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### Comparative studies of health care systems in Western Ladakh

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Traditional medicine is one of the tangible heritages of the local people of Ladakh, which has been an indispensable source of both preventive and curative medicine. However very less information is available on the social status of healers, treatment techniques and the nature of medicine used by them. The hierarchical relationships among different medical traditions their structural superiority (status and wealth) and functional strength (distribution and utilization) was studied in detail through a comparative analysis of three different traditional health-care systems (THCS), i.e., *Sowa-rigpa*, *Shamanism* and *Akhonism*, with a view to conserve the valuable knowledge and the plant resources upon which these system depends. A detailed field investigation was undertaken for this purpose, which involved questionnaire survey and group discussions with the practitioners of different THCS, local people and allopathic doctors. The study was conducted across major ethnic groups (Boto, Balti and Dards) in Suru, Wakha-chu and Lower Indus valley of western Ladakh. At present, THCS of Ladakh provide its services to more than 30% of population. The socio-economic status of healers of *Sowa-rigpa* system is critical and young generation is not willing to adopt this system due to the lack of financial support, modernization and acculturation. Majority of local people are in favor of legalization of this system while they were uncertain regarding the legalization of Akhons and Shamans due to lack of scientific approach to treat the patients. According to allopathic doctors, providing training to the healers of *Sowa-rigpa* system on the nutrition and hygiene and allocating resources for more effective drug selection through clinical trials has potency to improve this system immensely. Akhons and shamans are less frequently visited as compared to Amchis. Shamanism has increased in recent years due to increase in non-native visitors and the proportion of young people involved in this system is highest (52%).

#### Biography

KunzesAngmo is native of Ladakh. She had nurtured her interest in medicinal plants from her childhood days, while accompanying her grandfather to pasturelands. She had gained a fascination for the wonders of plants that were used traditionally. This reverence and inquisition induced her to pursue scientific research more seriously. Gradually, during the years as a Master's student she had honed skills by which she conducted systematic studies on uses of various medicinal plants of the west Himalayan state of Uttarakhand and also expanded her study area towards Western Ladakh. Recently she had submitted her PhD in Forest Botany which entitles "A study on ethno-flora, with special reference to traditional healthcare system in western Ladakh" Jammu and Kashmir' from Forest Research Institute University Research centre, Wildlife Institute of India. Her study was based on medicinal plants, Ethnobotany, Ethnoecology and traditional health care system in western Ladakh. At present, she had joined as Junior Scientist at Krishi Vigyan Kender (Nyoma), Shere Kashmir University of Agriculture Science and Technology. She has authored about many Publications that include research articles. Her research interest includes ethnobotany, folk medicine, Ethnopharmacology and Biodiversity conservation in Indian Trans-Himalaya.

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