

Prevalence of Superstition among the people of Dipatoli village in Mahuadanr, Jharkhand

G Kaslin Juliet* Shalini Bara Shashi Shekhar*** Jane Marian Soreng******

Department of Botany

St. Xavier's College, Mahuadanr, Latehar, Jharkhand

Abstract

Beliefs and superstitions are inseparable part of human society. Each society has its own traditional knowledge stored in their culture in the form of beliefs, customs and rituals. These beliefs are not based on human reason or scientific knowledge. The present study focuses on the common beliefs of the people of Dipatoli village in Mahuadanr and attempts to reveal that how some beliefs are significant but some are not, focusing on the superstitions related to death and health.

Keywords: Superstition, Belief, Health, Death

Introduction

Dipatoli, one of the villages of Mahuadanr, a sub-division of Latehar district in Jharkhand, India, situated around 100km away from district headquarter Latehar, has the total geographical area of village is 20 hectares. According to Government census 2011, the total population of the village is around 1,192, out of which male population is 593 while female population is 599. The total Literacy rate of this village is 67.45%, out of which 74.03% males and 60.93% females are literate. There are about 237 houses in Dipatoli village and its inhabitants belong to different religion and different tribes. Thus there are various religious and tribal beliefs and practices in the village and many of them are considered superstitions.

Sumit Agarwal in his work *Superstition and Asset Markets* states that “the people start to believe in superstitions when they get a feeling that humans are at the mercy of natural elements. As a result, people worship forces of nature for a long time.” Some superstitions are thus created because of social values. He further says that “the gap, between what is superstitious and what is not widens even more when considering the opinions of the general public and scientists. The word superstition denotes the fear of the unknown or a belief in supernatural and magical powers which apparently control our lives and fate. Superstitious persons could be mostly

uneducated and without any access to scientific knowledge”. Thus, superstitions are usually attributed to a lack of education, however, educated are not exceptions.

Psychologists and anthropologists suggest that individuals who follow superstitious practices do so to cope with misfortune and uncertainty and to make sense of a complex world. If there is always some chance of a bad outcome when following superstition and some chance of a good outcome when not, an individual might never realize that it is untrue and continue to follow it. Even though the world has faced many changes and development in the field of science and technology, the belief of the people over superstitions still exists in the society therefore, some superstitions are created because of social values.

This study is an attempt to find out whether superstitious beliefs still play a crucial role in the belief pattern of educated, uneducated males and females of Dipatoli village. It is also to find out up to which extent the prevalence of these superstitions affects their lives.

Methodology for Field Study

The present survey was conducted at Dipatoli village in Mahuadanr, Latehar, Jharkhand in the month of April 2023. The sample was collected from the villagers which consisted of 593 males and 599 females. A questionnaire, consisting of 20 questions was prepared to assess the prevalent superstitions and myths related to death and health, found in the village. The students along with the faculties visited the village and went door to door to collect the data. Data was collected by interview method and percentage method was used for data analysis.

Study Area



Image 1: Image showing geographical location of the village Dipatoli



Image 2: Photographs taken during the village survey

Results

Table 1.1 Table showing literacy rate and number of people believing in superstition

Particulars	Sample Population	Literate Population of Sample	Believers	% of Believers	Non-believers	% of Non-believers
Female	130	80	27	33.75	53	66.25
Male	100	70	15	21.42	55	78.57
Total	230	150	42	28	108	72

Table 1.2 Table showing illiteracy rate and number of people believing in superstition

Particulars	Sample Population	Illiterate Population of Sample	Believers	% of Believers	Non-believers	% of Non-believers
Female	130	50	42	84	8	16
Male	100	30	20	66.67	10	33.33
Total	230	80	62	77.5	18	22.5

Table 1.3 Table showing Believers and non- Believers of different occupations

Occupation	Total no. of families	Believers	Non-believers
Business	12	10	2
Educators	5	2	3
Agriculture	8	4	4
Laborers	11	6	5
Others	4	2	2

Table 1.4 percentage showing response for different superstitious behavior

Superstitious behavior	Number of Response from the families	
	% –yes	% –No
1. Common superstition		
1. Sneezing during the time of departure, people consider it unlucky	82	18
2. Eating curd before the start of any job/exam/interview is considered auspicious	84	16
3. Not using the broom after sunset	89	11
4. Not opening the scissors without cutting anything	66	34
5. Not looking at oneself in a broken mirror	83	17

