

SOME POPULAR INDIAN SUPERSTITIONS

OR

SUPERSTITIONS—THEIR ROLE IN LIFE

OR

THE ORIGIN AND INFLUENCE OF SUPERSTITIONS

“Superstition is the religion of feeble minds”.

— Burke

Superstitions are founded on fear or ignorance. They have no basis in reason, logic or science. It is not possible to explain any superstition with the help of reason.

Superstition is a blind faith which has no explanation. “Superstition”, said Bacon, “is the reproach of the Deity.” Ignorance gives birth to superstition. Superstition means a belief which has no rational basis. Superstitions are not found in India only. They are found in almost every country. Each country has its own superstitions. There are some superstitions which are universal in nature. Backward people are more superstitious than advanced people. Even some educated people believe in superstitions.

Different types of superstitions are prevailing in different countries of the world. Some superstitions are attached with some animals and birds. If a crow caws on a house top, the residents expect the arrival of a guest. If a person meets a priest in the morning, he fears bad luck that day. On the other hand, if he meets a beggar, he feels that the day will bring good luck.

Some superstitions are linked with the movements of the parts of the body. If there is an itching on the right palm of a man or on the left palm of a woman, they would expect some gain in the day. Twitching of the left eyelid of man is considered ominous. People believe that the hooting of an owl is a message of a bad happening.

Almost all the countries of the world believe in ghosts and witches. Even the most enlightened countries like America, Russia, England and France are not free from such beliefs. In India, belief in ghosts is very common. They take the affected person to a ghost expert. Sometimes, the person alleged to be under the influence of an evil spirit is tortured to death. Some people sacrifice their children to satisfy some goddess. Some cut off their tongues to please another goddess. Some others roll down in mud and mire in the course of their journey to the holy shrine of a goddess.

Shakespeare's plays are full of lines that reveal that Englishmen are generally superstitious.

Calpurnia says to Caesar:

“When beggars die there are no comets seen:

The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.”

These lines reveal Calpurnia's superstition that the appearance of a comet in the sky foredooms the death of some great man. Hamlet too sees the ghost of his dead father several times. It is the ghost that spurs him on to action.

Some days are thought to be good for starting a new thing. Whereas Wednesdays and Fridays are believed to be good. Tuesday and Saturdays are believed to be inauspicious days for the opening of a new shop or starting a new business. The number thirteen is considered unlucky in several countries. Chandigarh, the city beautiful, does not have sector thirteen. The number 'thirteen' has been knowingly missed out. Similarly, if a cat crosses someone's path, his mission is supposed to be foredoomed to fail. Nobody in India starts his journey if somebody present on the scene sneezes. Some people leave their homes only after eating something saltish.

Some people believe that superstitions play a positive role in life. They help people to somehow “explain” their failures and feel satisfied. They provide a sort of psychological outlet or explanation to a number of mishaps in life. But they certainly do more harm than good. They weaken the mind and create unnecessary fears.

Superstitions can be destroyed only by the torch of education. They are the products of darkness. They cannot stand light. As knowledge increases, superstition decreases. An educated man wants to know the how and why of things. He does not accept superstitions are already dying out. But a lot still remains to be done before superstitions are completely done away with.