream. Although it is named after the second mortuary rites (*Guarkum*) all the funerary rituals like *Abguite*, *Guar*, *Karja* and *Lajjap* are performed by this category of shaman. The *Guarkummar* can also perform the Name-giving (*Aannyimun*) ceremony if the name given to the child is that of an ancestor. The women take the dominant position in this category of shamanism. Being a funerary shaman is a very difficult job, which needs patience and determination. Because, the ritual involves elaborate performance and very long duration as has already been mentioned that *Guar* need two days but *Karja* continuously for three days with long duration in the possession of spirit.

There are two other shamans who perform some specialised but assistant roles in funerary rites are called *Sigamar* and *Idai*. Of course, they do not get full status of a shaman by the *Saoras* ritual traditions. The man who burn the dead body with his special expertise is called *Sigamar* and *Idai* is the assistant especially selected from one's own lineage (*Birinda*) who acts only on funerary rituals of the *Birinda*. In fact, the *Idai* is not a full-fledged shaman but an acolyte.

Third, there are specialist shaman who only performs the rituals like *Ajorapur*-the stream/water deity and similar rites. The ritual *Ajorapur* is

---

\(^{10}\) Elwin, 1955, op. cit., p. 131.
performed in the occasion when children fall sick or a pregnant woman fallen into sick. These categories of shamans are not capable of propitiation of spirit but only preside over buffalo sacrifice, medicine (Regam) administration and only made incantations. The reason behind it is that they do not have intermediaries but only taken away the evil omen from the sick.

Fourth, *Tanaikum*, is a shaman who performs black magic and mechanically tested to discover the hostile magic and magician. The term *Tanai* means charm or sorcery. *Tanaikummar* is basically acts for the remedy of the power or person inflicted by sorcery. But it has also been told by Ekep Dalbehera of *Dungdungar* that a sorcerer is expert in both cause and cure of sorcery. Both male and female shamans are found in this category. However, in comparison to women the numbers of men witch shaman are many. They are not capable of possession of spirits due to the fact that they are not supported by tutelary. They can divine only by mechanical means such as bow or the winnowing fan.

Fifth, there are shamans who can perform the rituals related to healing. The role of this category of shamans in *Saora* society is very important. They are only specialised in supernatural medicines. The numbers of these shamans are highest and have good appreciation in the society of the Hill *Saoras*. They frequented the house of the sick for the performance of sacrificial rituals, even for a small illness. In common name they are called *Regamkummar/bai* by the *Saora*. But they are actually called in the name, the kind of healing rituals they perform in different time and different places. They are only providing supernatural medicine and treatment but not necessarily herbal or natural medicine.

The shamans in the Hill *Saora* society are divided on the basis of their means or modes of performance and treatment into four categories.
i. The shamans perform the rituals through divination with propitiation of spirit or with the help of tutelary;

ii. Shaman who take away the ill omen without propitiation/trance but only with some incantations; having no tutelary;

iii. Through both divination of spirit and medicine administration; and

iv. Extracting the intruded objects or spirits by magical and mechanical means. This refers to the witch-shaman.

The shamans are classified according to the kinds of rituals they perform and methods employed to perform the rituals but this classification is not exclusive, because it has been already mentioned that the nature of variations of rituals' performances, practices and the name of the deities which differ from village to village and region to region. Although a shaman has performed several rituals, he or she is called by the name of ritual for which he or she performs. Hence, exclusive classification of shamanism is a little difficult task in the Hill Saoras society.

There are many shamans do their performance in Saora religious events but all of them are not having same reputation. There are good or more powerful and there are less powerful shamans. The people according to their effective healing effects and performance can judge this in ritual occasions. In other words, how the shamans can well influence the supernatural and ancestral spirits in the rituals can assess their effectiveness. However, the convincing power of a shaman depends upon his/her tutelary and capacity of learning and wisdom.

The number of female shaman in performing the healing rituals of the Hill Saoras is numerically superior to the male. In the treatment of sick a shamanin finds greatest scope and fulfilment in the Hill Saora society. The
number and popularity of female shaman (Kudanboi) in the religious and therapeutic tradition is better than the male. Referring to her practices related to treatment of sick Elwin wrote that "her methods of diagnosis and cure are varied and ingenious; she uses the fan and the lamp, the bow and the sword, hand full of rice and pots of wine. Now she dances in ecstasy, now lies lost to the world in trance. When she has found the cause of disease or tragedy, she is at infinite pain to heal the wounds; she sucks infections from her patient's body, burn it with flashes of gun powder, bites and kisses it manages it to expel the evil orders of the sacrifice of goat or buffalo, direct the village artist (Italmar) in the composition of sacred pictures flatter to the spirits, dedicate pots, speaks healing and consoling words. She works ceaselessly, for she is inspired not only by pride in her profession but by her love for the tribal community she lives". 11

To the sick and lonely, the shamanin is the nurse and friend, the guide, the analyst. To the strangers eye she may be just one more dirty old village woman; but to the Saora whose life is broken by tragedy, she may well be an angel of strength and consolation.

7.4 THERAPEUTIC TRADITIONS AND TECHNIQUES OF THE HILL SAORAS

The methods of healing and treatment always depend upon the causes. In indigenous societies the causes of illness are often associated with supernaturalism. There has been a strong faith on supernatural method of healing and no cure is possible without the mercy of supernaturals; whatever the quantity or kinds of medicine one may take. Hence, the illness caused by supernatural agents is cured by supernatural methods of treatment. As an indigenous community the Hill Saoras associates diseases and ailments with

supernatural and magical reasoning which also have been cured by employing the same methods of treatment. Thus, the cause and cure are rested with the same agencies. However, to cure the diseases caused due to sorcery may have certain variations as far as the experience of the Hill Saoras is concerned. The methods of healing and treatment are classified according to the types and causes of illness.

The Hill Saora has its own methods of treatment and healing practices unlike the modern mainstream societies. The indigenous therapeutic tradition may be divided into the following categories: (i) healing through supernatural methods; (ii) healing through magical technique; (iii) healing by herbal and natural medicines; and (iv) healing through bone and massage therapies. Before administering any therapy over the patient the first step must be followed in the processes is diagnosis. Hence, an elaboration of the indigenous concept of diagnosis of the Hill Saoras is necessary.

• Diagnosis

A correct diagnosis gives correct medicines and treatment. Diagnosis is the first step of treatment to be inevitably followed in all the therapeutic traditions: from modern allopathic to the indigenous or alternative systems of therapy. It seems common to every system of medicine-indigenous or modern to trace the exact cause of illness. But the techniques adopted for diagnosis are variable in different systems and sub-systems. Especially, it varies completely, in the indigenous traditions in which supernaturalism played a key role in causing and curing the illness.

In indigenous therapeutic traditions of the Hill Saoras the cause of affliction are traced through the supernatural agents i.e., Sonnuns, as they are the cause of illness. In their therapeutic tradition of magico-religious techniques an enquiry is made at the beginning or before the celebration of
the main healing rituals. The inquiry is made to test the cause of illness and responsible Sonnums (deity or spirit). The tutelary or the responsible Sonnums possessed on the shamans through trance will say the reason why he or she has made the person ill and remedial measures to be taken. This process is called Yangate or some places known by tedung. Inquiries are made with the help of a winnowing fan handful of rice, which the shaman rubs round with its right hand. Through this process the shaman called the spirit and possessed by it. This helps to persuade the gods, as a shaman told me and it seems to induce by its rhythmic and slightly hypnotic motion a state of trance which is the basic condition for all a shaman’s commerce with the unseen world.12 There are various methods of test adopted by different shamans according to their learning; one among them is in Bel (Aegle marsupium) leaf with unbroken husked rice. However, the diagnosis made by supernatural method suggests the same method of treatment. The types of treatment are also prescribed by the same supernatural agents. No natural medicines and treatments are seen to be prescribed through supernatural method of diagnosis.

There are a group of shamans who perform the healing rituals without spirit possession. They are regarded as less powerful and inexpensive shamans, who have no tutelary. These shamans in real practice diagnose the patients by observing the natural symptoms and with personal intuition in the patients' body and then associate them with the supernatural agents while suggesting for remedies. Because, the practitioners have developed certain familiarity due to their regular involvement in ritual practices and can guess which Sonnums have caused the affliction, from the bodily symptoms of a patient. The case of Atnangdakansumpur for Empuri by the Ekep was one such

12 Elwin, 1955, op. cit., p. 244.
example. This was a case of rheumatism in which the symptoms were pain in knee joints, body ache, headache, swelling, fever, etc. However, in the healing rituals of the Hill Saoras diagnosis is an essential part. A case study of Manasi Raika in this context has given clear understanding about the indigenous concept of diagnosis.

Case Study: *Yangate* (Diagnosis/test)

Manasi Raika /Male /62/Sagaad narrated about the methods of diagnosis (Yangate/Tedung) to trace the cause and remedies of illness in the Hill Saoras healing tradition. He said, “The most common method and means used by the shaman is bel leaf. The objects necessary are bel leaf, rice mostly unbroken, a winnow fan, a ritual lamp with Karanja (*Pongamia glabra*) oil. A shaman lights a lamp and places it in a winnowing fan half filled with rice. The bel leaves taken one by one, in each it puts unbroken rice. It holds the leaf in the flame of the lamp and invokes the names. The invocation starts by guessing the name and narrowing the field of possibility. For instance, it begins by taking the names of gods, ancestors, and sorcerer. If the name of ancestor is hinted at then the individuals’ names are recited. It gets its answer if the grain of the rice in the bel leaf is turning black and sticking to the leaf or by the way the leaf curls in the heat.” Similarly, there are other ways of diagnosis (Tedung) such as by bow, sword or pots of testing and diagnosing the person who has fallen sick.

