



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Sociology

HOME REMEDIES IN COMMON CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES (A BRIEF STUDY AMONG THE KAIBARTAS OF KAOIMARI AND SIMULUGURI VILLAGE OF DIBRUGARH DISTRICT)

KEY WORDS: Home Remedies, Child, Health, Illness, Kaibartas.

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ABSTRACT

Traditional health care practices are prevalent in every country since the beginning of the civilization. They are influenced more by the socio-cultural and environmental factors. Home Remedy is an important application of traditional knowledge in health practices. It is known to almost every elderly person in the family and it is prepared either by a single or more than one ingredients including spices, herbs etc. which are locally available. Minor ailments are healed by such measures. Children are considered as a backbone of a nation. Therefore, the study of child health becomes very important as they are more prone to illness. The main objective of study is to get a brief idea of the use of home remedies in common childhood illnesses. The study is carried out in two Kaibarta's dominating villages namely Kaoimari and Simuluguri of Dibrugarh district. Kaibartas are one of the scheduled caste population of Assam. The study is totally empirical based on field study.

INTRODUCTION

Health and Illnesses are the universal phenomena which co-exist in every human society and it is an important dimension of every human individual. The World Health Organisation defines health as a physical, mental and social condition of the people. The health and illnesses are linked with their socio-cultural environment and their health seeking behaviour of the community. From the early history of the emergence of man on the earth, it has been seen that man has always developed several methods of medical system for his better health. Every Community or tribe has their own age-old perception towards understanding health, diseases and health care practices. In this regard the traditional health care practice of the concerned people deserves a special attention. They are influenced more by the socio-cultural and environmental factors. Home Remedy is an important application of traditional knowledge in health practices. It is known to almost every elderly person in the family and it is prepared either by a single or more than one ingredients including spices, herbs etc. which are locally available. Minor ailments are healed by such measures.

Children are highly vulnerable to illness and diseases as they come in contact with many people. Their immune system is also weak to cope with the changing environmental conditions. As children represent the future, and ensuring their health growth and development ought to be prime concern of all societies. Children's are vulnerable to malnutrition and infectious diseases, many of which can be effectively prevented or treated. In child care practices, the role of parents becomes very important where their attitudes, knowledge, beliefs are considered as an important aspect in taking care of a child.

The Kaibartas of the two villages under study are settled near the bank of river and due to problem in transportation facility they prefer home remedies if the illness is not so severe. Sometimes due to non availability of doctors in the health centre, far distance etc are certain reasons for use home remedies. According to them they consider it effective also. In the backdrop of these reasons a preliminary investigation is done to get some insight of the practice of home remedies in common childhood illnesses.

Literature Review

Kaibartas are one of the scheduled caste populations of Assam. There are various studies undertaken to study about the scheduled caste community of Assam like B.Das (1986) in the book "A Glimpse of the Scheduled Castes and the socio-economic development in Assam" has highlighted various problems being faced by Scheduled Caste population in Assam. An account of the Scheduled Caste population in Assam including sub-caste wise population of scheduled

caste is shown.

Going through an unpublished PhD thesis on "Socio-Economic changes among the Kaibartas-A case study in Barak Valley Assam" (Dibrugarh University) makes an objective exploration of different aspects of the socio-cultural life of the Kaibartas in relation to changing conditions emerged due to many reasons. There is a book which described about kaibarta i.e "People of India" (Assam) edited by K.S.Singh. There is an article on 'Kaibartas' by M.M.Das which has described about the Kaibarta community holistically. It has tried to touch each and every aspect of the community. It has talked about their origin, subsistence pattern, social organisation etc. It has also tried to talk about their occupation and socio-economic condition of the society.

In the journal of Human Ecology there was an research paper entitled "The Kaibartas: A Fishing Community of Assam, Their Society and Economy" by Chandana Sarma and A.N.M.Irshad Ali in 2005 worked among the Kaibartas of Boripara village, nearby Guwahati city in Kamrup District, Assam. The focus of study was on occupational changes noticed among them due to the impact of urbanization.

Objective of Study

The main objective of study is to get a mental picture of the common childhood illnesses and the practice of Home Remedies among the Kaibartas of the two villages of Dibrugarh district.

Area of Study

The present study was conducted in two villages, Kaoimari and Simuluguri of Dibrugarh district. At a distance of about 30kms to the southeast of Dibrugarh is situated Khowang Ghat. Kaoimari and Simuluguri are situated on the northern part of the Khowang Ghat. Both the villages are homogenous one consisting of Kaibartas. The Kaibartas are the major scheduled caste group in Assam having total population 581,559 lakh as per 2001 census. They are basically a fishing community.

They are one of the early inhabitants of Assam. It is known that formerly the Kaibartas of Assam were known as keuts. The Keuts were divided into parts i.e. Jalowa keuts and Halwa Keuts. But nowadays only Jalowa Keuts are known as Kaibartas. T.N.Das (1986) mentioned that the term Kaibarta had its origin from ka means pani (water), bartta means jibika (livelihood). He further says those people who lived by the side of water resources are known as Kaibarta. In Assam, they are also referred as Nadiyals. (J.R.Saikia & A.Boruah, 2009). At present Kaibartas are found mainly in Kamrup, Darang, Nagaon, Dhemaji, Sibsagar, Tinsukia and Dibrugarh district.

Methodology

The study is totally empirical based on Field study. The study is done through in-depth interview. The data were mainly collected from the elderly persons especially women.

