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Documentation and validation of indigenous practices regarding child care practices in Bikaner district of Rajasthan

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Abstract

Indigenous knowledge is a repository of technologies; know how skill, practices and beliefs accumulated over generations. Women are a rich repository or a storehouse of indigenous knowledge provides locally, manageable, sustainable and cost-effective survival strategies for local community. Bikaner district was selected for the study because Bikaner comes under arid zone and vast variability of traditional and indigenous practices was found in this area. Therefore a study was taken on Documentation and validation of indigenous practices regarding child care practices in Bikaner district of Rajasthan in the year 2016. It was found that indigenous practices regarding to care of child followed by majority of the respondents such as first food given to new born baby was (Jaggery, jaggery and ajwain, ajwain, jaggery and desi ghee and goat milk), given first mother milk (colostrums) to their baby, in bath practices (temperature of bath water according to season, massage of baby with mustard oil), tied neem leaves at gate, used Rai pillow, indigenous treatment given in general diseases i.e. stomach pain, cold constipation, diarrhea, fever and rashes etc. All these practices considered logically correct by the experts' field of Ayurveda.

Keywords: Indigenous practices, documentation, validation, technologies, treatment

1. Introduction

At present, insufficient pre, peri and postnatal care is the main cause of maternal and child health problems in the world especially in developing countries. Of all deaths which occur in the first five years of life, 36% are neonatal deaths. The neonatal mortality may depend significantly on interventions involving promotion or adoption of traditional care and behaviours practiced at home. Insufficient care before, during and after pregnancy still cause maternal and child health problems. Several studies have revealed that several traditional neonatal care practices which vary with culture may cause infections, anaemia, hypothermia and hypoglycemia and thus increase the risk for disease among infants (Marsh *et al.*, 2002 and Winch *et al.*, 2005) [3, 6]. Although these practices may vary from culture to culture, pregnancy, birth and child care related beliefs and practices appear in all communities and may play an important role in child health. Culture values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours affect life style and health of mother and babies, some of these practices have no negative effects on their babies. However, some traditional practices have harmful effect on babies and mother health. Kaur and Singh (2012) [2] documented various traditional practices of child care like first food item given to the infant was colostrums and honey gutty (readymade) to clear the stomach of the infant, Bath to the mother was given from sixth day of delivery and old clothes of elderly person were used for clothing the new born child for the first time with the belief that the new born child would have a long life. Lighting lamp for the whole night to ward evil spirit, keeping iron item under cot of the mother and baby and also keeping water would protect them from spirit. Traditional practices also known as various synonymous to the term are traditional knowledge, local knowledge and wisdom of the elders. The memories and activities of the people are the store house of indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge traits are oral, undocumented, simple, dependent over the values, norms and customs of the folk life, production of informal experiments through trial and error, accumulation of generation wise intellectual reasoning of the day to day life experiences, lost and rediscovered practically rather than theoretically as well as asymmetrically distributed. Gupta (2011) [1] stated that indigenous knowledge traits were oral, undocumented, simple, dependent over the values, norms and customs of the folk life, production of informal experiments through trial and error,

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accumulation of generation wise intellectual reasoning of day to day life experiences, loosed and rediscovered, practical rather than theoretical as well as asymmetrically distributed. IK was also regarded by several names, such as folk knowledge, traditional knowledge, local knowledge, indigenous technical knowledge (ITK), traditional environmental/ ecological knowledge (TEK). Indigenous practices among women related to home practices have been use from long periods of time. Therefore, a need was felt used to document, validate and verify these practices from experts for preservation and propagation of these time tested technologies for the benefit of the women community so that they could avail technologies at one place and the same could over all benefits. The traditional knowledge based on years of experience needs careful documentation and analysis for sustainable development. Besides, it would help in preserving for posterity the age old practices that remained unrecorded and undocumented. Thus documenting and validating by experts these indigenous practices used by women related to various aspect of their lives will be helpful in modifying these indigenous methods of treatment on the basis of scientific validation or strong logics, through blending of common local ingredient with modern technology methodologies in order to investigate different household tasks in which people use their indigenous knowledge. The state of Rajasthan is a desert area and time to time its faces severe effect of draught so that people of raj. State were followed various indigenous practices to stored, preserved things for them survive livelihood.

2. Material and Methods

The study was conducted in Bikaner district of Rajasthan. For selection of rural and urban respondents, two panchayat samities i.e. Bikaner and Nokha for rural and two zones i.e. east and west for urban was selected. Out of each panchayat samiti and each zone two villages and two ward selected randomly. The 30 women above 50 years of age were selected from each village and each ward. A sample of 240 respondents comprising 120 respondents from rural area and 120 respondents from urban area were selected randomly.

