

without making invocation prayers, the encroacher would fall sick and by loosing one's "vitality", he or she would start to act insane. This sickness is attributed to the spell of evil spirits. So a remedial action called "*la kukni* or *yong-raley* (in Tshangla dialect) must be conducted to appease the possessor with some offerings. This "*la kuk*" or "*Yong-raley*" is a special ritual that summons or reinstates the loss of feared life force.

During the ritual, the *la kukmi* would collect varieties of twigs especially of *khenpa shing* (*Artemisia*; *merangma shing* in Tshangla dialect) from the precise direction indicated by the astrologer or a palmist. Based on the word and timing, he/she would shake the twigs over the patients head as he/she whistles with certain tunes. It is either white spider (*yong baling mo*) or black spider (*yong chang lu*) falling on the patient's head that is identified as the lost soul. If it is the black spider, it is considered difficult for the patient and will take time for the patient to recover. But if it is the white spider falling from the twigs, the lost soul is considered to be recovered.

Phajo/Bonpo: *Phajo* is a shaman who performs propitiation according to Bon tradition while a *bonpo* is he who believes and practices Bon religion. Although there are phajos in Bhutan they are not bonpos, because Phajos receive and practice the teachings of the Buddha from Buddhist Lamas and are not dedicated to practising Bon as a religion.

4.3. HEALING PRACTICES & LOCAL HERBS

There are various indigenous methods to treat diseases by using locally available herbs. The practioners or healers usually do not have any sorts of formal training, but rather, a few claims to gain these skills in their dream state. Some of them are said to have learnt the skills orally from a master. Then with practice and experience, they learn to locate the diseases by feeling the nerves of the body with their fingers.

Some of the following plants and methods are considered to be more effective for treating ailments ranging from common cold to chronic diseases such as sinusitis, arthritis, rheumatism, liver problems and diseases related to digestive and nervous system.

Jaundice:

- *Peru Lara* in Lhotshampa language – is a kind of creeper. Drinking the juice of this vine or chewing it is known to cure jaundice.

So, the phajos deal with certain classes of local spirits that harm people. They do not go into trance but recite specific prayers to drive away evils that cause harm. Besides being carried out as healing ritual, it is also carried out as part of bi-annual or annual ritual performance to propitiate deity in order to bring harmony to the community. Performing rituals by a phajo is particularly common in central and western Bhutan and the practice varies from place to place. They make their ritual altar/shrine with grains such as wheat or buckwheat being set up in layers on which they place ritual cakes. The rituals usually start with burning branches and twigs as incense (*sang*). Then, accompanied by the rythm of drums, they chant prayers inviting deities. Not everyone can be a phajo. The practice is usually a family heritage and taught to a child from the early years, except in some rare cases.

Doenchoe (*gdon mchod*) literally means propitiating or expelling evil force/spirit. It is an emergency healing process. It is practiced when one gets ill suddenly. The leftover food in the house is collected and then together with *sur* (smoke created by a mixture of butter and wheat flour), and offered to the evil spirit instructing with pleasing words not to harm and leave the place. Anyone can do *doenchoe* anywhere when required but there are few who are specialized in it. There is no particular process to practice this healing [for more details see Chapter –I, the Oral Expressions].

Nose bleed:

- The seeds of *kappa* (in Dzongkha) and *mowan* (in Tshangla dialect) (bot. *gossypium* sp.) are used to stop nose bleed and also heals nose disorders.

Fever:

- The seeds of *chassee* (Sow. *mkhal ma zho sha nag po*; Bot. *Erythriana aroborescens*; *kharsing* in Tshangla dialect) are used as agent for reducing fever.







- The fleshy part of the fruit called *amla* in Dzongkha and *chugorngshey* in Tshangla dialect (*Phyllanthus sp.*) is known to cure fever.

Sinusitis and Headache:

- *Pinashey lara* in Lhotsham dialect is a green climber. If it is rubbed and inhaled it is known to cure sinusitis and headache. It has got prickly smell.
- Puti shing (*kuri* in Lhotsham dialect) – Root of this plant is brewed and consumed or can be chewed. It's used to treat headache.

