

Traditional herbal healer

APPRECIATION

Karimbhai Sumara (58) hails from Veerampur village in Banaskantha district, Gujarat. He currently treats 40 patients per day, some of his patients coming from Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Karimbhai's father was a potter and also an expert in herbal medicine. Karimbhai used to accompany his father on his frequent visits to the jungles to collect herbs and on these trips his father imparted valuable knowledge about different herbs to him. Karimbhai recalls how his father would prepare the extracts and mixtures. He used to help his father in grinding, powdering and mixing medicines.

Busy Practitioner

Until three years ago, Karimbhai was a potter and used to take time off from routine chores to collect herbs and to treat patients in the village. But then he became a full-time practitioner of herbal medicine as he was not able to attend, on a part-time basis, to the swelling rank of patients who required his attention.

Karimbhai often leaves home just after midnight to walk about 15 km in hilly terrain through jungles to pick up the right herbs. The trip takes up to five hours and he is able to start treating his patients as the morning dawns.

He treats a gamut of diseases like heart ailments, arthritis, diabetes, skin disorders, cold and cough, asthma, fractures, genitor-urinary-tract infections, intestinal ulcers etc. and even cancer. Some of the practices he uses:

Leucorrhoea

In this condition there is excess bleeding during menstruation. For this take *Mal/Nagli* (Finger millet, *Eleusine coracana*) (250 g) and soak it in water (500 ml) overnight. Next morning cook the finger millet with

the same water in which it was soaked until the water reduces to 100 ml. Decant the water. This cooked finger millet is given to the women having this problem and the water should also be drunk. This practice should be repeated twice.

Dermatitis

The symptoms are itchy eruptions on the skin, itching sensation, redness of skin and wounds caused because of fungal infection. A paste is made of a sufficient amount of the roots of *Chitrak* (Ceylon leadwort, *Plumbago zeylanica*) using water and this is applied on the infected area.

Alternative treatment

Bark and wood of *Rohida* (*Tecomella undulata*) is soaked in water for two days. This is then distilled and the distillate collected is applied on the eczema.

Alternative treatment

Bark of *Kerda* (*Capparis decidua*) and leaves of *Mamejava* (*Enicostemma littorale*) are taken in equal proportion and ground to paste using a little amount of water. This paste is then applied on the eczema affected part.



Address
VPO Virampur
Banaskantha, Gujarat

Scouted by
Jalamsinh Jhala



Diabetes

Symptoms of this illness include sugar intolerance and infected wounds. Usually patients come with either laboratory reports or diagnosed by a doctor.

Roots of Awalkanti/Shatavari (*Asparagus*, *Asparagus racemosus*) and Chitrak (Ceylon leadwort, *Plumbago zeylanica*), leaves of Mamejava (*Enicostemma littorale*), rhizomes of Amba Haldar (*Curcuma amada*), seeds of Kharhadiya/Sarpankho (*Tephrosia purpurea*) and Gugal (Indian bodelium, *Commiphora wightii*) are all taken in equal proportion. All of these are ground to the powder/paste form and with the help of water, pills are made and are taken orally twice a day. Continuation of this practice for a month, results in the decrease of the sugar level by 100 points at the end of a month.

Psoriasis

The symptoms include boils/inflammation on the entire body and itchy eruptions.

Collect the fruits of *Vinchhuda* (*Martynia diandra*) and air dry them. Coarsely grind these and soak for 2-3 days in water. This solution is then distilled. Distillate thus collected is used internally and externally. Take one tea spoonful of it orally once a day and apply this distillate on the infected parts 2-3 times a day. This will cure psoriasis within two months.

Varadh/Pneumonia in Children

This condition which occurs only in children and has the symptoms of severe cough and cold is called Varadh. Seeds of Kasundara (Stinking weed, *Cassia occidentalis*) (50g) and Jayfal (Nutmeg, *Myristica fragrans*) (four nos.) are ground to the powder form. One tea spoon of the powder is administered orally twice a day. This cures varadh within a week.

Arthritis

Joint pain, stiffening of joints, inability to stand straight, pain while walking, etc are the common symptoms. Bark of *Saragva* (Drum stick, *Moringa oleifera*) (200 g) is ground and boiled with water. The entire amount of water is then allowed to evaporate and the paste collected thus is mixed with Amba Haldar (*Curcuma*

amada) paste (100 g) and black pepper powder (100 g).

AIDS

Equal amount of dry roots of Avalkanti/Shatavari (*Asparagus*, *Asparagus racemosus*), Amba Haldar (*Curcuma amada*), Kdvi Dodi (*Leptadenia pyrotechnica*), Dodi (*Leptadenia reticulata*), *Chitrak* (Ceylon leadwort, *Plumbago zeylanica*) and *Athani* (available in forests of Rajasthan only) are mixed and ground to powder form. Ten grams of this powder is taken orally twice a day. Karimbhai claims to have cured more than 8-10 patients of HIV/AIDS till date. And according to him, it takes not more than three months to cure the patient completely.

A nature-lover

An ardent advocate of environmental conservation, Karimbhai's work in this field is three-pronged and includes monitoring the abundance or scarcity of the various herbs vis-à-vis their demand and cultivation of those plants that are becoming scarce as well as those needed in large quantities, educating the youth about the importance of diversity and about ways of utilizing the bounty of Nature without disturbing ecological balance and processing of medicinal plants in such a manner that a stable supply position is maintained and also in a manner, which assures consistent potency of their extracts. In 1999, Karimbhai founded an NGO named Aravalli Vikas Mandal which has been rendering creditable service to the flora and fauna of the ranges. He has also featured in a documentary film commissioned and telecast by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to honour experts in indigenous knowledge.

Future Plans

Karimbhai has joined with three more herbalists and applied for financial assistance under the Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP) of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) so that the market potential for his blood-pressure medications can be systematically assessed. He is quite hopeful of getting the needed funding and dreams of the day when the true potential of the herbs of the Aravalli ranges could be realised.