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## Tribal Health and Traditional Medication: Usages and Practices in Present and Past Society

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### Introduction :

Since from the time immemorial, with the passage of time and due to evolution, development and growth of science, simultaneously by following and adopting various processes like modernisation, westernisation, globalisation, liberalisation worldwide many things or we can say each and everything which has been existed today, have changed. Now a great gap or differences can be marked between the traditional life style and modern life style. So we can say development of science has left its footprint in every aspect which directly or indirectly affects human society in general and health in particular. Due to the same reason medical science has also reached its utmost pick level success which leads to various social as well as human development, but despite of all these success human development and growth has affected negatively by the negative effect of environment on health which has turned into a barrier for all round growth and development. Though for all round development of society the development in every field is essential but health factor has turned into an important one. So it's a focus of everyone to work on for the improvement and development in health and medical science sector.

As we know health is the gate way for all kinds of human development and in today's health facilities are much more developed in comparison to the traditional health facilities. Despite with the advancement of time and technologies, development has happened in the field of health and medical sector but in the same way the number of health diseases also increasing day by day. Seeing all these World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1946 has defined health as “ a condition of complete bodily, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of sickness or disability.” A good health includes genetics, environment, relationship and education. A person can be counted as a healthy person if s/he is having a healthful diet, exercise, screening for diseases and coping strategies. All these things are required to keep a person healthy. So for measuring the health status of people and

communities there are many health indicators introduced by health care system and government and some of them are like; mortality indicators, morbidity indicators, disability indicators, nutritional indicators, social and mental health indicators and health system indicators and all. To influence various health policy government uses these indicators. The health care policies refer to a company's policies, strategies and efforts to achieve some health goals. Some of the health policies are like; global health policy, public health policy, mental health policy, health care services policy, insurance policy, personal health care policy and policy related to public health, etc. Despite all these policies we have some national and international bodies and organisations whose contributions help in promoting health care facilities all over the world and such organisational bodies are like; United Nations Children's Fund, World Bank and International Monetary Fund, World Health Organisation, United States Agency for International Development, Centre for Diseases Control and Prevention, Alliance for International Medical action, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere International, Population Services International, International Child Care and Global Health Council, etc.

### **Brief ideas on Tribe and Tribal Health :**

A tribe or indigenous people refers to the collection of individuals and families primitive by origin having their separate culture, languages, dialects, customs and institutions. E.B. Tylor named them as "Social Fossil" and in India they are called as "Adivasi". Again constitutionally they are called as "Scheduled Caste". These separation makes them different from the rest. Around 370 million indigenous people in more than 70 countries resides in all over the world. In India around 8.08% tribal people resides from the total tribal population of the world. Among the tribes 80% of the tribal are Hindus and 70% from them lives in rural and forest areas. In India we can find 427 types of tribe from whom 104 million tribal people lives in 10 states and North-East region where Odisha constitutes the largest part of the tribal people of 8.15 million.

In India the process of health care system and treatment varies from place to place, group to group and community to community on the whole the process is not homogeneous for everyone. Among tribal communities also it is not same. Sometimes the process of treatment varies and depends on educational, socio-economic background and culture. Generally tribal people suffers a lot from various communicable disease like vector-borne malaria, water-borne diarrhoea and hepatitis and air-borne pneumonia, measles and TB.

Among the tribal communities the belief on supernatural power is very prominent which plays a crucial role in their economic and health point of view. Due to the cultural influence they used to follow many rituals for different economic perspective. In the same way they belief on spirits and deities and connection of these with diseases. They are having some particular gods and spirits for health and diseases. Nature of treatment and cause of illness both are intimately related. Sometime the process of treatment and healthcare system increases the community sentiment among tribals. Among tribals if someone is suffering from a disease then the entire family of that person and the community also

affected with that. They follow certain taboos, restrictions and food habits. Even the violation of those taboos, restrictions are punishable under village council.

