

Synopsis

The Perceptions of Lifestyle diseases in contemporary Kolkata: A Sociological Study.
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Introduction

Modernization is an irreversible, ever changing and an unending process, which has engulfed the whole world in such a way that people are going crazy over the increasing demand of development or consumerism. On this contrary, India is a developing country where agriculture and cultivation is the main occupation till now, thus it is really being very tough for the Indians to compete in the long and unending run of modernization. Taking this into consideration, few cities which are mention worthy in history of India for its characteristics of its typical traditional culture like Kolkata are being eroded and changed into an unacceptable and unrecognisable modern culture, which is not being fully accepted by the people. People of Kolkata being a metro citizen, do not want to get loosened from their roots of originality, whereas at the same time can't deny the forceful impact of modernization which they are bound to accept. The present situation of the society is such that the educated and 'Y' generation people are getting a foothold and can cope with the constant changing effects of westernization or urbanization and more specifically modernization, but the older generation people who believe in their traditionalism can't internalise the irreversible change, thus face obstacles or cultural lag. These in due accumulatively causing stress depression and loneliness at large.

Now let us understand what lifestyle disease is, before that we need to know what does life style means, In sociology, a lifestyle is the way a person lives. This includes patterns of social relations, consumption, entertainment, and dress. A lifestyle typically also reflects an individual's attitudes, values or worldview. Having a specific "lifestyle" means engaging in a characteristic bundle of behaviours that makes sense to both others and the self in different times and places. Therefore, a lifestyle can be used to forge a sense of self identity and to create cultural symbols for the way a person is. The behaviours and practices within lifestyles are a mixture of habits, conventional ways of doing things, and reasoned actions. To be more explicit Lifestyle is the typical way of life of an individual, group, or culture. The term was originally used by Austrian psychologist Alfred Adler (1870-1937). The term was introduced in the 1950s as a derivative of that of style in modernist art. The term refers to a combination of determining intangible or tangible factors. Tangible factors relate specifically to demographic variables, i.e. an individual's demographic profile, whereas intangible factors concern the psychological aspects of an individual such as personal values, preferences, and outlooks. A rural environment has different lifestyles compared to an urban metropolis. Location is important even within an urban scope. A particular neighbourhood affects lifestyle due to varying degrees of affluence and proximity to open spaces. For example, in areas within a close proximity to the sea, a surf culture or lifestyle is often present.

As we now know what lifestyle is, let's concentrate on health and health factors to know about the lifestyle disease. We all know Sociological Perspective of health is a state of complete well-being: physical, mental, and emotional. This definition emphasizes the importance of being more than disease free, and recognizes that a healthy body depends upon a healthy environment and a stable mind. Along with that Lifestyle factors are the modifiable habits and ways of life that can greatly influence overall health and well-being.

A good or satisfactory condition of existence; a state characterized by health, happiness, and prosperity; welfare: to influence the well-being. When we do not, rather cannot cope up with the trend or involve too much in the trend, by forgetting our roots then only our body rebels by showing different problems as forms of diseases, what we know as lifestyle diseases. Lifestyle diseases are defined as diseases linked with the way people live their life.

This is commonly caused by alcohol, drug and smoking abuse as well as lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating. Diseases that impact on our lifestyle are heart disease, stroke, obesity and type II diabetes. The diseases that appear to increase in frequency as countries become more industrialized and people live longer can include Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, atherosclerosis, asthma, cancer, chronic liver disease or cirrhosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, metabolic syndrome, chronic renal failure, osteoporosis, stroke, depression, obesity and vascular dementia.

A new set of diseases are seen due to the changed lifestyle. Not only lifestyle, but the new trend of eating habits of having snacks and fast food is also hampering the health of all. As these are available widely everywhere, pocket friendly and seems to be tasty, that is why urbanites being aware of the bad effects of snacking, still opt for having it. The concept of dining out and trying new foods in multi-cuisine restaurants has become popular. The cook shows, cook books, availability of spices and condiments and cooking as a lucrative profession, these all have given a rise of urge of experimentation with food. Food festivals and carnivals are common in Kolkata which people enjoys a lot. More over Kolkata is a harmonious place, where every community people celebrate all festivals by feasting. This happens by inviting people over feasts of religious festivals, donating and sharing food. As the unending cycle of eating good food is repeated very frequently, so different types of diseases are seen very commonly in Kolkata. Obesity, high blood pressure, gastro-intestinal problems, indigestion etc. are very story of every household. On top of it the pollution and population problem of Kolkata, has aggravated the problem further. Various air and water borne lifestyle diseases are common like asthma, allergy, cancer, and skin and hair problem to name a few.

