Habits And Practices Among the Tribal Community in Sundarban

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Abstract: Ethnic people have conserved the biodiversity in and around localities of their natural habitat since the beginnings of civilization. Plants are conserved by these ethnic and indigenous people as they serve as a source of wild edible food in the form of roots, tubers, rhizomes, seeds, fruits and as agricultural and horticultural plants. Some of the indigenous plants conserved by these ethnic people are used in agricultural crop improvement programmes to increase productivity and incorporate traits for increasing resistance against different pests and diseases. Many of the plants conserved by ethnic people are used as antidotes for snake bites and scorpion stings, for setting bone fractures by traditional healers, for curing wounds or arthritis, or as abortifacients and as cures for menstrual problems, etc. Plants are conserved in abandoned sites of shifting agriculture by tribals and also in sacred groves as in situ conservation of biodiversity and ecological restoration.

Keywords: Anthropological approach, Harbalism, Rituals and Religious activities, Ethno Botany

The indigenous and ethnic people of the world have learnt to live in most hostile environmental conditions in this universe. The most interesting feature associated with these people is that, they live in localities which are immensely rich in biodiversity. It is estimated that about 300 million indigenous people are living in the world, out of which nearly half i.e. 150 million are living in Asia, about 30 million of which are living in Central and South America and a significant number of them are living in Australia, Europe, New Zealand, Africa, and Soviet Union. A list of some of these prominent ethnic and indigenous people is presented in table -1. These ethnic and indigenous people have played a vital role in conservation of environment, management and development of flora and fauna, as they possess traditional knowledge useful in Eco-restoration. These people know how to live with harmony in nature, and have developed a kind of affinity with forests.

In India, 68 million people belonging to 227 ethnic group and comprising of 573 tribal communities derived from six racial stocks namely - Negroid, Proto- Australoid, Mongoloid, Mediterranean, West Breachy and Nordic exists in different part of the country (Pushpgandan 1). These ethnic people, mostly the indigenous tribals, live close in the vicinity of forests, take shelter from forest and utilize wild edible plants to manage and conserve the biodiversity of their localities since long time. The flower and fruits are generally eaten raw, where as tubers, leaves and seeds are cooked. Tribals utilize forest produce, forest timber and fuelwood.

India is a country with large ethnic society and has immense wealth due to which it is rich in biodiversity. There are 45,000 species of wild plant out of which 9,500 species are ethnobotanically important species. Of these 7,500 species are in medicinal use for indigenous health practices. About 3,900 plant species are used by tribals as food (out of which 145 species comprise of root and tubers, 521 species of leafy vegetables, 101 species of bulbs and flowers, 647 species of fruits), 525 species are used for fiber, 400 species are used as fodder, 300 species are used in preparation and extraction of chemicals which are used as naturally occurring insecticides and pesticides, 300 species are used for extraction of gum, resins, dyes and perfume (Arora, 2). In addition to these a number of plants are used as timber, building material and about 700 species are culturally important from moral, cultural, aesthetic and social point of view. Indian sub-continent is one of the twelve mega-centres of biodiversity representing two of the eighteen hotspots of biological diversity one occurring in Western Ghat and another in North-Eastern Himalaya (Zeven and Zhikovsky 3). Floristically 141 endemic genera belonging to over 47 families of higher plant occur in India In India 11.95% of the world’s biodiversity has been conserved by ethnic people in many ways (Arora, 4). Botanical survey of India has reported 46,214 plant species are found in India of global flora of these 17,500 represents flowering plants. Thirty seven of these are endemic and found in North-East of India (Arora, 4).