Diarrhoea and Dysentery:

- The bark of *shing dzae* (Sow. *Shing tsha*; Bot. *Cinnamomum sp.*) acts as an anti-diarrheal agent and also restores stomach heat.
- *Drag-zhun* (Sow. *Brag-zhun*) in Dzongkha literally means melt of the rock. It is extracted from cliffs and it is hard like rock when raw but can be processed. Some people boil it in water for a long time and drink it as tonic when they get diarrhoea. But people usually boil it, mix it with milk and honey and drink it to treat malaria, dysentery and scabies. The substance can cure allergies, enhance sex drive and stop nose bleeding.
- The seed of gourd which is called *ku* in Dzongkha and *chong* in Tshangla dialect (Sow. *Kabed*; Bot. *Lagenaria sp.*) is used for treating diarrhoea and dysentery.
- The acorns of *sisi shing* in Dzongkha and *Beynangshing* in Tshangla dialect (Sow. *Mon chha ra*; Bot. *Quercus griffithii*) cure dysentery.
- The whole plant of *tharam* in Dzongkha and *Tiktsa* in Tshangla dialect (*Plantago depressa*) cures diarrhoea.
- Lemon & Onion – drinking the juice of these two mixtures helps to treat vomiting and diarrhoea.

Blood pressure:

- *Hala lay* - shrub/weed is known to cure blood pressure.

Hand and leg cut:

- The juice extracted after crushing the *beetle leaves*



(locally known as *shing pan* in Tshangla dialect) is used to apply on the cut in hands and legs to stop bleeding from the cut. *Assam dama* and *khenpa* are also used to clot the blood to prevent excessive bleeding.

- The juice of *bangla rokpa* and *merangma* in Tshangla dialect are used to stop bleeding. This tradition is still happening but more people depend on science due to the development of health facilities.



Wound and boil:

- The grind mixture of *tiktsa*, *tsashog* and *bangla rokpa* in Tshangla dialect covered with a *chamela* (leaves) in Tshangla is heated and used to treat boils and any swollen parts of the body.
- The whole plant *pangtshen puru* (Sow. *spangtshen spuru*; Sc. *Eriophyton wallichii*) heals wounds or infections in the lung, and relieves associated fever.



It also regenerates and strengthens torn nerves, ruptured blood arteries and veins.

Stomach ache:

- *Alanchi* (Sow. *kakola*, bot. *Amomum Subulatum*) is used to restore stomach heat and aids in digestions.
- Seeds of *Sendu* (Sow. *se 'bru*; Eng. *pomegranate*) and (*Thalem* in Tshangla, Kheng, Shar dialects) heal stomach disorders.
- *Rimen* (Tshangla) – a creeper, whose roots are ground, boiled and drunk either hot or cold is known to cure stomach ache.
- The leaves and flowers of *chu kar meto* (Rheum *Nobile*) is used as evacuation of bowels, increase urination and prevents vomiting. It is also used to control swelling and sensation in the stomach and helps to retain body fluid.
- The aerial parts of *luru marpo* (Sow. *Lugru dmarpo*; Bot. *Pedicularis megalantha*) are used as an antidote and also to cure intestinal disorders.



Cleansing Effect:

- It is believed that the tender leaves of *zocha* (stinging nettle) cooked like spinach has cleansing effect.

Malaria:

- The seed of *tsampaka* in Dzongkha and *Namkaling* in Tshangla dialect (*Oroxylum indicum*) is used as anti-malarial and also to reduce fever.
- *Num* – the root of a plant smaller than orange tree but having broader leaves is brewed and consumed to treat malaria.

- *Khe-ru* – smells like human excreta. This creeper is put around the neck of people as well as around the neck of horse to prevent malaria.
- *A-bi-ja-lo* in Lhotsham language – this plant grows in small forest and spreads its root on the surface of the earth and does not grow in height. It is green and has round leaf. One can inhale the odour it produces when burnt. It is usually used by Lhotshampas.

Giddiness:

- *Zati* (Bot. *Myristica fragrans*) is used to treat giddiness, and insomnia. It also calms heart disorders.



- Sweets or candy extracted from *guncha* in Dzongkha and *khomin* in Tshangla dialect (*Saacharum officinarum*) calms nausea, and giddiness.
- *Lung mom-dang* in Tshangla dialect – it grows on stone at higher altitude, which is like a moss. The smell of the plant is inhaled or it can be eaten as well to cure giddiness.

Leprosy:



- The root, leaves and flowers of *tshendug* (Sow. *Bong nga nagpo*; Bot. *Aconitum laciniatum*) cures leprosy, chronic infection and gout. It also allays bone diseases and also used for expelling worms.

Tooth ache:

- *Doma* (*Area catechu*) is known to strengthen gum and teeth. It also cures kidney disorders.

Typhoid:

- *Tul-si-pat* in Lhotsham dialect – this is a domestic plant raised by Lhotshampa people in their front yard. Firstly, it is believed that if leaf is eaten, it cures typhoid. Secondly, if juice of the leaf is taken out and applied on eyes, it heals eye pain.

