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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CARILLA MAGIC: AFRO GUYANESE MEDICINE AND MEMORY

Ele Cayana

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Abstract

The general context of this historical investigation is Herbal Medicine in the Afro-Caribbean Atlantic and, particularly, in Guyana. Specifically, this essay is focused on the use of Memory and Medicine to alleviate the socioeconomic and socio-spiritual challenges that non-European cultures faced in the ' New World' . My central question concerns the transplantation, transmission, and syncretism of various remedies to pre-colonial and pre-Columbian maladies, as well as modern maladies. It is already known that Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine is associated with the treatment of diseases through florae, and it has already been established that, at the time of contact, non-Europeans were healthy because of their Ethnobotanical knowledge. This essay' s importance relies on the investigation into the nature of Afro-Caribbean Atlantic retention. The analytic method contains a fusion of Social Histories, especially the use of Guyanese news articles, used to analyze the memory and history that remains in the hearts and minds of the public. The results show that there is a simultaneous recollection of Herbal Medicinal memory, and an attempt to remember; to be as healthy as generations before. The contemporary implications are especially relevant in this era, as the chronic nature of Covid illness becomes a greater threat in our human society.

Introduction:-

The impetus for this historical investigation began because of my family's use of Carilla throughout my life, and I ventured to find its historical antecedent. From the beginning of the 16th century to the mid-19th century,Africans brought knowledge of Holistic Healingduring their forced transoceanic journey to the 'New World'. The biological and socio-spiritual healing, from Magical/Medicinal florae, helped them maneuver the social and medicalmaladies of enslavement and,thereafter, the maladies of modernity. In the 20th and 21st centuries, manyAfro-Guyanese followed this ancestral guidanceand collaborated with Indian, Indigenous, and Chinese Guyanese's use of traditional medicine and a dietary discipline, which now defines their holistic salubrious lifestyle. However, this essay is ultimately more concerned with the transmission of memory and knowledge than it is about illnesses and/or their remedies. With a particular focus on the memory of healing in the Afro-Atlantic Caribbean, often historicized as Obeah in Guyana. This paradigm,historically characterized as pejorative, is now being recognized by historians and scientists with the value it has always deserved. Lastly, the paucity of Ethnobotanical terminologies in this essay is purposeful,and not as salient as the names that Afro-Caribbeans, and particularly Guyanese, call these Herbs and Plants.

Corresponding Author:- Ele Cayana

The intellectual history of the Afro-Atlanticcomprises theaccount, and amount, of florae that were transported to and transplanted into, the new world during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. In this way, Afro Caribbeans can trace their roots and routes to West Africa andthe ancientNile Valley Civilization (Kemet) where magic, medicine, and science were created. These ancient Africans produced the first physicians many millennia ago and shared their knowledge with the civilizations that followed. In the infamous Greek text,*On Ancient Medicine*written in 400BCE, Hippocrates referenced scientists from Ancient Kemet, who were cognizant of the connection between a salubrious human body and the substances it consumes.Furthermore, Hippocrates revealed that the balance and imbalance in human beings could be attributed to bodily levels of "black bile, yellow bile, phlemn, and blood."[1]The great Greek historian Herodotus (450BC) suggested that "they(the Egyptians) have a persuasion that every disease to which men are liable is occasioned by the substances whereon they feed."[2]These ancient sources contain knowledge that rarely differentiates between the sacred and the secular, and often references magic, medicine, and religion as if theyare equally important, and necessary, to fully achieve intelligence. In the places and spaces of learning, there was little or no distinction between Art, Astronomy, Mathematics, Philosophy, Music, Medicine, and Science.

The Kemetic Civilization (Nile Valley Civilizations/Pharaonic Civilization) was the healthiest grouping on Earth in the pre-historical period, and Kemetic scientists migrated throughout their continent, Greece, and the Near East transforming societies into civilizations. Furthermore, their magical/spiritual powers were psychic, physiological, and phenomenal;the placebo effect used in modern medicine is analogous tothe power of the mind used to heal the body,which was mastered in the Nile Valley Civilizations.[3]Furthermore, Kemetic physicians were cognizant of the excrement, perspiration, and deficiencies of the blood,"using as many as 1000 animal, plant, and mineral products in the treatment of illness."[4]

The historical record is pellucid that ancient, and pre-colonial scientists from all parts of the African continent were proficient in medical and magical skills, as much as they were in their sacred, secular, and surgical performance. In addition, inPre-Colonial West African cosmology, the supreme deitydid not intervene in worldly affairs, the worldly spirits were responsible for the catastrophe and/or prosperity of the living. As Juanita De Barros reveals, West Africans viewed "medicine and magic as intimately linked and often attributed sickness and misfortune to the supernatural."[5]In the language of modernity, these men and women would be regarded as doctors, diviners, healers, intellectuals, priests, sages, scientists, and/or scholars, and the value of their use of Herbs and Plants was recognized by all classes of society.

