

# **A STUDY ON CULTURAL BELIEFS AND PERCEPTION OF CASTE IN GORA VILLAGE, LALITPUR DISTRICT UTTAR PRADESH**

ANJANA SINGH RAJPOOT

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI, 110067

## ***Abstract***

*This study conducted in Gora village of Lalitpur district, Uttar Pradesh. Bundelkhand is known as a drought prone area, but this region is also famous for its folklores. Despite the problems such as poverty, economic deprivation, hunger; people of this region celebrate each and every festival with proper tradition with enthusiasm. On the other hand the religious beliefs of the people are very strong. This Paper deals with the cultural beliefs and practices of the region particularly in Gora village with special reference to caste perspectives. The ritualistic superiority of the upper castes people is the sole reason for the dominance and discrimination faced by the lower caste people and other tribes in the Gora village. The study reveals that the Gora village is very poor thus presenting a very different and unique picture of the research.*

***“Culture is the art elevated to a set of  
beliefs” Thomas Wolfe***

In India caste system has become a world’s longest surviving social hierarchy. Caste as a defining feature of Hinduism encompasses a multifarious ordering of social group on the basis of ritual purity. Under these caste phenomena, a person is considered to be a member of this system who is born and remains within the assigned caste until death. Caste may vary among regions and over a period of time. In India, the first literacy of the caste system was found in Rigveda and Purnasukta hymn.

Caste provides a particularly illustrative case of a cultural institution where sharedness and disparity (as domination and inequality) co-exists with each other in a state of perpetual tension (Dumont, 1980). It is a “live force in modern Indian culture and politics” (Satyanarayana, 2014), which exercises a powerful cultural influence on the Indian politico-economic order (Deshpande, 2001; Fuller, 1996; Micheluti, 2007). There are three interrelated facets of caste are

considered central: first one, it is a maker of (single caste) communities; second, also of inter-caste dominance and hierarchy laid down at birth, and third; leadership within intra-caste communities in the form of the caste headman. All these three are the facets of caste. By infusing everyday practice and influence the shaping of social networks, castes as “ethnic groups don’t just experience the world in terms of ‘we-them relations,’ but play a role in producing them” (Reddy, 2005).

Indian culture, as it is popularly known, is like a huge tree with its branches representing various systems of religious thought. Religion, tradition and customary practices are an important part of Indian culture.

Sociologists and anthropologists consider the organization of a society to be a reflection of its culture: an important component of which is cultural beliefs. Cultural beliefs are the ideas and thoughts common to several individuals that govern interaction between people and their gods. In general, cultural beliefs become identical and commonly known through the socialization process by which culture is unified, maintained and communicated (Davis, 1949). Culture is the bond or tie that keeps people belonging to a particular region or community together. "Culture" refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, actions, customs, beliefs and institutions of racial, ethnic, social, or religious groups (California Endowment, 2003).

*“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture are like a tree without roots.” Marcus Garvey*

### **Village Cultural Profile**

The lifestyle of villagers, their religious beliefs value and perception of caste are very different from others. Their life style is surrounding within their boundaries, they live in a midst of natural surrounding with the charm of nature which justifies the remark of famous English poet Cowper that “*God made the country and man made a town*”. The villagers live a healthy and peaceful life with no smoke and noise of the city factories. They live a simple life and also their desires are less and they are satisfied also with what they have and they usually never dream out of their comfort zone which makes them happier. The main occupation of village people is agriculture, their life is more depended on crops and field; they are mainly farmers. They do farming in the nearby lands in the neighborhood of the village. In spite of this, some people keep shops and keep the necessities of life of the villagers. Other works like pottery, carpentry etc. are also the

sources of livelihood in villages. The good thing about villagers is that they are socially bonded together. In a town or city, no one care of each other but in villages each villager is familiar even with the family histories of the other villagers. By the evening they collectively assemble in the village chopal (the center point of the village) with their hukkas (*cigars*) and gossiping with each other which goes on till late night. With this simple life villages have some drawbacks also, for example, most of them are extremely poor living in one room which is called '*kacchaghar*' or mud houses which often fall off to the ground in the heavy rainfall. In spite of their hard work they are not able to earn sufficient to provide themselves with a proper life or one day meal, they are not saving for their future betterment or not able to educate their children, Whenever they need money they have to borrow from the village moneylender with interest and debt which they are often never able to return. Bichumuttathara said in his article on Indian farmer that '*He is born in debt, lives in debt and dies in debt*', and also their crops are at the mercy of rains. Besidethis their perception of caste are very strong in today's time it has been decreasing for a while due to increase of education and more awareness among people but in spite of that the untouchables are considered polluting and are therefore kept at a distance in today's world also. They have to live separate and can't share such common village amenities, for example, well. Those caste who are considered to clean up, deal with dead animals or use their meat for making their *dhol* are ritually unclean and beyond the pale and couldn't be accepted by the higher caste people. Most of the lower caste people are actually engaged in the agricultural labor. With this perception of caste, people are more dominated by the religious or cultural belief, they are much influenced by the religion and culture, all their work and life is surrounded and based on these beliefs from birth to death, they have rituals ceremonies according to their community and culture.