As consumerism has touched all the aspects of our lives, along with its goodness it has hampered different other aspects of life too. Above that, the social media or internet has helped all of us to be more informative. Thus, from religious, fashion, food or important news every query is being solved with in seconds. Time is an important factor at present, everybody is falling short of time, thus automatically all lengthy, irrelevant work of life has been either cut short or handed over to specialized persons. The religious rituals and rites are one of them. Though religious experts say that in every religion whatever the stipulated rituals are, those are so scientifically or logically made that, it actually helps to maintain a healthy, positive life. They also claim that, as people are abstaining from these rituals, so they are getting different kinds of diseases. Each and every ritual have different health benefits. The diseases are not only happening due elimination of rituals, but for the type and kind of work one does. The work culture, pattern, risk factors are considered for occupational or situational lifestyle disease caused by smoke, pollutants, heat, cold, sound, dust, fumes etc. most of the working professional passes through these situations and fall prey to different lifestyle diseases. Urbanites are more exposed to different awareness measures due to accesses to different things like uninterrupted internet connection, social media, library, good network of learned people and different campaigns etc.

The researcher wanted to do the representative study based on the religious and related ritualistic orientations and changes in Kolkata. The kind of disease one has doesn't depends on one's religion solely but majorly on one's lifestyle and one's sense of ethnicity, traditionalism, originality history etc. Secondly no religion as such is responsible for certain kind of disease, in fact all kinds of lifestyle diseases are found in all religions. We all know that each religion has something good and noteworthy and few drawbacks related to it. These drawbacks can be overlooked only by the power of education. Education can help to understand and reason out logically the odd religious demands, and at the same time relate to other goodness of different

religions and ultimately use the amalgamated goodness of religions in one's life. Then only one can feel harmonious to oneself and at the same time keep care to one's health. As people in Kolkata don't worry about the rituals or religious bindings, and the youth here believe in more solidarity and socialism. Thus, religion does not play a vital role in disease formation neither does it help in reduction of disease. The same thing is true for health education also. As health is the ultimate wealth of the society, so it is very necessary to put health education in syllabus, like other compulsory subjects, so that from the very beginning one knows the best and cheapest ways of proper food habits by keeping in mind the nutritional part. To know the dos and don'ts of food intake is very important for avoiding food related diseases. This habit will be taught and practised by both the present generation and their previous generations too. Like this way the concepts of healthy and non-healthy foods will be clear and people can lead a disease-free life.

Objectives

1. What do the middle class Bengalee Hindu, Muslim and Christians of Kolkata understand by the term lifestyle as a concept and how do they relate lifestyle with lifestyle diseases?
2. What changes can be seen in the religious activities of HINDU MUSLIM and CHRISTIANS in respect to their genders in this neo-liberal age?
3. How modernization and consumerism related to both religion and lifestyle diseases?
4. What consciousness and remedies are followed about the lifestyle diseases?

Methodology & Research Setting

Survey and case study for mixed method approach has been opted. Purposive non probable snowball sampling has been chosen for the study. The study is cross-sectional as it examines a cross-section of the population distributed in different zones in Kolkata (east, west, north and south). The data was collected in Kolkata city. As the subjects under study consisted of people of different age groups, it was not possible to contact them in formal setting, so the subjects were contacted in various setups like their own homes, work place and recreational areas. Having identified the sample, the researcher then established contact with them via personal visits to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. The study objective was explained to the eligible subjects and their informed verbal consent was sought. The researcher has collected the data by mailing the questionnaire to the relatives and their referred people. The researcher knew the ones who are well equipped with internet and computer. With their prior permission she had mailed the questionnaire to them. Secondly, she telephoned few of them, specially the senior people who are pensioners or retired persons. As they were reluctant to answer for such longer time.

Theoretical implication.

The application of Rational Choice Theory (RCT) to the domain of religion is debatable. The cost-benefit model of RCT does not solely determine individuals' allegiance to particular religious belief or practice. Hence religious activity is a field where applying RCT may not be adequate. However, RCT stands out as the most reliable theory formulated so far in an attempt to objectively understand religious affinity.

Rational Choice theory is part of economic theory where maximum benefit for least cost determines human behaviour. All behaviour accounted here is then by nature rational. As for example friendship and marital relations can be understood through RCT. Choice of friend or partner is a measure of benefits over costs.

Applying RCT to sociology of religion has led to a reanalysis of the latter. Within which

- i. RCT explains secularization thesis through new basis, and
- ii. RCT attempts to provide new understanding in the study of sectarianism and religious movements.

Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge first applied the laws of Rational Choice Theory to sociology of religion (1980). It has since then been furthered and modified by them continuously. Roger Finke and Laurence Lannaccone have also significantly contributed to refining RCT. Stark and Bainbridge developed a deductive theory of religion. They see religions as systems of "compensators" The theory is based on a general theory of human nature and action. It is closely related to the popular exchange theory. According to exchange theory actors will always try to obtain maximum benefit through every interaction. Every human interaction is treated in the form of an exchange. Hence, exchange theory is a special case of RCT.

Rational Choice Theory of Religion (RCTR)

From this understanding then we would now be able to formulate the Rational Choice theory of Religion (RCTR). RCTR states that 'within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options, guided by their preferences and tastes, humans attempt to make rational choices' (Stark and Finke, 2000: 65). Humans weigh rewards against costs. They develop ways to minimize costs to the most. As a result of this balancing of rewards against costs, explanations develop on how to minimise costs and maximize rewards. Humans then chose from these explanations the most effective one.

By definition rewards are anything which is desired by humans and to obtain which humans are ready to incur costs. There are two types of rewards: Specific and General and both are limited as compared to their demands. Some rewards are very strongly desired by humans but which are very difficult to obtain. For example, immortality. Religion provides explanations in how these difficult-to-obtain rewards can be achieved by humans.

The role of religion

Religion is the means by which humans can achieve strongly desired rewards in everyday life. Religion is like a set of explanations but those which cannot be verified. But humans believe in it because it provides promises of beyond-this-life rewards. These other-worldly rewards are those which can be received only through supernatural forces. The presence of supernatural forces in religious explanations is a very important characteristic to be present in most religions. Therefore, *Theravada Buddhism* is different from popular Buddhism, which has the presence of supernatural beings.

The existence of Gods is also very important feature for any system of explanation to be called religion. Gods are considered to be beings which have consciousness and desire. This is accepted by Stark and Finke's in their Rational Choice Theory of Religion. In RCTR therefore

abstraction in idea of God is not accepted hence Taoism or 'ground of being' are not examples of true gods.

Defining religion through exchange theory

The relation of humans to gods is one of exchange. Gods provide rewards which are not available through everyday means. Therefore, according to Stark and Finke (2000: 91) "Religion consists of very general explanations of existence, including terms of exchange with a god or gods". Religious explanations are useful for humans on various grounds:

- i. Firstly, they show what gods want from humans and what humans want from god.
- ii. Secondly, they are capable of answering questions on
 - a. Meaning of life
 - b. How humans came to being
 - c. Why do humans exist in this life?
 - d. What happens to them after death, and so on?

From this understanding it shows that for RCTR religion acts more like an explanatory system. It does not consider it to be functional or symbolic which help in social integration, solidarity and maintaining order. For RCTR religion can be functional or symbolic in specific empirical cases.

Gods and exchange

Gods are believed to have different characteristics that also vary. Gods, in general, are seen as having power more or less, helps others being benevolent and malevolent, reliable, consistent. Exchanges between humans and gods are dependent on these characteristics. Such exchanges can also be of varying nature. Like, short-term or long-term, less important or more significant. These exchange relations change from one society to the other depending on the nature of the particular society. In societies having division of labour dealings with gods are taken up as responsibilities by specific organizations. These organizations in their work further develop a cultural system of exchange.

Stark and Finke explain how religious explanations are difficult to be considered as neutral (2000). Humans believe strongly in these and therefore place a lot of trust on them. This attribute therefore makes religion a collective and communal system. The collective nature of religion is expressed in the communal form of ritual and ceremony practices. Maintaining rituals provide confidence to the loyalists. An example of ritual is praying. It is a private form of ritual that gives assurance in the existence of gods and the possibilities of miracles and mystical experiences.

Nature of religious organization

A number of religious organizations develop in society providing religious explanations. According to RCTR religious organizations also operate in an 'economic' way. Religious organizations are like firms which are providing products in the form of religious explanations to consumers that are humans. Humans then choose between these firms i.e. the religious organizations as to who is providing the greatest products in exchange of minimum costs. Costs in this case are in the form of costs of religious participation and rewards are measured by humans in terms of their preferences and level of benefits. Among these religious organizations there are certain exclusive organizations who involve religious specialists (Stark and Finke, 2000). Exclusive organizations provide those rewards that are least uncertain to achieve.

People chose their religious organizations according to their preferences regarding what they want from the latter. These preferences vary widely. Preferences are in the nature of religious involvement. Some prefer expressive excitement while others calm contemplation at worship. One tenet of RCT is that human preferences are relatively stable and uniform. What humans want from religion are in general:

☐ Security ☐ Comfort ☐ Material wellbeing ☐ Entertainment and others.

Religion as a system offers rewards that are difficult to achieve. Hence religious answers are required in everyday problems of human life. Religious organizations will emerge based on these preferences and trying to provide for all types of individual choices.

