



**TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF DIAGNOSIS
AND TREATMENT OF JAUNDICE AMONG THE
PATI-RABHAS OF MOUMAN VILLAGE OF KAMRUP
DISTRICT, ASSAM, INDIA**

A. F. GULENUR ISLAM BARBHUIYA

Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology,
Gauhati University, Guwahati.

Abstract:

The present paper intends to study the traditional medicine with reference to Jaundice among the Pati-Rabhas of Mouman village of Kamrup district, Assam. The villagers believe that jaundice occurs when the liver of a person enlarge and become less functional due to excessive intake of high proteinous as well as spicy food. By seeing the external appearance of a person they diagnose this disease. According to them when a person suffers from it, the conjunctival membranes over the sclerae and urine become yellowish in colour and even sometimes skin and nail also. Very low appetite makes the person very weak. Two table spoon juice of raw turmeric has to be consumed by the patient in empty stomach. Besides these, two tablets with water has to be consumed by the patient twice a day after having meal and these tablets are prepared from rhizome of mango ginger and turmeric mixed with honey.

KEYWORDS-

Pati-Rabha, Jaundice, Traditional Medicine, Diagnosis, Treatment.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of traditional medicine is an important vehicle for understanding indigenous societies and their relationships with nature. Traditional medicine (also known as indigenous medicine) comprises medical knowledge systems that developed over generations within various societies before the era of modern medicine. Traditional medicine includes the health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral-based medicines. It may be spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to treat, diagnose and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being. Practice of indigenous medicine is generally transmitted orally through individuals, family and community until "collected". Within a given culture, elements of indigenous medicine knowledge may be diffusely known by many, or may be gathered and applied by those in a specific role of healer such as a shaman or midwife (Acharya and Anshu, 2008).

In every culture a substantial and integral set of beliefs, knowledge, techniques and practices are related to the major life experiences of health and disease. The health problems need special attention in the context of the tribal people mainly for their backwardness and uneven growth of the population. This may be intimately connected with socio-cultural habits and health practices as well. The health care system prevalent in a society is a combination of traditions, beliefs, techniques, ecological adaptation, etc. This

system is an integral part of the culture of a society and it provides the means to the members of the society for maintaining health and preventing and curing diseases. The Pati-Rabhas of Mouman village also practice some indigenous medicine for curing diseases.

Objectives:

The main objective of the present study is to investigate the traditional medicine for diagnosis and treatment of jaundice among the Pati-Rabhas of Mouman village of Kamrup district of Assam.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted among the Pati-Rabhas of Mouman village which is situated on the south- western direction of Boko town of Kamrup district, Assam. The Rabha, a scheduled tribe constitutes one of the important plain Tribes of Assam. They are scattered throughout the districts of Assam like Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, etc and Garo Hills of Meghalaya (Bordoloi, et.al., 1988). In general the Rabhas shows all the characteristics of Mongoloid stock. There are five to seven endogamous sections of this tribe among them Rangdaniya, Maitoriya, Pati, are described as dominant ones. Present data was collected by applying schedule, observation, interview and case study method.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SITUATION OF THE VILLAGE

The Pati-Rabhas: The Pati-Rabhas is one of the nine Scheduled tribes in the plains districts of Assam. Their distribution spreads over Meghalaya, Bangladesh, Nepal, West Bengal, Manipur, etc. The total population of the Mouman village is 428, out of which 229 are males and 199 are females. They maintain their livelihood mainly from agriculture. Both male and females are engaged in cultivation. They cultivate both ahu and sali along with some amount of pulses, mustard seeds and vegetables. Rice is the staple food of the tribe with an inherent liking for fish, pork and rice-beer. The tribe has become assimilated with Assamese culture. They have adopted Hindu customs for all intents and purpose. Besides, they lost their mother tongue and speak a patois of the Assamese language. Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Rangali Bihu, Bhogali Bihu, etc are the festivals they celebrate. They follow patriarchal system of family structure and most of the families in the village are nuclear family. Monogamy and marriage by negotiation is the prevailing practice among them.

The Setting: The village is 15 km away from Boko town which is well communicated with Guwahati city by National Highway 37. It falls under the jurisdiction of Boko Police Station of Kamrup district of Assam. Climate of the village is more or less similar to the plain areas of Assam. The village is full of floras and faunas which include cow, ox, pig, duck, hen, birds, snakes, etc. while floras include mango, jackfruit, jujube, banana, bamboo, etc. The village has one Primary and one Middle English school. Besides these, it has two temples and one club. Village houses are present in linear pattern and most of the houses are Assam type. The main source of water is tube well, pond, etc. Most of the houses in the village have pit latrine (either kutchra or pucca toilets). They are very health conscious and always try to maintain cleanliness around the house.

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF JAUNDICE

The Pati Rabhas of Mouman village have certain beliefs and curative measures for certain diseases. Jaundice is one of the common diseases which the villagers counter frequently in the village. So, here a modest attempt has been made to examine the diagnosis, preventive measure and curative measure of jaundice.