Many plants are conserved in their natural habitat by tribals due to magico - religious beliefs that they are habitats of god and goddess. The tribal culture prevalent in tribal pockets in Central India has been recorded in Dindori, Balaghat and Mandala districts of Madhya Pradesh and Kawardha and Bilaspur districts of Chhattisgarh states. Tribals worship trees and flowers as they believe that God and Goddesses reside in them. A list of such plants is presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNo</th>
<th>Local Name</th>
<th>Vernacular Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Name of God and Goddess residing in plants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aam</td>
<td>Amra</td>
<td>Mangifera indica Linn.</td>
<td>Anacardiaceae</td>
<td>Lord Vidhyadhara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arjun</td>
<td>Arjun</td>
<td>Terminalia arjuna W &amp;A</td>
<td>Combretaceae</td>
<td>Lord Brahma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bijapura</td>
<td>Nibu</td>
<td>Citrus medica Linn</td>
<td>Rutaceae</td>
<td>Lord Brahspati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bilva</td>
<td>Bel</td>
<td>Aegle marmelos Cor</td>
<td>Rutaceae</td>
<td>Lord Shiva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nimba</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Azadirachta indica A.</td>
<td>Meliaceae</td>
<td>Serpent King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Basil</td>
<td>Tulsi</td>
<td>Ocium santum L</td>
<td>Lamiaceae</td>
<td>Goddess Lakshmi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF PLANTS WORSHIPPED AND CONSERVED BY TRIBALS’ RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

PLANTS CONSERVED BY TRIBALS AS SOURCE OF FOOD.
The ethnic and indigenous people have conserved several plants and endangered sub species of agricultural crops such as rice, maize, millets, grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables which have originated under diverse agro-ecological climates in north—east, central and peninsular region of India where the indigenous communities have their abode. e.g. some of these indigenous varieties of rice such as Pattambi, Champara, Valsana are conserved by Kurichya, Pariyar, Khasi, Jatin and Garo tribes in North East region - Manipur, Meghalya, Assam, and 150 wild species of rice which are conserved by Santhal, Munda, Birhor and Gond tribes of Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar. These are genetically superior than existing cultivated rice varieties in characters like aroma, grain quality, protein content, digestibility and also have resistance to insects, pests and diseases. These varieties are now multiplied by rice breeders and incorporated in All India Co -ordinated Rice improvement programme at Central Rice Research Institute Cuttack.

The ethnic and indigenous people have to depend upon several wild species for fruits, seeds, bulbs, roots and tubers which are used for edible purposes. The same is presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Local Name</th>
<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aegle Marmelos</td>
<td>Bel</td>
<td>Rutaceae</td>
<td>Fruits are roasted and eaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Amorosphallus paonflodium</td>
<td>Suran</td>
<td>Araceae</td>
<td>Petiole/ Bulb as vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Achyranthus Asper</td>
<td>Chichita</td>
<td>Amranthaceae</td>
<td>Tender shoots as vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bauhinia Purpuea</td>
<td>Keolar bhaji</td>
<td>Convolvulaceae</td>
<td>Leaves, Flowers, Seeds as Vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bahinia vahlii</td>
<td>Sehar</td>
<td>Ceasalpiniaceae</td>
<td>Leaves as Vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dioscorea alta</td>
<td>Duhia aru</td>
<td>Dioscoreaceae</td>
<td>Tubers as Vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Curculigo Orchioides</td>
<td>Kali musli</td>
<td>Amaryllidaceae</td>
<td>Roots and Tubers as vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Xylia xylocripa</td>
<td>Jambu</td>
<td>Mimosaceae</td>
<td>Seeds asvegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Entada pursaetha</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Mimosaceae</td>
<td>Seeds as vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dioscorra bulbifera</td>
<td>ratalu</td>
<td>Dioscoreaceae</td>
<td>Tubers as vegetable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PLANTS CONSERVED BY TRIBALS FOR EDIBLE PURPOSES
Tribals follow environmental conservation rule in harvesting edible plants which establishes ecological prudence. Tubers of edible plants like those of Dioscorea spp. are harvested by tribals when the leaves of the vine turns yellow and it has matured. The wild tubers are dug carefully avoiding damage to associated species.

PLANTS ARE CONSERVED IN NATURAL HABITAT IN FOREST USED AS ANTIDOTE OF SNAKE BITE AND SCORPION- STING BY TRIBAL HERBAL HEALERS
Many plant species are of great economic importance to tribals as rhizomes of such plants like Acoruscalamus, stem bark of Bunchianlazan, stem and leaves of Moringaoleifera, Achyrnthusaspera, Gynandropsisgynandra, Bombaxceiba being used as antidote of snake - bite and scorpion stings. Paste is prepared from rhizome and applied on wounds. These plants are conserved for above purpose by tribes.

