



GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

**EVALUATION OF STATUS OF SOME OF THE MALIGNANT,
EXPLOITATIVE AND OFFENSIVE TO HUMAN DIGNITY
SUPERSTITIONS OF KARNATAKA AND THE CHANGE IN THEIR
STATUS OF PREVALENCE IN THE PAST 25 YEARS**



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Karnataka Evaluation Authority

KARNATAKA EVALUATION AUTHORITY

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PROGRAMME MONITORING AND STATISTICS

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MARCH 2018

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THEIR STATUS OF PREVALENCE IN THE PAST 25 YEARS**

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WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



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Karnataka Evaluation Authority

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, PROGRAMME MONITORING AND STATISTICS
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CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA,

having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a

SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST

SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought , expression,

belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the

individual and the unity and

integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do

HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO

OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

Foreword

Social Transformation is a pre requisite of sustainable development. Social institutions such as customs, traditions, and superstitions hinder the process of development.. The spread of knowledge and education is expected to develop scientific temper to eradicate such malpractices from a society. In this context, “An Evaluation Study of Status of Some of the Malignant, Exploitative, and Offensive to Human Dignity Superstitions of Karnataka and the Change in their Status of Prevalence in the Past 25 Years” was initiated by the Planning Department of Government of Karnataka on the request from Department of Women and Child Development and was taken up by Karnataka Evaluation Authority (KEA). The study was outsourced by KEA to the Evaluation Consultant Organization, Hyderabad Karnataka Centre for Advance Learning, Kalaburagi.

The study has analysed the superstitions like Made Snana, Mass Animal Sacrifice, Ajjalu, Tossing of Children, Bettale Sewe, Jata or Jade, Devadasi system and Sidi or Hook Swinging. A sample of 796 persons spread across different area where these superstitions are prevalent was randomly selected for the study and 16 Focused Group Discussions were also conducted to collect the information. The findings of the study indicate that there is a decline in these practices due to legal measures and spread of education but they still continue to exist. Some of the major recommendations of the study are effective implementation of laws, knowledge and awareness through incorporating them in school curriculum, developing scientific temper and involvement of Heads of religious institutions in awareness campaign, Kannada and Culture Department to develop short documentary films on evils of these practices, CSR initiatives and involvement of NGOs, Youth Associations and Self help Groups etc. in the eradication mission.

The study received support from Additional Chief Secretary and Secretary Planning, Programme Monitoring and Statistics Department, Government of Karnataka. The necessary information was provided by Department of Women and Child Development. The report was approved in 34th Technical Committee meeting. The review of the report by KEA, Technical Committee and an Independent Assessor has provided useful insights and suggestions to improve the draft report.

I expect that the findings and recommendations of the study will be useful to the Government and the Departments to eradicate malignant superstitions and bring about social transformation in the State and Society.

6th March 2018



Chief Evaluation Officer
Karnataka Evaluation Authority

Acknowledgements


This study was carried out at the behest of the Department of Women and Child Welfare, Government of Karnataka. The purpose was to get a first-hand impression of the nature of some superstitious practices prevalent in Karnataka, changes in them over the years and direction in which they are proceeding.

The study was monitored through the Karnataka Evaluation Authority (KEA) in the Department of Planning and Statistics. Indeed, this is one of the very first research study sponsored by the KEA, which hitherto was carrying out impact assessment and evaluation of various policies of the State. In that respect the initiative taken is laudable. The Additional Chief Secretary of the Department, Ms. Renuka Chidambaram who has been quite concerned over maintaining the good quality of the reports brought out by the KEA, and has given some very insightful comments and suggestions in finalising the report. We are beholden in debt to her. Dr. Rajanish Goel, the former ACS was quite enthusiastic of the study being carried out and completion on time. Several discussions with him on the nature and scope of the study as also of our findings generated some useful perspectives. To him too we remain thankful. Mr. Shivaraj Singh, the Chief Executive Officer of the KEA too was a constant source of support. His comments and suggestions, together with those from the members of a Technical Committee, and participants of a half-a day workshop on January 9, 2017, on an earlier draft of the study were very helpful. We believe they have added meaningful value to the report. In equal measure, we are thankful also to the officials of the KEA, who showed a special interest in the progress of the study and participated in long consultations.

To the pontiff of Shri Nidumamidi Veerabhadra Swmiji, Dr. S T Ramesh, Professors Maralusiddaiah, Sridhar, RS Deshpande, Gurulingaiah M, V Ramaswamy, Sudha Sitaraman, Sudhesna Mukherji and others who participated in the workshop and gave critical comments we remain indebted. Professors Ravindranath (Udupi) and Professor S. Japhet helped us many ways in bringing this study to its final form. We are grateful to them. Mr. S Harikrishna Holla sensitised us to the legal status of several of the superstitious practices in Karnataka and elsewhere. Professor G K Karanth carried out this study as its Principal Investigator and prepared this report. His total dedication

for the study and wholehearted involvement in preparing the report is well appreciated. We are grateful to Mrs. Rajalakshmi G Karanth for her support. To them our sincere thanks. We thank also Smt Aparna Kolla, formerly secretary, HKCAL for her constant support in carrying out the study.

It is customary, but it is with a sense of greater responsibility we acknowledge the help and support from all mentioned here and those we haven't. Some have chosen to remain anonymous. To all, our sincere thanks. However, for any omissions, the responsibility lies with us. The intentions to write this report is not to hurt sentiments of any – whether as believers or non-believers. In that spirit we seek to be exonerated of unintended offence, if any.



Laxmanrao Kolla

President, Hyderabad Karnataka Centre for Advanced Learning, Gulbarga

Fortunes Predicted...



... ‘Unluckily’... to the Old!

(Picture taken on the way to Savadatti Yellamma Temple)
© G K Karanth 2008

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“My point, once again, is not that those ancient people told literal stories and we are now smart enough to take them symbolically, but that they told them symbolically and we are now dumb enough to take them literally.”

John Dominic Crossan

Liturgery.co.nz

Some rituals and the superstitions behind them are such in their consequences that they eminently distort the very character of God whom we venerate.

Executive Summary

When does Superstitions become a Problem?

Superstitions become a social problem when they extend to deny dignity to human beings – either collectively or individually, and/or violate human rights recognized morally or legally by a society, and/or affect the life chances of individuals or groups of people, humiliates an individual or an entire community, we have a social problem at hand. There are several personal practices arising out of such superstitious beliefs which may not affect or hurt anyone.

When we observe the results of several superstitions, what becomes evident is a matter with which social history of Indian society has to admit with a sense of guilt, namely another version of discrimination based on the then ‘rigid’ rules of caste system. The victims are, in a majority of cases, members of the so called ‘low’ castes, especially the socially excluded castes and tribes. Even though penned at a time when proselisation of the heaten was the main purpose, a Statement made by a colonial missionary holds mirror to the situation much before Indian independence:

The lowest class have scarcely any religion at all; they are outcasts, and are neither expected nor considered fit to engage in religious exercises... But superstition supplies what religion denies them. Fear of demons and evil spirits haunt them constantly, and rites and processes are devised to get rid of these influences. Omens and portents are eagerly looked and watched for; and their domestic usages are naturally cast in the mould of these superstitions. (Osborne 1884: 131-32)

Objectives of the Study

In the recent decades it has well deservedly described as the State housing the ‘silicon valley of India’ and has been among forefront of nations in hosting renowned computer and information technological undertakings. Yet, in several other respects, the State has retained the not-so-fair reputation as being ‘traditional’ or orthodox. One such area pertains to the persistent prevalence of superstitious beliefs and practices

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstitions in Karnataka

Despite a strong ‘anti-superstitions’ movement, vocal and active groups of rationalists, and a history of active and successful movement of the castes or communities that are usually victims of some superstitious practices (Dalits, Tribal groups, Women, Animal rights activists), Karnataka State has had its share of shameful incidents in recent times too.

