

A New Dimension on Health Care

The idea is to make the people, particularly women and children of the weaker sections of the society self sufficient in health care system. This objective is going to be achieved through two-pronged strategy of education and provision of low cost indigenous herbal medicine. Through education people would be made conscious about the preventive and curative aspects of various diseases and will be taught about preparations of simple household remedies.

The people, especially the Adivasis (Santhals) can regain proper knowledge of roots and plants as medicine and their use in changing environment and society with a programme of raising herbal plants on a community basis with the help of health consciousness and knowledge on health-related matters they will be able to move forward for maintaining their health on their own. In this, the leadership and initiative of women will be of paramount importance.

People will understand through the participatory process of action their health situation and resources. In order to prevent their exploitation, efforts will be made to develop community feelings. This will be achieved through cheapest curative and preventive measures. Methods will be developed to prepare herbal medicines and these methods will be disseminated through trainings, meetings, study circle clinics, campaigns, posters, slogans etc.

There will be plots of medicinal plants in every village. Village community will be formed to ensure participation of villagers in the programme. There will be two committees in each village - one for men and another for women. Health volunteers will be selected by these committees. Organisation of children will be formed to make them and their guardians aware about health matters. In the study circle clinics, people will know about the causes of diseases, their medicines, doses and methods of use. People will also discuss and try to understand the ways and means of preventing diseases as well as their social and environmental impacts on their lives.

In every village, two types of medicines will be introduced - one will be raw medicines for immediate use and the other will be readymade packaged medicines. Everybody will know the process of their preparation. Often the life style and status of a family determines its health status. Therefore, efforts will have to be made to create employment opportunities. Different programmes will be taken up in the long term, so that people enjoy better standard of living and improved health status.

The process of exploitation starts with the loss of confidence, start of dependency and use of new technology. With the change of social and environmental conditions, technology which was available with the Adivasis has been lost. It has to be regenerated, redeveloped and redeployed in a different way. It will not be generated by technical experts, but by the people themselves. It will be a people's knowledge, property and will be used for their benefits.

Health care system, particularly allopathic medicines which are prevalent these days destroy resistance power of the people towards the diseases while the traditional medicare methods helped to develop resistance power among the people. The alternative medicine system will help to develop this resistance.

Knowledge is key to develop alternative medicine and to promote it. Education can be a tool to achieve this objective. It can also help to generate confidence among the masses in the efficacy of alternative medicines. Organisation and networking can help the community to fight against exploitation.

The above ideas and methods will be expanded in the nearby villages and towns through health cadres. In this, help from various research centres like Jasidih's PRAKRITIK CHIKITSA KENDRA will be taken. Help from interested and like minded Doctors will also be enlisted for this purpose. A dialogue can be held throughout India on the role of alternate systems for improving the health status of the masses in the country. Networking can be established with like-minded individuals and organisations on a national basis to promote the idea. The network can also be used to overcome health-related exploitation of the people.

Experience of work in Deoghar district

Bariar Bandhi, a village in nature, you can say a slum in Deoghar district of Jharkhand. Most of the dwellers are KAHAR (RAMANI), MAHATOS, DHANUGS, CHAMARS, DOMS etc. 50% of the families of this village are migrated from the interior villages for jobs and employment through wage earnings and gradually they settled here with their own house or room.

Human Rights

Kalu Ramani, a boy of 18, lives in a slum (KAHARADAN) of Deoghar town in Jharkhand. He is basically a labourer. His father is a class IV employee in a Government department. In April 1999 one day Kalu's relatives came to us and asked us to go to Deoghar thana because the police had locked Kalu with the charge of robbery and was torturing him. We went to the Superintendent of Police, Deoghar and complained. She (that time the S.P. was lady) asked us not to interfere with their work. We requested her to interfere personally because the boy is not a criminal and also request her to ask the officer in-charge to stop the torturing to Kalu. At this, the S.P. ordered the O.C. to stop beating. The next day, we tried to convince the S.P. that Kalu was not a criminal type. We knew him and we assured that he was not involved in this type of work. In the meantime, we also talked to the people of Kalu's village to be united and to go to Thana to pressurise the police authorities. At least 40 people become united and we went to thana with some of them. They talked to the O.C.. Meanwhile, Kalu's father asked his officer to help him in getting his son released. The officer also influenced the Thana's people. On the fourth day, Kalu was a free man and no case was registered against him. Thus, an innocent man was saved from being charged with robbery and prevented from becoming a hardened criminal.