In the early 16th century, the propinquity of the Akan and Hausa/Fulani cultures resulted in the collaborationbetween scientists, recognized as adroit herbalists and agriculturalists whose societies often traded with the Mandingo. Furthermore, "it is noteworthy that the Mandingos were the first people to develop smallpox vaccination as a prophylactic measure."[6]Ultimately, their ethnobotanical knowledge manifested on both sides of the Atlantic World, because of the transoceanic trade of African people.In Benin, the Pre-Colonial Kingdom of Dahomey, a 2004 study showed that herbal plants continued to be sold by vendors in all the major markets, to treat Malaria; "thought to have a natural cause, but…also believed possible to be made sick by a vodoun."[7]The holistic remediesconsisted of tonics and admixtures which contained fruit/bark/root specimens, in which "of the 3000 Beninese plant species, over 500 (were) used in Herbal medicine", some remedies requiring up to 28 different plant varieties.[8]As Malaria is multi-symptomatic, some plants were used for anemia, or headaches, while others were used for inflammation and/or

[1]Ivan Van Sertima,*Blacks in Science: Ancient and Modern. 13th Edition*,(The Journal of African Civilizations Ltd., Inc., 1998.), 135.
[2] Van Sertima, *Blacks in Science*, 132.
[3] Van Sertima, *Blacks in Science*, 140.
[4] Van Sertima, *Blacks in Science*, 146.
[5] Juanita De Barros, "Setting Things Right': Medicine and Magic in British Guiana, 1803– 38," *Abolition and Slavery* 25, no.1 (April 2004): 37.
[6] Susan A. McClure, "Parallel Usage of Medicinal Plants by Africans and Their Caribbean Descendants," *Economic Botany* 36, no. 3 (1982): 297.
[7] Merel Hermans, Akpovi Akoègninou, and L. Jos G. van der Maesen, "Medicinal Plants Used to Treat Malaria in Southern Benin." *Economic Botany* 58 (2004): S239.
[8] Hermans, "Medical Plants," 240.

stimulation of the immune system.[9]The conclusion of this study showed that almost half of the plants and mixtures sold had scientifically quantifiable medicinal value.

For Afro-Guyanese, the aversion to African remembrance was sometimes a product of the internalization of European "characterization of African memory as nonknowledge."[10]However, their memory was always a salient source of knowledge that guided their sensibilities, even in the reality of persecution and pessimism. As validated by Edward Kamau Brathwaite, the tens of millions of African people transported to the new world from 1540 to 1840, brought with them a rich culture that "survived, and creatively adapted itself to its new environment."[11]That memory continued to thrive in the lives of theirAfro-Caribbean descendants, and in this way,suggests that African memory, Afro-Caribbean memory, and Afro-Guyanese memory,are continuous processes even asHistory may be regarded as static. Furthermore, the ongoing interpretation of African cultural retention has always been a tool against Eurocentrism. However, this essay is not a contestation against European knowledge, only a defense of African knowledge as different but not deficient.

The West African root and route of many Herbal Medicinal Plants aresometimes ambiguous, but not completely untraceable. It is problematic to consider that much of the written history of these plants does not give credence to an African Past. For example, according to Velasco and Waldron's research, only four; Congo Lana, Money Bush, Man Piaba, and Woman Piaba, of sixty-eightselected species from Bill Rogers' song, *West Indian Weed Woman*,are of African origin.[12]In their research, the origin of Physic Nut is recognized as Cape Verdeanas if that island's proximity to the African continent precludes an African origin.However, their essay mentions possible syncretism and the probability that species had multiple places of origin. Also, their research firmly states that the word Piaba, from the mint family, is from the Akan linguistic family**.**It is evident that upon arrival into the Caribbean, Africans would have transplanted ideas, sowing the systems that created comfort in their daily lives. The tropical ecologist Tindel R. van Andel reveals that "enslaved Africans recognized a substantial part of the Neotropical flora."[13] The names and uses for several floraeindicate either evolution and hybridization or that florae were cultivated and domesticated independently by different cultures.Whether through ingenuity or memory, West Africans recognized the value in the similarities between their old and new environments. By the 1790s, enslaved West Africans from regions such as modern-day Benin, Gabon, and Ghana continued to pour into theCaribbean and South American landscapes with their memory intact.

