

# Beliefs and Practices Associated with Bone Setting among the Mishing Tribe of North Lakhimpur, Assam

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**Abstract:** The Mishing people are a strong believer in the supernatural spirits and their healing practices are closely associated with their belief systems, rituals healers and several herbs. Their knowledge of healing practices is orally transmitted from one generation to the other generation, where no written records are available. In this context this research work is an attempt to document the healing practices and rituals associated with bone setting (Aalong Dirpak/ Dirtung) among the Mishing tribe of Puta Bil village of Lakhimpur district, Assam.

**Keywords:** Traditional healing practices, Mishing tribe, Traditional bone setting, Bone setter, Herbs, Belief systems, Rituals, Healer and Supernatural spirits.

## 1. Introduction

The Mishing people are a strong believer in the supernatural spirits. They believe that every diseases or ailment have their root in the benevolent and malevolent spirit, where the former protect them in their living world, while the later cause any kind of diseases or illness. They have a strong believe that if they breach any taboo then they have to face the wrath of supernatural spirit mainly malevolent spirit. Therefore, the healing practices of the Mishing people include both herbal and magico religious practices. This knowledge of healing practices is orally transmitted to next generation as no written records were available. In this context this research work is an attempt to document the healing practices associated with bone setting.

### 1) Objective

The main objective of this research work is to document the healing practices associated with bone setting among the Mishing tribe.

### 2) Area of study

The present study is conducted among the Mishing tribe inhabiting in the "Puta Bil" village of North Lakhimpur district, Assam.

## 2. Methodology

The data collected for the present study is based on primary data that is collected through fieldwork and interviews (both structured and unstructured), concrete case studies and

observation. Audio visual tools are also used to document the data. The traditional healers are the key informants. The documentation of healing practices associated with bone setting is collected from the other members of the tribe in an extensive manner.

## 3. Observation

The knowledge of healing and its associated practices is orally transmitted from generation to generation. In Mishing tribe the most common plant species for bone setting is the 'Harjura lota' which is of great ethno medicinal value and mainly used in curing bone fracture. While healing the patient of bone fracture the healer asked the "Rakhi" (Horoscope) of the patient and matches it with his own. It is said that if the Rakhi of the healer and the patient is same then the medicine heals fast and if not so then it will take time or even the patient have to go to another healer. The healing of bone fracture starts from 2 months old child to old aged ones. It is believe that the setting of the fractured bone is very much successful in during the growing stages of the patience i.e. children and very difficult and time consuming during the old aged people.

While collecting the creeper (harjura) the bone setter has to clap his hand once taking the name of Lord Krishna and his Guru (teacher) and in one breath he has to takes some of the creepers. The healing practices not only include herbal medicines but certain rituals or offerings have to be made. The healing of bone fracture includes the use of both herbal medicinal plant and offerings. This offering is a part of healing ritual for bone setting where the patient family or the patient himself/herself offer certain things to the healer like- a battle nut and leaf along with 'Gamusa' (hand weaving towel) and money, the money is given in odd number such as Rs. 3, Rs. 5, Rs.11, Rs.101 and so on. And also some time one time meal is given to the Healer in which a small black or white colour chicken, mustard oil, potato, rice etc are given. After all this the healer in return gives Akirbad (Blessing) to the patient and asked the patient to offer 'Agarbati' in Namghar and said to return home without turning back.

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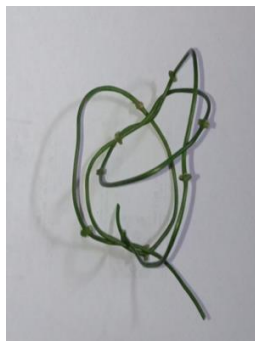


Fig. 1. Harjura creeper

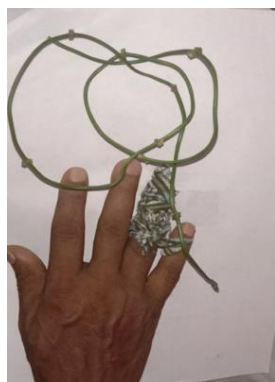


Fig. 2. A fracture joined by harjur

Table 1  
Plant name and part used

Sl. no	Name of the Medicine Plants	Parts Used	Quantity	Method of preparation
	Local Name/scientific/family Name			
1	<i>Harjura/ Cissus quadrangularis</i> Linn/Vitaceae	creeper	5-10 cm	Creeper is grind and a paste is prepared and applied it on the broken area, covering the area with a banana leaf and wrapped it with a 'Harjura lota' over it. Pieces of this creeper are arrange over the broken bone by wrapping it with another piece of the creeper with a knot.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The Mishing tribe is blessed with the knowledge of herbal plant species which are available in their localities. These herbal plants are of great use and importance in their life. The use of harjura for bone setting indicates the use of herbal plants among the Mishing community. Therefore, it is important to conserve these plant species for their diverse uses in life. The traditional knowledge of healing practices has no written records, therefore with the decrease in the numbers of healers lead to the loss of such valuable knowledge of healing practice which is transmitted from generations.

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