

# 1 Indigenous Knowledge and Health Seeking Behavior Among 2 Kattunayakan: A Tribe in Transition

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## 6 **Abstract**

7 "This study aimed to document the INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND HEALTH  
8 SEEKING BEHAVIOR of kattunayakan of south north arcot district, Tamilnadu focusing on  
9 their utilization of medicinal plants and associated indigenous knowledge. Five villages were  
10 selected out off 65 villages, the participant observation method used for collecting data.  
11 Different parts of different Plant are used to treat different ailments ranging from diseases. In  
12 an average, the diverse patterns of use of different medicinal plant parts show the considerable  
13 indigenous knowledge of kattunayakans."

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16 **Index terms**— utilization, participant, considerable

## 17 **1 INTRODUCTION**

18 The early Human beings were the simple hunters and gatherers and depended upon nature for food, shelter  
19 and medicine. This gave a chance to study about the local plants and their effects in different situations. In  
20 India majority of tribal population still depend on the indigenous treatment. In every tribal group a particular  
21 family or individual is identified with the knowledge of ethno botanical recipes and as well function as magico-  
22 religious practitioner. These medicinal practices acquired and accumulated from generation to generation. This  
23 is commonly referred as the strength or value of the society (Samira Dasgupta: 2006) (S. ??ajan:2007). But in the  
24 recent past, the ideology of this strength and value are gradually weakling due to so many different social contacts  
25 from outside, the kattunayakan are still observing those traditional practices to some extent. The present paper  
26 deals with understanding the indigenous knowledge of health seeking behavior of kattunayakan related to their  
27 local environmental. Their health care practices have been merged with their daily life. The aim of this paper is  
28 to document the health seeking behavior of kattunayakan because they are fast vanishing.

29 Three South and North Arcot districts, namely Vellore, Thiruvannamalai, Villupuram have been covered  
30 for this study. Totally 61 settlements were visited, and five of them namely Panapakkam, Seshadrinagar,  
31 Kalasapakkam, Mugaiyur, Sitheripattu have been selected for the study.

32 The tribe is highly reserved and so the collection of information is a very difficult task. Hence the halt at  
33 the long time duration gave a pavement to score more data about their health seeking behavior. Systematic  
34 anthropological field explorations have been carried out with the help of elderly kattunayakan, medicine men  
35 (Vaitheir) who have knowledge of plants and remedies. Discussions with women have been held in various  
36 settlements to collect maximum information of health seeking behavior.

## 37 **2 II.**

## 38 **3 HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOR**

39 Health seeking behavior in relation to illness behavior refers to those activities commenced by individuals in  
40 response to a symptom experience (Keith: 2004:829-63). This symptom experience known as knowledge of illness  
41 causes and symptoms, Knowledge is generally reviewed in order to see how far community knowledge concurs to  
42 Ethno medical concepts (Susanna-Muela:2004:3). People reported University, Pondicherry Author ? :

## 11 G) ROLE OF MIDWIFE AFTER CHILD BIRTH

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43 Author :

44 4 ?

## 45 5 Global Journal of Human Social Science

46 uman beings in general and tribals in particular depend upon nature for their primary needs as they are born  
47 and brought up in forest. Their life long and trans generational interaction with nature was encapsulated with  
48 indigenous knowledge system which serves their mundane needs as well as crises situations of life including health.  
49 In India majority of tribes still rely upon their own indigenous health seeking practices in the event of disease  
50 and this indigenous knowledge commonly referred to as the strength or value of their society.