Markets with religious organizations will emerge surrounding these preferences that will either be in tune with predominant social values or which deviate from them. So, according to RCT there will be those organizations which are in low tension with society and those which are in high tension with society. In a free religious market, all types of organizations will be present. Those with high tension will be ultra-strict and those with low-tension will be ultra-liberal. Generally, most religious organizations will be neither of the two. They will be in the centre where most individual preferences will be present.

RCTR's understanding of religious market

RCTR emphasizes on the supply side of religious markets. Since the religious preferences of individuals are fixed and religious change is not so common the role of 'religious entrepreneurs' are important. The religious entrepreneurs are those who provide new ways to cater to religious needs. They provide new ways that appeal to customers and which so far have not been expressed by them.

A pluralistic religious market is one where various religious organizations are present that cater to almost all types of individual preferences. Competition in this religious market is between religious organizations. They will try to attract more members by offering newer and newer ways of achieving rewards.

According to conventional theory in case of religion there is no pluralism or competition among religious organizations. This question the authority of religious beliefs and encourages indifference leading to secularism. Rather the presence of unchallenged church ensures that dissent and deviance do not develop at all.

RCTR on the other hand says that monopolistic religious market that is existence of only one religious organization does not meet all religious needs. The place of religious specialists and functionaries are secure in the monopolistic religious market though they may not be popular. Individual preferences are not seen therefore humans have no choice. This results in very few allegiances to the organization and widespread indifference. But if pluralistic religious market is present individuals can choose according to preference. There will be more religious participation and more and more promotion of religion will be possible. RCTR believes pluralism will help to develop more and more spontaneous religious participation. There will be more religious vitality among the people.

Conclusion

As we know that the ritualistic ways of religion have changed, so the void has been bridged mainly by various ways of celebration. Celebration mainly consists of feasting; feasting can be during or after the festival. These feasting are very lavish and elaborate, because the enjoyment which food gives, it cannot be surpassed by any other activities. Food is always related to religion because we offer or sacrifice food to almighty, for satisfying him or her, or for wanting their blessing. At times we want to thank god for the happiness we get for any good news or share the sorrows also, at that time too we offer food to god. That food is what we use as a feasting product and share among all. As these feasts are very rich and happens to occur very frequently, so there seems a probability of people falling sick and having high blood pressure, getting obese, gastritis etc. On contrary of consumerism, it is a very mention worthy phenomenon, that media is targeting women for their marketing agenda. They are portraying all fair and slender figured women for their brand endorsement which in return making them to fall pray for their product and at the same time the society too being male dominated is accepting that and pressuring women to be like the brand endorsers or ambassador. Thus, it is found that the teenage girls are fasting in name of god, but at the back of their mind they are staying away from calorific, oily food. Which will help them to control their weight. Not only this in religious texts and books also, we find all goddesses and angels have slim figure and very good looking, thus the social expectation has also become like that. But they can't understand that now, they have plenty of opportunity to prove themselves in different fields, if they work according to the social expectation and can't tackle with the unacceptable, but opt for figure correction and lack in nutrition then automatically they will not be able to prove themselves in long run.

Education is the only healer that can heal and make understand all the necessary actions needed for a better health and a better future. Education can bridge all the drawbacks of the religion and help to replace it with more acceptable ways of conduct. As we know that all religion has something good and bad as well. Thus, education can only help to reason out and logically interpret from other religions, what is acceptable and what not. The traditional religious demands seem to be like, putting a round peg in a square hole. As the society has changed so the expectations and demands also changed accordingly. Religion is the only thing which can sort out every problem, and come up with new ways of accommodations and compatibility, which will help to eradicate radicalism and ward off fanatic situations. Similarly, if from the very beginning, if children get used to the health education, then automatically the notion of proper food habits and dos and don'ts will be clear to them. They will be able to show the

correct ways of eating to their elders and Youngers too. Like this way the health perspective of the nation can be solved.

To end the issue of the topic, i.e. What kind of lifestyle diseases can be seen more predominant in which religion, It can be said that though religious factors work to some extent for having few lifestyle diseases, due to its typical ritualistic rules and regulations? But there is no such trends found, especially in case of Kolkata that religion is making special lifestyle oriented diseases. Every kinds of people irrespective of their religion is susceptible to lifestyle diseases depending upon their lifestyle and especially in cities, because of its pollution and over population. It might be due to the impact of metro life, that maximum people are aware of the side effects of modern life, and so its lifestyle, thus all of them are trying to cope with the side effects of modern lifestyle, as they cannot change it back to traditionalism. For coping various methods are being used from medication to meditation.

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