Tutelary is the King or God of the Underworld called by a number of terms, such as *Ildasum, Raudasum, Mannisum, Sedasum,* etc., which varies from village to village. In the Sagaad and Puttasingi area the most frequent reference made to the name of tutelary is *Ildasum* and next is *Raudasum.* The shaman summoned and persuaded to the tutelary to discover the cause of disease and responsible spirits in the Underworld. Tutelary in fact brings the spirits or
ghosts upon the shaman. The shaman in possession has dialogue with the living world and representing the spirits convey the reason for the cause of illness and also suggest the remedy. The upshot of the whole business usually is that the shaman is able to tell his or her patient who has attacked him or her, and why, and what ought to be done about it.\textsuperscript{13}

In November 26, 2002, a diagnosis ritual was conducted by Putti Dalbehera, a Kudanboi of Dungdungar sitting to perform Tedung (diagnosis) at the house of Jamana whose three months old baby boy is suffering from fever. She is initiating invocation with husked rice, Mahua leaf and an earthen pot with Salap wine as shown in image no. 60.

Another case of ritual diagnosis is directly observed at Sagaad performed by Despa Sabar.

Case study: 23\textsuperscript{rd} January 2003.

Shamanin: Despa Sabar/ Female/ 65/ Sagaad.

Patient: Gumsari Gamang/ Female/ 62/ Sagaad.

Gumsari is suffering from serious eye pain and headache. She has invited Despa for Tedung to trace the cause of her illness. The shamanin invokes spirits by using a winnow fan, with husked rice, a burning lamp and bel leaf. She is taking a bel leaf putting unbroken rice on it moves around the flame of the lamp and invokes the name of Sonnums and narrowing the chance. Finally, she found the answer that Uyungsum has caused the illness. The photograph image no-61 shows Despa holding rice in bel leaf on the winnow fan performing the Tedung right in front Gumsari, the patient, is sitting.

\textsuperscript{13} Elwin, 1955, op. cit., p. 243.
Ritual Diagnosis (Yangate): Tracing the cause of illness Putti a Kudanboi initiating invocation to detect the cause of fever of a two months old son of Jagna Sabar at Dungdungar.
Tracing the Cause of Illness: Despa Sabar, a shaman in performing Yangatel/Tedung with winnowing fan, bel leaves, rice and a burning lamp to know the cause of eye pain and headache of Gumsari Gamang who is sitting right in front.

Appeasing the Ancestors: Pasno performing Rratapur, a healing ritual for Sarjuna.
7.4.1 Healing through Supernatural Methods

Treatment of diseases caused by supernatural agents needs supernatural methods to cure. As illness is caused due to the anger and wrath of the Sonnums the first and foremost duty of the living is to make the spirit normal and happy. This needs sacrificial rituals to appease the ancestral and supernatural spirits. The supernatural spirits among the Hill Saoras can be divided into two: a divine spirits and ancestral spirits. Both of them are called by Sonnums in common usage.

The treatment given through supernatural methods have more of psychological importance than the physical one. The effectiveness of indigenous medicine therefore, lies in its psychological aspects. Hence, all of the indigenous folk medicine may be viewed as unintentional psychotherapy. The fundamentals of modern practices are found in this ancient psychotherapy curing ceremonies. The spiritual healers are served as good psychotherapists. The most fundamental role played by the Hill Saora shaman is providing psychological treatment.

The patient is made the centre of attention, made to feel cherished, given the support of powerful supernatural beings through the dialogue with the illness causing spirits and to make psychologically bolstered. However, the success of therapy depends upon the patient’s trust and faith upon the practitioner and his techniques, and ‘the power of suggestion’ is strongly brought into play. As the Hill Saora healer shaman share the common cultural traditions of the patients, naturally the patients have more faith in them. The shaman is the intermediary between the living and the dead. He or she communicates directly with the dead about the cause of illness and ask their suggestion for remedies, which he or she conveyed to the patient. The living
also talks with the dead through shaman upon whom the responsible spirits possessed through trance and got assurance through dialogue. Consequently, the patients have developed a strong sense of confidence and conviction upon the traditional healer (in this case shaman). That is why in most of the indigenous society one of the main factors for the non acceptance of modern medicine is that the traditional medicine establishes faith and assurance in the patients, while modern medicine lacks this 'sura of conviction'.

The very unity of indigenous medicine, in fact, always addresses to both body and mind, in contrast to the modern medicine. It also explains many of its results in the somatic field. The patient comes in complete harmony with nature during the course of ceremony and the universe must have a strong psychotherapeutic value goes without saying.

The dialogue process continues between the living kins and the responsible spirit. The spirit speaks in the mouth of a shaman while she or he is in trance with the possession of that spirit. The conversation continues to convince and appease the spirit. Consolations are given to normalise the anger of the spirit and to give sacrificial offering according to its wishes.

The spirits during the course of dialogue sometimes show its disagreement and unhappiness with the living members of its family. The living members try to convince by reminding the most emotional and loving moments that they shared while the spirit was alive. They also express their poor and forsaken conditions to draw the sympathy of the spirits for speedy recovery with minimum sacrifice. It means to make the ancestral spirits emotional and take its advantage to normalise its anger. The patient is also committed to fulfil the desire of spirit by good food, cloths, drinks or whatever desired by it.

---

In each and every occasion of ritual healing a sacrifice is must. If the disease is not cured the next ritual is followed by a higher sacrifice of animals. Every successive ritual is followed with higher level of sacrifices which means higher expenditure. However, the role of shaman as healer doctor is very much important that how he or she is enforcing 'the power of motivation' and convincing the spirits to take away the disease.

The offerings are made to fulfil the desire of the Sonnums and make their anger normal. The quickest way of softening an enemy or an angry person is to feed him well. To seek the help and goodwill of an ancestor or god is to appease it first, believed by the Hill Saoras. Food sacrifice especially wine of Sago palm (Caryota urens), cooked rice and meat of animals are the major item of the rituals. In early days, sorghum rice was also used for cooking. The animals sacrificed in the rituals are buffalo (Bungtel), goat (Kumme), pig (Kamboon), cow (Tanglee) and among the birds mainly fowl (Kansim) and rarely in the occasion of Karja the peacock (Mara). The good drink includes sap of Sago palm (Caryota urens), and rarely Mahua (Madhuca longifolia) liquor. Some cases the spirit asks for ornaments and cloths it left behind. The sacrificial rituals (Purpur) are varying from Sonnums to Sonnums and from ritual to ritual.

In the healing traditions the cultural belief of the Hill Saoras states that the ancestral and supernatural spirits (Sonnums) as the cause and cure of illness. This feeling immediately penetrated into the mind and psychology of the patient at any moment of sick or even a slight feeling of sickness. A psychological 'trauma' developed out of this. While having dialogue with the Sonnums in the process of ritual invocations the patient got some kind of assurance and relieve from the under world spirits who has caused illness. These dialogues, as Saora believes, are made directly between the spirits and
patient, in majority of the healing rituals. The spirits come over the shamans through propitiation directly interact with the patient.

The advantage a patient got out of these conversations with the spirit is self-conviction and assurance from the spirit to take away his illness. That in fact keeps the patient in high moral or psychic conviction and confidence, which certainly has some positive impact on the physical health of the patient. This has proven in the methods of healing through spiritual and psychiatric technique in contemporary health care practices.

Some of the case studies of the ritual/ supernatural healing are worth mentioning to substantiate the facts relating to supernatural methods of treatment among the traditional Hill Saoras. The rituals performed for healing purposes are many out of which some few case studies are observed.


Shaman: Makar Gamang /58/Male/Ganurre

Mandada was organizing the ritual for his youngest two year old son. The child was attacked by the ‘shade’, his (child’s) elder brother who died recently. The child was shocked and frequently losing consciousness, because the shade of his brother has made him frightened and ill. The reason, as Mandada stated, was that he was passing through the village road along with his (youngest) son in the evening. In the same night the child developed fever and fright.

Makar was the performing shaman. In the process of invocation he took the name of several persons of child’s Underworld relatives and ancestors to come and accept the offerings made in the ritual and makes the child free from their evil omen. The performance of this ritual is usually taken more than three hours and three phases of invocations and offerings. Before
the sacrifice is made, the pig was fed with rice. It is believed that if the pig
does eat the rice, the spirit for whom the sacrifice is organised has accepted
that happily. A pig was then sacrificed and the blood and the head of it were
offered to Rratusum. The meat of the sacrificial animal and rice was cooked
and offered in the final phase of the ritual.

The participation of birinda relatives in the ritual is the general norm.
Mandeda invited all his birinda members but only men. Rratupur is only
performed by male shamans. Another most important thing is that there is a
taboo that women do not eat the meat of pig. However, the sacrificial food
was shared by the entire participant in the ritual sites and whatever left
brought to home and enjoyed by all in the family including small girls but not
by the girls after puberty.

Immediately the sacrificial food is shared the shaman has directed to
the entire participant to stay at that place any more. It is believed that the
spirits (Sonnums) are visiting to that place frequently and their actions are
very dangerous. So no one should fall prey to his or her eyes. Hence, to leave
the place as soon as possible is advisable to avoid any misfortune further.

Case study: Nov. 02. Patient: Indanga Karji /55/Male/Sagaad.
Shaman: Meduru Gamang/63/ Male/Sagaad.
Indanga was suffering from high fever and pain in his stomach. After
diagnosis made by Meduru, the ailment was caused by Rratusum. It is a
malevolent spirit. The Hill Saoras regards it as the very dangerous ghost spirit.
Its attack always makes sudden and serious problem to the victim. The nature
of Rratusum is generally to attack in isolated place and preferably in the
darkness. The symptoms shown at the afflicted are sudden unconscious, fever
with nervousness and timidity, coughing of blood, stomach (Kampoong) pain,
blindness, etc. Indanga was coming from Karanjasing, a village situated more
than two kms across the Sagaad top hill, in late evening. When he was passing through the road he was caught by Rratusum. The reason was that Indanga was passing through the ritual site where offering is generally made to Rratusum. When he came closer to the spot, he suddenly got shocked and afraid of. On arriving at home he developed high fever and pain in his stomach. Meduru, the shaman after diagnosis has discovered that Indanga fall preys to the eyes of Rratusum and falls ill.

