
INDEGINOUS KNOWLEDGE ETHNOMEDICINE MAGICO RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CURATIVE PRACTICES AMONG SAVARA PRIMITIVE TRIBAL GROUP OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present study makes an attempt to find out the concept of religious beliefs and practices related to health care system purely in the way of indigenous knowledge and primitive ethno medicines of the Savara tribe of Eastern Ghats of India. The study reveals that the Savara Members of the Savara community first approach specialists or medicinemen they have considerable knowledge about the herbs and its medicinal use. The various types of locally available herbs and leaves of wild plants are used by them as medicine. Yejjodu (male) yejjuralu (kundanboi) is a female and Disarodu are magico-religious healers, available in each village to ascertain the cause of the illness. Tribe believes that certain diseases are caused by malevolent super natural forces and they try to cure them by pleasing the supernatural powers through prayers and sacrifices. They also use various locally available medicinal herbs for treating diseases. Many elderly persons of the village are also aware about the importance and use of such herbal medicines.

KEY WORDS

Indigenous Knowledge, Savara Tribe, Eastern Ghats, Ethno medicine, Religious beliefs, Yejjodu, yejjuralu, Disarodu.

INTRODUCTION

The study of indigenous knowledge ethnomedicine religious beliefs is a new revolution set in the domain of Anthropology. In its wake, this new knowledge interface has created a new awareness on the part of Anthropologists to critically look at their conventional methodological armour. Indigenous knowledge, as an area of anthropological interest, deals with a variety of hybrid studies born out of a battle of different perspectives, leading to a critique of our understanding of knowledge as such. A holistic perspective on human knowledge would help us understand the implications of indigenous knowledge especially in the areas of health and disease. In this context, of late, Anthropologist's ability to facilitate incorporation of indigenous knowledge into development process has assumed greater significance.

KNOWLEDGE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

An ideal system of knowledge is generally seen as one that derives its corpus from abstract principles by systematic deduction. Modern academic knowledge is 'a way of knowing' that emerged historically through the union of a number of ideas which are subjected to global systematization through "centers of calculation", nurturing its spectacular accumulation, scope and power (Latour, 1987). Such an understanding is questioned with the advent of the recognition of indigenous knowledge as a living and dynamic tacit knowledge interfacing with an all encompassing human activity in all societies, which "scientific knowledge is not always capable of validating" (Brouwer, 1998). The heretical idea

gained currency that 'other' people have their own effective 'science' and resource use practices and to assist them we need to understand their knowledge and management systems and "those others" may have something to teach us (Atte, 1992; Barrow, 1992; Rajasekaran, et al., 1991). In his exploration of the ethnography of human knowledge, Barth (2002) maintains that "knowledge in its different modalities can range from an assemblage of disconnected empirical detail to a 'theory of everything'... as we are in a world constructed on principles of sociality and morality, not mechanical causality". Indigenous knowledge is explained as "local, orally transmitted, a consequence of practical engagement reinforced by experience, empirical rather than theoretical, repetitive, fluid and negotiable, shared Anthropology as an integrated science of man deals with biological and cultural aspects of man. Presently anthropologists are more involved in applying their knowledge and techniques for human welfare.

During the last two or three decades anthropologists are taking keen interest in understanding various problems of health and disease of the people. As a consequence 'Medical Anthropology' has emerged as an important sub discipline of Anthropology. Anthropological studies have revealed that every known human society has its own concept regarding health and disease and also methods of coping with them. In the simpler societies it is mainly based on magico - religious theory of disease causation and they seek devices through supernatural forces. Ethnomedicine refers to "those beliefs and practices relating to disease which are the products of indigenous cultural development and are not explicitly derived from the conceptual frame work of modern medicine" (Hughes, 1968, cited from Misra et al, 2003). Various institutions are now concerned with the traditional health care system and means of traditional treatment. In recent times with the increased knowledge of life and culture of the tribal communities, the social scientists are taking interest in ethnomedicinal studies. Many works have been reported specially from among the rural and tribal communities of India (Choudhury, 1986; Bhadra and Tirkey, 1997; Sharma Thakur, 1997). Ray and Sharma (2005) have given a description of ethnomedicinal beliefs and practices prevalent among the Savaras, a tribal community of Andhra Pradesh. Kumari (2006) gave an account on the concept of illness and disease and the application of folk medicine among the Saureas of Jharkhand.