To relate with the perception of caste to the cultural belief of the people, Bundelkhand has emerged as a powerful culture with full of diverse songs, dances, art, rituals, ceremonies, traditions etc. People of this region are more culturally oriented. Here, people have blind faith, taboos, and beliefs on different gods in different form. As per their beliefs, there are certain location where god situates and if one wishes something, his wish generally comes true (*Kreelaki Mata, Jatasankar, Deva Mata, Rakhpanchampur, DasavatarMandir, Chitrakoot, Orchaetc*).These are some places which are considered to be the most sacred places according to the people of this region. In spite of this, there are some popular dance form and songs also famous in Bundelkhand region which are performed in various festivals and also while celebrating as rituals and traditions.

*Diwari, Ravala, Badhaiya, Rai* are the famous dance form in Bundelkhand region; popular dances also include *Pahunai, Horse dance, Kachhiaayi*. The region of Bundelkhand has got many popular folk songs as well. Some of the very popular folk songs are: *Faag, Alha, Dadre and Gari, Lamtera* (call of god). Despite of being a small region in between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh matches to the standards of Indian culture and has set an impeccable example in terms of art and culture.



Figure 1: A Group of male and female performing a dance form called Badhaiya.

Source: [www.bundelkhand.org](http://www.bundelkhand.org)



Figure 2: A Group of females performing a Folk dance form called RAI.

Source: <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=cultural+folk+dances+of+bundelkhand>



Figure 3: A Dance form called Diwari.

Source: <https://www.google.co.in/searchdiwari+dance+in+bundelkahnd&oq=diwari+dance+in+bundelkahnd&gs>

### **Folklore of Bundelkhand region**

- Hori or Phag is sung in the spring and is appropriately romantic and sensual
- Kajri is sung in the monsoons
- Sohar is sung on the occasion of the birth of a child
- Rai dance is performed by women dancers as well as men during Dushera
- Diwari dances are performed during Diwali by acrobatic male groups holding long poles and dressed in very colourful and unusual attire.
- Achri, a folk song form performed in honor of mother goddesses especially during Navratri Devi puja
- Alha, these songs celebrating the heroic exploits of mythologized historical figures Alha and Udal, who fought on the side of the Chandelas in the war against Prithviraj Chauhan
- Lamtera songs sung in honour of Ganesh and Shakti
- Pahunai song and dance performed to welcome guests
- Got (pronounced as 'goat'), a song form with a strange rhythm sung through the night to seek good health for all cattle in the village
- Kacchiyahi, song and dance performed by women and men of the backward Kacchi caste
- Kahri songs sung to welcome the rains
- Khayal, a competitive form of singing performed by two groups of singers
- Tambura Bhajans, which are songs usually sung to Kabir's lyrics, celebrating a nirguni (formless) godhead, and
- Kolhai song and dance peculiar to the Koltribals of the Patha region.

These are the dance and songs which are famous in Bundelkhand region and also used in many festivals considering rituals which are still alive in some areas and celebrated with full of joy and systematic way.

## **Religious Beliefs**

When we talk about religious belief in study area then we can observe that the religious belief of the people of Gora village is very strong. For every single thing, they can relate to religion. When the researcher did her fieldwork to know about their cultural patterns with some questions in mind, it was found that these people are very close to their deities and are very sensitive toward deities. Accordingly people of this village relate religion with their food habits, marriage, festivals or heath for example after one day of *Diwali* festival every household of this village make *rice* and *Besan*<sup>1</sup> with *Kheer*<sup>2</sup>. It can be also said that they have a kind of fear of god. And the noticeable thing here is that caste plays an important role to form a patterned culture, in which different caste of people role within it. As I mentioned in the previous chapter that in this village there have a number of *Devi- Devtas*<sup>3</sup> also called *Babaju* which should not be countable because people of this village have this notion that the number of gods should not be calculated. But one of them told that around 36 deities are here. The most interesting thing is that, those deities which are worshipped by lower caste people are called as evil or bad devtas by dominant caste group's people. So, upper caste people and lower caste people have their own differentiation and definition of worshipping deities or *Devi devtas*. In this village, dominant caste has their own deity *schabutara*<sup>4</sup> for worshipping. However, a main temple of the village has no rules, any caste group people can enter in the temple but for that, there are some rules that they enter the temple directly. Lower caste people have to take a round and take the entrance from the behind. This indicates that upper caste people can enter in to the temple directly but lower caste people cannot enter directly. Sometime when some bad thing does happen with both lower and upper caste people or if any problem comes into their home, they relate it with deities and say that, "look, this year we did not go to this god for worshipping, so they have cursed us". Then soon after they will go to the deity's place and make food their (*dal bati or kheer puri*) and worship them and pray that their problem is solved. There are different gods for different treatments for example:

- One god called *BHAINSASUR* is famous for treatment of animals

- One god called *KHANCH KE BABAJU* is famous for cure of someone bitten by a snake
- One god called *JAMUNAYA KE BABAJU* is famous for that if someone bite by scorpion
- One god called *ATAI KE BABAJU* is famous for treatment if some person is burnt with the fire than they will help to cure them
- One god called NAT BABBA is famous for if snowfall happen and it will effect the crop than people go to the local deity in village for saving their crop.