In Benin, the herbal fruit 'Pechereku', sharessimilaritieswithan herbal fruit used by the Afro-Surinamese in the Northern part of South America. In Suriname, Maroons have sold 'Pedreku',"added to medicinal mixtures to disguise their bitter taste"and used against infections of the urinary mucous membranes.[14]For centuries the Fon people of West Africa had used this fruit of the 'Aliwa' tree, which they used to produce a seed pulp. These were sold in markets and "known in French as 'moutarde Africain', an essential ingredient of a traditional sauce accompanying the regional staple foods of millet and sorghum."[15]The movement and migration of memory and medicine formulated fortitude amongst the Maroons, whose mental and physical resistance to European domination is pellucid in the annals of Afro-Atlantic history. Resistance to European domination manifested in many forms; magic and medicine had always been used to resist the evil incarnations that existed in the socio-spiritual worlds of the enslaved, even after emancipation. For example, the stems and shoots of a lavender-scented plant(Cyperus Proxilus), used in Suriname to bathe and protect babies from supernatural forces, have similarities to Cyperus Rotundus known "as Kyakya in the Twi language."[16]Africans in the new world recognized these similarities and

[9] Hermans, "Medical Plants," 249.
[10] Abebe Zegeye and Maurice Vambe, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 29, no. 4 (2006): 331.
[11] Edward Kamau Brathwaite, "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature," *Daedalus* 103, no. 2 (1974): 73.
[12] Erneslyn Velasco and Lawrence Waldron, "WEST INDIAN WEED WOMAN: INDIGENOUS ORIGINS OF WEST INDIAN FOLK MEDICINE," *Conference: XXVII Congress of the International Association for Caribbean Archaeology, 2017 At: St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islan*ds (2017): 625-626.
[13] Tinde R. van Andel, "African Names for American Plants," *American Scientist* 103, no. 4 (2015): 271.
[14] Andel, "African Names," 268.
[15] Andel, "African Names," 270.
[16]Andel, "African Names," 273.

began implementing them in their medicinal treatments as they did in their Homelands. In another example, the "Afro-Surinamese name 'sangrafu'…can be traced back to the Kikongo word 'nsangalavwa, used in the Democratic Republic of Congo for Costus afer…Costus species are known in Trinidad and Guyana as Congo cane."[17]

By the mid-18th century, hundreds of thousands (perhaps millions) of West Africans were enslaved and integrated into the West Indian labor force, attempting to recreate their previous environments as much as they could. For example, Lime "was previously used medicinally in West Africa…and incorporated into West Indian culture."[18]AsSusan McClurestates, Lime was used for sacred and secular purposes, both in West Africa, the Caribbean, and during the transoceanic journey; the Lime twig was common on slave ships and used for oral hygiene, scurvy, and dysentery. Ultimately, theseforced Atlantic migrations served as a bridge for the continued use of Lime, and even now, Lime is often used; in a bath admixture, as a charm in the Caribbean, and particularly Guyana, to wean off bad energy and spirits.

From the mid-16th century, the cultural, and military defeat by Europeans and the subsequent enslavement of Africans, created the notion of Western superiority and colonial alterity,saturating all facets of life in the African Diaspora. However, this essay, like many other academic, andpopularcontributions, attempts to explicate and extradite notions of the backwardness of African traditional medicine and traditional religion in the Caribbean historical record. For African people, from times immemorial, there was always little difference between the sacred and the secular,and the use of words in the New World had the same metaphysical and pragmatic power over the living spirit and human biology, as it did before the transoceanic migration. As Edward Kamau Brathwaite contends, "the rhetoric of yard quarrels…word throwings…tea-meetings…and preacher/political orations…The whole living tradition of the calypso is based on it."[19]