Cough and Cold, Sore Throat and Chest Pain:

- The bark of *tshema tshelu* in Dzongkha and *sergong* in Tshangla dialect (*Rubia sp.*) is known to heal common cough and cold.
- Boil turmeric powder (*balidi*) in salty water. Gargle it and spit out the water. It cleans throat and cures cold.
- The flower of *tsa atrong* (Med. *rtsa akrong*; bot. *Arenaria kansuensis*) cures lung disorders and pus above chest including head.
- The juice of a *khempa shing* has an interesting smell and bitter in taste. When people suffer from cough and cold they boil the leaves of the plant and drink. It is very bitter but believed to cure cough and cold.



- *Pangen Meto* (Sowa. *spang rgyan sngonpo*; Bot. *Gentiana Algida*) usually grown in high altitude and is used to treat cough and cold.

- *Cordysep* called *yar tsa guen bu* (Sow. *dbyar rtsa dgun 'bu*; Bot. *Cordyceps sinensis*) is used to treat sore throat. It is also useful not only for kidney disorders but also optimizes spermatogenesis. It is made into tonic which helps to relieve fever arising from lung disorders. It also regulates blood pressure (high and low), and improves function of lungs and kidneys.

Gastritis:

- Consuming ginger roots reduces the severity of constipation and gastritis.

Production of Breast Milk:

- If the new mother is short of milk, drinking *ju-wa-no* (fenugreek) which looks similar to coriander but comparatively smaller than it is believed to increase the yield of milk.

Blood purification:

- *Chi-ra-ta* – (*khalu* in Tshangla dialect) soak the plant in water and drinking it every morning is believed to keep our body healthy, especially helps to purify blood.

Dog bite:

- When bitten by a dog – collect red soil or clay and knead into dough-like mixture with the help of water. Apply the dough in pieces over the bitten part. After sometime, it will bring out the hairs of the dog that had bitten. The mud will fetch black hair if the rabid dog is black in colour and so on. After which, it will cure the patient from rabies.

Setting broken bones and joints:

- Fresh juice of *bar-tsee* in Tshangla dialect (*Acorus Calamus*) is also applied to dislocations and fractures, and also used as laxative.
- The seed of *khaesey* in Tshangla language and *tago* (*star go*) in Dzongkha (*Juglans sp.*) straighten and align crooked limbs and allays stiffness of limbs.

- An aerial part of *a-jab* (Bot. *Aster diplostephioides*) is used to join and heal fractured skull. It also helps to reduce fever, swelling, inflammation and pain especially in the upper part of the body.



Local healers also examine and feel the nerves and the broken parts of the bone, and start massaging it. Then turn the affected part to clockwise and then anti-clockwise direction until one hears a cracking sounds. Those ardent believers of local healers (*menpa*) talk about the performance of miraculous healing. Si-ka-ri la-ha-ro –a vine found in thick forest is also used for fractured joints or broken bones.

Traditional Treatment for Animals

While the above plants and methods are used to treat

human ailments, the following methods are applied to treating animals:

- The materials required for treating sick pig were miktang (fire), axe and rope. The rope is tied to the axe where fire is tied to the end of the axe. Then it is tied to the pig sty (*gordong*). This used to be practiced in eastern Bhutan and this is believed to cure sick pig.
- Buckwheat porridge is used to cure a sick cow.
- In olden days, people used to boil the stem of a climber called dakor (in Tshangla) and extract its juice which, if cooled and fed to the cow, helps to cure the dysentery of a cow.



4.4. INDIGENOUS METEOROLOGY

How did our forefathers perceive or predict the weather condition during their times?

Traditional Bhutanese knowledge of weather is related to the interrelationships between humans and spiritual powers. Knowledge about the weather was something founded on shared local experiences. Elderly people claim that weather prediction during their times was based upon a particular system of knowledge and set of beliefs about the nature.

In the olden days there was a common belief that the phenomenal world was inhabited by a host of spiritual beings and deities and must be acknowledged in relation to the areas of human activity. Various human actions were believed to affect the local weather. For instance, it is believed that destroying the forest would

pollute the environment and thus harm the *neydag* and *zhidag* (local guardian deities). It is said that the pollution created by the burning of solid waste could provoke the fury of *lha* in the sky. Thus, there are some weather-making or weather controlling rituals (weather rituals) which existed in the traditions for the purposes of inviting rain during the times of drought, prevention of frost and hail.

Bhutanese conceived all aspects of weather like rain, snow, sunshine, cloud, and hail by looking at the sky, signs, noise from animals and insects, and personal experiences. It comes in the form of the following beliefs:

- When cloud moves in the easterly direction, rain is expected and if it moves with greater speed, then the strong wind is expected.