If people are happy they usually go to the temple and if they are suffering from any problem then they believe that God is not happy with their deeds so God is teaching a lesson.

During the *Navaratri season*<sup>5</sup>, people bring devimata's statue at home for worship. They worship it for nine days. They have some mythological beliefs that Devi's soul enters someone's body after that she will predict people's future and will also solve their problems providing solution in the form of *Pooja- path*<sup>6</sup> and *Dan- punya*<sup>7</sup>. The devotees follow *mataji's* advices very carefully because they have blind faith on her.



Figure 4: A place of Local deity

Source: Gora village Survey

### **Basore Untouchables: A drumbeater**

In this village, one thing related to caste is also famous that a man who belongs to *basore* community (scheduled caste) do one important work in this village or other nearby villages; his hereditary work is to play drum (*dhapla or dhol*)<sup>8</sup> in marriages, festivals and some rituals or ceremonies. Apart from it, the act of drumbeating is associated with dissemination of message,



but he is also doing the work of a messenger of village, for example some places are there where villagers have to go collectively and make food for worshipping the rain deity for better monsoon for good crop. They do worship there collectively, so this person a day before, in the night when all people are present in their houses, takes a round to the village with his *dhol* and alert people by informing about these dates and give other information also, it's called (*minadi pitna*<sup>9</sup>). This happens in the form as he goes to the village in 8 to 10 places first he pitted his *dhol* 4 to 5 times so people get alerted that some information is about to come then he start shouting, for example, *sabailogan se vintihaikekalkhanchkebabju no roti banbe jane so kouapneite roti naibanawe , sbutaichlwe*(this is to inform everyone that tomorrow we will have to go *tokhanchkebabajuso* don't make food in your home, make your food there only). And this information and dates about when all villagers go for worshipping, has been decided by Pradhan of the village or the people of village panchayat. This person belongs to scheduled caste and this work is done by his family member and their primary survival work is beating drum. People who belong to upper caste give him money and food for this work. This is the only things for survival of these caste people.



Figure 5: A Drumbeater playing Dhol during Marriage Ceremony.

Source: Village Survey

## Marriage

In India, the most and famous thing about caste in marriage is that, inter-caste marriage is strictly prohibited among the village community. One cannot marry to person belonging to the other caste even in village like Gora and one cannot marry within one village as well. If any person marry from other caste or own village, he gets punished by the villagers as a form of villagers will not behave with him nicely or sometimes they are being said to leave the village or if one person marries the lower caste girl or boy, rest of the village member behave very harshly with



them and stop going to their house and stop drinking water and having food from the same person's home.

In Gora village, the marriage takes place in a particular form where every caste person has different role to play for instance: First and the most important person is a woman who belongs to lower caste called *khawasan* an important in some rituals with bride and groom both. This woman has the right to take some important decision related with the bride for example in the ritual of *haldi* ( turmeric), a special bathing with milk and water, *madua me khambkogadna*<sup>10</sup> etc.

The husband of this woman also has special work in marriages. His work is to give invitation of every small functions related to marriage like haldi, sangeet etc., to the every household of the village.

A dance form called **RAVALA** is also famous in the weddings. The farm labor community performs this dance during the weddings in their families. It is performed with funny expressions and humorous actions.



Figure 6: A person sitting on the floor (Khawas) perform a ritual with newly bride and groom during marriage also known as “Worshiping of Local Deities by giving them Holy food”.

Source: Village Survey

### **Commensality and Discrimination**

In Gora village, upper caste people do invite lower caste people in marriages but some of them attend the function and some do not. During the field study, lower caste people said that the reason for not going in such ceremonies is because they feel discriminated when they have to eat food sitting on the floor. But some are happy to go there.

Similar to this a head teacher, (*Harilal*, age 62) belongs to scheduled caste in this village shared his experience. Once he went to a marriage of a *Lodhi* caste person (he refused to mention his name). He sat there on the chair for having food. But after a while, one person came from the family and told him (pointing to the lower caste people who was already eating his food sitting on the floor) "*Ite kay betheute un logankesangebethekkehalomassab*" (why are you sitting here, go and eat with those people, sir). When he listened to this, he felt very discriminated; he came back to his house without having food. So in this village even if a person is in higher position, these people will consider them by caste only.

