CHAPTER-6

FOLK MEDICINES

6:01: Introduction:

Folk medicine is the media of cure of disease, affects psyche influence, aches, cuts, responses, etc. attached directly to the folks and is as old as the human race itself. Like other folklores, folk medicine has also grown up as straight identity of the rural people. But the clientele drawn are of all kind of people from both urban and rural background. The medical historian Buttner in 1930 described that the folk medical practitioner’s clienteles were from the peasantry as well as from the working class and petty bourgeois from the cities. The Christian world of both west and east are more involved in folk medicine specially the women than the men. The rural areas in Europe with limited communication with outside world were depended on the folk medicines ritualized with Christian beliefs. The Protestants practice however turned down during the Reformation complaining it as against Christian beliefs. The result was that the concentration on the folk medicine led to underground practices.

During the nineteenth century, study of folk medicine revived with the study of the folk culture by some folklorists of Germany and England followed by philosophical, social and functional approaches. The classical scholars, at the same time undertook to study medical system of classical antiquity and among them the comparative religionists interested in the medical materials in the Vedas connecting India with the European tribal forms of medicines.484

There are two varieties of folk medicines: (i) natural folk medicine and (ii) magico-religious folk medicine. The natural folk medicine represents one of man's earliest reactions to his natural environment, and involves the seeking of cure for his illness in the herbs, plants, minerals and even in animal substances of nature. These medicines are also called 'rational' and sometime 'herbal' because of the predominance of herbs in the prescribed items (material medica). The primitive people more attached to it, but in many cases the effective cure turned it into the way of scientific medicine. The second branch of magico-religious; which is also called 'occult' folk medicine is associated with charms, holy words and holy actions to cure disease.485

Indian tradition is a result of the long fusions of the endless ethnic units since unknown times. Traces of almost all the human race are found in the Indian sub-continent. The proto-Austroloid, Dravidians, Sumero-Assyrians were the races existing prior to the period of the Indus civilization. The Indus valley people were the evidence of its pre-historic most developed civilization. Compare to them the Aryans were said to be nomadic barbarous hordes specialist only in breeding horses and dogs and skilled in wielding the bow. They hatred the Indus valley people; as black skinned, pug-nosed, god-less, devoid of rites etc., Phallic-worshippers proves that before the Aryans there were people living of such character. They were identified with the Dravidians. The Aryans borrowed numerous items of beliefs and rites enriching their own ideas and rituals in the course of time. With all other things; they must have borrowed the idea of medicine from the pre-Aryan people. It is interesting to note that the Proto-Austroloid people were the first to use betel-nut, turmeric and vermillion. All these items

485. Ibid
are used as medicinal purposes. Bana the common word for arrow and the shooting of the evil-magic to a person by a sorcerer is widely used by tea garden people of Assam. Betel-nut chewing freshen mouth and help digestive system; turmeric essentially used in all injuries internal or external and vermillion saves from sun-rays and evil effects.\textsuperscript{486} Turmeric is one of the most important toilet items and widely used by the Oriya people, specially, among the women folk. It is used to clean body, an ointment against skin diseases, stomach injury or pain, ointment for both internal and external injuries, etc. For a new born baby and the mother turmeric is used to clean body and secure from the attack of the foreign viruses. At present also they use it with various mixtures like mustard oil, and garlic for the treatment of the different diseases of the infants and children. Without use of the turmeric after menstruation the woman is not considered clean. Turmeric is already ritualized among the Oriya people.\textsuperscript{487}

In later ages, the Aryans accumulated and recorded the borrowed ideas with their own and perhaps gave shape to the Vedic religion. The four Vedas are definitely the collection of such ideas since their entrance into this land. With other things they also adopted the phallic god Shiva, Dravidian god of youth Krishna and the monkey god Hanumant in their worships.\textsuperscript{488} The medicines referred in the Atharva Veda must include some of the borrowed ideas from the pre-Aryan people. The charms related to the super-natural powers; particles of different beasts; flora and fauna found only in this land, may be placed among those items, they borrowed.

\textsuperscript{486} Upadhyaya, B.S.: Feeders of Indian Culture, New Delhi, 1989, p 11
\textsuperscript{487} Informant: Smt Hemo Nayak on 17.1.2005
\textsuperscript{488} op. cit , Upadhya 1989, p 12
Vedas borrowed Indian folk medicines like the culture itself. The *Rig* and *Yajur* Vedas include the general idea about the practitioner, treatment and the related ills. *Atharva Veda* deals with various kinds of diseases and their healings by creepers, flowers and plants. *The diseases are referred as asura*; are spells and charms as pray to the creepers and flowers for their successful cure. Fire and water are recognized as deity who helps curing diseases. The Indus valley people were nature worshipper and the *asura*, referred in the *Atharvaveda* was the famous Assyrians.489 The Aryans, though adopted most of the treatment system from the non-Aryan; still hatred some of them. Fever denoted as *asura* named *takman* and to defuse it certain ‘charm’ is recited.

Ayurveda, for its logic and observation becomes a separate treatise and so has limited relation with folk medicine. But folk medicine, specially, the natural medicine derived from the *atharva* part is related to *Ayurveda*. And the magical part with the *angirash* and thus use different type of metals, stones, gems with planetary positions which falls under the second category of astrology. So, the Indian folk-medicine has its two branches: (1) natural folk medicines, and (2) magico-religious folk medicines. The first one represents man’s initial reaction to his natural environment seeking cures for his ills in herbs, plants, minerals and anima* I substances. The second branch of magico-religious variety with its charms, holy words, prayers, action to cure diseases are sometimes called ‘occult’ folk medicine. The first one, as we have discussed earlier have some historical fact of its derivation from the *Ayurveda* while the other directly represents the *angirash* part.490

489 ibid., p. 16.
The historical part of the magico-religious healing may be entrusted with the few tantra-mantra works; most of them associated with Kamrup and Kamakhya are perhaps later attachment to the angirash branch with both evil and healing methods.

The Oriya origin in the plantation of Assam, are the inhabitants of the rural area of present Orissa and its adjacent areas. Their character is a mixture of both the Aryan and non-Aryan origin. They worship the Vedic gods and at the same time the spirits and ghosts. The medicines they practice are the nature of both the traditions. To cure a disease they believe more on their tutelary deity and the 'kutumb; adopted depta than other mean of treatment. The non ritual medicines are the women practiced medicines derived from the household items. In these items also use of medicinal herbs are limited.491

6:02: Two Branches of Indian Folk Medicines:

The two branches of folk medicines are the (1) natural folk medicine, and (2) magico-religious folk medicine. The first of these represents man's earliest reaction towards the nature of the diseases in relation to the situation in which the disease took place. They tried to derive the mean of cure to such diseases. The second emerged as their fear towards the unidentified and invisible powers starting from the heat of the sun to the darkness as occasion for the unknown and unidentified powers to awake and stroll. The diseases appeared all of a sudden and inexperienced were symbolized as the result of an evil spirit, and thus satisfying it they began to believe that the disease will disappear. Both the system still

491 Informant • Smt Hemo Nayak. On 17.1.2005
prevailing among the rural people through out the world and the Oriya origin in the plantation are one of them.492

6: 03: Tribal beliefs about Folk medicine:

The Indian society, specially the tribes who are said to be animistic belief the whole world, populated by spirits and if all are at peace with them, men can be freed from illness and have a longer life. If the relation between the spirit and human is violated, the general belief is that the person will fall ill or in some other trouble. Such ill or trouble can only be healed if certain magical performances, by skilled men or women in the art are approached. Once of the person succeeds he is recognized as an ojha or baid. 493

The Indian societies composed of some habits traditionally accepted from the past are signs of individual identity. As long as the rituals are observed the society exists. An individual is a tiny part of that component and equally responsible for existence of the society with others. If he falls ill and becomes invalid the society suffers. The society is responsible to bring back to work and thus the recognized shaman does his best to recover him without demanding price. He feels, as one of the part of the society himself and his duty to save the man for the sake of his society. However, he may be less respected for his peculiar activities and isolated life from the rests.