A ritual was organised by Indanga’s family in the next day. As pig is preferred animal by Rratusum the same is usually sacrificed on the occasion. Pig is believed to be the vehicle of Rratusum. The other objects used in the ritual were turmeric powder, a small basket of rice (runku), wine of Sago palm (Caryota urens), cooked rice and meat. Meduru made the offering to the spirit who causes illness. To the surprise, in the next day morning Indanga was looking quite well.

Case study: 14th Nov. 02. Patient: Lasari Gamang /60/Male/Railpadar.
Shaman: Ganjila Sabar (Karji) /62/Male/Sagaad.
Lasari has fallen sick. His father Laina invited Ganjila, a shaman and arranged a ritual for curing his son. Lasari was suffering from high fever and head ache. It was caused by Rratusum as noticed by the shaman. Ganjila started invocation by throwing the rice on the child. He smeared or polished with rice on the body of his child patient. In the process he invoked different village names and invited their spirits, to accept the offering, and take away the affliction made by any one of them to Lasari. The village names recited are Anjarsing, Karanjasingi, Tarbel, Rungrungba, Alangda, Sagaad, Railpadar, Gudada, Putta, and Turudrum (Mahulabania).

The offerings are made both in-house and outside, the isolated village road. The in-house performance is preliminary in nature where the presence
of patient is mandatory. The major sacrificial ritual is offered outside the village road in which a pig was sacrificed to appease the ancestral spirits. *Rratusum* is the most powerful malevolent spirit. The meaning of undertaking the sacrificial ritual outside the village is to take precaution and show the way to the spirits to their respective abode without taking any chance to affect other villagers. In fact, some body that may come on the way while the spirits are passing through may fall victim to the eye of the spirits and fall sick.

The place of worship is called *Greiginding*, the place is demarcated near some important trees such as *Tamarind* (*Tamarindus indica*), *Aba* (*Madhuca longifolia*), *Sargia* (*Shorea robusta*), and *Kulpadal* (*Aegle marsupium*). However, all the trees not necessarily to be remain together at the place.

After the end of the rituals the shaman advised to the participant to leave the place as soon as all the ceremonial work and sharing of food is finished. Even in other normal days people generally avoid to pass alone through those ritual sites not to become the victim of the evil eyes of the ancestors. This shows their sensitivity and fear toward the ancestors and their place of worship. The *Saora* believe that a little disrespect, even unknowingly, committed against the spirits world can cause illness to the living.

**Case study:** 06 Dec. 02.  
Patient: Sarjuna Raika /45/ Male/ Guddada.  
Shaman: Pasno Karji /64/Male/ Sagaad.

Sarjuna developed fever in the evening after he return from the swidden field (*Baroohn*) cutting the ripen sorghum (*Kamboor*). The fever was continuing since then and getting high. He invited Pasno, a typical aged shaman to perform the healing ceremony to mollify *Rratusum*.

The ritual is celebrated in both in-house and at the roadside of the village. The duration of the in-house ritual is performed for short period and
preliminary in nature. The major part of this ritual is celebrated in outside road of the village.

*Sarjuna* invited the *birinda* members for their participation in the ritual, which is very important in case of outside performance. Pasno continued invocation of the name of villages and its ancestors namely, Marakoi, *Sagaad*, Railpadar, Alangda and Angra. He invited the *Sonnums* to the ritual place to accept the offering. During his prayer he requested the spirits to take away the fever (*asu*) from Sarjuna and make him well. His invocation goes “hey *Sonnumsanji*, hey *Juunjji* (grand fathers), *Buyangji* (brothers) why did you make Sarjuna ill. Do not be unkind, as you know he is the only earning member of his family. His children will die out of hunger. Grant him good health at least for the sympathy to his family. He is the only working person of his family and is not going for collecting his matured Sorghum (*Kamboor*), since four days it is going to be damaged by *Tangleejan* (bullocks and cows). Nothing will remain to feed his family and children. Hey, ancestors (*Sonnumanjji*) come and accept your favourite *Kamboon* (pig), take wine we brought for you, drink it and be happy and forgive us if we disrespect you, forgive us if we could not recognise you when you were moving on the road or forest. Sarjuna had no intention to disrespect you. So, come and enjoy the food and drink that is brought for you despite his poor livelihood (*Mandregna*) condition and take his fever away”. The shaman was trying to convince and appease the spirits through invocation and incantation. The photograph image no-62 shows *Pasno* busy with invocation and offering of sacrificial blood of pig and behind him the Birinda relatives of Sarjuna preparing the food for final offering.

In the next day Sarjuna was found well observed by this researcher. Whether it was psychological or any thing else is really very difficult to judge.
But the dialogues between the dead and the living and the counselling of the shaman have definitely had some bearing on the psychology of a patient. Through conversation and invocation the patient gets an emotional and moral assurance and strength which might help to overcome from the 'psychological trauma'.

Here is another kind of illness called Dhanurja (rheumatism) which is given supernatural therapy. The case study of Empuri is stated below:

Case study: 16 Dec. 02.

Ritual: Atnangdakansumpur

Patient: Empuri Gamang/60/Female/Sagaad.

Shaman: Ekep Dalbehera/58/Male/Dungdungar.

Empuri, the second wife of Limada Gamang had gone to collect red-gram (Ragan) from the swidden field (Baroon). She came back home after gathering and carrying some red-gram. Suddenly in the evening she developed a fever and pain in her whole body especially serious pain in her legs. Her major illness was swelling legs and joint pain. She was not able to fold her legs. The problem persisted for seven days and got worsened day by day. The reason for the illness was that a Sonnums who was responsible to make Danurja (locally called Anthuganthi Bata jwara) attacked Empuri. This is a kind of rheumatism.

The offering ceremony was organised in consultation with Ekep, the performing shaman. The ritual was performed both in in-house and outside-near the water stream. The performance started on the annalam (the rice pounding hole). The objects used at in-house performance were paddy, husked rice, Mahua liquor, and chilli for offering. Besides, these, some roots and barks of the plants are grinded and massaged on the head, back and the affected parts of the legs. The plants used for medicinal purposes called in Sora are Kereda, Anarja, Atnangdatamna, Ayulim. This medicine is not taken
orally but only massaged in the forehead and legs. The image no-63 and 64 has shown the first phase in-house performance of the ritual.

Secondly, performance outside home is done in three phases: (i) before sacrificing a pig, (ii) with blood after sacrificing the pig, and (iii) offering of cooking meat and rice. The presence of the patient in the outside performance is not mandatory.

The second phase started nearby water stream of Sagaad. By arranging a kg of rice in a small basket, some two three kgs of paddy in a plastic bag, a herbal paste mixed which was already used in massaging of patients body (in first phase), rice on Siali (Laiyal) leaves, and Mahua liquor in a bottle Ekep started incantations of the names of ancestors and deities and names of the surrounding villages. After fifteen minutes the shaman fed the rice to the pig as shown in image no-65. It is believed that once the animal eats the rice means the deities for whom the sacrifice is organised has accepted the animal for offering. The pig was then sacrificed and the blood and head of the animal are kept in offering as shown in image no-66 and 67 respectively. The rest of the meat is taken for cooking. The rice is also cooked separately. The cooked meat and rice are also offered in the ritual. At the end all the Birinda members participated in the ritual shared the food and wine shown in image no-68. As soon as the ritual is over it is advisable not to remain thereafter for long but of course after feasting. The party then departed in a row which is shown in image no-69.

The sacrifice was in fact given to Uyungsum (Sun deity) and Manisum (Jungle deity) as was evident from the invocation of the shaman. However, after six days Epmuri was found walking slowly with the support of a stick.
Atnangdakansumpur: Ekep performing in-house ritual for Atnangdakansum for Empuri Gamang of Sagad who is suffering from Dhanuraj locally called Anthuganthibata.

Ekep the healing shaman is tracing the affected parts and giving some massage therapy with some herbal paste.
Feeding the animal (pig) before sacrifice

Sacrificing the Kamboon (pig) to Atnangdakansum
Invoking and Appeasing the *Sonnum* by blood, cocked rice, meat and wine.
Farewell from the Sonnums: The Birinda relatives of Limada, the husband of Empuri, are leaving the place of worship at the end.
• Economy, Rituals and Sacrifices

The religion is a very expensive affair. It is a heavy item in the budget of the Hill Saoras. The frequent rituals in each and every occasion, however small or big it may be, have the draining effect on their economy. In the word of Elwin "religion is the most fruitful cause of Saora indebtedness." Without ritual offering and sacrifice religion of the Hill Saoras is meaningless. Not a single event is seen without a sacrifice. They are inevitable part of supernatural obligations. Throughout the year majority of the sacrifices are offered in healing rituals. Because if some one in the family is ill, nothing can stop the Saoras to go to any extent to cure him or her. He is more sensitive if any of his children fall sick. As soon as the shaman says for a sacrificial animal he immediately reaches at the door step of Dorns, the local scheduled caste, who usually provide them the animals. Except fowl and rarely pig other sacrificial animals are purchased from the Doms. The Saora has rarely had the sufficient cash to pay and ultimately promise to pay in kind at the time of forthcoming harvesting of crops with usual interest. He has to face a hard bargain as he is in stress and anxiety not because of poverty but because of fearness to the wrath of the spirits (Sonnums) who causes illness. He tried to appease the spirits to get back the health of his relative as soon as possible. Through this process the Hill Saora has to face bilateral exploitation. One by the Dom traders to whom the harvested products are given with very low price as per the hard bargaining. Very little may left for the poor Saora for his family consumption. Because for them the supernaturals are first and family has to bear with hunger. The other side of exploitation is from the bargaining of the ancestors (Sonnums). It is said that the ancestors are greedy for meat and wine. No ritual is performed or possible without a sacrifice. It has been

observed that in almost every ritual the demand of the supernaturals are essentially made for meat and wine. Each successive demands made by them are higher if the same disease is not taken away in the former ritual sacrifice. The other demands made by the ancestral spirits are cloths, food, ornaments, agricultural products or equipments, musical instruments, etc., which were under their possession and had direct attachment while they were alive. However, these items are offered only for titular purpose without much financial investment.