HEALTH STATUS OF EASTERN GHATS TRIBALS

Eastern Ghats in South India are a long chain of broken hills and mountain ranges spread over three states, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. These Eastern Ghats are inhabited by a number of tribes and of the 33 scheduled tribes in Andhra Pradesh, 22 live in Eastern Ghats. Some of the prominent tribes of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh are, the *Bagata, Gadaba, Jatapu, Savara, Konda Dora, Khond, Valmiki* etc.

Poverty is the main cause for illness and early death among the tribals. 'However, lack of access to right foods: iron, protein and micro-nutrients such as iodine and vitamins, is the principle cause for the very high incidence of nutritional deficiency diseases: anaemia, diarrhoea, night blindness, goiter, etc. These factors combined with lack of access to basic health care services is the main reason for the unexceptionally adverse differentials with the more developed parts of the state: maternal mortality is eight per 1000, (going up to 25 among some tribal groups) as against four per 1000 for the state; infant mortality rate is 120-150 per 1000 compared to 72 per 1000; and while it is nine per 1000 crude death rate, with 30 per cent under-five mortality for the state, among some of the major tribal groups such as Savaras, Gadabas and Jatapus, the death rate is as high as 15-20 per 1000 with over 50 per cent of deaths of children under five. Longevity of life is lower; there is evidence of a faster decline in the sex ratio during

the decade 1981-1991 and an unacceptably high level of about 75 per cent stunting/wastage among children. Under TB and malaria, the tribals suffer disproportionately to their population – the rate of incidence of TB among tribals is estimated to be double and under malaria, case incidence is estimated to be over 18 per 1000, mostly of the P Falciparum variety, accounting for 75 per cent of the state's total deaths on account of malaria' (Sujata Rao, 1998:481- 482).

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on in-depth interview, observation and case study method. The relevant data for this study were collected from Whole Eastern ghats of India where the savara are habitats odisha and Andhra Pradesh agency areas namely Koraput, Ganjam, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram districts. These districts are entirely inhabited by the Savara people. The data were collected mainly from the village medicine-men whose treatments are believed to be very effective and also from some elderly persons of the community who have got a good knowledge about indigenous herbal medicine that they have acquired from their elders. In the collection of data, no structured question was used. However, following major questions were kept in mind while collecting the required data.

- (i) How do people perceive illness and what are the beliefs and practices influencing the health behaviour of people.
- (ii) What is the role of indigenous medical practitioners and folk medicine in relation to health and medical care ?
- (iii) What are the different herbs and shrubs used for treatment. Their method of preparation and treatment. What are their opinion towards the herbal medicine?
- (iv). In their daily intake how much medicinal herb they consume? Their knowledge and awareness about it.

ETHNOMEDICINAL PRACTITIONERS AMONG THE SAVARAS

Health care is primarily provided by the relevant specialists:

- 1). Magico- Religious healers and
- 2). The Herbalists.

While herbalists provide services for health promotion, prevention and curing of diseases, the magico-religious healers on the other hand, render services only for the prevention and curing of disease. These practitioners deal with cases ranging from common ailments, e.g. the cold, minor surgeries due to accidents, to more serious health problems, such as treatment for snakebites, multiple fractures, individual organ-related conditions and specific diseases. They claim to have a holistic understanding of diseases and possess a wide variety of diagnostic techniques for disease control.