### **Caste and Birth**

At the time of birth of a baby there have different traditions and rituals in this village, for instance, after the birth of a baby they call a woman from Baretha caste (scheduled caste), but she is not allowed to see the face of the child and mother because it is considered that if she sees the face of the baby then mother becomes unable to breastfeed the baby, because they say that "*nazar lag jatihai or maakadudhana band ho jatahai*" (it casts an evil eye on mother and she stops breastfeeding). So they cover the face of both the mother and the child after which she does her job of cleanness and leaves. The male member of the family visit *Nau* (a male belonging to the nai caste, scheduled caste) family to seek their services for sending invitation to the villagers, however his wife are asked for care of child and mother (mainly giving massage) during the period of first two months of childhood. This is also pertinent that the higher caste families do not take services from those *Nai* families who have their clients in lower caste. This goes through by patron client relationship. A system in which lower caste people perform various functions for upper caste people also called as *Jajmani system*. This *Jajmani* system is a bond between upper caste people and lower caste people. After three days of delivery, the female *Nau* will be called to perform another ritual called as *sootakhatana* (a kind of purification ritual). After purification women are allowed to visit the temple.

### **Son preference**

Some people in the village, who prefer to have a boy child, have the kind of belief that they have one person who is famous for giving blessings for baby boys. If you go and pray in front of them and ask him for a baby boy then you will surely get a baby boy. But during the fieldwork, it is found that despite the prayers and ritual performance as described by different people some

families did not get the desired result in the form of blessing of a son. Saving the legacy and authority of “*Babaji*” some replied that “*Karma*” (deed of past birth) has an important role to get your wishes fulfilled. Some respondents stated that it depends on “karma” if you will to do good karma and if you have a pure and good heart than god listens to you and blesses you with the baby boy. It is surprising to find that entrenched belief system dominates the people. But question arises here, this uncritical attitude towards faith or belief system belongs to which section of the society. Fear of dominant caste to affect the outcastes’ livelihoods could be the reason for unquestioning of the belief dogma. They cannot afford to dare to question the god injustice.

Due to lack of food and nutrition and having extreme faith in god and religious things , lower caste of this village have a number of children but are not able to sustain all. Child gets ill due to various diseases and lower caste people don’t have money for treatment so they prefer home treatment (*desi ilaz*). Even if they have time also they don’t go to the doctor, because they have the mentality that why would we waste our money on them, in spite of that we can go to the *babaju* and do pray in front of them and do treatment by giving him ‘*babajika bhabut*’<sup>11</sup>, especially in the case of girl. People of this village said that “*Modhikomarvo or bhunsayekosaparvo*” (If a girl child dies, one’s sin would be washed off if he takes bath in the morning, its not any bad thing). And also by this sometime they have lots of children also in fear of that if one or two dies than we should have more children (specially, boys) for increasing our clan.

### **Health Perspective**

The perspective towards health of the people of Gora village is closely linked with their cultural factors. Illness birth and death are a natural part of life and some older adults believe that illness is a result of natural causes, improper diet or the will of god for improper behaviour or lack of spiritual imbalance. Many people refuse to take medical care and medical treatment and prefer self-treatment and giving a good chanting to heal, some also have strong faith in god that they will surely get better by the blessing of god, home remedies and through prayer to treat illness.

**For example:**

A 55-year-old lady named *Mamata*, belonging to scheduled caste, suffered from stomach pain. She took treatment from every hospital nearby. She did the entire test but conditions did not become better. After some days her family members heard about some babaji, that he gives some “*Bhabut*”, which heals people’s sufferings. She went to this Babaji’s place. He gave her bhabutand said that take this and you will get better after one day, she took it and returned to home, after a day she got perfectly fine.

Similar to this case not only in this village but also nearby places the religious beliefs of the people are very strong especially among lower section of the society. In Gora village also, these types of cases can be seen in every second day people get sick and they go for this treatment or village deity. And if they will get better than, as they say, “*unkijagah par jakekhanabnatehaibhgwankodhnybadkrnekekiye*” (for thanksgiving to their deity they will worship him in the form of making food in the place of their devta). They also give food to nine small girls called as (*kanyajawana*). People do come from other villages also for the worship of this village deity because they have a strong belief on them (*Deities of this village*). And when their problems get solved their beliefs grow stronger.

### **Untouchability**

Untouchability is the most important and essential phenomena in the reference of caste. Untouchability comes there in any way this is the core feature of caste system. The notion made by people that, schedule caste and scheduled tribe people can’t sit beside dominant caste people they have to maintain distance from them. SC and STs Houses are located in different place considered in the village but slightly far from dominant caste houses. Most of Dalit caste people also made their houses in field, where they do farming. In this village lower caste people have less involvement in social gathering on festivals. Though there are no such any rules that they couldn’t participate in any programs but some of them do not want to involve themselves, because they feel discriminated there; I said this because when I did my pilot study, I realized that some people feel discrimination and they don’t like it. They shared their experience that by going to any place either temple or marriage or anywhere they have to maintain distance from dominant caste people and if mistakenly any mistake does happens, they are being abused by dominant caste group (*Rakes, age- 25*). These type of mentality is held by t young group people only because when I talked to the people over 50 years of age they told me they accept the fact that they are Dalit and if they want to live in this village and this society, they have to accept

these things and these are traditions which comes from the earlier time so we just have to follow them. To this, *Haddu* (belong to scheduled caste, age 51) said, “*ab kakare beta hmesha se joichalet aao so hum bhejoimantaarye ye sb to paramparayeaaimekaaachho or kaburao*” (these all are traditions and we are bound to follow them, what is good and what is bad in this). Here it can be said that old age people do accept these things but younger generation do not want to be suppressed by them, but due to socialization they are bound to follow this tradition. In this village untouchability takes place in the form of following:

- Maintain distance in social gathering
- In the time of distributing holy food dominant caste people doesn't touch their hands
- Could not sit near and beside dominant caste people
- Cannot take drinking water from one place
- Cannot use utensils of one another
- Dalits are not allow to enter to the house of dominant caste
- If dalits eat food in dominant caste utensils, they have to clean it by themselves only.
- They couldn't wear footwear in front of dominant caste people's home. They have to take off their shoes or sleeper than cross their houses.

