Abstract

An excellent health is considered remarkable for every person in our society, as it encourages a healthy mental, physical and social health. Health diversifies considerately with income, gender, age, and family origin as it could be innate or acquired. The concept of health has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting a shift from a narrow focus on the absence of illness to a more holistic view that encompasses physical, mental, and social well-being.

Anthropologists have been interested in medical practices for many decades; however, medical anthropology as a distinct subfield is a relative newcomer in the world of academia. Medical Anthropology study how people in different cultures and societies experience health and disease, healthcare, and related issues. Such experiences observe through the community's knowledge about sickness and misfortune concerning moral and religious ideas. According to Medical Anthropology Quarterly (1992), all inquiries into health, disease, illness, and sickness in human individual and populations that undertake from the holistic and cross-cultural perspective distinctive of anthropology as a discipline, i.e., with an awareness of species, biological, cultural, linguistic and historical conformity and variation.

This medical anthropological study is very new research among the 'Sherpa' tribes of India. The present study tries to unveil and understand the notion of health, disease and traditional treatment involving magico-religious performances, life-cycle related rituals and their supernatural connotation. The study also explores the traditional health care system, impact of modern health care system and syncretism of different health care alternatives prevalent among the Sherpa. An attempt had also been carried out to know the general conceptions and the various types of practices and beliefs that prevail among the studied population.

The first chapter begins by exploring different theoretical perspectives that address different notions of health, disease, and treatment along with an analysis of the current health situation among tribal populations. The chapter also includes a review of previous studies on healthcare practices along with the Sherpa community highlighting key findings and gaps in the literature related to health care practices and the ways in which the Sherpas approach health and illness. A critical discussion on the scope, objectives, and hypotheses of the present study forms an

important part of the chapter. The chapter also focuses on the research methodologies used in the study and addresses the selection of the study area.

The second chapter is divided into two distinct sections to provide a thorough understanding of the research area. Section A focuses on the physical and administrative characteristics of the region including geographical features, climate, flora and fauna of the selected areas. Section B focuses on the Sherpa people, providing an in-depth exploration of their demographic aspects such as family size, marital status, literacy rates, occupation, income levels, and language spoken within the community. It also sheds light on the Sherpas' family structure, language, marriage customs, kinship systems, economy, religion, festivals, political organization, and material culture.

The third chapter focuses on the traditional healthcare practices within the Sherpa community highlighting the deep connection profound relationship between their cultural beliefs and medical practices. The chapter explores the various diseases common in the community and the associated treatments, showcasing a blend of practical knowledge and spiritual guidance. It also discusses the significance of life-cycle-related rituals and significant events that influence health-related practices. The belief in supernatural forces remains central to Sherpa's health care, and the chapter explores how these forces are thought to impact health, disease, and recovery. The role of traditional healers is also a focal point of the discussion.

The fourth chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the modern health scenario in India, focusing on the various governmental health policies and planning strategies. It offers a detailed discussion of the contemporary healthcare infrastructure at modern medical institutions such as Sub-health centres, Primary Health Centers (PHCs), Sub-divisional hospitals, and District Hospitals in the studied areas. The chapter further examines the effectiveness of these healthcare facilities and the challenges the studied people face in accessing healthcare services. The chapter also evaluates critical factors impacting health, such as access to drinking water, personal hygiene, sanitation, and the prevalence of smoking and alcohol consumption within the population. The chapter evaluates the community's awareness of and participation in various health initiatives programs such as immunization campaigns, family planning and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program.

The present research was a comparative study done on health situation and care seeking behaviour among the Sherpa populations of two selected urban and rural areas. The

comparative study is an important aspect to understand the health hygiene perspective and at the same time for initiating further development strategies. This present study helps to orient the health conditions of Sherpa population highlighting on their traditional healthcare practices and beliefs, magico-religious beliefs and practices, supernatural connotations. Simultaneously, it also helps to understand the implication of modern healthcare system, government healthcare policies and programs on the Sherpa community.