



# BONE SETTING PRACTICES AMONG THE MISHING TRIBE OF *PUTA BIL* VILLAGE OF NORTH LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT, ASSAM

Alam Channa Ahmed<sup>1</sup>

Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies

Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh-791112, India

Tasmina Rahman<sup>2</sup>

Department of Anthropology

Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh-791112, India

## ABSTRACT

The traditional healing practices of the Mishing community of Assam is very unique with several herbs, belief systems, rituals, food, healer and supernatural spirits are closely associated with healing. The knowledge of healing and associated practices is orally transmitted from one generation to other generation. Traditionally, for any bodily or mental illness, the Mishings consult the traditional healer and follow their advice. However in modern context the value and the role of the traditional healer is decreasing day by day and as a result the traditional knowledge of healing and associated rituals are also disappearing. This paper is an attempt to document certain important healing practices, particularly on *Aalong Dirpak/ Dirtung* i.e bone setting among the Mishing people domiciled in *Puta Bil* village of Lakhimpur district, Assam.

**Key words:** *Traditional healing practices, Mishing tribe, Traditional bone setting, Bone setter, Herbs, Belief systems, Rituals and Healer.*

## INTRODUCTION

The traditional healing practice of the Mishing community of Assam is very unique and several herbs, belief systems, rituals, food, healer and supernatural spirits are closely associated with healing. The Mishing people have a rich tradition of herbal medicines use in the treatment of various ailments. Among these treatments the

use of herbal medicine of bone setting is very different. A bone may be completely fractured (broken bone) or partially fractured in any number of ways (crosswise, lengthwise, in multiple pieces). The rate of healing and the ability to remodel a fractured bone vary tremendously for each person and depend on age, health, the kind of fracture, and the bone involved. For example, Children are able to heal and remodel their fractures much faster than adults.

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## OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this research work is to document the method and ethno medicinal plant species use in traditional bone setting practices by the Mishing tribe.

## AREA OF STUDY

The present study is carried out among the Mishing tribe domiciled in the “*Putu Bil*” village of North Lakhimpur district, Assam.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study is primarily based on primary data that is collected through extensive fieldwork and by using conventional techniques, such as – interviews (both structured and unstructured), concrete case studies and observation. The traditional healer is the key informants. The experiences and the belief systems associated with healing is collected from the other members of the tribe in an extensive manner. Audio visual tools are also used to document the data whenever required.

## OBSERVATION

The knowledge of healing and associated practices is orally transmitted from one generation to other generation. One of the most common plant species is the ‘*Harjura lota*’. While collecting the medicine the bone setter go near this plant and clap his hand once and in one breath taking the name of *Lord Krishna* and his *Guru* (teacher) he takes some of the creepers and come back.

This plants species is use in two different ways to treat bone fracture. In one method, 200 gm of *Harjura* (Edible stemmed vine /*Cissus quadrangularis* Linn/Vitaceae) (creeper) is grind and prepared as a paste and applied it to the broken area and covering the area with a banana leaf and then wrapped it with 2 feet of ‘*Harjura lota*’ and in one breath the bone setter tie the knot. This method is applied in major fracture while in minor fractures only the paste of *Harjura* is applied.

In another method, the Bone setter cut a part of this plant into required pieces depending on the intensity of the fracture and arranges these pieces over the broken bone by wrapped it with another piece of the creeper with a knot in a single breath. This method is applied for treating both major and minor fracture.



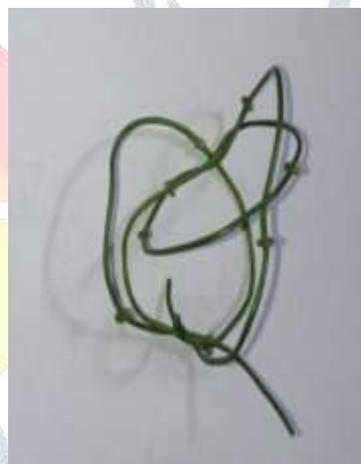
**Fig:1** *Harjura* plant



**Fig:2** A fracture joined by *harjura*



**Fig: 3** Bone setter collecting medicine



**Fig: 4** The *harjura* creeper

**Table-1** Plant and part used

Sl. no	Name of the Medicine Plants		Used Parts	Quantity
	Local Name	scientific/ family Name		
1	<i>Harjura</i>	<i>Cissus quadrangularis</i> Linn/Vitaceae	creeper	5-10 cm

## Conclusion and discussion

The use of *harjura* for bone setting indicates the use of herbal plants among the Mishing community. The Mishing tribe is blessed with the knowledge of herbal plant species which are available in their localities. They can, not only consume these herbal plants in their diet but can also use it as medicine. These herbal plants are of great use and importance in their life. Therefore, it is a need to conserve these plant species for their diverse uses in life. But the upcoming generation is not interested in learning this traditional practice as it is not remunerative enough as compared to time, efforts, employed and herbs available. Beside these, the introduction of modern medicines and the contact with the non-tribal have hindrance in the use of this traditional method of bone setting.

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