

Gaddis' Folk Medicine: A Source of Healing

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ABSTRACT Patients seek cures from a variety of medical systems. In the traditional medical systems, medical traditions partly cover other sectors of social life. In contrast to traditional health care system, the official health care system is based on Western science and technology. Gaddis employ different ways in case of sickness. Traditional medical knowledge is coded in to household cooking practices, home remedies; ill health prevention and health maintenance beliefs and routines. Like other rural parts of India, health care in Bharmour among Gaddis is characterised by medical pluralism. Among Gaddis, the health care includes self care, consultation with traditional healers- *chela*; and / or primary health care. Spirit possession is acknowledged as an illness among Gaddis. The cause is a spirit, the effect is spirit possession and the cure is controlled spirit possession. Among Gaddis, deities and evil spirits possess men as well as women. It is believed by Gaddis that traditional medical system is competent of restoring health of the body (herbs) or the mind (*chela*). Modern education, technology, biomedicine has not threatened the traditional therapeutic healing as there are no alternatives. The integration of the two systems is conceptual. These systems just co-exist, side-by-side. To dismiss traditional medical systems as ineffective or weak is to overlook their relevance and benefits in the contexts of their socio-cultural systems. At the same the shortcomings of modern medical systems: their technical complexity, rising costs, curative rather than preventive focus, and limited accessibility for large population sectors can not be overlooked.