

# Adivasi' Ecological Worldview toward Traditional Medicine and Modern Medicine: A Study of HIV/AIDS in Jharkhand

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## Abstract

*The critical situation on health issues among the Adivasi people of Jharkhand demands advanced research for the development of a health culture. The people of this land use to live in poverty and scarcity along with poor medical facilities. They are mostly depended on their traditional medicinal practices in the way of health culture in their traditional village. This paper delineates the valuable role of traditional medicinal practices in the context of modern medicine which are being used in HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS is generally known as a deadly disease. It tries to ascertain if hopes for finding a cure for aids can be on traditional medicines. It clear to understand pondering upon ongoing experiments and studies throughout the world based on Ayurvedic 'traditional medicine' and allopathic for the treatment of HIV/AIDS seems to be a hopeful therapy in the future. The researchers of this paper have tried to delineate all the possible pros and cons regarding traditional medicine and modern medicine among the tribal peoples of Jharkhand. It provides an excellent guide to people intending to explore traditional medicinal systems to find a cure for aids. It could also help to remove doubts about the efficacy of conventional systems of medicine.*

**Keywords:** Adivasi, Ecological Worldview, Health, HIV/AIDS, Traditional Medicine, Modern Medicine

## Introduction

As per the study by WHO on traditional medicine, it has been part of the life of common people and is "often underestimated part of health services", which is recognised as "complementary medicine". Traditional medicine possesses a long backdated history which has occasionally been undergone up to the present time by elders of a family, by the local practitioners and doctors. It is also well acknowledged and practiced by traditional ethnomedicinal doctors in the Adivasi community. It has been generally transmitted orally one generation to another through ages. Doing research on herbal and conventional medicinal practices demand an ecological worldview has been intrinsic parts of Adivasis' life all over the world. WHO report (2013) has disclosed that "It is the sum total of the knowledge, skill, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention,

diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness" (WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy: 2014-2023, 2013, p. 15). The life of Adivasi people sustainable toward nature's 'ecology' through the ages; they possess rich knowledge systems for surviving from abstinence to prosperous situation way of living in their traditional settlements. A study on fossil records in the context of medicines by Haidan Yuan et al., discloses that plants, microorganisms, marine organisms and animals, and others have been used as medicines to alleviate and treat diseases that could be traced back at least 60,000 years back. All of these have been developed by our elders since time immemorial that have been mostly used up to the present time by the Adivasi communities throughout the world. They "developed their skills about edible materials and natural medicine" since then, they "learned how to make alcohol, developed religions, and made technological breakthroughs, and they learned how to develop new drugs" (Yuan, Ma, & Piao, 2016). Based on

the above reviews and studies, it is clear that traditional medicinal practices among Adivasi communities have been the culture in surviving in those ecological and geographical inhabitations as their traditional knowledge systems, which are adjustable in their sustaining tangible and intangible socio-economic conditions up to the present time.

Sustainability toward nature 'ecology' is recognized as a primary school for the adivasi and indigenous people where they have inhabited and developed their societal and cultural organization. In ways of accommodating their lives in those geographical and ecological setting developed their traditional knowledge system on which they formed some rules and regulations to survive there. Ecology has endowed India with rich flora in all the geographical locations, which enables them to use those resources for edible and medicinal purposes. Its uses as therapeutic treatments since remote past and the plant-based system continue to be included in a vital responsibility in primary health care by ethno-doctors and practitioners among the Adivasi people (Yuan, Ma, & Piao, 2016). Scientists who are doing research the treatment of HIV/AIDS try to ascertain if hopes for finding a cure for aids can be traditional medicines. Researches on the traditional medicine and its processes of treatments a disease disclose that there there have been the possibility in the future to use them curing HIV and AIDS.

### Research Objectives

Developing a critical understanding of the above-mentioned observations, in this article, the researchers have attempted to focus on the following objectives in the context of Adivasi' ecological worldview toward traditional medicine and modern medicine in respect of HIV/AIDS:

1. To study the main concerns and issues behind traditional and modern medicine from the ecological perspective.
2. To study the present status of HIV/AIDS among the population of Adivasi people in Jharkhand.
3. To document the problems and prospects of using traditional medicine.

### Methodology

This study is primarily based on the descriptive analyses and qualitative methods for studying discourse on the Adivasi' ecological worldview toward traditional medicine and modern medicine in respect of HIV/AIDS in Jharkhand. To focus on the above-mentioned objectives, some selected research works are cited as references which are available in the form of published books, articles and reports etc.

