

Traditional Wisdom Practices among Rural Women Regarding Health and Care of Infants

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ABSTRACT

The word "traditional" implies the sense of tradition. The term, tradition is derived from the term 'tradere' which means to transmit. In other words tradition is transmission of community value and behaviour which is rooted in past. The study was conducted in purposely-selected two villages with sample of 50 rural women of Bikaner panchayat samiti; district Bikaner of Rajasthan. The interview schedule was used for data collection. Five experts (Ayurvedic doctors) were selected for scientific validation of the traditional practices and for that a questionnaire was prepared. The major findings of the study showed that the practices like Ghutti of honey or jaggery, 2-3 drops of boiled thymal water, boiled water with nutmeg and raw and roasted cloves, cleaning of body with dry cloth and body massage for infant (0-2 years) deserves encouragement and should be retained. Some practices which have been considered unscientific should be discouraged as discarded viz., rubbed infant's own discarded navel cord with kajal applying in eyes and breast feed the new baby after 2-3 days for infant (0-2 years). The study thus reveals that in rural areas most of the practices and traditions followed have got scientific validity and can be further recommended.

Key words: Traditional wisdom, indigenous practices, health and nutrition care.

"Traditional" usually refers to cultural continuity transmitted in the form of social attitudes, beliefs, principles and conventions of behaviour and practices, derived from historical experiences. However, societies change through time, constantly adopting new practices and technologies, making it difficult to define just how much and what kind of change would affect the labeling of practices as "tradition". "Traditional" does not mean absolute neither does it imply absolute. Good traditions include recent and future innovations likewise "Indigenous" means occurring or living naturally in a specific area. Indigenous practices are largely untapped and evidences focus that some of them are regarded as unscientific with respect to modern technology. They are still in vogue and are indicative of the fact that they have scientific rationality for development. Much of this existing knowledge about indigenous practices has not been consolidated and put together as they are unwritten and untapped knowledge i.e. unique. No systematic work has been done in recent times in bringing this knowledge to light. Therefore, there is an urgent need to safeguard and reaffirm traditional wisdom. Establishing and promoting linkages among young and old within the social system can further harness the wealth of traditional knowledge. In order to develop modern technology their experiences are required to be shared and discussed. Also, indigenous

practices have to be identified from superstitions before selecting them for communicating to masses. Thus, the present study was conducted to explore the logics of prevalent traditional practices among rural women with respect to health and care of infants (0-2 years) and match these selected practices with their corresponding scientific practices by experts (Ayurvedic doctors).

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in purposely selected Bikaner panchayat samiti of Bikaner district of Rajasthan. Two villages Beechwal and Husangsar were selected purposely from Bikaner panchayat samiti. A sample of 50 rural women (25 women from each village) was selected purposely who were ready to participate and cooperate in the study and had under 40-60 years age group. An interview schedule was developed to gather information regarding the traditional practices related to health and care of infants (0-2 years). A questionnaire was developed for the scientific validation of the information gathered on traditional practices. For this purpose five experts (Ayurvedic doctors) were selected purposely who were participate and cooperate in the study. The data were analyzed in terms of frequency and percentage.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by the following traditional practices due to particular logic related to health and care of infants (0 to 2 years) N = 50

