

Resort to Religious and Faith Healing Practices in the Pathway to Care for Mental Illness: A Study among Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Kerala

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Abstract : Belief in supernatural causation of mental illnesses and resort to religious and faith healing as the method of intervention still continue in many parts of the world. The proposed study intended to find out the belief and causation on health and illness and utilization of religious and faith healing, its implications, and associated socio-cultural and religious factors among Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Kerala, a southern state of India. Thangals are the endogamous community in Kerala, of Yemeni heritage who claim direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed's family. Because of their sacrosanct status, many Thangal works as religious healers in Malabar, Northern Kerala. Using the case of one Thangal healer as an illustration of the many religious healers in Kerala who engage in the healing practices, it is intended, in this paper to illustrate the religious and ritual healing practices among Mappila Muslims of Malabar. It was found that the majority of the Mappila Muslims believed in supernatural causation on illness, and majority of them consulted religious and faith healers for various health problems before seeking professional help, and a considerable proportion continued to believe in the healing efficiency of the religious and faith healing. A significant proportion of the population found religious and faith healing practices are supportive and more acceptable within the community. Religion and belief system play an important role in the health seeking behavior of a person.

Keywords : religious and faith healing, mental illness, Mappila Muslims, Malabar

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