492. op. cit., Dorson, 1972, p. 19
493 op. cit., Kujur 1989, p. 138
6:04: Folk medicine of the Oriya people:

Oriya people are referred in the epics and Puranas. But the folk medicine they practice, are symbols of the pre-Vedic period. Recently, the original Pippolad branch of the Atharva Veda Samhita was found in a village of Orissa which is evidence that they are pre-Vedic origin and developed to contribute their part in the Vedas. Naturally, the folk medicines they practice are of pre-Vedic nature. The rural Oriya people are more attentive towards the beneficial magic and holy spells. The practice of witchcraft is less known to the general Oriya people but among some tribes it got ritualized in their socio-cultural life.

The Oriya people in the tea garden of Assam represent the folk medicines practiced in their respective regions. The people of Tinsukia district, as originally belong to the hilly western part of the State are less known about herbal medicines but very attentive towards occult-folk medicines. They are organized in several groups; each belongs to a particular clan, organized as a kutumb; responsible to continue the clan rituals. At least one or two shaman called diāri or dehri with his few disciples called kalshi in some regions are responsible for the health and prosperity of each family under the kutumb. One or two of the selected persons within the kutumb are the executives called dhanga-majhi are responsible to run the rituals in the name of the kutumb. Occasional meetings are held among the members to decide on the immediate problem to solve. In such meetings after long service the two executives are relieved and new persons chosen. The diāri on the other hand, is permanent and only replaced after his leaving of the line or kutumb for ever or for some serious

494. op cit., Basu, 2004, p. 49
guilt. For the folk medicine, the diāri is fully responsible as he is the pet the god or goddess accepted by the kutumb. His main function is to use his occult for the health of the individuals and their security from attack of the evil spirits, individual family and the society. He is responsible to observe annual ritual of the kutumb associated with his occult. He sometime innovated with some new idea about natural medicine becomes more popular attracting people of other societies whom he give equal importance like the members of his own society.

The function of a shaman in an Oriya society is similar in all the kutumbs. The few differences sometime observed are due to the regional influences which are easily traceable. The Oriya people, who are originated from the Eastern parts of the State are influenced by the neighbouring cultures, like those of West Bengal and present Jharkhand States; while the people from the Western parts are influenced by the present Chhatisgarh State. The impact of the neighbouring societies differentiated them into several cultural groups. A number of shamans among the Oriya people who become pet of the tribal gods are getting prominence among the tribal people. The tribes like the Gonds and Sobors in the Western Orissa and the Mundas, Oraons and Kharias of the eastern Orissa are clear instances that a number of their rituals are found similar to the Oriya people of that region. With the rituals the folk medicines, though directly derived from the Atharva Veda are influenced by the tribes of this regions.495

Illness and Beliefs: (method of tracing out the effect of a bhut):

Any illness causing alarm is attributed to some deo, bhut or evil eye needs appeasement. In some tribes like the Kharias among the tea garden community send a man with a handful of āruwā (unbleached) rice to a gunia or diāri (sorcerer) to ask for his help in discovering the cause which may be responsible for the sickness. Having being informed of the nature of the sickness, the gunia asks for a blade of thatching grass which the man takes from the roof of the gunia’s house. Praying to the bhāgwān (god), the gunia touches the ground with it, and then his forehead. Then he measures with his fingers to the length of 15 digits and throws away the remainder; again measures the same piece three times beginning from the other end praying, he bhāgwān, may this grass increase if a bhut or deo is responsible for this disease; if not, may it decrease.” If the grass has increased, the gunia declares that a bhut is at the bottom of the trouble. If, however, the grass has decreased, the gunia before declaring the absence of a bhut, asks for the ārwā-rice to discover the bhut. He places the rice on the floor and separate whole grains from the broken ones. From the heap of all grains, he takes a pinch of rice and deposits a few grain in two or three little heaps, praying, ‘he bhāgwān’, if a bhut is the cause of this sickness, may the number of grains in the heaps be odd number; if not, may it be an even number. He goes through this process from 7 to 10 times putting aside each time the grain that has no pair, while he mixes the rest with the heap. If each time there should have been an odd number of grains in the heap, the gunia is emphatic in the declaration that a bhut is the cause of the evil. If, however, the blade of grass should have decreased, and his second attempt should only have shown an even number of rice grains, the gunia
acknowledges his inability to discover the bhut, and advises his visitor to call some other guniā.496

Among some of the tribes and castes like Sāwrā, Oriya, Porjā, etc. invites a diāri, capable to invite spirit on him; who, after following some rituals* invites in his sub-conscious condition, and when asked about the cause; declares whether it is due to a bhut or a normal matter. In the same condition he also advises how to get rid from the trouble.

Finding out of the evil spirit affected on the person by thatch blade or by āruwā rice is common among most of the tribes and castes in the tea garden community. This type of guniā, however, does not know the remedy and advises the usual practice prevalent in the society in such problems. They advise mostly of some sacrifices.497

6: 06: Magico-religious Folk medicine:

Magico-religious folk medicine is the healing of ills on the folk cultural or traditional level, using words, charms, amulets and physical manipulation of man and animals. It is based on primitive world view of the unity of all things, heaven; earth, man, animal and nature. Within this unity there is a dualism between evil powers, concentrated in the evil spirits with their voluntary services of the witches and the good powers concentrated the gods and goddesses, family tutelary and harmless sprits from whom the shaman, diāri or ojhā gets the healing power. Diseases is believed to be sent by evil forces into the person or animals, hence it has to be removed by a

497. A few tribes like the 'Munda' use 'arwa' rice on a winnowing sup repeatedly brass them to invite the spirit.
'counter spell' applied by the shaman. The shaman who is a pet of some god or goddess invites the deity on him by performing some rituals; identifies the evil spirit and drive it out from the person, thus the ill is cured.

Diagnosis of an ill sent by evil spirit is only possible by the deity on the shaman. Through the deity the means of removal of the evil spirit is also acquired. Without the deity on him the shaman is an ordinary man. But in some cases, through astrological application some ojha or diari can identify the evil and with the help of the counter spell the evil spirit is driven away. A person, who knows the counter spell, is also capable of shooting ban on him. In such cases invitation of the spirits on the shaman is not necessary. 498

There are also some methods of treatment of a patient which are neither magic nor religious, the Oriya people use in some of the ailments. A person touched with an evil spirit is driven by applying the bosh plant. The grinded roots with warm water and mild massage on the whole body of the patient can remove evil spirit from a person. Sometimes such patient who makes unusual behavior is harshly beaten to get rid of the evil spirit. After the patient comes to sense, he cannot tell anything about the affect of the beating. Taking an affected person to local temple or place of worship and praying the deity, also drives the evil spirit away.499

A person whose abdomen grows in unusual manner can be cured by touching of his stomach of a gohi, it is believed. A person suffering from continuous hiccup can be simply by diverting his mind towards an imaginary spirit blessing on him.

498 op. cit., Kujur, 1989, p. 139.
Snake crossing over the body of a sleeping patient can get rid of the illness, it is believed.

Married couple having no children due to the damage of the woman's embryo may have children after few months by sleeping together nude for some days.

6:06:1: Learning of Exorcise/Sorcery:

The magico-religious activities prevalent among the tea garden community of Assam preserve special importance. We know that the modern system of treatment of a disease came to India with the advent of the Europeans into this country. But the new type of treatment of disease could not reach the people of the interior areas until the missionaries penetrated into them to preach Christianity. The missionaries opposed to the sorcery and magic to be the production by the help of the Satan and were contradicted to the biblical orders. The immediate remedy of a disease caused by the modern medicines and the biblical preaching confused the rural people about their own system of treatment by magic and sorcery. It was the period when the tea plantations were started and the people immigrated into Assam. They were immigrated with their own religious beliefs including the magic, exorcize and witchcraft which they practiced in the tea garden as there were no other sources of treatment known to them. Later, when the plantation developed they were made access to the modern medicines by the planters and the immediate remedy lost their faith in the indigenous system of treatment. The plantation environment was also not suitable to practice their old system.

