



# TRIBAL FOLK METHODS OF TREATMENT OF SOUTHERN CHHATTISGARH, INDIA

**KEYWORDS**

Tribal People, Folk Methods, Gunia, Southern Chhattisgarh

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**ABSTRACT** *The role of a traditional indigenous medicine man, in the tribal community is much more extensive than of a city physician. In tribal areas due to the less availability of allopathic health care facilities and costly medicines, people also go for folk practitioner's treatment which is locally and easily available. The tribes of Southern Chhattisgarh (Bastar and Dantewara District) are known for their unique and distinctive tribal culture, folk treatment and heritage in all over the world. The paper highlights the folk methods of treatment with the various tribes of the region*

**INTRODUCTION :**

Bastar and Dantewara district jointly occupies the Southern most part of Chhattisgarh State. Both district extents between 17 45 N to 19 45N latitudes and 80 18E to 82010'E longitudes (Fig – 1)

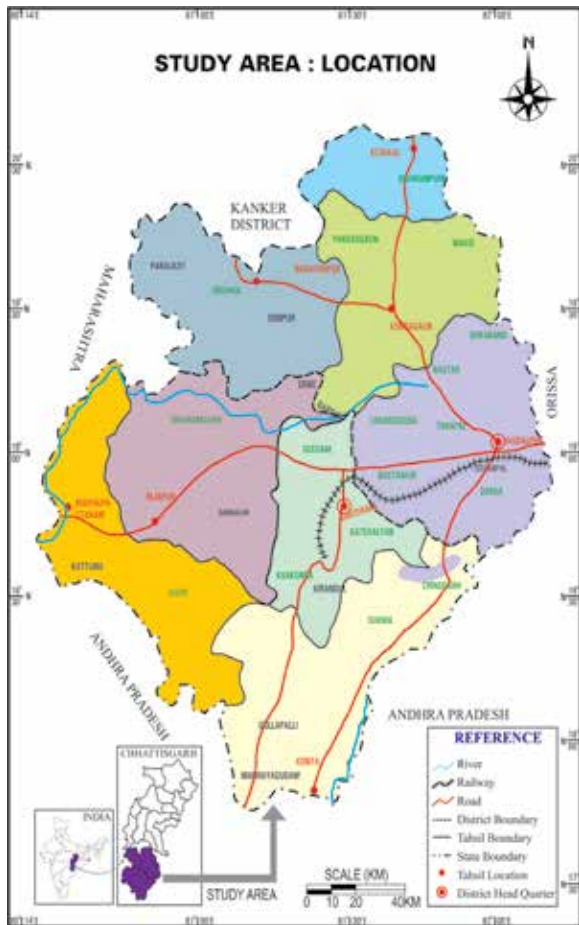


Figure : 1

**Fig. 1 : Location map of study area**

Tribal population of the study region consist 70.29 percent (2001 census) of total population. Bijapur tahsil with 81.80 percentages, has the highest concentration where as in the Jagdalpur tahsil tribal population is 62.05%, lowest.

**Table – 1 : Study area : Caste structure (%), Tahsil wise**

Sl. No.	Tahsil	ST Population	%	Sc Population	%	OBC and General caste Population	%
1.	Keshkal	113941	73.35	4236	2.72	37143	23.91
2.	Narayanpur	82716	76.16	3853	3.54	22037	20.29
3.	Kondgaon	231349	68.83	16216	4.82	88526	26.33
4.	Jagdalpur	438482	62.05	14374	2.03	253800	35.91
5.	Dantewara	173714	70.33	10859	4.39	62405	25.26
6.	Bijapur	115948	81.80	4366	3.08	21424	15.11
7.	Bhopal pattanam	80324	81.21	5306	5.36	13274	13.42
8.	Konta	187442	80.98	1539	6.64	42464	18.33
	Total	1423916	70.29	60749	2.99	541073	26.71

Source : Census 2001

The cultural mosaic of the study area is very unique. From time immemorial it is the melting pot of different cultures (Sarkar and Dasgupta, 1996). The original inhabitants of the area are Gonds, Bhatras, Halbas, Murias, Madia/Marias (both Dandami and Abujh marias or Hill Maria), Dhurwas and Dorlas. The tribal people of the area mostly depend on forests for their livelihood and upto 80% of the rural population still depends on traditional medicine and folk practitioners as a primary healthcare source. And Southern part of Chhattisgarh state is one of the area which is very rich in variety of medicinal plants.

