

Traditional Ethno-Healing, Environment and Modernity: An Outlook in Darjeeling Himalaya

Sapan Tamang*

Department of Environmental Sciences, Bidhan Chandra Agricultural University, Mohanpur, India

Abstract

Medical anthropology healing practices in contemporary Sikkim focuses on the practices of faith healing in Sikkim. The study also focuses on how and why the traditional medical knowledge is still persisting among the Lepchas and Bhutias of north Sikkim. The study further deals with the use of different popular home based remedies, herbal, healing, spiritual, religious practices and bio medical treatment among tribal communities in Sikkim.

Assam's tale of Witch-Hunting and Indigeneity focuses on the understanding of the practices of witch-hunting as an instance of ethnic revivalism which is both, the fall-out of globalisation and the failure of the state. The paper further discusses about the process of cultural failure of state and ethnic resurgence, the process of ethno-formation and the resurgence of traditional practices.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the nature and scope of ethno-healing practices in the small Himalayan region of Darjeeling.
- To analyse the relationship between ethno-healing practices such as Jhankri practice and the environment in the region.
- To examine the impact capitalist development or modernity on Jhankri practice of the region.
- To find out the alternative measure for sustainability of both environment and the ethno healing practices in the region.

Materials and Methods

Traditional birth attendant

Local healers

Bone setters

Barefoot vets

Legal status

Not recognised by the government

No legal validity

Educational institution

Commercial institution

Research organization

Service organization

Recognised by the government

Legal sanctity by the government

every ethnic community within Gorkha community for the attainment of emancipation (Mauksha) to the deceased. The performance of these death rituals are locally known as chinta. Chinta is common in all the ethnic caste groups of Gorkha community; this chinta, is actually a special kind of puja or yagya performed by the local Jhankri to emancipate the immortal soul. It is also interesting to mention that while performing chinta the deceased is often seen alive in the body of Jhankri and communicate with the family members. This chinta is generally performed at night with complete Jhankri attire together with different uncommon wearing into the head prepared by the feather of hen or cock. Dholey a normal individual is an associate of Jhankri who help the Jhankri in the entire process of chinta, starting from the making of puja ko thaana *i.e.*, sort of small temple for performing chinta. His main task is to play the (Dhyangro) drums and give beats to Jhankri while dancing in front of puja ko than. In this entire process of chinta, Jhankris often come across certain unnatural, supernatural and magical things. Hence, it is beyond the periphery of normal human beings. Accordingly, this kind of chinta is also being performed by Jhankri to treat some severe diseases both mental and physical. Moreover, there are ample of instances where people became well and disease free with the help of chinta performed by Jhankri to eliminate the diseases. Thus, it is evident that the healthcare practices of Gorkha community of Darjeeling hills are very unique and different compared to the mainstream healthcare system of India. It has been widely observed that the healthcare practices of the entire region of Darjeeling hills are largely influenced and dominated by the folk culture, customs and values of a distinct ethnic community. On the basis of conversation with local people of Darjeeling hill, it is evidenced that people have a great faith in Jhankri. They presumed Jhankri as the man of god on earth [13]. Because, devta laagnu or devta le ruchawnu (possession by the god) is a very special kind of thing and it is of the general belief that if someone possessed by devta (god) means he or she has been chosen as a man of god who got the power to eliminate the human sufferings and ensure peace and tranquillity in the society. On the basis of field survey it has also been observed that different kinds

S No.	Name of Jhankris	Address	Age	Gender	Healing experience	Categorization of Jhankris	Kidnap by Ban Jhankri at age of	Occupation
1	Rita Rai	Pussimbang tea estate	52	F	30	Bhuifutuwa Jhankri	10 yrs (trained by Ban Jhankri)	Housewife
2	Kiran Rai	V[]*•[]*^æ estate	46	M	25	Bhuifutuwa Jhankri	12 yrs (trained by Ban Jhankri)	Daily wage labour
3	Prem sova Limbu	V[]*•[]*^æ estate	63	F	32	Boju Utreko Jhankri	Trained by normal guru	Tea garden worker
4	Lakpa Tamang	Pussimbang tea estate	51					



Figure 2: State-run NHPC's 160 MW Teesta low dam IV hydro project in Darjeeling district of West Bengal has become fully operational.