It was felt that some of the superstitious practices needed to be reassessed as they were practiced, and examine the more recent changes, if any, as they were being practiced. There had been some which had been explicitly banned by an Act of legislation or executive orders (e.g., Bettale Seve, hook swinging or tossing of children), while there had been reports also of some of them being practiced secretly or in other places than where they were traditionally known for.

1. To document the local belief/legend/history of the following superstitions of Karnataka- Made Snana, Mass animal sacrifice, Tossing of children, *Bettale seve*, Jata or jada and Devadasi system, and the practice of *Sidi*
2. To study and document as to whether belief in superstitions is increasing, decreasing or has remained almost the same in the past 25 years.
 - In case the superstition is pan district, documentation of inter-district variations
3. Has the spread of education and greater exposure to the world as a whole made any impact on the belief of superstitions?
4. What practices or measures can the government and governance follow to eradicate malignant superstitions and create a superstition free Karnataka?
5. Are there contradictions in State policies?

Research Methodology

By the very nature of the topic, the study aimed at employing qualitative techniques of data gathering: observation (where feasible), in-depth interviews and focused group discussions with a range of informants: members of the affected households or families, religious leaders, NGOs and activists, as also protagonists who support the practices and beliefs. A day’s consultation was held in Bengaluru with the participation of representatives from different sectors (religion, law, police, academia, and activists.)

Observations, discussions and interviews with a randomly chosen sample of 796 respondents gave us an indication of not only the way the practices have persisted but also

indicate the nature and extent of changes that were occurring. Above all, the latter gave us indications as to why some have persisted, and what seem to be limitations of the State initiatives in eradicating them. Policy recommendations are made at the end of this Chapter derived from such an approach.

Separate Interview and discussion were prepared and employed for data collection. Questions pertained to the perception of the origin of practices, narratives about the beliefs behind such practices, and the nature of changes if any.

Change Agents and Socio-Cultural Resistance to Change: The past 25 – 30 years have witnessed spectacular changes in our system of communication. In short, the horizon of knowledge has far exceeded what it may have been, say 25 years ago. Yet contradictions galore with modernity and scientific advancement. One such contradiction is the nature of change in respect of our faith and beliefs in supernatural or superstitious causation.

We may find a continuum of change in respect of belief or practice of the different rituals or practices concerning the eight superstitions we examined. At one extreme of the continuum is the process of modification as a response to changing forces, and at the other, abandonment. In between, we find replacement, or stealthily practicing some of them. We may find ‘modification’ as a major pattern of change in respect of Mari Bali, Made Snana, and Sidi. At the other extreme is the response of abandonment of practices. Foremost of them and more obviously has been the practice of tossing the children as a ritual. Also abandoned is the practice of Bettale Seve. But here we enter the domain of speculations and rumours competing with facts. There is one version which claims that there are stray instances of its practice, in small numbers and in remote places. If this indeed is true, it speaks equally of the continued ignorance and the role of facilitating institutions or individuals. Another version of claims places the practice of Bettale Seve at the point of modification rather than abandonment. According to this version, men and women wear wet clothes – which in any case get dried up by the time they reach the shrine, and therefore the practice is no different from any other form of prayers. Ajalu too is another set of practices that is certainly on the way out, and as having been part of Kambla or annual rituals of being offered to eat human wastes, they are certainly things of the past.

There has been a long history of rationalist movement in the country. Just as India is known as land of religion, superstitions and blind beliefs, it is also known for its share of rationalism. This history of rationalism goes as far back as the Charwaka philosophy in

ancient times, and the birth of Buddhism too is to be seen in the context of the proto-history of rationalism in India. Other prominent names and movements associated with rationalism are Basaveshwara, Sant Kabir, Sant Tukaram, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Agarkar, Maharshi Karve, Â Raghunath Karve, Periyar E.V. Ramasami, M.N. Roy, Gora, Dr. Ambedkar, Abraham Kovoov etc, (see Nanavaty, n.d.; and his review of Quack 2012). As has been the history of several social reform movements characterised by giving birth to a new *avatar* of the very institution against which the movement may have been a protest and attempt to reform, some of these attempts too gave rise to newer versions of religions and the accompanying superstitions.

The late 1970s witnessed a State sponsored search for truth behind several of the commonly held superstitions and belief in occult and witchcraft in Karnataka. Among those in the forefront as Dr. H Narasimhaiah, the famed educationist and freedom fighter. The committee consisted of other prominent thinkers and scientists such as Dr. C R Chandrashekar, Dr. H S Narayan, Dr. S M Mallikarjunaiah, and Dr. Keshav among others. Their responsibility was to find facts behind mysterious happenings in the name of Bhanamati. The committee itself came up with a report that the art of Bhanamati was merely a myth terrorising people, and the victims were largely with no education or awareness. Dr. Chandrashekar, the renowned psychiatrist, pointed out that Bhanamati and superstitions about them were all a result of some psycho-somatic disorders (Chandrashekar 1992; see also Gangolli 2012; Pasha 2014; and Dhabolkar and Arde 2014).

As late as 2013, in response to an invitation by the Government of Karnataka, a high powered committee went into understanding the body of blind beliefs and superstitions, arrived at a typology of superstitions that could be regulated under a law, and identified the extent of offence and punishment for carrying out acts based on such superstitions. It eventually arrived at a Draft Bill, popularly known as the Draft Superstition Bill which is pending before the Government.

As may be expected, any attempt to regulate phenomenon that has a religious flavour in it received strong protests from sections which feel threatened. The Draft Bill too is no exception. As Pasha (2014:198-200) points out, much of the opposition seems to have arisen more my not reading the draft Bill or recognising the fact that it is only a draft. The State has the scope to modify it as it deems fit based on the recommendations of its legal experts.

What then is the direction of social change in regard to superstitious practices? The driving force seems, as of now, the tightening legal and monitoring regime. Belief in the practices has not completely gone. This issue takes one to the need to educate and build awareness. The terms scientific temperament have been used so often, and for so long, perhaps its weight has been lost. Scientific temperament as a notion has to free itself from the mystery of science, but embrace the domain of common sense of linking cause and effect.

Of all the different superstitious practices listed, the law to govern such practices was accounted to be the most efficient tool for bringing about a positive change. There was a standard and repetitive suggestion made also that there was a need for strict enforcement of the law once it is made. Appropriate law would be most effective, going by the response patterns to our question on the topic, in respect of Made Snana (opinion by 87.5 per cent), followed by Mass Animal Sacrifice (80 per cent), and Sidi. Law seems to be much less effective in respect of Devadasi system (25.47 per cent), and Nude Worship (31.11 per cent.) This set of views certainly calls for the efficacy of the prevailing laws and their implementation. What seems to be more effective for Devadasi to bring down its practice? Among all the different options given, paradoxically, it is law that gets a higher efficacy although, it must be hastened to add the scores here is not comparative to each other in their ability to bring about a change.

Next to law, it is the role of education that gets a greater importance (48.87 per cent) to bring about a change, when all the superstitions are taken together. But education has highest importance in bringing about the positive change in respect of Made Snana (at 97.5 per cent), followed by its impacting Ajalu and Sidi at 50 per cent each. Education seems to have least impact on the practices related to Devadasi (12.75 per cent), but a slightly higher impact -though in small proportion - on Jata / Jade (27.45 per cent). Nude worship too has much impact by education at 32.2 per cent).the impact of Television too is much lower than the others in bringing about a decline in beliefs over superstitious practices.

