

SUPERSTITION IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The word superstition was first used in English in the 15th century, borrowed from French superstition which continues Latin superstition.

What is superstition?

A superstition is any belief or practice based upon one's trust in luck or other irrational, unscientific, or supernatural forces. Often, it arises from ignorance, a misunderstanding of science or causality, a belief in fate or magic, or fear of that which is unknown. It is commonly applied to beliefs and practices surrounding luck, prophecy, and certain spiritual beings, particularly the belief that future events can be foretold by specific (apparently) unrelated prior events.¹ The word superstition is often used to refer to a religion not practiced by the majority of a given society regardless of whether the prevailing religion contains alleged superstitions.²

Identifying something as superstition is generally pejorative. Items referred to as such in common parlance are commonly referred to as folk belief in folkloristics.³ Superstition refers to any belief or practice which is explained by supernatural causality, and is in contradiction to modern science.⁴ Some beliefs and practices, which are considered superstitious by some, may not be considered so by others. The gap, between what is superstitious and what is not, widens even more when considering the opinions of the general public and scientists. Superstitions are usually attributed to a lack of education but, in India educated people have also been observed following beliefs that may be considered superstitious.⁵ The literacy rate of India, according to the 2011 census is at 74%. The beliefs and practices vary from region to region, with many regions having their own specific beliefs.⁶ The practices may range from harmless lemon-and-chilli totems for warding off evil eye to serious concerns like witch-burning. Some of these beliefs and practices are centuries old and are considered part of the tradition and religion, as a result introduction of new prohibitory laws often face opposition.⁷

TYPES OF SUPERSTITION

We in a country where more than half the population literally thrives on baseless superstition. All of us have also been brought with a set of weird superstitions and most of them simply defy logic. Yet, there are many who refuse to question their rationality and continue to live in blind faith.

Only Indian superstitions will tell you that crow shit is actually good for you. And it gets weirder than this! Here are some superstitions which don't make sense, but we Indians blindly follow.⁸

1. Hindus believe that cutting nails and hair on Saturdays brings bad luck.
2. If a black cat crosses your path, then your tasks get delayed or postponed.
3. Keeping onions and knives under your bed will drive away bad dreams.
4. You lose your wealth, if you shake your legs.
5. Sweeping floors in the evening drives away Laxmi from the home.
6. People with flat feet bring bad luck.
7. Putting a small spot of kajaal on a baby's forehead took care of 'buri nazar'.
8. Breaking mirror brings bad luck.
9. Don't step out during an eclipse.

10. A girl shouldn't do certain things while she is menstruating.
11. Go near a Peepal tree in the night.
12. Bathe after attending a funeral ceremony.

HOW TO AVOID AND STOP BEING SUPERSTITIOUS

- Notice your emotional reactions when you're writing down those beliefs.
- Determine how often you succumbed to an irrational belief, by performing or not performing certain actions.
- Search for any resources, including the Internet and a local library for the origin of your superstitions, as there are often some historical backgrounds that back their existence.
- Keep your anxiety at bay.
- Be realistic.
- Consider whether your adherence to a belief is bordering on obsession. If
- Feel free to maintain practices and beliefs that are culturally significant to you, however remember that they only carry only symbolic meaning instead of literal ones.
- After examining the origin of your superstition and belief system and trying to be realistic, you should re-examine your list. Re-rate your response or anxiety of each item in the list.⁹

CONCLUSION

Although superstitions are completely erroneous, it is proven that the positive power of mind and prayers can improve the probability of success in your life. So make sure, your life is filled with positive energy, thoughts and behaviors, as those ridiculous superstitions have no logical basis what so ever. Education is one factor that can wipe out superstition to some extent.¹⁰

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