

INDIGENOUS MEDICINAL PRACTICES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF NEPAL: A RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Objectives: To explore the indigenous traditional medicine used in the rural area of Nepal and to identify the impact of indigenous conventional medicine on peoples' life span in the Nepalese context. **Methods:** For this study, a qualitative research method was selected. A sample consisted of 15 participants from the rural municipality. The purposive sampling method was used for the selection of the sample. The primary tools are in-depth interviews, field notes, and observation used to gather information. The discussion of participants was recorded and transcribed to develop the theme. Those data were analyzed through the themes. **Findings:** It was found that traditional medicine was discovered by eastern religious Vedic philosophy. It had slowly transferred to western philosophy. The Himalayan and hilly region plants used in treatment like Panchoule, Yarshagumba, Timur, Harro, Barro, amala, etc. Different parts of animals like deer velvet, monkey's flesh, the meat of jackal, bile of bear, etc., are also used to cure diseases. The primary curing diseases are Asthma, bath, bacterial infection, diarrhea, skin problems, gastritis, ulcer, Paralysis, cancer, pressure, injury, fracture, etc. It concludes that traditional medicine practices are reliable for increasing the life span of the human being. **Novelty:** The traditional practices are transferred from one generation to another by telling, seeing, unknowing practices, peer groups, and relations with older people. That may help to cure the many diseases in rural places. To improve the used practices of indigenous medicines, the field of science and technology is necessary for the current education system.

Keywords: Indigenous, Traditional Medicine, Curing Practices, Diseases, Religious Perspective

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurvedic medicine is a traditional treatment practice used in Nepal and has no side effects. But in the Indian subcontinent, a person with rheumatoid arthritis took an unknown tablet with steroids as a filler for two years. During that time, the person started to have problems that can happen when taking too many steroids. It reveals that Ayurvedic medicines can sometimes have bad side effects because they contain harmful ingredients like alkaloids. This means they might not always be safe [1]. People in rural parts of Nepal, where it's hard to get to government health care facilities, use medicinal plants and local healers to deal with health problems. One hundred one medicinal plants belonging to the species were from the Asteraceae, Fabaceae, Lamiaceae, and Zingiberaceae families. The informant consensus factor showed the most agreement in the fever category. The highest fidelity level values for *Calotropis gigantea* used to treat skin diseases; *Drymaria cordate* used to treat fever; *Mangifera indica*; and *Wrightia Arborea* used to treat conditions of the digestive tract. It shows how diverse the local flora is and how ethnic communities in rural areas always know how to use certain medicinal plants

[2].

In the ancient period, people depended entirely on nature for survival. They considered nature as a mother. When there was an epidemic in nature, they thought the gods were angry. People used to worship rivers, forests, and mountains as deities when they fell ill. Like 'rishi muni,' our ancestors went to the Himalayas and hills for "tapshya" to acquire knowledge. They used different plants and animal parts to cure the injury, wounds, fractured, fever, pain, common cold, and viral and bacterial infection. Similarly, sick people also meet the local 'baidhyes' and use plant and animal parts as medicine. Some curing practices like the case of nerve pain or pain in any part of the body, applying green leaves of a Sal tree and hot mustard oil is customary. Similarly, it was usual to put a cap on the broken arm and leg using a bamboo stick. Local "baidhya" treated the disease with the help of various Ayurvedic herbs. On the other hand, our society has many superstitious practices to cure different diseases like the prayer of "kul devata," to show 'Dhamijhakri,' 'tantra mantra phukane,' and 'palto phalne' 'dhulautoheraune,' etc. Even in these places, traditional healing is still widely available and used. It was tried to reveal how people in general, traditional healers, and biomedical clinicians think about the different types of services and decide whether to use one or both. [3]. They also worship the deity. The priest is requested to offer Creators on the body of 'DhamiJhakri.' After God climbs on Dhami's body, his body begins to tremble. People with various diseases and disorders call on divinity and seek the advice of a devotee [4]. They also superstitiously believed in the existence of witches, masons, demons, and those who made people sick. Therefore, people practice 'Dhami' and 'jhakri' to eliminate witchcraft, masons, and monsters. So, they seem to have taken Dhami and Jhakri as the coordinators of the divine and material worlds. According to the Gita, Hindu people believe that the soul lives even if the body dies. They believe in the Vedas as their primary text and have

Practiced Ayurvedic medicine ever since. Since the beginning of time, Nepalese people (80%) have used traditional medicine. In rural areas, conventional medicine is the primary source of health care for most people [5].

