

THE KARBIS BELIEF SYSTEM OF HEALTH CARE PRACTICE: IMPORTANT AND IMPACT OF MODERNISM

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Karbi Belief system of health care practice is still prevalent by the Karbi tribe of Assam. In Karbi's belief, some folk illness are recovered by traditional customs and the use of folk medicine. The rituals are related to the health care practice or well-being of the society, also part of the culture.

Objective: The objective of the present study is to understand the belief system of health care practice of Karbi tribe. Rituals and traditional customs in health-care practices by the major ethnic groups of Assam

Design: A field study was undertaken from January 2020 to August 2020 Information was collected from 16 villages. Which is still prevalent in traditional customs by the villagers.

Method: Information was collected from both unstructured and structured interview methods, and personal observation. As per villager folk illness is healing through traditional customs and rituals, which is not only healing process but also an important part of the culture. Such as 'Peng Karkli', 'Rongker', 'Nihu Kachingtung' etc. This information was collected with the help of local guides and identified using available literature also with help of the internet sources.

Result: Significant promotion of 40 to 45 percent of older Karbis has been found the health belief system of health care practice is through the use of folk medicine and cultural-based. The health-care practice of the karbis believe system includes both local and oral application, rituals to cure diseases. Maternal uncle plays an important part in curing mental depression like Nihu Kachingtung is prevalent until today. The clans of Karbi which plays a significant role in society.

Conclusion: The belief system of health care practice becomes less important in society due to the awareness of the people from wrong treatment and availability of hospital and treatment concerns. The attitude of the present generation towards traditional health care practice as being unscientific and acculturation are the main causes of the decline of such practice in the karbis.

KEYWORDS: Karbi tribe, Nihu Kachingtung, Amen Kachevang, Folk illness.

Introduction

Many cultures have their own tradition and belief system. A belief system is an ideology or set of principles which help us to interpret our day to day life. It may be in the form of religion, political, spirituality, among many other things. The belief system of health care practice which is influence by various variables such as culture, socio-economic factors, generational practice. Many cultures have strong belief in the folk medicine for primary health care practice. Cultural norms and health belief in the form of personal observed, desire to be part of the healing process, illness perception and ethology, holistic and natural healing process.

The Karbi tribes are the oldest tribe in Assam. The great artist-Scholar Bishnu Prasad Rabha refers to them as the Columbus of Assam. The karbis, according to the constitutional order of the government of India, are one of the major ethnic groups in Northeast India especially in the hilly area of Assam. They constitute the third largest community in Assam. They are believed to have migrated from the Kuki-Chin area in Western

Myanmar. The karbis belong to the mongoloid group and linguistically similar to the Tibeto Burman. They have a very rich in culture heritage, folklore, and traditions. The karbis are a patrilineal society. The major clans of Karbi are Lijang, Hanjang, Ejang, Kronjang, and Tungjang. Marriage between members of the same clan are not allowed because they are considered brothers and sisters among themselves. The children of the couple would inherit the surname of their father. As a society the maternal uncles plays in very important role. The karbi belief system is kingship relation in the society. The maternal uncles are held in high esteem and traditionally it is all sisters to pay periodic homage to their brothers for well-being of her children.

Important Area of Folk Medicine of Karbi Tribes in Health Care Practice:

The use of traditional medicine is an important part of the health care practice of many cultures of the world. Medicine borrowing for health care practice is based on traditional beliefs. Traditional medicine is also known as folk medicine arising from superstition, cultural traditions, use of native remedies. Traditional medicine originated from primitive man's reactions or attitudes towards natural events. Magic and witchcraft played an important role here which also influences the belief system of the society. In these societies, where witchcraft and religious beliefs were of great importance, disease and health were explained by external factors, harming the body, and personal observation. People efforts to find solutions to these diseases set up the basis of folk medicine which may be a form of religious belief, rituals, and charm for healing the illnesses. The use of traditional medicine is still prevalent in the Karbi tribe due to limited access to allopathic medicines, lack of proper medical facility, and transportation and poor economic conditions. In society, the Karbi tribe has followed the weather changing, and for individual wellbeing they have perform rituals in their homes. The Karbi traditional medicine is not only healing the illnesses but also which is an important part of their culture. For the wellbeing of family members, they have conduct rituals once or twice in a year as per predictions. It may be involved with family members but also involved with the villagers collectively. Such kinds of rituals are 'Chojun', 'Rongker', and 'Pengkarkli'. As per the field study some kinds of diseases are considered as the folk disease of the Karbi tribe such as 'Nihu Kachingtung' (Kind of mental illness), 'Arikan Keso' (A type of the pain of hand), and 'Amen kachevang' (Naming tradition). Consequently, in traditional societies' opinions on disease and health, were born as a part of folk culture.

