

Prevalence of Superstitious Belief among the (ST) Scheduled Tribe Students of Nalbari District

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ABSTRACT

Present study has been undertaken by the investigator among the Scheduled Tribe students of Nalbari district in the state of Assam to identify their different types of superstitious behaviour. Two null hypotheses have been formulated in the present paper – firstly, there is no significant difference between Male and Female ST Students towards superstitious beliefs and secondly, there is no significant difference between graduate and Post- Graduate students towards superstitious beliefs. Total 80 students sample has been selected for testing the hypotheses. No significant difference between Male and Female towards superstitious beliefs was found and in case of 2nd hypothesis also no significant difference between graduate and Post- Graduate students towards superstitious beliefs was observed. Further, in the present paper, the investigator has tried to draw attention of all kinds of educated people towards the harmful effects of superstitions in the society and put forward suggestions to make a society free from social evils due to superstition in India.

Keywords: *Superstition, ST, Education, Nalbari*

Superstition refers to one kind of belief in something which is not justified by reason, scientific attitude or evidence. Dictionary meaning of superstition is nothing but to believe in something blindly without any verification. In most of the cases, insecurity makes a person vulnerable to unjust beliefs or superstitions. Superstitions are deemed as pertinent in India because these generally, hint at future occurrences and can be either good or bad. Though people try to believe these are baseless beliefs, somewhere deep inside their hearts, they are stuck to their roots and still believe in some of the superstitions, if not all. Superstitions, irrationality and blind belief have had an upper hand in our society throughout the ages. An example is the phenomenon of "witch hunting", which has claimed many innocent lives. Superstitions lead to the exploitation of common people by clever "Sadhus and Tantrics". They also lead to caste bias and

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discrimination. It must be realized by people that in a society where youth are practising superstitions, it will hinder social progress. Its prevention is possible only through educational awareness and knowledge is its cure. So, in this paper an attempt is undertaken to study the superstitious behaviour of students of higher educational institutions in Assam so that they can take necessary steps in near future to stop superstitious beliefs harmful to society which are also called as social evils.

Nalbari is one of the highest populous districts of Assam and people of this district are also very much educationally conscious. Educational opportunities in Nalbari are of high quality. It boasts of producing most number of toppers in School level. Nalbari is famous for Sanskrit education and known as "Nabadeep" for presence of various Sanskrit education institutions. First School was set up in Nalbari in the year 1887, which later known as Nalbari Govt. Gurdon H.S School. Nalbari College, Nalbari; Nalbari Sanskrit College, Nalbari; Nalbari Commerce College, Nalbari; MNC Balika College, Nalbari; Barbhag College, Kamarkuchi; Baska College, Mashalpur; Barkhetri College, Mukalmua; Tihu College, Tihu; Barama College, Barama; Kamrup College, Chamata; Dhamdhama Anchalik Mahavidyalaya, Dhamdhama; Gyanpeeth Mahavidyalaya; Nalbari Law College, Nalbari; D. S. R. Academy, nalbari are some premier colleges of Nalbari. Along with 28 Higher Secondary Schools, 145 High Schools, and 276 ME and MV Schools, Nalbari have massive educational infrastructure. "Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit and Ancient Studies University" is a new addition to the higher education scenario of Nalbari, which was established in 15th November, 2015. Actual Population of Nalbari district as per the Census report 2011 is 771,639 among which Male population comprises of 396,006 and Female comprises to 375,633. Population Growth is 11.99%. Proportion to Assam Population of Nalbari district is 2.47%. Sex Ratio is per 1000: 949 and Child Sex Ratio is (0-6 Age) 967. Average Literacy of Nalbari is 78.6% among which Male Literacy stands for 84.36 and Female Literacy stands for 72.57%.

This socio- educational background of Nalbari district gives ample scope to the investigator to conduct a study on Prevalence of Superstitious Belief among the Scheduled Tribe Students of Nalbari District”.

Statement Of The Problem

Present problem has been stated as, “Prevalence of Superstitious Belief among the Scheduled Tribe Students of Nalbari District”.