The ancestors are not only causing afflictions or illness to the relatives because of the breach of taboo or punishment for their negligence but some times visit their near and dear ones expressing their love and affection. Whatever the intention may be each and every arrival of the Sonnums is caused with illness. And to cure the illness means to bear the cost of sacrifice. As for the Hill Saoras principle of ancestors first, an honorary ritual sacrifice is organised to appease and bid farewell to the Sonnums. This has clearly reflected the nature and cost of Saoras religion.

The cost of sacrifice and rituals can also be judged from the types of shaman consulted for the purpose. There are expensive shamans and shamans who are not expensive. The less expensive shaman, who has no tutelary and cannot be in touch or interaction with the other world, performs the ritual only based on presumption and acts as the mere taker of omen. As he recommends 'cheap and simple sacrifice,'16 he is preferred by the poorest people. It is believed that the less expensive shaman may not be much effective in taking away the ill. However, the number of expensive and important shamans is many. She/he tries to offer higher and superior sacrifice and not let the chance to make the spirits unhappy or discontented. He or she

prescribes big sacrifices like buffalos and goats, painting of icons, building of shrines, etc. To do the things well all precautions are taken so that the ancestors would not feel inferior treatment to them and won't retreat the problem with the patient.

During rainy season the cases of illness-fever, malaria, dysentery, could cough, viral fever are comparatively much higher than in other season. Hence, the major parts of the income of the Hill Saoras are devoured during this period in sacrificial healing rituals to get back the health of the patient soon. This is the period people are seriously busy in agriculture work. This is the period of impoverishment and shortage. However, in this situation and deficiency in food and other requirement of survival the burden of the ancestors on their living kins are very heavy. Because the number of fever, malaria, dysentery, could cough, viral fever is comparatively much higher in rainy season than in other seasons of the year. Sacrifices after sacrifices are offered to the deities and spirits to make the person well. The losses are heavy can be accounted on two different angles: lose of man-days during the busiest period of agriculture operation and huge expenditure of money and energy in sacrifices during the lean season when all crops and products are almost exhausted and only little amount might have left for household consumption. The deficiency of cash and kind during this season are heavy.

Some healing rituals are organised coincidentally during the time of crop harvesting are managed little comfortably but during rainy season when occurrence of the number fever and diseases are high the expenditure is definitely being higher. As a consequence, the exploitation of the Hill Saoras by the local Dom traders, who provides sacrificial animals on loans, becomes agonized. The future of the crops which is yet in growing stage is put into ill-fate.
To organise a healing ritual a person has to sacrifice minimum two days one day for the preparation and purchasing of materials including sacrificial animals and the second day for the offering of the sacrifices. On the day of sacrifice minimum one male member from each family of the same birinda has to attend as per the tradition hence the most precious time of minimum seven to eight persons during the most busiest time of agriculture may costs much to the Hill Saoras.

The expenditure meted out per ritual is ranging around Rs. 200/- to Rs. 1000/- depending upon the cost of sacrificial animals. This has excluded the man-days loss and expenditure on other necessary items which are available with the households like rice, paddy, cloths, danki (new earthen pot), etc. The healing rituals observed during the fieldwork mentioned above where the majority of sacrificial animals were pigs. The cost of a pig is varied from Rs. 200/- for a very small one and Rs. 400/- to Rs 500/- for a big one, hence the average price is taken per pig for calculation is Rs. 300/-. The cost of buffalo is much higher and the average cost of a buffalo can be Rs. 700/-. This cost is estimated excluding the skins and horns because at the time of purchasing it has been the usual transaction that the Saora has to return the horns and skins to the Doms therefore, their cost cannot be calculated.

Similarly, if a family offer on an average six to seven healing rituals per annum the expenditure necessary only for sacrificial ritual is Rs. 1800/- to Rs. 2100/- per family. If we calculate the expenditure on other items like rice, paddy, cereals, new danki etc., the amount will go much higher. For a poor family religion is a curse than a blessing. They are continuing under

---

17 The number of persons falling in illness per annum is more than the number taken here. In fact any fever- cold and cough, stomach disorder, dysentery, and headache are treated through ritual healing. Depending upon the conditions of ecosystem and seasonality the illness occurred are more than I am calculating here.
impoverishment first by their ancestors and subsequently by the traders of sacrificial animals.

Besides, the above, another cost of religion of the Hill Saoras is not financial but psychological—the existence of fear psychosis. It has been observed that if the term Sonnum is taken by anyone it is immediately referred as if the synonym of disease. Surrounded by the ghosts and spirits of ancestral and celestial being the Hill Saoras are living with the feeling of hypochondria. This may have the suppressive impact over the minds of the people which may block the mental augmentation and elevated morale.

Besides serious financial destitution and psychological trauma, the frequent rituals and sacrifices have added good meal to the diet of the Hill Saoras. Some scholars like Elwin and Patnaik have observed that the Hill Saoras are greed for meat. But their observations do not substantiate the logic that for their greediness they organise frequent rituals and put themselves into the track of exploitation by the traders. This is very much contradictory to the idea, life styles and the societal ethics, moral and religious code of the Hill Saoras. They would never want their family to live with hunger and constant impoverishment because of their greediness.

Rituals and sacrifices have contributed a great thing despite their impoverishment. It binds the society together by association and participation in rituals for common purpose and ensures that the people are well fed at least a good meal for the day. That is why they get a good source of energy from sufficient animal protein to work hard in difficult hilly terrain and swidden field. However, as a whole the religion of the Hill Saoras is a heavy burden on their economy and cause of impoverishment.

4.2.2 Healing through Witchcraft/ Sorcery

The magical cause of illness can only be cured by magical method. The witch-shaman is called Tanaikumar who perform this category of healing rituals. He is the doctor-specialist gives treatment to the diseases and ailments caused due to the act of sorcery. Among the Hill Saoras two types of methods used by the sorcerer to make a person ill. One is ‘intrusion of spirits’ and the other one is ‘intrusion of alien substances’. Sometimes, both the ways are used to make a person ill. The treatment is given according to the ways illness is caused. However, by and large, treatments are given in majority of the cases by employing magical methods. The Tanaikummar who gives treatment adopts two ways to heal a patient. First, extract the intruded objects through magical techniques and second, through herbal medicines. The herbal medicines given are basically taken orally for vomiting through which the intruded substances comes out and not for automatic healing. However, a case study of Dasanti is given below has enough information in this regard.

Case study: 21st Oct. 02 Tanaipur: Witch-worship

Patient: Dasanti Karji/Female/59/Sagaad.

Witch-Shaman: Agadu Dalbehera/Male/56/Alangda.

Dasanti an aged woman was suffering from the actions of sorcery. About more than three months she has been suffering from joint pain, pain in knee joint, legs, backbone and elbows. After taking so much of massage therapy from Ekep, a famous bonesetter and physiotherapist of Dungdungar, her pain could not be relieved. It became severe day by day. There was unbearable pain accompanied with swelling in the knee and legs. She became very weak. After so many days of treatment Ekep got puzzled and finally suggested to contact Agadu for tracing whether the cause for Dasanti’s
ailments was due to sorcery (Tanai). However, after consulting Agadu it was confirmed that some one has applied sorcery and a Tanaipur was organized.

The offering was given to Uyungsum (Sun deity) in this occasion. A pig sacrifice was made to seek the support of Sun deity through healing process. The performance is completely in-house. The Tanaikumar made an image of a lizard and a man like image ghosts in mud. A white tassel was connected with the roof of the house. The objects used in this rituals are paddy (Sar), husked rice (Runku) and its powder, pig (Kamboon), Mahua leafs, Mahua (Madhuca longifolia) liquor and Sago palm (Caryota urens) wine, Barada leafs, Ragan (red-gram), Titin (Tamarind-Tamarindus indica) leafs, a lamp used in all preliminary rituals especially in healing rituals and a water jar used specially in Guar and Karja ceremony are most essential. A container of wooden fire was also kept for burning of the extracted elements from the patient’s body.

The diagnosis (test) started with the Tanaikumar by moving the flamed lamp around the body of Dasanti and other family members if any one of them is affected with the power of sorcery. While moving the lamp around the body of Dasanti suddenly the flame became high near knee and backbone side. Those parts are identified as affected by sorcery. The ritual performance continued for more than five hours. The intruded substances that extracted from the body of Dasanti were immediately burns in the fire.

Some of the alien objects identified by the researcher are Marisa (chilli), dried Barada and tamarind leaves, and dried Mahua leaves. Some solid types of elements extracted from middle portion of the chest, which could not be identified by the researcher. The dried leafs of Mahua (Madhuca longifolia) were taken away from the backbone area of Dasanti’s body. In the knee portion a type of insect, leafs, and seeds were expunged, which were immediately thrown over the fire.
Dasanti was also given the barks or roots of some of the plants grinded and mixed with Mahua liquor to drink. Immediately after taking medicine she started vomiting where some small pieces of roots and leaves were found, those were intruded by the sorcerer into her body.

The treatment given in this event is both medicinal and magical. Magical method mainly refers to the performance of rituals with the power of witchcraft. The rituals are offered to supernatural entity by sacrifice and incantations. Medicines of different roots and resins are given to eat as well as physical massaging. However, the herbs or shrubs used for medicine are not only having natural values but also magical value as well, which has been told by many medicine men like Rama, Punda, Jembru, Mengulu and so on.