51 6 H

52 Abstract -"This study aimed to document the INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND HEALTH SEEKING  
53 BEHAVIOR of kattunayakan of south & north arcot district, Tamilnadu focusing on their utilization of medicinal  
54 plants and associated indigenous knowledge. Five villages were selected out off 65 villages, the participant  
55 observation method used for collecting data. Different parts of different Plant are used to treat different ailments  
56 ranging from diseases. In an average, the diverse patterns of use of different medicinal plant parts show the  
57 considerable indigenous knowledge of kattunayakans." knowledge, which derived from Ethno medical concepts, is  
58 usually termed 'beliefs'. This behavior among different populations, particularly in the tribal communities, is a  
59 complex outcome of many factors operating at an individual, family and community level (Lurie: 1995:539-46),  
60 including their Eco-social profile, their past experiences with the health services, influences at the community  
61 level, availability of alternative health care providers, including indigenous practitioners and last but not the least  
62 their perceptions regarding efficiency ??Jain: 2006:140). Belief systems prevalent in the communities, i.e. how  
63 people ? She begins to vomit a lot. ? The lower abdomen begins to swell. ? The urine became more viscous.

64 7 a)

65 ? They count the months by a bar code on the wall. ? They also use leaves for this purpose.

66 ? Apart from this they put a Sozhi or pebbles in a small pot, for a month and then count them. ? They  
67 also begin to calculate the month the period without menstruation by for each month in a rope in the corner of  
68 the house. ? They calculate the possible date of the day after the husband left home. ? They also remember  
69 the date by marking marks like festivals new moon day and deduce the fertilization date before or after these  
70 important dates.

## 71 8 b) Husband caring wife during pregnancy

72 ? The husband begins to grow beard, Methods of counting the pregnant period to his wife. fertilization from  
73 adding a knot land or full moon day ? He also helps her cooking, bathing and feeding ? He also follows the  
74 instructions and given to him and follows which is given by Kenche (local medical women-Thai). ? He also  
75 abstains himself having sex with her months.

## 76 9 e) Sex & pregnancy

77 Sexual intercourse to be prevented for the first to 3 rd or 4 th month, sexual intercourse is continued from to 5 th  
78 to 9 th month. The reason they say is it could result in normal child birth, they also believe sexual intercourse  
79 provides pleasure and relieves from anxiety. Sex during pregnancy is carried out cautiously that the body his  
80 affection her with food. medication first few weight is not fully transfer to the female partner. Due to their  
81 drinking habit the husband forced his wife for sex in their drunken state. The women when drunk also oblige  
82 the husband. The first child birth takes place in the bride's house. The other child births will happen in the  
83 husband's house.

## 84 10 f) Role of the husband (father) during child birth

85 The father note down the time and date of the child birth, he also note down how many days after and before  
86 new moon day and full moon day. He also buys the necessary materials required for the child birth and provides  
87 food and salary for the people who help during the child birth. Finally he intimates the message to his relatives  
88 then the first child birth brides mothers house, the mother is not allow to the during the child birth. Other female  
89 members like her own sisters and her husband sisters, mother-in-law, elder women and kenchey are allowed.

## 90 11 g) Role of midwife after Child birth

91 After the child birth the mother is made to stand up and her belly is tightly wrapped with cloth, this prevents  
92 the accumulation of air inside the womb. When the child is born its nipple is squeezed to remove the first milk  
93 and washed. This is done to prevent the over growth of the nipple and abnormal breast for female.

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## 94 12 h) Colostrums (Seemball)

95 The nipple of the mother's breast is cleaned and the baby is fed with the Seemball, it is highly nutrition. The  
96 baby don't drink the mother's milk due to some digestion problems, it results in clotting of milk inside the  
97 mothers breast. This causes huge pain in her breast and discomfort in her body, even slight disturbance causes  
98 by help from the husband and who suck the nipple slowly and spit on a green plant. conceptualize the etiology of  
99 a health problem and how symptoms are perceived is an important factor in deciding the first step of treatment  
100 seeking(Keith:2004: 829-63). Likewise, the perception of treating the individual biological changes with the  
101 knowledge of local ecological adaptation is termed as the natural way of living (Fikret Berkes: 1991). So the  
102 kattunayakan community still is following such a methodology.

