

Preface

Maintaining good health by making use of traditional curative techniques and using herbs is as old as the history of humanity. Traditional health care systems originated much before the evolution of modern medicines. Today, the world is looking back at the alternative system of medicine, because it attempts to examine and cure the cause of a disease, covering up all its symptoms. In the recent years, the use of the alternative system of medicine has got wider consideration and appreciation throughout the world. In some Asian and African countries, 80 % of the population depend on traditional medicine for primary health care. The book precisely unveils indigenous healthcare traditions among Himalayan communities besides delineating the conventional and conservative interventions made by people for both physical and mental health at the local level. The Himalayas has a rich legacy of folk medicine and other traditional healthcare practices. Besides *Ayurveda*, a number of ethnic healthcare systems remain widespread in the Himalayas.

The endeavor to maintain an optimum state of health has always exercised the mind of man, since time immemorial, which resulted in the evolution of diverse systems of healing across the world. [Chapter 1](#) talks about the legacy of the Himalayan region, its people, their knowledge resources, and concept of healing in epic sagas.

The concept of health, categorization of healing traditions, folk medicine, and research studies on healing traditions carried out in the Himalayan region are presented in [Chap. 2](#).

The thought of food as medicament and culinary traditions of the northwest Himalayas, are discussed in [Chap. 3](#). This chapter also highlights the culinary customs of Himalayan communities with respect to its ethnic food, diversity, and suitability of food according to climatic conditions, ingredients used, and use of indigenous cookery technologies.

[Chapter 4](#) is focused on mystic healers of the Himalayan region, who act as mediators between the materialistic and metaphysical world. The role of village deities and numerous Hindu Gods and Goddesses in healing is also discussed in this chapter. Sacred healing by Buddhist monks and use of plants in magico-religious ritualistic performances is incorporated in [Chap. 4](#).

Mountain communities are dependent on forests for their livelihood and sustenance. They collect herbs for their own use and sale in the market. The process

involved in collection of herbs, their processing, and their cultivation is taken up in [Chap. 5](#). Traditional methods employed for preparing herbal formulations, dosage system, administering of medicine, traditional therapeutic procedures, pediatric medicine, indigenous dermatology, and cosmetology are also discussed this chapter. The role of traditional orthopedic practitioners, traditional birth attendants, and *Amchis* is taken up in this chapter.

Indigenous *Materia-Medica* is considered in [Chap. 6](#). This includes the material used by folk herbalists in their medicines.

The healing traditions are on the verge of extinction, thus, an endeavor has been made to explore the reasons behind the fading of these systems into oblivion. The folk healers, herbalists, traditional birth attendants, orthopedic practitioners, oracles, shamans, and priests, who have shared their lifetime experience, are duly acknowledged for their cooperation. In addition to this I acknowledge the Director, Institute of Integrated Himalayan Studies, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla and other members of the staff for their help & support. Every possible effort has been made while gathering and interpreting the information, yet the aura of this field is infinite. Hence, the shortcomings, if any, in this edition will be substituted in the next edition.

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