7.4.3 Healing through Herbal and Natural Medicines

Supernatural agency makes biological or physical disorder is the basic concept of disease and illness in the worldview of the Hill Saoras. The natural and other physical concept has very poor representation in the therapeutic traditions of the community. The importance is only given on supernatural treatment. Appeasing the supernatural will automatically take away the disease of the invalid is the perception of the people. Although there are some medicinal roots and barks offered in the rituals and used in massaging and anointing the patient their oral administration is hardly seen. For instance, in Atnangdakansumpur performed for curing rheumatism of Empuri some herbal roots and barks of Kereda, Anarja, Atnangdatamna and Ayulim plants were made into paste and symbolically massaged on the body and not taken orally. Of course, these plants are now found to be used by some medicine men in natural treatment.
Ambiguities and differences of opinion exist about the existence of natural and herbal medicines in the healing traditions of the Hill Saoras. The scholars working among the Saoras have differences of opinion. Elwin, a famous scholar extensively working among the Hill Saoras has observed that the existence of indigenous pharmacopoeia as poor and doubtful while Sitapati had shown some faith and accounted considerable number of pharmacopoeia and successful herbal practitioners. Bebarta has given a balanced and rather more positive account on it.

Elwin has argued that if all the diseases and accidental ills like cuts and burns are regarded as the work of spirits, logically they should be treated by spiritual means and the Saoras should have no use of medicines and other natural methods of cure. He, however, mentioned the existence of natural medicines and methods like bind up wounds, accept aspirin for headache, concoction for fever due to heat, Chireta (Justicia paniculata) for worms and intestinal troubles, etc., in actual practice.

He has mentioned the case study of a shaman-cum-medicine man (Regammar) Ikam and his learning of medicines through tutelary and spirits in dreams. Through this case study Elwin intents to show how the administration of medicine is fundamentally magical in character and make the ritual sacrifice more effective. The five medicines Ikam learnt during the course were: Kinnaregaman (tiger-medicine) to protect people from tigers; Pararegaman an antidote to the spread of violent crime. These two have nothing to do with pharmacopoeia. The third, Ajoraregaman and fourth Doriregaman are applied externally to drive away evil spirits. Fifth, Tanairegaman has a magical rather than a medical effect. These three can only be used in association with a sacrifice. The other medicine like Kutamregaman made out of root of Kutam tree is used to restore a crop damaged by Labosum.
In all these medicines Elwin has observed that the administration of medicine is magical in character, designed to reinforce the effect of sacrifice and prayer.\footnote{Verrier Elwin, 1955, pp. 258-263.}

He also pointed out the practices of numbers of minor remedies given by the Hill Saoras. But none of these remedies are efficacious, and may indeed be positively dangerous, unless they accompany the proper sacrifices. Because an arrogant display of confidence in one's own powers may well offend the Sonnums is regarded as Erssee by the Hill Saoras. Expressing his ambiguity over the existence of natural and other techniques of therapy Elwin states "I am very doubtful whether this is so at least among the Hill Saoras. It is true that they have a number of remedies, such as the application of heat and bandaging, and know a number of healing herbs, but theses are always used in connexion with sacrifice, and most of the 'medicines' which are applied externally cannot have any possible direct effect on the patient's body.\footnote{Verrier Elwin, 1955, p. 258.}"

Sitapati in his account has seen a considerable pharmacopoeia with the Hill Saoras and has seen "successful medical practitioners using some of the Saoras drugs with satisfactory results."\footnote{G.V. Sitapati Pantulu, 1943, 'The Soras,' Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society, Vol. XIV, p. 16.} He has cited an example of a form of treatment for epilepsy, which combines all the different methods of cure. The shaman performed Kannipur with a buffalo sacrifice and made a string of the beads of the Canavalia ensiformis, and after chanting over it the necessary incantations tied it round the neck of his patient. He prepared a medicine from the following formula: seed and root of Canavalia ensiformis; roots of Tinospera cordifolia, bark of Dalbergia latifolia, bark of Cipadessa fruticosa; root of an unidentified plant called samapuri, mustard. He reduced these to powder...
and the patient had to take two doses a day before meals for a fortnight. During this period he had to avoid the flesh of the peafowl, wild hog and hare. At the end of the fortnight there was a further ceremony.\textsuperscript{22}

Bebarta’s paper is nothing but the review of Elwin’s and Sitapati account. He has, however given a balanced view by saying that although supernaturalism plays a very important role in causing and curing the ‘invalid’ there are some instances of people taking practical and natural therapy.\textsuperscript{23}

After a careful observation of the above scholars and their works on the healing traditions of Hill \textit{Saoras} the most important thing found is that no one among these scholars seems to have explored the pharmacopoeia and the herbal and natural therapeutic knowledge of the Hill \textit{Saoras} consistently and consciously with special focus. All of them over emphasised on supernatural and religious aspects of life and healing traditions. What the present researcher has presumed is that had there been a special initiative taken by any scholars to explore the natural and herbal medical knowledge and the pharmacopoeia of Hill \textit{Saoras} besides their supernatural knowledge there would have been some valuable information gathered on the subject. Surprisingly, no one even mentioned the most effective knowledge and technique of bone-setting and other orthopaedic therapeutic practices of the Hill \textit{Saoras}.

As a forest dwelling community living on hilly terrains and forests most of their works are done on hill slopes and forest clad for their survival and subsistence. It is found obvious that during the course of working on the

\textsuperscript{22} ibid., p.8.
swidden plots and forests the chances of getting bone fracture, injury and other bone related problems does occur. In the early days people were living in isolation from the mainstream world and were not aware about the facilities and care available in the hospitals. At that period, even today, it was very much difficult to reach at the government hospitals for any orthopaedic treatment by passing over several hills and ghats by foot for more than 27 kms without proper road communication and conveyance. The question occurs that how those problems were/is taken care of and by whom if the Hill Saoras were completely relying on supernaturals? This researcher has found so many bone-setters and medicine men giving natural, herbal and physical therapy some of with whom he shared major part of his time. So many cases have been observed from the case studies collected with Ekep, an effective bone-setter and therapist from whom so many people received treatment and got well.

Since Elwin’s time a lot many things have changed. There have been little shift or change in the process of thinking from the supernatural therapy to the natural one. As Christianity and modernisation crept into the Saora territory with the impact of which the minds and attitude of the people toward modern therapy slowly changed. The natural or biological conception of illness very slowly developed along with the supernatural concept of illness in due course of time. That may be the reason why the poor knowledge of pharmacopoeia developed into better and useful resources in the natural healing processes. But that does not necessarily mean that the Hill Saoras brought this knowledge from outside and they had no knowledge on it. Almost all medicine men interviewed have informed that all these medicinal knowledge are of their own Saora knowledge (Sora Birna Ganlama).
Besides the expert specialists and medicine men, there are many people in the Saora villages who hold some sort of knowledge of herbal and natural medicines. As a forests dwelling community the Hill Saoras interaction with the forests and forests ecosystem makes them familiarity with the medicinal and other useful qualities of different plants and trees. During the fieldwork it is experienced that many common people to who are not known as medicine men, knew some useful remedies for some common illness. Many of the middle aged and young Saoras have knowledge of medicine for contraception and conception which in fact is working effectively. Not only that there are many medicine men, which know medicines for big problems and provide their services if any one comes to them. They offer treatment to the diseases like epilepsy, tuberculosis, rheumatism, jaundice, dysentery, diarrhoea, small pox and chicken pox, cholera, leprosy, etc. besides common cold and fever. However, the effectiveness of their treatment is not carefully observed all the cases. They have accumulated good source of knowledge on pharmacopoeias during the course of their practice. The case study of the medicine men and their prescriptions and knowledge are given in appendix in a tabular form.

Since ancient time the Hill Saoras have been living in the cradle of forests and as the foster children of it. All kinds of their need are fulfilled from the forests. It is the store house of numerous medicinal plants and herbs. Living inside the forests ecosystem since time immemorial the Hill Saoras have developed a deep-rooted knowledge of various plants, roots, heaves, herbs and some parts of animal bodies, which are available particularly in their immediate surrounding used as medicine to cure many common, chronic diseases and serious ailments. They have accumulated this therapeutic knowledge and use them to manage the health and illness for their self-sustained survival. This folk medicinal knowledge has the close
Punda Gamang a famous medicine man showing Allang and a Devaru plant in his herbal garden
Punda Gamang, a famous Regammar (medicine man) showing his stock of roots and herbs kept in a basket.
A renowned medicine man, Rama Sabar of Sindhuba, showing some medicinal plants in his own herbal garden. He is also a witch medicine man.
Mandeba Raika of Gudada showing Odiyarangde, a plant used in healing mouth ulcer. He is famous for snake and dog bite and fertility related medicine.
Jikariya Raika, a medicine man, collecting *Umudin*-a medicinal plant and its roots used for curing jaundice.
A medicine man Pasito Karji of Allengal showing a medicinal herb called Resanjing (wild garlic) used for epilepsy on the top of the Barai and Rejingtal hill.
Makar, a shaman and medicine man specialised in bone-setting and children's problems.

Jemburu Gamang, an effective and famous practitioner in Sagaad and Puttasingi area. He is a convert.
Mangsira Raika of Angra is specialised in treatment of many diseases, searching for the medicinal plants.
similarity with the ayurvedic and other forms of traditional medicines developed over the period of time by the non-tribal population in India. Some medicinal plants and their use by the Hill Saoras collected from the medicine men are given in appendix. The pharmacopoeia knowledge of the Hill Saoras this area is both of their own forefathers and the Saoras of other (their neighbouring villages) areas like Guma, Atarsing, Jungjung. Some the specialists are referring to their learning from those areas i.e., outside their own territory but not outside of their own community.

7.4.4 Bone and Massage Therapies

Traditionally as a shifting cultivator and gatherer community the working field of the Hill Saoras are hill slopes and forests. While working hard in difficult hilly terrains and forests they are not free from orthopaedic and other physical ailments. The occurrence of disease and ailments are closely related with the immediate living and working environment. As an indigenous community living in isolated forest clad since ancient time the Hill Saoras have evolved their own technique of therapy to deal with those orthopaedic problems and other physical ailments. Although all types of diseases, physical injuries and ailments are associated with supernatural cause the wider practice of the physical therapy and bone setting among the Hill Saoras is giving ample evidence to the naturalistic treatment and cure. Hence, the effectiveness, acceptability and viability of these therapeutic practices need to be explored and examined further.