In the Caribbean, grandiose ceremonies had always been part of the healing process and may have contributed to the success as well as to the mystique of the healer. Their ethereal power was often respected and recognized to treat the social and spiritual needs of enslaved people.The spiritual needs were necessary to fill the void that European religion did not address, and their social necessities were to counter the sense of inferiority that non-European cultures endured. Emancipation and the end of slavery in 1838 did not coincide with an end to European suppression, and colonial cultural repression took many forms. The paradigm that "the process of education began-first clerical, then secular, but always colonial", is indicative of this essay's antithesis concerning Afro-Caribbean memory.[20]As a result of colonial indoctrination, newer generations of African descendants began to lose the memory of their people and their Africaness, adapting to and adopting a more European spirit. The ones that were fortunate enough to hold on to their old ways of life would be castigated and criticized by most and celebrated by some. Ultimately, this new Caribbean community consisted of multiple layers of disparate and dividing cultural codes, contesting for control of the same places and spaces. The use of Herbs in the Afro-Caribbean Atlantic was associated with 'pagan' rituals and regressive religion, but also connected to the movement and migration of Asians and Indians. It is indeed remarkable that "for the past four centuries, many remedies have endured, conserved sometimes in pure or syncretic forms by Caribbean populations with diverse global origins and ethnic affiliations."[21]Carilla, Kerala, or Bitter Gourd/Melon was one of these plants that are still used for its leaves and fruit as a remedy for many modern maladies.

Many of the herbs used by Afro-Guyanese have indigenous origins, notwithstanding that these origins may have a syncretic connection to West African origins. As Velasco and Waldron affirm, a large majority of the species mentioned in Bill Rogers' folk song 'West Indian Weed Woman', "are native to the Caribbean and the other Americas (raising questions about) whether the traditional healers of these plant-based medicines knew their native origins…"[22]Over time, the modification of these medicines created a variation in prescription among Indigenous regions and amongst the entire Caribbean and South American landscape. An ethnobotanical study of the Watoriki people, in the State of Amazonas, Brazil, revealed the use of a broad spectrum of Herbs, and their medicinal

[17] Andel, "African Names," 275.
[18] Susan A. McClure, "Parallel Usage of Medicinal Plants by Africans and Their Caribbean Descendants," *Economic Botany* 36, no. 3 (1982): 292.
[19] Brathwaite, "The African Presence," 92.
[20] Brathwaite, "The African Presence," 75.
[21] Velasco, "West Indian Weed Woman," 622.
[22]Velasco, "West Indian Weed Woman," 622.

traditions were in tandem with "shamanistic contact with the spirit world..."[23]Ultimately, their propinquity to Guyana gives even more credence to the syncretic nature of the Guyanese ethnobotanical tradition. Milliken substantiates this claim that "the species used, and the ways in which they are employed, have much in common with those recorded among indigenous and non-Indigenous communities both within and outwith the region."[24]

Furthermore, as indicated by Chikako Takeshita, the indigenous people of the Third World tropical regions have a holistic relationship with florae, and the connection between nature and society produces unique cultural politics.[25]Similar to the Caribbean colonialists who imposed their education systems on their subjects post enslavement,in Mexico, "pan-Mayan movements (attempted) to reestablish cultural and political autonomy through education, language, and other cultural initiatives."[26]This research revealed that knowledge had been 'stolen' and there had been a concerted effort, in spaces such as Brazil and Guyana to challenge the West andattempt to register medicinal patents for their 'sacred plants'.Although Takeshita's research focuses on economic capital, human capital, and its relationship with biodiversity, a comparison to the Guyanese situation is apropos. In Guyana, the quotidian use of herbs and fruits like Carilla, which produce sustainability and self-sufficiency, has increased their equity with regional and international health infrastructures. This paradigm existed for the Pre-Columbian Indigenouscultures, and the totality of the Post-Colonial world, alike. In the new world, to survive and thrive, disparate non-European people bonded together and ultimately created cultural ties that fostered fortitude.

