

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The concern over Medico-spiritual healing practice has acquired enormous proportions today and is receiving attention all over, as it has connection with primary health care and the environment and there is a commitment to safeguard both from the physical and social impacts associated with it. It is peculiar that where on the one hand huge investment is made in constructing super speciality health care institutions, while on the other hand, slight thought is given in dealing with the Medico-spiritual healing practice prevalent in Sikkim. The information of ailments presumption and moor care system of the the world enables us to manage extra judiciously, more sympathetically while introducing original indigenous medicinal practice amid individuals who have identified Medico-spiritual healing practice previously. A lot has been whispered but little is prepared in the direction of safeguarding and promoting of Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim.

The study of Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim as a traditional management of human ailments indicates that the study area is rich in its medicinal plants composition and the associated indigenous knowledge possessed by the healers. The extensive uses of these medicinal plants specify that there is good harmony on the efficiency of their medicinal properties. The traditional medicinal floras are fundamental to the rural cultures. The healers are conversant about the plant life, their distribution, application and conservation. This is further promoted and safeguarded by cultural and spiritual practices.

Indigenous Knowledge has been exercised for ages by indigenous and restricted communities and has been the basis of their existence specially in the key sectors of health and food. Modern science has recently started looking at Indigenous Knowledge as a foundation of new ailment specially as the expenditure of putting new medicine on the marketplace is becoming very costly. The growing phenomenon of bio-piracy<sup>706</sup> shows that somewhat hypocritical attitude of western science to Indigenous Knowledge. Scavenging it on the one hand and claiming patents on all kinds of products derived from Indigenous Knowledge (turmeric, neem, etc.) yet refusing to acknowledge its economic value and ownership.

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<sup>706</sup>The practice of commercially exploiting naturally occurring biochemical exploiting naturally occurring biochemical or genetic material, especially by obtaining patents that restricts its future use, while failing to pay fair compensation to the community from which it originates.

Similarly, amidst the loud protests against ‘bio-piracy’ and ‘theft’ of India’s biodiversity and traditional knowledge by foreign nationals, the turmeric case was a landmark case. In it, this was the first time that a patent based on the traditional knowledge of a developing country was challenged successfully and United States Patent and Trademark Office revoked the patent. This eventually opened up the path to the creation of Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, Traditional Knowledge Resource Clarification, and finally inclusion of traditional knowledge in the International Patent Clarification System.

The efforts of the National Biodiversity Authority is further carried forward by the nationalized institution of Science communiqué and the division of Indian Systems of drug and Homeopathy of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which have come together to compile the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library. The Traditional Knowledge Digital Library is to document the Traditional Knowledge available in the public domain in a digitized format. Starting with the existing literature in Ayurveda, it would cover Unani, Siddha, Naturopathy, Homeopathy, folklore medicine and medico-spiritual healing too. Despite, having such a beautiful concept and a medium to preserve and protect such an age old practices, sadly, Medico-spiritual healing practice prevalent in Sikkim do not find a place in the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library. Hence their Intellectual Property Rights are not protected, which indeed causes a great threat to such age old practice in Sikkim.

Taking into consideration the seriousness of the problem persisted in management of Medico-spiritual healing practice throughout the country and to examine the efficacy, the researcher has undertaken the subject with objectives in hand which includes among others, detailed in-depth knowledge about the existing Medico-spiritual practice scenario prevailing in the Sikkim, its evolution by tracing out the past history, international instruments (general and specific) to deal with the same, general and particular laws of the country under which the subject could be properly dealt with, the existing scenario of Medico-spiritual practice in countries like Nepal, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Venezuela etc. On the basis of the available data, primary and secondary, the researcher had tried to reach to the findings with relevant remarks under this work. The Chapterisation of this research work is based on the hypothesis that natural resources such as herbs, medicinal plants and other flora and fauna are not adequately protected by the State and do not find a place in Traditional Knowledge Digital Library and no Intellectual Property Rights is protected. Further, Statutory laws available in India do not directly address the key issues relating to Medico-spiritual practices in Sikkim; hence a comprehensive legislation is needed to address such issue and there is an urgent need to take

steps to extend legal protection to them so that in terms of equity, efficiency, quantity and quality they would significantly improve.

