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Medical Anthropology: Healing Practices in Contemporary Sikkim

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ABSTRACT The knowledge of disease theory and health care system of a society enables us to cope more wisely, more sensitively while introducing new medical system among people who have known traditional system previously. In colonial times, authorities frequently outlawed traditional medical systems. In Ladakh, a traditional medical system *Amchi* has been incorporated into health planning. In the traditional medical systems, medical traditions partly cover other sectors of social life. Traditional medical systems therefore cannot be studied exceptionally. In contrast to traditional health care system, the official health care system is based on Western science and technology. The term "Traditional Medicine" or "Traditional Systems of Health Care", refers to long standing indigenous systems of health of health care found in developing countries and among indigenous populations. Ethnic medical literature has defined two types of Traditional Health Systems-the *naturalistic* system and *personalistic* system. Lepchas of Dzongu have an indigenous system of health care based on herbs and ritual care. Spirit possession religious and popular rituals flourish in North Sikkim. In communities with strong traditional health care system for managing health, the introduction of biomedical facilities to provide health care is often met with indifference. Traditional medical knowledge is coded in to household cooking practices, home remedies; ill health prevention and health maintenance beliefs and routines. The two systems of health care co-exist in Ecuador. Despite opening up of Public Health Centres and massive propaganda, traditional ideas of disease and health prevail. Among Lepchas and Bhutias, the health care includes self care, consultation with traditional healers and /or primary health care. The cause is a spirit, the effect is spirit possession and the cure is controlled spirit possession.