In the metaphysical division, traditional medicine prayers or old age peoples offer some mysterious and powerful forces [6]. The practitioner usually uses one or more practices to transfer to other conventional medicine, the sum of knowledge and skill-based practices on the belief systems. It existed in human society before applying modern medicinal techniques [7]. With the advent of modernity and the production of allopathic medicines, the new generations do not seem to be able to use and transfer that knowledge and skills. Although the use of allopathic medicines has started showing various side effects, many studies have shown no side effects from Ayurveda medicines [8]. Traditional medicine plays an essential role in Nepalese society. Therefore, conventional medicine practices in rural Nepal have emerged with its culture and tradition. The knowledge about traditional methods and practitioners' scope and characteristics is limited to exploring indigenous herbal medicine in Nepal [9]. Besides, advancing modern technology and medicine in traditional society also creates the need for conventional practices in some places of Nepal. They used Ayurvedic medicine to cure disease due to fewer side effects, but now one illness after another appears due to the use of allopathic

medicine. There is a lack of study on the conventional medicine practice system and its impact on the human life span in the Nepalese context. Nowadays, there is a lack to use and transfer indigenous knowledge skills related to treatment, how Traditional medicine healing practices are transmitted in communities, families, and individuals and how to identify the vegetables, minerals, and animal substances used for medicinal purposes. Therefore, this study entitled indigenous medicinal practices in rural communities of Nepal: a religious perspective selected as the study problem.

2. METHODOLOGY

Methodology consists of different types of methods, data collection techniques and procedures. The following materials and methods were used for this study.

Materials and Method

The methodology helps the proper guideline for the research study [10]. So the qualitative research method was applied for this study. The sample consisted of 15 persons from the rural municipality of dailekh district that have knowledge and skill in religious and traditional medicinal practices in the rural area. They have also used the therapeutic value of the different herbs and animals. The purposive sampling method has used the gathering of valuable information. The primary tools are structured interviews, field notes, and observations that were used for the data collection. The discussion of participants was recorded and transcribed to develop the theme. Those data have been analyzed through the articles related to indigenous traditional medicinal practices in rural areas of Nepal. The interpretation of the data is based on the interview transcribed by the participants'.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The interview transcribes, observation, and field notes were used to develop the following themes. Those were discussed through the descriptive pattern based on collecting data. Origin of traditional medicine, types of practices medicine and curing disease, conventional medicine practices, and human life span and transmission of traditional medicine practices to another generation have been discussed in this heading.

Origin of Traditional Medicine

Nepal is a prosperous country based on culture, tradition, and the use of traditional medicine practices. More than 85% of the population depends on indigenous medications for primary health care [11]. Many traditional healers have been practicing indigenous medicine for hundreds of years. Indigenous knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation as an inheritance culture, but only a little of the information was documented in books and other religious scripts. In Nepal, various herbal and animal resources use to care for different types of diseases. The leading cause of using traditional medicinal practices is not excess of good medical clinics and modern allopathic medicines in the rural context. Traditional or folk medicine was discovered by religious eastern Vedic philosophy. It had also slowly transferred to western philosophy [12]. One of the participants expressed that the rishi muni found the

traditional medicine. So, traditional pharmaceuticals are derived from old practices (Field note, 2018).

Types of Practices Medicine and Curing Disease

Different types of plants and animals are used for curing various diseases. According to the collection of data, the major plants, animal, and curing practices are listed below;

Table 1: List of plants and disease curing practices

SN.	Name of plant	Scientific name	Part of plant use	Curing diseases
1	Titapati	Artemisia vulgaris	Leaf, twig, and root	Itching and skin diseases, Diarrhea
2	Ghodtapre	Centella Asiatica	Leaf, twig	Digestion of food
3	Panchaule	Doctylorized hatagirea	Root	Highly nutritious, urinary troubles, Injured body parts can be instantly healed by its application.
4	Bhumi Champa	Kaempferia rotunda	Root, leaf, and Steam	Plastering of fractured
5	Dubo	Cynodondactylon	Twig and leaf	parts of bones and limb Cough and other
6	Harro	Terminalia chebula	Seeds	Gastritis, ulcer, and cough

