

Study on Ethno-Medicinal practices and system of cure among the People of Rath Region of Garhwal Himalaya, Uttarakhand

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Abstract: The present paper deals with the Ethno-medicinal practices used by the people of Rath region to cure various therapeutic purposes. The study reveals that people of Rath region still depend on the indigenous method of treatment to cure various diseases due to their knowledge of medicinal plants. They chiefly used their knowledge in curing fever, dysentery, headache, Migran, Cough & Whopping, Piles, Rheumatism, Jaundice, Stomachace etc. Elderly persons of village and Vadiyas have a good knowledge of the herbal plants. The medicinal properties of these plants may be due to the presence of various chemical constituents.

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Key words: Ethno-medicine, Rath Region, Garhwal Himalaya, Indigenous knowledge

1. Introduction

Ethno-medicine refers to “those beliefs and practices relating to disease which are the products of indigenous cultural development and are not explicitly derived from the conceptual frame work of modern medicine” (Misra et al, 2003). The research and utilization of the traditional medicinal systems has become an essential part of the contemporary health care planning (WHO, 1978). The Garhwal region has a fabulous wealth of medicinal and aromatic plants and traditional knowledge and practices of utilization of these plant resources for ethno-medicine treatments. This qualitative relationship of the people’s knowledge with their immediate resources apart from providing physical well being to them helps also in biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development.

In recent times with the increased knowledge of Himalayan communities, the social scientists are taking interest in ethno-medicinal studies. Many works have been reported specially from among the rural and tribal communities of India (Choudhury, 2000; Bhadra and Tirkey, 1997; Sharma Thakur, 1997). Ray and Sharma (2005) have given a description of ethnomedicinal beliefs and practices prevalent among the tribal community of Andhra Pradesh. Kumari (2006) gave an account on the concept of illness and disease and the application of folk medicine of Jharkhand.

Choudhury (2000), Duarah and Pathak (1997), Kohli (1999), Bhasin (1997, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2005) studied on the socioeconomic conditions and indigenous method of treatment to cure the disease by the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Such type of study was also done by Farida *et al* (2008) on the health care system of the tribe of Assam. In this study an attempt has been made

to find out the beliefs and practices related to health care system among people of Rath region of Pauri district, Garhwal Himalaya.

2. Methodology

The paper is based on in-depth interview, observation and case study method. The relevant data for this study were collected from Four villages namely (Masoun, Teela, Bereth and Kunur) of Rath Region of Pauri District The data were collected mainly from the village medicine-men whose treatments are believed to be very effective and also from some elderly persons of the community who have got a good knowledge about indigenous herbal medicine that they have acquired from their elders. In the collection of data, detailed indigenous methods to cure the disease were asked by medicine men and elder persons.

3. Results and Discussion

The people of Rath region have their own indigenous methods of treating different kinds of diseases. Various types of locally available herbs and leaves of wild plants are used by them as medicine. In this region, there are few herbal specialists or medicine men have considerable knowledge about the herbs and its medicinal use. Normally, they learn about these medicinal plants and its uses from their ancestor. These medicine-men are referred by different term according to the cultural norms like Vaidyas etc. It has been observed that besides medicine men many elderly persons of Rath Region are quite known about the use of herbal medicines for curing certain diseases. Some of the disease and their indigenous methods of treatment used by the people of Rath region are given below:

Indigenous Method of Treatment used by the People of Rath Region

Fever:

- Lime juice mixed with sugar is applied on the forehead of the patient to get relief from fever.
- A spoon of honey mixed equal proportion together Zinger juice and three to four times daily to cure the fever.
- Powder of Tulsi leaves, KaliMirch and Misiri with water is prescribed to drink in the morning in empty stomach.

Dysentery:

- Lime juice with hot water and little salt is prescribed in dysentery.
- The juice of tender leaves of mango black berry and goose berry (equal proportions) together with honey are mixed with goat milk and is taken to cure blood dysentery.
- Honey together with the juice of Dubari grass can cure blood dysentery and need to be taken for three / four days.
- Boiled Fig and prescribed juice to cure dysentery.
- Mix Isabgol with Curd and is prescribed to patient in dysentery.
- Two table spoons Tulsi juice mix with Misiri and prescribed to drink the patient 3-4 times in a day.
- Methi tea is said to good for curing the dysentery.

Pain in the Ear:

- Juice of Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*) is boiled and put it in the ears to heal earache.
- 3-4 drops of Mild warm Zinger juice is used to cure earache.
- Cooked Tulsi seeds in onion juice then add 2-3 drops in ear to remove earache.
- Mild warm onion Juice drops also prescribed in ear ache.
- The oil of onion seeds is also given to cure the earache.

Piles:

- Ripe fruit of wood apple (Bel) is given to patient.
- To drink Regular Milk with Ghee in night for curing Piles.
- Guavava is Prescribed daily to eat in morning in empty stomach to cure the disease
- Applied the ash of onion seeds on scabies to cure the disease

Headache

- Leaves of Tulsi, Black-Pepper, Zinger and Pieces of Misiri boiled in one glass water. When water remaining half glass then

prescribed to drink the patient to cure the headache.

- To give relief on headache Cardamon (Ilaichi) paste is applied on head.
- Paste of Kesar and Chandan is also applied on patient to cure the headache

Migran

- 2-3 drops of Fresh cow ghee is pored inside the nose to give relief in migran pain.
- Paste of Raw guava applied on head in migran pain.
- In Equal proportion of Lemon juice and Tulsi juice prescribed the patient to cure the migran.