## 103 13 III.

## 104 14 METHOD OF DETECTING PREGNANCY

105 ? The woman begins to sleep a lot. ? She begins to dislike the smell of cooking especially grams.  
106 c) Food during the pregnancy period Kezhvaraghu -(Elesinecorocana), Thennai {Thinai-Setariaitalica) Rice,  
107 with this they prepare Puttu for pregnant women.

## 108 15 d) Food taboos

109 Black grapes and naval fruit are restricted because it causes Sevapu disease to child.  
110 Vegetables like Ash gourd, pumpkin, guva fruit, onion, cabbage, seethapuli and other grain-foods, raw rice,  
111 rosted rice and powdered tubers aspired. It affects the growth of the child. Eeasal must not be taken because  
112 this are causes Sevapu disease to the child.

## 113 16 i) Removal of the first excretion

114 When the child takes a long time for defecation then it is done artificially. So they apply castor-oil at and around  
115 the anus of the baby then the kenchy of the grandma insert the finger in the anus and remove the feces by use  
116 of the left hand finger. millet, Adhirasam and jaggery must be prevented. Adhirasam and mango fruit causes  
117 irritation of the anus. Millet causes oppoosam for child.

## 118 17 u) Ealumburiki kassam

119 The leaves of Kanchankorai(Ocimum canum) ten grams nutmeg one gram is ground to powder and is taken with  
120 hot water.The leaf juice of thuthuvali is heated with ghee and a teaspoon is taken twice a day.  
121 Thuthi flower is made into paste taken with sugar amounting to half a teaspoon. Panchanga sooranam of  
122 neem is taken with one gm of ghee, honey, milk or butter for 90 days.

## 123 18 t) Thickening of semen

124 The flower of moringa is mildly roasted with ghee, boiled with milk and drunk which thickens the semen. The  
125 maruthani-(lawsonia inermis) paste with lemon juice is placed on padai in genitals for few hours and bath is  
126 taken remove the scars. The magandi is applied over ven-padai for cure.  
127 ? Eating ripe papaya ? Eating of sesame seeds with jaggery. ? Infanticide is not practiced on sexual bias,  
128 female infanticide is not selectively practiced.

## 129 19 l) Food habits of child

130 Normally the child is fed with milk six to seven times at the day. After the fifth month they start to give the  
131 porridge, in the same time they also give the boiled kezhangu and fruits. m) Alternative food for the baby  
132 Kezhvaragu-{Elesine corocana) porridge prepared without sugar and given to the baby through the sanghu or  
133 paladai, then they give the boiled rice water with salt also given to the baby. The solid food other than the  
134 mother's milk is given after the sixth month; like idly, Rice, Grams. They should be smashed fully and then  
135 given to the baby. p) To increase the lactation Garlic is added in the food in large amount. Non-vegetarian foods  
136 are prepared. They are rabbits, squirrels, Madayan, vaka, nari, kaadi, kowthare, and myna.

## 137 20 n) Food Restrictions on the nursing mother

## 138 21 q) To decrease the lactation

139 The thuvari dhal is immersed water in one hour and then made a paste then the paste is applied over the breast  
140 this decreases the lactation. The jasmine flower tied around a cloth at the breast this also decrease the milk.  
141 r) Cure for Nipple Pain Leaves of meghendi (maruthane) and turmeric are made into a paste and applied over  
142 nipple;  
143 Kadukkai-(Terminalia chebula) is made into a paste and applied over the breast.

**144 22 s) Sex after pregnancy**

145 Sexes advocated (avoided) at least after three months of child birth, because they find the differently in calculating  
146 the date of insemination. The first child also gets sick, Became very weak. It may begin to vomits, have Dysentery  
147 and develop other illnesses. As a medication in the cause a Pungam kai-(Pongamia pinnata) tied around the  
148 tread trough a hole of the seed and then tied around the waist of the baby.