Table1 shows that different plants are used to cure various diseases' traditional practices. The Titapati, Ghodtapre, Panchaule, Bhumi Champa, Dubo, and Harro were used to fix the itching, digestion, injury, fractures, cough, gastritis, and ulcer diseases, respectively. One of the participants told me that there is "no medicine without plants." Mostly Himalayan and hilly region plants used in medicine like Panchoule, Yarshagumba, Timur, etc., to cure disease. The Harro, Barro, and amala are generally called 'Triphala' and are used as medicine for traditionally curing different diseases. These are better medicine than the comparison of allopathic medicine (Interview recorded, 16 august 2018).



Figure 1: Photograph of medicinal plants (Ghodtapre, dubo, Harro, bhumiChampa, panchaule)

Table 2: List of plants and disease curing practices

SN.	Name of plant	Scientific name	Part of plant use	Curing diseases
1	Asuro	Adhatodavassika	Leaf, twig, and root	Stomach pain, anti- viral
2	Bojho	Acorus calamus	Root	Used for stomach problems, skin problems, earaches,
3	Timur	Zanthoxylum alatum	Fruits, leaf	The bone problem, anti-worm
4	PattharChatta	Kalanchoe pinnata	Leaf	Stone cure of gall bladder and kidney
5	Gurjo	Tinospora cordifolia	Leaf and steam	Pressure control, antibacterial, and antibiotic
6	Aloe Vera	Aloe Barbadensis Miller	Leaf	Anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, pressure control

Table 2 indicates that different plants are used in curing traditional practices of various diseases. Three participants expose that medicine like Asuro, Bojho, Timur, Patthar Chatta, Gurjo, and Aloe Vera was used to cure Stomach pain, viral, skin problems, earache, bone problem, worm, Stone of gall bladder and kidney, Pressure, bacterial, and antibiotic, inflammatory, and control pressure diseases respectively. These are the practices of medicine in the rural area of Nepal (interview recorded, 16 august 2018).



Figure 2: Photograph of medicinal plants (PattharChatta, Barro, amala, yersagumba)

Table 3: List of plants and disease curing practices

SN.	Name of plant	Scientific name	Part of plant use	Curing diseases
1	Gimbu	Allium HysistumStearn	Dried leaf and steam	Common cold Flavoring, Preserving agent, and anti-oxidant
2	Tulasi	Ocimumtenuiflorum	Leaf	Common cold
3	Cactus	Cereus peruvianus	Steam	Pain, the fluid used in the pain part
4	Yarshagumba	Ophiocordyceps sinensis	Root	Tuberculosis, Asthma, chronic bronchitis, hepatitis cardiovascular, and hypertension.
5	Barro	Terminalia bellerica	Fruit	gastric, ulcer
6	Amala	EmblicaOffacinalese		Headache and fever problem

Table 3 represents the different plants used to cure traditional practices of various diseases. Five participants expressed that medicine like Gimbu, Tulasi, Cactus, Yarshagumba, Barro, and Amala was used to cure a Common cold, Pain, Tuberculosis, Asthma, chronic bronchitis, hepatitis, cardiovascular, hypertension, gastric, ulcer, Headache, and fever diseases respectively. These are the traditional practice of medicine in rural areas (Interview recorded, 16 august 2018).

Table 4: List of Animals and their parts for disease curing practices

SN.	Name of animals	Scientific name	Parts of animal use	Curing diseases
1	Dumsi	Erethizondorsatum	Flesh	Asthma
2	Cheplekeera	Gastropoda	Body	Bone marrow and bath
3	Bhalu	Ursidae	Bile	Liver diseases, gall stone
4	Sparrow	Passer domesticus	Droppings	Asthma in children
5	Cow	Bos indicus	Urine and dung	Antibacterial and viral disease
6	Kasturi	Cervidae	Navel Part (velvet)	Powerful Antibacterial, Disorders on the child, Immune system, and stress

Table 4 represents the different animals used to cure traditional practices for various diseases. Three participants indicated that the body parts of animals and birds like Dumsi, Cheplekeera, Bhalu, Sparrow, Cow, and Kasturi were used to cure Asthma, Bone marrow, bath, Liver diseases, and gall stone, Asthma in children, bacterial, viral, Disorders on the child, immune system, and stress diseases respectively. These are also traditional medicine practices in the context of rural areas of Nepal (interview recorded, 16 august 2018).