THE CATEGORIES OF DIFFERENT HEALTH PRACTITIONERS AND SPECIALIZATION

While the magico-religious healers are generalists in the sense of their ability to diagnose and treat all types of illnesses, the herbalists claim to only diagnose and treat some specific ailments. The various types of specialists, identified among the herbalists in this field, are as follows

1. Yajjodu: He is the most important religious priest in savara tribe. The post of "yajjodu" is a permanent post for one clan only. It means hereditary post. In the savara tribe the " KURANGI CLAN" people are only performed as a "yajjodu".

Main duties of yajjodu:

He is the priest of all gods in savara tribe, he decides and fix the dates and muhurthams for the festivals, sacrifices, and so on. He is also worked as a “medicine man” and “devine hailer”.

According to savara people he gives the remedies from “devil spirits, evil eye, sorcery, chicken pox, small pox” etc. He is also do the marriages in savara tribe with the help of “disarodu”, the yajjodu is also gives a some of herbal medicine to various diseases like “fits – jaundice – stomach pain – and etc. For his services he is taken a fees in terms of “gifts – cashfee – animals” etc.

2. Yajjuralu: She is the most important assistant of the “yajjodu”, she is tells about the “curing practices” in the way of “pathi or kanuka” system (lamented system). “Devil spirits and goddesses”. In that she asked for scarifies and its desires of deities and devil spirits. As per their offer the yajjodu did the scarifies and festivals.

3. Disarodu: He is the another type of priest in savara tribe. According to savara knowledge, he is a one type of shaman or community healer. His main duties are as follows.

- He is gives the herbal medicines to savara people for curing of various diseases like “fits – jaundice – fever – mouth ulcers – motions” and etc.
- He is identifying the various herbal medicines, herbal roots, and others from the forest, and making a herbal medicines, and powders.
- He is identifying the diseases, after the checkup the patients.

4. Yaidigodu: The both male and females are perform the “Disarodu / yidhigodu” in savara tribe. The Disarodu is also known as a “yidhigodhu” it means “medicine man”.

Above all of us like a shaman, divine healers, and also tribal medicine men. In the area of health to dependence, on divinatory forces is distinctly visible in their curative practices, the tribal’s believe that different elements, conditions, and persons and responsible for different types of elements. They are natural cause breach of taboos and social regulations, ancestral spirits, sorcerers and witches malevolent spirits etc.

The medicine man (yajjodu) is a part-time magi co- religious power directly from super natural source, an important element of the shaman works the performance of public rituals, in which divination and curing are accomplished through trance, when sickness is not cured for many days the patients approach the shaman for cure the diseases.

Some of their cultural factors are indirectly related to the problems of the disease, treatment, prevention and health status. Therefore the study of health and means of coping with disease involves cultural factors through which people perceive their world, the characteristic of personality, social and cultural systems and their socio – cultural values.

The savara have their own concepts relating to ecology of diseases, they believe that sickness is caused by the wrath of kitting (gods and goddesses), by spirit- instruction, by sorcery, by casting evil-eye and by the breach of taboos. Physical (biological) and environmental factors are attributed secondary importance.

1. Bone-setters:

These are the ones who treat both simple and multiple bone fractures, in domestic animals and people.

2. Specialists regarding poisonous bites:

They treat bites of snakes, insects, and animals such as dogs, rats, rabbits, etc.

3. Specialists in specific diseases:

Their expertise lies in diagnosing and treating only some specific diseases or organ related illnesses. Thus, in the study area, specialists for fits, cataract, dental problems, leprosy, paralysis, joint pains, TB, jaundice, mental illness, and cancer are listed.

4. Specialists in pediatric diseases:

The diseases specifically identified with children, e.g., swelling of the navel, diarrhea, measles, rashes on the body, skin diseases are treated by some healers, and they claim to have a specialist status for their specialization in this regard.

5. Specialists for infertility, abortions, sterilization and increased sex drive:

Some herbalists claim to have special knowledge of fertility related health issues commonly noticed in both men and women. They also deal with complicated deliveries and claim to be able to identify the sex of the fetus in the womb.