Similar with these things there have many more things by which lower caste people feel discriminated from upper caste people.

### **Eating habits which relates to the Culture**

In some places people have different food habits and also food plays an important role to frame a cultural life of the people. It is an essential aspect of humans; people make all effort and do all things to earn money for one time food. Some people usually don't eat after sunset, some people have proper diet chart according to their wealth perspective, and in some places there have regional food to eat as well. But when we talk about village culture than people mostly have less food to eat especially lower caste people. Generally they don't have food to eat because they are not in good economic condition. So people belong to lower caste manage their food habits according to their economic situation.

While doing survey, I found that people of this village are not much efficient economically specially the lower caste people. They don't have land for agriculture. They do farming on the

others' field in wages. In spite of that fact they still manage their cultural belief and rely on the food habits. In this village food play an important role to practice some rituals and traditions (make food for worshipping God near the place of devidevtas example, Dal bati, puri kheer, as per their economic condition) and on some special day they make special food also (*for example on the day of bhaiyadoj every house have make besan and puri, on the day of maker sakranti every houses have make laddu, papri and other things, on the day of snatawan sate*<sup>12</sup> *every house have make thethara batiya*<sup>13</sup> etc). So lower caste people have to practice these rituals according to their economic condition. Also when some problem happens within their home they make a wish to the deity that if their problem get solve than they will "kanyayokobhojankrwayenge" (feed food to the small girls). So, in this area food is an important part to show their cultural belief and practices.

### **Most Celebrated Festivals**

In Bundelkhand every festival has its own specialty and preferences and for every festival they have some reason behind celebrating it, which came from the early period based on their beliefs. These festivals are not celebrated in one day only, but these go on for about 3 to 4 days.

### **Diwali**

On the day of diwali people celebrate it with full of joy in the form of a dance, which is performed specially during the day of Dipawali. People believe that the reason behind this dance form is this majestic dance is lord Krishna, who raised "GovardhanParvat" to save the lives of people and later he danced in joy. The dancers (Upper caste) also dance in a similar way wearing colourful costumes holding sticks or peacock feathers in hand. The dance is also performed as a 'thanks giving' after harvesting of the crops. Popular instruments of this dance are 'dholak' and 'Nagari'. With this, they perform this dance on the day of diwali. After diwali for the festivals of bhaiyaduj there have some special and different traditions which are performed in today's period also with full of joy. On this day a *Doj*<sup>14</sup> is made by cowden cake and is worshiped by the people. This doj made by Cowden cake poured with fruits, sweets and milk and kheer also. On this day scheduled caste people go to the upper caste people for demanding new clothes and money. And upper caste people have to give them sweets, clothes and food.



Figure 7: Girls making *diyason* the festival of Diwali.

Source: Village Survey

## Holi

On the day of holi, people of Gora village, after playing holi collectively go to one *babaji called natke baba* to pour color on him. On the place of this deity one ritual also happens in which aman, in the dress of woman, dances with the *dholak and nagari*<sup>15</sup>. After that this deity comes to one man's (belong to dominant caste) body and tell villagers about some things related to their upcoming crops or weather or something related with the village. Then, "*eklambelkdike banspar chdkarekadmiusko beech se todtahaiuske bad babaji us aadmikesarir se chalejatehai*", then people pour their color to the devta and oneself then come back to their homes. For the lower caste people, tradition is same only they maintain their distance from upper caste people, they all sit in different place and upper caste people sit in another place. The people in the village believe that without this their festivals are not completed. After this day people decorate their animals with different types of "*murgare*"<sup>16</sup> things. The reason behind this is that an animal is a life saver for a family, An animal give them milk and the product made by milk by which they can survive and also plough their fields with them and do all their (*kheti*) agricultural work with them. So animal plays an important role in their life. If animal gets sick they get worried. They do worship near the animal deity for their animal betterment. Animal is the only thing which makes them alive, when they don't have anything to eat. Villagers called them "*Dhan*", means wealth. And for the lower caste people if they have animals (only some dalits have cow and buffalo others have goats only) these animal are the main source of their income and livelihood.