Traditional health care practices are of two types in this area, first categorized as faith and folk practitioners (which activities more important) which comprises same on Shamans, Mystics, Tantriks, Faith-healer, Baiga, Gunia, Ojhas, Priests, Babas and other. This folk practitioner are consistent with the cultural belief and have popular mass support. And second traditional medicine as alternative system are the practitioners of AYUSH.

In the study area have so many folk practitioner, approximately they are 3680. They highly concentrated in Konta, Bijapur, Dantewara, Kondagaon tahsil. The present paper is an attempt to study the folk methods of treatment in study area, in this reference the vital information has been collected from 260 folk traditional medical practitioner. And all 260 folk practitioners has been interviewed personally.

**METHODOLOGY :**

A district which have the tribal population more than 65% (according to census 2001) have been selected as sample tribal area. Southern part of the state comprises of selective district out of which two districts, namely Bastar and Dantewara have been selected for the study of traditional folk practitioner. Twelve (12) village from the two district of southern Chhattisgarh have been randomly selected for sample study.

**Table – 2 : Sample villages : Distribution of folk practitioners and diseases treated by them**

Sl.No.	Vil-lages	Number of folk practitioner (2009)	Diseases Treated by them
1.	Karan-jee	92	Snake bite, watRoga, Dhatu Roga, Pimples etc.
2.	Chitra-kote	79	Dental pain, Joint pain, Paralysis, Bronchitis, Itch, Pneumonia, Diccup etc.
3.	Badek-ilepal	60	Skin, piles, Fracture, Dog-bite, Fistula, Dropsy, Jundice, Fever, etc.
4.	Baniya-gaon	69	Hydrocele, Acidity, Indigestion, Constipation, Cough, Dropsy, Itch, etc.
5.	Lan-joda	88	Migraine, Pimples, Gastric, Mumps, Gount, Ring-worm, Rabbis, etc.
6.	De-ogaon	52	Leucorrhoea, T.B, Dysentery, Gonorrhoea, Epilepsy, Dhat, etc.
7.	Benoor	62	Diabetes, Malaria, Jundice, Gout, etc.
8.	Singapur	72	Bleeding, Weakness, Bad cold, Fever, Pain, etc.
9.	Kumar-rash	34	Vomiting, Asthama, Bleeding, Cancer, etc.
10.	Chital-anka	31	Elephantties, Calcuei, Anemia, Piles, etc.
11.	Ka-balner	59	Small-pox, Chicken-pox, Body-pain, Stomachache, Eczema, etc. Body-pain, Stomachache, Eczema, etc.
12.	Balud	90	Snake bite, Lower pain, Gastic, etc.

Source : Field Survey 2007 - 2009

In this process it is to made that at least one (maximum two) village will be selected from each tahsil to ensure the representation of whole study region. But due to naxal / maobadi activity, it was unable to go to remote area of three tahsil — Bijapur, Bhopalpattanam and Konta. And it is a fact that due to "Swalba Judum" camp, aforesaid tahsils people are lived together in different Swalba Judum camps. And three Swalba Judum camp was visited by author and many folk practitioner was interviewed at the camp.

A group discussion with villagers was also conducted to collect information regarding traditional health care practices, folk way of disease treatment, their problems, and participated many live performance of treatment by folk practitioners.

**OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS :****STATUS OF TRIBAL FOLK PRACTITIONERS :**

In the study region Gunia, Sirha, Dai etc. are the main health practitioner. They are treated as God. He/she is responsible for cure of any disease.

