

Full Length Research Paper

Superstitions and traditional uses of animal in Bangladesh

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Using traditional medicines in Bangladesh are very ancient. Some little educated and low income people here belief this tradition and take that animals parts as medicine. Due to less serious or common diseases they got relief from their psychological views which are questionable. In case of animals mostly they use skin and bones. Out of twelve problems of people 58.33% were pain related was gout, toothache, waist pain etc. Result suggested the highest mammalian species were 8 (44.44%), reptilian 5 (27.78%), molluscan shell 2 (11.11%) and the lowest avian, annelid and cnidaria each 1 (5.56%). Such type of tradition is a part of great mythology.

Key words: Superstition, medicinal animals, snake charmer, mythology.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of traditional medicine in Bangladesh is an integral part of the culture of the people. Different forms of traditional medicines have been used in this country as an essential treatment of some diseases (Qureshi, 1984). Allopathic medicine a large majority (75-80%) of the population of this country particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, still to use traditional medicine may be available in the neighbourhood. However, the concept, practice, type and method of application of traditional medicine vary in different ethnic groups according their culture, living standard, economic status, religious belief and level of education. In Bangladesh as most primitive forms of folk medicine which are cultural habits, superstitions, religious customs and spiritualism. Of the total population only about 36% are literate and about 20-25% live in the cities enjoying modern living facilities. The main profession of the village dwellers (75-80%) is farming and the economy is based on agriculture (Ghani, 1990). Traditional medical practice among the tribal people is guided by their culture and life style on the use of plant and animal parts (Qureshi, 1984). Treatment and application are greatly influenced by religious beliefs and their concept of natural and supernatural causes of diseases. For that reason their medical practice use of a

number of religious prayers, sacrifices and sometimes tortures. The plant materials and other natural products sometimes also include of animal origin (Sofowora, 1982). Massages, physical torture are also prescribed as parts of treatment. Treatments prescribing the twigs of plants or animal bones and teeth and drawing of images of supernatural creatures, gods and spirits on different parts of the body are also in vogue among some tribes. Folk medicine which uses mainly plant and animal parts for treatments like blood-letting, bone-setting, hot and cold baths. Religious medicine offerings in the God and spiritual events which utilizes methods away the imaginary evil spirits. Among the largest ethnic group which comprises of illiterate, semi-literate, half-educated and highly educated individuals. About 1500 of the people are institutionally trained and qualified on this traditional treatments, the others are privately trained. In country there are about 10,000 unregistered traditional medicine practitioners who are practicing in many rural and peri-urban areas of the country. A total of 15 government recognized institutions are currently engaged in the teaching of traditional medicine and training in Bangladesh. Of them, 10 institutions are teaching the Unani system and the other 5

Ayurvedic systems. The curriculum of the courses covers anatomy, physiology, hygiene, community medicine, minor surgery and other relevant subjects (Rashid et al., 1992). A Government Unani and Ayurvedic Degree College has been established in Dhaka with effect from the 1989-1990 academic sessions. This college offers a five year degree course and one year internship training. Some of the important raw materials of plant origin are derived from the rich tropical flora of Bangladesh. Many of them are imported from India and Pakistan.

In underdeveloped or developing country the tradition of animals' superstition is very common. From the very beginning of human ancestry they used animals' skin, teeth, fur, blood and flesh for the various diseases. That time the science was not developed so that people believe these. After the scientific discovery all sorts of superstitions are decreasing day by day. Within this era peoples who are not well educated or not so scientific they belief such animals' superstition. So that they get suffer at the extreme stage of various diseases. Illegal animal poacher, tribal people and snake charmers supply these animal parts after taking meat. Mainly rickshawpuller, addicted people, illiterate people, obsolete, depressed and anxiety related people goes to this medicine. By this tradition we are loosing our biodiversity as well as wildlife. For toothache they says there larvae in tooth so need to use animals parts in amulet. But in dental science after rupturing tooth we can't see that teeth larvae. On the other hand near footpath there is one kind of people who sit with arranging letters with a parakeet. He starts the walk of parakeet on envelopes of the letters and it hold an envelope and the letters sentences say your future. Common characteristic of the parakeets' is to hold something by using its beak because its beak is a locomotory organ. Here people just use the normal phenomenon of parakeet for human future declaring. Then snake charmer in Bangladesh which is locally called *Bedes*. Normally they are nomads; have no distinct resident. They use some snakes to playing with them and sell medicine. Once a time bear charmer in Bangladesh was available but not this is extinct and now few are monkey charmer all over the country. This is only playing or enjoyment to the people not for selling amulet or medicine.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Animals for human medicine

There some peoples who are normally saints along with exceptional dresses to attract people to take those animals parts for diseases. From the patients' information their pains is normally reduces by massages. When collecting the information of the animals' beneficial effects on human saint is not allowed for serving the data (Table

1, Plate 1).

Animals in palmistry

Near the road-side of Bangladesh very common to see man with Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) to confirm your coming future by reading a letter (Plate 2).

