Traditional medical practices of Gaddi tribes in Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh

Bindia Sharma* and Snehlata Maheshwari
Department Of Home Science Extension Education, College Of Home Science, Maharana Pratap University Of Agriculture And Technology Udaipur 313001, Rajasthan

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The tribal people of Himachal Pradesh living close to forests and facing unfavourable climatic conditions have rich traditional knowledge, which was documented and tested on scientific scale and mostly recommended for further research. Traditional practices followed by the Gaddi tribes in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh to cure pinworm and diarrhoeal problems among infants have been discussed.

Kew words: Gaddi Tribes, Himachal Pradesh, Pinworm, Diarrhoea, Ethnomedicine, Kangra Traditional Medical Practices.

Himachal Pradesh, is a state of hills, mountains and rich vegetation. The people of this state, especially the tribal people, live a quite difficult life because of unfavourable climatic conditions. The various tribes prevalent in the state are Gujjar, Kinnaura, Lahaula, Gaddi etc. These constitute about 4.22% of the states population (Census, 1991). The Gaddi tribe taken for the present study has a migratory style of living. Their main occupation is the keeping and rearing of sheep. The number of sheep one holds determines the wealth of Gaddi people. That’s why it is called as the “Dhan” of Gaddi people. At Chamba, Bharmour, Kullu and in a few places of Kangra there are settlements of Gaddis tribes though Bharmour is the main town around which many of these tribals have settled. Bharmour is also known as Gadheran, the region of Gaddis. The Gaddis are nomads who move along with their flock of sheep to higher pasturlands, though they have their permanent settlements at villages on the lower heights. They move to the higher ranges during summer months but in winters they get down to the lower heights. At the higher ranges they build up temporary dwellings as a shelter against rains and other natural calamities, but at lower ranges they have permanent settlements. These people have their dwellings close to the forests and thus have vast knowledge about plants, which they use to cure health problems. These people have a storehouse of traditional practices, which needs to be documented and recommended for further use and research based on scientific validation.

Methodology
The study was conducted in selected four tribal dominating villages of Bhawarana Panchayat Samiti in Kangra district. For the information collection, 100 married women of Gaddi tribe of 40 years and above age group were interviewed. Another set of 12 experts from the fields of Nutrition, Gynaecology and Ayurveda were also selected for the scientific validation of traditional practices on three-point continuum as scientific, unscientific and uncertain. The information from experts was collected using questionnaire technique. The traditional practices were also validated based on Ayurvedic literature.

Results
A very small worm, Enterobius vermicularis, causes pinworm. The problem is most common among the infants (0-1 yr age) of the region. The anal region of the infants becomes reddish with an irritational feeling. The worms prick the anal portion of the infants causing discomfort to the infants. The problem is mostly associated with the intake of food like maize, mash/Urda dal, chillies by the lactating mothers. Sometimes it is caused due to the intake of infected water.

Traditional practices followed to cure pinworm and diarrhoeal problems among infants by using herbal materials (Fig. 1-4) along with their scientific validation are presented in Table 1.

* Corresponding author
Fig. 1- *Terminalia bellirica* Roxb.

Fig. 2- *Glycyrrhiza glabra* Linn.

Fig. 3- *Acorus calamus* Linn.