S. No.	Traditional practices	Traditional logics	Follow due to logic	
			f	%
1.	<i>Ghutti</i> of honey or jaggery	· It cleans the neonate mouth	24	48
		· Neonate gets the practice to suck the mothers breast	20	40
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	6	12
2.	Two three drops of boiled water with thymal	· It helps in easy digestion	12	24
		· It helps to procure stomach problems	24	48
		· It helps when infant not take milk and anything	14	28
3.	Two three drops of boiled water with nutmeg	· It helps in easy digestion	10	20
		· It gives relief in loose motions	20	40
		· It gives relief in cold and cough	14	28
4.	Two three drops of boiled water with roasted and raw cloves	· It is a tradition so they follow it	6	12
		· It gives relief in stomach ache	34	68
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	16	32
5.	Rubbed infant's own discarded navel cord and apply with <i>kajal</i> in eyes	· It gives relief in eye problem	14	28
		· It cleans the eyes	12	24
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	24	48
6.	Put one side backed thymal <i>roti</i> on infant's stomach	· It helps to pass out gas from the infants stomach	32	64
		· It gives relief in stomach ache	12	24
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	6	12
7.	Apply asafoetida powder on infan's navel	· It gives relief from stomach ache	38	76
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	12	24
		· It procure the infant from cold and cough	40	80
8.	Put on the piece of garlic with the help of thread in neck	· It is a tradition so they follow it	10	20
		· Baby is weak and may fall sick if given bath	34	68
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	16	32
9.	Bath is not given to baby but cleaned with dry cloth	· It is believed that massaging the body in open will be harmful for his health	44	88
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	6	12
		· As there is no secretion of milk from breast for 2-3 days after delivery	16	32
10.	Massage the body mostly in close space	· Mothers consider yellow fluid (colostrum) as unhygienic	12	24
		· They believe that it is necessary to give pre lateral feed for 1-2 days	8	16
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	14	28
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	14	28
11.	Breast feed the baby after 2-3 days	· As there is no secretion of milk from breast for 2-3 days after delivery	16	32
		· Mothers consider yellow fluid (colostrum) as unhygienic	12	24
		· They believe that it is necessary to give pre lateral feed for 1-2 days	8	16
		· It is a tradition so they follow it	14	28

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traditional practices and their logics with reference to health and care of infants (0-2 years) : Table 1 shows that 48 per cent respondents followed "Ghutti of honey or jaggery" due to the logic of it cleans the neonate mouth while 40 per cent respondents believed that from this practice neonate gets practice to suck the mothers breast and rest 12 per cent respondents followed this practice because it is a tradition of them. 48% respondents followed "Two-three drops of boiled water with thymal" because they believed that it helps to procure infants from stomach problem, 28 per cent respondents believed that it helps when infant not take milk and anything and 24 per cent respondents believed that it helps in easy

digestion. 40 per cent respondents followed "Two-three drops of boiled water with nutmeg" due to the logic of it gives relief in loose motion, 28 per cent respondents believed that it gives relief in cold and cough, 20 per cent respondents believed that it helps in easy digestion and 12 per cent respondents believed on this practice because it is a tradition of them. This finding is in line with the findings of Jain (1995). Majority of the respondents (68%) followed "Two three drops of boiled water with roasted and raw clove" due to the logic of it gives relief in stomach ache while 32 per cent respondents followed this practice reason being it is a tradition. 48 per cent respondents followed "Rubbed infant's own discarded navel cord and apply with *kajal* in eyes" because it is a tradition of them while 28 per cent

Table 2. Opinion of experts about different traditional practices related to health and care of infants (0-2 years) N=5

S. No.	Traditional practices	Experts opinion			Logic of experts
		Scientific f (%)	Unscientific f (%)	Uncertain f (%)	
1.	<i>Ghutti</i> of honey or jaggery	5 (100)	-	-	It prevents from throat infection and neonates voice is opened
2.	Two three drops of boiled	5 (100)	-	-	Prevents from stomach worms and thymal water gas. Good for digestion
3.	Two three drops of boiled	5 (100)	-	-	Prevents from cold and cough and stomach water with nutmegache. It increases the digestion power of infants.
4.	Two-three drops of boiled water with roasted and raw cloves	5 (100)	-	-	It helps to get relief in stomach ache and gas problem
5.	Rubed infants own discarded navel cord and apply with <i>kajal</i> in eyes	-	5 (100)	-	No have any scientific reason. It may be harmful for the infants eyes.
6.	Put one side backed thymal <i>roti</i> on infant's stomach	-	-	5 (100)	It may be helpful to pass out gas from the infants stomach
7.	Apply asafoetida powder on infant's navel	-	-	5 (100)	It may be helpful to pass out gas from the infants stomach
8.	Put on the piece of garlic with the help of thread in neck	-	-	5 (100)	It may be prevented the infant from jaundice
9.	Bath is not given to baby but cleaned with dry cloth	5 (100)	-	-	It prevents the infant from cold and cough and helps to maintain the infant's body temperature
10.	Massage the body mostly in close space	5 (100)	-	-	It also prevents the infant from cold and cough
11.	Breast feed the new baby after 2-3 days	-	5 (100)	-	Colostrum is good for infant's health