Recommendations

Prior to making some recommendations¹, it is appropriate to recall the views of Habermas on reason, secularism and religion. For, the spirit of what are listed here is guided by the debates in which he has engaged. Habermas has challenged reason to clarify its relation to religious experience and to engage religions in a constructive dialogue. ‘Given the global challenges facing humanity, nothing is more dangerous than the refusal to communicate that we encounter today in different forms of religious and ideological fundamentalism. (Habermas 2010)’ In order to engage in this dialogue, two conditions must be met: religion must accept the authority of secular reason as the fallible results of the sciences and the universalistic egalitarianism in law and morality; and conversely, secular reason must not set itself up as the judge concerning truths of faith.

The following are the Recommendations of the study.

1. All efforts need to be made to pass the proposed Bill. The Bill has been prepared with considerable intellectual inputs, but somehow has failed to gain people’s confidence and formulate guidelines for its effective implementation.
 2. Many of the superstitions addressed in this study are already under the State’s administrative scan or specific laws enacted. A review by a legal expert and from the department of police is suggested to examine the loopholes in their implementation, and seek remedial suggestions, every ten years or so.
 3. An urgent review needs to be undertaken, of the social and psychological impact of our advertisements, religious discourses, programmes and commentaries of religious/superstitious matters in popular media – both visual and print. This is not to suggest that they should be gagged, but an assessment to be made of the nature of impact. In the many other countries there is a major concern over political correctness of the programmes. In our context, there is a need to be concerned additionally with the ‘social’ and/or ‘cultural’ correctness of the programmes aired. This sensitivity is not something that can be imposed but as a value and responsibility, to be evolved.
- Censoring the programmes that exhibit or support evil practices needs to be considered.**

¹ These must be read in conjunction with the suggestions made by participants in the Workshop (See Annexure IX).

4. It must be recalled that the State has a role to govern the places of worship such as temples. Over the years, the State has been financially supporting many of them, besides paying a salary and upkeep support of the temple structures if they are under Muzurai department. It is necessary that this relationship is made accountable with respect to what *Seva* is offered for a fee or *Kanike* at the temples. Just as a product cannot advertise things for which it is not capable, so too the *Sevas*. Such of the *sevas* that promote superstitious beliefs must be discouraged to be rendered as a service, at least in the Muzurai temples.
5. The Consumer Protection Act to be made applicable also to many of the services that are offered at a premium through public advertisements.
6. Many of the superstitious practices under considerations are carried out with a view to fulfil a vow taken much earlier than at the time of performing the act. Focus of the policy and implementing agencies seems to be more at the performance level and time than at the time taking vows. While it is not feasible to monitor the latter, much awareness is to be created about the restrictions in fulfilling such vows – whether in a temple or any other public place.
7. Such an awareness building cannot go hand in hand with the kind of publicity producing literature, audio-visual programmes etc. concerning places and forms of worship. State should have a say in the matters publicised in this realm, especially if any of the practices involve imposing indignities or violation of human rights of vulnerable groups of people.
- 8. Knowledge and awareness about rejecting evil practices to be created in the young minds by introducing them in School curriculum- in Social Science & moral Science books and develop scientific values.**
- 9. Kannada & Culture dept. to develop short documentary films on evils of superstitions and their consequences and generate awareness to eradicate them.**
10. Specific castes, heads of religious institutions and similar others are not to be alienated from the drive to create a scientific temperament. They need to be involved actively in awareness campaign drive to get better and desired results.
11. Annual fairs, Melas, Jaatres to be monitored much more vigilantly to prevent any of the obnoxious practices.
12. CSR initiatives to be focused on eradication of superstitions, and promote Local NGOs, Youth Clubs, Mahila Mandals, Self Help Groups and other Associations to be involved in the process of eradication of superstitions.

Chapter 1

Introduction

All around the world, people who have different religions, beliefs, and thoughts; living in different geographical regions, under different conditions and with different social structures; having different traditions and cultures; coming from various ethnic backgrounds have believed in a variety of superstitions throughout history, including the beliefs in their social and psychological realities and have adapted and internalized these.

Sibel Akova (2011: 139)

Historically, much of the search for the so called truth scientifically has been with a strong disbelief of myths, superstitions, and other beliefs. Most of them had their origin and/or association with religion, although not all superstitious beliefs are religious in nature. Even before rational thinking got to be known as ‘science’ there had been such an opposition such as those reflected in the philosophical writings of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Lucretius or Cicero. Similar philosophies that opposed superstitions are to be found associated with the thoughts of Lokayatas (ancient materialists) or Charvaakas. Yet, both in the western world and in India, superstitions have continued to dominate religious thought and therefore social life. So much so that religion in India is often perceived more as superstitions than worship. For, it is also believed that most Indians are religious and superstitious. Considering the number of temples and places of worship, and forms of worship involving a range of bewildering rituals, this Statement on religiosity of Indian reflects a reality. Indeed, the birth of a person is accompanied by a superstition based on time of the birth – it being an auspicious one or malevolent one, and this continues to the person’s death – whether or not the person died on and at a time that was conducive for the good of one’s own soul and for the peace of those left behind. Life between these two stages too are guided by several similar superstitions.

Each region or State in Indian peninsula has its own peculiar set of beliefs and superstitions, and a range of myths behind them often to demonstrate the validity of such superstitions or the practices associated with it. Some overlap across the States either due to the cultural spread or geographical contiguity. However, it is an established fact that ‘superstitions span countries, cultures and centuries’ (Ronca, n.d.: 1) But some such beliefs

and superstitions give an impression as though they are applicable universally. Thus some plants, animals or even numbers have come to be associated with one or the other superstition, even though specific cultures may vary in the specific manner each of them is associated. Thus, in any given society sighting an owl may be considered as a good omen, while in another the belief may be just the opposite. Black cat is another such animal that has a place – positive or, as is the case, mostly negative in nearly all cultures – Western or Eastern. So too, there may be oppositions or similarities in the manner with which certain numbers – seven, eight or thirteen – and possible outcomes. For some one of these may be good, while for the others, bad. What is universal here is the fact that there are superstitions concerning them.

A peculiar feature about superstitions is that people who may claim not to be superstitious most often have repetitive behavioural patterns such as ‘knocking on wood’ a couple of times each time they refer to one’s health or good bearing, or yet others who may thank ‘their stars’ by declaring – ‘Touch wood, I am not superstitious.’

Another of peculiarities of superstitions universally, but especially in India, is that they tend to be – if not invariably – religious in nature. In other words, superstitions are buttressed in religious terms, as though religious ideas of Karma, Dharma, Heaven, predestiny, etc., endorse them or failing to adhere to a superstition would result in displeasing the Gods or spirits presiding over occurrence of events or failing occur – be it rains, a child birth, or marriage of an unwed person. Thus in many parts of south India, it is believed that if a man holds a broom to sweep the floor, the act would diminish his virility and therefore diminishing his potential to have a child. Consequently, there are several acts, rituals and forms of worship intended to please the divine forces either to ensure an occurrence or to avoid the occurrence depending upon whether or not such an occurrence is desired or undesired ones (see Zhang, Risen, and Hosey 2014: 1117; Converse, Risen, and Carter 2012). Many of these acts or practices are founded on a belief in the supernatural realm, and therefore in superstitions.