Fig. 4- *Randia spinosa* Poir.
Table I—Traditional practices followed to cure pinworm and diarrhoeal problems among infants along with their scientific validation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Food given (Quantity &amp; ingredients)</th>
<th>f / %</th>
<th>Logics</th>
<th>Experts opinion</th>
<th>Ayurvedic literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S* US** UC*** S^N^NS^^ Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinworm:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Juice of bitter gourd leaves (1/2-1 tsp thrice a day)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Bitter taste cures the problem</td>
<td>6 (50%) 3 (25%) 3 (25%)</td>
<td>S Bitter taste cures worms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Asafoetida water (0.2g/100ml water tsp serving thrice a day)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Strong smell responsible for curing</td>
<td>6 (50%) 2 (16.66%) 4 (33.33%)</td>
<td>S Strong smell kills worm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhoea:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boiled juice (quantity varies individually)-Chotti elachi (0.5g) Ajwain seeds (1g) Jaiphal (0.2g) in 150 ml water</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Chotti elachi being Sardhat (i.e. neutral neither hot nor cold in nature) avoids diarrhoea either due to coldness or warmthness, Ajwain helps in digestion &amp; Jaiphal is constipating in nature</td>
<td>6 (50%) 2 (16.66%) 4 (33.33%)</td>
<td>S Ajwain and Jaiphal are of constipating nature and chotti elachi helps in digestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Extract of Randa (1g) + Nutmeg (0.2g) + Bariyan (1g) + Almond (5g) in 150 ml water. One tsp/serving, twice a day</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>All are constipating Fin nature</td>
<td>8 (6.66%) 1 (8.33%) 3 (25)</td>
<td>S All these are of constipating nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Extract of Bahera 5g in 150 ml water (2-3 tsp/serving, twice a day)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Constipating food</td>
<td>8 (66.66%) 4 (33.33%)</td>
<td>S Bahera is of constipating nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jeevan Ghutti (1 tsp in 6-7 drops of water) thrice a day. Maize cob ash (50g), Bariyan (10g) Mullathi (5g), Chotti elachi (5g)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>It is believed to be Naregi for the child’s stomach.</td>
<td>6 (50%) 6 (50%</td>
<td>-- UA --</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scientific **Unscientific ***Uncertain *Supporting ** Not supporting ^^^Unavailable
N=100 n=12 f / %= Frequency of respondents

Discussion
Table 1 shows that to cure pinworms problem, majority (79%) of the Gaddi women give juice of bitter gourd (Momordica charantia Linn.) leaves as half to one tsp per serving thrice a day. Giving of roasted asafetida (Heeng) dissolved in water was also a practice reported by 14 per cent respondents. It was given as one tsp per serving, thrice a day. However, regarding scientific validation of these practices for further research, though the Ayurvedic literature supports the practice but the experts had a mixed opinion.

For diarrhoeal cure the traditional practice followed and presented in Table 1 shows that more than half of the respondents (60%) used to give extract of Bahera (Terminalia bellirica Roxb.) by rubbing 0.1 to 0.2 gm in cold water (for yellow faeces) or hot water (for green or whitish faeces) as 2-3 tsp per serving twice a day. The logic behind giving this was that it is of constipating nature. It was reported by approximately half of the women (52%) that they used Chotti elachi (Elettaria cardamonum Maton) + Ajwain (Trachyspermum ammi Sprague) + Jaiphal (Myristica fragrans Houtt.) by boiling in milk, thrice a day. These women mentioned that the properties of each item added helps in controlling diarrhoeal problem. Due to Sardhat (neither hot nor cold in nature) nature of Chotti elachi, it helps in curing diarrhoea resulted either due to warmthness or coldness. Ajwain was added to make the digestion proper and addition of
Jaiphal was based on their constipatious nature. Similarly, the constipatious items like Rarda (Randia spinosa Poir)\(^3\), nutmeg (Jaiphal), Bariyan (Acorus calamus)\(^3\) and almond (Prunus dulcis) were also reported to be given by 45 percent of Gaddi women respondents. All these items are firstly rubbed in water and given in hot or cold water depending upon the diarrhoeal cause, either due to coldness (whitish or green faeces) and warmthness (yellowish faeces) respectively. It was given 2-3 tsp per serving thrice a day. It was however mentioned by 20 per cent respondents that they give Jeevan ghutti as per diarrhoeal cause in cold or hot water. This is prepared at home by the Gaddi women using the locally available materials. They take maize cobs, Bariyan, Mullathi (Glycyrrhiza glabra)\(^3\) and Cardamom. During diarrhoeal problem 6-7 drops of hot water or cold water as per colour of the faeces are added to one tsp of Ghutti, given twice a day. It is believed as better for child’s stomach. During diarrhoea, tribal women of Udaipur district of Rajasthan, used to give the mixture of Ajwain, Nutmeg and Jaggery with water\(^1\). However, Janam Ghutti was also preferably reported to be given.

From Table 1, it can be concluded that giving of extract of Bahera, Rarda, nutmeg, Bariyan and almond have been considered to be scientific practices as experts (66.66%) and Ayurvedic literature supports it. However, regarding for other two practices, there is a need for conducting further research.

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