## Rakshabandhan

On the day of Rakhi, there is a tradition in this village related with *Bhujariya/Jaware*<sup>17</sup>. This tradition is famous from the time of *Alha Udal*<sup>18</sup>. On this day they come to the center point of this village called *athai*<sup>19</sup> and put their *bhujariya* with *mittikaghada* and wait for every villagers, till then they performed dance in a circle with *dholak and nagari* and when all villagers come then by the evening they go to the nearest river and take out their *bhujriya* from this *mittikaghada*. After that they go to everyone's home and distribute among one another (*ekdusrekegharjakarbanattehai*). Dalit community people also celebrate it with the same, the difference is that they can't go to the dominant caste people's home, they instead wish them by saying *ram-ram*. They say that "*puranesareldaiyokobhulkesbhieksath mil julkrhasikhusirhte hai jisse prem or happiness bdtahai logo ke beech*" (they distribute *bhujariya* within their own community people. People have believed that by doing this harmony will be maintained).

## Navratre

This is the festival which is most celebrated in this village. And here also, the caste differentiation in this festival could be seen in this village. Dalit community's people rarely came to the place where dominant caste people celebrate this festival or even if they attended then they do not have permission to go near *devikimurti* (statue of god) and people badly behave with them, so some time they self-make *devikimurti* in their *mohalla* (area) and celebrate within their own community. By seeing these festivals, traditions and different rituals, this can be observed that in spite of having so much caste related differentiation in this village or nearby village; people never sacrifice with their beliefs or faith towards their god. They celebrate each and every festival with full of joy and happiness collectively.



Figure 8: Gora village people carrying *Jaware/ Bhujariyaon* their head in the occasion of Nawaratre.

Source: Village Survey

### Superstitions

Superstitions also known as old wives, traditions, tales, legends are nothing but people's beliefs based on myth magic or irrational thought. This is also believed to be a notion which is not based on any reason, knowledge experience and logic. This word is often used negatively to refer to the beliefs which are considered to be irrational, and also involve animals, graveyards, ghosts, inanimate, objects, or even other people. Where in today's world science has made so much progress, new developments have occurred, there every single thing is proven logically and scientifically. Along with this there are places where the spiritual beliefs are considered as the main 'logical' point. And, here science also couldn't make their beliefs imbalanced. Old or experienced people shared their experiences and told so many stories to us related to this thing, they said they had seen them in real so how could they neglect that evil spirits are not relied in the earth, they have total belief on them. They couldn't refuse that science can prove each and everything but how can they forgot what they have gone through this made their belief, even more, stronger. And also they said that whenever these type of problems came in front of them and they remembered their devtas or deity their problem get solved or you can say they get saved by the devtas when people recall them.

There have one story in this village where a bride (*Sushma, age- 32*) of this village belong to pandit family was cursed by a negative energy. She behaved opposite to her nature sometimes,

generally she is very calm by her nature but sometimes she behave very differently, for example, once, she came out from her house and started dancing and shouting and become uncontrollable. Then three or four men have to control her and take her to the temple of this village. People do some worship and pray to god in the form of '*jaap of mantra*' (holy prayer) to get her out this bad evil. After that she came in to conscious mind but after that she is shocked to see herself in front of everyone and don't remember what would happen with her. People of this village said that this happened to her because "*unhoneapnagharekbabajikechabutarekotodkarbnayahai*" (they made their back portion of their house on one babaji'schabutara (place) by breakingit, so these things happen with her). After that her family member made a new place for this deity (devta) and did proper worship. After doing this her health got better. (Source: Hariram, age 62)

Similar to this story there are many more such stories which can be heard from the villagers. And some places of this village still famous where people believe that "*kue me kisikigirnekiawajyakisikeroneyachillanekiawaajaatihai*" (they heard weird noises and found suspiciousactivities in and near the well). Because of these things people couldn't resist themselves from their beliefs on superstitions. One old lady (*Bhagwati, aged 72*) shared her experience, that one incident took place in her early age. When, once, she and her sister were returning from field to home. On the mid of the way, they saw nearly 2 year old baby sitting alone and crying loudly. She thought, this baby must be belonging to her village. So she took him and carried him on her shoulder but after some time her sister saw that his one leg gradually become long and after some time second leg also started growing they got scared and threw him to down and run away. This woman told me that the child was not actually a child it was a ghost who came in the form of child, whom she called, "*khabees*"<sup>20</sup>. (2<sup>nd</sup> day of pilot study experience)

The deities of this village are very famous not only in this village but in other nearby villages as well. There are many stories about them. People say that because of deities, their child gets better or their problem gets solved. People of this village still believe that these deities will save this village from upcoming problems. The story behind one of these deities is that, they came from bangal and were learned in *bangalividhya*. They are also called as *bangali baba*. When they came here they were four brothers (khanchke baba, natke baba, jamunayake baba, or ataike baba). They gradually were placed everywhere in this village, and got famous for their works.

## **GaontiHawan**

In this village one thing is also very important which is 'GaontiHawan'<sup>21</sup>. In the middle of the temple of this village a big *Hawan Kund*<sup>22</sup> made long time ago. It is covered with a big stone. People have believed that when any big problem comes to our village, people do open it and do *Hawan* in this, it will resolve all the problems here. This *Hawan* ritual is only performed by dominant caste people in the village.