The reason behind the practice of sorcery or magic may be traced to their traditional habits. But many times it is due their fear on each other as they were completely strangers
to each other during the initial period. Very often the physical appearance, colour, habits etc. were also responsible for their fears. The individual languages; mostly the dialects, unintelligible to each other was also matter of doubts and distrust among them. The environment, they faced equally in the plantation was perhaps the reason for their later coherence. But the confusion and mental isolation among them remained for long. This led a new comer to learn the technique of sorcery and witchcraft in the later period.

There were, of course a number of tribes whose customary habit is to be attached with this type of magic. The Santhal never marry a girl if she does not possess the knowledge of witchcraft. Among some of the tribes, it was a subject of competition and the most expert is the most prestigious man in the society. Magic, sorcery, exorcize, witchcraft had special place in those societies as they were helped by bhut, spirit or evil spirit. The magic knowledge was widely practiced not only among the tribal people but also the Vedic people whose source of availing this knowledge was yoga or a high level self control and concentration. The Great epics refer to such ‘mantra’ or incantation which helped a person to get his desired things. The tea garden tribes and castes had been carrying the traditional practice by their forefathers in ancient times. The practice, beside, used to remove disease, were also used to tame a person, most of whom were engaged in transgression of the social conduct. In the environment of the plantation sorcery was used to punish a young boy or girl for their illegal attachments. Most of the quarrels in this society were results with revenge by sorcery of a person who is

500. The girl ‘arwa’ means bearer of witchcraft while ‘ushna’ means she does not know the witchcraft. A father of a boy enquires about his probable daughter-in-law before marriage of his son in this fashion.
physically weak to face his enemy. That is why the practice is still continuing in this society though stealthily. The sorcerer or the magic man is called ojhā or guniā by the tea garden people. The word ojhā, of course refer to a person with the capacity of traditional system of treatment of the diseases or the medicine-man through magic. Among tea garden people ojhā is specialist in traditional medicine whereas guniā is specialist in sorcery.

If a person wishing to learn the practice from an ojhā, has to follow certain rules as, before starting one has to give some gift according to capacity and to satisfy the ojhā before telling him about his intention. If the ojhā is satisfied he began to teach the person as his guru. Learning usually takes about three months. At the starting the guru occasionally takes his disciple to the burial ground and gives some idea about the magic as preliminary ideas.

In the second stage some strict discipline is to be maintained. Learning to chant the mantras properly and without stopping; to take oath on certain discipline as not to blame the guru; to help the needy even if he is an enemy; not to involve violence; not to take return against the good done and accept what is provided; if a disciple does not follows these rules he is liable to be ready to be fallen. The disciple, who wishes to finish his learning, by staying at the guru's house on the occasion of the dark night of the Kali puja has to take the bulk of the siju plant in his foods. This is called eating of the sid, following the rules advised by the guru.501

The others who wish to become more expert have to collect the skull and bone of the dead from the burial ground during the dark night of Kali puja. To do this he has to follow

501. loc. cit. Tasa, 2002,
certain rules; he has to light a diya (oil-candle) on the burial ground three days before the Kali puja, praying for the devta of the burial place to help him when he will come to collect the human parts, three days later during the Kali puja night. On the day of Kali puja, at mid-night, the person has to take his materials of worship including a packet of dried rice. The guru puts a stone on the ground with some magic chant a little distance from the burial place, advices his disciple that if he will be able to enter the ground crossing the magic stone he will be successful to acquire the knowledge as after crossing the stone, the guru assures his security; but before crossing it the security of the person is his own. So not to get fear, he should bind his body with mantras called gāt-bāndhni.502

The person so intended to go to the burial ground has to leave all his clothes, become nude near the stone directed by his guru and then with the mantra on him go inside. He then arranges his belongings of worship at the burial spot from which he wants to take out the skull. If possible, should prepare bhājni which is to be dedicated to the owner devta and his colleagues of the burial ground and by chanting the mantra seek the skull and bone of hand or foot from the dead beneath the ground. On asking this the dead underneath questions; “I can give the things you demand but before it, you have to take oath to give certain things to me which I need. Which one will you give me; the former or later or the last? If you assure me to give any one from these three, I am ready to give you what you demand.” If the ojha assured to give one of the three demanded, the dead beneath holds out the demanded things which the ojha has to detach by a bamboo blade. When doing this other bhuts from all directions surrounded the ojha and try to make fearful atmosphere which the ojha must not afraid; but,

502. ibid
scatter the ākhoi to them, which they start collecting. When they are busy taking the scattered ākhoi, the person immediately moves towards the stone installed by his guru and on return again he has to scatter the ākhoi behind. If he is successful to cross the stone the spirits will not cross the boundary of the stone. At home he washes the materials, put vermillion and fastens it with a new clothe, dedicate scents, lights etc. which he has to do everyday. The maximum period required to learn a magic is three years. This is because the guru does not give the 'mantra' to a confused disciple for a long period. If he is serious and confident he may get it within three months. 503

After completing the learning, all the disciples gather on the Kali puja night. They arrange dubari grass, white rice, tulsi leaves, a coin of copper with an earthen light on the thaal and make the aroti (prayer). After the end of puja, the foot of the guru is washed; the water is drunk and supporting by the flower, take oath; The guru in return, gives some advises—not to take meal on the dish with flower art; not to talk bad about the guru; must help a person in trouble without a price; and not to do bad things. If the advises are not followed he is destined to fall in trouble.

After completion of learning, if any disciple wishes to show his power the guru advises him to collect seven items from seven different places during the single dark night of Kali puja and if he is successful he is accepted to be expert with the mantras.

According to some people the human bone should be

503. ibid., p. 6.
named *māsān-sāli* instead of *māsān-hāḍ*. The *māsān-sāli* of the father can be used by his son if he continues to worship it. The process continues as hereditary for several generations and if neglected the danger is obvious.504

**6:06: 2: The Evil eye and Poisonous praise:**

The concept of *pāngnā* and *nāsnā* (evil eye and ill-will) are closely related to the divine power. Power is given to men for something good, which can be misused for evils. Hence whenever such person looks at any healthy or handsome person with ill-will, they cause sickness, failure or an accident. Thus the work of the evil eye ends in tragedy. Since the evil eye of such a person brings about sufferings, he or she is anti-social agent and the work performed by them is part of the snit-system. An evil eye is more effective on persons who are disliked.

It is also common belief among the Oriyas that there are some people who know the art of purposefully casting a spell by looking askance while reciting a *mantra*. Such an intention is called *bāān- mārā* (throwing arrow). It is effective when used against men or animals. But it can be ineffective if the intended victim knows the opposite *mantra*. In the tea garden context such *bāān-mārā-māri* contest between two experts was an occasional scene when the snake charmer (sapera) moving from one line to the other, showing snake-dance to acquire some money.

Similar to the 'evil-eye' is poisonous praise (ill-will) or 'evil-mouth'. However its effect is unintentional, the appreciation of good wishes of even close

504 ibid.
relations is quite genuine but the child they praise becomes sick, the fine young man gets no marriage partner, the beautiful long hair of a girl starts falling, the pregnant woman miscarries and the beautiful crops on the field on the thrashing yields little grain. Among the Oriya people it is called ānkhi-lāgā-āchhe or in sādri najor-lagehe.\textsuperscript{505}

6: 06:3: Witchcraft:

Witchcraft is associated with ills of the people. Witches generally do harm to the people of their dislike or to take revenge on the enemy. The spirit a witch worships however bestow her and her family with prosperous and trouble free life; but as long as the spirit is dedicated.

It is an art learnt by certain women to generate knowledge and power about the visible and invisible world. Usually witchcraft is attributed to women rather than to men because they often are presumed to be more jealous than man. Such women are trained into the art of witchcraft. A witch, they wrongly believe, has a power to do harm and he or she uses the power for personal benefit at the expense of any enemy, and thus upsets the harmonious egalitarian climate of the village. It is a widespread belief that the held their initiation ceremony on the darkest night of the \textit{Dewāli} in the month of \textit{Kartik} (October-November). They bring with them a frog, a big brown grasshopper, an adaze, a sickle and an earthen vessel of oil candle. They place those items around them and the \textit{guru} spirit appears in the form of a tiger and sits down close by. Witches take brooms, light lamps and form a circle. They put their earthen lamps on the knees and dance around. These lamps never shake off or fall.\textsuperscript{506}

\textsuperscript{505} Informant. Smt Panpotro Tanti
\textsuperscript{506} loc cit., Kujur
Beside the guru spirit they also have human guru in the group who directs them and they take an oath not to reveal the secret of witchcraft. They will endure torments and punishment rather than destroy the secret. They dance the whole night and are taught to be brave either in biting the tiger or picking up a snake. An ordinary person never tries to watch their meeting and dancing, because if they are caught by the witches they will kill him.