In the 21st century, the memory of Indian ethnobotanical knowledge is alive in Guyana with vendors such as Sharmila Mohamed; the 'Indian Bush Lady', whose practice was passed on from her grandmother to her mother. Her family legacy includes the use ofplants such as Sand Bitters, Lemon Grass, Daisy, and 'Cure for All', which are "washed and boiled, cooled then poured into sterilized plastic bottles."[27]Other Herbs such as Fever Grass and Tulsie are sold dry and used for brewing tea. It is important to recognize that Herbal practitioners like the 'Indian Bush Lady' in Guyana, acknowledge these potions as medicine, and so does her patronage. She iterated that "rich people, poor people, not so poor people, Indian people, African people, even Amerindian and Chinese people does buy bush and bush medicine from me."[28]Her knowledge, and that of her mother and grandmother, likely came from the multiplicity of Guyana's cultural formations, producing the rich cultural, Herbal medicinal value systems, ubiquitous in Guyana.

In the colonial historical record, the practice of traditional healing by Afro-Guyaneseis associated with 'Obeah'. Obeah, now a recognized religion in Guyana, is still reputed by most as an ungodly force, andthe historical record is clear that Obeah men and women were victims of this denigration and disrespect. In the pre-emancipation era, however, Juanita De Barros examines these enslaved health practitioners, their healing practices, and theirobligationtothe community, "particularly in the successful completion of medical/magical healing ceremonies."[29]In enslaved communities, the priority of the plantations was profit, while disease and death were accepted and normalized. As a result, "in the British Caribbean, slave doctors used 'herbal remedies' to treat patients in the estate hospitals."[30]In the colonies of Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice, the enslaved Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Creole's practice of Traditional Medicine and Obeah were meant to maintain agency and power over their own lives, and Juanita DeBarros reveals Mama Lucy as one of these respected individuals, who endeavored to heal and help. This continuous contest over the dominion of social, somatic, and spiritual wellbeing was revealed when "two *obeah* trials held in Berbice in the late 1810s and early 1820s…(showed)that healers depended on the assistance of the wider slave community in performing healing rituals, which were, above all, communal ceremonies."[31]

[23] William Milliken and Bruce Albert. "The Use of Medicinal Plants by the Yanomami Indians of Brazil, Part II." *Economic Botany* 51, no. 3 (1997): 264.
[24] Milliken, "The Use of Medicinal Plants", 276.
[25] Chikako Takeshita, "Bioprospecting and Its Discontents: Indigenous Resistances as Legitimate Politics," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26, no. 3 (2001): 261.
[26] Takeshita, "Bioprospecting and Its Discontents," 264.
[27] "The Bourda Bush Seller," *Stabroek News*, July 8, 2011.
[28] "The Bourda Bush Seller,"*Stabroek News*, July 8, 2011.
[29]De Barros, "Setting Things Right," 28.
[30] De Barros, "Setting Things Right," 32.
[31]De Barros, "Setting Things Right," 33.

Claudius Fergus acknowledges the early Afro-Caribbean music such as Guyana's Shanto, Jamaica's Mento, and Trinidad's Calypso as the melodic repositories of African memory which provided "psychotherapy for the trauma of enslavement."[32]Enslavement in the New World manifested new modes of memory, and music had always been part of the pre-colonial West African oral tradition. In that system, the salience of the Griot was transported to the Caribbean, along with the intellect and memory of that which the enslavers wished to erase. In the Afro-Caribbean Atlantic, these modalities moved and migrated between the various islands and colonies, reverberating the pains and possibilities of prosperities.

From the 1930s to the 1940s, these nascent, modern, musical modes were instrumental in providing new generations of free people with the edification that was absent in colonial institutions. Songs such as Cobra's 'Shango Song' (1937) were outlawed, because of the fears of Colonial and Christian power structures. The cultural ethos of this music hails from the cosmology of Yoruba and Ewe-Fon people of West Africa, and as Fergus cogently states, "free Africans favored calypso as a vehicle for secularizing Ifa (Orisha/Shango) and other African religious forms."[33]As Fergus contends, "this legacy goes back to the slavery era when European colonists conveniently labeled all traditional African priests, priestess, other mediums of the spirit world, and practitioners of African herbal science 'obeahmen' and 'obeahwomen'."[34]The linguistic origins of Obeah are an admixture of Twi, and Yoruba cultures and this imprint in the music is omnipresent, with its pervasive drum patterns and 'call and response' structures. From the early 19th century, the cosmopolitan customs of places such as Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad provided the space for the connection and collaboration between different forms of Afro-Caribbean musical styles that transformed how memory was perceived and received. Since the 1930s, Bill Rogers's song 'West Indian Weed Woman', has captured the hearts and minds of the Guyanese public, all the while enlightening them on the litany of Herbal Medicine, with a taxonomy that only Guyanese would recognize. The feeling of this classic work of art is as powerful now as it was in the 1930s when Shanto music was rarely recorded but still memorized and performed. Shanto music represents the reality that magic, music, and memory work together in tandem to create a holistic therapy for the mind, body, and soul.