It is the usual practice with the police to charge poor and educated people of various offences and then take money to make free. Legally police cannot keep anyone in lock up without the permission of a Magistrate, but it is normal with the police to haul up the people on trumped up charges and then harass and torture them to get money. Only vigilance of the people can save them from such harassment and torture.

Organisation of Youth

Youth are a storehouse of energy. Often their energy is wasted on unproductive pursuits and young people lose direction. If they are organised, their energies are channelised and are given proper direction, they can do a lot of work for the betterment of the society.

We talked to the youth of Bariar Bandhi slum of Deoghar town to come and sit together. The people of Bariar Bandhi had trouble from outside. Mostly the outsiders cheated the people of this area. Several meetings were held to make it clear to the youth that they could do something for the people of the area if they were organised. As a result of several meetings it was concluded that the youth should form a club through which they could be united and work for the area. There was an election to elect the office bearers of the club and to form a committee to run the affairs of the club, which would work for all. Seven persons were elected to the committee.

The young members of the club who are mostly from working class background and are employed as helpers in local shops or are ricksha pullers want financial assistance and training to start some enterprises and improve their status in life. From the very beginning, participating nature of work was maintained. We believe that demand for change must emanate from the people.

We can only act as a catalyst to speed up the process of change. The initiative has to come from the people themselves.

Counselling for women empowerment

The present status of the Indian Women is well known to everyone. The women continue to be socially subordinated, have very little access to resources, no freedom to assert their reproductive choice, are at the lower ladder of literacy and have less economic opportunities in unorganised sectors. The status of women irrespective of their caste and religious identity is the same in the way the menfolk treat their women. There may be a difference of opinion, but there appears to be an agreement on one point, that the women have multiple responsibilities, but limited security, power and control over their own lives.

Manju is the daughter of Jayanti. Jayanti works as a maidservant in different houses. According to her capacity, she negotiated her daughter's marriage. Due to the dowry system it was not possible for her to find a proper groom for her daughter. Not even a year had passed since Manju's marriage when she returned to her mother's house. Her complaint was that her father-in-law had an evil eye on her. Her father-in-law accused that she had relation with a young boy. Her husband is totally dependent on his father. He had nothing to say about the whole affair. He was ready to obey his father. We started counselling two parties. There is a PARIVAR PARAMARSH Kendra in Deoghar. We took their help. Manju returned to her in-law's house. Now she is staying with them. She is quite happy.

Sonu is the wife of Lakhna, a rickshaw puller staying in Kharada village of Deoghar. He asked his wife to stay with the family at village Chanan in Banka district alone. He thought that if his wife stayed in the village, his claim on the village house and land would be strengthened, but his wife was not ready to stay alone. He took his son with him and started to live at Chanan. When his wife also went there to live with him, he did not allow her to stay with him. She came to us. We talked to both the parties. Officially a letter was sent to Lakhna letting him know if he did not meet us he would have to face legal action. Both parties sat together and afraid of legal action Lakhna agreed to keep his wife with him.

