



TAG: BIJASALA

Bark Power

ON **DECEMBER 7, 2012** / BY **HIRAMAN** / IN **UNCATEGORIZED** / **3 COMMENTS**

I have known Murli Menon, a life coach from Ahmadabad, for over six year now. He is a regular follower of this blog, he was unfamiliar with my avatar. "I thought it may be some farmer-activist writing it," he says.

Murli, 45, has travelled **India** extensively and the South Asian countries not as a tourist but to broaden his understanding as to why people live and behave they do? He has lived among tribals in **Madhya Pradesh**, Chhattisgarh, Paschim Bango, Odisha in India and also aborigines in countries like Thailand, Malaysia, China, Philippines other countries. "The visits to the tribal hamlets have made him richer in experience," says he.

What he has learnt from the aborigines he shares among participants workshops he holds for corporates, students, teachers, doctors and others. Things like: How tribals deal with stress and anxiety? How they celebrate? How they keep themselves healthy? How they resolve their problems? How they meditate?

"There is so much to learn from them," he says.

In this post Murli shares his experiences on medicinal herbs the tribals have been using for ages to keep illness at bay.

"In 2002, I spent six months researching my book on Tribal meditation inside the core area of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve in interior Orissa. The Reserve is located in Baripada District of Orissa, which borders the neighbouring states of West Bengal and Jharkhand. I stayed with the Khadia, Mankadia and Kohl tribals for a long time, living in their leaf huts and learning a lot about their meditation techniques, songs, dances, folk-tales and medicinal herbs. As the core area of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve is a restricted zone, special permits are required to enter the core area.

During my long stay with these tribes, I photographed and studied the medicinal herbs used by these tribals to stay disease free in a forest, where the nearest hospital is a 50km trek. As the entire Simlipal Tiger Reserve is a **falciparum malaria** positive zone, even short term visitors are at risk to develop falciparum malaria. In fact, few health personnel venture into the core area of the forest due to fear of contracting falciparum malaria. This reduces the number of visitors who enter the forests to a handful like forest guards, who are more likely to be local tribals. However, the Khadia, Mankadia and Kohl tribals continue to live inside the thick forests and are surprisingly immune from falciparum malaria.

How and why?

The tribals cook their meals under starlit skies huddled around an open fire kindled by dried twigs. They put large amounts of dried grass into the fire at regular intervals, which I later learnt was *Gangashivli* grass. *Gangashivli* is a pungent grass which keeps mosquitoes away. Before retiring for the day, the tribals rub their bodies with dried *Gangashivli* grass. In the morning they chew a herb called *Bhuinimba* which prevents malaria.

Another amazing thing I noted about the tribals, was the absence of diabetes among them. As these tribals followed a vegan diet which consisted of wild fruits, boiled vegetables and bamboo shoots they are disease free and healthy even in their nineties. Coming across aged Mankadia tribals climbing giant trees to gather fruits is not unusual.

Every night the tribals heat an earthen pot with water collected from the nearby waterfall and put generous amounts of the bark of a tree known as *Bijasala*. After a ceremonial dance where dancers hold each others waists in solidarity and move in synchronicity, the tribals retire to their respective huts for the night. Then, in the morning before starting the day, they religiously drink several glasses of the herbal tea from the earthen pot which was covered with a lid and kept outdoors throughout the night.

I did not come across a single tribal man, woman or child who missed drinking the herbal tea in the morning. The tribals gave me a generous amount of the bark of this tree for my personal use, when I left having completed my research on tribal meditation and after photographing their herbal medicines,. I was 35 years old at that time and had borderline high blood glucose due to the fact that both my father has diabetes and my grand-parents too suffered from it. I followed the tribal **herbal remedy** religiously over the next year and returned to the forests of Orissa for replenishing my stocks. Over the last ten years I have been taking the herbal tea, my blood sugar has been normal.

To know more about it I gave pieces of the bark to my school classmate who is an expert on botany and he classified it as the bark of *Pterocarpus Marsupium*.

Pterocarpus Marsupium is a rich source of polyphenolic compounds. The key compounds include the diaryl propane derivative, propterol; the stilbene, pterostilbene; the hydrochalcone, pterosupin; the benzofuranone, marsupsin; the flavanoid, liquiritigenin and the catechin. The active constituents of *Vijaysar* are Polyphenolic Compounds which significantly lowers the **blood glucose level** of hyperglycemic. The effects are due to an increase in insulin secretion and its impaired glycogen synthesis in the liver secondary to diabetes. *Vijaysar* modulates tissue glucose utilization in insulin-dependent tissues and could serve as one possible mechanism of its anti-diabetic activity. It slows the development, progression and severity of cataract, a common complication of chronic diabetes. *Vijaysar* helps to reduce the glucose absorption from the gastrointestinal tract and improve insulin and pro-insulin levels. *Vijaysar* is effective in beta cell regeneration and has also been found to have a hypocholesteremic effect.

This is the procedure I have followed having observing the rituals of the tribals.

1. Heat water in an earthen pot.
2. After the water boils, put three or four small bark pieces of the pterocarpus marsupium into the pot.
3. Lower the flame to let the water simmer for 5 minutes
4. Switch off the flame
5. Close the pot by placing a lid overnight
6. Drink this herbal tee or infusion every morning on an empty stomach.

The tribals believe that the healing power of the herbal tea is due to the fact that all the three elements of fire, water and earth (earthen pot and the bark of the pterocarpus marsupium) are used in the preparation of the tea."

Pterocarpus marsupium, or the **Indian Kino Tree** is a medium to large, deciduous tree that can grow up to 30 m tall. Native to India it occurs in parts of the **Western Ghats** in the Kamataka-Kerala region. Found commonly in hilly regions throughout the **Deccan Peninsula**, and extending to Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa.

According to www.himalayahealthcare.com: An aqueous infusion of the wood is said to be of use in diabetes. Tests on mice and rabbits with alcohol and aqueous extracts of the heartwood are said to have shown hypoglycemic action, probably by hindering the absorption of glucose in the intestine.

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