Herbal Medicine in Guyana is ubiquitous, even though there is "little research and chemical analysis of the majority of folk medicine used."[35]The scientific regularization has been a slow and steady process, however, some flora such as ginger, garlic, and turmeric have been acknowledged to have holistic health benefits. Mint has also been beneficial, verified through much research, and "used to treat colds and fevers…combined with other herbs such as lemongrass and Toyo…with its Menthol…it is able to break up phlegm and mucus."[36]Though Guyanese lack the historical knowledge of Hippocrates and the ancient text *'On Ancient Medicine'*, their Afro-Caribbean intelligence manifests in the use of products like Shilling Oil and Tiger Balm, two popular aromatic medicines in Guyana. The quotidian combinations of consumption of manyherbs and plantspresenta comprehensive approach to fighting diseases, often, before they intensify. For example, validated by Velasco and Waldron, in the Caribbean and South America, 'Piabas' (native bushmints), are used to treat gastrointestinal disorders, skin infections, and pain. 'Woman Piaba' has been used to treat pain, infections, and Cancer, and applied to wounds to promote healing.Gully Root is also used as an admixture, with Carilla Bush, to alleviate the symptoms of Cancer, and as a treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, andSoursop leaves are used to regulate high blood pressure, for colds and fever, as a vermifuge, and as a mosquito repellant.[37]The leaves of Ant's Bush were crushed, and the juice was used with breast milk to care for children with thrush. Black Nightshade was used to cleanse the blood and improve kidney function. Black Sage was used for treating headaches, and 'Bird-Pepper' was used to improve heart function. The stems of Cappa-Dula were boiled in hot water and used to ease the symptoms of diarrhea. Christmas Bush was also brewed as a tea to prevent further fevers.[38]

[32] ClaudiusFergus, "FROM SLAVERY TO BLACK POWER: THE ENIGMA OF AFRICA IN THE TRINIDAD CALYPSO," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, no. 16 (2014): 1.
[33]Fergus, "FROM SLAVERY TO BLACK POWER," 4.
[34]Fergus, "FROM SLAVERY TO BLACK POWER," 10.
[35] PatDyal, "The Health Benefits of Mint and Tulsi," *Guyana Chronicle*. August 25, 2019.
[36] Dyal, "The Health Benefits of Mint and Tulsi," *Guyana Chronicle.*
[37] Velasco, "West Indian Weed Woman," 627-629.
[38] Daniel F. Austin and Godfrey R. Bourne, "Notes on Guyana's Medical Ethnobotany," *Economic Botany* 46, no. 3 (1992): 294

The Guyanese population in modernity has continued to rely on these very remedies for their modern maladies. In 2015, cancerous cells were detected in a patient; Rodell Hinds, and by 2017, she had been diagnosed with cervical cancer. After many semi-successful attempts at chemotherapy, she began a "herbal treatment and…changed her diet to vegan...She started the herbal medicine and according to Hinds within a month she was 'up and running as opposed to being almost bedridden when the conventional medicine was being administered."[39] Hinds admitted that Herbal Medicine worked better than conventional medicine and she has continued to use it in tandem with seeing her regular doctor. Ultimately, data continued to show that Guyanese believe in the efficacy of Bush Medicine, albeit they practice this Alternative Medicine with conventional Modern Medicinal practices. Though, to a lesser extent, even Pharmacists and Physicians in Guyana support the use of Herbal remedies.[40]

In modernity, Guyanese are reminded and are remembering that "much of today's medications sold in pharmacies (incidentally, the Greek word Pharmakeus refers to a Sorcerer, and is the origin word of Pharmacy) were stolen from ageless formulas created by genuine 'bush medicine' practitioners throughout the ages."[41]Even as there are scientific attempts to elevate Modern Medicine and denigrate Herbal science, Guyanese continue to be vigilant in their defense of the proven record of 'Bush Teas'. As former Minister of Health Dr. Bheri Ramsaran stated, "good things…come out of bushes…we need to take cognizance of what is said…maybe the University of Guyana should probably do a research…(and) we would know more concretely what they do."[42](Stabroek News Ramsaran to have technical people peruse UWI bush remedy study)