In witchcraft there is identification between the witch and the bhut. The bhut takes possession of the witch. The identification is thus expressed by an animal such as a rat, bat or black cat.

The witches are said to bring disease and calamities on individual, families and villagers in various ways such as: by use of pāngnā-nāshnā magic bundles; the shooting of the baāns or magic arrows; the extraction of the shape of a black cat and to drink human blood etc.

Witchcraft is not always a safe occupation; the familiar spirit of the witch sometimes brings illness and death to her family. If revealed she is fined and sometimes tormented to death.\textsuperscript{507}

Witchcraft is also associated with marriage. The Santhals (Majhi) and some other Adivāshis like Oraons, Kharias etc. accepts a girl for marriage if she knows the witchcraft. So, when the father goes for enquiring for a bride for his son, first questioned as ārwā no ushnā (boiled o not boiled). If the

\textsuperscript{507} A number of witch killing news very often appears in the newspapers, most of them belong to the tea tribes and a few other tribes of Assam.
answer is not boiled the girl is selected as it is a sign that she knows the craft.^[508]

6: 06: 4: **Jhāḍā-phukā** and **Ojhā-chokhā** (spirit doctors):

*Jhada-Phuka* or *Ojha-Chokha* means treatment of a person affected by witch, *baan* or evil spirit through certain devotion, action and spell of charms by the shaman, *diāri* whom in general is called *ojhā*. The general *ojhā* claims to have received his powers from *Shiva* one of the trinity of Hindu beliefs as reward for his meditation and abstemiousness. He is faithful to his devotions, keeps an open shrine close to his own hut. He installs a stone in his Shiva lines. Every morning he cleans the shrine, dedicates to the stone in the name of god *Shiva* with basil leaves, *bel* leaves, *dhotura* and also with milk, *ghee*, flower, incense and *sindur* litted earthen candle. He blows the trumpet, strikes a gong and bell. When he has to treat an affected person, he burns incense brass ārwā rice on a winnowing sup frequently and shakes his head violently till *Mahadev* wakes up on him. He makes unmistakable description of the 'witch', advises the patient or his attendants what to do. Generally minor offerings are made to the deity in his shrine or at home and the ill is cured.

Among the *Oriyas* the *Ojhā* is called *diāri* who instead of *Mahadev* or Shiva worships the spirit god accepted and annually dedicated by the *kutumb*.

**Popular objects used as precaution against the Evil eye:**

The *Oriyas* use a number of objects as precaution against the influences of the evil eyes. These popular objects may be

---

508 Informer: P.M. Bhengra (62) on 30. 1. 2007.
grouped as follows:

(i) objects directly obtained from nature, flora, minerals and salts.
(ii) objects obtained from cultural items: fire, charcoal, chilli, garlic, mustard etc.

Among flora bel, tulsi(basil), mango etc. are considered deterrents to evil spirits. These leaves are considered sacred and holy.

Minerals specially refer to the instruments made out of iron and copper preferred as protection of evil eye. Salt has its own value, when put on fire it makes cracking sounds and burns with flames, if one of the most essential deterrent object against evil eye.

Fire regarded as destroyer of all things, good or bad. So the materials used as deterrent put on fire. The burning charcoal on a broken pot used for the sacrifice thrown far away from the house.

Chili considered as deterrent to evil spirit. The smoke comes out from a burning chili can drive away evil spirits. But the diari, the deity on him takes it as reception and is offered smoke of burning chilies symbolizing himself that he is not evil spirit to be affected or run away from such smoke.

Another most important deterrent is the mustard seeds and oil. Oil requires for the earthen candle to burn without which no sacrifice could be complete among the Oriya people. The mustard seeds are used to burn with salt and chilli to drive away the evil spirit. It is thrown around the house so that no evil spirit could enter the house. It is believed that an evil spirit
6: 07: Oriya belief in Magico-religious Folk medicine:

Geographical situation, environment and the occupational pattern of the Oriya people are responsible for the type of medicines they learnt to use. Generally, people live in forest regions are more attached to the herbal medicines due to easy access of the different plants they come into contact. The healing of certain is decided by the availability of such plants. The people dwelling in this region get easy access to such plants. The Oriya people of the tea gardens emigrated from the areas of barren hills have rough or superstitious idea regarding the folk medicines than the natural medicines of herbs. It is found during my investigation that the people of the Tinsukia district are less aware about the herbal medicines. They are more prompt to the magico-religious folk medicines in major areas of illness. The minor ailments are however cured by the family mothers, who have sufficient knowledge about children's ailments. The materials they use for the treatment are found in household environment and are easily acquired. They also use some spells in the name of God or the family tutelary when they apply their medicines. They do not treat an adult, though they are not bound to do so. Sometimes a more expert woman, especially of old age is consulted about the ill and the necessary measures are taken.

The treatment of the more serious ills in the Oriya society are forwarded to the shamans, diāris or guniā.509 The cause of such ills are confirmed in its origin by the pet spirit through the shaman with its remedies. Someone a single person plays both

509. 'ojha' in general is an expert in herbal treatment
the roles of shaman and diāri. In such cases the jhākɔr who is the pujāri of the deity interacts with the pet spirit and transmits it to the shaman or the diari after retreat of the pet spirit. This is because when the deity controls the shaman or the diari he is out of sense and whatever he acts or talks is of the spirit. He becomes a general person after the deity leaves his body and he is not aware of the fact what the spirit advised the sick person through him. If he himself is a shaman he acts according to the jhākɔr's report. Sometimes, the pet god himself treats some of the external effects done by a witch. The deity on the shaman identifies the spot of the effect; bites on the spot by teeth and pulls out the invisible object applied by the witch and the person is cured. The treatment by the deity itself is only possible within the few minutes when it is on the diāri. The deity on the shaman openly describes the nature of the illness. For example if he says that "it is some lotkā-chitkā, that means attack of some minor spirits; if it he says, pordeshiān; it means outsiders which include witch, if he says, ghororta; it means that the tutelary should be worshipped at home properly. The deity also advises the head of the family to properly follow the family rituals to avoid such attacks.

6:08: The Deity:

The Oriyas in the tea garden are known of a number of gods and goddesses, out of whom one or two are selected and worshipped socially by the kutumb as a guard of the families in the kutumb and the village or the ‘line’. The diari of the kutumb worships a certain deity with serious meditation and abstemiousness, calls on himself and the jhakor, and other

510. ‘shamans’ are the ‘gunia’ in ‘sadri’ and ‘diari’ in Oriya. ‘ojha-chokha’ to indicate a shaman applying both the methods in his treatment.
pujāri with him asks some critical questions to test the deity’s capabilities to guard the village and its people. If they are satisfied the deity is worshipped by the kutumb socially and assures to do the same on the chutria or Jātrā every year and thus the deity is adopted.  

The adopted deity is responsible to keep the village from the attack of the outside spirits and evil powers. He guards every person and family in the kutumb and is respected and worshipped by all. He is the chief patron deity of the diari and his family nuā-khāi.

During the unknown illness in the family, every family has right to invite the diāri to call the deity on behalf of the family. The diāri observes certain rules from the day before the darkest Tuesday in the month and during the time of entering of the cattle in the shed; he calls the deity on him by performing certain rituals. To invite the deity he keeps fasts and abstinence, takes some ārwā rice devotes to the deity and puts on the ground; a dia (earthen candle) places on the limb of the rice, holds a chicken making a vermillion spun on its head, dedicate it holding its head attached to his head on standing, pronounce some spells and leaves the chicken. Then he violently shakes his head for few minutes and the deity comes onto his body. The symbol; of coming of the deity is calling of he jhākor as pujāri and asks to serve phul.  