Bede (snake charmer): Indo-Aryan tribes which include the Namasudra, Jaliya Kaibartta, Bede, Bhumali and other low-caste peoples, live in plains in smaller groups of the country. They are nomadic people live on boats and move from place to place through the rivers and other water ways. They are speaking the same language with a slightly different accent; they have a different culture and life style. Most of the *Bedes* (*Gypsies*) practice folk and spiritual medicines are snake-charmers-cum-traditional medicine practitioners. In their medical practice they use both plant and animal parts but more often animal parts and products. They do not normally use oral medicine. Golden Tree Snake (*Chrysopelea ornata*) is very common snake with Bede community. Treatments like sucking out of 'bad blood' with animal horns, entities from painful carious teeth with the help of fine plant twigs are common practitioners. Snake charmers used such snakes whose poison fangs have been removed or rubbed so that the charmers can receive its bite without getting venom. Snakes venom is used to digest its food. Sometimes the fangless cobras or other poisonous snake became fatal to charmer because it has poison gland. Some *Bedes* or snake charmers ultimately die by this snake bites. A lot of superstitions in our society with snakes and all are scientifically not true. After poisonous snakes biting only antivenom injection is the solution (Plate 3).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For any pain the oil or jackal and spiny-tailed lizard are commonly used. In twelve problems there were for psychological, astrological, sexual and allergen related. All are our very common problems in our daily life. Drinking of cows' urine which relief fever and cancer. Human urine is used for healing the wounds. Pigeon blood has a strong effect for paralysis by massage on the body. For early puberty collared doves' flesh can be use. Pimple or acne on the body or face the molluscan shell could repair (Mahawar and Jaroli, 2006). Hirudin is one kind of anticoagulant chemical which clots the blood and found in leech. So, these annelids are used as anticoagulant injection that injected within veins (Mahawar and Jaroli, 2006).

Conclusion

If we protect such animal concerning bogus traditions we could restore some wild animals in nature. Due to

Table 1. Following animals used in human medicine

Animals name with Human 1	Class/Phylum Total no. (%) 2	Used parts 3	Peoples Problems 4
Human		Humerus	Phobias
Deer		Skin, Antler	Catch cold
Otter		Skull	Pain
Jackal		Fleashes oil	Pain
		Skin	Gout, Toothache
	Mammalia 8 (44.44%)		
Cow		Tail	Ghost/Evil spirits
		Teeth	Make attraction on somebody
Bear		Skin	Fever
Elephant		Tusk	Astrological view (fixed zodiac)
Ganges Dolphin		Skin	Waist pain
Crow	Aves 1(5.56%)	Skull	Pain
Cobra		Rust off	Asthma, Allergy
Terrapin		Carapace	Skin disease
Crocodile	Reptilia 5(27.78%)	Skin	Pain
Monitor Lizard		Skin, Bones	Gout
Spiny-tailed Lizard		Entire body	Pain
Cowry	Mollusca 2(11.11%)	Shell	Hot/Dry body
Conch		Shell	Leg disease
Leech	Annelida 1(5.56%)	Entire body	Sexual disease
Coral	Cnidaria 1(5.56%)	Entire body	Sexual disease

*Source: Sadhu, Jessore, Bangladesh (column 1,3,4) (Plate 1).



Plate 1. Plant and animal parts as medicine.

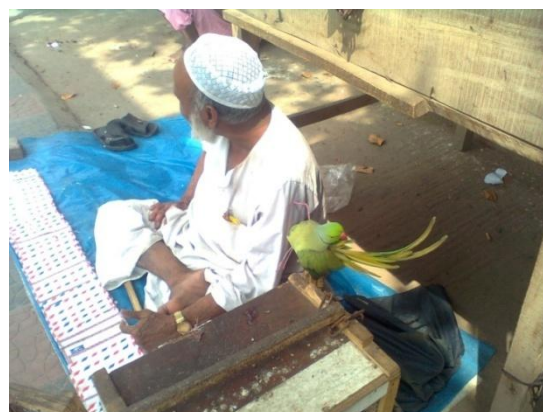


Plate 2. Rose-ringed Parakeet as an astronomer.

exceptional posture and false story to common people is easily attracted by those saints. Soft-hearted people simply belief them. From the ancient human they know some medicinal plants and animas for human welfare. This tradition or culture is the base on that history. But it needs proper research to allow exact uses on human. Medicinal plants and animals are right but its components; mode of action, formulation is must for its

purification. But it is true that this is back warding day by day. From the names and characteristics of the animals are similar to human diseases. All bears have carnivoral lethargy and for this it showed frequently fever; so its skin is used for human fever. If we observe carefully it's very easy to find out how this medicine acts? Peoples get relief from the belief from their core of heart. This is just psychological motivation by the saints to the common



Plate 3. Snake charmer is playing with a cobra.

people. We should study the cultural anthropology to solve this problem in our society.

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