respondents followed due to the logic of it gives relief in eye problem and 24 per cent respondents believed that it cleans the eyes. 64 per cent respondents believed that "Put one side backed thymal roti on infant's stomach" helps to pass out gas from the infant's stomach, 24 per cent respondents believed that it gives relief in stomach ache and 12 per cent respondents followed it because it is a tradition of them. Majority of the respondents (76%) followed "Apply asafoetida powder on infant's navel" due to the logic of it gives relief from stomach ache. Rest 24 per cent respondent believed in this practice because it is a tradition of them. 80% respondents followed "Put on the pieces of garlic with the help of thread in neck" due to the logic of it procures the infant from cold and cough while 20 per cent respondents followed this practice because it is a tradition of them. 68 per cent respondents followed "Bath is not given to baby but cleaned with dry cloth" because they thought that baby is weak and may fall sick if given bath while 32 per cent respondents said that it is a tradition so they follow it. Similar result also noted in the study of Jain (1995). Most of the respondents (88%) believed that "massaging the body in open will be harmful" for his/her health. Rest 12 per cent respondents

said that it is a tradition so they follow it. Findings confirm with the findings of Jain (1995).

Table 1 also indicates that 32 per cent of the respondent followed "Breast feed the child after 2-3 days" due to the logic of as there is no secretion of milk from mother's breast for 2-3 days after delivery, 28 per cent respondents said that it is a tradition so they follow it, 24 per cent respondents believed that colostrums is unhygienic and rest 16 per cent respondents believed that it is necessary to give pre lateral feed for 1-2 days. This finding is in line with the findings of Choudhary (1994) and Jain (1995).

Scientific validation by experts (Ayurvedic doctors): In this section included opinion of experts (Ayurvedic doctors) regarding traditional practices with logics.

Table 2 reveals that all experts considered that the "Ghutti of honey or jaggery" prevents the infant from throat infection and from this neonate's voice is opened. "Two three drops of boiled water with thymal" prevents the infant from stomach worm and gas. It is also good for digestion. "Two-three drops of boiled water with nutmeg" prevents the infant from cold and cough and stomach ache. It also increases the digestion power of infant. "Two-three

drops of boiled water with roasted and raw cloves helps to get relief in stomach ache and gas problem. *"Bath is not given to baby but cleaned with dry cloth"* prevents the infant from cold and cough and helps to maintain the infant's body temperature. *"Massage the body mostly in close space"* prevents the infant from cold and cough and massage is good for the infant's health.

All expert feels (Table 2) that some practices was considered unscientific like that *"Rubbed infant's own discarded navel cord and apply with kajal in eyes"* may be harmful for the infant's eyes and *"Breast feed the baby after 2-3 days"* was unscientific with the reason of the first breast milk (colostrums) are good for infant's health. It contains antibodies which prevents the infant from several diseases. Table 2 also reveals that 100% experts considered that some practices are uncertain

like that *"Put one side backed thymal roti on infant's stomach"* it may be helpful to pass out gas from the infant's stomach. *"Apply asafoetida powder on infant's navel"* may be helpful to pass out gas from the infant's stomach and *"Put on the pieces of garlic with the help of thread in neck"* may be prevent the infant from jaundice but not any scientific proof available regarding this practice.

CONCLUSION

Thus it can be concluded that unscientific practices should be discouraged while those practices which were ranked as scientific should be further verified by doing in depth researches so that their usefulness can be disseminated.

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