Figure 3: Photograph of medicinal animals and birds (Deer, bear, jackal, crow, pigeon, monkey)

Table 5: List of Animals and their parts for disease curing practices

SN.	Name of animals	Scientific name	Parts of animal use	Curing diseases
1	Jackal	Canis aureus	Flesh	Bath disease, Asthma,
2	Monkey	Simiiformescatarrhini	Flesh	asciatica Uric acid
3	Goat	Capra indicus	Leg soup, blood	Common cold, pneumonia
4	Crow	Corvus splendens	Flash	Whooping cough
5	Pigeon	Columba livia	Blood	Paralysis(external use)
6	Bat	Cyanopterus sphinx	Flesh, blood	External injuries and whooping cough

Table 5 expresses the different animals used in curing traditional practices of various diseases. Most of the participants argue that the body parts of animals and birds like Jackal, Monkey, Goat, Crow, Pigeon, and bats were used to cure Bath, Asthma, sciatica, Uric acid, Common cold, pneumonia, whooping cough, Paralysis (external use), External injuries, and whooping cough diseases respectively. These are also better medicine than the comparison of allopathic medicine (interview recorded, 16 august 2018).

Traditional Medicine Practices and Human Life Span

The Major traditional medicinal practices Used in human beings to the facture part of household animals for bandage bones and limbs, the lotion of the bacterially infected injury (turmeric and oil), Skin problem like that 'khatira,' etc. According to the participants' expressions, if the person used traditional medicine and their practices (Ayurveda) has no side effects and the product of deep meditation of Rishi Maharishi [13].

The participants expressed that conventional medicine practices are highly reliable for increasing the life span of the human being. These types of medicine treat slowly dangerous diseases like cancer and other long-term diseases [14]. Similarly, the improve the traditional medicine used to practice; it is necessary to include the science and technology-related field and come to the formal education system. Most participants point out the "need for a scientific study about the traditional practices for the effective use.

It also helps bridge religion and culture and the impact of the modern education system. Traditional practices are the primary source of medical science. Therefore, modern science must be adjusted with the standard medicinal practice, postmodernism, and guide other religious and cultural philosophies.

Transmission of Traditional Medicine Practices to another Generation

The participants' views show that the traditional medicine practices are transmitted to another generation by telling, seeing, unknowing patterns, peer groups, and relation to old age people. These techniques are conservative, and no interest in transferring their offspring due to the modern education system (Field note, 2018). To keep native medical traditions alive in rural areas, science and technology must be integrated into the present educational system. [15].

4. CONCLUSION

From the above results and discussion, It was concluded that the plants in Himalayan and hilly regions, like Panchoule, Yarshagumba, Timur, Gimbu, Tulasi, Cactus, Barro, and Amala, etc., were used to cure disease, a Common cold, Pain, Tuberculosis, Asthma, chronic bronchitis, hepatitis, cardiovascular, hypertension, gastric, ulcer, Headache, and fever diseases respectively. The flash and body parts of animals like monkeys, jackals, bears, deer, crow, and peigon, are traditionally used to cure disease practices. The primary curing diseases are Asthma, bath, antibacterial, digestive system, skin-related problems, gastritis, etc. If the person uses traditional medicinal exercise, their practices have no side effects. It concludes that conventional medicine practices are highly reliable for increasing the life span of the human being. Such methods are transferred to another generation by telling, seeing, unknowing patterns, peer groups, and relations with older adults. This paper also concludes that people have no interest in transferring traditional medicinal knowledge to their offspring due to the modern allopathic curing system in which fast recovery occurs. The indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants and their practices is vital for the locals [16]. Therefore, the improvement of used practices is necessary to include the field of science and technology in the current education system. The active participation of local people in the conservation and management of medicinal plant species should encourage the sustainable development of biological and cultural diversity in the rural areas of Nepal.

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