PLANTS ARE CONSERVED IN NATURAL HABITAT AND USED FOR SETTINGBONE FRACTURE AND IN ORTHOPEDIC TREAT-MENT OF TRIBAL HERBAL HEALERS
The root, stem and leaves of some plants are powdered and paste is prepared and applied by tribals on broken bone portions. The paste prepared from of stem and leaves of plants like Vanda tessala, Alternantherasessiles and of roots of Cassia adnata, Sidacordata,Bauhinapurpuea etc. are tied for healing of wound for 10 - 15 days on broken bones. These plants are conserved by tribal herbal healers in natural forests for orthopedic treatments.

PLANTS CONSERVED BY TRIBALS IN NATURAL HABITAT AND UTILISED AS MEDICINAL HERBS
Primitive and indigenous people have been using several plants for combating disease from centuries and they have found wide acceptance in traditional medicinal use. Plants like Equisetum ramosissimum, Argemonemaxicana are dried, powdered and paste is applied on infected portion of skin and on wounds. Plants like Bauhinia purpurea, Sidaacuta, Jatrophaercus, Grewiahirsutum, Albizzialbebeck, Capparis decidua are conserved as used in muscular pain, cure of fever, headache, and body swelling. Decoction prepared from roots of Curculigoorchioides, Bombaxceiba, to cure white discharge in urine of tribal women are also conserved by primitive tribes.

PLANTS ARE CONSERVED IN ABANDONED SITES OF SHIFTING AGRICULTURE BY TRIBALS
The shifting agriculture jhum practice of cultivation of crops are practiced by ethnic societies in North -East region of India in states of Assam, Tripura, Mizoram etc.in Central India in states of U.P., Maharashtra, Orissa and Chhattisgarh and in South India in states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. In this practice a forest is cleared by felling of trees and plant bio-mass is burnt and the ashes collected which are source of essential plant nutrients are spread in the fields. After an year of cultivation, the land is abandoned for several years for regeneration of fertility of soil. During this period the farmers are moved for cultivation
in other land. The tribals do not perform completefelling of forest but they retain several useful species of horticultural and agricultural importance such as Mangifera indica (Mango), Citrus spp. (Orange), Musa spp. (Banana), Phyllanthus emblica (Goose berry), Zeamays (Maize), Saccharum spp. (Sugarcane). Several useful plants like Ardisiapolycephala, Ardisiacrispa, Caseariaglomerata, Meliosma philata, Rhus spp., Phoenix spp. etc. are colonized at abondoned sites.

The ethnic people of India have played a vital role in preserving bio-diversity of several virgin forests and have conserved several flora and fauna in sacred groves of tribals, otherwise these flora and fauna might have been disappeared from natural eco -system. The sacred groves are the natural forests which are located in North - East, Central and Peninsular India. The interference of all kind of human activities are prohibited in sacred groves. In sacred grove of Maharashtra in Western ghats, the giant tree Mangifera indica (Mango) which is covered by the twiner of Tinosporasinsensus having hanging stem and looking like trunk of elephant. Due to magic - religious belief the tribals worship mango tree and have conserved these trees in natural eco -system. In western ghats one can find the Curcuma domestica the wild herbaceous species growing as carpet along with piper in some rare sights(Vartak,.6) Some of the plants growing in sacred groves in India.

Nutritional evaluation of about 200 wild species of edible purpose has also been carried out in different nutritional laboratories of CSIR, New Delhi. These plants have been collected from tribal areas (Arora 5). Due to high nutritional value of the most of the plant, it was observed that the tribals who still live in undisturbed forest areas and practice traditional food habits (consumption of wild cultivars and food varieties in forest from different season) are found to be more healthy and free from diseases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Name of plant</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Butea monosperma</td>
<td>Medicinal, Dye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cordia dichotoma</td>
<td>Food, Medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rauvolfia serpentina</td>
<td>Medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Alstonia scholaris</td>
<td>Medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Helicteres isora</td>
<td>Medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Boswellia serrata</td>
<td>Medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Calotropis gigantean</td>
<td>Medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Carissa congesta</td>
<td>Medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Diopyros Monta</td>
<td>Medicinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bambusa arundinacea (wild bamboo)</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PLANTS GROWING IN SACRED GROVES IN SUNDARBAN