**Table – 3 : Sample folk practitioner (Non professional interviewed) : Designation**

Designation	Frequency	in %
Gunia / Ojha	41	15.77
Sirha / Leske	19	7.31
Baiga	11	4.23
Bone Settar	16	6.15
Dai	32	12.31
Priest	14	5.38
Herbalist	22	8.46
Fakir Baba	6	2.31
Jantra Baba	9	3.46
Mantra Vidya	22	8.46
Magicine	20	7.69
Rudraksha and Mala Specialist	19	7.32
witchcraft and Scorer	11	4.23
Cambiad Practitioner	18	6.92
Total	260	100.00

Source : Field Survey, 2007 - 2009

**TRIBAL FOLK METHODS OF TREATMENT :****Method 1 :**

Gunia (Gond people called Bhumka) takes some rice (Chawl) and Vermilion (Sindur), mixed them in a leaf. And then asks the patient to touch it, after that he goes to a particular place which situated on out skirts of the village. And then Gunia scatters the rice and vermilion (mixed) on the ground in the name of different God / Goddess etc. at the same time uttering incantations requesting the evil spirits to leave the patient. Then the Gunia returns to the patients house. And make some protectional defensive marks with vermilion or Kumkum in the courtyard and walls and promises to sacrifices to causative evil spirit. When the patient does recover they approach to Gunia again and make request to organize the sacrifice ceremony. Afterwards, the sacrificed animal is prepared for eating. Then the community members drink rice beer or mahua. Gunia gets some items and few rupees also.

**Method 2 :**

The Gunia takes some black mustard seeds and puts them in fire in the name of some omen. If there is a flame after throwing the seeds in fire, the omen is taken as good, if not, the omen is considered as bad. This process is repeated thrice. If all the three times the result is the same, it is a very bad or very good omen.

Nine or twenty one seeds of black mustard are thrown in heat by the Gunia and names of Gods or demons are uttered and if after throwing the seeds in fire it does not produce good flame, the particular God or demon is responsible for the ailment. If the seeds produce a flame then it is otherwise. If same result is obtained again, the sickness is attributed to physical illness. And then Gunia gives some Jori-buti to the patient.

**Method 3 :**

Another mode of divination is called oil divination. The oil is placed on nail of the thumb of the left hand of women and right hand of the men when the charm is recited the spirit concerned is involved to migrate its power to the operated man or women.

He or she is asked whether the sick person will recover, while uttering the names of the possible God or demons responsible for the ailment. It is believed that when the correct name is uttered, the magic of the symbol for that God or demon can be seen in the oil.

Then Gunia pray to this symbolic God / Demon to leave the patients body. He uttering some spell and lastly success to driving away. And patient become cure.

#### Method 4 :

Another method is broom method. The Gunia / Sirha picks few reeds from a broom, and after beating the thicker ends gently on the ground he measures a length of twelve fingers breadth of them and cuts them. After reciting certain incantations he asks a questions for instance, which spirit or god had caused the trouble. This questions is answered again by measuring the reeds. If they now appear some what longer then before, the answer is considered to be in the affirmative, if the reeds now seen shorter than at the first measuring is assumed as a negative answer. After getting answer Gunia starts his Jhar-Phuk methods and sing some devotional songs.

#### Method 5 :

In the study area if a evil spirit possesses a patient, tribal people calls a Gunia / Magician / Baiga. After hearing all facts Gunia takes him and his relatives to a place of worship (Mataguri). If the patient is not able to walk to worship place, then the Gunia/Magician man and patient's relatives visit that place alone. There the Gunia recites some incantations, and performed religious activities. There are a very important or essential thing is red/black thread. And threads are essential for powerful exorcism. So, the Gunia makes a thread to tie it around the neck, wrist or arm of the patient. They mixed the thread with sindur and haldi for more effective. Sometime Gunia make a string of threads and he recites some mantra. And then an offering is made the deity worshipped, and the string-tied round the neck of patient. And patient will be cure slowly.

"Churelin" is one of the important and dangerous evil spirits in the study area. The Churelin is the ghost of a woman who has died in pregnancy of childbirth. Exorcism of a Churelin is very complicated and difficult than that of any other evil spirits. Tribal people of the study area say's that only powerful Gunia or Baiga can perform the exorcism of a Churelin.