Normally if we will see the people lives in rural area have a better health status rather than the people lives in urban area. They collect their food supplements from forest like fruits, tubers, leafy vegetables, shoots, honey, flowers, juices, grass, fish etc. Many medicinal plants and herbs are also collected from forest and they are using as modern medicine. Types of roots and tubers are also used as a balanced nutrition for them but due to deforestation and establishment of industries and residential flats on forest ground now it has turned into very difficult job for tribals to collect these valuable things from forest and in this way their health also get affected by this. Vegetation also has a great impact on the tribal people for maintaining their health.

In tribal area tribal people having a group of specialities on whom the people prefer for their treatment. Those specialists may be called as magicians, medicine men or Shamans and these people are also responsible for non-acceptance of modern western medicine by tribal people. The medicine men having a strong cultural belief on traditional medication process. Sometime the people of tribal area suffer a lot in some specific disease and those disease controlled in that particular place or group because of their food habits. But any kind of changes which affects their ecosystem also affects their health and food habits. Some reasons are like deforestation, commercialization of minor forest products, replacement of food crops in cash and etc.

### **Review of Literature :**

As per the study conducted by Begum, S. and et.al (2017) where they have concluded that the tribal people had a strong belief or faith in traditional customs, and they used to follow the traditional medications during pregnancy and childbirth. The facilities provided to them for their utilization at the time of pregnancy and childbirth for maternal and child health services were accepted by them very poorly. They had a strong faith on “Dai” rather than expert and experienced doctor or skilled personnel. Preference for home delivery was high, unhygienic care and delay in breast feeding were also followed by them.

As per the study conducted by Pandey (2001) tried to explain the socio-cultural beliefs and practices of three tribes- Bharias, Hill Korwas and Kamaras of MadhyaPradesh. According to the study, the researcher has concluded that some of the processes followed by the people of these above tribes were good and useful for a healthy reproduction. And they were like – the tribal people avoid cohabitation at the time of pregnancy, avoid taking alcohol, they regularly do their normal chores until the delivery. To prevent various infections and diseases the infants were given colostrum.

As per the study conducted by Pranjiv Goswami and et al (2008) has tried to explain in their study that around 10 medicinal plants are used by the Tagin tribes for the prevention or cure of the diseases. They can use it for both human being and animal diseases. Mostly they use fresh leaves for their treatment and prepared medicines for tropical applications for wound healing, skin diseases and burning etc., again problems like blood clotting, tonsillitis, joints pain, stomach disorder, blood pressures, jaundice and gastritis. And even these modern time also they consume these indigenous traditional knowledge for treatment because of lack of communication facilities, interior area of living and non-availability of modern healthcare facilities.

As per the study conducted by Roy, J.J. on the tribes like Bhutias and Lepchas of Sikkim about their ethno-medicinal practices and it's interconnection with religion. No doubt at the same time the modern medicine and hospitalization has been already introduced in the society with the creation of the Health Department and establishment of Hospitals, PHCs and sub-centres many people started visiting over there. But people of certain groups like Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas still having the faith and trust on the traditional herbal and medico-psychiatric practices.

### **About Field , Respondents and Methodology:**

The present study has been conducted in one block named Jashipur out of 26 blocks of the biggest district of Odisha i.e Mayurbhanj. The district is located in the northern border with a geographical area of 10418 km<sup>2</sup> (4,022 sq mi). According to the census report of 2011, Mayurbhanj district has a population of 2,519,738 people. In Mayurbhanj Blocks like Udala, Khunta, Bijatala, Jamda and Baripada represents 70% to 80% of the tribal population. In short around 56.6 % of the people are tribe of the respective district. In the same way the population of Jashipur is 121,030. Among them men are 61,404 and women are 59,626. The average sex ratio of Jashipur is 1030. According to the 2011 census, 4.2% of the population lives in urban areas and 95.8% live in rural areas.

In the present study “ The Tribal health and Traditional Medication: The Usages in Past and Present Society” has been conducted on the Health care issues of tribal people and the use and importance of traditional ethno-medicines among tribal people. In this present study the researcher has followed Descriptive Research Design with this Purposive sampling under Non-Probability sampling beside this took Semi-Structure Interview Scheduled and collected data from both Primary and Secondary Sources.