## **There are some stories on cultural belief of the people of Gora village which was found during pilot study**

Once a girl (*Jyoti, age 15 years*) was bitten by a snake. Then, the villagers took her to a god (*khanchke baba*). After which this god possessed an old man's body (it could be anyone either belong to upper caste or lower caste then there was the process of recalling god which is transmitted from generation to generations, not within one family or caste it could be any person) and this man cured the girl by calling the snake and the snake took back all the poison and healed the girl. (*Source: Gulshan, age 35 belong to scheduled caste*).

Similar to this story, once a scorpion bite a man (*chakki, age-28*) then he was taken to another devta called *Jamunayake baba* he prayed to this god and worshipped him soon after he got better (*ibid*).

It was informed that a buffalo, belonged to *Mulamsingh, age -50 year*, got ill in their village. Then, suddenly the people remembered that last year they didn't go for worship of a god that's why their animal got ill. Soon after they arranged their things as a form of *kcchha* food and took it with them and visited the place of *bhainsasurdevta*. They worshiped and made food for them. And by the next day their animal got better health and also started giving milk. (*Source: MulamSingh belongs to dominant caste*).

---

<sup>21</sup>Gaontihawan: A form of worship happened in village during special occasion or if some problem come to the village.

<sup>22</sup>Hawankund: A big square hole made with mitti, and also cowden cake and decorate it with color where people do worship with burn fire and pour ghee and sakkar. People belief that by doing this god will happy and bless them.

Similar to this example if some people's animal got sick they relate it with this diety and they believe that they made some mistake in worshipping, that is why, their livestock are falling ill. Therefore, they go there and worship for betterment of their animals.

As well as a woman (*Kamala, at the age of 27*) had a baby, she had seen the face of a woman belonging to Baretha Caste soon after, she stopped breast feeding. So they have a belief that if a women have baby, she will not be allowed to face *Baretha* caste women until ten or fifteen days after childbirth. (Source: Kamala, 65 year)

### **Some common beliefs among the villagers**

- Beating a person with a broom will bring bad luck upon that person for years.
- Black is the color of bad fortune and is associated with evil and disaster.
- It is thought that lemon and chili not only wards off the evil eye but also keeps away evil spirits and demons.
- It is believed that Money attracts money, so never leave your pockets, purses or wallets completely empty and Always keep at least a coin or two
- If you have an unwanted guest in your home and you want them to leave. All you have to do is sprinkle salt behind them. The powers of the salt will chase them out.
- If a black cat crosses your path, something bad will happen.
- Breaking of the mirror is considered as a sign of bad fortune.
- Here people are afraid of number 'three' they believe not to do any work in number three sequences.
- If you whistle or play a flute at night, snakes will come to you.
- A ghost will curse you if you will sleep with untied hair.
- A ghost will curse you if you go anywhere putting strong perfume.
- A ghost will curse you if you are talking about them at night.
- Not taking bath on the day of Makar Sakranti will make you Lanka kaGadha in next life.
- If you go to a funeral, you should not enter your home before taking a bath. This is believed to be cleansing.

- You should never sleep with your head in North position or you will have a short life
- Cutting your fingernails or toenails at night and Tuesday and Saturday is bad luck. If you do so, it is believed that you will not be with your parents at their deathbed
- Washing your hair on Tuesdays and Saturdays will bring bad luck to your brother.
- If you make kheer and you will have to take it from any other place you will have to include any black thing in it specially a piece of burn wood. Otherwise, ghost will curse it.
- Similarly, when you make food with oil like *puri* and *parathe* and take it with any other place it will be compulsory for a little girl to eat a piece of it, otherwise it will be cursed by negative energy.
- Doing things during Rahu-kala or travelling during in auspicious time
- Cries of dogs & hooting of owls.
- Itching of left palm—money gain, Right eye twitching —good for men, left eye twitching well for women
- If you go somewhere for a good work and you see a bunch of wood it brings a bad thing in your way.
- If some negative energy will curse someone's body and you hold his last finger it will control that person.
- The tail of buffalo will help to save children from the negative eye.
- To the protection from the bad dreams, keep knife, hasiya inside your pillow.
- The person who met with an accident, to the protection of this person from bad eye of the bad people, they tie a small hair rope of ladies useless hairs in the toe or hand.
- The newly born baby should wear a black pearls chain for the protection of bad eyes.

Similar with these, there also have many beliefs in this village which people still follow blindly and work accordingly.

After studying these cultural beliefs of the Gora village, the things coming into our mind are that in such villages where does modernity exist? Governments make policies for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe people but where are there implemented. The people here still live the life similar

to that of pre-modern age. They still believe in myths, stories, taboos and blind faith in God. In today scenario, we live in a country which is going towards modernity and globalization. But, places like Gora village are still underdeveloped. These places still come to the area of underdeveloped society. They still have this caste notion in their blood, the people still not only believe in caste system but also practice it meticulously. They still believe in and follow the Varna caste system (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra). These people are not affected by status, class or anything for them if a person belongs to a lower community, it means they don't allow themselves to sit beside him. This type of mentality is still present in people's mindset here. This needs to be changed and standard of living of the people needs to be developed.