6. Not cutting nails at night	92	08
7. Use of lemon and chilies outside house door removes evil eye	96	04
8. Not washing hair on Tuesday or Thursday	72	28
9. Stopping and waiting to someone else to cross while cat crosses the path	80	20
10. Women not allowed to enter kitchen and temples during menstruation	77	23
2. Death superstition		
1. Dog crying at night indicating death	88	12
2. Eagle flying over a house indicating death	47	53
3. Health superstition		
1. Not sleeping with head facing North	79	21
2. Avoid drinking water while standing	54	46
3. Sleeping under the tree during night leads to mental ill health	87	23
4. Not giving bath to new born baby, it lowers body temperature	72	38
5. Pregnant woman should not come out of the house during an eclipse	94	06
6. Drinking milk and eating fish causes skin diseases	71	29
7. Cracking fingers causes arthritis	80	20
8. Not to drink cold water after having a hot tea	90	10

Discussion

The present study highlights different superstitions and false beliefs practiced by the villagers. Mehak Gupta Grover in her article *Blind belief is dangerous* rightly concludes that “God has made us with brains. Why don’t we use our brains and the intellectual power which God has bestowed upon us? He created individuals with rational powers, which imposes upon them the duty to understand things, if not then they are on the verge of superstitions”. Believing in bad luck such as unlucky numbers or occurrences (such as breaking a mirror) can lead to anxiety which can in return lead to a reduction in performance, stress and health problems. Low levels of rational thinking are more in women, but not in men, female superstitious believers are more prevalent than male superstitious believers. The study shows that how the villagers are unable to use their reasoning capacity and easily become the victims of superstitions.

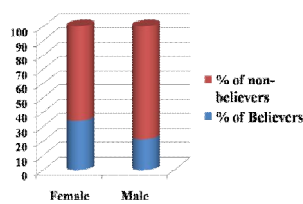
The study reveals that how superstitious beliefs play a vital role in the believe pattern of the people of Dipatoli and particularly to the illiterate villagers who are unable to reason out why and how things happen. But it is also surprising to see that a section of villagers who are

involved with some kind of business believe in luck rather than in hard work to succeed in business.

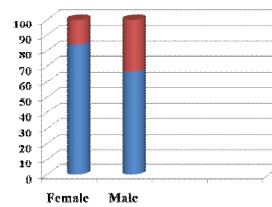
The study also shows that how various meaningless superstitious activities such as sleeping under the tree during night leads to mental health, cracking fingers cause arthritis etc., are blindly practiced by the villagers. There may be some scientific reasons behind some of the practices however mere believing them and practicing them blindly results only in disaster.

It is true that Indian culture, traditions and beliefs hold great value in the society therefore it is necessary to assess their impact on one's physical, mental, and social well being. No matter how much these traditional beliefs are outdated they still have great influence in the people. Therefore education and public policies should be aimed at the promotion of rational beliefs to counter the superstitions.

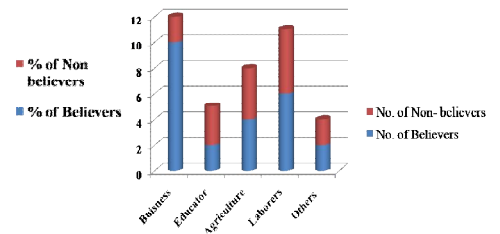
The study being limited to one particular village has its own limitations. Thus, in order to have better understanding, similar studies can be conducted in both rural and urban areas.



Graph 1: Showing % of Believers and Non-believers among the literate group



Graph 2: Showing % of believers and Non-believers among the illiterate group



Graph 3: Showing Believers and Non-believers of different Occupants

Suggestions

- Students both in schools and colleges should be made aware of the wrong practices prevailing in their society.
- Parents should also be made aware of such superstitions which could impact the lives of children.
- Anti-superstition campaign should be conducted in the rural areas to help people, develop a practical and rational mind set.

Conclusion

Although superstition lacks legitimate reasoning, it has persisted over time and remains prevalent despite scientific and technological advancements. Even today it continues to sting our society as it not only hinders our mental and rational growth but it also sets platform for

various crimes and absurdities. Women and individuals who are emotionally susceptible are most vulnerable victims of superstitions. Therefore, the best solution to counter such problem is to give education to the people.

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