6. Traditional birth-attendants:

The universal presence of birth attending mid-wives in each village depicts the hereditary trend of transmission of this art from one generation to another. Therefore, some women in each village acquire knowledge and skills of handling deliveries and give their services purely on a voluntary basis. As a reward, such women in every village are given some grain after the annual harvest.

DIAGNOSIS OF ILLNESS

Magico-religious means. Diagnosis by the *Yejjodu/yejjuralu*

Members of the Savara community first approach the *Yejjodu* (male)/*yejjuralu* (female), magico-religious healer, available in each village to ascertain the cause of the illness. The *Yejjodu/yejjuralu* is an aged male/female member of the community and a religious specialist who conducts every ritual during village festivals, being gifted with the skill of establishing contact with supernatural beings and seeking answers to the questions of the members in the community. When a patient or his/her family members approach him, the *Yejjodu/yejjuralu* establishes contact with supernatural beings, the ancestral spirits, and even evil spirits to ascertain directly as to who among these could be the cause of the illness. He takes a few rice grains in a winnowing-fan, offers one grain to each of the beings, ancestral spirits and evil spirits and then puts the same grain into a small pot filled with water. If the grain floats on the water, the illness is attributed to that particular god/goddess, or ancestral spirit or evil spirit, in whose name that grain is put in to the pot. If the disease is attributed to any malevolent gods/goddesses or evil spirits, the *Yejjodu/yejjuralu* orders that he or she should leave the body soon. The healer diagnoses the cause of the illness through different methods – first, he would smell the body of the patient. If he feels some specific smell uncommon to the person, the illness is attributed to a malevolent goddess or evil spirit. Similarly, he would then look at the colour of the palm, the eyes, the tongue and also examine the patient's behaviour, provided the evil spirit or the malevolent goddess is found to be the cause of the illness.

Diagnosis by herbalists

The Savara tribal people have their own indigenous methods of treating different kinds of diseases. Various types of locally available herbs and leaves of wild plants are used by them as medicine. Like many other communities of the region, there are few herbal specialists among the Savara tribe. These specialists or medicine men have considerable knowledge about the herbs and its medicinal use. Normally they learn about these medicinal plants and its uses from their ancestor. These medicine-men are referred by different terms according to the cultural norms. The herbalists diagnose the exact cause of the disease by examining the natural factors, i.e. the eyes, skin and tongue colour, and also urine and

sputum. Reading of the pulse is also very important. The herbalist would also examine the patient's behaviour, whether he/she is irritable or calm and composed, etc. All the herbalists also make a detailed note of the symptoms being experienced by the patients. On the basis of all these, the herbalists identify exactly which organ of the body is affected and for what reason. However, the intensity of the disease is established by resorting to a somewhat magical approach. They would root-out a plant to be used for the preparation of medicine for the supposed illness. If it is observed that the root of that plant is healthy and strong, then the intensity of the disease is considered minimal. Otherwise, the illness is believed to be acute. Relying on this test, the herbalists would make decisions with regard to the doses of medicine to be administered, and the length of the treatment period.

Diagnosis of fractures by bonesetters: The bonesetters resort only to physical examination to know whether there are multiple fractures or a single fracture, or whether it is just a dislocation of the bone.

Diagnosis of poisonous bites: The specialists of poisonous bites examine the pulse, eyes, and also the change of the skin colour in order to determine the severity of the bite. They determine the dosage of medicine according to the severity of a particular case.