Despite the spread of education, science, rational thinking and specific legislation against certain practices based on such superstitions, they continue to prevail in society. An observation made by Robert Galbreath in 1971 is relevant in the present times too: ‘a vast ignorance exists’ concerning ‘the factors underlying the appeal of the occult. (1971:753). Prevalence of superstitions and practices based on such belief could be perceived as being a reflection of a ‘revolt against a scientific and technological age’ (Blum and Blum 1974: 568). But in the Indian context, one may find superstitious beliefs and advancement in

science and technology going hand in hand. Recall how, for instance, launching of satellite may be timed so as to have an astrologically conducive time, or avoid an inauspicious day or time of the day. When faced with a draught, the State may formally undertake rituals and offer worship to please the presiding deities of rains (see, e.g., Karanth 1995). Blum and Blum aver, perhaps on account of the ease with which people tend to be superstitious: '*superstitions of one kind or another are inextricably woven into the fabric of every individual's life-the very wise person as well as the simple*' (1974: 569).

When people undertake certain actions or engage in practices that are founded on superstitious beliefs, they may on their part gain a satisfaction or a sense of relief from their anxieties over past occurrences or anticipated outcomes in future. But, whether or not they are conscious of the other consequences, they could contribute to violations of certain values, or norms and hurt the sentiments of others in a society. Often some of them violate the fundamental principles of Indian constitution or the tenets of human rights if not offending the collective conscience in the national and international community. Over the years – and even decades and centuries of colonial administration, if one were to go as far back as that, - several such practices have been forbidden by law. For example, there used to be the heinous practice of *Sati*, involving the climbing into the pyre in which the body of a woman's husband was being cremated, so as to 'ascend' the heaven with the diseased husband's soul. In the south of India, young widows shaved off their head, without a strand of hair, drape themselves with a red *sari* to cover her from foot to the forehead. Whether or not these practices were vestiges of a patriarchal society in which woman was more of a property of a man than as an individual by her own right, they persisted with a strong belief that such women were fulfilling a religious obligation. The woman who committed *sati* was deified. In those days – during and prior to India under the colonial rule, many women were either forcefully pushed into the pyre by other men who were superstitious or women themselves believed that if they did not commit *Sati* they would be sinning. Notwithstanding the law against it, one comes across a rare incidence of human sacrifice, of a *sati* or a dedication of a girl child as *Devadasi*² which results eventually in human trafficking even to this day.

There is a considerable body of literature especially authored by tourists, missionaries and colonial administrators, if not early anthropologists and Census commissioners,

²The system is known by different terms within Karnataka, just as so in other states. Terms such as *Basavis*, *Jogati* (Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh), or *Murali* (Maharashtra) are meant to be conveyed as same by the use of the term *Devadasi*.

documenting the wide range of superstitious customs and practices that prevailed through the length and breadth of the sub-continent (see, e.g., Thurston 1906, 1909 and 1912; Dubois 1897; Whitehead 1921; Saletore 1935; Martin 1914; Arthur 1850; Ward 1817; Whitehead 1921; Hoole 1844) H H Wilson narrates one such superstitious practice during the festival of Makara Sankranti in Bengal's Ganges merging with the sea, involving the tossing of children way into the sea

The act was not, like the oblation of fruits or jewels, intended to obtain the favour of the deified ocean, but in satisfaction of a vow; as where a woman had been childless, she made a vow to offer her first-born at Ganga Sagar, or some other holy place, in the confidence that such an offering would secure for her additional progeny. The belief is not without a parallel in the history of antiquity, sacred or profane, but it was the spontaneous growth of ignorance and superstition, not only unprompted, but condemned by the Hindu religion, and was confined to the lowest orders of the people... (Wilson 1844: 68)

What we find as a ritual of tossing the children from atop of a chariot of the deities in some parts of Karnataka too could be seen as a version of a fulfilling a vow – a thanks giving – in return for curing a child of its ill health, or granting a child to childless couple. The difference being retrieving the child having thus ritually thrown him/her away in the latter practice in Karnataka. Giving away ritual and symbolically a much valued possession – be it a cow or a child – to those who are credited with the powers to possess and withhold evil bearings too is a pan-Indian practice, especially in the southern part of India historically. Thus a sick child is given away to a woman of Koraga or Male Kudiya caste in the coastal Karnataka. In other parts of Karnataka, throwing away a child into the manure pit and taking it back ceremonially as a gift of the presiding deity of manure pit – *Thippe Swamy* and renaming the child as Thippe Swamy or Thippaiah if a male and Thippamma or Thippakka, Thippi if a female is also a common practice. One hears or reads, not infrequently, of a child or a pregnant woman killed in sacrifice as a rite in search of a hidden treasure in different parts of the State and the country.

1.1 Log Frame / Project Theory

Log frame/Project theory

Objectives Indicators and key outcome; Means verification and assumptions				
Objectives and Outcomes	Outputs and Key Activities	Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
1. To document the <u>local</u> belief/ legend/ history of the following superstitions of Karnataka- Made Snana, Mass animal sacrifice, Tossing of children, <i>Bettale seve</i> , Jata or jada and Devadasi system, and the The practice of <i>Sidi</i>	Key Activities: Interviews and Canvassing Questionnaires; Survey of Historical Literature and Contemporary Accounts of the different and listed Superstitions; Outputs: A brief history of the practices, myths and or legends pertaining to them or their practice; where available a couple of visuals of the practices as they existed in the past and as they now prevail.	The availability of the legends or Myths	Does not require any Verification	No assumptions warranted
2. To study and document as to whether belief in superstitions is increasing, decreasing or has remained almost the same in the past 25 years.	Key Activities: Specific Questions posed to the believers, practitioners, victims, about the nature of practices as prevalent, and what they perceive as changes in them, and since when. Comparison of the responses with the documentary accounts of the practices in the past, especially since the past two or three decades.	Statement of the believers, practitioners, rationalists and temple priests.	Does not require any Verification	No assumptions warranted
□ In case the superstition is pan district, documentation of inter-district variations	Key Activities: Discussions with experts, workshop, consultations with informed specialists about the practices also being in other districts, and upon learning the incidences to be elsewhere too, track the changes or differences if any. Outputs: By and large the legend or myths are of the same nature and the practices too are similar with hardly any variations. A variation if any is largely the ethnic identity of people from different parts of the State.	Statement of the believers, practitioners, rationalists and temple priests.	Does not require any Verification	No assumptions warranted

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstitions in Karnataka

<p>3. Has the spread of education and greater exposure to the world as a whole made any impact on the belief of superstitions?</p>	<p>Key Activities: Focused Group Discussions with informed public, activists and the believers/practitioners. Outputs: Not much difference exists based on whether one is well or highly educated or not so highly educated: beliefs or compulsions to participate and practice in some of the rituals have remained the same. Where the temples or religious events are a family tradition, even global exposure does not prevent one from participating in the worship forms even if they themselves may not undertake some of them (hook swinging, tossing a child, or Made Snana. Modern marriages involving mass feeding of new relations have tended to become a <i>Mari Bali</i> whether sacrificed in the presicts of the dedicated temple or outside it. Mellowed down practices or modified versions of the superstitious practices are also on the rise involving both the well (and often professionally) educated and those with national or international exposures. As regards the victims (men and women), there are some practices in which the nature of voluntarism that prevailed earlier is no longer easily perceivable. Thus, women refrain from undertaking Nude Worship, but do go to the dedicated temple to offer their prayers. Likewise, educated Koragas and MaleKudiyas do not wish to submit themselves (or members of their caste/tribe/communities) to the humiliating practices of Ajalu or Made Snana. But, some practices such as Devadasi or Jade had among our respondents who were in their mid-30s and were educated beyond SSLC or incomplete Bachelor's Degree students. The latter certainly raises alarm.</p>	<p>Statement of the believers, practitioners, rationalists and temple priests.</p>	<p>Does not require any Verification</p>	<p>No assumptions warranted</p>
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<p>4. What practices or measures can the government and governance follow to eradicate malignant superstitions and create a superstition free Karnataka?</p>	<p>Key Activities: Focused Group Discussions with informed public, activists and the believers/practitioners. Reflections on the part of Research Team. Outputs: Recommendations include some of the suggested measures (See below). Greater need to monitor the Annual Festivals of the temples across the State, especially of those that are within the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of Religious Endowments. The proposed cultural policy of the State ought also to address this issue and ensure that in the name of culture, superstitions are not bred.</p>	<p>Statement of the believers, practitioners, rationalists and temple priests.</p>	<p>Does not require any Verification</p>	<p>No assumptions warranted</p>
<p>5. Are there contradictions in State policies?</p>	<p>Key Activities: Analyze the policies and legal framework. Hold Consultations and discussions with the informed public. Outputs: There are a few areas in which one may witness some contradictions: For instance, the frequency with which office accommodations whether in the Legislative house or elsewhere are modified to suit the beliefs that border Superstitions. Either the State comes out with a clear Statement as to what it considers 'superstitions' (harmless, to add a qualification) or harmful. Interestingly enough, the official calendars issued by various departments until recently had indications of auspicious time and days!</p>	<p>Statement of the believers, practitioners, rationalists and temple priests.</p>	<p>Does not require any Verification</p>	<p>No assumptions warranted</p>