### Background of the Study

As per the study by Chandreyee Roy who reported based on the report of the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) that HIV/AIDS is a great threat to the world population in which "37 million adults and 2.5 million children were living with HIV at the end of 2003" (Roy, 2005, p. 97), which has raised to 38.4 million in 2021. As per a report of the UNAIDS (2021), It began to anxious to note that 1.5 million (1.1 million-2.0 million) newly affected with HIV were added to statistical data, and about 6,50,000 (5,10,000-8,60,000) people died in 2021 (Global HIV & AIDS statistics — Fact sheet, 2021). The pandemic of HIV/AIDS has become one of the most dangerous diseases, which have covered as tight space on the planet, which is causing hazardous situation affecting the circumstances of lives and family along with their earning modes of the environment of those peoples who suffer from it. The availability of modern medicines and health care facilities regarding its treatment is far from most of those who have suffered with HIV/AIDS. This is the reality for those people who also suffering from poverty and scarcities ultimately depend on traditional medicine for curing themselves. Reports of World Health Organization (2002, and 2003) disclosed the significance role of traditional medicine as health care in different countries across the world. As per the report, traditional medicines were used as health-care delivered by 40 percent of the population in China, and in Colombia; by 65 percent of the population in India; and by 71 percent of the population in Chile. These types of traditional medicines were mostly used in rural areas and in the Adivasi' community to require their primary health-care issues. As per the report, "traditional, complementary and alternative

medicines" have also been adopting as good examples of health-care in developed countries across the globe, where these medicines were used at least once such as Australia (48 percent), Belgium (31 percent), Canada (70 percent), France (49 percent), and the United States of America (42 percent) (Fifty-Sixth World Health Assembly-Provisional agenda item 14.10: "Traditional Medicine", 2003; WHO Traditional Medicine; Growing Needs and Potential. WHO Policy Perspectives on Medicines., 2002).

As per the study by WHO, traditional medicines generally provide health cares, which covers approximately 75-80 percent of the world's population, most of the population live in the developing countries, where advanced medical health-care facilities are unavailable to the common people (WHO, 2002). As per the studies by different sources disclosed that traditional medicines are used in primary health-care issues, which are applied "in many African countries". They were used through a process of traditional healing practices to those people who suffered "with emerging diseases such as HIV and AIDS" (Kala CP, 2006; Scheinman, 2004; Kisangau, Lyaruu, Hosea, & Joseph, 2007). As per the study by Kisangua et. al., (2007) there had been a great number of populations up to two-third (63 percent about) "infected with HIV/AIDS" lived in sub-Saharan Africa countries in 2006 (Kisangau, Lyaruu, Hosea, & Joseph, 2007; AIDS Epidemic Update, December 2006). The pandemic like HIV/AIDS effects primarily youths, the young generation of a country, who are the next builders of a nation. In this way, it is the most challenging concern to make control over it as socio-economic aspects of a country (Calverton, 2008-09; Kisangau, Lyaruu, Hosea, & Joseph, 2007). This type of HIV/AIDS pandemic causes to loss of skills, talents, expertise, and person-hours. Based on the above studies and reviews, it is clear to understand that most of the people across the world use to live with HIV/AIDS without knowing that they are infected with this type of pandemic. "HIV/AIDS are susceptible to fungal and bacterial opportunistic infection", which decrease the power of our immune systems. It is very dangerous for a person who doesn't know if he suffers from it and donate his blood to others, because he transferred this disease to others without knowing about it. Remedy of such type of disease

is to know about it, and to take precautions of health-issues guidelines to be safe in his life. Precaution to be safe and enjoy life is the great remedy in managing HIV/AIDS cases or infected people with HIV/AIDS (Kisangau, Lyaruu, Hosea, & Joseph, 2007; Hodgson T, 2012). As per the updated studies, more than 60-70% of the world population depends on traditional medicines for managing various diseases, including HIV/AIDS (Mhame PP, 2004; Scheinman, 2004). As we observed through various researches on HIV/AIDS that there have been poverty and scarcity across the world, mainly in developing countries recognised as third world. There have also been scarcity of medical health facilities and unavailable of drugs in most of Asian and African countries, which force them, most of population, to live with HIV/AIDS. These types of conditions, concerning on HIV/AIDS, ultimately force them to depend on the traditional medicinal plant and their therapist way of treatment.

Based on the above reviews and studies, it is clear to understand the importance of easily accessible traditional medicinal plant and herbal treatments for curing these severe diseases like the HIV/AIDS pandemic throughout the world (2002). Researchers of this paper have focused their attention on traditional medicine and health practices among the Adivasi community in different parts of the world, along with Jharkhand in India. The compilation starts well with an overview of aids research being carried out in traditional medicinal systems in other parts of the world. The investigation and analysis of traditional and herbal medicinal practices disclose that they are being used as a medicine for curing AIDS in the African countries. Studies on their effectiveness as a medical treatment have also been initiated in India. Results of some preliminary clinical trials, which have been being carried out in India are also shown great results to adopt traditional medicinal plant, which have been found in those areas where the Adivasis' communities inhabit. It has a series of papers by traditional experts, modern practitioners, non-governmental organization workers, and policymakers.