Figure 9: Village Temple of Hanuman Ji

Source: Village Survey



## REFERENCE

Bose, P. K. (1991). Social stratification, In Dipankar Gupta (Eds). *Mobility and Conflict: Social Roots of Caste Violence in Bihar*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Chakravarti, A. (2001). *Social Power and Everyday Class Relations: Agrarian Transformation in North Bihar*. Delhi: Sage Publication.

Cohn, B.S. (1968). *Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture*. Chicago: Aldine Pub., Co.

Cohn, Bernard (1987). *An Anthropologist among Historians*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

Damle, Y.B. (1968). In James Silverberg, ed, *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India. Reference Group Theory and Mobility in Caste System*. Hague: Mouton.

Das, G. (1978). *Village Studies in the Third World community studies in Latin America*. America: Hindustan Publishing Co-operation.

Dube, S.C. (1964). In BaidyaNath Varma. (Eds.). *The Community Development Programme in India*. Bomba: Asia Publishing House.

Dubey, S.C. (1965). In T.K.N., Unnithan, et al. (ed)., *Towards a Sociology of Culture In India. The Study of complex Culture*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall Of India.

Gupta, D. (2004). *Whither the Indian Village? Culture and Agriculture in "Rural India" (Malcolm Adiseshiah Memorial Lecture)*. Chennai: Madras Institute of Development Studies.

Harriss, W. (2004). *Rural India Facing the 21st Century: Essays on Long Term Village Change and Recent Development Policy*. London: Anthem Press.

Ishwaran, K. (1970). *Change and continuity in India's Village*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lal, D. (1988). *Hindu Equilibrium, Cultural Stability and Economic Stagnation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Levine, H. D. (1990). *Popular Groups, Popular Culture, and Popular Religion, Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Delhi: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, O. (1970). *Village life in Northern India*. New York: Random House.

Madigan, F. C. (1958). *Structural Change and Culture Conflicts in India*. Philippine Sociological Review: Philippine Sociological Society.

Majumder, D. N. (1962). *Rural Profiles*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

Mines, D. P and N. Y. eds. (2010). *Village Matters: Relocating Villages in the Contemporary Anthropology of India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Moore, D. S. (2000). *The Crucible of Cultural Politics: Reworking "Development" in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands*, American Ethnologist.

Natrajan, B. (2005). *Caste, Class, and Community in India: An Ethnographic Approach*, *Ethnology*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education.

Overgaard, L. (2010). *An analysis of Indian Culture in an Era of Globalization*. Department of Language and Business Communication Aarhus School of Business Aarhus University.

Prasad, N. (1957). *The Myth of the Casteism*. Patna: Samjna Prakashan.

Presler, H. H. (1962). *Sociology of Religion in India*. Review of Religious Research: Religious Research Association, Inc.

Redfield, R. (1955). *The Little Community: Viewpoints for the Study of a Human Whole*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Singh, Y. (1989). *Social Stratification and Change in India*. Delhi: Manohar.

Singh, Y. (1972). *Modernization of Indian Tradition*. Jaipur: Rawat Publication.

## JOURNALS

Demerath, N. J. et al (2006). *Interrogating Caste and Religion in India's Emerging Middle Class*. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 41, No. 35, pp. 3813-3818. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4418652>, UTC

Levine, H. D. (1990). *Popular Groups, Popular Culture, and Popular Religion*. Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 718-764, Cambridge University Press, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/178959>, UTC

Madigan, F. C. (1958). *Structural Change and Culture Conflicts in India*. Philippine Sociological Review, Vol. 6, No. 2 (April, 1958), pp. 1-9 Published by: Philippine Sociological Society Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43498033>, UTC

Mishra, A. (2005). *Local Perceptions of Famine: Study of a Village in Orissa*. Economic and

Political Weekly, Vol. 40, No. 6, pp. 572-578, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4416175>, UTC

Natrajan, B. (2005). *Caste, Class, and Community in India: An Ethnographic Approach*. Ethnology, Vol. 44, No. 3. pp. 227-241, University of Pittsburgh- of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education .URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3774057>, UTC

Presler, H. H. (1962). *Sociology of Religion in India*. Review of Religious Research, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 97-113. Religious Research Association, Inc. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3510688>, UTC

Sathyamurthy, T.V. (1997). *Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India*. (Review: Interpreting the Creative Society, by: Manoranjan Mohanty). Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 32, No. 48, pp. 3069-3071. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4406126>, UTC

Terretta, M. (2005). 'God of Independence, God of Peace': Village Politics and Nationalism in the Maquis of Cameroon, The Journal of African History, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 75-101, Cambridge University Press URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4100830>, UTC

Tharu, S. (1992). *Subalternity and Culture in India*. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 27, No. 9, p. 434, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4397637>, UTC

Woodburne, A. S. (1923). *The Present Religious Situation in India*. The Journal of Religion, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 387-397, The University of Chicago Press. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1195078>, UTC