1.2 Progress Review

The Study was carried out during the six months that had been assigned as time for carrying it out. An initial fact finding fieldwork was undertaken during the first month, prior to submission and approval of the Inception Report of the study. During such a field trips, the different temples and locations where the listed superstitious practices were practiced were visited, random discussions were held with devotees and priests involved in the observances of such practices. Following this, a set of different research tools were developed, and tested for their utility and manageability in two field sites (Ramanathapura and Machohalli).

Once the Inception Report was approved, a two day training programme was held to introduce the research topic and administering the research tool for data collection among the recruited research assistants. Following this, data collection was undertaken in the different locations. There was, by and large, smooth conduct of fieldwork, although at the religious sites the pilgrims were not always forthcoming to be our respondents out of fear of legal action against them. Demonetisation that took place in the month of November 2016 too affected our study considerably for it had become difficult to make funds available for our staff to be in the field and carry out data collection as scheduled.

The collected data were coded and processed by using SPSS, and the qualitative and quantitative data were analysed by the Principal Investigator and his team of scholars. As soon as the preliminary findings were ready, they were shared among a group of scholars, activists and representatives of civil society organisations, during a one day workshop. There was a delay in convening the workshop owing to the preoccupations of the invited members and finding a mutually convenient day. Following this workshop, a draft report of the study was prepared and submitted for comments and observations.

A very useful set of comments were received from the external subject expert, almost all of which were incorporated. The revised and suitably modified version of the report is now

1.3 Problem Statement

The State of Karnataka, which has acquired a reputation for its giant leaps in information and space technology, presence of reputed educational institutions of national and international standing, too is not free from some superstitious beliefs and practices that are generally unacceptable from the point of view of a human rights and or rational society. Even as the colonial administrators and other commentators had anticipated that many of customs and superstitions – which they described then as inhuman or outrageous – would eventually disappear with the growth of ‘enlightenment’ or the spread of modern education, British introduced legal system and general ‘progress’ of the Indian society. Let us recall one such optimism, but not before condemning many such practices then prevailing³.

It is...especially in India that we may expect to find living representations ancient observances, and the still existing solemnizations that The nations of antiquity, and we shall not be altogether disappointed; although even here they begin to languish under the influence of a foreign government, under the unsympathizing superiority which looks upon the enjoyments of a different race with disdain, under the prevalence of the doctrine which regards public holidays as deductions from public wealth, and under the principles of a system of religious faith which although it might be indulgent to popular recreations, cannot withhold its disapprobation of them when their objects and origin are connected with falsehood and superstition. From the operation of these causes, the Hindu festivals⁴ have already diminished both in frequency and in attraction; and they may become, in the course of time, as little familiar to the people of India as those of European institution are to the nations of the West... (Wilson 1844: 60-61).

³ Often such condemnation was also founded on a commonly prevalent missionary zeal of viewing everything religious other than those the Colonial ‘masters professed as their faith – the rest being pagan or heathen.

⁴ Reference to ‘festivals’ in this quotation is because, the author Wilson takes note of festivals as the occasion when many of the superstitions, especially that are inhuman, indecent and unacceptable to modern thinking, get enacted.

The story of superstitions is such that even if there is a rationale for certain actions based on them, there is a tendency for them to persist even after the rationale has undergone a modification or change. In the words of Philip Waterman, we get a good understanding of this process:

It is most unfortunate, but it is also most true, that these cruel foundation sacrifices were not outgrown in the remote past. So profound is superstitious dread that it ever begets a remarkable conservatism, so that even when the principles on a custom was founded cease to be accepted, the custom will none the less remain, for timid people will be afraid to abandon it (Waterman 1929: 9).

The sense of optimism expressed by the likes of H H Wilson is somewhat of similar sentiment of the nationalists at the dawn of Indian Independence, who then thought India to be a secular society in which caste and creed would have very little space. Yet, even as late as 2017, several of the States in the India that is now about to cross seven decades of Independence and scientific progress, enacting legislations that explicitly prohibits several of superstitious practices.

This much is certain, that Indian society does not exhibit itself to be as superstitious as it once was reputed to be. Many of the practices and beliefs have undergone changes, as for instance, in the place of human sacrifice there now prevails animal sacrifice or the offerings of fruits and flowers to the gods and a range of deities. For the sake of making a case of making a societies more progressive (i.e., less superstitious about the occurrences of desired or undesired results) one may examine a very meaningful articulation made by Henry Maudsley as early as 1887. He too recognises, as early as 1887, that superstitions about occurrences of events in supernatural terms to be more a result of subjective States of mind, than the objective phenomenon. He thus questions:

If the domain of the supernatural has shrunk immensely in the modern times, as it undeniably has, and if the age of miracles be now past, as on all hands is repeated continually, the question to be resolved is how much of this result is due to the progressive discovery of the natural origin and working of causes which formerly, being entirely hidden, lent all their support to theories of the supernatural? Is it because they have ceased to operate as once they operated in human thought that the supernatural has waned? Or, is it that it has come by degrees, as human means improved, actually to take less and less part in human doings? Is the change subjective only? Or is it an actual objective change? If the former, then the supernatural relics in modern belief will be

Owing to the fact that causes, once so widely operative, continue to work in the old ways in many minds (Maudsley 1887: 3-4).

This proposed study is about the nature and extent of some such beliefs and practices prevalent in Karnataka, and to assess the nature and directions of changes in them over the two or three decades. As a first step in reporting the study, let us now define the concept of superstition, superstitious practices, and outline the nature, objectives and methods of carrying out the study.

