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Indigenous Ethnomedicine: The Contested Futures Amidst Appropriation and Sovereignty

Chandra Jyoti Sonowal

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai- 400088, Maharashtra, India

E-mail: chunuda@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT Indigenous ethnomedicine encompasses holistic knowledge systems integral to cultural identity and sovereignty. This study uses a qualitative meta-synthesis of 34 global cases to analyse their contested future. The researchers find that a synergistic triad of dispossession, spatial (extractive industries), intellectual (bioprospecting), and epistemological (biomedical reductionism), threatens these systems. However, Indigenous communities actively exercise agency through medical pluralism, cultural resurgence, and community-controlled enterprises. The findings demonstrate that the future of ethnomedicine hinges on the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and epistemic justice. The researchers conclude that supporting its revitalisation requires dismantling structures of dispossession and implementing stakeholder-specific recommendations to secure land rights, promote community-led research, and foster epistemological pluralism in global health.