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**"THE MANIFESTATION OF SUPERSTITION IN  
TERMS OF COVID-19"**

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**ABSTRACT**

Superstition, generally means a belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge and it is a practice based upon one's trust in luck or other irrational, unscientific or supernatural forces. (dictionary, 2020) In the current situation, even when the literacy rate of the society is increasing, it is seen that superstition is predominant in terms of COVID-19. This disease is a pandemic that has left people bewildered. 2019-nCoV is a novel corona virus extracted from the lower respiratory tract of patients infected with cryptogenic organizing pneumonia. It was named 2019-nCoV by the WHO. (Pooja Sharma, 2020) The virus originated sometime in the middle of December in China at a live seafood market and then spread to the Wuhan area. From the Wuhan area, it travelled to western countries like Italy, the USA and Europe. (Abazi, 2020) COVID-19 is a public health emergency. History has shown that public health emergencies often lead to stigma and discrimination towards certain communities and groups or affected persons. (Addressing Human Rights as Key to the COVID-19 Response, 2020)

Superstition has manifested itself in various ways in human society for a long time. Some numbers, colors, special days, special objects, special events, some special animals have been considered evil by man. Sometimes people have unscientific ideas in the name of religion. Belief in miraculous powers has remained with mankind as well as the advancement of science. Epidemics have announced for ages. The main interest of this paper is that superstitions still exist terrible in human society in the 21st century due to the impact of Corona epidemics on society. In order to survive the Corona epidemic in different parts of the Hooghly district, most of the people in the society have expressed superstitious attitude which is described in the following text of this paper.

**Introduction:**

World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 an international disaster. The

effects of this virus are being noticed all over the world. It has instilled fear in people's mind very naturally. No exact cure for this disease has yet been discovered. It is not possible to provide adequate amount of mask, hand sanitizer, PPE for this huge population of the world. So, people has lost the way and has put their trust in God. People have become dependent on medical science on the one hand and divine power on the other. People are feeling socially insecure. Because the disease is spreading through the community. That's why the people of the society are ready to resort to any means to survive. Although there is a huge difference between religion and superstition, it is seen that people are obsessed with superstition in the name of religion. The main reason for this is that the role of religion in daily life is very obvious. Religion is inextricably linked with individual life and social life. So, in the current crisis, people have been trying to awaken the superpowers.

### **THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN HUMAN SOCIETY:**

The role of religion in human society is undeniable. However, the nature of religion is not the same aspects as well as personal aspects. James G. Frazer discusses the concept of religion in his book 'The Golden Bough.' According to him, "Propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life." (Frazer, 1922) W. F. Ogburn and M. F. Nimkoff Discusses the concept of religion in their book "A Handbook of Sociology". According to them "Religion is attitude towards superhuman powers." (Ogburn & Nimkoff, 1947) Religion or it's functional alternatives, inevitably provides the basis for the cultural integration of all societies. (Fenn, 1972)

Religion has some positive and negative role in individual life and social life. The role of religion in controlling the whole society is undeniable. The influence of religious discipline on daily life is immense. Religion helps to obey social taboos and makes people moderate. Fear mixed with respect awoke in the people's mind. Religion instills a sense of security and comfort in people. Establishes principles and norms. In addition to preserving unity and solidarity, it inspires people in public service. In addition to these, some negative effects exist. Religion makes people believe in destiny. Creates superstition in people's minds. Many times, it leads to anti- science behavior. Fanaticism sows the seeds of superstition in the minds of the common people of the society. It is often seen that religion undermines the independent consciousness of the people. Indulges in dependence on destiny instead of self – reliance. The divisive power of religion can also be noticed. Religion often creates communalism.

### **RELIGION AND MAGIC:**

Social anthropologist B. Malinowski discusses magic in detail in his book "Magic Science and Religion." According to him, "All magic simply was from the beginning an essential adjunct of all such things and processes as vitally interest man and get elude his normal rational effort." (Malonowski, 1954) Magic refers to the use of mantras and other practices to force an impersonal occult power to fulfill a wish. Magic is a strategy or endeavor. The primitive people of ancient primitive society used magic to deal with diseased, natural disasters, epidemics, etc.