Significance Of The Study

Superstition is the fear of what is unknown and mysterious. A person believing in superstitions is always haunted by unknown fears and anxieties and loses self-confidence. Superstition is typically seen as inconsequential creation of irrational minds. People of every country believe in one or the other superstition. The mind of the people of Assam is also not free from superstitious

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beliefs. A large number of witch hunting cases were reported from different parts of Assam during the last few years. A number of superstitious beliefs such as eating food at the time of solar eclipse is harmful, a number of diseases are caused by witches, rhino's horn have many medicinal values, etc. are also very much prevalent in this region. That is why, in the present study an attempt has been made to study what are the superstitious beliefs existing in our society and also finding the gender difference in superstitious behaviour of students in Assam focusing on their harmful effects of in the society

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of related studies done within a very short period of time is presented below-

- **Chakraborty, S. And Gogoi, M.** (2016) carried out “A Study on Superstitious Beliefs of the Secondary School Students of Dibrugarh District of Assam”. The study revealed that many superstitious beliefs still exists among the people of Dibrugarh District. The study also revealed that the rural students are more superstitious than urban students. Moreover, the students studying in English medium schools are less superstitious than the students studying in Bengali medium schools and Assamese medium schools.
- **Dayal, J.K.** (2015) “A Study of Superstitious Attitude Among Women” This study was conducted to compare the superstitious attitude of working and non working women. The sample consisted of 200 women from Ludhiana district of Punjab state. Superstitious attitude scale was used to collect data. The statistical techniques such as Mean, Standard-Deviation, and t-test were employed. The results revealed that there exists a significant difference in superstitious attitude of working and non working women but married and unmarried women possess same attitude towards superstitions.
- **Singh, B. D.** (2014) conducted a study on “Superstitions Behavior and Decision Making in Collegiate Athletes: An Illogical Phenomenon” and concluded that the individual sport group has low superstitious belief and better decision making level as compared to their counterpart dual and team sport.
- **Zad Ebrahimi, R.** (2014) studied on “Superstitious beliefs and some of its causes (Case Study: Ghachsaran Citizens)”. Using the questionnaire and survey method, it was concluded that women's tendency to superstitious beliefs is much more than the men's. There is a significant relationship between religious belief and superstition belief. Social and economic status of people plays an important role in the tendency to superstition so that people with low social and economic statues have more tendencies to superstition.

Objectives Of The Study

The objectives of the present study are

- (I) To study the existence of superstitious beliefs among the ST students of Higher Education level in Nalbari district.
- (II) To find out is there any gender difference in superstitious behaviour of ST students in Nalbari.

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(III) To find out is there any significant difference in the superstitious behaviour between Graduate and Post-Graduate students.

Hypotheses Formulated In The Present Study

Two null hypotheses have been formulated in the present study which are-

Ho1: There is no significant difference between Male and Female ST students towards superstitious beliefs

Ho2: There is no significant difference between Graduate and Post- Graduate students towards superstitious beliefs

Delimitations Of The Study

Present study has been delimited to the ST (Plan) students in higher educational institutions only.

Operational Definition Of The Concept:

Superstitious Belief:

Superstitious belief refers to one kind of belief in something which is not justified by reason, scientific attitude or evidence. Dictionary meaning of superstition is nothing but to believe in something blindly without any verification.

ST Students:

Scheduled Tribe is an ethnic tribe of people who are original inhabitants of the state of Assam. They are called as the son of soil in this land.

METHODOLOGY USED FOR THE STUDY

Method used:

Normative survey method has been used in the present study as the topic looks for what ought to be in the society so far as superstitious belief is concerned.

Tool used and its description:

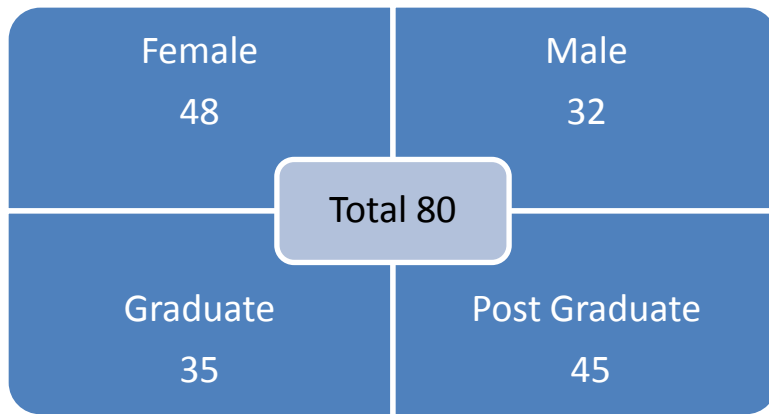
A Self-structured questionnaire was used for collection of relevant data. Before application of the questionnaire among the respondents, experts' opinion was taken from 5 social scientists and academicians in order to validate it. At the first time total 21 items were taken by the researcher, but as per the suggestions of experts later on three more items were included in the tool. It is a three point scale containing the option of "Agree" for 3 points, "No comment" for 2 points and 1 for "Disagree". Among the total 24 (Twenty Four) items, 9 (Nine) items were positive and 15 (Fifteen) were negative. So, it increases the reliability of the tool.