TREATMENT

Magico-religious treatment by the Yejjodu/yejjuralu

After ascertaining the cause, making the supernatural being or spirit angry with the patient, the Yejjodu/yejjuralu suggests an appropriate ritual and sacrifice to be made to appease this annoyed being or spirit. The intensity of the disease is believed to be commensurate with the intensity of anger of the being or spirit. In the case of high intensity of wrath of the being or spirit, causing severe and chronic diseases, he suggests the sacrifice of a large animal, for example, a goat, sheep, or pig. Similarly, in the case of low intensity of the anger, the Yejjodu/yejjuralu proposes a normal sacrifice such as a black hen, a mouse, or a fish. The patient's family members promise to make the sacrifice within a given time. Then he gives some medicine, prepared from plants representing ancestral and supernatural spirits, for external application to the body. This medicine is expected to stop the aggravation of the disease before the prescribed sacrifice is made. When the illness is identified to be due to an ancestral spirit, the Yejjodu/yejjuralu orders the ancestral spirit to leave the patient's body immediately.

If the ancestral spirit is reluctant to do this, the Yejjodu/yejjuralu drives away the spirit by taking certain measures, e.g. beating him/her with a broomstick, throwing mustard seeds on to the patient, or by burning rubber. After identifying the cause through one or all the means the Yejjodu/yejjuralu prescribes the rituals and offerings to be made. If the illness is attributed to a benevolent god or goddesses, no animal sacrifices are prescribed; if it is attributed to ancestral spirits, or malevolent gods or goddesses, the sacrifice of a black chicken or a pigeon is prescribed along with a ritual to be conducted with flowers of seven different colours and other common ritual materials. In a situation where the illness is believed to be caused by an ancestral spirit, the Yejjodu/yejjuralu will drive this away by adopting similar measures. However, if such means do not work in driving away the ancestral spirit from the patient's body, he will make an image of the ancestral spirit with mud and shoot an arrow into it, causing a serious injury so that the ancestral spirit leaves the body of the patient. If the illness is attributed to malevolent goddesses, a more elaborate ritual is prescribed by the Yejjodu/yejjuralu.

In this case, the healer takes the patient to the bank of a stream where he catches the goddess with his magical power, and then seals her in a small earthen pot and buries it in the ground or immerses in the stream. If magic/sorcery or a supernatural being is not held responsible for the illness, he will refer the patient to the herbalists. If the Yejjodu/yejjuralu fails to identify any supernatural reason for the illness by himself, yet thinks that it could be because of some ancestral spirits, etc., he will refer the patient to a specialized magico-religious healer. Similarly, in this situation where the Yejjodu/yejjuralu is sure that no supernatural agent or ancestral spirit is angry or that the illness is not caused by an ancestral spirit, or evil gods, he will refer the patient to an herbalist for proper treatment.

Treatments by herbalists

The herbalists prepare a variety of medicines using plants, animal products, insects, reptiles and birds. These products are distributed in different forms, e.g., syrups, tablets, and pastes for internal consumption and also in other formats such as oil, ointments, saps, ashes and powders for external application. Massage, as well as minor surgery, is also an important method of their treatment. Medicines, prepared from different parts of plants – roots, bark, leaves, flowers, seeds, fruits, and latex – have a predominant role in their treatment. For example, night blindness, *julujulapid-lue* (glow worm), is treated with bananas. Products of animals, insects, and birds used in different medicinal preparations include the following: eye of an owl, nail of a jackal/fox, teeth, flesh, milk, and moustache and bones of a tiger, and canines of a wild boar. Even human blood and urine are also used for the preparation of different medicines. In the case of fits, the blood (2–3 drops) of the patient, mixed with medicine prepared from plant materials, is administered. In the case of snake bites, urine of the child below 12 years is given along with the latex of the *arakhaplant*. Ash prepared from the burning of cloth is used to stop bleeding injuries. The type of ash prepared by incinerating the dry leaves of plantain, along with the juice of plantain leaves, is applied to kill the *penuka* (lice) in hair. The surgery includes the puncturing of the wounds to drain the pus, remove portions of flesh and skin due to wounds, corns, etc., using simple instruments such as a knife and a needle. The hair of the animals or the humans is also used for removing warts. Massage is an important aspect of treatment in the case of many illnesses. There are some healers who claim to have special skills and knowledge with regard to massage. Various types of oil are used for different techniques of massage and for different complaints. Bone setting is carried out by skilful resetting and by massaging the area with marrow extracted from beef bones. The fractured section is bandaged placing heated tobacco leaves on it and then using bamboo shards and thread to restrict the movement of the affected part. To quicken the healing, the bone setters also apply drops of sap, a specific medicinal plant. These drops are put in the ear opposite to the fractured side of the patient's body.