Sundarban in the present scenario is rich in biodiversity. The indigenous people have helped in conservation of bio-diversity. However, efforts for conservation have to be made in both vertical as well as horizontal direction due to rapid industrial revolution. Conservation of diversity, sustainable management, propagation of such valued flora and their in-situ as well as ex-situ conservation are the need of this century. Therefore various disciplines like Genetics, Pollen biology, Tree Breeding, Ecology, Botany, Physiology, Eco - restoration, Taxonomy, Ethno -botany, Phyto chemistry, Biometrics, should work at one platform and linkages have to be established. In sacred forests as well as in localities dominated by ethnic people needs to be surveyed for identification of plants associated with various ethno-botanical uses followed by phytochemical studies. Awareness campaigns and training programmes are to be organized in tribal localities for eco -restoration and conserving floras.

Religious beliefs and practices have human perceptions from ancient time to present day into tribal world. The beliefs and practices of each and every society of the world have manifested through celebration of ritual and ceremonies. (Tylor 1871) ‘Animism’ is the common phenomenon among the tribes. Therefore, the religious beliefs and its performances among the tribes consist with their life cycle rites, communal rites and worship practices along with theirancestral worship practices followed by their different totems and taboos. Religion, as a social singularity and it’s challenging to explain. Tribal peoples’ belief in Gods and Goddesses, witchcraft, magic and disaster is attributed to displeasure and malicious acts of the supernatural forces, malevolent spirits. Indian tribals continue their religious belief under the threshold of Hinduism; but they also practice spiritual belief. Tribal ritual associated with birth, death and marriage which performed by priests, who own certain magical power which connect with the Gods and spirits for their interference and blessing. In 1963, Paul Bohannan stated that maybe presently no particular subject matter present where anthropology concerns itself nowadays the literature is superior than religion, particularly, the Tribal Religion. Eminent sociologist Emile Durkheim 1950s a significant studies on religion i.e. “The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life” established the interrelationship among religious beliefs and practices of a society or a culture which form as rituals. Therefore, in any society, rituals as the expression of religion. Durkheim explored religion through a comprehensive study, which included the most primitive, among them the Australian totemism followers. Durkheim pointed that all human societies are separated into the contrasting territories of ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’8. Also, in the year 1959 Radcliffe Brown said, “Rituals have a useful function in ordering society and this function is the essential and ultimate reason for their existence”12.

India has different ethnic communities and tribal ethnic community is one of them. A prominent tribe is the Kora-Mudi tribe in western parts of Bengal, and some parts of eastern India. In West Bengal they are approx. 3% out of the total tribal population. The Kora tribal community maintains their existence as well as the religious practices in the threshold of Hinduism. In the year 1891 H.H. Risley specifically pointed out that the Kora tribe has been influenced by the Hindu religion. Therefore, Risley in his ‘Castes and Tribes of Bengal’ states that, “In matters of religion, Koras effect to be orthodox Hindus, worshipping the regular gods and calling themselves Shaktas or Vaishnabas accordingly, as they incline to the cult of Kali, Durga, or to that of Radha or Krishna, Manasa, the heavenly patroness of Snakes and Bhadu …….. whom goats, fowls, pigeons, rice, sugar and plantain are offered, and
are divided between the worshippers and the deogharia Brahmans ……….village gods. In Manbhum, the Koras do not employ a Brahman……”13

The present study attempts to understand the religious belief and practices of the Kora- Mudi tribe who lives in Naudih village under Raghapur Gram Panchayat of Purulia district, West Bengal. The researcher attempts to identify their belief in religion, worship and ritual practices to regulate the spirit and soul to maintain a harmonious relationship among themselves and their surroundings.

Methodology of the study
For the present study the researcher has selected Naudih village under Raghapur Gram Panchayat of Purulia district, West Bengal, and a specific indigenous group i.e. Kora-Mudi from Mudipara hamlet in the Naudih. For the collection of data, the researcher has been used interview technique with the help of unstructured questionnaire schedules, Focus Group Discussions; Observation; Case Study; Case History method were also be taken.