There is a big difference between religion and magic. Religion is not used as a means to an end. The purpose of magic is to try to subdue supernatural powers

through mantras. The purpose of religion, on the other hand, is to surrender to supernatural forces. According to Emile Durkheim, religion is communal because its adherents, bound together by shared belief, form a church. Magic involves no permanent ties between believers and only temporary ties between individuals and the magicians who perform services for them. (Magic and Religion, 1999) (Magic and Religion, 1999)

#### **METHODS:**

The research is being carried out at a time when the worldwide lockdown is underway due to the Corona pandemic. In this case, primary information has been collected from certain areas of Hooghly district under West Bengal through telephone interview. Various news channels and newspapers and social media have been used to collect secondary information.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SUPERSTITION IN HOOGLHY DISTRICT:**

When everyone is concerned about the killing virus corona and they are terrified to the covid-19, a group of people busy to spreading all kinds of rumors. Through the news of Arambagh Times that, in different parts of Hooghly District like Arambagh, Shrirampur, Kalipur, Champadanga, Khanakul etc, were subjected to various kinds of superstitions. It is said that a Brahmin from Tarapith had received a dream order that if everyone collects charcoal from the nearest corner of each house and soaks it in the Ganges water and applying on their forehead, there is a way to get rid of corona virus. On 21st morning, the members of the maximum house collected the charcoal and applied on their forehead. Also, the matter was noticed among many educated people. Along with their reliance on science, educated people relied on miraculous powers. The virus has caused so much fear in the minds of the people that a class of people have gradually fallen prey to superstitions. They are behaving as they are regardless of space and time. Actually, people are ready to use any means to get rid of the novel corona virus. It has been heard that much more has been collected from the ground in Arambagh and its surrounding areas. (Arambagh Times, 2021) Such as collecting tree roots from the ground and wearing them on the body with white thread, which their thought was a way to get rid of corona. These strange behaviors of people have been noticed as viral on various social media.

Some people did this by imitating everyone. At the time when people live in Corona are unsettled and people have to be deported from their homes to maintain social distance as directed by the Government of India, it has announced that, electric lights for all Indians at 9pm for 9 minutes close and keep the candle burning. Although this instruction was followed everywhere, most of the people in the rural areas of Hooghly district set fire to it with a misconception. They thought that lighting candle would make God happy and destroy the Corona virus. In that case, religious sentiments are clearly present and people have sometimes fallen prey to superstition while trusting in God. This disease is contagious, it has been repeatedly requested to maintain the distance. But in some areas, people have been seen participating in candlelight vigils and lighting fireworks. (Bangla Bharat, 2020) A few more things can also be noticed. Doctors, nurses, health workers are fighting the virus from the front. Their contribution is maximum during this crisis. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, to encourage the medical staff, the people of India are requested to pay applause as per

the directive of the Govt. of India. But this issue is also taken in a completely wrong side in some rural areas of Hooghly district. In those areas, the idea that clapping and ringing bells would destroy the Corona virus. In this case also people have fallen prey to superstition. (The Indianness, 2020)

Some people reside in the different part of Hooghly district, who did not hesitate to drink cow's urine to escape from the Corona. (News18 Bangla, 2020) Where no suitable medicine has yet been discovered, some people think that the only way to get rid of it is to use cow's urine or not. One more thing is noteworthy. People have been trying to overcome their fear of death through various forms of worship, sacrifice etc. (Biswa Bangla, 2020) (Pramita Bangla, 2020)

In most of the hindu houses in the countryside, 'shilnora' is worshiped as Maa Shasthi. In this Corona atmosphere one thing has been noticed to worship 'shilnora' at home. This has been noticed in Arambagh, Khanakul and some parts of Srirampur. Worship with incense by standing the 'nora' vertically on the 'shil' or get rid of the corona pandemic. These issues have been noticed on social media. (News Bangla, 2020) News of the flag burning at the top of the Jagannath temple in Puri on 20<sup>th</sup> March also went viral on social media. (PuranKatha Official, 2020) That's why people in some towns of Hooghly district like Arambagh, Srirampur etc. started thinking that a terrible epidemic would come.

