

The Indigenous Medicinal Practices of Korku Tribe of Amravati, Maharashtra

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Abstract

Korku Tribe is one of the poorer and most deprived tribal group in India mostly residing in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh region. The Korku tribe resides majorly in the Melghat region of Maharashtra which is very much famous for the backwardness in development. The lower socio-economic status has impacted them very badly as most of these tribes are malnourished and the cases of child mortality is very common. The Korku tribes of this region still do not have the proper health care facilities due to which their indigenous medicinal practices are very common. To maintain the better health among Korku tribes of Melghat region, Amravati, the people belonging to this community uses plants, leaf, stems, seeds, fruits, roots etc. This paper will discuss the use of indigenous medicinal practices which are practiced by the Korku Tribe of Melghat, Amravati region.

Keywords: Korku, Tribes, Indigenous Medicinal Practices, Melghat, health care, socio-economic

INTRODUCTION

The concept of using traditional medicinal knowledges is not a new thing for tribal communities in India. They are practicing their own traditional health practices for taking care of their good health since ancient times by being dependent on forest and other natural herbal resources (Vikram Singh, 2018) [1]. Every tribal community including Korku tribe possesses their own traditional knowledge, beliefs and practices related in the process of having good health. Healthcare in tribal communities is mostly associated with their strong relationship with local and natural resource base. Their indigenous knowledge of medicines, herbs and rituals have helped them for health care for centuries in remote area of their habitat. Most of the peoples from the Korku tribes are quite distinct culturally from the mainstream society in terms of livelihood, traditions, rituals etc. They are culturally and geographically detached group with diverse histories. In anthropological perspective, tribal people are indigenous to the soil, inhabits forestry and hilly areas, principally pursue a subsistence level economy, practices their traditional religion and culture, and believe in common ancestry (Awasthi, 2021) [2]. In the same way the Korku tribe is one of the poorer and most deprived tribal community in India. Most of their population resides in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh region. The reason behind selecting this region

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for research was the population share of this community. In Maharashtra, Melghat region of Amravati have the significantly better share in Population of the Korku tribes. Among the Korku tribe, malnourished and child mortality is high due to poor health care facilities are very in the region. As a result, they rely on the Indigenous medicinal practices except the ancestral one. Yet only indigenous medicinal practices cannot be relied on for better health in the long run. There is need to have integrated facilities of indigenous and modern health care system. Therefore, this paper attempts to discuss the use of indigenous medicinal practices which is being practiced by the Korku Tribe of Melghat.

Research Methodology

The research methodology used for writing this paper is qualitative type. For the study, the data was collected from these villages; Bori and Chitri from Harishal Gram Panchayat and Kotha from Jambu Gram Panchayat. These villages are in Melghat, Amravati region of Tiger Reserve, dominantly inhabited by Korku tribe population, who runs. Out of which, 71 families were selected for study as a sample through the household survey method. The data has been compiled from both primary and secondary sources. For Primary source, data has been collected through various techniques like interview schedule and case study. The respondents in the interview schedule includes people from the community. For case study, the medical practitioners were consulted for in depth knowledge related to medicinal practices. Along with this, data has also been collected from secondary sources through, research papers, government documents, internet, books etc. In this research, village sarpanch and elders of the house have been selected for the compilation of family data as well as traditional doctors mainly *Jadi Baba* who acquires knowledge about herbs through their practices. They usually treat people through herbs, so these people are more knowledgeable about the medicinal use of herbs.

About Korku Tribe

Origin Story

As the story related to origin of Korku community has no written proof, but there is a glimpse of the origin of this tribe based on the cosmic story of a divine origin. Once, Ravana, the king of Lanka came to Vindhyaachal and Satpura region. While walking for the sanctuary visiting, he notices an unlucky place, very quiet, where no one lives. Then, Ravana requested the God Mahadev to make this place alive with some animals and humans. In response, God Mahadev became happy and ordered Kgdoot Kageshwar to bring red soil from the Bhanwargarh and Sawligarh. Mahadev made a human-like effigy from the red clay soil and was about to give the breath in that effigy, but at the same time God Indra got angry and sent his horse, who destroyed the clay made effigy. Later on, from the same soil, the effigy of dog was made, who ran after the horses. Then after, Mahadev made the two humans like effigy named 'Mulla' as Male and 'Mulai' as female and gave them breathe to live. Both the Mulla and Mulai became the founder of the Korku tribe. The place from where the Kgdoot Kageshwar brought the soil is Sawligarh and Bhanwargarh. This place is considered to be the origin of Korku tribe. The Korku tribe usually dig (Korna or Kodna in Hindi) the roots in forests of Vindhyan and Satpura which later called as Korku. 'Kor' or 'Koro' which means 'Man' and 'Ku' means "Alive" thus Korku means 'Alive Men' (Biswas, 2017) [3].