The Hill Saoras methods of giving massaging and physiotherapy are found effective. There is no ritual and sacrifice as such. Even this physical technique of therapy has no mention in their religious traditions. The most interesting is no researcher; even Elwin who has done an extensive work on the Saoras had no mention about this effective therapeutic technique. There
are many specialists available in this field some of them are giving very successful treatment through this method. There are many women including men giving massage therapy for abdominal pain, swelling, back pain, muscle pain and many other ailments related to bone, muscle and joints. The only medicine used in all the cases, as has been observed, is Karanja (Pongamia glabra) oil. Even that is only meant for external massage.

Besides that the most note worthy and effective treatment is bone setting which the researcher found and experience in some serious cases are quite remarkable and helpful for the community. Out of six persons we shared a major time with Ekep, a famous bone-setter (Jaisattamar), and directly participated in six cases of treatment.

One of the very important qualities found at Ekep was his ready acceptance to the call and attend the patient with compassion without any expectation. He treats the patient with proper care and charitable attitude. We have never seen him refusing any body those coming to him for treatment. Almost all the people irrespective of traditional or Christianised have valued the effectiveness of traditional therapy of bone-setting and massage therapy to cure the ailments by Ekep with high esteem. Besides, other types of herbalists are also now-a-days getting honoured in the whole community. However, these therapeutic knowledge and practices of Ekep are examined in different case studies.

He has learnt this therapeutic knowledge and technique from his paternal uncle Apinda, whom we met during 1994-95, and his father. Apinda was a quite and reserved person is no more in this world. He was a very effective and powerful medicine man and shaman with additional skill of being an Idimar or Itaalmar. None of the cases of his physical therapy Ekep prescribes or gives any oral medicine.
Case study: 25, Nov. 02.

Patient: Galanti Raika/70/ Female/ Christianised/ Sagaad.

Galanti an old woman aged about 70. She fell down from the terrace of her house while she was going up to fetch water from the tube well above 25 feet height of her house. Her left leg slipped down on the steep and sloppy road as a result of which her thigh bone got dislocated and knee joint slightly fractured. She was given regular therapy by Ekep as her village is very nearest to him. Interestingly, Paringa, the son of the woman is serving as an assistant (peon) in Puttasingi PHC. In stead of taking his mother to Gunupur hospital he took her to Ekep because he has more faith on the traditional therapy of Ekep than the modern expensive therapy in the poorly equipped hospital. Anyway, after four weeks of continuous treatment at her home at Sagaad she was shifted to Puttasingi where Paringa has been staying. Every Monday, the day of weekly market, Ekep visited the woman and treated her there. After about one and half months of continuous therapy she started walking in support of a stick. The researcher has visited twice with the therapist to observe the therapy at Puttasingi. The image no-70 shows Ekep giving physical massage therapy to fold and move the knee joints which became stiff due to plaster.

Paringa has a very good friendship with the researcher as during 1994-95 the researcher was staying at his house for three months. When the researcher asked the question ‘why do not you take your mother to Gunupur government hospital for treatment?’ his reply was very interesting and reflected upon some important factors which need to be mentioned here. In his reply Paringa states, “Ekep is a very expert and famous for bone-setting and massage therapy. He has been giving vary effective therapy to so many people and making them well. Even so many people come back from the
Ekep giving therapy to 70 year old Galanti (the mother of Paringa Sabar) of Sagad who got fracture in her knee joint and thigh bone.

Ekep messaging an older woman of Sagad in his stick (Kandu), his only instrument used for physiotherapy, with Karanja oil.
Gunupur hospital to take therapy from Ekep and getting well. If you are going to hospital you need to spend so much of money. As our Saora people are very poor they cannot afford to pay in the hospital. They some times ask for operation and cutting. After all the treatment given by Ekep is very good and heal more quickly than the time taken in the hospital. The doctors in hospital are not providing good care. They ask for money only. Our people do not pay anything to him (Ekep). Only after cure people pay some gift Rs. 50.00 or 100.00 or offer a feast at their mercy and pleasure.” Paringa’s opinion clarifies two vital factors. First, he has strong faith on the effectiveness of traditional therapy given by Ekep which has been confirmed in several cases. Second, conditions of poverty keep the people open to take a decision; as a result they opt for their own system of therapy. The Saora feels that the traditional orthopaedic therapy is more suitable than the modern hospitals, from all points of view. After all the ‘spirit of assurance’ plays a very crucial role while people choose their traditional healer.

Case study: 2nd Dec.02

Patient: Rayani Gamang/ Ganurre24 / 56/ Female/ Traditional

Rayani is an elderly woman aged about 55 fell down in the swidden field. She got fracture and injury in her pelvic and backbone. Of course, the fracture was of medium level. After receiving the first therapy from Ekep she describes “I was coming back home by carrying head-load of Kamboor (sorghum) from Baroon (swidden field). It was slightly heavy. While walking down my right leg was slipped as a result of which I felled down on the rock and was hurt on the back. Then I could not stand. Later, I was brought home in support of my daughter. At night the pain (asuda) persisted severely.

24 This is the original Saora name of this village frequently used by the Saoras among themselves but its name for the non-Saoras and in official documents it is known as Gundruba.
Neither could I sleep nor could sit. I then sent my daughter in the early morning next day to call Ekep for therapy. I also have no money to go to Gunupur hospital for treatment. Even, they (the hospital people) are not giving good treatment. Ekep is a big therapist (Suda Jaisattamar) and very famous."

Ekep is a famous and effective bonesetter and physiotherapist known among the people in this area. As soon as he got the message to go for giving treatment to Rayani at her village Ganurre he informed the researcher through a youth at Sagaad where the researcher was temporarily camping. The researcher accompanied with Ekep and attended the therapy given to Rayani which is shown in the photo image no-72 and 73.

The therapeutic instrument used in bone setting is a 12 to 14 inch of stick made of Tendu (Kendu wood) and a piece of thick cloth besides Karanja (Pongamia glabra) oil. The one end of the stick is made like a ball by wrapping a piece of cloth soaked in Karanja oil to make it smooth while moving on the affected parts. The clothed stick is warmed on the fire to make it smoother in massaging. It is used to massage and press the fractured bone to bring them in proper track or shape. The methods and techniques used in the stick depend upon the parts affected and the way they are affected. Ekep is massaging the peripheral parts of the affected area and keeping the bones in their original shape. A separate thick cloth made warm by soaking with the Karanja oil and pressed on the affected parts to relieve the pain and swelling and to keep the distracted bones to match on the track, as shown in the image no-73. While giving therapy to Rayani, Ekep was searching the bone and pelvic parts of his won body to compare the normal body and trace the degree of damage caused and accordingly he administered the therapy. This shows
Rayani, an aged woman of Gundra (Ganurre) receiving therapy from Ekep as fell down while working in swidden field. Her pelvic bone is fractured.

Ekep massaging with the warm cloths with Karanja (Pongamia glabra) oil.
the development of indigenous knowledge through intuition and self experiments.

Later Rayani was carried to Ekep’s house and stayed there for 20 days. She was given daily therapy. Finally, she got completely recovered from the ailments and injury. After 15 days of continuous therapy Rayani became able to walk slowly at her own with the support of a stick.

Case study: Date: 14th December 2002.

Patient: Somnath Dalbehera/ Male/ 56/ Traditional/ Turudrum25

Therapist: Ekep Dalbehera/ Male/ 56/ Traditional/ Dungdungar.

Somnath was fall down accidentally from the date palm (Sindi) tree while collecting the toddy. He got serious and multiple fracture in his thigh, fore arm and lower face. The thigh and fore arm both of the right side got major fracture. He was completely paralysed and not able to sit. He is an old man staying along with his wife. All of his three sons are working at Assam as migrant labour. He is suffering from financial crisis as none of his sons is sending money for his minimum expenditure. His elder brother Lingu called Ekep to give therapy and now taking care of him.

Ekep was asked about the time it will take for complete cure while administering the therapy. He said that it will take minimum one month to make him stand. The researcher could be able to attend the second time of therapy given to Somnath by Ekep which are described in this case study. A clean cloth with some grinded leaves first plastered around fractured parts of the thigh and arm. Then the small pieces of bamboo sticks caned in the ropes bound tightly over the affected parts as shown in the image no-74 and 75. It

25 This is the popular and original Saora name of the village Mahulabania. Turudrum is popularly used by the Saora of this area even today when they take among themselves.
Somanath Dalbehera of Mahulabania (Turudrum) was fallen from Date palm tree while collecting toddy and got serious and multiple fractures in legs hands and face. *Ekep* plastering and massaging his leg with bamboo sticks.

*Ekep* is plastering the fractured elbow of *Somanath* with bamboo sticks caned with thin ropes.
looks near similar to the modern orthopaedic plastered done in the allopathic systems of treatment. The plastered becomes harder after it got dried and works like hospital plastered therapy. The leaves used in preparing the pastes could not be identified after several attempts. The healer was suspicious to show the plants in spite good association with the researcher. The photograph image no-76 shows the therapist preparing paste himself out of the leaves for plastering.

During the therapy Somnath was feeling unbearable pain and shouting like anything. The therapeutic equipments and techniques used by the people are very simple and are made by the specialists themselves. A one feet rounded stick, a piece of thick cloths and Karanja oil are used as the basic requirements for the therapist. Other requirement depends upon the types and degree of ailments or afflictions.

Case study: 19th December 2002

Patient: Sudara Sabar/ 12/ Male/ Traditional/ Sagaad.