#### Method 6 :

When Gunia/Pujari has to perform the exorcism of a Churelin, he comes to patient house to observe the suitable place of performance. After choosing the appropriate place he orders patients relative to bring a smouldering dung-cake. And puts some pungent items like chilly, hair etc, over it. The patient is asked to keep her head over the fire and inhale the fumes. Because of it, patient soon begins to tremble and this is presumed to be a sign that Churelin has entered the patients body. The Gunia/Pujari now recites some spells and then asks the spirit what offerings she would like. The spirit answers through the patients mouth in this way first stage of the exorcism has been completed. In the second stage, the Gunia/Pujari orders the patient to move a "sal" tree. The patient is touch the tree with his hand.

Then Gunia/Pujari cuts the hair off close to the patients head. At this moment the Churelin is believed, to leave her victim and enter to the sal tree. In this way patient become cure fully.

#### Method 7 :

In the study region the most common method of divination is known as winnowing fan - gourd-method (Supa-tumba method, locally).

In this method the medicine man (Gunia or Padihar or Baiga or Pujari) takes a handful quantity of rice, waves them with a circular motion over the head of the patient and pours them into a winnowing fan (Supa). After that he burns incense (Hawan) and prays that his divination may please be successful. Latter on, after addressing his God and reciting certain invocation, starts asking questions in order to discover which god or spirit has caused the illness or sent the misfortune. Then he tries to find out how the offended spirit can be appeared or supplicated for help. As soon as the medicine man maintains the name of the God of spirit responsible for the patient's sickness. Then he gives some traditional medicine to the patient.

#### Method 8 :

The medicine man makes a small heap of Kadai on the floor. On the pile, he places a "lota" full of water on the lota. He places a wooden or bamboo made stool (locally called pirha) on which his assistant is advised to sit. To put him into the rightmood, the assistant turns round and round the pirha, which rotating easily on the lota. The medicine man now prefer to take some rice (grains) and throws it on his assistant an ask his questions. He inquires about the God responsible for the diseases and begins him questionning. He inquires which God was responsible for the diseases and quickly recites the names of number of Gods. After getting the name of God he starts second part of the treatment, where he offering some coconut / hen to the God. And this way patient become cure.

#### Method 9 :

If any person affected by "bhut" (Pagalpan / madness) than the Gunia stands on one leg and recites his Mantra, frequently repeating parts of it, especially such expressions as "Go away!" or "I drive you away !" And he use the following Mantra.

#### A. A broken shoe !

**The nine iron needles !**

**With these, I bind the spirits.**

**I bind the Bhut; the pret, the deo etc.**

**Who binds them ? The guru binds them, and I the guru's pupil. Immortal charm !**

#### B. Tum Maya Mohita !

**Sarbe brikha Tripure Kashe !**

**Tum Jangat !**

**Debi Prachanda trisuldhari !**

**Shak la haban kare,**

**Bhut dur hoye ! (Local Language, Hindi)**

Recitation of their Mantra is generally accompanied by a simple ritual (Take a coconut and treats the coconut as a living thing. Then Gunia pulls off some tufts of hair from the back of the coconut's and smashes it on a stone).

#### Method 10:

When a man is cut by an axe or knife, this mantra should be used to staunchness the flow of blood.

Ram aims at a Phadki !

But lakshman binds the bow !

Who binds ?

The Guru binds !

And I the guru's disciple !

As a leaf flies into the air !

So let this injury fly away !

As a stone sinks in water, so let it sink !

Let the poison go to its own place !

**Method 11:**

This is the classical treatment for snake bite. A number of men gather round the victim and begin to sing mantra. As they continue, the rhythm of the music affect the more sensitive among them. Presently Gunia goes to the victim, sucks blood and poison from the wound and spits it out into a pot of milk, Then he throws himself on the ground and counts very quickly. "One, two, three....." upto twenty and cries,

While he is doing so, the onlookers sing with increased vigour and play of the drums. Beside this method generally the following mantras uses when a person bitten by a snake.

Sarpa bish nasto ho !  
Rogi histo - Puto ho !  
Kaniya nag nathega !  
Uppor Kanha Nachega !  
Sesh nag ki fir duhai !  
Lakshamn sakti kare sahai !  
Bom-bom bish har ! (Local Language, Hindi).