Another object of this research work was to highlight the exercise prevailing in Sikkim in terms of Medico-spiritual healing practice, for which the researcher had undertaken to conduct field study as part of the empirical research and it has been found that the scenario in Sikkim in terms of this form of healing practice is more or less similar to that prevailing in the other States of the Country, which is neglected. Being the primary aim, the researcher had visited different Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim, questioning and interviewing them. A glimpse of the chapter dealing with the empirical study shows a very grim picture of the Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim. The study makes it evident that despite ages of traditional healing practice within the State, the concerned authorities have failed to find a place for such healing practice in Traditional Knowledge Digital Library. Moreover, despite having many associations representing various ethnic communities in Sikkim, lack of a legal framework to address issues pertaining to Medico-spiritual healing practice in the State is of a grave concern, for the protection of Intellectual Property Rights.

In this background, where the Medico-spiritual healing practice all over the country including Sikkim portray a similar picture, there is an urgent need to develop a legal framework within which progress can be made on a step by step basis which shall foster the philosophy that any small but steady step of improvement is better than being a mere spectator and doing nothing. The framework can be compared with a ladder where each stair is a detailed plan of action that aims to protect and promote Medico-spiritual healing practice and practitioners, the basis for moving up the next level, leading ultimately to the establishment of a sound traditional health care regime within the State. To achieve the same, strict implementation of the following must be ensured and then only Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim would be practically and effectively protected.

## **7.1. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Therefore, the Medico-spiritual healing process should begin with the following:

### **1. The Policy guidelines**

The policy has to provide a framework within which the Medico-spiritual healers are to be operated. If the framework is not well conceived, the tasks of those concerned with such healing practice and the beneficiaries would be very difficult. The policy makers

should also provide support and guidance to the concerned healers involved in such kind of traditional practice. Intellectual Property Rights guidelines are intended to provide an approach to such form of healing practice, as it would promote the healers, beneficiaries and the environment. To ensure effective management of traditional healing practice in Sikkim, Medico-spiritual healers should prepare a policy guideline with an assured implementation scheme. The policy must be compiled taking into consideration various policies, national and international relating to the management of Medico-spiritual healing practice. This depends, of course, on the role played by such traditional healing practice to promote primary health and its potentials. For the proper and effective implementation of the policy it is essential to establish a Management Cell, to monitor such healing practice whose task would be to prepare an integrated master plan regarding training and education, with more emphasis on its legalities.

## **2. Medico-spiritual healers management cell**

A separate wing, called Medico-spiritual healers management cell can be set up in the State for each Districts, which would maintain an inventory of the speciality possessed by different healers. The management cell in each district should establish a management committee and appoint a management representative who is assisted by a team of adequate trained staff and will be directly responsible for maintaining all the requisites needed in that district, relating to such healing practice. The members of the Committee should include representatives from various Government departments including Health department, Culture department, and Ecclesiastical department. The management cell should frame a management strategy to ensure that all relevant regulatory requirements are fulfilled; including finding a place for such traditional healing practice in Traditional Knowledge Digital Library. The strategy should clearly outline management committee

- a) To the principle of responsible Medico-spiritual healing management;
- b) In terms of resource allocation;
- c) Highlight the accountabilities and responsibilities of management, healers and beneficiaries;
- d) Clearly define the various categories of treatment available, plainly articulating appropriate procedures and its healing potentials;
- e) Provide adequate and ongoing education

Strict compliance of the strategy by each and every personal involved in the management of Medico-spiritual healing practice in the State is the most essential function of the head of the management. The making of the policies and setting up of the Management Committee would be futile if the strategies are not successfully implemented.

### **3. Medico-spiritual healers management action plan**

The representatives of different ethnic community associations of Sikkim should come together to develop a plan, an action plan, to give effect of its Medico-spiritual healers management policy. The members of the Medico-spiritual healer's management committee should begin by conducting a survey for understanding the entire systems in each district and should prepare a document in this connection. The document should cover the following aspects:

- a) Name and address of each healers;
- b) Type of speciality possessed by the healers;
- c) Application for apprenticeship as a Medico-spiritual healer should be published in all major news papers;
- d) Description of the existing methodology practiced under different forms of treatment, such as pre-treatment, post-treatment;
- e) One should cross check whether the procedure practiced are adequate as per standard practices;
- f) Remedies available to beneficiaries against Medico-spiritual healers in case of negligence.
- g) Existing methodology should be modified appropriately, consistent with the type, quantity and result of beneficiaries in each district;