Demography Details

As per census 2011, the total population of the Korku Tribe in India is 9,55,399. In Maharashtra, their total population is 2,64,492. The language spoken by this community is Korku, Marathi and Hindi. The literacy rate of Korku tribe in Maharashtra is 73.40%. Male literacy is higher than the female literacy rate, i.e., 82.39 % for male and 64.02% for female. The Sex ratio in Korku tribe for Maharashtra region is 960 per thousand males. Child (0-6 years old) sex ratio is 973 per thousand males (GOI, 2011) [4].

As per the data recorded by the researcher in three villages, total population in Chitri, Kotha and Bori villages are mentioned below in the Table 1.

Table 1. The demographic details.

Details	Chitri	Kotha	Bori
Total Population	348	1064	1060
Male Population	181	571	553
Female Population	165	493	507
Literacy rate	70.16%	83.40%	72.81%
Sex ratio	911	863	917

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indigenous Medicinal Practices

The indigenous medicinal practices have maintained the special position in many south Asian countries like India, China, Japan, Pakistan etc. Indigenous Medicinal Practices are the part of the health healing practices mostly among the tribal communities as they are inhabitant of forestry region having multiple knowledge of identifying the flora and its uses. It is the way of defending and restoring the health which has been passed to the present generations from the past generations traditionally. The traditional medical practices of the Korku are famous as the Melghat region is a land of many precious herbs and shrubs. The practice of traditional medicine was widespread until recently, but the weakening state of traditional medical practice was evident from the field research. Many elders in the ward reported that they were completely dependent on traditional medicine for all kinds of physical ailments. The Melghat region is notorious for health matters and the prevalence of various sicknesses (H. R., 2020) [5]. The Korku tribe in the Melghat region is one the tribe who also rely on the traditional medicinal practices for the health healings. *Jadi Baba* mainly treats people through herbs, so these people are more knowledgeable about herbs. The details of the various diseases and their treatment with the traditional medicinal products are as follows:

Dysuria (Burning Urination)

Dysuria makes the patient feel pain or a burning sensation during peeing or urination. It is a burning, tingling, or stinging sensation in the urethra and meatus that occurs when person suffering from it urinate (Sands, 2015) [6]. Male and Female of any age group can experience this disease. For the treatment, the Korku people use *Gwarpatha* (Scientific Name: Aloe Vera) (see Figure 1). They drink one glass Juice of *Gwarpatha* jelly part with sugar mixed in it for seven days and get recovered from the illness. During the medication week, they do not take any meat and fish.



Figure 1. *Gwarpatha* (Aloe Vera).



Figure 2. *Akaw* (*Calotropis Procera*).

Foot Pain due to Thorn Prick

This happens when part of pricked thorn got stuck inside the foot sole then it starts paining after some days. For the treatment, they use *Akaw* (Scientific Name: *Calotropis Procera*) (see Figure 2) leaf. They foment with the help of this leaf that relieves the pain of the patient. The milk of *Akaw* leaf helps in coming pricked thorn out of the sole.

Calculus (Pathari)

It is a compaction of minerals formed inside the body parts, especially in the kidney or gallbladder. Kidney stones are most commonly seen in one or both kidneys. Urinary stones have troubled mankind for ages, going back to 4000 B.C., and they are the most frequent urinary tract ailment (Petros, 2018) [7]. It causes too much pain. For treatment, patient uses *Dudhi* (Scientific Name: *Euphorbia Hirta*) (see Figure 3) plant leaf with the water and drink. It gives relief from the pain of the Calculus. This time they do not prefer to eat gram (Sunil Kumar, 2010) [8].



Figure 3. *Dudhi* (*Euphorbia Hitra*).

Hemorrhoid

Hemorrhoid also known as piles, are swollen veins in patient anus and lower rectum, similar to varicose veins. Hemorrhoids are vascular tissues, smooth muscles, and connective tissues that form three columns in the anal canal: left lateral, right anterior, and right posterior. These clusters may be classified as sinusoids rather than arteries or veins since they do not have muscle walls. It can develop inside the rectum or under the skin around the anus (Migaly, 2016) [9]. For the treatment, patient take *Laalgooty* (Scientific Name: *Sphaeranthus Indicus*) (see Figure 4), *Safedgooty* (Scientific Name: *Filago*; Loebl. ex L.) (see Figure 5), *Teuji* (Scientific Name: *Mitragyna Speciosa*) (see Figure 6), *Amarbaal* (Scientific Name: *Cuscuta Reflexa*) (see Figure 7), Copper bhaji, koilari leaf (Scientific Name: *Bauhinia Monamara*), *Jadkumbhi* (Scientific Name: *Portulacaoleracea*) plants after soaking it in water for 24 hours. Then, filter it in the morning and drink. This medication takes 15 days to gets cured.

Fracture

The bone fracture can be treated with the help of the hair, egg, the vermilion which has been offered to God Hanuman. All are wrapped in a cloth and tie it on the broken place and keep pouring it from time to time can cure the fracture. *Hadjodi* (*Cissusquadr Angularis*) (see Figure 8), also helps in curing fracture (Hemal R. Brahmshatriya, 2015) [10].