**149 23 j) Removal of amniotic fluid**

150 The child while in uterus will ingest amniotic fluid around it. When the child comes out of the womb, it is not  
151 desirable to health. The hay of the little millet is burned and the Kodikalli-(Sarcosdema intermedium) plant is  
152 shown in the flame of little millet hay. Now the Kodikalli is squeezed and the juice is fed to the baby through  
153 thepaladai, after drinking the plant juice they vomited the amniotic fluid in the baby stomach this makes the  
154 baby active and drink more milk.

**155 24 k) Treatment for delay child birth**

156 The juice prepared from the leaf extract Murungai (Moringa oleifera), which is added with soombu, and roosted  
157 Seeragam {Seeragam-Cuminum cimini} which is then heated and prepare a Kashayam this is induce the Child  
158 birth. Castor oil is applied from navel to lower belly this also induce the Child birth.

**159 25 Types of abortion methods**

160 ? A mixer of black Seeragam (cumin) and j aggery.

161 ? The leaf twigs of the date palm are eaten.

**162 26 o) Breast feeding**

163 The head side should be up and leg portion should be lower. They give milk while weaving the basket, and even  
164 while they are selling the basket roaming in the street. They also give milk whenever the child cries irrespective  
165 of the weather. kanjankorai about 30 days with milk is given for infants. 5 ml of Thoothuvvelai heated with ghee  
166 is taken twice a day. The leaf juice of Thazhuthazhai is sucked through v) Cold Affected Lungs Adathoda and  
167 manapagu juice about 10ml is taken thrice a day with hot water. Leaf juice of the nose which gradually reduces  
168 the symptoms of cold. The leaves of Leppia with ginger, pudina, coriandrum, murunga is made into paste and  
169 taken with rice and ghee. The dried Sundai and amla with dried d) Muscle Strain Vaathamadakki leaf is heated  
170 in castor oil and gently applied over the affected area.

**171 27 e) Sleeplessness**

172 Scenting thiruneetm pachilai and sleeping with mehndi flowers near bed act as sleep inducers.

**173 28 f) Increasing Lactation**

174 The leaves of castor or kattamanakku are placed over the breasts increase lactation. The leaves are boiled and  
175 immersed in a cloth which is gently applied over breast. Later the leaves are tied over breast which increase  
176 lactation. Illuppai leaf is tied around breasts which also increase lactation.

177 g) Kaal Aani Amman pacharisi latex is applied over kaal aani and root barks of mehandi is powdered and  
178 applied over aani in foot. Turmeric (2 pieces), mehandi leaf (10gm), vasambu (1 piece), camphor (5 gm) are  
179 powdered and applied for 10 days on kaal aani.

**180 29 h) Itches and Itching Wound**

181 Leaf extract of kanjaankorai, thumbai and p unail flower extract, keezhanelli extract with salt, ad athoda and  
182 samula extract heated with gingili oil, any one of these are applied over the body and taken bath. This cures  
183 itches & scabies.

**184 30 i) Removal of Unwanted Hair**

185 Applying turmeric at night and washing it in the morning. Feathers of peacock are charred and mixed with  
186 coconut oil and applied over unwanted hair.

**187 31 j) Saitrupun**

188 Arueampul-(Cynodon doctylon) with turmeric is mixed and grounded to paste k) Burns Venthayam (methi) in  
189 paste form is applied over the wounds to ease pain. The banana fruit juice is applied over fire wounds for cure.  
190 The young leaves are tied around wounds to enable faster cure.

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## 191 **32 b) Blood with Urine**

192 A decoction is prepared with 50 gms of flower buds boiled in 500ml of water and it is consumed twice a day  
193 solves the problem. Roots of Ponnankanni is ground to paste and added with curd.

194 The butter extracted from this curd is taken in morning for 3 days. ginger, methi, carumcarvi, shell of  
195 ponegavate, seeds of mango, karivembujiera are made into powder and two teaspoons are taken twice a day.

## 196 **33 IV. Diarrhoea**

197 The leaf juice of Adathoda is taken with buffalo's milk. The leaf juice of tamarind is boiled and it is taken with  
198 milk (30ml). Flowers of asoka tree, mango seed is taken in equal amounts and taken with milk.