The action plan should lay the standard healing procedures covering all components and modes of Medico-spiritual healing. The first step would be to identify the entire Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim be it Government recognised or unrecognised and segregate them district wise. The management representative of each district should be properly educated and well acquainted with such healing practice. Each management representative of different districts should give points or rate the healers on the basis of beneficiaries' feedback which would help in identifying the potential of the healers. The person must have a vigilant eye over the entire process especially those involved in

identifying and segregating the healers on the basis of one's district because improper identifying and segregation would put the entire management process at jeopardy and all the efforts would go in vain, collaterally promoting quack Medico-spiritual healers within the State. Only trained and experience personnel's should be engaged in this process. Such personnel may be assisted by not so trained ones who not only would obtain the practical knowledge, in the course of time but would become trained and experienced and the risk factor in the primary stage due to quack Medico-spiritual healers would be completely reduced to nil.

The method of cross-checking after following each step in the entire system of Medico-spiritual healer's management is considered as a valuable step and if the same is implemented, the risk factor would be nil. The head of the management may be held liable to the higher authorities for not discharging the duty of cross checking on a regular basis. The existing methodology may vary from time to time depending upon the situation keeping in view the ultimate aim of safeguarding Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim.

#### **4. Ensuring infection control healing practices**

Infection control refers to policies and procedures used to minimise the risk of spreading infections in the health care institutions. The control of infection in the health care institution is the responsibility of all health care personnel which includes the Medico-spiritual healers. Infections known as nosocomial infections require a hygienic and sanitised environment and maintenance of good practices and use of protective gear. Routine cleaning of every healer's healing place and the instruments used by them is absolutely essential. Infection control practices can be grouped in two categories:

- a) Standard precautions: To be applied to each and every patient at all times, regardless of his diagnosis or infectious status. This includes hand washing and antisepsis, use of appropriate personal protective equipment while handling organs, blood, body substance etc.
- b) Additional precautions: These are infection control precautions specific to modes of transmission such as airborne, droplet and contact and are applied in addition to standard precautions, wherever necessary.

Many a times it has been seen that despite the availability of the protective equipments, due to lack of education and training the Medico-spiritual healers are careless in wearing the same and as a consequence it results in spreading and contacting of infection to them, including other visiting patients, and all those who are directly or indirectly connected with the healers. To stop the same the head of management dealing with Medico-spiritual healing in each district should be careful and should see whether protective measures have been adopted and followed. In addition, such person should also sensitise the healers regarding the benefit of adopting such safety measures and see whether appropriate protective measures are being adopted by the healers while exposing themselves and their family members to certain types of life threatening communicable diseases.

## **5. Proper Training and Education**

The purpose of training and education is to mitigate the risk of injury associated with the healing process. The concerned authorities should provide training to the following personnel:

- a) Medico-spiritual healers;
- b) Those as apprentice under the healers;
- c) Family members of the healers; and
- d) Personnel's frequently visiting the healers for maintain inventories.

Training of the personnel is an important aspect for a successful Medico-spiritual healers management programme. Training will provide orientation for new as well as existing Medico-spiritual healers with new responsibilities and help in avoiding negligence and any sought of mishap. It has been seen that till date segregation of healers has been done district wise by the Culture department, Government of Sikkim, randomly without proper mechanism. Training should focus on all principles relating to the management of Medico-spiritual healing. The training module may be divided into the following categories:

- a) Introduction to Medico-spiritual healing problem;
- b) Development of a strategic approach;
- c) Policy development and programme planning;
- d) Planning to Medico-spiritual healers level;

- e) Strategic planning to avoid quack healers.

Regular training of the personnel would increase awareness among them. The training should be made mandatory for all the Medico-spiritual healers. At the same time, Medico-spiritual healing related education materials both in print and electronic format like posters, books, leaflets, films, video slides is to be prepared. Audio-video screening sessions, field visits, situation analysis, problem solving, along with informal interactions should be incorporated in training programme.

It has been seen that many Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim are involved in such traditional healing practice without proper training and without having adequate knowledge regarding the same. Thus, in-house training of all healers should be made mandatory in Sikkim, which would help in proper management of such healing practice. In addition to this, the Government through Culture department should annually conduct programmes to sensitise the Medico-spiritual healers regarding the dos and don'ts. The benefit of conducting and attending such training programme is that the Medico-spiritual healers in the State would be well versed with the methodology of such healing practice and its management.