Defining Superstition

As with most concepts in social sciences, that too concerning the ones that are in frequent usage in everyday language, it is an onerous task to define superstition. The difficulty arises from several sources, one of which is that the concept is in the realms of religion and faith. Before long, it must also be clarified that not all superstitions are necessarily in the realm of religion, but quite frequently – to the extent, that sooner or later, they become invariably so – they get embedded with religion and religious practices (Shore 1837: 488). Thus, one may have a superstition about a cat crossing one's path, and to the best of one's knowledge there are no scriptures that stipulate the crossing of a cat to be a profane act or that it would result in something undesirable as outcome. As in many other societies that are multi-cultural (read, multi-religious), in India too religious beliefs and practices tend to assume much emotional significance among the followers. Thus, labelling a belief and a practice arising out of it, as a superstition – let alone a 'blind superstition or belief' could become a sensitive matter. It is not to Indian society alone that this tendency is to be attributed. It took several decades, if not centuries to gain popular acceptance of the scientifically proven fact that earth is flat, whether or not Adam and Eve were the key players in the idea of 'creation,' or that Neil Armstrong indeed landed and walked on moon. To label something as superstition or superstitious – no matter how they are defined – runs the risk of hurting or offending the sentiments of those who uphold such a belief thus labelled as superstition. While the term 'magic' may carry with it an enchanting spell, superstition as a concept has retained a strong pejorative connotation (Johoda 1970; Linderman and Swedholm 2012: 2). This pejorative tendency is even more pronounced for superstitious beliefs or practices are most pointed out to as being part of a culture of the "others" in their narratives, whereas it is more or less stated without specifically saying so that 'we are more scientific, enlightened or civilized'. Note the following summing up of this sentiment prevalent in different societies, in this case, the Norwegian society.

From 1700 onwards, descriptions of divergent religions appear to imply that “the others” hold all folk beliefs, supernatural beliefs or new religious ideas. Such beliefs are seen as being in opposition to the “right” religion, as well as to enlightenment and rationality. Throughout the centuries the religious community has kept appropriating new arguments for designating correct and true beliefs (Selberg 2003: 300).

There are two dimensions of understanding and defining superstitions, according to Bonnerjea (1927: 6-7): Subjective and the objective dimensions. It may be defined as a ‘subjective disposition or tendency to ascribe phenomena which admit of natural explanation to occult to supernatural causes; or objectively, it is any system of religious belief or practice which manifests such a tendency (ibid. 6). He goes on describe superstition as excessive belief or credulity (i.e., a tendency to be too ready to believe that something is real or true). A superstition is an unreasonable belief in things or phenomena which, according to Bonnerjea, may actually owe their origin to perfectly natural and logical causes, but are attributed to supernatural force or power.

Although Cicero distinguishes clearly between religion and superstition, the latter has tended to be associated almost always and everywhere with religion (Gothóni 1994). According to a popular web definition superstition is excessively credulous (i.e., that which requires little proof) belief in and reverence for the supernatural. Further, it pertains to a widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influences, especially as leading to good or bad luck, or a practice based on such a belief.

It is said that one person’s religion could be another person’s superstition, for the word superstition is used differently in different contexts (Jarvis 1980). For a believer of a faith or religion an act may be following his or her religious tenets, while for another who is not a fellow believer, the same act could be seen as being superstitious. Thus, when a Hindu circularly waves his/her hands over a lit camphor and ghee-soaked cotton wick and presses the hands over one’s eyes, the act may be perceived as being superstitious to a person of another who may not be a Hindu, but any other religion. Likewise, several acts of consecration of objects, or hand-signs by followers of other religious groups could be perceived by the others as acts of superstition. Hence the tendency to depend on a dictionary definition than a scholarly conceptual analysis of the term superstition.

The Reader’s Digest’s Great Encyclopaedia Dictionary defines superstition as “Irrational fear of the unknown or mysterious, credulity regarding the supernatural; habit or

belief based upon such tendencies; irrational religious system, false pagan religion' (1964:885). According to the Cambridge Dictionary, superstition is belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge, but is connected with old ideas about magic, etc. However, it may be added that reference to such 'old' ideas relate to practices and beliefs associated with forms or versions of religious beliefs of an earlier era. Thus a successive dominant religion may relegate which often are practices or beliefs associated with previously prevailing religious beliefs as 'heathen,' barbaric or primitive. It is another matter that many such practices may, indeed, be barbaric or inhuman.

Scholars studying the phenomenon of superstitions and behaviours based on them, especially psychologists are all much in agreement that the field is weak also because of a lack of consensus on definition of the concepts. A very informative analysis of concepts and definitions in the topic by Lindeman and Swedholm (2012) has the following to observe:

Psychologists have been interested in paranormal, superstitious, magical and supernatural topics since the 1800's, but in the research literature, these terms are used inconsistently. For example, the exact same beliefs might be filed under different constructs; belief in witches, for example, has intermittently been labelled paranormal ..., magical..., and superstitious.... Conversely, the same construct might be used to refer to very different beliefs, as in the case of superstition, which has been exemplified by fear of non-poisonous snakes... and belief in an afterlife, among others.... There appears to be no consensus whatsoever on the way the concepts of paranormal, superstitious, magical, and supernatural should be defined. Consensus is lacking for such basic questions as why belief in immortal souls should be considered paranormal (supernatural, magical, superstitious) while the belief that vitamin C prevents flu should not. As researchers, we should also be able to specify the relationship between scientific knowledge and claims that are, for instance, supernatural (lat. *super* _ above, *natura* _ nature) or paranormal (gr. *para* _ against; lat. *para* _ contrary, outside). Can today's knowledge be delegated to the status of a supernatural claim tomorrow and vice versa, or is there something inherently different in paranormal, supernatural, magical, and superstitious beliefs that separates them from scientific knowledge? (2012: 2)

With their study of definitions, the authors Lindeman and Swedholm arrive at the conclusion that the surveyed 'literature revealed no essential reasons to set the concepts paranormal, magical, superstitious, and supernatural apart. Arguments concerning which of the terms should be taken as synonyms and which should not, were seldom presented' (2012: 7).

Superstitions are considered irrational because they are usually founded on ignorance or fear and characterized by obsessive reverence for omens, charms, etc. They are made up of a notion, act or ritual that derives from such belief. Yet, scholars in the field of social psychology have found that the tendency to believe is also due to a specially gifted abilities. For example Tobacyk, in his study 235 students in a University, concluded that his findings were 'consistent with the notion that the construction of illusory correlations is a common cognitive process characterizing beliefs in superstition, paranormal divinatory procedures, and psychically gifted persons' (1991: 512).

A much cited scholar, G Johoda sets the tone in the 1960s by defining superstition as a construction of an over generalised cause and effect relationship from events that may be more appropriately considered as coincidence. Thus, each time a person gets up from the left side of a bed, and experiencing an unfavourable turn of events that day are causally connected in such a way that the latter is a result of the person rising from bed on the left side. The same manner of perceiving a negative outcome or an ill bearing is to be perceived among those who refuse to start their automobile, move forward an inch or two than backing it up; or turning an inch to the right before taking a left turn which may have been the direction in which they need to proceed. Societies everywhere have their versions of such causal relationships to account for coincidences or conjectures. Tobacyk approvingly quotes Fiske and Taylor (1984) their assertion that 'superstition appears associated with greater susceptibility to the construction of illusory correlations, i.e., the tendency, based on expectations of a relationship between two variables, either to overestimate the extent of a relationship or to impose a relationship when none exists (Tobacyk 1983: 511).

According to Foster and Kokko (2009) 'the concept of superstition encompasses a wide range of beliefs and behaviours, most can be united by a single underlying property—the incorrect establishment of cause and effect.' Likewise we get an excellent definition and interpretation of superstition in the work of Sibel Akova (2011) as under:

Superstition is essentially a concept that can be defined as the set of thoughts and beliefs that are incongruent with reality, and as a subjective concept that we can categorize

as referring to the set of doings, behaviours, words, and beliefs that have different meanings for different individuals and cultures. A belief or practice that an individual or a culture considers to be superstitious, void or meaningless can be considered to be true by another. We know that a superstitious set of beliefs, which has been formed—or has emerged of its own accord—based on different perceptions and interpretations through time, exists in all societies.

