



Book Review

- Title* : The quest for health (The health services in Nepal)
- Publisher* : Educational Enterprise (P) Ltd., P.O. Box 425, Kathmandu.
- Year* : Second Edition - 1999
- Writer* : Dr. Hemang Dixit, Professor in Child Health, Institute of Medicine, TU, Nepal.
- Price* : Nepalese Rupees 250/-
- Reviewer* : Dr. Ritu Prasad Gartoulla, IOM, Maharajgunj Campus, Kathmandu.

'The Quest for Health' by Dr. Hemang Dixit is a time-demand contribution for the society where everyone is in a bleak position for getting health information. 'The Quest for Health', his recent book, is the distillation of his mind, experiences, study, and attitude towards the society and human being.

This book consists of fifteen chapters. The first chapter denotes the health support history of the Nepalese physical environment explaining attitude, climate, soil, water supply, social environment, and biological environment as virus, spores, bacteria, parasites and the future. The second chapter deals with the *Medicine in Days of Old* discussing the entire history of health care practices with citation of Oldfield's experience in Nepal during and after the era of Prithivi Narayan Shah, Jung Bahadur Rana and pre and post democracy of 1951. Till now, this

part of history has been cited by a very few persons in their work; among them Dr. Dixit is one. This part, perhaps, is the most vital unit of his book which could be considered as pioneering work in the history of health.

The third chapter is a sole history of health as largesse or birthright since Jung Bahadur regime to 1950s. Being a child specialist, the author is also concerned with medical anthropology which is evident from chapter four in which he explores the socio-cultural aspects of health, concentrating mostly on ethnomedicine and Shamanism, state of the child in Nepal, and health care systems in comparison with the UK, the USA, Russia and Nepal. The fifth chapter explains the present status of health especially the 47 years of long history, since 1951. Each section in this chapter explains each five year

(one three years) plan with the long-term health plan (1997-2017 AD).

Chapter six is important because the author debates primary health care in Nepal under selective PHC approach where comprehensive PHC has been neglected. Till now, Nepal's PHC is controversial and resource-based.

Chapter seven explains different situations of hospital services with the history of allopathic and other systems. Chapter eight is related to the diseases that matter in Nepal, for example viruses (measles, hepatitis, rabies, encephalitis, AIDS, etc.) due to spores, due to bacteria (TB, leprosy, diarrhoea, typhoid, cholera, meningococcal meningitis, brucellosis, plague, streptococcal infections, STDs), parasites (malaria, kala-azar, amoebiasis, echinococcus, cysticercosis, other worm infestations), and others such as vitamin-A deficiency, cor-pulmonale, cancers, high altitude sickness, etc.

Chapter nine covers family planning and MCH activities incorporating health statistics and future directions. The tenth chapter is devoted to nutrition and health education on which the reference has been very limited in Nepal and this, perhaps fulfills the gap of information on nutrition. The eleventh, 'Human Resources Development for Health', denotes the Nepalese situation with examples of various health personnel, IoM, Nursing, Ayurveda, NGTC, future projections and manpower issues, and quota in graduate and post graduate medical courses. The medical school muddle is discussed in chapter twelve focusing on private medicine and health insurance

examples from Sajha medicine shop, Kali Gandaki Hospital, nursing homes, polyclinics, NGOs, INGOs clinics, clubs, associations, etc. and their role, jurisdictions and service sectors.

One of the striking sectors which is not yet prioritized properly in Nepal is Research. Dr. Dixit has rightly pointed out the medical research activity in Nepal in the Fourteenth chapter. He has mentioned that Nepal Health Research Council is one of the few institutions to facilitate health research. He has aptly mentioned the twelve health research priorities for Nepal.

The last but not the least, chapter fifteen has the illustrations of short and long-term implications looked at critically. This includes the long-term health plan (1975-1990), Country Health Resources and Priorities, National Health Policy 1991, and other relevant issues. Other remaining issues are presented as annexures for health, for health legislation, acts and rules.

To summarise, the book covers the topics that are needed for a good health planner, policy maker, writer, social scientist as well as public health, nursing and medical scientists and researchers. This book is also useful for politicians, students and general public, who should be aware of the health status of the country.

It would have been better if some issues on health politics, role of political leaders in health, and basic alternative health care practices had been mentioned. I hope that the author will consider these issues in the

third edition. Paper, cover and print is found to be good.