Rama is a handicapped person. He used to bring goods from the market for the shopkeepers to earn his livings. He has his own house at Bariar Bandhi in Deoghar. He stays there with his wife and one child. His younger brother and mother are also staying with him. His mother supports her younger son. She is against her daughter-in-law and wants to marry her younger son. She wants that Rama should leave the house so that her younger son can live with his wife in the house with her. Rama is not ready for that. One-

day, Rama's brother and mother beat him badly. Rama was compelled to leave the house. Rama's brother and mother did not stop at that. They beat Rama's wife as well and threw her out of the house. When we came to know of the problem, we brought Rama's wife to our house. For 48 hours, she lived in our house. We tried to convince both the parties and discussed this issue with the elder women of the area. The elder women sat together and took up this issue and ensured that a compromise was reached. They tried to convince Rama's mother that what they had done was not right and in future they should never beat Rama's wife and Rama would be staying in the same house. If there is a fight and they beat Rama's wife they (the elder women) allow them to stay in the area. By such acts, they were destroying the village atmosphere.

This inspired the elder women to campaign for stopping wife beating. Gradually, most of the people accepted that wife beating was a bad practice. Whenever this type of incidence takes place, the group of women interferes and takes control of the situation and sees to it that the problem is solved amicably.

Mahila Samities: Till now, four Mahila Samities have been constituted. Each Mahila Samity has twenty members. The Mahila Samities resolved to work in the following areas:

Electrification: The Mahila Samity members contacted Special Officer, Deoghar Municipality and MLA. They gave an application to the special officer to electrify the houses, which are not yet electrified. The Special Officer took action on the application and the supervisor of the Electricity Office surveyed the area, planned to erect poles and chalked out the route through which the poles would be laid.

Sanitation: The Mahila Samity passed a resolution in its meeting and put an application under the Swarna Jayanti Rozgar Yojana for Sanitation work. There are two proposals, one, regarding drains and the other regarding latrines.

Roads: The Mahila Samity gave an application to the Special officer, Deoghar. Municipality for concrete roads. The roads were sanctioned and the work has already been completed. The youth of Bariar Bandhi contributed "Shramdaan" for earth and water work on this project.

Funds: The Mahila Samity has decided that it would collect funds from among its members for emergency uses. These funds will be used only for the benefit of members for emergency uses.

Education: The women of Bariar Bandhi came together and when they were discussing their plight and trying to find out the causes of their sorrow, they felt the main reason for their misery was that they did not know how to read and write. They thought that if women were educated many of their problems could be solved.

They called on us. We organised a meeting of village women and youth. In the meeting, we called Maharaj of Ram Krishna Mission, Deoghar as the chief Guest and we as well

as the women of Bariar Bandhi pressed for setting up of a Mahila Shikshan Kendra. A Kendra was set up. 30 women were enrolled for education.

Similarly, a meeting of youth was called. The young men wanted that a centre should be set up to educate the children who were not going to the school. We inspired them to start a centre. The centre was started with 20 children. Generating resources for the centre was a problem. We contacted Marwari Yuva Manch, Deoghar. It readily accepted to adopt the centre and agreed to pay the salary of three teachers who were instrumental in setting up the centre. The centre was named as “Khula Vidyalaya”. It is still running.

Consciousness about Health: Inherent in the acceptance of the declaration was the Government’s own commitment to ensure that healthcare could eventually reach the poorest in the society, but in recent times, however, the focus has shifted increasingly from public health towards privately managed care threatening to create a marginalised group with little or no access to basic healthcare.

Three years back we started to distribute Homeopathy medicines to the people of Bariar Bandhi. In the beginning, people did not believe in Homeopathy. They used to go to a quack or to private doctors. In order to save money, only the male members of the family or male children were taken to the doctor. The women and girl children were left to fend for themselves. In only very serious cases, they used to be taken to the doctors. Otherwise they were given JARI-BHUTIS or taken to OJHA for cure.

With our effort all this changed. Homeopathy is working well and daily 10-12 persons, mainly women and children come to us. They are satisfied with the low cost cure they get for their ailments. Usually we are giving the medicine free of cost and sometime we write the name of medicine and they have to buy it from market in a nominal cost. Another development was noted by us. In the daytime menfolk shunned our centres, but they came at night in case of emergencies.

We not only give medicines, but also try to raise the consciousness of women about health. All the women fear if their children start vomiting. We taught them how to prepare oral rehydration solution and administer it to the children. It was made clear to them that if the rehydration solution is administered from the very beginning; the question of collapse of the patient does not arise. Almost every family of Bariar Bandhi has become aware of this by now.