The jhakor, who is with him immediately supplies the phul and listens to the deity. The patient is brought and touched by the deity. After touching the patient, he gives unmistakable description of the illness and its remedies in shortest a word which a habituated jhākor can

511. ‘Chutria’ is celebrated to keep the deity satisfied. It is celebrated during the darkest day of the month of ‘Chait’ (March-April)  
512 ‘phul’ denotes flower, but the deity means the burning charcoal.
only understand and transmits it to the family. After some minor reception the *diāri* and the *jhākor* leaves the house.

The *Oriya people* believe in a number of deities that come on the body of some individuals in the *kutumb* during *chutriā*. They are asked about their identity and refused to worship informing about the deity they have adopted. Few of such deities are as follows with the place and type of fowls they worshipped:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deity</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Type of Fowl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dongor</td>
<td>Outside the house</td>
<td>White cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharam</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>White cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bāburāi</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>Red cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buḍhimā or Gongādi</td>
<td>Outside the house</td>
<td>Red cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kālkā</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>Black cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duārsoni</td>
<td>Outside the house</td>
<td>Mixed colour cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorhessoni</td>
<td>Outside the house</td>
<td>Black cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pordesiaṇ</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>Red cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pājhrāin</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>Black hen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotādiriān</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>Mixed colour cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonmoili, Raktāmoili,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gungomoili, Chulimoili,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phulmoili</td>
<td>Outside the house</td>
<td>Black hen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulā</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>Black cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhāirav</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>White cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghotesoni, Māleswari,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khomeswari, Pāthmistri,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lokheswari</td>
<td>Inside the house</td>
<td>‘patha’ goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monglā</td>
<td>Outside the house</td>
<td>Red cock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bubliān</td>
<td>Outside</td>
<td>White patha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodān</td>
<td>Outside the house</td>
<td>‘pod-puja’ (ox sacrifice)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of them among these deities is selected for adoption as village guard.

All the deities mentioned above possess different characters, nature and power. When they come on human body they prefer the person to wear some special costume. Most of these deities, both male and female prefer spotted jhāgā and no clothes on top of the body. Their belongings are sickle, cane stick, phārsā or rope. When they come on the human body māndār flower garland is offered and hanged around his neck. The man who is a pet of a certain deity never cuts his hair but maintain cleanliness. When the deity is on him, his eyes become half opened and physically instable. Only during chutriā he moves from house to house running until he returns to his sthan. When invited on special occasion it never waits for long. The jhākor and the dhāngrā-mājhi near him must be ready to receive his instructions as it does not wait long.

Besides the pet deity, sometime the diāri can try to call the family deity if requested. But the family deity rarely comes. If he is successful the interaction with the jhākor comes to know some of the internal matters of the family. A woman or man in the family, if not following the family rituals, is not accepted by the family or the deity accepted by the kutumb until he or she accepts the guilt and return to the family codes. Thus, the persons whose marriage is not ritualized cannot participate in the family rituals including marriages. A married woman once leaves the house for other man never accepted by

514. 'jhaga' is a petticoat preferred by the deity As it is the clothing of the deity, it is taboo for the Oriya women to wear this cloth
the family gods. The man who goes with polygamy without following the family rituals is also refused by the family gods until he ritualized the women.

The deceased ancestors accept oblations from the eldest son in the family only. Any alteration of this ritual must be pre-informed with dedication. So the position of the eldest son in the family is higher than the others. He is the hair of the family and it is his responsible to observe the family rituals. Violation of this norms results free access of the family to the evil spirits. The family becomes guard less resulting ills, unusual harassments in the family.\textsuperscript{515}

\textbf{6:09: Bān (magic-charm):}

In all the effects caused by \textit{ban} or witchcraft, it is removed by the pet god in the \textit{kutumb}. If the family and the pet god of the society are satisfied no evil can come to the family. Witches can never challenge a socialize god or the family māsān. A witch can affect an Oriya person only by satisfying the negative family god. Sometimes a family god is made captive by a \textit{guniā} and the family falls in various troubles. In this case the \textit{guniā} must know the \textit{gotra} of the family.

As the Oriya people feel safe if their rituals are wisely followed. A \textit{guniā} (spirit-doctor) rarely found them. But the impact of the other societies in the garden atmosphere a few of them learns the tactics. They can remove the ill-effects sent by other \textit{guniās} or witches by a counter spell which he has learnt through his \textit{guru}. The Oriya people can do this through their pet god, family tutelary simply by dedicating extra oblation. But it is only possible if he follows the rituals regularly. The diseases

\textsuperscript{515} Informant. Smt Panpotro Tanti on 3.3.1996

- 261 -
sent by witches or by others may be transferred to a plant, animals, and object or to another person. The Oriya people do it by placing the materials used for the cause on the way of the particular person. But they rarely do it rather they place it in such a spot common to all trespassers, individuals or animals. Some of the evils caused due to the position, place and hours of the puberty of a girl placed by the bank of a river, pond, on a plant through certain rules include special sacrifice and oblations.

Diagnosis of magico-religious ills has its limitations. It recognizes the symptoms and rarely according to the etiology. Ascription ranges from witchcraft to the predestination idea that ‘God causes sicknesses.

In case of diagnosed by the pet god the main features are first diagnosed the case, tell the person, his attendant or the jhākor whether he is conjure or not and to find out who laid the charm. The charm then is destroyed and the patient is cured. If the patient wishes the charm may be turned back upon the person who set it.516

Among the Oriya people magico-religious treatment of the animals is not found. The absence of veterinary practice denotes the methods hired to this society from others.

6:10: Natural Folk Medicine:

Natural or herbal medicine is undoubtedly as old as the Vedas as one of them concentrated completely with its most developed condition. It does not mean that the pre-Aryan people did not know about it but much contribution of

516. loc. cit., Kujur.
the non-Aryans is very clear in Ayurvedic herbal medicines. Non-Aryan people were living in the jungle with the nature either to give way for the aggressor Aryans or for their own way of life. So the herbal medicine mostly dealt with the elements of the nature is the contribution of the earliest people of India with more ideas included throughout the ages with new experiences by the sages.

As we have discussed before herbal medicine as contribution of the woods and plants were the sources from forests. The country being an agrarian in character, most of its areas were occupied by jungles. People living in woods were more prompt to the herbs as it was related with the life stock. The North Eastern region full of jungles even it today is one of the major sources of the herbal medicines. Definitely the Terrai region beneath Himalayas is the richest region supplying with herbal medicinal mixed up with the river Ganga to make it sacred for its curable quality since unknown times.517

Unlike the Ganges the Brahmaputra River would have been of same quality but the monsoon water flooded every year sweeping away the waters defusing its medicinal power. But the jungles in this region save almost all the costly plants and recent discovery of zinseng in the forests of Nagaland completes to make its position highest in herbal perseverance.

6: 10: 1: Household medicine:

The tea garden Oriya people are found less known about herbal medicine but their idea about natural medicine preserve special importance. As I have discussed in previous chapter that the origin of these people is not from the jungle areas but

517. op. cit., Barua, 1972, p. 142
the bare hills with very few grasses and ravines. South Western part of the Chhotanagpur plateau stretches towards the areas they live, which due to less rain left ravine, sometime at the cost of lives due to the occasional famine. Around this bareness and dry atmosphere they try to find out the remedies to the ailments that taking place in their areas.

The Oriya people, specially the women developed a sound knowledge of treatment based on the limited herbals and more on the elements found in the household atmosphere. In relation to vegetations they know few vegetables which can cure ailments. The traditional baid deals with herbs rarely found among them. As I have mention earlier, the diāri who treat the ailments replaced the baid. He cures a person either by healing or by magico-religious mean. But they, in the tea garden do not taken it as their occupation. They are like the other workers working in the tea garden.518 The women and the housewives traditionally came to know about the immediate treatment of the children they bear.