During the study, it was found that the Kora people simultaneously believe Hindu gods and goddesses and nature worship. Though, the sacred spots of Koras are conspicuously absent. Paul 2004, pointed that according to tribal peoples’ belief, undressed pieces of stones are generally considered as the resting place of certain deities where propitiation is done for the existence of ancestral spirits as they believe14. Also, Kora people keep the figures or pictures of some deities into their living room. They also believe in Sharul worship which is animal sacrifice worship. Therefore, Kora peoples’ religious beliefs divided into two types. The deity types are given below:

Sahrul: One of the most important traditional religious practices of the Koras is Sharul, also known as Maghipujua because Sahrulpujais held in the month of Magh. This traditional religious practice is done with the help of a priest. In Naudihavillage the Kora people sacrifice a goat for ‘garamdeity’. The sacrifice done for the welfare of the Korainhative at the time of Maghpujma day.

Tusu: Another most important traditional religious ritual is Tusu. The Tusufestivals held each year in January month and the day is known as MakaraSankranti that means the last day of Pausha (Bengali Months). Tusupuja is performed with the uses of Rice cakes. The Kora females sing, the Tusu songs till the end of the celebration. It is mainly celebrated by the female members in the river or tank. The Tusu song is dynamic in nature which is performed by the female members of the Kora community. The song is: “Aachirepachirepadma/ Padmabiaarpotena/ Tusr hate joraPadma/ Bhramaroibaar base na/ AamaderTusuretekchihaitya/ Kultalebaikheleitai/ Konsatinerdhuladila/ Dhular baron gelanai/ Cykelechariababu/ biri-o-cisardharyaya/ Khetekheteachhebabu/ Ekebaramalamaya/ Khatarialalmati/ Bitichhanarkatejhami/ JhantipatarTitisalal/ Madia tai chankedarya.”

Janthal: The Janthal ritual is a sign of the welcome and thanks to the deity for good harvest. This ritual starts before harvesting time. The Janthals practiced by the priest who worships where the deity ‘GaramThakur’ receives the sacrifice of fowl and putting its blood at the seat of the deity (than). The Janthal ritual is connected with agriculture, it is a pre-agricultural ritual.

Muth: Muth ritual is the practiced by the Koras before the seeding operation. For this ritual the cultivator Korapeople carry a trickle of paddy, sowing in the ploughed field. The Korapeople will not take the risks of starting to the seeding process into the paddy field without practicing the Muth ritual. On the ritual day, the bullocks are washed, then vermilion symbols are adornedon their body and the plough. The Muth ritual is practiced for the expectation of a bountiful crop therefore Muth is a pre-agricultural ritual among the Kora tribal community.

Gram bandhpuja: The ‘grambandhpuja’ is celebrated at the clan level of Kora tribal community once a year, in a month of Boisakh, for protection of clan members from occurrence of chicken pox. The gram bandhpuja is accomplishedby worshipping a goat and sacrificing it at the gram than.

Bonga-Buru: The ‘bonga-Buru’ worship is also known as hill spirit worship. The Bonga-Buru festival usually happened on the day of Chaitrasankranti. This worship is also a belief system of nature where the Kora people believe that their descendants or ancestors who lived in the hills. Therefore, they give respect to their ancestors, through this festival. In this festival they sacrifice a black cock, because if the ancestor is plagued by an evil soul then after sacrifice, the evil soul leaves the ancestors. After that the ancestors protect the Koras.
Sosó-Giddi: Sosó-Giddi is a traditional agricultural worship connecting animal spirits, with the paddy fields. If all the animals’ spirits are connected with the paddy field then never any animal does any harm to the crop in the field. Therefore, the animal spirit worship is accomplished just before sowing seed in the month of Jyestha. As per the Koratribes, the Kora religion originated from the Munda religion therefore, essential fact is presence of the Munda people throughout the worship. However, if, the Munda does not live in the nearby village then priest society select a Munda from own Kora society.