The Pati-Rabhas of Mouman village depend only on indigenous medicinal method for curing the disease jaundice because they believe that it could be only cured through this method and not by modern medicines. But now-a-days due to the impact of modern medicines in very few cases they go for allopathic treatment. The study also reveals that all the villagers do not know the treatment of jaundice, so when a person suffers he seeks the help of village ethno-medicine man Mr. B. Rabha as well as ethno medicine man of neighbouring villages for curing it. Under the influence of modern medical system, ethno-medicine has undergone unidentifiable changes but till now the Pati – Rabhas of Mouman village depend on indigenous medicinal method for curing jaundice.

Jaundice and It's Causes: Jaundice is not a disease but rather a sign that can occur in many different

diseases. The symptoms of jaundice are yellowish pigmentation of the skin, the conjunctival membranes over the sclerae (whites of the eyes), and other mucous membranes caused by hyperbilirubinemia (increased levels of bilirubin in the blood). This hyperbilirubinemia subsequently causes increased levels of bilirubin in the extracellular fluids. Typically, the concentration of bilirubin in the plasma must exceed 1.5 mg/dL (Guyton and Hall, 2005), three times the usual value of approximately 0.5 mg/dL, for the coloration to be easily visible. The color of the skin and sclerae vary depending on the level of bilirubin. When the bilirubin level is mildly elevated, they are yellowish. When the bilirubin level is high, they tend to be brown.

However the villagers consider it as a disease. According to the villagers, intake of high proteinous food such as fish, meat, egg, etc. in a large amount along with excessive use of spice is the root cause of jaundice. These food items affect the liver due to which the liver swells and can't function properly which results in jaundice. In other words, jaundice occurs when the liver of a person enlarge and become less functional due to excessive intake of high proteinous as well as spicy food. Apart from that, they also believe that impure drinking water and unhygienic condition is also responsible for it.

Diagnosis:

By seeing the external appearance of a person they diagnose the disease. According to them when a person suffers from it, white portions of the eyes & urine become yellowish in colour. Besides, the skin and even sometimes nails also become yellowish in colour. The appetite of the person becomes very low which make the person very weak.

Treatment:

The rhizome of mango ginger (local name-keturi & botanical name-*Curcuma aromatica*) is grinded and it is mixed with water (usually boiled water) in a bucket which is used for bathing. Two table spoon (approximately-30 ml) juice of raw turmeric (local name-Kecha halodi & botanical name-*Curcuma domestica*) has to be consumed by the patient in empty stomach in the morning. Besides these, rhizome of keturi and halodi are grinded and mixed with honey and from these ingredients tablets are prepared which are to be consumed by the patient and the dosage is two tablets (with water) twice a day after having meal. Apart from that when a person suffers from jaundice, he has to take soft rice and boiled water and doesn't take spicy and oily food. He has to drink lots of juice of sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*), coconut (*cocos nucifera*) and orange (*Citrus sinensis*).

Note:

The treatment also includes reciting of mantras by the ethno-medicine man. The investigator could not reveal those mantras as the ethno-medicine man believes that he may loss the power of treatment if he discloses the mantras.

Various studies reveal that the use of medicinal plants for treatment of jaundice by different population groups of Assam is not similar. Medhi (1995) mentioned that juice of leaves and bark of *Media azadirachta* (*Margosa*) are used by Mishing tribe of Lakhimpur District of Assam. Bodo, Rabha, Koch-Rajbanshi and Santal of North-Kamrup, Assam use whole plant juice of *Nymphoides indica* (Das et al., 2006). Jaintias of North Cachar Hills District of Assam use entire plant of *oxalis corymbosa* (Sajem and Gosai, 2006). Equal proportion of leaves and milk of *plantago major* are used by Lushai of North Cachar, Assam (Sajem and Gosai, 2008). Sikdar and Dutta (2008) reveal that Nath People of Morigaon District of Assam use the whole plant juice of *Oldenlandia corymbosa*. Besides that they also use juice of leaves and roots of *Eclipta alba*. While the present study reveals that Pati-Rabhas of Mouman Village of Kamrup District, Assam use rhizome of *Curcuma aromatica* and *Curcuma domestica*. So, it can be said that the traditional medicine for jaundice of various communities of the state (Assam) are different from one another. There is variation in the medicinal plants as well as the parts used by the different communities of the state for treatment of jaundice. So, it depends on the available local resources and traditional knowledge of a community.

CONCLUSION

The Pati-Rabhas of Mouman village depend only on indigenous medicinal method for curing the disease jaundice because they believe that it is only cured through this method, not by modern medicines. All the villagers do not know the treatment of jaundice, so when a person suffers he seeks the help of village ethno medicine man Mr. Bharat Rabha as well as ethno medicine man of neighbouring villages for curing it. The Pati-Rabhas of Mouman village believe that the main cause of this disease is the liver infection due to excessive intake of high proteinous as well as spicy food. According to them when a person suffers from it, white portions of the eyes & urine become yellowish in colour. Besides, the skin and even sometimes nails also become yellowish in colour. Two table spoon juice of raw turmeric has to be consumed by the patient in empty stomach. Besides these, two tablets with water has to be consumed by the patient twice a day after having meal and these tablets are prepared from rhizome of mango ginger and turmeric mixed with honey. Under the influence of modern medical system, ethno medicine has undergone unidentifiable changes but till now the Pati-Rabhas of Mouman village depend on indigenous medicinal method for curing some diseases like jaundice.

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A. F. GULENUR ISLAM BARBHUIYA

Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University, Guwahati.