As pointed above, Indian society has had a long tradition of beliefs in superstition and in superstitious practices. Some are so strong that the believers do not hesitate to engage in acts that are considered illegal, inhuman often involving human sacrifice, disfiguring one's own or of other's body, sacrifices of a wide variety. As late as 30 January 2016, the Times of India (Jaipur) reported from Ajmer that a person killed two neighbours because he had been advised by a shaman that the neighbours were responsible for a chronic pain with which he was suffering.⁵ The paradox is that superstitious beliefs get subscribed so rapidly that any scientific contradictions of them never travel as far as the superstition themselves. Many temples in the country, especially those with a reputation for powers to heal, become a breeding centre for such superstitions. Quacks and local healers thrive on the illiteracy and ignorance of naive and gullible people and try to hoodwink them into believing that they have magic cures for their ill.

The most prevalent belief is that the people living in rural areas and in remote villages are far more superstitious than any others, but this is not necessarily true. People living in urban areas too have their own superstitions, if not carry-over from the rural hinterlands. In Indian villages myths, misconceptions, blind beliefs, and superstitions abound. Whether in villages or towns, quacks and local healers thrive on the illiteracy and ignorance of naive and gullible people and try to hoodwink them into believing that they have magic cures for their ill, or to attain a means for quick wealth.

One of the peculiar features of the world of superstitions is that they make almost any to develop a faith or belief in them, as if it is for 'just in case.' The disaster involving Apollo 13, the prayers before and after the successful launch of the spacecraft to the planet Mars; professionals such as doctors, engineers; irrigation specialists... from nearly all walks of life subscribe to one or the other superstition. Even the 'scientific temperament' is not free from superstitious beliefs, for the launch of invention has to often wait till it is an

⁵ The Times of India, Jaipur Ed. January 30, 2016.

auspicious time and day. Each occupational group or a profession too tends to evolve its own ethics as well as set of superstitions. For example, a hair dresser does not touch his tools on a Tuesday in most south Indian towns and villages. The popularity of most television channels today are sustained not merely by a proper mix of soaps and drama, but also with a number of astrological consultations and/or shows that prescribe magical cures for various needs of the audience (be it for a timely marriage of an unwed daughter, or search for a lost son!)

It is not the purpose of this section in the introductory chapter to present a treatise on the definitions of superstitions. One more definition may be presented to the readers that addresses a broader conception of superstition, as done by Scheibe and Sarbin (1965): a superstition may be said to exist whenever an individual persistently or repeatedly behaves as if his subjective estimate of the result of that behaviour is significantly different from an objective (scientific) estimate of the effect of that behaviour (p. 145). In most superstitious behaviours, especially in the realm of religion, there is a tendency to observe that the believer or practitioner may or may not be aware of the externally evident causal connections, but there is a subjective or 'inner' causal relationship between their actions and the anticipated outcome.

When does Superstitions become a Problem?

When nearly all societies have had their share of superstitions, beliefs and practices based on them, one may ask – why should they become a worry? For, it is not uncommon to come across a belief or practice that an individual or a culture considers being superstitious, void or meaningless to be considered as true by another. Often inter-community or cultural stress and conflict is around such differences, especially among the tribal and similar primitive societies.

There are several superstitions that are in vogue, following which there are practices of avoidance, preference or rejection and so on. For instance, it is believed that it is a likely to be a bad day for a person, as she or he wakes up and rises from the bed to see the face of certain people known to be bearers of bad luck! Imagine if this belief is so strong that there were killing or defacing such persons believed to be bearers of bad luck! Indeed, some of the practices associated with Untouchability towards Dalits in India has had such a superstitious belief.

In any case, superstitions become a social problem when they extend to deny dignity to human beings – either collectively or individually, and/or violate human rights recognized morally or legally by a society, and/or affect the life chances of individuals or groups of people, humiliates an individual or an entire community, we have a social problem at hand. There are several personal practices arising out of such superstitious beliefs which may not affect or hurt anyone. For instance, foregoing of all food and beverages for a whole day as part of a practice to fast on certain days in a week or month may not hurt anyone or offend any others. But facilitating the bodily rolling over the left-over food served on banana leaves in a temple by a group of people could be considered as denying the human dignity. Likewise, insisting on members of a caste or tribe should eat the food particles removed from the gaps in finger nails of persons of another caste could also be a case of violation of human rights, inflicting inhuman practice upon others.

When we observe the results of several superstitions, what becomes evident is a matter with which social history of Indian society has to admit with a sense of guilt, namely another version of discrimination based on the then ‘rigid’ rules of caste system. The victims are, in a majority of cases, members of the so called ‘low’ castes, especially the socially excluded castes and tribes. Even though penned at a time when proselytisation of the heathen was the main purpose, a Statement made by a colonial missionary holds mirror to the situation much before Indian independence:

The lowest class have scarcely any religion at all; they are outcasts, and are neither expected nor considered fit to engage in religious exercises...⁶ But superstition supplies what religion denies them. Fear of demons and evil spirits haunt them constantly, and rites and processes are devised to get rid of these influences. Omens and portents are eagerly looked and watched for; and their domestic usages are naturally cast in the mould of these superstitions. (Osborne 1884: 131-32)

It is under such circumstances that we consider superstitions and practices arising out of them as social problem. This study pertains to some such superstitions.

⁶ The author is referring here, perhaps, to what in contemporary Indian society refer to as the ‘Social Groups’ consisting of the ‘excluded’ castes and communities. For more contemporary illustration of such a ‘religious exclusion’ and attempts to include themselves, see Zene 2000 and 2016.

1.4 Objectives and the Issues for Evaluation

The State of Karnataka has prided itself historically to the present as a ‘Model’ State, rapidly industrialising State, developed and scientifically advanced State. It has been home to several national and internationally renowned scientific and academic institutions. In the recent decades it has well deservedly described as the State housing the ‘silicon valley of India’ and has been among forefront of nations in hosting renowned computer and information technological undertakings. Yet, in several other respects, the State has retained the not-so-fair reputation as being ‘traditional’ or orthodox. One such area pertains to the persistent prevalence of superstitious beliefs and practices. As pointed above, had it been merely a faith in a taboo concerning the bad luck that is to follow if a person walks under a ladder, or the belief that several ripe chillies and a lemon are to be sewn and hung at the entrance of a commercial establishment – if not the entrance to a ‘software solutions start-up’. Some such practices affect the lives of innocent others who according to the /Constitution of India are citizens with equal rights and obligations towards each other.

Despite a strong ‘anti-superstitions’ movement, vocal and active groups of rationalists, and a history of active and successful movement of the castes or communities that are usually victims of some superstitious practices (Dalits, Tribal groups, Women, Animal rights activists), Karnataka State has had its share of shameful incidents in recent times too. Some of these practices, such as Madesnana (see below) or Ajalu certainly has drawn national and international attention. There have been inhuman practices of inflicting injury upon oneself in the name of making an offering to a presiding deity of a temple or God or Goddess of a region: Sidi (hook swinging), Tossing of a Child, Nude Worship, Dedication of young or adult women – which effectively is no different from Human Trafficking in the name of religion, or mass animal sacrifice with no consideration for hygiene or protection of bio-diversity. A few years ago, the Government of Karnataka initiated a process of bring about a suitable legal enactment to prevent such inhuman, offensive and archaic superstitious practices. A committee that had been constituted to suggest suitable legal measures came up with a Report and a draft Bill (see NLSUI: 2013), which at the time of reporting this study (2017) is under consideration before the Government. The document that was submitted by the Committee was a much acclaimed work of academic scholarship

and legal acumen, yet it received a mixed response from the public in the State. There were groups that felt threatened by the proposed Act, while there were another section which strongly welcomed the proposed legislation.

