

Preface

In pre-independent India, a senior civil servant of the Government of British India for the first time identified a small community Toto in the border of India and Royal Bhutan. They resided in a single village named Totopara. The village is situated nearly about 25km off from Madarihat railway station under Alipurduar Sub-division in Jalpaiguri District near the border of Bhutan. Totos are the smallest tribal community of West Bengal and one of the *seventy-five communities of India*, listed as 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups' by the Government of India. Partial isolation of their den by turbulent river, forest and mountains helps them to preserve their indiginity. In the era of globalization, it very difficult for any small community to sustain the indigenous culture of their own and Totos are also not the exception.

The traditional tribal societies in India as well as in the world differ from region to region due to various ecological settings, socio-economic and socio-cultural reasons. As part of the indigenous culture, the concepts of health, disease and treatment vary according to the culture of a particular area. Moreover a particular culture of tribal area is guided by the traditionally laid-down customs and each member of the culture is ideally expected to conform to it. Toto society has also some cultural objectives to prove whether or not there is a case of illness and whether or not individual is healthy. The present medical anthropological enquiry was made to explain the concept of health, disease, medical system and medical belief related religious practices, diagnosis and traditional way of treatment among the Totos. The author was also highlighted the issues of the modern health care facilities, infrastructure and implementation of different treatment procedure and introduced health care programmes among the said population and area.

The introducing chapter will discuss about the basic components of health, disease and treatment along with the conventional idea about Medical Anthropology and the role of cultural anthropology in studying health care practices. Understanding about the village and the people are the prime objective of chapter-2. A detailed idea about the studied village and people will be given including the demographic profile. Traditional concept of health and disease as well as the indigenous way of treatment among the studied tribe is discussed in chapter-3. In this chapter reader could go through the supernatural beliefs regarding health and well-being of the community member along with the procedure of appeasement of

different deities for protection from various diseases. Chapter- 4 is framed to discuss about the health facilities and programmes of the studied area. Treatment by modern medical institution and practitioners, the actual condition of modern medical institutions are given in detail. In the conclusive chapter a general observation and conclusions are made on the above said aspects along with the possible suggestive measures.

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