In relation to vegetation, the mungā leaves as curry is the immediate food to the parturient woman to bring normalcy to her body. This leaves serves as vegetable curry with warm rice. If a person suffering from contamination bhaji-saag serves as curry acts as medicines. So this vegetable is for a parturient woman. A pulse called kolod is immediately used for such woman to stop bleeding and bring early normalcy.519 This pulse also helps developing milk in a feeding mother. The puthi fish as curry is also used for the same purpose.

The Oriya mother knows the immediate treatment of the

518. Informant: Sri Bati Mahanandia on 17.4.1999
519. 'kolod' is not produced in Assam but supplied by other parts of the country.
illness of the infants and children at her own custody. Such treatment may be divided into three categories: natural, by help of certain elements and the herbal means.

Massage and Physical Actions are natural treatment especially, of certain actions, massage, application of selected oil are included. As soon as a baby is born, making loud sounds by beating of dhol, drum as tin is necessary. The sudden sound made by it makes the difference sensible parts active; such as ear, eye, nose etc. If even after the sound the infant does not cries it is carried upside down holding both the legs by the hand which makes the air enter through nose and mouth and the infant begins to cry. Crying of a newly born baby is necessary for air healing and blood circulation. 520

The infant is massaged three times every day in the morning, noon and before sleeping. Massage by mustard oil includes massage of all parts of the body especially from both sides, the hands and legs are stretched, and the body let loose holding the head; again upside down holding the legs etc. which help in the proper development of the body and regular blood circulation. Infant’s spine and neck sometimes displaces makes the infant difficult to suck milk from its mother. The Oriya women mildly make some massages to adjust the spine. This is a very risky act in respect of an infant which an Oriya woman can easily do. If a child suffers from contamination, the hands and legs of the child are stretched in the opposite way while massaging with mustard oil. Grown up children are laid on their stomach and the opposite legs and hands are pulled putting own leg on its back to make pressure on the abdomen. The massage or other physical exercise is

520. Informant: Smt Hemo Nayak on 13.7. 2006
mild for the infants and slowly it is strengthened as the child grows. On achieving the age of one year the child is massaged with full strength which continues till it begins to take solid food.\textsuperscript{521}

Massage with mustard oil fried along with garlic plays very important role in the treatment of a sick person in the family. A person suffering from fever, body ache, flue etc. is relieved when massaged by the warm mustard oil as it makes the person feel healthy. On such massages 'jāḍā-tel', gohri-tel', 'sus-tel' etc. are used on the spot of the muscle pain and misplaced bones. An expert can only fix the misplaced bones with regular massages early in the morning as soon as the patient gets up from bed. In case of pain, kerosene, petrol, turpentine oils are used in massages. Such person is paid with some price which he never demands but accepts the price.\textsuperscript{522}

\textbf{6:10: 2: Other mean of treatment:}

\textbf{Household treatment of a baby:} In case an infant's naval string is infected the dried secretion of goat or sooth or ashes of the burnt coconut rope is applied. A tobacco stem is applied on the anus of an infant if it is suffering from hookworm. After a child’s birth the mother's stomach is given warm pressure of the jhāḍā-pātā. On earache or discharge from the ear vermillion mixed with coconut is poured into the ear. Juice of \textit{kunduli} is also applied for the same purpose. In case of diarrhea of a baby a \textit{hartaki} is rubbed on iron, mixed with warm water and the poultice is applied on the anus and on mouth to swallow. To dry the naval point of an infant, turmeric mixed with mustard oil is to be applied. Sooth mixed in coconut in coconut oil is

\textsuperscript{521} Informant: Smt. Panpotro Tanti on 11.2.1996.
\textsuperscript{522} Informant: Sri Bhojo Tanti on 16.1.2007.
applied on the *tālu* of the baby. The later is also applied to cure a baby from worm. Garlic and mustard oil poultice is also used to remove septic of the naval point. To save from such effects regular application of mustard oil and turmeric poultice is used on the naval point. If a baby suffers from stomachache and contamination mild encircling of one’s thumbs for few minutes makes the baby normal. If a baby’s physical growth is stopped it is touched with the *pāhrun* on the *dheki* for several times and the baby begins to grow. Such baby is called *puni* affected. The mother or the *dhai* makes a powerful puff in the mouth of the baby to bring out the cough from inside during his bathing. When puffed in the mouth the cough comes out from the nasal holes. To remove cough and cold mustard oil boiled with garlic and pig fats is used. To keep clean the mouth of a baby regular brushing by turmeric and pig’s fat is needed.  

**Household treatment of the Adults:** Headache is cured by biting by the teeth on the forehead by an expert. On such biting, a cracking sound comes out and after some while the headache is cured. The people pluck of the tea leaves having their palms very strong. Their massage with mastered oil found body ache, muscles trouble etc., are immediately relieved. This practice may be noticed in every house in the Oriya families. Such massage specially applied on the children as immediate treatment.  

A person suffering from backache; three, five or seven times massage by the left leg of a person who was born leg side first is effective. This massage is applied early in the morning and before any other activities.

523 Sri Bhojo Tanti, Smt. Hemo Nayak and Smt Nijra Tanti  

524 Informants: Sri Gojo Tanti, Sri Bhojo Tanti, Sri Niranjan Munda and many others whom I met during my field study
A girl, though matured physically but could not achieve puberty is punched on her back when at the same time her legs should be stamped.

The fat of the fowl can cure burn.

The dust of the upper layer of bamboo stops flowing of blood from cuts and can cure the cut by applying it mixed with lime. The cuts may be also cured by burning a cloth dipped with mustard oil and applying the liquid oil flowing from a burnt cloth and also by putting the burnt cloth's ashes on the cut.

To cure gastric the juice of the flower gendhā is taken as drink. The bāsi rice eaten in the morning also removes gasses from the stomach. The water drawn from gruel, kept for few days and the sour water can cure blood dysentery. The more old the water; the result is more effective.

For any stomach trouble, warm rice taken with ghee cures the trouble. On respiratory problem honey works as medicine. Cough, cold, fever etc. are also cured by honey.

Degenerating health can be revived by taking ghee everyday with the food. Curd removes stomach trouble during the summer.

Regular use of the urine of black cow that has not given birth restrains all kinds of ills from the human body. The Kumpātiās uses it as pobitro to make a person clean.525

The ashes of the dhuni (fire sacrifice) of the Kumpātiā can remove any sickness. Dhuni is performed on the first day of the month Mahā, Vaisākh and Kartik.526

525 Informant: Prodip Hari on 24 5 2006
526 Śri Hari

- 268 -
The partial headache called ādh-kāpāli can be removed by touching the dubori grass three times on the forehead facing the sun during the sunrise before washing the mouth and saying the following charm "my headache is more powerful than the sunrays."

The above mentioned herbal plants are difficult to trace out by ordinary people. So, an ojha is needed who is experienced on applying such herbs on different persons. But there are a number of herbs found in the environment if the plantation most of which are known to them as they use them very frequently in their working places. The interesting feature of this knowledge lies with the experiences of the few immigrants from the different areas at the initial period.

The experience and knowledge of different herbs useful as medicines in the common environment of the plantation work led them to learn from each other making them rich with the knowledge about herbal medicines.

6:11: Cuts and Leeches:

The immediate use in cut, scratch or blood release are met with the phool-hābi found everywhere in the rural areas mixed with little lime and tobacco if available and they recover from the pain and the blood release also stops. In the places of their work in the garden they are common victim of the leeches. They apply their spit to remove them from their body and sometimes tobacco or sada is also applied. They prepare oil out of coconut oil mixing it with tobacco and apply on their foot to prevent themselves from the leeches. Because when the leeches cut the skin and begins to suck the blood a person cannot tell as he has to be busy with his work; he learns about
it only when he notices the continuing bleeding from the wound.  

6: 12: Bite of Bees and Wasps: 

The garden workers very often meet with bees and wasps in the tea garden under the tea bushes. As they are out of sight, a person unknowingly comes in contact with them and attacked by them on the whole body. Sometimes if they are few in number, a person can apply some fresh cow dung and get relief. If they are bees their stings must be taken out from the affected part of the body and thus they need to go to the garden hospital.