We have been treating cases of dehydration, female diseases, asthma, fever, pneumonia, skin diseases, cough and cold, worms (intestinal diseases of children) etc. People have become conscious of clean food, water and environment and they are trying to be clean more than before. Occasionally, we used to sit with the women to make them clear that prevention is better than cure. Gradually people, especially women, are understanding this better, but their habits and traditional values come in the way of swift change.

Legal Aid: It is said that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. In order to protect oneself from exploitation, one has to be vigilant as well as aware of his rights and duties.

In a country like India where a large part of population is still illiterate, it is easy to talk about legal rights of the citizens than implement them. That is the reason why large-scale violation of Human rights has been taking place in our midst.

When we felt that people have very little knowledge about their legal rights, we planned to organise a workshop on Legal Aid. Mostly people have problem with the police or/and entangled in land disputes. We organised a workshop with about 30 participants. Three advocates from Deoghar Court came as experts. Also three activists on legal aspects from Jamshedpur participated.

In the workshop, papers on land disputes and police torture were read. Copies of the papers were distributed to the participants. The advocates and the legal activists elaborately discussed the rules and regulations and their implementation. The participants asked questions about solution to their various problems, which were readily answered by the experts. The advocates assured them that they would help them in the court. One advocate expressed his willingness to help the poor people fight their cases free of cost.

With the experience of Singhpur, Shahdol of Madhya Pradesh and of Bariar Bandhi, Deoghar, Jharkhand I become interested to work on health issue knowing that the health is not a separate problem to the people. It is related with other problems. I have seen that the village people are naturally interested in Herbal medicines, which is easily reachable to the poor. So it may be a good media to be independent in health care system. In the present situation people easily accept the doctors or teachers. To intervene in village this health issue will help us a lot to educate them. In my last experiences even in Deoghar we have to take the different issues i.e. Gender Issue, Human rights, Legal aid, Youth organisation, Mahila Samity etc. And that is the reality. Through the health issue we can organise the people (youth, Mahila and men) gradually it can be expanded to the total development. We are going to form the village committees which may look after all the action programmes. And this committee may be the starting point of initiation for the broader organisation.

Adivasis (Santhals) of Santhal Parganas are still very much interested in herbal medicines and it is their traditional practice. Now days whatever medicines (Herbal) are available it will be available to them only because wherever they are staying that very much nearer to the forest may be it is going to be ruined. Still something is available there. And I think they will co-operate a lot regarding the development of plant collection and their use. So I have to take a different area rather than my old working area i.e. Bariar Bandhi of Deoghar. The area, which I want to select, is Sarwan block of Deoghar district. The schedule tribe population is 11.25% and the schedule caste population is 14.98% in Sarwan Block. I know the use of Homeopathy medicines and it may be a very good entry point. And from this I will be able to know very easily that they (people of the village) used to suffer from what type of diseases and what methods they used when they don't go to doctors. This area of Sarwan Block is only 15 km. away from Deoghar town. So it is not easy to take the facilities of treatment of Deoghar Hospital and doctors. The thing I have to be conscious that my identity will not be only as a doctor. And it will not be because really I am not a doctor. In Deoghar I became successful. So I became able to penetrate on their other crucial and day to day problems because my main object was to educate them, not to treat them from their diseases. So from the development of Herbal plant garden, use of plants we have to shift automatically to food they used to take, mal-nutrition and the standard of life. And it will bring me to the all types of exploitation. Even the exploitation of doctors, exploitation of medicines. Then through the village committee both men and women as well as the youths a proper-planned programme will be chalked out to come out from the situation.

For my own sustenance I need help from outside for 3 years. In the meantime I shall take the registration for medical practice as a Homeopathy doctor and that may be my source of livelihood. At the same time I shall register a society under the society registration (non-profit making) Act. And through this I may take some projects for different studies on various aspects of the society where I already have worked. And after 3 years there will be no need of external fund.

