Culture and Health

Name

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Health and healing practices have always had a very important position in the cultural practices of a community. Although the modern healing practices and medicines are practiced equally in the developed countries of the world, the traditional and tribal societies of the world had their own set of cultural healing practices, which they believed to be more influential. “Coping with Life: Religion, World View, and Healing” from the book by Richard B. Lee sheds light on the cultural and spiritual healing practices of the Ju/′hoansi people, who are the indigenous trial community of southern Africa. For centuries, the tribal community of the Ju/′hoansi people has followed the traditional and spiritual practices of healing and restoring health, as they believed it to be more effective, as compared to the modern western medicine and health practices. They believe that the disease is either a form of suffering and misfortune, which needs to be dealt by the use of healing practices, or it is just the will of the god, who wants to kill people. The chapter has shed light on the views of spirituality, god, healing myths and dance practices of the Ju/′hoansi people, which will be discussed in detail in this paper.

There is a greater link between religion, world view and the healing practices of the different communities of the world, as human beings have the faith that God has created them and has the authority of bestowing them with health or disease. So, a greater population of the world tends towards religious practices, in order to ask God for health and ease in pain. In addition to it, some people from the tribe or community practice the activities which they believe can restore the health. in the case of the Ju/′hoansi people, they believe that there are four classes of the supernatural forces, which consist of the high god, the low god, the animal spirits and the gangwasi. The high god is the one who created human beings, and he is good towards them as well. O the other hand, the low god is the evil one. The animal spirits are created for the benefit of human beings, and the gangwasi are the dead human beings, who become evil after dying and become an important source of killing people. The Ju/′hoansi people believe that pain and suffering are mostly caused by the gangwasi who tease and cause pain to the living people, due to the unknown reason and become the source of killing the people. Therefore, they believe that it is important to carry out the spiritual practices of healing, which would help the dying or ill person to become healthy and not die according to the practice and wish of the gangwasi. The Ju/′hoansi people believe that the greatest disease and misfortune is caused by the gangwasi, who never become happy by seeing their loved ones happy and satisfied in their life when the gangwasi, who once was a living person has died (Lee, 2012).

According to the worldview of disease and suffering of the Ju/′hoansi people, it is mostly caused by the gangwasis, their ancestors who have died. In addition to it, according to the worldview of the healing practices of the Ju/′hoansi people, they need to practice the healing dance, delve into a trance and practice spirituality to get rid of the misfortune caused by their dead ancestors in order to save the dying people. Moreover, the believe of the Ju/′hoansi people reading the misfortune caused by their dead ancestors seems quite troubling in the way that most societies of the world believe that they need to offer prayers for their departed ancestors, who would become the source of alleviating their pains and sufferings, but is the case of the Ju/′hoansi people, their ancestors actually become the source of causing misfortune, suffering and pain. The Ju/′hoansi people believe that their ancestors expect them to act and behave in a certain manner and they cause the misfortune by making the person ill when they are not happy with the attitude, actions or behavior of the individual (Miller, 2017).

Lee (2012) has explained the traditional and spiritual healing practices of the Ju/′hoansi people in his book. He has shed light on the giraffe dance of the men, as well as the drum dance of the women of the Ju/′hoans tribe. According to them, n/um is the substance which has the healing powers and has the ability to cure the ill people. The n/um is present in the bodies of the healers. The author has described in the book, that the giraffe dance practice is the healing practice in the way that it puts the dancer, or the healer in the state of trace and provides them with n/um, which they use for healing people. The healing dance is a general practice of the Ju/′hoansi people; however, it is specifically practiced when a person is seriously ill. According to the practice, the n/um is present in the bodies of the healers, and when they start dancing, it heats up with their blood and move towards their brain, form the spine of their bodies. After reaching the brain, it causes a trance on them, which is also known as !kia and that state of trance enables them to become bigger than their selves. They are able to see the gangwasis, who is in the form of smoke or just a soul. They negotiate with their gangwasi for the healing and health of the ill person or fight with them. On the other hand, due to dancing, they become sweated which they think is spiritual and rub it on the body of the ill person to restore his/her health. In the case of giraffe dance, the men hold the central position while the women play the supporting role by chanting the songs, other healing words or even shrieking loudly. The dance practice carries on for hours in the case, when the healers have to restore the health of seriously ill people. The healers work individually as well as in groups (Miller, Van Esterik, & Van Esterik, 2007).

In the case of drum dance, it is practiced in the same way as the giraffe dance; however, the difference is that women have the central role in it and men play the supporting role. The healing abilities are bestowed to the Ju/′hoansi people, and half of the men and one-third of the women of their community are healers, although they have to achieve the status of !kia, to achieve the trance and healing powers. They do not practice black or other forms of magic, as they think that it would become the source of breaking their unity and mutual trust in each other. On the other hand, they accept the wonders of antibiotics; however, they do not practice modern or western medicine and healing practices (Lee, 2012).

Religion plays an important role in defining the worldview and healing practices of different communities of the world. In the case of Ju/′hoansi people, they believe that the illness and suffering are caused by the misfortune of their deceased ancestors who are not happy with their actions and they need to fight with them to restore their health. They practice the giraffe and drum dance, due to which they get the n/um, which is rubbed on the body of the ill people and restores their health. On the other hand, sometimes the suffering and diseases are caused by the god, which kills the people, and the healers cannot save the person in that case.

References

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