6: 13: Snake and other reptiles: 

Sometimes the workers come in contact with the wandering snakes under or over the flat tea bushes. If they cut a person, they try to remove the poison by the following ways:

The person is immediately taken to the ojha and the ojha chants some mantras and put a brass thāl on the back of the patient. If the poison is still on his body the thaal will be attached to the skin and it absorbs the poison from the person’s body. The thaal is polished with certain herbs which is capable of sucking out the poison. In most cases, if the patient reaches an experienced ojhā in time he is sure to be saved. But inexperienced ojhā cannot determine the depth of the poison and in such cases the person may not be recovered. The immediate treatment of snake bite is of course, applying of the

528. Informant: Sri RajaramTanti on 13.9.2006

529 Sri Rajaram Tanti
roots of the *birni* grass (*andropogen muricatus*), pounded with water on the affected part.\footnote{op.cit., Doongdoong, 1981. p. 155. (Most poisonous snake-bite cannot be recovered by these methods).}

A reference about snake bite and the magico-religious treatment is found in Abhiram Tasha’s *Chah Bagichar Gontisalor Chintā Sorsha*. He describes the treatment as follows: If a snake bite someone, the spot is to be identified first up to which the poison is raised. This could be identified as the spot or the area will be unusually warm than the other parts. The *ojhā* or *guniā* then puts his middle finger of the right hand on the ground, praying to *Shiva*, the Hindu god, takes some soil on the finger three times without taking breath and makes three different circles out of the soil with puff above the effected spot. While doing this he has to chant some mantra called *bāndhni mantra*. The mantra is as follows: \footnote{op.cit., Tasa, 2002. pp. 1-2}

\begin{verbatim}
 "dhorni bāndhou āij nāi dhorni bāndhou beāj nāi
tiri guru kā sāti,moi dhorni bāndhou, guru garot
āik dhorni āikāinjka tini prohor
kālikā chār prohor ladit chadit joḍi tol hāde
modhā utichāt drishti nagorer māthā khābi."
\end{verbatim}

After making of the *bāndhuni* (three circles), the *katon-mantra* is applied. To start this mantra three pieces of thatched blade is to be taken from the doorstep of the house.

\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}
and the stick blades touched the affected spot chants the
*katan-mantra*, which is as follows: 532

1. "Sankar sodā sisir khedā dohichhe āpnār mone bāhor
   bhitore bish sāmāilo jhādilo kemone oi āshode sankā
   nochar pāwe gārol gārol bish phukiye udāi ke kāte guru
   kāte guru āgiya hāmi kāti kār duhāi is or gauri-pārboti
   mohādebor duhāi."

2. "Sundor soki nāth thiro mon ārāmoi bondibo bhoi sob
   debgon, methilotā gondiban sunoibo hāmi, ei montore
   morā nāhi logīgā āār montrore kole juro bishop horimā
   ke kole guru kāte guru āoyā hāmi kāti kār dehāi isor
   gāuri pārboti mohādever dohāi."

3. "nijē thākur hāl bānālek kāke sālker bānālekre juwāli
   bānālek kāker pānjonkor sol bānālek kāker doker māti
   bānālek kāker sonker bhāirkē jōtlek ker purab-paschim,
   uttor-dakshin jōinke bunlek kā soirshā sei sorshā gāchh
   keson tewāl boron pāt keshon dālā, phul keshon horik
   boron, phol keson bel-boron gota, sci sorsha jāir kā hā
   paschim duār paschim duār jāike surjā poroir keme āle
   sorshā. Sorshā jātārow medina porāo āhāngkār ohin,

532. ibid.
tāhiu jomgon mmug doli phogu nāini lātā chhitā.
Pāsholi bāurir borbir bāubir borbir norshing gurur
dohāi”.

4. “bongele kākore gode ei kolā kāpoe lohā gode ei lohā kā
bohāi surī bānāi ei churi kā kāte ros kāte, pith kāte
āmbol kāte bethā kāte, bāo kāte bāsāt kāte, lāik kāte,
lāgās kāte, mit kāte, rom kāte, pīrit kāte, dāhin kāte,
kudhrā kāte, muwā kāte, māsān kāte, gāyāh kāte,
kātoī hoite bohni kāte, pāsh bohī kāte guru lāter guru
thākā hāmi kāti kār dohāi srichāt kāmrup kāmākhya
mā chondir dohāi.”.

5. “chal kātāo chālni kātāo sātso giyāni kātāo kātuwar bish
pātālshe kātāo ke kāte guru āgiyā hāmi kāti kār dohāi
godurer dohāi.

6. “megh āndhār rātī kon kon jāti jāti chit māhālonti āgni
bādhāo pāo horir māthon māthon bish kori paschim ke
kāte guru kāte kār dohāi isor gāuri pārboti mohādebor
dohāi.

7. “bhāīti bhāngou gothiār bhāngō sātso lohār sikli bhongāo
ghom mukhī jāi, ke kāte guru kāte guru āgiyā hāmi kāti
kār dohāi godurer dohāi.”
The guniā with no spot on his body usual or unusual is more successful to cure a person by his mantra but has to live life of chastity and purity. The person or the guniā who has spot on his body, lives impure life is less successful. But sometime a pure person may also be unsuccessful due to his unknowingly consumption of certain things like human urine or vulture etc., mixed in his food by his enemy.533

6: 14: Herbal medicine:

The natural medicines or the herbal medicines; the tea garden community use to cure their various diseases, are found not only in the forests; but most of them, if identified; could be found in every corners, street sides, drain sides, one's courtyard etc. As they live in the rural area, like the plantation, full of different herbs in the environment are found in these places. A few of them are mentioned below: The names of the medicines are of 'sadri' as they are of common use.

1. Bunui-kuda or Suar mara (Eleusine indica): Extract of the root of this grass is administered to cure fever. This grass is pounded with water and baked into a kind of bread and eaten.

2. Birni grass (Andropogen muricatus): Roots of this grass are pounded with water and applied externally on the snake-bite wound.

3. Motha grass (Cyperus rotundus): Roots of this grass are pounded with garlic and applied externally to cure fever.

4. Har jora (Vitis quadrangularis: The stem and leaves of

533. Informant: Sri S. K. Bhengra on 31.1 2007
this creeper are pounded with water and given internally to a
woman after child birth to relieve from pain.\textsuperscript{534}

5. \textit{Dhaman-puchk}: The root and stem of this creeper
pounded with water and applied externally to cure rheumatism.

6. \textit{Bankuthi} (Lawsoni sokph): The leaves and stems of this
creeper are cut and steeped in water and administered with
water in cough and asthma.

7. \textit{Mehendi} (Lawsoni alba): The leaves of this shrub are
pounded with castor seeds for external application of sore toes.

8. \textit{Dhatura} (Phyllan thusemblica): The roots of this shrub
are pounded with water and applied like poultice to swollen
fingers. Its fruit is sliced into rings and worn on the fingers of a
woman in whose breast too much milk has accumulated causing
pain.

9. \textit{Sinduar} (Vilex negundo): The stem of this shrub is
pounded and applied externally with splinters as a cure for
broken bones.

10. \textit{Chitchithi} (Acyrauthes aspera): The roots of this shrub
are pounded and boiled in water and the extract is
administered to a woman after child birth when spittle curdles
like milk.

11. \textit{Tirio Kondeng} (Acyranthes sp): The roots of this dwarf
and thin bamboo shrill are pounded and the juice is taken to
cure griping of the stomach which is believed to be caused

\textsuperscript{534} The 'har-jora' is a plant used to join broken bones which can cure in a

week. Sri Parmeswar Satnami, a practitioner of Ketetong, Margherita

Sub-Division (Assam), says that he has learnt the medicine through dream.
either by the evil-eye or by spirits. The roots are also boiled and the extract administered to a woman after child birth when her spittle coagulates.

12. *Bariari* (Sida carpinifolia): The roots and stem of this creeper (which bears yellow flowers) are tied on the hair at the back of the head of a parturient woman to hasten delivery. The fruit and leaves of this creeper are used as poultice to cure boils.