## **6. Emphasis on waste generated through Medico-spiritual healing practice through audit**

Audit of waste generated in Sikkim through Medico-spiritual healing practice is an important step in the management of Bio Medical Waste because the success of the entire traditional healers depends on it. The purpose of the waste audit is to determine current performance in terms of safety, efficiency, environmental impact assessment, costs and regulatory compliance. The following information should be collected and assessed in accordance with the guidelines:

- a) Types, volume and/ or weight, quantities and composition of waste generated;
- b) Hazard assessment of waste;
- c) Incidence and severity of waste handling injuries;
- d) Sources of solid and liquid waste;
- e) Collection and storage sites;
- f) Loading, transport and disposal methods;

- g) Costs of waste packaging, internal and external transport, treatment and disposal.

The policy guidelines should include in their respective policy the matter relating to the waste audit. It has been found that, despite waste both hazardous and non hazardous being generated through Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim, the healers aren't aware of Bio Medical Waste and its vulnerable impact. However due to its non implementation to this kind of traditional healing practice the situation remains the same. Thus in order to achieve the goal of effective management of the Bio Medical Waste within Sikkim, the Concerned authorities in the State should also bring the Medico-spiritual healers within the ambit of Bio Medical Waste management rules and sensitise them regarding the same. The audit would help in identifying the areas where there is lack of proper management and after detecting it, appropriate corrective measures can be taken to remove the defects. Regular waste audit is an important aspect in the management of Bio Medical Waste identifying the most negligible area in Sikkim i.e. Medico-spiritual healers healing place and accordingly appropriate steps could be taken to overcome it. This would also help in identifying the persons for whose negligent and careless act have been making the situation worse and thereby appropriate steps can be taken against them by the concerned authorities of the government.

## **7. Documentation under Traditional Knowledge Digital Library**

Interrelationship between nature and Sikkimese society, mainly ethnic/ indigenous communities and utilization of bio-resources in the healthcare sector has a rich legacy. Both codified system of traditional medicine (Ayurveda, Siddha and Amchi) and non-codified medicinal knowledge (Medico-spiritual healing practice or indigenous medicine without written text) have a pivotal role in the healthcare system and can act as leads for new biologically active molecules or therapy. Medico-spiritual healing practice prevalent in Sikkim sadly is in a verge of extinction, since firstly, it's voluntary and all the healers are engaged in different means of livelihood to meet their ends and secondly, the sons and daughters of these healers do not want to follow in their parents footsteps.

Till date, no form of Medico-spiritual healing practice exercised in Sikkim has been documented in Traditional Knowledge Digital Library. Thus the researcher feels that the Culture department, Government of Sikkim should take appropriate steps in recognising traditional healing practice in the State and documenting such modes of healing practice

in Traditional Knowledge Digital Library. This way the traditional healing practice along with its knowledge can be better safeguarded and Medico-spiritual healing practice prevalent in Sikkim will also gain national and international recognition. Traditional Knowledge Digital Library is an initiative by India to digitize and document knowledge available in public domain hence, if Sikkim's Medico-spiritual healing practice finds a place there it would facilitate systematic arrangement, dissemination and help in retrieval of information.

The other advantage would be, there has been international acceptance of Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, with the World Intellectual Property Organization constituting a group of members from America, China, Japan, Europe and India for discussing the findings of the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library task force. The outcome is to create a new sub-class for Traditional Knowledge Resource Classification with Ayurveda. India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library database has also been selected and when completed, Traditional Knowledge Digital Library would help patent examiners easily retrieve traditional knowledge-related information, thus avoiding the possibility of granting patents to unoriginal inventions or cancellation of already granted patents.

## **8. Human Rights Protection of Medico-spiritual healers**

Two protective paradigms have been employed to protect traditional knowledge using intellectual property tools. For example, countries like America, Japan etc. have shaped traditional knowledge folder to prove their traditional knowledge as preceding art in direct to put off perceived abuse such as bio-piracy. Although traditional knowledge databases may pre-empt some from securing rights over traditional knowledge, databases do disclose such traditional knowledge to the public. This becomes a problem since many communities would rather keep such traditional knowledge within their community. Many communities have their own traditional or customary laws that regulate the use of traditional knowledge that may differ substantially from their national systems or the international system of intellectual property rights. Disclosure may violate these customs.