The work plan for one village:

S.No.	Nature of Work	Total Periods to fulfil the work	
1. a)	To introduce Homeopathy medicines	3 months	1 st Phase
b)	To find out the names of diseases and their curative process as well as the name of herbal medicines which are used.		
c)	To prepare the people for a plot for plantation, which will be treated as community property (at least 3 to 4 meetings will be held)		
2. a)	Collection of herbal plants	3 months	2 nd phase
b)	One training programme on health problems and their causes		
c)	Use of Homeopathy medicines and side by side use of herbal medicines locally available will be started		
d)	Action on day to day problems.		
e)	Meeting of women, youths and elders (total 3 meetings)		
3. a)	Formation of village committee (one village meeting)	3 months	3 rd phase
b)	Collection of medicinal plant.		
c)	One raining programme on problems, causes and precautions		
d)	Action on women issues		
e)	Establishment of study circle clins		
4. a)	Preparation of posters, slogans	3 months	4 th phase
b)	Health Volunteers will be selected by the village committee and their duties also will be determined		
c)	Training programme on Environment and health.		
5. a)	Formation of children's group and involve them in different curriculum	3 months	5 th phase
b)	Preparation of medicines will be started		
c)	Training Programme on Diseases and their prevention		
6. a)	Will be trained at least two women about the diagnosis and the selection of medicines as well as the methods of prevention	3 months	6 th phase
b)	Evaluation of previous experience for the purposes of chalking out the future plan		
Total Time		18 months	

Similar work will be carried in another two villages

Budget

Sl. No.	Total Amount (In Rupees)	
1	Survival amount (@6,000 per month x 18 months)	1,08,000
2.	Furniture	
a.	1 Almira	4,000.00
b.	1 Table	2,000.00
c.	2 Chairs	1,600.00
d.	2 Benches	1,600.00
		9,200.00
3.	Consumables	
a.	Homeopathy medicines with boxes @1000.00 x 3 villages	3,000.00
b.	Travelling 200 per month x 18	3,600.00
c.	Training (4 times of 3 persons for 5 days each)	81,600.00
	<i>Travelling</i>	<i>1,300.00</i>
	<i>Remuneration</i>	<i>5,000.00</i>
	<i>Fooding & lodging (6,800x3x4)</i>	<i>500.00</i>
d.	Posters, Banners etc.	10,000.00
4.	Overhead 15%	32,310.00
	Total	2,47,710.00

Curriculum Vitae

Name : **Shri Asit Bhattacharya**
Father's Name : Shri Pannalal Bhattacharya
Date of Birth : 2nd June 1950
Nationality : Indian
Address :
Language Known : Bengali, Hindi and English

Experience

- a) Work as a Project Officer of 200 N.F.E. Centres in Ghazipur district, U.P. and also work with Women to run their self-help groups in Ghazipur district, U.P. from 1990 to 2000.
- b) "Towards a new conscious society", an experience of Training Programme at Paburia, Phulbani district of Orissa.
- c) Achievements on towards People's Action: PARASAGUDI KALSA JAGA, about a village Parasgudi of Surguja district of Madhya Pradesh in the year 1981-82.
- d) Consciousness on health – An experience at Singhpur, Shahdol district, Madhya Pradesh in 1982-84
- e) Value based social process of Education – An experience at Singhpur, Shahdol, M.P in the period of 1982-84
- f) Participated several cadre developments training programmes as a resource person from 1978 to 2000.
- g) Cadre development Training programme can promote action in the village – An experience at Karojgaon programme in Betul, M.P. in the year 1980.
- h) Work as an organiser and research assistant in Surguja, Shahadol of Madhya Pradesh, in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh and in Santhal Parganas of Bihar from 1980 to 1990
- i) Work against social injustice throughout the period.
- j) Consciousness development on comparative findings on environment and social atmosphere and behaviour through the training programme.

Educational Qualification : a. B.A. from Calcutta University in 1972
b. Higher Secondary from West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in 1967