Carilla, known as "Momordica charantia L…belongs to a genus of approximately 40 species that are indigenous to the Old World."[43]In Guyana, the many names, pronunciations, and spellings of Momordica charantia L. are 'sorossi'(usually spelled Cerassie in Jamaica), baan-caryla, and Carilla.The fruit is often used as a fried stew and is eaten with rice, however, the most common use is when the leaves are boiled and used as a tonic to treat hypertension,as well as to purify the blood. Also, "the root is astringent and applied to hemorrhoids. A root decoction produces abortion and, in Cuba, is prescribed to expel concretions from the bladder. In parts of Venezuela, an infusion of the root is esteemed as anti-malarial."[44]

In many cultures of antiquity, the Bitter Gourd(Carilla) is featured in their creation stories and retained a supernatural satisfaction with the collective. As it relates to 'the origin of the sea', the Arawak Indians of South America believed Giaia, who slew his son, placed his bones inside a Gourd, which turned into fish."The Neur of the southern part of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, of the Zeraf Island, and along the Nile, says 'A very large gourd is supposed to have fallen down from heaven. In it were a spear, a large leopard skin, and a person. This person is Kur, and he is the father of the first Neur."[45] Also, "the Wa of Indo-China assert that the Creator Spirit, Hkun Hsang Long, dropped from heaven two gourds from which sprang the people and animas of earth."[46]Eddie Wilson reveals that in Chinese historical culture, the painting of a gourd served to "ward off pernicious influences" and prevent smallpox and measles in children.[47]Wilson's research confirms that within the African continent, many cultures used the Gourd for spiritual/medical purposes. A Nyanga (doctor) of the Manyika culture of Zimbabwe, used the Gourd as a divining instrument, and the Wayao traditional healers of Nyasaland also used the Gourd in similar ways. Also in West Africa, from the Akan cosmology, "Ananse, the Spider, collected 'all diseases' which at the time were

[39] Oluatoyin Alleyne, "Patient with advanced cancer drops chemo and opts for herbal medicine." *Stabroek News*. February 18, 2018.
[40] Ede Tyrell, Karishma Jeeboo, Jewel Edmonson-Carter, Troy Thomas and Rajini Kurup. "Attitudes and Practices of Pharmacists and Physicians towards Bush Medicine in Guyana," *Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medical Research* 11, no. 4 (2020): 10.
[41] Barrington Brathwaite, "Bush tea and bush medicine," *Guyana Chronicle*. July 6, 2017.
[42] "Ramsaran to have technical people peruse UWI bush remedy study." *Stabroek News*. April 3, 2012.
[43] Kendrick L. Marr, Xia Yong Mei, and Nirmal K. Bhattarai. "Allozyme, Morphological and Nutritional Analysis Bearing on the Domestication of Momordica Charantia L. (Cucurbitaceae)." *Economic Botany* 58, no. 3 (2004): 435.
[44] Julia F Morton, "The Balsam Pear: An Edible, Medicinal and Toxic Plant," *Economic Botany* 21, no. 1 (1967): 61.
[45] Eddie W. Wilson, "The Gourd in Magic," *Western Folklore* 13, no. 2/3 (1954): 113.
[46] Wilson, "The Gourd," 114.
[47] Wilson, "The Gourd," 115.

confined in the body of one woman, placed them in a Gourd and stretched a skin over the gourd, thus forming a drum."[48]This migratory memory would have been syncretized throughout the Afro-Atlantic diaspora in the Caribbean and South America.

In the northern region of the South American continent, "the Surinamese name sopropo for the bitter melon can be traced back to the Ashanti people in Ghana, who use the same term for it."[49]Even as some research studies point to multiple origins of Carilla, "the domestication of M. charantia most likely occurred at a single location."[50]Ultimately, however, the present use and memory of its use are more important than where it was first cultivated or domesticated, whether it is African, Indian, Chinese, or Indigenous.