## HIV/AIDS in Jharkhand

According to National AIDS Control Organisation, Jharkhand has also been red alert under HIV/AIDS infected patients. It has been growing as a fast pace pandemic in many districts of Jharkhand. There have also been poor medical facilities along with scarcities of HIV/AIDS related drugs in public or private hospital every corner of Jharkhand. These types of medical conditions are not new only in Jharkhand, but have been remained in all the states of our country. As per the report, there are hardly visited public doctors in those hospitals, where they have been appointed to cure or to provide medical treatment to the patients who hardly visit there. Based on the above facts, Jharkhand AIDS Control Committee (NACO) has disclosed the fact that there have hardly been provided an HIV test or ART facilities to anyone who visited there (District HIV/AIDS Epidemiological Profiles developed through Data Triangulation Fact Sheet Jharkhand, November 2013).

Based on the 2011 census report, about 31.44 % (approximately 103.73 lakh) of the total population usually migrated to other states of India to earn livelihood, which 39.12 % (86.45 lakh) were tribal peoples of this land (Kumar & Kumar, 2021). According to the updated official estimates, up to 16 lakh people (approximately) from Jharkhand migrated to other Indian states in search of earning livelihood. There have been a public concerns to suffer with contagious disease like HIV/AIDS from the migrants. They usually have to migrate in many states of our country, such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Bengaluru (Kumar & Deogharia, 2017; Tribal Livelihood Migration in India: Situational Analysis, Gap Assessment & Future Directions in 12 States in India, 2020).

As per the study by NACO, "the adult HIV prevalence in Jharkhand is 0.25 per cent while the national average is 0.27 percent". The rate of HIV/AIDS infected people are increase day-by-day in the population of Jharkhand. Due to poverty and scarcity, most of the people of this land depend on traditional medicine to cure themselves. Traditional medicinal practices are used by ethno-doctor as treatment to cure diseases in the Adivasis' communities

in Jharkhand without knowing whether the person is suffered with HIV/AIDS or not. Traditional medicine are used as cure in all types of diseases on which they strongly believe that they will be recover as healthy person.

## Discussion and Results

There have been 32 different Adivasi communities live in Jharkhand. Most of them have been living in forest clad land, hills side, riverine, and those rural areas adjacent to urban. Poverty and scarcity have been found in most of Adivasi communities all over in Jharkhand. They use to live with many diseases without knowing about them, HIV/AIDS is one of them. A report on them disclosed that there have a large number of people who have suffered from HIV/AIDS-related infections, live in many districts of Jharkhand. The people of this land use to live in poverty and scarcity along with poor medical facilities. They are mostly depended on their traditional medicinal practices in the way of health culture in their traditional village. There has been a traditional health culture prevalent in the communities where there use to live in their traditional village settlements. Most of them depend on traditional medicine for curing any type of diseases. They have rich knowledge about traditional medicinal plants which are used by the elders 'ethno-doctors' of their communities. There have been many studies conducted on traditional medicinal plants in those geographical and ecological settings, where they use to live since time immemorial. Fossil record in the context of medicines which has been studied by Haidan Yuan et al., disclosed that plants, microorganisms, marine organisms and animals, and others have been used as medicines to alleviate and treat diseases that could be traced back at least 60,000 years back. These types of studies disclosed that there have many species of the medicinal plant 'flora' along with some special parts of animal, birds, and insects in the whole ways termed as 'fauna' are used to make traditional medicines, as peals, syrup and others etc. which are used to treat more than one diseases.

## Conclusion

The information provided forms a solid basis to the conservation of the reported remedies, considering that

more significant percentage of the plant parts used were roots and stem/bark. Continuous unsustainable harvesting of these plant parts may eventually lead to disappear of these invaluable resources if early conservation measures are not taken. In future, there will be a need to engage in value-adding and standardization of herbal preparations by developing the necessary dosages and packaging of the herbal formulations. Researchers for finding HIV/AIDS treatments should also focus on Adivasis' ecological worldviews for researching traditional medicine, as Ayurvedic and allopathic treatment of HIV/AIDS seems to be a hopeful treatment in the future. The ethnopharmacological information reported forms a crucial lead for further research to identify and isolate bioactive constituents that can be developed into drugs for managing HIV/AIDS opportunistic infections.

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