CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, an attempt has been made to examine the pristine concept of disease and treatment of the Tagins of Arunachal Pradesh as conditioned by the social, psychological and environmental situations. An attention has been paid to understand the preventive and curative measures adopted by them to cope with the diseases and ailments. Moreover, a meticulous attempt has also been made to examine the percolation and utilization of modern medical systems, and interaction of traditional and modern systems in the Tagin society.

It is an established fact that the surrounding environment, settlement pattern, sanitary habit, food habit, socio-cultural factors, available resources, values, traditions, etc., are important aspects influencing the living condition of a community, as well as, directing their health and health related activities, including healing and treatment.

Upland settlement in the hill slopes provides many advantages in favour of health of the Tagins, as air and water, the two major disease carrying media, remain more or less free from dust and similar other pollutants in such a situation. The Tagins depend mainly on forest resources for their livelihood. In every sphere of their life, the
Tagins are found to be more tradition bound, and mostly, dependent on nature and surrounding environment. They lead a very simple life and prefer to live in the traditional pile houses. They take more or less traditional food and also lead their life in the preview of their age old social, cultural and economic settings. Usually, a Tagin house is constructed without ventilation, which is not suitable for good health. The inside of such a house remains Smokey throughout the day and night, and such an unhygienic condition is responsible for many respiratory diseases, and eye-related infections.

The Tagins do not have clear-cut idea about the balanced diet as well as category wise nutritive value of the food items. Food is consumed for the satisfaction of hunger. With regard to the nutrient contents of the food, broadly speaking, carbohydrate is provided by rice, arum, potato, millet and various edible roots. Protein and fat are derived from fish and meat. Vitamins and other nutrients are obtained from leafy vegetables and fruits. No doubt, the Tagins consume these items. Even then, their diet does not provide sufficient nutrients, because of irregular food intake and injudicious choice of food. It appears that the dietary pattern of the study group is the cause for the low prevalence of degenerative disease, like ulcer and gastritis among them. They mostly take boiled preparations and rarely fry their food in oil. They also take less spices, except ginger and chilli. These habits can check many stomach related problems, particularly, gastritis, indigestion, inflammation and ulceration.

The lapses the Tagins commit in observing the rules of cleanliness-lack
of sanitation, untreated drinking water or impure water and other defective and deficient items of food, remain mainly responsible for their ill-health and occurrences of a number of critical diseases and ailments. In respect of eating and drinking habits, it can be said that the people are not enough conscious of hygiene. Taking of food without washing hand, use of the same dish to take food, one after another, without cleaning it, serving food to the pets in the same dishes used by the household members, are responsible for the spread of different diseases. Absence of proper drainage system, accumulation of household sewage, here and there, indiscriminate defecation, etc., help the harmful germs to multiply easily and are responsible for different diseases and ailments. Their irregular bathing habit create different skin diseases, cold and cough, etc. Moreover, their unhygienic clothing practices are responsible for different skin diseases. The children and old folk are not to be found habituated to clean their teeth everyday. Hair and nail trimming are not done in regular intervals. Washing of garbs and clothes of bed are not a regular practice. All these habits of the Tagins are not conducive to the maintenance of good health. As the study people are not fully aware of the fact that flies and some other insects transmit diseases, not to speak of the need of restricting the breeding of the flies and insects, they don’t take adequate care to cover their food, so that it may not be infected by the germs. On the whole, the study people are not conscious enough about personnel cleanliness and healthy sanitation practices, and certain behavioural aspects of them have bearing on the prevalence of diseases and ailments.
Yet the truth is that, in respect of diseases and ailments, each society has been found to develop some kind of value system within its own ethnoscience for the concept of treatment of diseases and ailments. We have already discussed the perceptions of the Tagins of diseases and ailments and their remedial measures. There are some universal perceptions of health and disease, in respect of which all the human societies possess some common considerations. At the same time, there are also some social perceptions, unique to a particular society. The Tagins believe that good health depends on the eating habit, disease and ailment and, above all, the wrath of gods. Their perceptions regarding disease and ailments have still remain more or less, traditional. Diseases are named by distinctive traditional terms. When a person suffers from any irregularities of his body, such as, when he feels weak, and is unable to eat usual food, or suffers from pain or gets external injury, these are taken to be the symptoms of ailments. The Tagins, hold that diseases are caused by supernatural forces, like spirit’s attack, sorcery, witchcraft, breach of taboo, sin committed, divine punishment and by physical factors, like food, over work, exposure to heat, sun and rain, and natural calamities. Moreover, according to their belief, only physical forces cannot be responsible for any disease or ailment, until and unless, supernatural force plays a key role. Likewise, human sufferings at individual or community level, as per their faith, are invariably caused by the influences of supernaturals. Benevolent and malevolent powers are widely recognized by them. One of the important findings and that makes such a study interesting, is that the Tagins believe in different spirits responsible for different types of diseases. Moreover, it is also found as per the faith of
the Tagins that a single spirit may be responsible for a good number of diseases. According to them, there are some ailments, which the common people cannot identify, and only the priest can diagnose these, and prescribe necessary remedial measures. They also believe that one may suffer for one's defiance of prevailing social norms and breach of taboo.