199 Murunga leaves with chilly is fried in ghee and then added with old tamarind fruit and salt made into a paste  
200 and eaten with rice.

## 201 **34 c) Karappan**

202 The juice of Aaduthinnapalai and samoolam is boiled with gingili oil and applied over the infected area.

203 The leaves of Uthamani is fried in neem oil and gently applied over the infected area. Poovarasam flower is  
204 dried and mixed with coconut oil and applied over infected areas. Latex of papaya is mixed with padikaram and  
205 applied over infected area. Consuming

## 206 **35 1) Nachukatru**

207 Neem with turmeric in paste form is applied for 10 days around the infected place. The lemon fruit is lightly cut  
208 and inserted into the finger for cure.

209 Silanthi nayagam leaf extract is applied to the nail and it breaks the wound to release blood and pus and cure  
210 the wound. Kiranthi nayagam leaf extract is applied over wounds.

## 211 **36 VI.**

212 BIBLIOGRAPHY powder and dosa is prepared with ghee and consumed. Nancharuppan leaf powder (150 mg)  
213 is mixed with honey and consumed.

## 214 **37 n) Fits**

215 Vasambu asafetida, thirikadugum, skin of kadukkai, athividayam, black salt in equal proportions are powdered  
216 and a teaspoon is consumed twice a day.

## 217 **38 o) Menstrual bleeding**

218 The bark of trees such as Arasamaram-(Ficusreligiosa), Alia maram-(Ficusbenghalensis), Atthi maram-  
219 (Ficusglomerata), Marutham maram-fterminalia arjuna), and Thennam palai (Thennai-Cocos nucifera) are boiled  
220 in a vessel containing two liters of water. It is boiled until the water gets reduced to one liter forming tick  
221 decoction. The people suffering from menstrual bleeding are made to drink this decoction for three days.

## 222 **39 V.**

223 Documentation of health seeking behavior of kattunayakan gives us a glimpse of their rich indigenous knowledge  
224 in protecting their health by both preventive and curative measures which are culturally nurtured and  
225 environmentally supported. They follow their own distinct ways of predicting and diagnosing the health conditions  
226 and trying to meet the demand in a very casual way that would not differentiate much from day to day activities.  
227 Much curiosity is exhibited in the matters of child birth and sexuality as pointed out by ??evy and Fallers (1959:  
228 647-51) that reproduction and sexuality were two primary or essential activities of any human beings life.

229 Kattunayakans use a variety of plant products like leaves, barks, roots, fruits etc in different combination to  
230 cure various diseases. They use two or more remedies for the same disease indicating that one is superior to the  
231 other. As the local environment is subjected to degradation the non-availability of certain species also force them  
232 to find an alternative. It is also observed that almost every grownup individual try on their own for any knid of  
233 ailment in initial stages. However in the changing situation kattunayakan are gradually accepting modern health  
234 care systems subjected to their economic conditions.

## 235 **40 m) Kakkuvan**

236 Inflorescence of tulsi, thippili, vasambu in equal proportions are powdered, mixed with sugar and intaken with a  
237 spoon of honey. Kathiri leaf juice is mixed with rice CONCLUSION



Figure 1: Indigenous

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grounded and given with curd for infants. Onion is fried with ghee and consumed. Nathai Soori seeds are powdered and added with sugar crystal and taken thrice a day. Maasikai is roasted, powdered and about 1 gm of powder is taken with honey.

a) Removal of Stomach Worms

The root of Uttamani is powdered and 2-4 grams are taken with milk. The problem related to digestion, diarrhea and worm infestation in stomach of children are solved. The leaf juice of Erukku and honey in ratio of 3:10 is taken to get rid of worms. Taking a leaf juice (15ml) of Karujempai cures karappan

*[Note: physiologically. Applying leaves of piramathandu is made into paste and applied over infected areas.]*

Figure 2:



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