Bandaging for cuts, boils and wounds to stop bleeding, is practiced by applying the gum prepared from the roots of *talmuli* and a piece of clean cloth. While some plants and animal products can be collected and stored for ready use in the future, others need to be collected just prior to treatment. The herbalists do follow certain prescriptions and proscriptions in the collection of medicinal materials. Some plants need to be collected only on the days of a lunar and solar eclipse. Sunday is believed to be the most auspicious day for collecting herbs and also for treatment. Thus, the herbalists most often collect the materials or prepare medicines from the materials collected on Sunday. Most of the patients also approach them on Sunday.

It has been observed in the Eastern Ghats of primitive tribal people are still using of herbal medicine for curing certain diseases are quite known to the people and besides medicinemen, many elderly persons known about the use of herbal medicines. Some of the diseases and their indigenous methods of treatment are given below:

Fever:Lime (*Citrus aurantifolia*) juice mixed with sugar is applied on the forehead of the patient to get relief from fever.

(2) Diarrhoea:Dry goose berry (*Emblica officinalis*) powder and black salt mixed with cold water is taken. Bark of Long Pepper (Pipoli tree) mixed with Misiri water is also used to cure the disease.

(3) Dysentery:Lime (*Citrus aurantifolia*) juice with hot water and little salt is used in dysentery. The juice of black Tulsi leaves (*Ocimum sanctum*) and Sirata (*Swertiachirata*) is also used for the purpose. The juice of tender leaves (three numbers) of mango (*Mangifera indica*), black berry (*S. cuminii*) and goose berry (*Emblica officinalis*) (equal proportions) together with honey are mixed with goat milk and is taken to cure blood dysentery. Honey together with the juice of Dubari grass (Family-*Gramineae*) can cure blood dysentery and need to be taken for three / four days.

They also use a kind of wild herb, locally called Manimuni (*Centila asiatica*). The juice of this herb mixed with sugar or honey should be taken continuously for a month to cure the disease. They also use lime water (chunpani) mixed with juice of turmeric (*Purcuma domestica*) leave to get relief from blood dysentery and mucous.

SOME OF THE OTHER HERBAL MEDICINES, THEIR LOCAL NAMES & USES:

KAMPU RODDA LEAF:

It is using for wounds, burnings; it is used for blood clotting.

NALLA ZELLA:

This herbal medicine is used for remedy of "ortharites pains, joint, bone pains, etc. it is mixed with "ippa oil or mustard seeds oil" then the both of us boiled and applied whenever the pains are occurred.

VASAA:

It is also known as a "PHEDDU MANDU" it is using for the "stomach pains" in children. And it is also using for increasing the talkative power in the children.

The below herbal roots and leaves are used for the children for various disease and pains. The herbal roots and leaves are as follows "paghuanasi – budhathaanasi – gouda anasi.

The below herbal roots and leaves are used for children for curing of various disease. The herbal roots and leaves are as follows "paghuanasi – budhathaanasi – godhaanasi – aadhondadumpa(tuber) – pethamchekha – puttatharii".

THELLA ESWARI:

This herbal plant roots and stems, leaves, are using for medicine, this herbal plant is using for anti taxonomic medicine (anti venam medicine).

SOL DATHAR: It is used as a medicine at the fever.

SANAGHAR: it is also known as a "patella garidi", it is used as a medicine for "stomach pain".

SUZANG: it is used as a medicine when the time of "bone fractures".