Disclosure may also displace the problem. Disclosure is a tool to stop the granting of patents, or the revocation of granted patents. In intellectual property law, patents cannot be granted or can be invalidated if it can be shown that there exists "prior art" knowledge

in the public domain that is equivalent to the process or product for which a patent is sought. Disclosure puts the knowledge into public domain. It does not stop use of the traditional knowledge or associated resource.

The second protective paradigm (often called “positive protection”) seeks to secure protective legal rights over traditional knowledge. This is achieved by either using the existing laws or using legislative means to enact new sui generis laws. Some have argued that some countries, like the United States, may face constitutional problems with granting perpetual rights to these communities. They also raise utilitarian concerns with granting legal rights to traditional knowledge. For instance, some forms of traditional knowledge (Medico-spiritual healing practice) may be used to help others; and if exclusive rights were granted, some may go un-helped. Other concerns deal with the equitable sharing of benefits and resources.

Due to not being legally aware, many Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim are uncomfortable with applying the concepts of intellectual property to their traditional knowledge healing systems, even for positive protection. Just as citizens of one country are bound to respect the intellectual property laws of foreign countries related to imported products through international agreements, indigenous and local communities should respect their traditional beliefs and Medico-spiritual healing knowledge beyond their territorial borders. Indigenous peoples and local communities in Sikkim have shared much of their knowledge and resources with their community. Many have traditions of sharing. Healers in general, have spiritual obligations to heal the sick and have shared their healing knowledge.

Forced disclosure of and access to traditional knowledge and resources for the benefit of mankind, against their customs, without consent or without reciprocity may be as unjust as privatization of their knowledge and resources in patents, trademarks, trade secret and copyrights. In Sikkim indigenous and local communities have strong traditions related to the spiritual, sacred, secret or guardianship nature of their knowledge and resources that may prohibit some sharing. Despite many indigenous and local communities within the State arguing that the reasons and mechanisms for protecting their knowledge do not lie within the logic, misappropriation and misuse of this knowledge may violate customary laws that are at the core of their collective and cultural identity. These beliefs are currently being recognized as a distinct human right within the

United Nations and thus the concerned authorities should sensitise the Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim regarding the same.

## **9. Safeguarding Medicinal plants**

One of areas to be addressed at the earliest in terms of Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim is that Medicinal floras are under threat which is collaterally eroding indigenous knowledge attached with it. The main pressure to medicinal floras and the related knowledge in this particular study area are agriculture expansion and over grazing, the side effects of being an organic state. In addition, exploitation for fire wood, timber production, charcoal production and construction have major threatening impact on the biodiversity of medicinal vegetation. These have significantly affected the availability of medicinal plants and the indigenous knowledge of the healers within the State. It's evident that there is little tradition of bringing medicinal plants under cultivation. Medico-spiritual healers still depend to a greater degree on naturally budding species, as they consider these species in the wild vegetation are more potent in the prevention and treatment of different diseases and health problems.

The outcome of this study would have considerable contribution in efforts directed towards management and preservation of the residual resources of which there is still a substantial quantity left, provided that the essential strategies are put in safeguarding these medicinal plants. The researcher would like to recommend the following:

- a) Local communities in Sikkim should be concerned in safeguarding and managing plant resources and their indigenous knowledge in their locality;
- b) Identifying valuable medicinal flora and encouraging the local people to grow medicinal flora in home-gardens, mixing with other vegetation and at live fences of their neighbourhood and surroundings;
- c) The Medico-spiritual healers should be sensitised by the concerned authorities regarding harvesting medicinal plants for business or for household use, along with its threat, or awareness should be raised as to which sustainable harvesting be practiced.