13. *Dhowai* (woodfardia floribunda): The flowers of this shrub are dried and powdered and mixed with water and sugar and taken as cooling drink.

14. *Gethia* (Vernonia cinerea): The roots of this shrub are dried and boiled with water and applied externally in the form of poultice over the joints to cure pains in the joints (articular rheumatism). The tube of this creeper is also boiled and then steeped for a whole night in running water so as to wash away its acridity. It is then boiled again and eaten.

15. *Akaond* (Calotropis gigantea): The root and leaves of this plant are pounded and warmed and applied externally to cure muscular pains, particularly in the sides. The juice is also applied to fly-borne sores. The root bark decoction is useful in dysentery. Another use for this juice is to use it for poisoning the water of a pond of dammed up stream so as to induce torpor or death to the fish in it in order to catch them.

The latex of this plant is irritant and in combination with *Euphorbia nerieolia* used as purgative.

Powdered flowers are employed as a cure for cough, asthma and indigestion.
16. **Rangaini** (Solanium Xanthocarpum): The root of this plant is boiled with water and taken to cure stomachache. This fruit is boiled and eaten in fever. The *Mundas* use the rind of the fruit for cough and the *Oraons* give the fruit and flowers mixed with ghee for the same purpose.

17. **Karijhuri** (Vernonia anthelminitica): The fruit and leaves of this plant are pounded with water and applied externally to cure swelling of the glands.

18. **Rohen** (Astonia scholaris): The bork of this tree is pounded with water and administered internally to a woman after child birth. It is a bitter tonic useful in diarrhea and dysentery.

19. **Ambra** (Spondia mangifera): The bork of this tree is pounded mixed with lime and taken internally as a cure for diarrhea.

20. **Konyar** (Mangifera indica): Its juice is mixed with lime and taken internally to cure diarrhea.

21. **Semol** (Bombox Malabaricum): It is pounded with water and sugar and the mixture is administered to cure rheumatism.

22. **Sal** (Shorea robusta): Fruit of the tree is boiled and then pounded with murum (Bassia latifolia) and taken internally as a cure for diarrhea.

23. **Gulanchi** (Phumeria actifolia): The bork of this tree is pounded with water and applied externally for open sores or wounds and is also taken internally as a purgative.

24. **Jamun** (Eugenia jamboloma): The juice of the bork of this tree is expressed and administered as cure for dysentery.
25. *Jada, erendi* or the castor plant (*Ricinus Communis*): The root of this plant pounded with water and applied externally to the skin underneath the heel when the skin gets hardened and becomes white. Oil extracts from *erendi* seeds is taken internally as a purgative or as a cure for constipation.

26. *Munga* (*Maringa Oleifera*): Bark, roots and leaves are pounded with water and externally applied to remove migraine.

27. *Neem* (*Agaderacata Indica*): Leaves, roots and bark are useful for stomach and blood circulation. The stem used as tooth brush relieves from tooth ache.\(^{535}\)

6: 15: Other mean of treatment:

To take out the worm lodged in the tooth, *Bijri* fruit fried or roasted on an iron plate. The steaming fume of the fruit is inhaled in mouth covering the head of the patient with clothes.\(^{536}\)

In case of stomach-ache, juice of; *jambu* (*Eugenia Jambolana*) is given to the patient. Roots of *Bichi-Mandar* (*Scorparia Dulcia*) and the crushed leaves of *Kitti* (*Buchanania Lotifolia*) mixed with rice-beer is also used to relieve the pain.

In case of constipation, ash made of burnt wood or rope mixed with water is given as drink to the patient.

Body ache is removed by the roots of *Nerrdimbo* (*Cucumis Trigonus*) crushed, mixed with mustard oil and rubbed and the affected area.

\(^{535}\) Informants: Sri Gulap Tanti, Sri Karamsing Bhokta, Sri Bhojo Tanti, Sri S K. Bhengra, Sri Niranjan Munda, Sri Benedict Kujur, Smt Jospin Kujur, Sri Kameia Kujur and many others whom I met in the field

\(^{536}\) Informant: Sri Bati Mahanandia
Sudden internal pains or wounds could be cured by rubbing methi or garlic fried with mustard oil.

In case of ordinary fever Kalmegh (Anduographin doniculata) leaves crushed and mixed with water is given to the patient to drink.

Chhatu (Mushroom) is crushed and the drink administered to high fever patient.

Ghora Bash (acorus calamus) roots are smashed and rubbed on the body to cure malaria fever.

For small wounds, roots of Karla (Trichodesma Indicum) is crushed, mixed with mustard oil and applied as an ointment.

Epilepsy, called mirgi is controlled by rubbing of the oil prepared from a live muskrat put into a bottle containing kujri (celastrus Paniculatua) oil.

On eye-ache warm water mixed with turmeric is applied or several sprinkling is done to relieve from the pain.

In case of insomnia crushed legs of a spider is mildly rubbed around the eyes of the patient.

For ear-ache or ear running rakta-sindur mixed with coconut oil is to be dropped or the juice of kunduli is dropped on the ear.

Castor leaves are mildly warmed and applied on the abdomen of a woman after a child's birth.

Cough and colds are cured by garlic and salt fried in mustard oil which is tied in a small piece of cloth and hanged at the throat of a patient.
If menstruation is stopped and the person needs to activate it again *Pathal rait* is boiled and given to the patient to drink. Sometimes bark of *Rohini* is crushed and the drink is given. Roots of *Putri Simbol* which is completely buried underground is crushed and mixed with rice-beer for making it tasteful to drink and given to the patient. One bottle of this drink is sufficient for one to three months and two bottles in case of five to six months is enough to cure a patient.\textsuperscript{537}

The stem of basil root may also be fastened on the organ which is applicable up to two months stop.

If urine is stopped *bhijri* fruit boiled and its water is served as drink to the patient.

If a person is affected by poisonous substance, the crushed root of 'Dhatura' (*Dutura Fastuosa*) is applied on the affected areas.

In case of syphilis about a half kilogram of *Tengra* fish is dried in sun; made it into powder and mixed it with the *tisi* (*Linumusita Tissimum*) oil and applied as am ointment.

In case of tetanus; bark of the tree struck by lightening is crushed and given as drink to the patient. The crushed bark is also made into paste and rubbed on the affected part.

To kill the bacteria of an animal's wound *il barai* or the leaves of *Ratan Gauri* is crushed, made into paste and applied on the wound.

\textbf{6:16: Treatment and Prohibitions:}

In case of applying of the natural medicines the expert with the correct method of using them can only draw success.

\textsuperscript{537} Informant: Smt Jospin Kujur on 21.12.2002
Because the same substance if not rightly followed may create negative effect. For example, the basil leaves and rots are used for developing vigor but the flowers have the opposite effect. The same bark sliced upside down will do something different than slicing from down towards up. Same way the natural medicines are also effective according to the hours, tithi seasons etc. That is why an expert baid prohibits eating or using some of the items during the treatment. Here one more example may be given. A person bitten by ‘mad dog’ should not stand under the creeper of beans as it makes the bacteria more effective. Another important advice the baid gives is that a person taking natural medicines must avoid more powerful substances in his food. Alcoholism is completely prohibited in some treatment, while in many natural medicines supplement rice-beer is necessary. Here, it should be clear that rice-beer is made out of herbs which are used in medicinal purposes. A small quantity taken everyday can restrain from many ills. But garlic, onions etc. neutralize its effect. The Oriya people have deeply trust in the healing power of their baids. And these in many cases succeed is undeniable; they sometime fail which is equally compared to the failure of the trained doctors or allopathic medicines in some cases.

The Oriya people, may it be of the tea gardens of Assam are more laid towards the magico-religious and the non-plant substances. Whatever they know about the medicinal plants is only due to their neighbouring tribes living in the forests and hills. Even in Assam a number of natural medicines they have learnt from their localities. Uses of different types of flowers, leaves, barks and roots they have learnt in Assam as most of these plants are not found in their original places. Similarly, a number of plants, which they know as natural medicines, are absent or do not grow in Assam. Kolod is such a pulse used for
a parturient woman. The Oriya people of the tea garden collect it from their acquaintances.