Commonly in savara tribe, the medicine is giving only in "Sunday – Wednesday – Friday". They believethat, those days are the best for curing of the diseases. In savara tribe, the people were not used to cow milk. At the same time for the baby's also give a mother's milk only.

For the curing of “devil spirits / magic” and sorcery “the treatment was done only in Sunday and Tuesdays only.

PERIOD OF TREATMENT

The period of treatment in case of the magico-religious healers is only one day. Having detected the cause of illness, they prescribe a ritual and a sacrifice, which are generally conducted in consultation with the Disarodu. Regarding the herbalists, the treatment may only last one day in the case of fits or poisonous bites. In the case of other illnesses, the herbalists normally give medicine for three days. If there is no relief from pain and suffering, inflicted by the disease or illness, medicine is given for an additional three-day period. There may be an extension for another three days, if suffering still persists. In any case, the health provider does not apply treatment for more than nine days.

When the herbalist fails to diagnose the disease, he refers the patient to the magico-religious healer or Yejjodu/yejjuralu, who is more experienced than him, to detect the cause of illness once again. This time, the Yejjodu/yejjuralu would confirm once again that the disease is not caused by evil spirits or that the supernatural beings are satisfied with the sacrifice and conduct of ritual as assured by the patient. Thereafter, according to the advice of the Yejjodu/yejjuralu, the members approach another or the same herbalist for continuation of the treatment. The Yejjodu/yejjuralu or any other elderly woman of the village conducts the birth delivery. Generally on such occasions, all the men of the village are asked to leave the village except for two men who stand at a distance in order to be ready to help in an emergency. In the case of a difficult labour, one of the male members is sent to the Yejjodu/yejjuralu or Buyyato fetch some medicine. If a woman is suffering from difficult labour either the Yejjodu/yejjuralu or any elderly woman inserts a leaf in the hair of the suffering woman. It is claimed that as soon as the leaf is kept in the hair of the woman, delivery occurs without any further difficulty. It is very interesting to note that the Savara use their expertise in psychotherapy, as exemplified in the performance of the act of coconut-breaking intended to ensure easy delivery. In the psychological approach, the medicine-man stands outside the delivery enclosure and holds a coconut in his hand and chants some hymns. He orders loudly the delivery of the child as soon as he breaks the coconut. He purposefully delays the breaking of the coconut on the pretext of counting numbers 1, 2, 3, and then breaks the coconut. As soon as the coconut is broken the woman usually delivers the baby. If the delivery of the afterbirth is delayed, the Buyya, or the Yejjodu/yejjuralu, is again approached for assistance. The Yejjodu/yejjuralu gives the root of *uttareni* (Acharanthes aspersa) plant to be kept in the mouth of the woman thrice with the belief that the afterbirth may come out without any delay. The Yejjodu/yejjuralu cuts the umbilical cord with a knife or an arrow-head and the placenta is buried in the outskirts of the village in a dung pit.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the magico-religious healers, as well as the herbalists, handle a wide range of illnesses among the Savara. Yejjodu/yejjuralu, the magico-religious healer, available in each village, plays a very important role in Savara society. It is to this person the members approach first and on the advice given they take health decisions. If the initial treatment fails and the illness is perceived serious they opt for the Yejjodu/yejjuralu, a male magico-religious healer, to find the cause of the illness. The magico-religious healers, while prescribing rituals and sacrifices, may also suggest treatment from the herbalists.

The herbalists prepare a variety of medicines using plants, animal products, insects, reptiles and birds. These medications are in different forms, e.g., syrups, tablets and pastes for internal consumption, and

also in forms such as soil, ointments, saps, ashes and powders for external application. Massage and minor surgery are also important methods of their treatment. Although the herbalists play an important role in health care their practice is intimately dependent on the magico-religious healers. The health seeking often involves considerable shopping for both diagnosis and treatment. The shopping path is however not always unidirectional as the patients may go back to the health providers consulted earlier.

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