Hindu Religious: In Naudia village Kora tribal people also performed the hindu worship. Maybe due to acculturation, they have accepted the Hindu worship. They practice some Hindu worship personally and some worship is celebrated communally. The different types of Hindu worship which practiced by Kora tribal people are describing in below:

**Manasa:** Manaspupji is one of the Hindu worship which practiced by the Kora to celebrate the divinity of the snakes. The worship is accomplished by a Brahman priest with sweets, fruits and unboiled milk, and milk is offered to the snake during the worship. The worship is practiced on the day of the Nag panchami in the month of Shravan. Some of the Korafamilies perform the male duck sacrifice in the village and therefore, the Manaspupji is known as Dakpupji among the Kora. More or less in all the Kora families in the village, a cactus plant, locally called ‘Fani-Manasa’ or ‘ManasaGach’ are cultivated within the homestead land with care.

**Sitala:** Sitala worship is practiced in many rural parts of Bengal as it is an old folk deity in rural Bengal. The Kora people practice the Sitala festival, and Saturdays and Tuesdays are auspicious days for the worship. The Kora people have a faith that Sitala Devi is in charge of the pox and if the Sitaladevi becomes angry or the worship is not appropriately done, then pox affects all the members of that particular house. Therefore, all the Kora people participate happily and a Brahman priest completes the worship. Moreover, Kora people call it as ‘Mayer Daya’ and they maintain some taboos such as keep the house clean and sprinkled with holy water from the Ganga, avoided oil or soap during affliction time, never eat fish like Kai, Magur and Singi because these are considered as carriers of Mayer Daya, and the taboos are known as ‘Mayer Niyam’ among Kora people.

**Kali:** Kali is a goddess of power, in Kora society they believe she is responsible for causing different types of fever, bloodshed and accidents if angered. ‘Mata Kali’ is envisioned as black complexioned with three wide-open eyes, and her feet resting on the Mahadev Siva. She has four hands where she carries weapons such as axe, spear, and amputated human head and human head with dripping blood, signifying punishment for sinners. The worship is practiced by a Brahman priest on new moon day in the month of Boishakh. Kora people practice this worship once in a calendar year, and they sacrifice a black male goat to Mata Kali. Goat is sacrificed by a special kapalik, or ritual executioner. Apart from this, few of the Kora people practice the worship of Raksha Kali. Raksha Kali worship is not a communal worship, thus only two people can practice this worship in their household premises who are in a better economic condition.

**Saraswati:** One of the hindu goddess ‘Saraswati’ worship has been practiced by the Kora people in Naudia village. Usually Kora youth practice this worship for the improvement of their education. The worship practiced by a Brahman priest on the day of shreepanchami in the month of Magh. All the Korahouseholds pay money as contribution for the worship. The school going children and youth boys and girls arrange all the essential ingredients.

**Bhadu** (a fun tribal festival) is the social festival of South Bengal. The festival starts from the first day of **Bhadro**, the sixth month in **Bengali Calendar starts with “Chaitra” and continues till the end of the month.**[1] It has its origins in the story of a princess called Bhadravati (Bhadresvari) of Panchakote who magically disappeared. Bhadravati's devotees make an image of her and sing and dance before it throughout the month. On the last day of Bhadra, they gather on the river bank and immerse the image in the water. Songs, mainly focussing on marriage, form the main attraction of the festival in which both professional groups and amateurs take part. Celebrations include fairs and cultural programmes. The Bhadu festival is centered around the legend of the princess Bhadu. According to legend, she was found as an orphan by the chief of Lada village. Bhadu is said to be the living embodiment of the goddess Lakshmi. The chief adopts her and secretly raises her as a princess. Bhadu falls in love with Anjan, the son of a doctor in a neighboring village. The king does not approve of the relationship and has Anjan imprisoned. Bhadu and two companions then travel the kingdom singing song at the gates of forts and prisons, hoping that Anjan will hear her voice. The king eventually releases Anjan, but by then Bhadu has disappeared, and is said to have faded away and merged with the sky. [3]

The songs of the Bhadu festival are based on those that Bhadu was believed to have sung.