To get rid of evil tricks and influences of evil spirits, the Tagins have devised indigenous ways. There is a set of traditional infrastructure, at times at various levels, to take care of such adverse situations. To abstain from diseases and ailments caused by supernaturals, they sometimes perform rituals and propitiatory rites. There are both male and female priests in the Tagins society, who act as magico-religious practitioners. Female priests are less in number and there are only three male priests in the study villages. These priests act as the mediators between the people and the supernaturals. Through propitiations they try to maintain congenial relationship between the Tagins and the supernatural forces, which interfere into human affairs. Thus, magico-religious treatment of disease is resorted to.

The Tagins are traditionally well-adapted to their surroundings through their various socio-cultural mechanisms as well as by the way of using different biological and non-biological resources. They use forest and forest materials to fulfill innumerable requirements of life. The nearby forests are rich with various flora and fauna, and organic drug potentials are found in abundance in those areas. It may be mentioned here that there is no professional medicine man in the Tagin society, as a result of which, the use of flora, fauna, etc. as ethnomedicine in organized way is not very
frequent in them. In true sense, the Tagins depend on magico-religious performances to a greater extent, than traditional medicine for curing diseases and ailments. However, flora and fauna, including other ingredients, although in a limited scale, are use by the study people for medicinal purpose, as per their knowledge and availability in their surroundings. Intensive research through chemical analysis of the plants, animals / animal parts and other ingredients, that are used by them as traditional medicine, may help a lot to the modern world to cope with disease and ailments. Pharmaceutical institutions may use these organic and inorganic materials having medicinal properties after proper investigations for the preparation of modern medicines. This may provide a new opportunity to the study people for collection and production of such valuable medicinal plants and may provide them employment at their desired place also. They may be trained to correctly identify, to batch, to grade and to pick these species for use by the indigenous drug manufacturers, as well as the manufacturing concerns elsewhere. Likewise, it might have rich potentiality to improve the status of the Tagins.

One of the primary aims of the present study has been to understand utilization of modern medical system, and interaction of both the traditional and the modern medical system of treatment. In the contemporary situation, one can hardly ignore the contribution of medical sciences in treating diseases and ailments and in the maintenance of disease-free life. The introduction of modern medical system has proved beneficial to the Tagins, as it has led to medical pluralism among them. The people have understood the benefits and quick actions of modern medicine in certain diseases. However, for some diseases, there are certain strong specific cultural
explanations of the Tagins, and they are dependent on their ethnomedicine for treatment. It has also been observed that both traditional and modern means are simultaneously practised by the Tagins for curing disease and ailments. Most often, they consider ritual in combination with any one of the three available treatment options, namely, medicine prescribed by the modern physicians, medicine taken at own selection or given by the pharmacists, and traditional medicine.

Choice of the treatment options of the Tagins are considered by many determinants. The educated folk mostly prefer modern medicines, whereas, the illiterate and older generations generally prefer ageold indigenous practices, to cope with diseases and ailments. Economic status of the Tagins is also plays a vital role in respect of choice of healing and treatment options. Majority of the villagers are hand to mouth agriculturists and they always adhere to less expensive treatment, for curing a disease or ailment. It is found that to perform a ritual for curing a disease is more expensive in comparison with modern medical treatment. Therefore, the poorer section opt for modern medical treatment as their first preference. When effective results are not achieved, then immediately, they resort to magico-religious practitioners. According to the Tagins, modern medicine can give temporary relief to a patient, but the performance of relevant ritual is most necessary for permanent relief from the disease. The belief of the interference of supernatural forces in diseases and ailments, the attribution of some diseases to some spirits, the belief in evil eye, sorcery, etc., clearly indicate that still the Tagins have clung to their traditional modes of beliefs and practices. Their indigenous practices will hardly die in near future. It is due to the fact
that the Tagins do not consider diseases and ailments to be a separate entity, but look upon them to be integrally associated with their religious belief and social structure. It has already been revealed in course of the present study that the modern medicines are gradually making inroads in the Tagin society. It can be presumed that, modern impact has given momentum to change in the Tagin society, and they are becoming more and more prone to modern means of treatment for curing diseases and ailments.