
Questioning as we learn: An introduction to critical thinking

Material for Higher Education students in Sierra Leone by INASP, UK



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Unit 3 - Snippet 64

Nepal's rich indigenous medical knowledge is under threat

Adapted from a press release on the INASP webpage <http://www.inasp.info/en/news/details/241/>

A research article published in 'Journal of Institute of Science and Technology' explores indigenous knowledge systems in the Darai community living in the Chitwan Valley in Nepal. The article describes this community's usage of animal and plant products to treat various diseases and ailments as a result of indigenous knowledge.

The Darai people use 28 animal species to treat 22 different types of ailments, and 76 plant species to treat 36 types of ailments ranging from simple diseases like common cold and headache to complex diseases like typhoid, the research found. In the case of animals, flesh, eggs, fat, bone etc. are used. In the case of plants, leaves, roots, fruits, flower, bark etc. are used.

Darai is one of the dozens of communities living in the hills, mountains and the plains of Nepal and Dr Singh has found that their indigenous knowledge system is very rich. However, the knowledge of the community passed on from generation to generation orally is now facing a risk because of the swift modernization, introduction of the internet, easy access and availability of allopathic medicine, and the younger generation's desire to migrate and adopt modern lifestyles. It is worrying that people are forgetting the traditional medicinal practices and depending solely on modern medicines. "For that exact reason, it is important to document the traditional knowledge," says Dr Singh. "And we have done it in detail in a very scientific way."

"Local people have suggested effectiveness and demonstrated success in the use of traditional medicines for curing and controlling diseases. While modern medicine has its own value, it is never sufficient alone to treat all types of illnesses." says Dr Singh. "That is why an integrated system comprising of the best practices of different systems of allopathic and traditional systems should be applied in healthcare."

"... modern medicines have been developed from certain compounds extracted from various types of plants and animals", Dr Singh explains. As there is a huge value in the indigenous knowledge that hasn't been put to use so far, Dr Singh concludes that research in this field should continue.