Bhadugaan, an inseparable part of Bhadu festival reflects the colours of rural society. It used to be very popular in **Burdwan, Bankura** and **Midnapore**. But in **Birbhum** the existence of this unique genre is being threatened by the rising popularity of cinema and television.[4] Bhadu songs are composed extemporaneously and sung on each night of the festival, depicting the Goddesses as young girls. They describe Bhadu and tell in loving detail how they will be entertained. Since Bhadu
is unmarried, her songs are sung mostly by unmarried girls. Dancing and playing drums accompanies Bhandu.
ROLE OF WOMEN IN ETHNOMEDICINE, A SUMMARY OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Knowledge of medicinal plants is not only one of the main components in the structure of knowledge in local medical systems but also one of the most studied resources. This study uses a systematic review and meta-analysis of a compilation of ethnobiological studies with a medicinal plant component and the variable of gender to evaluate whether there is a gender-based pattern in medicinal plant knowledge on different scales (national, continental, and global). In this study, three types of meta-analysis are conducted on different scales. We detect no significant differences on the global level; women and men have the same rich knowledge. On the national and continental levels, significant differences are observed in both directions (significant for men and for women), and a lack of significant differences in the knowledge of the genders is also observed. This finding demonstrates that there is no gender-based pattern for knowledge on different scales.

Science has an interest in identifying patterns of knowledge regarding natural resources on a global scale [1–3]. Albuquerque and Medeiros [4] transpose a macroecological focus to a macro-ethnobiological focus. This transposition suggests that, by using the arguments and concepts of macroecology as a basis for understanding the wealth and abundance of organisms on different scales, both spatial and temporal, in ethnobiology, we can understand how knowledge variables behave on different spatial and temporal scales and thereby advance the understanding of social-ecological systems on both temporal and spatial scales. This understanding supposes that a social-ecological system is the result of the knowledge and use of natural resources in an ecological system of humans who are immersed in a social system [5]. A macro-ethnobiological approach involves the recognition of patterns that are tied to intracultural and intercultural variations in knowledge and the use of natural resources using systematic revision and meta-analysis [4] to advance areas such as nature conservation and bioprospecting [4].

Gender has been widely studied to understand whether medicinal plant knowledge varies with gender and how this variable influences the structure of local medical systems [9, 10, 12–15]. However, these studies were conducted on a local level. They have not been analysed together to determine whether there is a gender-based pattern in knowledge on a regional or global level that could characterise the influence of gender on the structure of local medical systems on different scales. Such a determination could contribute to the understanding of how predictive variations in knowledge can relate to the gender variable [4]. Albuquerque et al. [16] note the importance of considering variations in knowledge with gender in ethnodirected studies related to the search for...
medicines. Understanding the variation in knowledge between the genders on different scales is also important for conservation because it enables strategies that consider variations on different scales to be established. Through gender-based differences in resource use, Müller et al. [15] show the importance of including this variable when establishing conservation strategies and public policies.

Gender-based studies of medicinal plant knowledge using a systematic review process and a meta-analysis to determine whether there are gender-based patterns in medicinal plant knowledge on different scales (national, continental, and global). Women generally have more medicinal plant knowledge than men on different scales. We hope that this study contributes to an understanding of the influence of the gender variable on local medical systems.

Gender-based comparative studies of the knowledge of medicinal plants, the social roles of women are classified as wives and daughters who are in charge of health, diagnosing illnesses, and knowing their prognosis; they are responsible for implementing the first treatments [25, 26]. By contrast, men are in charge of maintaining the household economy and providing resources, leading them to know more about natural resources for other purposes, such as construction [18, 27, 28]. From the perspective of social roles, women should be responsible for medicinal plant knowledge within local medical systems. However, we can observe three directions in the gender-differentiated understanding of medicinal plants.

Compared the knowledge of medicinal plants of men and women by relating the numbers of species and diseases treated by each sex and studies that only presented comparisons of the diseases treated with plants by each gender were not included because few studies included these analyses, which limited the analysis of the different scales. Studies in which comparisons were performed using diversity indices were not included because the results included other types of information that limited the information compared to most of the selected studies.

Women know more because they are homemakers and are responsible for the health of the family cannot always be applied on different scales, which may reflect the heterogeneity of the strategies for the division of labour that do or do not favour a specific gender available to communities; these strategies are more homogenous on the local scale.

**NOTE AND REFERENCES:**