

Review Article

Socializing, Collectiveness, Faith Healing & Human Behavior

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Abstract: Any large gathering brings in potential health risks & risk to disaster. Studies have shown that the benefits outweigh the risks. The benefits are in the areas of well being as those who participated in the month long Hindu congregation, reported a longitudinal increase in well being than those who did not attend or participate. Through the lens of three published studies on the Kalpwasis of the Kumbh Mela (Large & Long congregation of Hindu pilgrims), the article focuses on the influence of socializing & collectiveness on human behavior. The next part is the aspect of faith healing where the article focuses on the trust, confidence angle of human behavior & how it impacts the clinical medicine. The topic of faith healing is seen through the context of medical & behavioral science. At the end, there are two examples related to faith healing. Thus, in the current challenging times, it is prudent to get back to the habit to socialize while developing trust & confidence for each other to not only improve our physical & mental health but also the holistic health.

Keywords: Kalpwasis, Faith Healing, Psychology.

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INTRODUCTION

A study highlighted that concentrating society on participation risks overshadows the valuable advantages of attending mass gatherings. Social anthropological research repeatedly suggests that mass events like religious festivals, carnivals bring immense joy, fosters unexpected connections among strangers. Well being was not the primary focus of the study [1-3].

The study also found that being religious has a positive impact on well being. Religious beliefs provide cognitive schemes or encourage practices relevant to the appraisal of life events & coping. This is because

participation in a congregation helps one act alongside others. Research on work groups operating even in stressful environments show that more one feels a part of the team, the better is one's well being. People come together & form solidarities based on social identity. Their relationships & collective self realization enables them to achieve better well being [1-3].

The study on Kalpwasis showed that Kalpwasis perceive themselves as members of a unified collective. Participation occurs within a group setting. During every day activities like collecting water helps them to remain in close proximity to fellow members or Kalpwasis.

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Consequently, actions & conduct of others significantly influence individual's personal experience. There are series of ways in which people help each other to cope. These are 'they shield them from winds', 'aid them in dressing & undressing quickly' & 'providing assistance in sickness' [1-3].

The research also showed that 'shared identity' signifies feeling of oneness. Participants see themselves as 'we are all pilgrims' & this involves perceiving others as part of one's group. This feeling emerges in certain gatherings where participants see themselves as part of a unified group. The research tool had a question that characterized the sentiment by comparing the 'crowd to a family unit'. The study analyzed two variables. These were 'their self identification as Hindus' & their engagement in 'Hindu religious practices'. The findings revealed the hypothesis that 'heightened post mela (congregation) identification increases participation in religious activities'. The findings of the study are more relevant in today's context when social media has weakened personal bonds. During the mela or congregation, it involves perceiving others as part of one's group & at the same time believing that they reciprocate this perception of one as part of their group. Living the Kalpwasi identity requires following a specific way of life to achieve spiritual enlightenment. The fundamental principle used in the study was 'to maintain positive thoughts about others'. The successful implementation of this communal principle relies heavily on mutual adherence amongst fellow practitioners [1-3].

In the analysis section, there is a table on 'factor structure of shared identity & rationality'. There are two broad areas for the respondent. These are 'to what extent do other kalpwasis' & 'to what extent do you think that all kalpwasis'. Under each area, there are 5 variables each & thus there are 10 variables in total. Factor 1 is on rationality & Factor 2 on shared identity. In the analysis, the principal axis factoring used the oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalization [1-3].

Faith Healing & Psychology

There are intimate linkages between the mind & the body. The state of mind changes the state of body by working through the cerebrum, the central nervous system, the endocrine system & the immune system. The cerebrum is the seat of consciousness & all mental activities. A small region called hypothalamus is in close proximity with the cerebrum & is affected by the emotional state of the person. Hence, according to the mental & emotional state of the person, hypothalamus stimulates endocrine glands & their secretions to regulate body's involuntary maintenance processes like heart beat, breathing, blood pressure, body temperature etc. The immune system of the body is also controlled by the cerebrum directly through secretion of chemicals in the blood stream or indirectly through the nerves & neurochemicals [4-7].

Body's own healing system gets activated under certain conditions. Faith healing catalyzes body's self healing process in case of any crisis like illness or injury. Faith breeds hope, optimism, trust & positive thinking. Faith takes away neurotic anxieties of the patient there by releasing all mental energy for self healing. Such a mental state galvanizes body's own healing system. The study of placebos helps to understand the way mind works over body. In experimental studies, one group is given placebo like the nation did in case of COVID 19 vaccine. Small traces of antibodies were also present in cases who received the false vaccine. A placebo effect is good proof that there is no real separation between mind & body. It reminds about the mind's infinite capacity of self healing. Placebo gives a patient hope & expectations of recovery that brings some definite changes in the body chemistry thus helping the body to mobilize its defense mechanism to fight a disease. Placebo activates cerebral cortex & thus the endocrine glands secrete especially the adrenal glands. The chemical secretions of the adrenal glands are responsible for mobilizing body's action by increasing heart beat, blood pressure & access to body's stored energy. Faith healing needs understanding of the culture & belief systems of the patients. A strong bond between a traditional healer & a patient is based on compassion, understanding & acceptance of the patient as a person & not as a case. Indian psychologist Sudhir Kakar mentions that of the decisive importance to a patient is the healer as a person & not his or her particular technique or conceptual system. One needs to understand that it is not the medicine only which treats but the patient's active role in the treatment process. As per Norman Cousins, up to 90% of the diseases from which people suffer are of self limiting in nature i.e. these are well within the range of body's own healing powers [8-11].

Recovery in all faith healing depends upon mobilizing the patient's defense mechanism to its optimum. Mind's powers of self healing are enormous & we only use 10% of its potential. It is prejudicial not to acknowledge the efficacy of a treatment that works just because the modern science cannot explain the phenomena [8-11].

Faith Healing Examples

Charak in his book *Charak Samhita* (Collections of Charak), mentions certain rituals being prescribed with medicine with the idea to enhance effectiveness of the prescribed medicine & not to mix religion with medication. Thus, Ayurveda gives the idea of holistic health healing since centuries [12].

Bernie Siegel in his book 'Love, Medicine & Miracle', mentions the faith healing story of the use of the drug 'Krebiozen' in a cancer patient. He describes the recovery of the patient upon developing trust with the medication but lost hope & died upon reading about the ineffectiveness of the drug in cancer [13].

CONCLUSION

The era of technology use in human beings have led to gaps among human beings as active communication is lost. We are a nation that harps on large gatherings since ages. Good management of large gatherings or if the 'hard' part is taken care, the 'soft' part eventually happens among human beings.

The aspect of the influence of large gathering & faith healing are the two important dimensions that influence human behavior significantly. This is the crux of this article.

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