Sudara, the 12 year old son of Dalima is studying in 6th class at Puttasingi High School 7 kms away from Sagaad. Sudara was driving his bicycle in competition with his friends, playing jokes, overtaking and raising the speed on the way back to home. As his bicycle got collided with his friend’s he fell down. As a consequence, his left arm got fractured seriously. His left arm got swelled and was paining seriously. He was carried by his friends to his home at Sagaad. The researcher along with his mother took him to Ekep’s house for therapy. It was the time around 5:30 evening when
Ekep is preparing the paste out of some leaves to be used for bandaging and plastering.
people²⁶ go to Gaaraasaal daily for drinking toddy, so as Ekep. The researcher along with the boy’s mother went to call him from Gaaraasaal.

The photograph image no-77 shows Ekep giving therapy. He is setting the fractured bones in proper track with the help of a thick black cloth soaked with Karanja oil. The affected part was tied tightly so that the bone is not getting away from its original track. However, after twenty days Sudara is found to be well and is on the verse of complete cure.

The boy is shouting like anything because of the occurrence of heavy pain due to massaging and pressing of disjointed bones into its original track. He shouts “E yang, E yang, E yang means O mother, O mother, O mother and Oogai, Oogai, Oogai, Oogai...means Oho, Oho, Oho, Oho.

Case study: 14th December 2002.

Patient: Parsanti Dalbehera/ Railpadar/ 55/ Female/ Christianised.

Parsanti is a convert since 1980. Her fore arm is hurt and swelled as a wooden log tumble on it while she was cutting and collecting the fuel wood. She came to Ekep to get physiotherapy and massaging. The therapist with the help of his stick (Kandu) and a piece of thick cloth soaked with Karanja oil given massaging on the affected parts. The photograph image no-71 shows the 6th day’s therapy on Parsanti is administered by Ekep. After about seven to eight days of treatment she got completely well.

Although Parsanti is a convert, she has a strong faith on the massage and bone therapy given by Ekep. Because the attitude of the Christianised Saoras on the practices of traditional Saoras and their life style is always inferior and looked down upon as superstitious. The converts basically prefer

²⁶ It does not refer to the Christianised population but only traditional and older generations of the Hill Saoras.
Sudar, a 12 year old boy fell down from the bicycle while coming from Puttasingi high school. He got fracture in left hand’s bone. *Ekep* is setting the bone pressing with a thick cloth and binding.
to take the help of allopathic and modern medical therapy through which, in fact, the movement of conversion originally started. However, this shows that the converted Saoras still have some respect and value towards their traditional knowledge and its efficacy in the self sustained healing tradition.

7.5 CHANGING PERCEPTION OF HEALTH AND HEALING OF THE HILL SAORAS.

There are several responsible factors that brought out some changes in the indigenous therapeutic traditions of the Hill Saoras. Two of the most important factors have very powerful impact on the changing perception and attitude of the Hill Saoras on healing and health care practices. The first and foremost is Christianity. The second factor is migration.

Christianity is the gateway of modern medicines and health care practices. The idea of modern health care facilities was brought out by the missionaries through their services among the Hill Saoras as well as other indigenous population of the territory.

The people who have realised the practical and biological cause and cure of illness got attracted towards Christianity because the very idea of conversion started through the health care services of the missionaries in promoting and sensitising the people regarding the biological or scientific concept of disease and the therapeutic value of allopathic medicines. Living in continuous interaction with the Christianised Saoras the traditional people, despite having strong faith on supernatural cause and cure of illness, take the help of modern medicines. This is evident from the visits of traditional Saoras to the hospitals or village allopathic practitioners. For any fever they now are taking their children to health worker or allopathic practitioners available in the village for treatment. The impact of the life style of the Christianised
Saoras on their traditional folk gradually reducing the trend of ritual sacrifices, although some good numbers of sacrifices are still going on.

During their stay in Assam tea garden the Hill Saora also came in contact with allopathic treatment and taken the help of modern medicines while they fall sick. Organising the healing rituals at Assam was a difficult matter for the people in a busy work schedule. However, despite massive impact of conversion, migration and contact with the modern allopathic system of therapy there are good number of medicine men found in Hill Saora society. Some of them are very famous for their treatment. Interestingly, some of the practitioners belong to Christianised Saoras having good name for their therapy.

Due to the impact of Christianity the acceptance of modern health care practices among the traditional Saora is positive and getting popular. In fact, the trend of conversion started through the modern health care facilities provided to the Hill Saoras as an alternative to the practice of healing through ancestral worship and sacrifice. Living in the environment which is prone with frequent malaria, viral fever, meningitis, brain fever people are familiar with the treatment basically given/administered in the form of injection. The problem arises due to the lack of minimum medical facilities, creation of awareness and the most vital is the absence of doctors and medical staffs in the hospitals.

There has been a difficult situation found today in the Saora villages. That so many people who are not even reaches at the matriculation are practising in the villages for giving treatment to the people. Their mode of treatment basically is through administering injection (passee). In the Hill Saora villages it has been a surprising fact that for any of the problem-small or big, people asks for injection. It is perceived by the people that injection is the
most effective which can cure the disease quickly. That also has been experience by the Saoras from the kind of treatment given in the areas that most of the time people suffer from high fever because of the existing environment and the kinds of diseases frequently persists in the environment. That is why any Saora who comes for the treatment first ask the health care staffs or doctors “Passees dakkupa (Do you have injection)?” If they are replied negative, they feel reluctant to get any other treatment. They, even if, are given the tablets by charging the money or free of costs, do not eat the medicine and through it away. This treatment really has very good impact over the psychology of the patient which acts, positively on the invalid.

The numbers of ‘practicing’ medicine men are many in the Saora villages. They include medical staffs (pharmacist, ANM, dresser, peon, midwives (dhai), etc.) the people having semi or slightest learning. The practitioners are seen to be two categories- (i) medical staffs and health workers mainly of government and (ii) individual practitioners who have only learn how to give passees (injection). The number of the later category are many in the villages most of which are belonging to their own community. Interestingly the emergence of this group of practitioners came up with the rising of Christianity but mainly due to the strong psychological faith of the people that “injection can only effectively cure the diseases and illness.” Pre-conceived notion of getting cured by the injection widely exists among the Hill Saoras for which the second category of practitioners emerged. The interviews of the individual practitioners revealed these facts. Some of them said that the people are psychologically so strong and trustworthy that even if you inject distilled water into their body they feel satisfied and get well.
7.6 COMPARING INDIGENOUS AND MODERN THERAPIES

Indigenous medicine is largely supernatural but it has often had genuine therapeutic value, and it has served as the foundation of scientific medicine. It includes those practices which modern science regard as empirically effective. Norbeck has argued that the modern man of civilized world does not understand how his medicines work, that he uses them on faith, and that they are therefore in some degree magical, but his attitude toward them is naturalistic. In contrast, he also stated, the effectiveness of primitive medicine is thought to be inherent in the objects used from the supernatural power and the acts of performance. Modern medical theory view the scientifically illogical nature of primitive medicine is clearly evident in such customs as treatment of persons other than those afflicted and the extension of dietary and other restrictions to relatives and associates of the invalids. In other words, primitive medicine is largely based on supernaturalism but often has had genuine therapeutic value. However, in his observation both modern and primitive therapy trust and faith play important role. What matters much for the effectiveness of medicine and therapy is the attitude of patients toward both these systems of medicine.

Morris Carstairs an allopathic doctor was conducting a medical clinic incidental to pursuing research in rural Rajasthan where the populations of villages were Hindus included several caste groupings. Carstairs sees sickness is as much a moral as a physical crisis among the people of rural Rajasthan. The conception of illness extended into the realm of human conduct and cosmic purpose. He has stated “no matter how rare a medicine you give a

28 ibid.,
29 ibid.,
patient unless you and he have faith in it he never will be cured. A healer can gain no grace for the afflicted nor can the sufferer receive it unless both are joined to each other and to the universe by a bond of faith”. However, the conception of remedies he found was two ways—ritual and reassurance as well as to mundane medicine.

For Carstairs, culture is a connected system and not a mere summation of separate parts. It is difficult to achieve mutual understanding, when the doctor and patient behold each other through different kinds of cultural glasses. To the western doctor complaints of weakness signified malnutrition and anaemia and called for prescription of iron tonics and vitamin concentrates, which was logical according to the premises of western culture. But according to the cultural system of the patient symptoms of physical debility were connected to moral weakness by a chain of convictions involving nutrition, blood, semen and transgressions of the ethical code. The remedy therefore lies on supernaturalism either by means of ritual performance or penitence to the supernaturals. Even though natural remedies are available they are not accepted without supernatural.

The signal successes of scientific medicine over the past century have hitherto encouraged neglect of the social and cultural factors which underlie the manifestations of disease and which are concerned in the reception by the community of people who are sick and impaired. Since anthropologists have fostered an interest in societies as seen from inside and are ideally placed to prevent the medical profession from adopting the worst preconceptions of

31 ibid.
outsiders\textsuperscript{33} Citing an example Maclean has observed the sickness behaviour among Yoruba and how treatment of epilepsy and smallpox is given treatment effectively by their indigenous methods in preference to European medicine. Yaroba believed that the condition frequently occurred by epilepsy is totally unsuitable for hospital. The treatment recommended by Yoruba is a mixture of magic, herbal medicine and specific hygienic measures which might well have been efficacious in reducing the spread of disease through out the community.\textsuperscript{34} Small pox and madness (epilepsy), declared by them, couldn’t be treated in hospitals. Virtually, all herbalists are expert in this sphere of knowledge.

Many ancestral therapeutic techniques of the civilized society are still in use or only recently discarded. Massage, cauterization, hydrotherapy, heat therapy, venesection, cupping, emetics, cathartics, and enemas, etc., have lost their supernatural facets in civilized society. However, out of the major fields of medicine, surgery is the most poorly developed in primitive society. Fairly effective practices of lancing, bone-setting and rarely use of prosthetic devices\textsuperscript{35} by the primitive therapists.

Medicinal plants are particularly plentiful in the pharmacopoeia of indigenous societies and a considerable number of scientific medicines, now some extent out moded, have derived from this source. The indigenous practitioner is regarded as the ancestor of the modern physician.

