medicine as well as *kobiraaj* and *hakims*, and use their expertise "to bridge the gap between traditional medicine and modern medicine."

"Today, even the Western world is in awe of our traditional eastern way of treatment. They are spending millions on researching on how to enhance their knowledge of the curative powers of herbs and plants," says Bhuiyan.

Bhuiyan cites his own example to explain the healing powers of natural herbs and plants. "When I was younger, I was suffering from high fever. I remember shivering and shuddering continuously and this continued for some time. A relative, who had some understanding of Unani treatment, visited me with a concoction of some herbs and plants, and asked me to drink the mixture. Within minutes I started to feel better and within days, I was completely fine," he says.

Even though the interest in Unani medicine is on the rise, Bhuiyan says that a lack of government support is hindering further growth and preservation of traditional medical practices like Unani and Ayurveda. Hamdard has already established a university with a Faculty for Natural Sciences and has founded several colleges around the country but without proper government support further growth is difficult, says Bhuiyan.

Hamdard, however, will continue to promote traditional medicine practices with or without the support of the government, says Bhuiyan "Our commitment is to our customers, who blindly trust our products. And our goal is to offer them the best products at an affordable rate," he concludes.



Sadhana sells ayurvedic medicines that have no side effects.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Being Natural

The Western world might term these practices as 'alternative medicine' but the use of nature for treatment has been an intrinsic, unique part of our culture since time immemorial. Herbal tonics are the medicines that our mothers would buy from stores like Shadhana Aushudhaloy or Hamdard to immunise us against ailments. As we grow older, we start seeking instant relief and fast cures, and in that process we seem to have forgotten how traditional plants can still act in a far more effective way of staying healthy. ■