The Indo-Guyanese use of 'Karela' reflects their movement and migration from India. "Ayurveda, a traditional Indian system of medicine and an integral part of Indian culture, still continues to provide health care to a large percentage of (their) people,"furthermore the anthologies of Indian Medicinal plants called 'Nigantus', written between the 7th and 17th centuries describe Karela as having a multitude of healing properties, including remedies for anaemia, diabetes/polyurea, worms, jaundice, and respiratory disorders.[51] Notwithstanding the likely multi-origin nature of Karela, modern Indo Guyanese possessed the memory of their ancestral journey as Indentured Servants, whichbegan after Afro-Guyanese Emancipation in 1838, lasting until the early 20th century. Indians brought with them Kerala, "and numerous other seeds…like the night jasmine or 'chameli', 'tulsie' or holy basil…'saijan' or moringa."[52]'Clean Outs', as termed in Guyana is a process of cleaning the digestive tract and is seen as necessary for holistic well-being. Indranie Deolall continues that "Bitters(brewed Karela leaves) were reserved for extreme cases when…far more oily and syrupy school snacks were suspiciously judged neither safe nor sound for lucid thought, long life and languorous limbs."[53]

The use of Traditional Medicine has continued to be a great benefit, especially for those who do have not access to the luxury of Modern Medicine. Their memory of ancient Herbal remedies now enjoys the scientific substantiation necessary to authorize their use of Ethnobotany as tantamount to Modern Medicine. In the current crisis of the Covid 19/Corona Virus pandemic, less populated areas in Guyana have managed to maintain healthy communities. As one resident of Baracara indicated, "We don't really get affect by sickness…just the simple cold and flu and we treat ourselves…we have a bark that we call the cold bark…we have something that we call wild sorrel."[54]The treatment of Diabetes is especially important for the Afro-Guyanese population, because of the debilitating dietary habits that have penetrated their culture.However, within the Guyanese national community, there has always been a positive path forward, and such an example comes from the use of Karela (or Carilla), where the fruit, leaves, and stem are used as remedies for the disease. In a recent study of Pakuri Village, the Arawak community's use ofCarilla was the most common plant used in the treatment of Diabetes, however, "more than two-thirds of the participants (in their study) had no previous training on the benefits and adverse effects of traditional medicine."[55]This is indicative of Guyanese culture, where intergenerational memory is robust even as the knowledge transmission lacks the requisite scientific explanation.

In its endeavor for economic self-sufficiency and sustainability, Guyanese have access to healthy foods, and ingenious use of diverse flora, which require only courage to be cultivated. This knowledge has continued to be a benefit to the entire Caribbean region and beyond. "When there wasn't enough money to supply the tribe with new

[48] Wilson, "The Gourd," 115-118.
[49]Andel, "African Names," 271.
[50]Marr, "Allozyme, Morphological and Nutritional Analysis," 454.
[51] Ashok K. Tiwari, "Karela: A Promising Antidiabetic Vegetable Therapy," *Current Science* 92, no. 12 (2007): 1697.
[52] Indranie Deolall, "Goat mouth and bitter fruits," *Stabroek News*. June 13, 2009.

[53] Indranie Deolall, "Goat mouth and bitter fruits," *Stabroek News*. June 13, 2009.
[54] "Baracara, the Maroon village that's never had a COVID-19 case." *Guyana Chronicle*. March 5,2022
[55] Boston, Cecil. Judith Rosales, Jaipaul Singh, and Rajini Kurup. "Knowledge and utilization of Traditional Medicine for Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus among Residents of Pakuri (St. Cuthbert's Mission) in Guyana." *Journal of Alternative Medicine* 7, no.3 (May 2019): 8.

tooth brushes: No problem! Blacksage stem did the job!"[56]As Guyana attempts to become the breadbasket of the Caribbean once again, the 'Obeah Man/Woman', of the past, are now entrepreneurs in today's world; a world in which local, regional, and international potential customers are looking for holistic, and organic ways to improve their immune functions and fight the chronic nature of non-communicable diseases. The story of Princess Cosbert and her business; *Nature's Finest Herbal Tea*, is revealing. Following the advice of her father to "concoct and consume a potion comprising 'young' coconut water, tomato, garlic, and parsley…In a week, she says, the weight and hair loss that had been the clearest indication of her failing health began to appear to be in regression."[57]Her product is an admixture of the bushes, barks, and grasses from the Soursop tree, Suriname Cherry tree, Moringa tree, and Lemongrass. Her decision to invest herself, and her resources into this industry was a result of her ancestral memory and the economic viability of Herbs. This is the story of Carilla Magic.

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