3. Results and Discussion

In this study only those indigenous practices have been reported which were followed by the respondents for the care of child. There are nine aspects included and the related information about these aspects have been presented in Table 1.

(1) First food given to infants

Table 1 indicates that majority of the expert (80%) considered maximum practices logically not correct followed by the respondents for first food given to infant because as all these things are harmful for baby health and goat milk is not equivalent to mother milk and have low nutrient content. While (twenty per cent) expert from the field of Auyravadic considered these practices logically correct.

According to them jaggery is store house of nutrient such as magnesium, iron, zinc, selenium, calcium and phosphorus etc., it make ease bowl movement and increase immunity, *ajwain*, Jaggery and desi ghee help in digestion and nullifies (neutralize) free radicals, goat milk is easier to digest can be given to babies who spit up a lot or have gastro-esophageal

reflux, it is less allergenic protein then cow milk. All expert accpet that mother milk is a complete food for infant. Similar study conducted by Negi *et al.* (2015) ^[4] who reported that majority of the experts considered wrong the practices of feeding pre-lacteral feed i.e. gutty given in form of honey.

(2) Time of start breast feeding

Table 1 showed that the practice start breast feeding at the time of twinkling of stars was considered logically not correct by all the expert. Expert view that in absence of any medical complication start breast feed ½ - 1 hour in case of normal delivery and for the caesarean delivery a period of 4-6 hours may be sufficient. The findings are in conformity with Negi *et al.* (2015) ^[4] who reported that all the experts considered unscientific the practices of starting breast feeding 8-10 hours after birth.

(3) First mother milk (colostrum) given to infant

Table 1 indicate that the practice of first mother milk (colostrum) not given to infant was considered logically not correct by all the expert but all accept that first mother milk is essential and good for baby health because as it contains antibodies, easy to digest and also help to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria by coating babies' digestive system. The findings are in conformity with Negi *et al.* (2015) ^[4]. According to them the expert given their opinion about first milk i.e. colostrums is very essential as it contains antibodies and other substances which protect the baby against disease who reported that all the experts considered unscientific the practices of starting breast feeding 8-10 hours after birth

(4) First bath given to infant

Table 1 indicate that the practice first bath given to infant just after birth was considered logically correct by the (60%) of the expert while (40%) expert of Pediatrician, Gynecologist and Field of Ayurved) was considered logically not correct because as it can cause of hypothermia according to Pediatrician and Gynecologist. Ayurvedic doctor stated that bath of baby just after birth should be avoided as the vermex is a cleanser, a moisturizer and anti-infection, anti-oxidant, do not wash but rub it.

The similar findings concluded by the Romano (2005) ^[5] and Negi *et al.* (2015) ^[4] according to them this practice considered unscientific by the expert because after birth removes the normal skin flora and expose baby to infection.

(5) Practices followed during bath of baby

Table 1 showed that the practices water temperature according to season and massage of infant with mustard oil was considered logically correct by all the experts reason is only given by Ayurvedic doctors that water temperature according to season prevent shivering or coldness in winter, mustard oil is good it is anti-bacterial, antifungal element, good moisturizer and warm up the body hence it is perfect for both head and body massage for babies especially in winter.

The practices added grains and other material in bath water and rub with traditional mixture i.e. '*loi*' and '*Pitthi*' was considered logically correct by (80%) of experts. According to them, these are home made good moisturizer and also anti-bacterial and good for baby skin. While, 20 percent of Pediatrician and Gynecologist expert were not agree with the practices because both practices make infants more prone to

infection.

The similar findings conducted by Negi *et al.* (2015) [4] who reported that massage with mustard oil was considered scientific by all expert according to them mustard oil is thermogenic in nature and tones the muscles.

(6) Types of clothes used for the 1st time for baby

Table 1 showed that the practices old clothes of elderly person was used or new born baby was considered logically not correct by all experts. The expert view that old clothes may not be clean and hygienic for the new born child and more prone to infection. So experts advised that baby can be wear washed new or old clothes, soft, loose clothes which should be comfortable to the child and should allow free movement.

(7) Type of napkin used for baby

Table 1 showed that the old cloth diaper was used for baby was considered logically not correct by all the experts. According to them the napkin used for baby can be new/old washed and cleaned which should be change periodically to prevent dermatitis.

