

Tradition Vs Transition: Acceptance of Health Care Systems among the Santhals of Orissa

C.J. Sonowal and Purujit Praharaaj

*Centre for Dalit and Tribal Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences,
Sion-Trombay Road, Deonar, Mumbai 400 088, Maharashtra, India
E-mail: chunuda@yahoo.com, moina@tiss.edu, ppurujit@yahoo.co.in*

KEYWORDS Health; spiritual insecurity; handia; supernatural power; traditional healer

ABSTRACT Tribal world of belief and practices has been constructed and surrounded by their parochial perception and action of natural and supernatural entity. They find themselves closely knit with the web of these two entities in every sphere of life. Perception about health and health seeking behaviour of the tribal people obviously is intertwined with the interaction of these two entities. The traditional healers act as the medium between man, nature and supernatural entity and provide spiritual security to the tribal people. The extent of meaningful acceptance of modern medicines and health care facilities among tribal people has been remained a matter of debate among social scientist and policy planners. It has been argued that lack of emotional content and spiritual security in modern health care system caused the failure of the system among the tribal people. The present article is based on a primary field study conducted among the Santhals of Orissa that shows the nature, extent and causes of acceptance of modern and traditional health care system by the tribal group.