## **7.2. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS BASED ON EMPIRICAL STUDY**

Based on the empirical study the following suggestions are forwarded by the researcher:

- a) The concerned authorities should necessitate coordination of Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim together by certification and organise events annually within the State to promote their indigenous knowledge;
- b) Establishment of Medico-spiritual healers association in every district should be made mandatory by the State Government;
- c) The Government should provide land to the healers for cultivating medicinal plants, and assist them financially with professional guidance to conserve the fast eroding medicinal flora in Sikkim;
- d) Analysis reveals that chief application of medicinal flora for healing of different diseases ranges from simple diseases to deadly diseases. These traditional therapy indeed, need to be established through technical investigations to categorize those that may provide alternatives for modern drugs;
- e) Workshops or sensitization programmes in local languages should be organised at-least annually to update the Medico-spiritual healers regarding various legalities relating to their practice covering subjects like:
  - i. Indian Forest Act, 1927;
  - ii. Wildlife (protection) Act, 1972;
  - iii. Patent (Amendments) Act, 2005;
  - iv. Bio Diversity Act, 2002;;
  - v. Bio Medical Waste;
  - vi. Medical Negligence;
  - vii. Medical termination of pregnancy 1971;
  - viii. Intellectual Property Law, etc.
- f) Action is needed both in terms of State and National level, in policy and legislation, to protect the Medico-spiritual healers and their indigenous knowledge. Once this is done the same can be distributed as handbooks to the healers in different local languages. This would help create a better mechanism for the proper functioning of Medico-spiritual healers in the State.

- g) Policy and legislations should also include provisions for healer's negligence. Stringent punishment should be there for quack healers and the penalty for infringement should be severe enough to be an effective deterrent.
- h) An upper age limit for healing people should be fixed by the concerned authorities and the ones retiring should be provided financial aid from the Government.
- i) Much traditional knowledge in India including that of Sikkim in relation to Medico-spiritual healing practice is not documented and is transmitted orally from generation to generation. This indigenous knowledge is of immense importance and the intellectual property rights needs to be protected in the context of globalisation and property rights through Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, particularly in the context of the standards and principle laid down;

Sikkim have their own structure healing principles, believes and medical ailments, though they have more or less resemblance with each other. The Sikkimese populace have a good belief on their own method of medication rather than other systems and western medication. Need of technical justification, reverse pharmacological and observational studies are essential for different beliefs and healing. The greatest challenge today is to protect and promote the Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim. This knowledge of traditional healing practice requires recognition, respect and understanding in the light of contemporary medicines.

Today survival for Indigenous people in Sikkim has been more than a question of physical existence, however it is an issue of protecting, preserving and enhancing indigenous worldviews, knowledge systems, languages and environments. It is a matter of sustaining spiritual links with ecosystems and communities. Unfortunately, these ecosystems, knowledge and communities are often critically endangered.

All people must have equal dignity and essential worth. Their languages, heritages, and knowledge must be equally respected by public institutions and by all people. Their ecological order and intellectual integrity must be respected by the market economies. Equality and respect require cooperative frameworks, efforts, and innovations to protect Indigenous intellectual, cultural and healing policies. Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim must be actively involved in the development of any new convention or law in

relation to traditional healing. They need representatives to discuss how to move toward developing these legal regimes. Their participation will develop new sensitivities to what is sacred, to what is capable of being shared and to what is fair compensation for the sharing of information among diverse people. Community based partnerships are also needed to resolve the nature of fair compensation and the ethics of healing. Public education is needed to develop an understanding of the new regimes and framework of Medico-spiritual healing.

The issues associated with protecting Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim are deeply concerned with the structural inability of State and National law to give the Sikkimese people control of their healing practice, heritage and communities. The absence of legal protection of these healers and their beneficiaries in State and National level is disturbing. As Medico-spiritual healers, they have had more than their share of adversity and tragedy because of the denial of the manifestation of legal protection. The State and National law should embrace and celebrate this universal healing culture and intellectual diversity for the richness and depth this Medico-spiritual healing practice brings to life on earth from a small State of Sikkim.

The establishment of concrete legislations and appropriate databases of National recognition for addressing the burning concern of the Medico-spiritual healers in Sikkim for protection of their Traditional Knowledge Intellectual Property rights are some of the steps which are yet to be taken. The grant of Traditional Knowledge Digital Library registrations to Medico-spiritual healing practice prevalent in Sikkim, establishment of patent rights and benefit sharing models are stepping stones towards Traditional Knowledge protection. The modalities for protecting Medico-spiritual healing practice are still emerging and evolving and therefore the measures for doing so is at a flexible stage. How will Medico-spiritual healing practice in Sikkim under Indigenous Knowledge be appropriately preserved and protected and also respected is still to be seen. Therefore, the widely accepted old philosophy 'better late than never' can be appropriately applied in this connection considering its healing potential which is the need of the hour.