DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled NOTION OF HEALTH AND CARE SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG THE SHERPAS OF DARJEELING DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Pinak Tarafdar, Department of Anthropology, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Ms. Chumu Sherpa, a registered Ph.D candidate of the Department of Anthropology, University of North Bengal has completed her Ph.D thesis on **"Notion of Health and Care seeking Behaviour among the Shepras of Darjeeling District, West Bengal"**. The work has been done under my supervision. This is also certify that she has carried out the work at the Department of Anthropology, University of North Bengal; and her thesis is based on the results of primary data which have been collected through empirical field work. This is her original research work and she has incorporated all the suggestions made or advised by me from time to time. I am forwarding her thesis for Ph.D degree (Science) in the Anthropology of the University of North Bengal.

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Preface

The Sherpa are an ethnic group native to the high-altitude regions of India, Nepal, China, and Bhutan. In India, they mainly reside in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of West Bengal and Sikkim. Classified as a Scheduled Tribe (ST), they belong to the broader Bhutia group, alongside other tribes like the Toto, Drukpa, Kagatay, Yolmo, and Tibetan. The name 'Sherpa' comes from the two Tibetan words '*Shyar*' (east) and '*Pa*' (people), meaning 'people from the east', referring to those from the eastern region of Tibet, especially the *Kham* region. They speak the Sherpa or Sharwi dialect, a part of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. The Sherpa follow the Nyingmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, which originated in Kham region of eastern Tibet.

This study was conducted among the Sherpa community in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, India. This comprehensive study is based on fieldwork conducted in two distinct locations: the rural area of Srikhola Daragoan Gram Panchayat and the urban area of Kurseong Municipality in the Darjeeling district, West Bengal. The study area of Srikhola Daragoan Gram Panchayat is considered one of the remotest areas of West Bengal. The study focused on four villages, namely, as part of the Srikhola Daragoan Gram Panchayat. Whereas, wards no. VI and VII of Kurseong Municipality are taken in consideration for the study of urban area. The approach for the entire scope of study was emic as I (researcher) also belong to the same Sherpa community under study.

The Sherpa community of India has been largely unexplored in comprehensive medical anthropological studies. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the healthcare practices of the Sherpa population in both rural and urban areas. It focuses on understanding the health conditions and care-seeking behaviors of the Sherpas in Srikhola Daragoan Gram Panchayat (rural) and Kurseong Municipality (urban). The main perspective of this comparative study is to have an in-depth understanding the health situation and care seeking behaviours of the Sherpa population of two selected rural and urban areas as stated above. 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 as well as modern healthcare system. This study evaluates the interaction between

traditional healthcare system and modern healthcare system and how it has influenced the health and care seeking behaviour of the community.

The first chapter provides an introductory overview focused on key concepts of health and care-seeking behavior, examining how individuals respond to health, disease, and treatment. The chapter also reviews previous studies on healthcare practices and offers a critical discussion of the study's scope, objectives, and hypotheses, that the study aims to address. The second chapter will provide a detailed examination of the research area and the population involved, offering a comprehensive understanding of the context and the people studied. The third chapter will explore traditional healthcare practices within the Sherpa community, emphasizing the strong connection between their cultural beliefs and medical practices. It will cover key aspects such as the use of herbal medicines and the appeasement of deities or spirits, highlighting the role of these practices in maintaining health and addressing illness within the community. The fourth chapter of the thesis provides a detailed analysis of the modern health scenario, focusing on government health policies and strategies aimed at improving public health. The chapter also examines key health determinants such as access to clean water, sanitation, personal hygiene, and the prevalence of smoking and alcohol consumption, particularly within the Sherpa population under study.

Chumu Sherpa

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Chumu Sherpa

Chumu Sherpa

Dedicated

To

My Beloved Parents

Mr. Phurba Sherpa and Mrs. Durga Sherpa

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