The Karbi tribes Belief System of Health Care Practice:

Karbis were belong to the hilly area of Assam North–East India. The Karbi economy is basically dependent on agricultural. Due to poor road connectivity of rural areas they chose home remedies treatment to the patient. Karbi tribes are strongly belief in the traditional medicine to curing the illness. Traditional medicine is not only healing to the patient which is also involve to the cultural events. The term illness Karbi is called "Keso" and its process of treatment is called 'seh-khachelang'. The karbi involves with various practice such as therapies, rituals and charm. Further treatment they were used animals, plant, fish, minerals for healing illness in various purposes. In traditionally practice Karbi were involves with the rituals which is a type of blood sacrificed is resorted for recovery of the patient. 'Seh karkli' is the one example of rituals In 'Seh Karkli' animal blood and liver sacrificed chicken, goats or big, Pigeons also sacrificed. Traditional health–care practices of karbis are strong belief in religious based. Charms (Kapherem) is a type of healing to the patient such as Mantel Problem (Nihu Kachingtung), But 'Pharo' (Gastroenteritis) 'Ingthum' (Boils), 'Inghai', 'Mekeso' (Sore eye).

The Naming of a Child in the Karbi Belief System:

The Karbi tribe has a very rich culture and belief system. They have unique cultures from the others tribes. The naming of New-born baby is considered as folk culture of the Karbi tribe. As a society new-born or naming of a child is still prevalent in society both rural and urban areas. Sometimes a new-born baby possesses seen as various problems such as they don't eat mother breasts and crying day-night also the baby acting like dead people activities while they are alive such type of activities indicates the naming problem of the child. For proper naming the child the parents of the baby call for an old age lady or person for proper

observing the child as per personal observation and experience they naming the child and they similarly a blessing for a bright future, well prevail, of the child. If the naming is correct the child will slowly stop crying and start eating to the mother's breasts.

Karbi tribe's belief in reborn or naming culture. A person's rebirth is possible only within in the same clan. A female, being the descendent of the members of the particular clan of her father, must also go back to her father's family reborn as a daughter. But, among the Karbis of the plains, a person can be reborn to a family belonging to the same lineage irrespective of the clan. For example, a rebirth of a father/mother can occur to a daughter clan as they belong to the same lineage. Among the hill Karbis, a dead father cannot be reborn to his daughter as her husband belong to another clan. It is believed that a reborn individual inherits some characteristic of the deceased and fulfils the announcement he made before.

'Nihu Kachingtung':

'Nihu Kachingtung' is a type of mental illness of the Karbi belief system. Such kind of illness is healing through traditional customs by the Karbi. 'Nihu Kachingtung' is still prevalent among their society. It is not the basis of religious belief it is followed by who face the same kind of illness they have to follow the same way of treatment. As a society, the maternal uncles are held in high honoured and traditionally, it is customary for all sisters to pay periodic homage to their brothers for well-being of her children. When a sister's son or daughter is afflicted with certain socially defined conditions such as biting nails, pulling one's hair, aloofness, and loss of appetite the condition is termed as 'Nihu Kachiri' (Nihu means maternal uncle; Kachiri, longing) as per belief it is the curse of the maternal uncle. Often the help of a wise man is sought to determine the cause of such unusual conditions. As a customary practice, the Nihu or maternal uncle of the patient is approach and he is honoured with specially prepared rice beer. The Nihu then prepares an adum or ball of rice (six in case of a boy and five in case of a girl) and along with six pieces of toman (dried fish of bigger size) offers to the afflicted person. The maternal uncle blesses the illness and gives all a bright future and all condemnation is withdrawn by him.