(8) Any other practices followed for care of baby

Table 1 showed that the maximum practices followed for care of baby was considered logically not correct by (80%) experts. Only (20%) were considered two practices logically correct i.e tied *neem* leaves on the gate and used pillow (made up of *rai*) for the baby. The opinion given by them is that *neem* leaves has natural insecticides and make flies, mosquitoes away from the baby and is good for baby health. *Rai* pillow is considered for shaping the head of new born. New born typically tend to turn their head on one's side that can develop bump in their head. So *rai* pillow was good for the sake these little and it reduce the chance of flat head

(9) Indigenous treatment given in general disease of baby

(i) Stomach pain

Table 1 showed that indigenous treatment given to baby during stomach pain (i.e gutty, boiled *Ajwain* and jaggery syrup, massage *Hing* on the naval of infant) was logically not correct by majority (80%) of the expert. According to pediatrician these are harmful in digestion and also suppress effect on CNS (Central Nerve System). While (20%) expert in field of ayurved were considered these practices logically correct. The opinion given by them is that these practices helps babies to discharge the waste substance from its bowels. These are effective remedy for stomach ailments, flatulence, Constipation, Vomiting, Diarrhea, pain etc.

(ii) Cold

Table 1 indicate that indigenous treatment given in cold to the baby was considered logically not correct by majority (80%) of the expert according to them these practices causes irritability to the baby. While (20%) of expert in field of Auyurved were considered these practices are logically correct. The expert view that garlic had anti-microbial properties in nature and pain relieving qualities.

Kapoor helps sore throat and its vapours or steam help in relieving congestion.

(iii) Constipation

It is evident from table 1 that indigenous treatment given to the baby for cure constipation was considered logically not correct by majority (80%) of the expert. The reason behind these practices is given by only pediatrician that it may be harmful and cause of constipation and indigestion and soap solution is alkali form and may cause of irritation on anal path. Only (20%) expert from the field of Auyurved agreed with both treatments. The opinion given by them that the gutty (mixture of *harad*, *Jaiphal* and black salt) are help in function liver smoothly and improve digestion and it's have carminative properties.

(iv) Diarrhea

It is perusal of the table 1 that the indigenous treatment given to baby to cure diarrhea was considered logically not correct by majority (80%) of the expert according to them these practices may causes of GIT infection.

Only (20%) expert from the field of Ayurved doctor were considered logically correct the reason given by them is that the lemon juice, raw mango or *jaiphal* are used to stop loose motion, aid digestion and control diarrhea.

(v) Fever

A glance at table 1 point that indigenous treatment given to baby to cure fever was considered logically not correct by majority (80%) of expert. The opinion given by them is that the fever may be due to infection and it is not cured by these treatments.

While (20%) experts from the field of Ayurved considered logically correct these practices according to them *fitkari*, *sughaga* and *jaiphal* are hot in nature and these are helpful to cure cold, cough and fever and mulethi improve bronchitis (inflammation of the tube of lungs).

(vi) Rashes

It is evident from table 1 that the indigenous treatment given to baby to cure rashes was considered logically not correct by majority (80%) of the experts and did not any reason given by them while (20%) of experts from the field of Auyurved were considered logically correct both practices. The reason given by them is that the *malai* (cream) and butter are containing vitamin E, therefore these are useful to cure rashes.

The above findings supported with findings of Nagi *et al.* (2015) who reported that indigenous treatment given to cure child diseases such as stomach pain, fever, eczema, cold and cough. 80 percent of expert considered scientific and for curing indigenous practices of diarrhea considered scientific by all the experts and delivery at home, bathing and cleaning of child after 20-30 min. of birth, feeding pre-lactal feed (guppy), starting breast feeding 8-10 hours after birth, burying the placenta under green fruit bearing tree practices considered unscientific.

Table 1: Distribution of experts according to their opinion regarding child care practices (N = 10)