Much of the effectiveness of indigenous medicine lies in its psychological aspects. All of the indigenous folk medicine may be viewed as unintentional psychotherapy. This ancient psychotherapy has been little

\textsuperscript{33} Una Maclean, 1976, op. cit, p. 287.

\textsuperscript{34} ibid., pp. 303-304.

studied but it is clear that the fundamentals of modern practices are found in this ancient curing ceremonies. Religious practitioners are served as good psychotherapists and counsellors.

The dependence and confidence on traditional medicine men or magicians and shamans are often responsible for the non acceptance of modern medicine as traditional medicine establishes faith and assurance in the patients, while modern medicine lacks this 'sura of conviction'. As the traditional medicine men or magicians share the common cultural traditions of the patients, naturally the patients have more faith in them.

Honigmann in his *Culture and Personality*, found the similarities between the practices of primitive curer and the modern psychologist or psychiatrist. The patient is made the centre of attention, made to feel cherished, given the support of other human beings of powerful supernatural beings, and of procedures believed to be effective and is thus psychologically bolstered. Success of both worlds depends upon the patient's trust and faith in the practitioner and his techniques, and 'the power of suggestion' is strongly brought into play.

The very unity of indigenous medicine, in fact, always addresses to both body and mind, in contrast to the modern medicine. It also explains many of its results in the somatic field. The patient comes in complete harmony with nature during the course of ceremony and the universe must have a strong psychotherapeutic value on the patient.

The psychological value of confession is unquestioned, even if, as happens when illness or tension arise from breach of supernaturally

---

37 Honigmann, 1944, *Culture and Personality*, pp. 420-23.
sanctioned rules, both cause and cure are sometimes religious. Speaking of indigenous medicine as a whole, Norbeck says, "however misguided it (primitive medicine) might be from the standpoint of scientific theory of disease, it holds the positive if unconscious theory that some action is better than none and infuses confidence and hope into the afflicted".38

Prophylactic or preventive measures of indigenous medicine often escape attention. Dietary and other taboos are very abundant in indigenous society. They involve negative supernatural sanctions and these often enough take the form of disease and death. Enormous variety of acts and objects such as bodily decoration-painting, tattooing, scarification, the use of ornaments in the nose, ears, and lips-may involve prophylactic as well as aesthetic motives. Unconscious prophylactic value such as customs as abandonment of dwelling in which someone has died destruction of the possessions and avoidance of the bodies of the dead, burial or hiding of bodily excretions for fear of exuviate magic worked through them, and isolation of the sick.

A very genuine and vital question frequently comes to the minds of all those who are concerned in with the study of the life of the adivasis, especially their problem of health are that: Whether the Adivasis is really not interested to accept to modern medicine or whether the modern facilities are non-existent in their locality? The answer to this vital question is not that simple and alleges either side of the parties concerned. The problem, in fact, lies with many interrelated factors. It involves many factors of explanations to understand the whole health scenario of the Hill Saoras.

The interacting influences of socio-cultural milieu towards the essentially biological and physical maladies should be deeply analyzed. Social

and economic factors are generally accepted as highly important in the multiple causation of disease. The common beliefs, customs and practices connected with health and diseases are intimately connected with the treatment of disease. This may be the reason for the non-acceptance of modern medicine practices. (Hill Saora accepts the modern forms of treatment. It especially became stronger due the impact of Christianity. The problems of communication and conveyance, economy, ignorant, and lack of lowest minimum facilities even in the nearest distance of 7 kms Puttasingi PHC, busy for daily livelihood).

Socio-psychological reasons are also very important in indigenous society. When a person goes to the traditional medicine men he gets something more beyond physical health. It is the socio-psychological reinforcements, which one can't get from the modern medical practitioner.

The social reinforcement based on the understanding of traditional beliefs and practices is often lacking and may be one of the reasons for making a medical practitioner unsuccessful within the indigenous population. To make modern or scientific medicine more acceptable by the indigenous population the practitioners should have the knowledge about the culture and society of these people. A medical practice having its roots in alien culture has chances of conflict between different cultural values.

Lack of adequate facilities in the areas, lack of respect for indigenous culture, lack of minimum updated facility and attention towards the patients are the practical problems responsible for not accessing and adopting modern medical care. The patient-doctor relations are important aspects to be considered. The environment sanitation, sanitary habits of the people, food and level of nutrition are other important aspects to be looked into.
Summary

Four indigenous therapeutic practices are prevalent among the non-convert Saoras: supernatural methods, witchcraft/sorcery, herbal and natural medicines, and bone and massage therapy. Although the remedies are very often attached with supernatural (magico-religious) methods, many cases have been reported using natural-herbal, bone and massage therapies. The bone setting and massage therapy are found to be most effective methods of treatment. Several famous medicine men have rich knowledge relating to pharmacopoeia.

The natural-herbal, bone and massage therapies have been widely accepted by the Hill Saoras. It has been observed that the people visit hospitals for allopathic treatment in cases of malaria, viral fever and cold and cough. The Saoras prefer injection (Passi) which they believe as the most effective way of getting quick relief. The Hill Saoras can be categories into three groups: (i) the purely traditional group having strong faith in supernaturalism and natural-herbal therapy, (ii) the people who rely on traditional cure, bone-setting and massage therapy as well as allopathic medicine, (iii) and the people who rely on allopathic medicine only.

The indigenous knowledge of medicine and healing practices possessed by the Hill Saoras has been found to be quite useful to cure some common as well as serious ailments. The belief in natural cause and cure of illness has slowly been taken into the system of medicine and healing practices. The most noteworthy fact is the acceptance of the natural-herbal and other native techniques of treatment by the convert Saoras. A numbers of converts are practitioners of indigenous healing practices. For instance, Rama
Sabar and Jembru Gamang are among the most famous medicine men. They started their learning and practice while they were pursuing traditional faith. Today, some convert Saoras are learning therapeutic practices and pharmacopoeias from the senior medicine men. However, they are not quite enthusiastic like traditional medicine men as they do not wish to take this as a profession. Thus, certainly emphasis is now slowly shifting on naturalistic treatment of diseases than remaining the supernatural sacrificial healing.

Although supernaturalism /Sonnums are the main cause of illness believed by the non-converts, the physiological treatment is having a new perception of illness. Surprisingly, for instance, Ekep Dalbehera is not only a traditional Saora but a shaman as well who performs healing rituals. But as far as bone setting and massage therapy are concerned neither he is associated with any supernatural or ancestral cause nor with any healing ritual. This shows a change in the non-technical aspects of indigenous knowledge due to conversion which mostly relied on physical or technical aspects of therapy.

Some of the ingredients found today in the prescriptions of the medicine men have been taken from herbal medicines. For instance, a few regamars have prescribed black piper in their medicine which is not usually found among the Hill Saoras.

The pharmacopoeia knowledge among the Hill Saoras is transmitted from their forefathers and from the Hill Saoras of the neighbouring villages like Guma, Atarsing, and Jungjung. Some of the practitioners certainly acknowledge their learning from others, but not from those who are outside of their own community. Whatever may be the original source of knowledge of medicine, the Hill Saoras have so many numbers of medicine men. The medicinal plants are identified in the name of diseases and not by proper names. Some elderly medicine men even do not know the names of the
plants. For example, Anjibore means Anji + boi + regam = barren + woman + medicine. Besides, the herbs and shrubs used for medicinal purposes are sufficiently available in this area and the practitioners have developed good mastery over them.

Those medicine men who are now converts have acquired traditional knowledge when they were non-converts. This is the reason that they understand the importance of the traditional knowledge in the field of medicine and health care. They are also promoting the knowledge they inherited from their forefathers by way of its application to the modern medicine. For instance, black pepper (the Saoras call Golmarisa), pimpali, etc., are mixed with other medicines. However, a very few medicine men are available in the Saora territory. Hence, the promotion and documentation of this knowledge is essential to save it from disappearance. After some time it would be a situation like 'after death comes doctor'.

Some advantages of indigenous natural-herbal medicine and bone and massage therapy of the Hill Saoras are as follows:

First, it gives a 'spirit of assurance' and faith as the practitioner is from his own community or family. No language and communication barrier exists. From convert or non-convert the patient gets a psychological support and assurance from the medicine man (regamar) who is from his own community. Interaction between the patient and the healers remains very cordial in such a situation in contrast to the modern hospitals.

Second, there is no demand of money by the traditional healer/medicine man. For the poor Saoras the traditional herbalist is a great advantage. Only token gift is given.
Third, medicines are available in the nearby forests. No money is required.

Fourth, help of the medicine man is easily available at a close-by place at any time.

The presence of convert Saoras with the non-converts is gradually reducing the tendency of ritual sacrifices. However, some sacrifices are still observed by the non-converts. This is evident from the visits of non-converts Saoras to hospitals or village practitioners due to realisation of positive results of modern medicine. For fever they consult the health worker or allopathic practitioner available in the village. The non-converts take medicines, but their preference is for injection (Passi) for any kind of illness whether it is stomach pain, fever, headache, or physical injury.

The elderly people are a rich source and stock of indigenous knowledge. However, there is an impending threat to this knowledge. Most of the younger people have converted to Christianity and they prefer have a modern way of life. As far as the transformation of indigenous knowledge of medicine is concerned the younger ones are not taking much interest to learn because they feel that they would not get substantial income from this for their livelihood. Among the Hill Saoras the traditional medicine men are not paid for their services. And the younger people are not quite comfortable to interact with the older people due to generation gap. The mind-set of the young Saora converts is not conducive for continuity of the traditional healing system. The older people are non-converts. The converts feel reluctant to interact with the older people with regard to learning and acquiring of therapeutic and medicinal knowledge. It is observed and anticipated that after a few years the old generation medicine men would be quite rare and the knowledge may vanish. However, some enthusiastic convert young men are
learning the herbal and medicinal practices with a view to provide services to their fellow community members.