Ritual Involved in Health Care practice of the Karbi Tribes:

Rituals are involved in health care practice for the purpose of healing in the past and still being relevant to the societies. The Karbis belief system is basically formulated dignified honouring of the 'Kurusar', worship of household deities, territorial deities, and rituals for the death. Karbi's belief system of religion still practices Animism with their culture and traditional influences practitioners of traditional Animism believe in reincarnation and honour their ancestors. Animism is not Hinduism nowadays many people follow Hinduism and confusion of their own religion there are also Karbi Christians. Rituals are practice for the individual well beings. The so called karbis are known as 'karkli Chophejo Aso'. Many illnesses healing processes ritual or 'Seh Karkli', involving blood sacrifice for the recovery of the patient. For the prediction, it may sacrificed Chicken is examined to imply the effectiveness of the rituals.

'Pengkarkli' Rituals:

'Pengkarkli' rituals is perform for the well-being for the family member of the house. Pengkarkli rituals are based on its religion belief by the karbi tribe. It is still followed by the majority society of the Karbi tribe. Rituals are observed for the general well-being of individuals, household, or the village community. As a customary practice the 'Kurusar' or priest honors his predecessors with 'Horlang' or rice beer before performing the ritual. Being is used as an offering to the deities 'Peng' (the household deities). Beng carries significant implications to the ritual as it is customary to offer beng to the deity. Beng is distributed to the priest and all-male guests present. The priest then calls for collective incantation in honor of the deity with an offering of rice beer and beng.

'Chojun' Rituals of Karbi Tribe:

'Chojun' ritual is the important part of the Karbi Culture and for the community wellbeing. 'Chojun' ritual, the Karbis are mainly worshiped to the supreme deity of Karbi pantheon, 'Arnam Kethe' (also popularly referred as Barithe, Abinong, and Angsong Asor etc.). 'Chojun' ritual may be performed both privately by a particular family and by the entire villagers collectively for three consecutive days with a view

to bringing welfare to the family members or the society. In any case, however it is associated with a particular myth. 'Chojun' ritual is worshiped to the particular God, it is called Chojun 'Arnam Kethe Karkli' i.e., the worship of heaven. The prayer that is offered by the; 'Kurusar' or deities or priest is actually a hymn or an invocation to heavenly or household Gods for divine assistance.

'Rongker' Rituals of Karbi Tribe:

The Karbi tribe is largely involved with 'Jhum' Cultivation. The Karbis 'Rongker' ritual is celebrated due to saving from the evils in the Karbi belief system. Which are the Karbis celebrate the 'Rongker' ritual before the start of the 'Jhum' cultivation, and hence this ritual can be termed as pre-harvest fertility magic or rite. This ritual is a kind of community prayer with a view to satisfying the God Called 'Arnam Pharo' so that evils can be driven away from the society and 'Arnam Pharo' will protect the harvest and the community. As per observation 'Rongker' ritual can be participated only by male members. It can be called a menfolk ritual, no women can take part in it.

Impact of modernism on Karbi Believe system:

The Karbi belief system of health care practice is significantly affected by the modern world. The development of technology, road connectivity, spread of knowledge, education which are impact to the day by day life of the people. The karbi belief of religion is Animism which the belief that objects, places, and creatures of nature. People belief in natural events like weather systems, plants, animals, rocks, rivers etc. Each cultures has its own different mythologies and rituals. The Karbi belief system of health care practice is cultural-based. In modern times the concepts health belief system is change due to religious concern among the Karbi tribe. The main reason of there is adopted of Christianity by the Karbi tribe. In present times, the majority of Karbis are pursued by Christianity and they are no longer followed Animism. Therefore the majority of Karbi are no longer practice of such rituals 'Pengkarkli', 'Seh karkli', 'Rongker', 'Chojun' etc. The Karbi culture, folklore, and literature have seen a number of changes with the advent of Christianity. Indeed Christianity has made a great impact on the Karbi society.

Usually, the use of rice beer is compulsory in the Karbi tradition which is avoided by the Christian society. The belief in health care practice is becoming less important in the society in the present times.

Conclusion

The belief system of health care practice becomes less important in society due to the awareness of the people from wrong treatment and availability of hospital and treatment concerns. The attitude of the present generation towards traditional health care practice as being unscientific and acculturation are the main causes of the decline of such practice in the karbis.

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