S. No.	Indigenous practices	Logically correct		Reasons given by experts
		Yes	No	
1.	First food given to infants			
	1. Jaggery, <i>ajwain</i> and jaggery, <i>ajwain</i> , jaggery and <i>desi ghee</i> , goat milk and traditional mixture – Keel of <i>ber</i> plant, <i>chandelia</i> desert plant pieces of jaggery, pan brahmi goli, 1-2 leaves <i>tulsi</i> . 2. Mother milk	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jaggery is store house of nutrient such as magnesium, iron, zinc, selenium, calcium, phosphorus etc. Make easy bowl movement and increase immunity. Ajwain and Jaggery and desi ghee help in digestion and nullifies free radicales. It is less allergic protein. Mother milk is a complete food for infant.
2.	Time of starting breast feeding to the infant after birth			
	Time of twinkling stars	-	10 (100.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start breast feed ½ - 1 hour in case of normal delivery and for caesarean delivery a period of 4-6 hours may be sufficient.
3.	First mother milk (colostrums) give to infant			
	(a) No	-	10 (100.0)	
	(b) Yes	10 (100.0)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It contains antibodies Easy to digest Help in prevent the growth of harmful bacteria by coating babies digestive system.
4.	First bath given to infant			
	Just after birth	6 (60.0)	4 (40.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It cause of hypothermia Vermix (baby skin) is work cleanser, a moisturizer and anti infection, anti oxidant, donot wash but rub it.
5.	Practices followed during bath of baby			
	(a) Water temperature according to season mainly used luke warm water	10 (100.0)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to season, prevent shivering or coldness in winter
	(b) Massage of infant with mustard oil	10 (100.0)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mustard oil is antibacterial, antifungal element, good moisturizer and warm up the baby.
	(c) Gold, silver, barley, <i>ghee</i> , <i>ajwain</i> , coconut, water, milk and curd are added in bath water	8 (80.0)	2(20.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ghee</i>, <i>ajwain</i>, coconut water, milk and curd are good household moisturizer and cleanser are good baby skin.
	(d) Mixture of wheat or barley flour, oil or <i>desi ghee</i> and rub forehead, hand and leg	8 (80.0)	2(20.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paste made from wheat, barley flour and oil are good moisturizer, antibacterial and good for baby skin.
6.	Type of clothes used for the 1 st time for the baby			
	Old clothes of elderly person	-	10 (100.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old clothes are unhygienic and prone to infestation Washed, soft and loose clothes should be used for baby
7.	Type of napkins used for the baby old cloth diaper	-	10 (100.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New/old washed napkin (diaper) should be used and change periodically to prevent dermatitis.
8.	Any other practices followed for care of baby.			
	(a) Keep water near bed of the baby, keep iron knife near to baby, keep holy book (Hanuman Chalisa).	-	10 (100.0)	
	(b)Wheat or bajra put near the flour pillar of cot.	-	10 (100.0)	
	(c) Put urine of cow in pot near to the main gate and enetered person first sprinkle the urine then enerted.	-	10 (100.0)	
	(d) Tied <i>neem</i> leaves on baby's room.	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Neem</i> leaves have natural insecticides and make flies mosquitoes away from the baby and good for baby health.
	(e) Used <i>rai</i> pillow for child.	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Rai</i> pillow is shaping the head of new born.
	(f) Used kajal (Home prepared) in eyes of the baby.	-	10 (100.0)	
	(g) Put copy and pen near to baby after six days of birth (in a ceremony)	-	10 (100.0)	
	(h) Tie <i>rai</i> and salt in red cloth and put near to baby	-	10 (100.0)	
9.	Indigenous treatment given in general disease of baby			
(i)	Stomach pain			
	(i) Gutty of <i>jaiphala</i> , <i>harad</i> and <i>saindha namak</i> (ii) <i>Ajwain</i> and jaggery boiled with water and given to baby (iii) <i>Hing</i> boiled with water and message on the naval of infant	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These practices help babies to discharge the waste substance from it bowls and effective remedy for stomach diseases.
(ii)	Cold			
	(i) Garlic heat in mustard oil and than massage on hands, feet and chest of the baby (ii) <i>Kapoor</i> mixed with mustard oil and than massage on chest and nose of the baby	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garlic had antimicrobial properties and pain relieving qualities. <i>Kapoor</i> help sore throat and it vapours or steam help in conjection.

(iii)	Constipation			
	(i) Gummy of <i>Harad</i> , <i>Jaiphal</i> and black salt (ii) Soap batti put in the anal of infant	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)	• Gummy are helpful in function liver smoothly, improve digestion and it have carminative properties.
(iv)	Diarrhea			
	(i) Lemon juice with raw milk (ii) Seed of kachha mango boiled with water, strained and given to child (iii) <i>Jaiphal</i> with cold water	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)	• These are stop loose motion, aid digestion and control diarrhea.
(v)	Fever			
	(i) Roasted <i>Fitkari</i> , <i>suhaga</i> , grind with water. According to age of the child increase 1 gm above mixture (ii) <i>Jaiphal</i> given with luke warm water (iii) <i>Mulethi</i> mix with honey and given to child	2 (20.0) 2 (20.0)	8 (80.0) 2 (20.0)	• All these things are hot in nature and helpful in cure cold, cough and fever. • <i>Mulethi</i> improve bronchitis.
(vi)	Rashes			
	(i) <i>Malai</i> (ii) Butter	2 (20.0)	8 (80.0)	• <i>Malai</i> (cream) and butter are contain vitamin E, therefore, these are useful to cure rashes.

5. Conclusion

In child care practices all respondent (rural or urban) were followed indigenous practices i.e. first bath given to infant just after birth, take temperature of bath water according to season, used old cloth diaper for baby and keep iron knife near to baby bed. All the expert considered logically correct only the practices of temperature of bath water taken according to season.

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