**Method 12:**

A 'Jantra'is most often a paper of a piece of metal, some letter or number engraved on it. sometime it uses like a 'tabeej'or 'amulet' or it is keep in a special place of the house. Below Jantra is an example, uses for high fever. Write this Jantra on a plain paper (page) and writes name of the patients in the middle of the page.

fj	x&	nk	l
ht&	s&	zt	Z&
	lt	b	
Ji	vi	fl&	A&

**Jantra for high fever**

And bind it by a red cloth. And then taking some direct sunlight. And then taking. And if it will be bind on patients arm (any), any type of fever will be go away.

**Method 13:**

Gunia/Jantra specialist writes this Jantra on a plain paper. And then he tells the patients to see it. According to him, patient will be immediate cure.

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**Jantra for high eye pain**

**And patients eye pain will be cure slowly.**

**Method 14:**

Gond people of the study area uses "Red Ant" method for malaria. The study area is highly affected by malaria. Most of the fever are treated as a malaria by any professional doctor.

When a Gond people affected by Malaria. He goes to a nearby "Nimbu per" (Lemon tree). And wait for some time. A Gunia also present there. Which "Nimbu Per" is full of "Lal Chinti" (Red Ant). Gunia reads some spell loudly. Patient (Malaria effected person) stay below the nimbu per. After reciting the spells Gunia shaking the nimbu (lemon) tree and then all ants (lal chinti) are fall down in swarms

on patients body. Ants are bite the patient's all body. It is running by ten to fifteen minutes. And then Gunia beat out ants by a broom, from patients body. And now the patient is go to his/her house. And he/she becomes fully cure between five to ten day's.

**Method 15 :**

In the study area another special method is 'weight lift method'. If any one fill sick, he/she calls a Gunia. Gunia comes at the selected place; with patient and their relatives. Where a banyan tree is situated. There are a heavy weight stone (8-10 Kgs.) beneth the banyan tree. A small whole is in the upper part of the stone. Gunia reciting some spell at first. And then he tells to patient lift the stone with his/her little fingure only with the help of whole. And Gunia tell the patient walk roundly four side of banyan tree upto 7th time; with the stone; holding in little fingure. If patients are success to rounded then he/she will be relief from his / her pain/illness/ problem. If patient are not succeeded then it is think that he/she have some personal fault (he/she did any crime, sin etc). And after this process Gunia gives them some Jori-buti medicine

**Method 16 :**

Churel is another pret/bhut in the study area. There are somany method to escape from a Churel. Beside previously said method, there are a special method to escape a man from his madness / pagalpan. When a men are effected by Churel; his relative goes to Gunia/baiga for his treatment. Gunia invites them with patient to a big ground (silent place) in a 'Purnima' night. And Gunia order to patient to be naked, and round (running) the ground for 11th time. Thus the men will be escape from the Churel.

**LOCAL MEDICINAL PLANTS AND TREATMENT SYSTEM IN SAMPLE VILLAGES:**

Medicinal plants and their uses are a great important (by traditional medicine men) in the study area. Tribal people uses many common and uncommon plants for the treatment of their ailment and various diseases. Thus each tribal community has a self developed traditional health care system of primary health care methods mainly bassed on herbal remedies. In the study area Gunia or Sirha are very famous for their knowledge about medicinal plants. Some folk practitioners provide herbal bassed health care facilities for their people.

**CONCLUSION :**

It has been noticed that it is the traditional form of medicine which strides ahead among the tribal people when both forms of medical systems are operating, tribal people turn towards the traditional medicine because it is free from side-effect, as well as it is inexpensive, easily accessible, informal and pays due respect to one's cultural traditions.

Statistics show that in the study area, there are large no. of traditional health care practitioners. If this enormous no. of medical practitioners are added to the modern medicine systems figure, then study area become one of the best patients-practitioners-ratio in the India. These enormous resources have not been systematically utilized by the health planners so far. So, this paper will provide adequate view to academic and researchers working on the promotion and restoration of indigenous knowledge systems of tribal communities of India and world.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT :**

Author is thankful to tribal peoples a of the study area. The greatest credit for completion of this study goes to the respondent – house holds of 12 selected villages. They

were kind, considerate and helpful in providing necessary information. Author is also thankful to Prof. Dr. (Smt.) Kaveri Dabhadkar; Govt. Bilasa Girls P.G. College, Bilaspur (C.G)

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