The Kaibartas basically live near the bank of rivers and therefore they are more prone to malaria and water borne diseases. The Socio-economic condition of the people is not so sound because majority of them live in below poverty line. Due to economic constraint both male and female are engaged in work. Therefore proper care of children is not taken. The common childhood illnesses were found among them are cold and cough, fever, dysentery, indigestion etc.

Home Remedies used in Common Childhood Illnesses

Diarrohea: This is very common in both the villages. For its treatment they use easily available plants and fruits in their surroundings. Few important among them are i. Creeping wood, Sorutengesi (*Oxalis corniculata*), one small tablespoon of the extracts of whole plant is given twice daily for seven days. If it gets cure early then they stop after five days. ii. Papaya, Amita (*Carica Papaya*), unripe fruits are boiled and given for few days. According to them, they use raw papaya in their regular diet. It is beneficial for health.

Dysentery: This is often spread through contaminated water and food. For its treatment they use i. Guava, Madhuri (*Psidium guajava*), fresh leaf crushed to make juice is mixed with equal amount of water and sugar according to taste is given 2-3 times daily for a week: ii Lime, Gul Nemu (*Citrus medica*) juice is mixed with water and sugar is given 2-3 times daily until cured or small amount of dried peel is also given to consume directly: iii Creeping wood, Saru tengeshi (*Oxalis corniculata*), whole plant is boiled and given with rice for consume once per day for 2-3 days.

Worm Infection: According to the information majority of children show this infection. This is mainly caused by coming in contact with infected surface, consuming infected water with improper hygiene. For this they use i Titaphool (*Phlognthus thyrsiflorus*), flowers are cooked as vegetables and given to eat. ii Papaya, Amita (*Carica papaya*), nearly ripe fruits are given to eat: iii Pine Apple, Matikothal (*Annonas cosmos*), fresh fruits are given to eat in excess.

Measles and Chicken Pox: Both are viral diseases occurring frequently in late winter and early spring. For treatment they prefer Margosa leaves, Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), leaves are put in the rooms in which child remains and also upon the doors, it is believed that they act as antiseptic and freshen the air which prevents superinfection of measles and chicken pox: iii Banh (*Bambusa tulda*), processed bamboo shoot (*Kharisha*) fried with fish species Magur (*Clarius batratus*) are given to eat for wound healing due to measles. Bamboo shoot has healing capacity. Apart from this "Aai Hakam" (religious offering to Goddess of Pox) is performed annually in the villages to propitiate Goddess of Pox.

Cold and Cough: Due to change in season and especially during winter and rainy days children get caught of Ginger, Ada (*Zingiber officinale*) fresh rhizome is crushed with old molasses and given orally: ii Curry leaves, Narasingha (*Murraya koenigii*), fresh leaf juice along with equal amount of honey is given 3-4 times daily for a week: iii Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), the crude extract of leaf is mixed with honey and given 3-4 times until cure: iv. Guava, Madhuri (*Psidium guajava*), fresh leaves juices along with water is given 2-3 times daily maximum for 3 days: v. One teaspoonful of Ginger, Ada (*Zingiber officinale*) mixed with few drops of honey. Sometimes when the nose is fully blocked and makes difficult to breathe then they prepare garlic garland for the children. By doing so it solves inhaling problem.

Fever: The fever is caused by various reasons. They prefer serving hot meals with black pepper. They also use i

Chalkuwari (*Aloe vera*), crushed leaf paste is applied on the forehead: ii cold water soaked with cotton and applied on forehead for decreasing the temperature.

Lack of Appetite:- This is the common problem of every child. Proper appetite is required for healthy growth of children. For this they prefer Durun bon (*Leucas aspera*), fresh leaves are boiled and given with rice to consume.

Indigestion:- For this they use i. Heart leaf, Mosonduri (*Houttuynia cordata*), fresh leaves are crushed and eaten raw or steam cooked and taken as a remedy for constipation and indigestion: ii Lime, Gul Nemu (*Citrus medica*), juice mixed with water and very little amount of salt and black pepper.

Jaundice:- This is basically liver problem. For this they prefer i. Banana, Athia Kal (*Musa paradisiaca*), the ripening fruit are dropped in water with bootmah (*Cicer arietinum*) and jaggery for overnight, the juice is given 7-10 days or until cure: ii Pategoja acid plant. Dupor tenga (*Bryophyllum pinnatum*) leaf juice is given daily two times until cured: iii Star fruit, Kordoi (*Averrhoa carambola*), are crushed to extract the juice and taken with water for 5-7 days.

Apart from this above home remedies, the villagers have believe in evil's eye, witchcraft, sorcery etc. There is also traditional medicine man called as "Baiz". They considered some people out of enemy nature can harm their children. For this they tie amulets for protection etc.

Interpretations: The practice of Home Remedies in common childhood illnesses among the Kaibartas are based on their knowledge through deep observation and belief in nature. This knowledge is orally transmitted from one generation to the other. They learn the concept about sickness and its remedy on personal level through experience which they acquire from elderly people and their contact with the environment.

For any kind of treatment they have to go either to Khawang Primary health centre or Tiloi Hospital. Since the economic condition and transportation facility of the people is not good, less importance is given to the health of the family. Most of the children are under nourished because the earning of the family is only up to hand to mouth. Very less care is provided to the children. Because of this the children are prone to some common illnesses as discussed above. They do not prefer going to health centre for day to day illnesses, instead they try to cure it by applying certain home remedies which are easily available.

Due to modernization, the use of Home Remedies is not very popular with the younger generation. In other words the traditional knowledge is eroding. Therefore, there is a need for preserving rich traditional knowledge from the existing people through proper documentation and also by making people aware of their scientific values and less side effect.

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