A telephone interview revealed that a deity named 'Bangru Roy' was worshiped in the village Sitanagar in Hooghly district. It is heard that in the dream of that deity, the villagers are collecting 'kundri' fruits and worshipping and eating them in front of the 'Tulsi mancha'. (Dey, 2020) They believe that Corona disease will not come as a result. According to the telephone interview, Goddess Chamunda in Dankuni of Hooghly district has to eat seven bel leaves, seven basil leaves and seven cloves together as per the dream order. This will make it possible to get rid of Corona. Such superstitions in the name of religion and Gods and Goddesses have come up in the wake of this incident. (Khotel, 2020)

We need to use facemask, sanitizer, PPE to avoid this virus. It has been suggested to use hand sanitizer containing 70% alcohol. In this case too, some people in the society have come up with their own idea that since sanitizer should be alcohol based, it is possible to get rid of this infection by drinking alcohol. For that reason, the alcohol store has seen eye-catching crowds. (News 18 Bangla, 2020) In this case also an extravagant attitude has appeared.

### **THE EFFECTS OF SUPERSTITION IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN TERMS OF MICRO SOCIOLOGY:**

Special social processes become the subject of micro sociology. In this case the unit of discussion is small. Outbreaks appear to be exacerbated during daily life and in some areas of society. That is why this discussion has become particularly acceptable under the micro sociology.

It would be more relevant to discuss the impact of religion on society in a small way, rather than applying it to human society as a whole. This corona situation has caused so much fear in people's minds that some people in the society are falling prey to superstition because of it. Religion is playing an important role in this. Some people consider the various events of daily life to be divine greatness. If we look at the matter from the theoretical point of view, the matter will get perfection.

One of the main theories of American sociology is symbolic interactionism. Theories of this genre think that the actor imposes various meanings on objects and social actions. Social action and interaction are considered to be the result of the meaning imposed by the actor in this theory. This meaning is not contained inside the object. (Turner, 1987) In this case, the current corona is not the cause of the superstition. It has become a superstition as different meanings have been imposed by the individual. And according to different behaviours of the person have been noticed.

Phenomenological sociology is one of the various trends in sociological practice in the late nineteenth and early twentieth Century's. The contribution of Husserl in this case is undeniable. According to Husserl, the external world is established by the touch of our consciousness. We gain knowledge of the surroundings through consciousness. External features are imposed by human consciousness. (Ritzer, 2011) In this case, the active role of our mind has been acknowledged. In this context, it can be said that the current superstition is associated with the human consciousness.

Max Weber says the imposition of meaning on social action. According to him social truth is never fully understood. In this sense of social action, Weber refers to behaviour that are performed at least in the context of another person. In that case prejudice is never spread by one person, in which case the company of more than one person is required. Actor tries to understand the actions of others by imposing meaning on human behaviour as his/her own. Weber used the term 'verstehen' in this context. (Coser, 2015)

According to Alfred Schutz, the way individuals shape or participate in their daily lives is the subject of sociology. Everyone wants to understand the event or situation in their own way. It was from here that Alfred Schutz began to explain everyday life. Superstition has taken its place in the activities of people's everyday life. People have some common ideas in social life that help them learn to recognize the things they have experienced and divide them into some types. Here Schutz used the term 'typification'. (Ritzer, 2011)

"The Social Construction of Reality", Berger and Luckmann show that civilization and society are manmade. (Turner, 1987). But in the wake of 21<sup>st</sup> century corona epidemic, people have relied on medical science, on the one hand, and another image has emerged. Some people of rural Bengal do not hesitate to consider the worship of Yajna as well as some superstitions as the effect of divine power. In this case, revealing the truth has become a very difficult issue.

Another part of information that is closely related to Ethnomethodology. (Turner, 1987). That is the way to understand everyday life. "The study of the methods people used to accomplish their everyday lives". Garfinkel shows that, "member's methods for making their activities visibly rational for all practical purposes". Garfinkel Ethnomethodology mentioned two process-accounting and indexicality. It is important to analyse how people use language to describe a social field. Social action is semantically subjective. In this case people try to justify their reasoning after committing superstitious behaviour. What may seem superstitions in general may have become a means of peace of mind for some people. Which is helping to allay people's fear.

**CONCLUSION:**

Religion and science are equally important as an essential aspect of human life. Yet there are some distinct fields of religion and science. Science investigates the natural world, while religion deals with spirituality. Religion describes the beliefs, values and practices related to sacred or spiritual concerns. Social theorist Emile Durkheim defined religion as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things”. Behind the origin of religion was man’s fear and excitement over natural forces. Fear and excitement have given rise to misconceptions about religion. In this context, it can be said that the effect of fear and excitement can be noticed in the current Corona atmosphere and as a result, people have become obsessed with superstitions.

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