Asthama

It is a condition in which a patient feel difficult to breathe. For the treatment, patient consume paste of mixture made up of *Hasbell*, *Torah* seeds (see Figure 9), Honey and *Bhilwa* water. The problem of breathing is reduced after consuming this.



Figure 4. *Laalgooty* (*Sphaeranthus Indicus*).

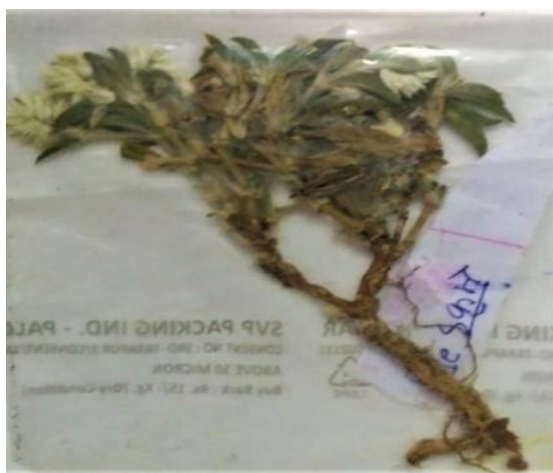


Figure 5. *Safedgooty* (*Filago*; Loebl. ex L.).

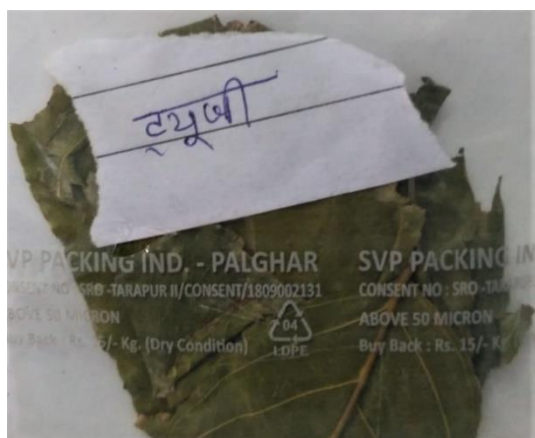


Figure 6. *Teuji* (*Mitragyna Speciosa*).



Figure 7. *Amarbaal* (*Cuscuta Reflexa*).



Figure 8. *Hadjodi* (*Cissusquadr Angularis*).



Figure 9. Torah seeds.

Jaundice

The Jaundice make face, eyes and nails in yellow color. For treatment, *Teuji* (Scientific Name: *Mitragyna Speciosa*) (see Figure 6), *Tikari* (*Luziola Juss*) (see Figure 10), *Amarbaal* (Scientific Name: *Cuscuta Reflexa*) (see Figure 7), Mango's bark etc. are soaked in water and drank as medicine by the patient.

Dog Bite

For the treatment of dog bite, *Amarbaal* (Scientific Name: *Cuscuta Reflexa*) (see Figure 7), *White Akaw* (Scientific Name: *Calotropis Procer*) (see Figure 2) is made into powder into a tablet. 10 tablets are generally preferred to take for the complete cure. Meat and fish are prohibited to take during the medication period.



Figure 10. *Tikari* (*Luziola* Juss).

Snake Bite

When people of this get bite from the poisonous snake, they prefer take *Kadulim* (Scientific Name: *Azadirachta Indica*) by making a solution with water, the patient is made to palpate.

Malnutrition

Malnutrition is one of the crucial problems found in Korku tribes of Melghat region of Amravati. The deficiency of many Vitamins is obvious from the bodily structure of the Korku tribe as most of the children, youths, and adults have underdeveloped growth and usually have health problems related with the nutritional deficit. Malnutrition is cured by taking bath continuously for 10 days after mixing elephant dung, *Bhumka* root (Scientific Name: *Costus speciosus*) (see Figure 11), and water.



Figure 11. *Bhumka* root (*Costus speciosus*).



Figure 12. *Sagwan* Seed (*Tectona Grandis*).

Fever

Seasonal fever is one of the common diseases found in Melghat region. For treatment, Korku people Grind the one spoon seed of *Sagwan* (Scientific Name: *Tectona Grandis*) (see Figure 12), one spoon with water in the morning and evening cures fever.

CONCLUSION

The accessibility of Health still remains a critical challenge for the Korku tribes of Melghat, Amravati district. The traditional medicinal practices have been widely practiced commonly for many physical ailments in this region. The study indicates such medicinal practices acts as an emergency aid due to lack of modern medical facilities. They would try to meet the *Jadi Baba*, but at time, it may take longer than expected for cure. For worst, the patients are left in miserable condition and eventually to death. However, Korku Tribes takes proper care of their health and hygiene with proper indigenous medicinal practices in their village area. The indigenous medicinal practices should be promoted by the governments to increase the efficiency of curing the diseases and to gain the trust as people are losing interest in such practices. At the end, the indigenous knowledge is the root of the Korku community culture which make them socially alive till now, so this knowledge must be protected through various interventions.

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