

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

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Abstract

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

Index terms— utilization, participant, considerable

1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

2 II.

3 HEALTH SEEKING BEHAVIOR

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

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

6 H

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

7 a)

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

8 b) Husband caring wife during pregnancy

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

9 e) Sex & pregnancy

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

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

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

11 g) Role of midwife after Child birth

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

12 h) Colostrums (Seemball)

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

13 III.

14 METHOD OF DETECTING PREGNANCY

? The woman begins to sleep a lot. ? She begins to dislike the smell of cooking especially grams.

c) Food during the pregnancy period Kezhvaraghu -(Elesinecorocana), Thennai {Thinai-Setariaitalica) Rice, with this they prepare Puttu for pregnant women.

15 d) Food taboos

Black grapes and naval fruit are restricted because it causes Sevapu disease to child.

Vegetables like Ash gourd, pumpkin, guva fruit, onion, cabbage, seethapuli and other grain-foods, raw rice, roasted rice and powdered tubers aspired. It affects the growth of the child. Eeasal must not be taken because this are causes Sevapu disease to the child.

16 i) Removal of the first excretion

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

17 u) Ealumburiki kassam

The leaves of Kanchankorai(Ocimum canum) ten grams nutmeg one gram is ground to powder and is taken with hot water.The leaf juice of thuthuvali is heated with ghee and a teaspoon is taken twice a day.

Thuthi flower is made into paste taken with sugar amounting to half a teaspoon. Panchanga sooranam of neem is taken with one gm of ghee, honey, milk or butter for 90 days.

18 t) Thickening of semen

The flower of moringa is mildly roasted with ghee, boiled with milk and drunk which thickens the semen. The maruthani-(lawsonia inermis) paste with lemon juice is placed on padai in genitals for few hours and bath is taken remove the scars. The magandi is applied over ven-padai for cure.

? Eating ripe papaya ? Eating of sesame seeds with jaggery. ? Infanticide is not practiced on sexual bias, female infanticide is not selectively practiced.

19 l) Food habits of child

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

20 n) Food Restrictions on the nursing mother

21 q) To decrease the lactation

The thuvari dhal is immersed water in one hour and then made a paste then the paste is applied over the breast this decreases the lactation. The jasmine flower tied around a cloth at the breast this also decrease the milk.

r) Cure for Nipple Pain Leaves of meghendi (maruthane) and turmeric are made into a paste and applied over nipple;

Kadukkai-(Terminalia chebula) is made into a paste and applied over the breast.

22 s) Sex after pregnancy

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

23 j) Removal of amniotic fluid

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

24 k) Treatment for delay child birth

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

25 Types of abortion methods

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

? The leaf twigs of the date palm are eaten.

26 o) Breast feeding

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

27 e) Sleeplessness

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

28 f) Increasing Lactation

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

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

29 h) Itches and Itching Wound

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

30 i) Removal of Unwanted Hair

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

31 j) Saitrupun

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

32 b) Blood with Urine

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

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

33 IV. Diarrhoea

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

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

34 c) Karappan

The juice of Aaduthinnapalai and samoolam is boiled withgingili oil and applied over the infected area.

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

35 l) Nachukatru

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

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

36 VI.

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

37 n) Fits

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

38 o) Menstrual bleeding

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

39 V.

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

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

40 m) Kakkuvan

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



Figure 1: Indigenous

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) oi Karujempai cures karappan

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

Figure 2:

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