Whooping

- To take half table spoon of zinger juice with honey 3-4 times in a day gives relief in whooping.
- To chew Azwain with hot water prescribed in whooping.
- To drink Haldi powder with sugar to cure the whopping

Cough & Cold

- Tea of Tulsi, Kalimirch, and Adrak give relief in cold.
- Zinger juice with honey is taken to cure cold.
- Half tea spoon of kali-imirch (Black peeper) mix one tea spoon of Misiri taken with one cup of hot milk three times in a day to cure cold.

Stomachache

- Equal proportion of Zinger and Garlic mixture prescribed with one table spoon water to cure the stomachache.
- One gram black salt and two Azwain taken with hot water to cure stomachache.
- Salt and Black peeper powder with Pomegranate seeds taken to cure the disease.
- Ripe guava with salt taken to relief in stomachache.
- Mixture of Azwain powder & raw salt with hot water prescribed immediate relief of stomachache.

Rheumatism

- Massage of mild warm Zinger juice relief in Rheumatism.
- Regular Massage of Azwain oil relief in rheumatism pain.
- Five buds of Garlic boil with half k.g milk and taken regularly in night to cure the rheumatism.

Toothache

- Mixed Raw salt with Zinger juice and applied on the infected teeth.
- Azwain oil prescribed to relief in toothache.
- Chewed Guava leaves taken for relief in toothache.

Nose Bleeding

- Flower of Pomegranate (*Punica granatum Linn*) is crushed and 3-4 drops of juice is poured inside the nose to give immediate relief.
- Juice of Aawla (*Embilica officinalis*) is poured inside to nose to give relief in nose bleeding.
- Juice of Tulsi leaves poured inside to nose to cure the nose bleeding.
- Poured the Fresh juice of Mehndi leaves inside nose to cure the nose bleeding.

Diarrhoea:

- Dry goose berry (*Embilica officinalis*) powder and black salt mixed with cold water is taken.
- Bark of Long Pepper (Pipoli tree) mixed with Misiri water is also used to cure the disease.

Jaundice:

- The medicine is prepared by pounding five or six number of Silikha (*Myroballum*) mixing with jaggery and it can cure jaundice.
- A glass of sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*) juice twice daily prescribed for the purpose.
- Boiled raw papaya (*Carica papaya*) is said to be good for curing the disease.
- Juice of Radish is also used in treatment of jaundice.

Diabetes

- Regular use of Aawala (*Embilica officinalis*) is helpful to cure the diabetes.
- Juice of Bel leaves prescribed regularly in empty stomach in the morning.
- Two table spoon powders of Methi seeds prescribed 2-3 times in a day to cure diabetes.

Stone

- Prescribed Aawla Powder with Carrot juice 3 times in a day.
- Pulse of Gaith is soaked in the water overnight and the water is prescribed to drink in empty stomach in the morning to cure the stone.
- Regular chewed Tejpat leaves relief in stone.

Scabies:

- Lemon juice mixed with coconut oil is massaged for curing scabies.
- To remove scabies they take bath with hot water in which leaves of Neem were boiled.
- Twigs of Chirata are crushed into paste with water to be used as an ointment and applied on the skin.
- Chirata water is prescribed to drink in the morning in empty stomach.

A variety of biologically active compounds have been

isolated from the leaves of *Ocimum* including ursolic acid, apigenin, luteolin, Rosmarinic acid, Linalool, -caryophyllene and Eugenol (Prakash and Gupta, 2005; Merrily and Winston, 2007). Glutamic acid, arginine, lysine, glycine, quercetin, allicin, *trans*-S-(1-propenyl) cysteine sulfoxide, S-methylcysteine sulfoxide, S-propylcysteine sulfoxide, cycloalliin. Thymidine, adenosine, astragalin (kaempferol-3-O-beta-D-glucopyranoside, kaempferol-3-O-beta-D-glucopyranosyl-7-O-beta-D-glucopyranoside, kaempferol-3-O-beta-D-neohesperoside, and kaempferol-3-O-beta-D-neohesperoside-7-O-beta-D-glucopyranoside were isolated and determined by (Ivanova et al., 2009). The major compounds such as 1,8-cineole (38.7%), -pinene (13.6%), -terpineol (12.6%), spathulenol (8.3%), 4-terpineol (4.5%), germacrene-D (3.0%), -pinene (2.8%) and -selinene (2.7%) were determined by GC-MS (Naik et al., 2004). Protocatechualdehyde, protocatechuic acid, 1,7-bis(3,4-dihydroxyphenyl)hepta-4E,6E-dien-3-one and 2,3,7-trihydroxy-5-(3,4-dihydroxy-E-styryl)-6,7,8,9-tetrahydro-5H-benzocycloheptene were isolated from the ethyl acetate extract of large cardamom (Kikuzak et al., 2001). kaempferol-3-O-alpha-L-(6"-methyl)-rhamnopyranoside, kaempferol-3-O-alpha-L-(6"-ethyl)-rhamnopyranoside, ascorbic acid, flavonoids, kaempferol, ellagic acid, 1,2,4,6-Tetra-O-galloyl-d-glucose and gallic acid were isolated from *Phyllanthus emblica* (Habib-ur-Rehman et al., 2007; Xiang et al., 2011). The Medicinal utilities of these medicinal plants are due to the presence of active secondary.

4. Conclusion

The study was based on ethno-medicinal practices and system of curing disease by the people of Rath region. The study concluded that the people of Rath region rely more on the indigenous system of curing disease and herbal medicine which are easily available and used to treat many common disease. The study suggests encouraging these indigenous methods to cure the disease used by the people of the Rath region.

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