Population and Sample:

University and college teachers along with their students of all higher educational institutions of Nalbari district is the population of present study. Total 80 students were selected as sample

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randomly among which 32 were boys and 48 were girls. Besides, in this group, 35 students were graduates and others were post –graduates.



Statistics used for Treatment of Data:

Simple %, Table, and t-test have been applied for analysis and interpretation of data.

Analysis and Findings of Data

After collecting the relevant data for all the objectives, they were treated carefully as per nature of the objective. So, objective-wise analysis and findings can be presented in the following way-

For Objective No.1: (To study the existence of superstitious beliefs among the students of Higher Education level in Assam.)

Superstitious behaviour among the students of Higher Education of Assam can be presented in the following way-

1. 98% respondents are disagree with **Wearing of white clothes and black bindi** on forehead by a married woman is considered inauspicious
2. 65 % believe that at the time of **solar eclipse**, it is harmful to take meal
3. 72% believe that number of diseases is caused by **witches**.
4. 85.8% believe that **rhino's horn** have many medicinal value
5. 86.8% do not believe that **Brahmin Widow** should always take veg. Food
6. 75% respondents believe that seeing a **black cat on the road at journey** time is a very bad omen
7. **While leaving home, sighting a widow or a barren woman is not lucky was totally rejected by almost all the respondents which is a hope for widows to live equally in the society.**
8. 65% respondents still believe that sitting of an owl **over the house-top is a sure sign of approaching ruin and destruction.**

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9. After a man's death, his widow should not wear colorful sarees or bindis on her forehead is a superstitious belief which is no to be accepted by new generation as all the respondents (100%) were “Disagree” with this statement.
10. Almost all the respondents (78 out of 80) believe that chicken pox is a product of divine anger. They do not like to be treated by the doctors, instead they prefer worshipping goddess *Shitla* for cure.

For Objective No.2 (To find out is there any gender difference in superstitious behaviour of students in Nalbari district)

Table No. -1, Comparison of Superstitious behaviour between Male and Female students on the basis of their responses

Gender	N	M	SD	SE _D	t	df	Significance
Male	32	37.45	20.21	3.65	5.9	78	**
Female	48	15.88	5.24				

**Significant at 0.01 level

As the calculated t- value is greater than table value 2.58, so, it is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted.

It can be said that there is no significant difference between Male and Female towards superstitious beliefs

For Objective No.3: (To find out is there any significant difference in the superstitious behaviour between Graduate & Post- Graduate students.)

Table No.-2, Comparison of Superstitious behaviour between Graduate and Post-Graduate students on the basis of their responses

Category	N	M	SD	SE _D	t	df	Significance
Graduate	35	35.61	15.12	3.41	2.85	78	**
Post-Graduate	45	25.88	15.18				

**Significant at 0.01 level

As the calculated t- value 2.85 is greater than table value 2.58, so, it is significant at 0.01 level. Hence, null hypothesis is accepted.

It can be concluded that there is no significant difference between graduate and Post-Graduate students towards superstitious beliefs

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. It is the duty of educated people to make common people understand that superstitions should not be confused with tradition and culture
2. Educational Movies should be produced and media should take up the challenge of fighting against this evil
3. Conducting educational programmes and awareness raising camps on how miracles are not possible, will go a long way in dispelling the belief.
4. Youth practicing superstitions will hinder social progress. Insecurity makes a person vulnerable to unjust beliefs. **Its prevention is literacy and knowledge is its cure**
5. Superstitious belief is the biggest stumbling block in our path to a healthy society. There has been a tendency to blame the government and depend it for the removal of social evils. I believe the only hope lies in the youth. In this regard the teaching community have to shoulder more responsibility, to 'modernise India' so that the desirable change may occur through education

CONCLUSION

There is no distinct boundary wall between belief and superstitious belief in Indian society. Certain superstitious beliefs have been in the Indian society for such a long time that they have been taken for granted and are no more considered as evil. People leaving everything to God and remaining idle is a common culture in the Indian society. Believe is to be like that superstitions are silly and ridiculous beliefs. Everything happening has a reason and a scientific explanation. Superstitions do affect the society a lot. For example, widows are considered to bring bad luck. At one point in India, widows couldn't get shelter and received harsh treatment. They were not allowed to attend auspicious functions. Also, black cats are hunted down because of the incredibly old superstition: Black cats bring bad luck. They have as much right to live freely without being cringed at do. I think that we all should attempt to steer our minds away from society-affecting superstitions and live as though they had never been created. So, we should think very much positively over this matter so that no more widows suffer in future in the name of superstitions.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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