The researcher has conducted the research work on 50 respondents from Tribal community like Ho, Kolha and Santhal community and they were from lower socio-economic class people engaged in food gathering, daily labour work, working under any one else and any other household work. Mainly they earn from their livelihood from agriculture and forestry. It was very easy to collect the data from the respondents as they were very simple, cooperative, and out spoken a small and friendly interaction helped the researcher to built a rapport easily.

**Discussion:**

In the present study on “The Tribal health and Traditional Medication : The Usages in Past and Present Society” the researcher wanted to know about the usefulness and worthfulness of traditional medication among tribal population. As the entire research has been conducted on 50 respondents from 3 different tribes like Koiha, Hoo and Santhal tribe and they are in numbers like 32%, 46% and 22% respectively.

Variable	Frequency		Percentage
Types of Tribe	Kolha	16	32%
	Hoo	23	46%
	Santhal	11	22%
Education	Primary	37	74%
	10th	9	18%
	12th	4	8%
Profession	Self employed	6	12%
	Working under someone else	9	18%
	Housewife	35	70%
Income	5000	7	14%
	10000	17	34%
	20000	26	52%
Satisfaction on the Availability of traditional medication	High	33	66%
	Mideum	14	28%
	Low	3	6%

(Source- Field work 2021, March to April)

In the above table data been shown on the educational, professional and income level of the respondents. Socio-economic condition means from which one can measure the standard of living of a person or group or society. Education means the way or method which teaches us about real life invents and how to deal with it. Some time that we understand that education means to make a person literate that the person can read and write perfectly. But the real meaning of education is something different as discussed above. Profession means the work by doing which some one will be paid. Here in this research as per the data collection the respondents are engaged in the work like working under someone else, self-employed and house wife.

According to the data mainly the respondents have completed their primary(7<sup>th</sup>) education only i.e. 74% of the total respondents and from the rest 18% and 8% have completed their secondary (10<sup>th</sup>) and higher secondary (12<sup>th</sup>) education respectively.

In the same way again on the basis of there profession the respondents have been divide into 3 categories like self-employed, working under anyone else and lastly working as housewives in their own houses and percentage of respondents according to the above said categories are 12%, 18% and 70% respectively.

However when the matter comes on income level of the family then their income are normal as around 10% of the respondent's family income is Rs.5000/-, in the same way 30% respondent's Rs.10000/-, 52% respondent's Rs.15000/- and only 4% respondent's family income is Rs.20000/-. On the whole they said they all are BPL category people.

In response the researcher got to know around 22% of the respondents showed low level of satisfaction, 32% respondents showed medium level of satisfaction and almost 46% respondents showed high level of satisfaction. With this the researcher got to know the modern hospital facility is not available there easily in near by area. And if any kind of such facilities are available then with a cost which one is not affordable for simple tribal people. What the researcher find communication and transportation facility is very bad for which it is again not easily accessible also.

In another problem is that the respondents are very much acquainted with traditional medication and having a great trust on the person who provides all these medicines. Sik is a **kind** of food intake which is specially served to the pregnant lady for **her** and her child's betterment. This Sik has made of the roots of some trees. And this happens as in the past traditional period this traditional medication was very effective, easily available and accessible for the people. Even in traditional period people were strongly believe in Ayurveda and Zadibuti system of medication which one is also prepared by using the plant's root, leaves, animals, fruits and all.



Some time local culture and believe system also plays vital role in promoting and preserving the traditional ethno-cultural medicinal practices. People of the respective tribal area are not ready to accept and adopt the modern health care facilities. Because they have a strong faith on local cultural treatment system and going beyond this might be a harmful consequence for them.

Again when they were asked that what kind of benefits they are getting in the present days when the availability of modern medicines and all other facilities are there. They said despite of the presence of the modern medicines they are having a great trust on traditional medicine for better cure from the diseases. Mostly it gives them a separate identity and recognition in the society for preparing effective and useful traditional medicines without any side effects on health in a very reasonable price which are easily affordable among every class people.

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