In any case it was felt that some of the superstitious practices needed to be reassessed as they were practiced, and examine the more recent changes, if any, as they were being practiced. There had been some which had been explicitly banned by an Act of legislation or executive orders (e.g., Bettale Seve, hook swinging or tossing of children), while there had been reports also of some of them being practiced secretly or in other places than where they were traditionally known for.

In the light of these developments, the Departments of Women & Child Welfare and Kannada & Culture, together with the Department of Planning and Statistics commissioned the current study with the following objectives:

1. To document the local belief/legend/history of the following superstitions of Karnataka-
 - Made Snana
Kukke Subramanya Temple,
Subramanya temples of Kalavara, Kundapura Taluk
Ramanathapura, Hassan District.
 - Mass animal sacrifice
Marigudi during Suggi Maripuja in Udupi and Gokarna
Purdamma in Hassan, Durgambika Devi fair in Davanagere, temples of
Voddarahalli and Machohalli in Bangalore during Makara Sankranti etc.
 - Tossing of children from top Digambeshwara temple in Nagrala village of
Bagalkot district
 - *Bettale seve* at Chandragutti, Shimoga and elsewhere
 - Jata or jada and Devadasi system of Dedicating girls to the service of God –
instead of female infanticide as elsewhere: Yellamma cult in Saundatti, and
in the Uttangi Durga temple on Uchungi Hill, Davanagere district
 - The practice of *Sidi* , prevailing at Ghattaragi village in Afzalpur taluk of
Gulbarga district and also parts of Bagalkot district; but also in other villages
of Davanagere

2. To study and document as to whether belief in superstitions is increasing, decreasing or has remained almost the same in the past 25 years.
In case the superstition is pan district, documentation of inter-district variations
3. Has the spread of education and greater exposure to the world as a whole made any impact on the belief of superstitions?
4. What practices or measures can the government and governance follow to eradicate malignant superstitions and create a superstition free Karnataka?
5. Are there contradictions in State policies?

1.5 Research Design

The study being an explorative one it had neither defined hypotheses nor any statistical tests to be adopted. The study was planned to a simple sample survey combined with desk research of the available literature, consultations with informed public, activists opposed to the practices of superstitious nature, and the believers of some of these listed rituals or superstitions. It was also not meant to involve any specific design of observation for the festivals and/or occasions involving these practices may or may not coincide with the time frame of the study.

Initially it was aimed at surveying about 60 respondents concerning each of the practices, the respondents comprising believers/practitioners, activists, and other local persons who may have an opinion on the issues concerned. However, it was not easy to find believers or practitioners of some of the banned practices (Made Snana, Ajalu, etc.). Likewise, the sample size had to be expanded in view of the similarity of views being expressed by the earlier selected sample. It was hoped that some diversity may be obtained by expanding the size of the sample.

1.6 Research Methodology

By the very nature of the topic, the study aims at employing qualitative techniques of data gathering: observation (where feasible), in-depth interviews and focused group discussions with a range of informants: members of the affected households or families, religious leaders, NGOs and activists, as also protagonists who support the practices and beliefs. Preceding the field work, we propose to undertake a systematic survey of literature especially from the colonial times written by administrators cum anthropologists (e.g, Edgar Thurston), and several missionaries with their commentaries and the descriptions made in the District Gazetteers. The recent report submitted by a high-powered committee set up by State Government on Blind Beliefs and Superstitions shall be consulted, and discussions with the members of the committee will be held. Another important source of information, which also will be within the focus of literature review are the newspaper reports and analysis over the past two or three decades.

Such a comprehensive review establishes the base information about the beliefs and practices but will also enable us to arrive at superstition-specific checklist for interviews and group discussions, and give a perception over the changes since they were first described or analysed in such documents and/or literature. Observations, discussions and interviews gave us an indication of not only the way the practices have persisted but also indicated the nature and extent of changes, if any. Above all, the latter also gave us indications as to why they have persisted, and what seem to be limitations of the State initiatives in eradicating them. Policy recommendations can emerge from such an approach which are far more likely to be realistic than mere review of literature.

Separate Interview and discussion guides were prepared for employing at the time of data collection. Questions pertained to the perception of the origin of practices, narratives about the beliefs behind such practices, and the nature of changes if any. Questions were posed about the challenges to eradicate such practices and changes in the system of beliefs.

1.7 Data Collection and Analysis

As indicated above, data was collected from at least three sets of respondents. First they consisted of the believers and/or practitioners of the different practices involving the listed superstitions. Second, they involved those who believed but did not practice the rituals any more. Third, consisted of the rationalists and the activists who were opposed to these practices and made a campaign against them in their own ways. In addition, where feasible focused group discussions were carried out involving a mix of the above kind of respondents to elicit their views on the changes that may have occurred in the past 25 years or so. The research team was specifically asked to make a thorough survey of literature, especially from the colonial times and of the missionary reports. This too was carried out, and the report here bears an evidence of such a consultation. It had been suggested that a workshop is conducted involving participation by the informed public, believers and activists as also a few intellectuals. This was convened on January 9, 2017. In response to invitations sent out to over 30 persons, only about 17 persons were able to participate.

Observational and other qualitative data were analysed to arrive at general trends. These were compared with the data gathered through survey of the sample respondents and found mostly corroborating the two sets. Using the software SPSS (Version 16.0) the survey data were analysed for the purposes of arriving at the different cross tables. Since there had been no specific hypotheses adopted in the study, there was no need for any statistical tests to be applied.

1.8 Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussions are organised into four following chapters besides an Executive Summary. The sections hitherto may be treated as being part of the First Chapter. The Second chapter, a brief one, gives an account of superstitions in Karnataka although this study does not make a claim that there are regionally unique superstitions. However, local cultural and ecological factors may have an impact upon the nature and content of the superstitions and the behavioural patterns that may be there in the specific region or sub-regions.

In Chapter 2, based on the literature consulted, a brief history of the specific superstitions examined in this study and practices related to them will be discussed. Further, based on the survey data, consultations and group discussions carried out as part of the study, an account of the nature and directions of changes in these superstitious practices will be analysed. of particular concern would be issues pertaining to their legal status, regional variations in the practices – if any, and current status of these practices. Also examined is the question of any caste or sub-group particularly involved in the observation of some of rituals concerning these beliefs. Chapter 3, which too is based on literature consultations and field survey data, outlines the process of socio-cultural resistance to some of these rituals and superstitions or in support of their practice, and analyse the role of the change agents.

Chapter 5 is brings forth the findings of the study together by way of a conclusion, and make an attempt at proposing a few recommendations to the State policy makers about the future course of action in regard to the role of the State in governing religious behaviours involving some of these superstitions and practices based on them.

Limitations, Orientations and Disclaimers

In carrying out this study, the research team encountered several hardships limiting the scope and character of the study. In the first place, a mention may be made of the reliability of data. Since several of the practices and superstitions have been in

the news, more or less in an unfavourable context or a context public outcry against them, many of our respondents seemed to be hesitant in making bold of their own opinions or beliefs. Secondly, in such practices that involved a legal sanction against them or seeking modifications in their practices, there had been attempts to conceal whether or not they practiced such rituals as they prevailed a few years ago. This observation applies specially to Madesnana, mass animal sacrifices, hook swinging, or Bettale Seve. Thirdly, some of these rituals take place during the annual fairs or on specific days marked as festivals, special pujas etc. The study was being carried out at a time not coinciding with any such special days, and therefore the respondents whom we could contact were casual visitors and not the ones who participated in the annual rituals. However, sufficient care was ensured to elicit information true to the beliefs and convictions of the respondents.

As regards the orientation of this it is necessary to make certain disclaimers. The study does not aim at targeting any religious or other ethnic groups. On the contrary, the purpose is merely to aim at highlighting some of the superstitions and practices arising out of them are considered as injurious to health or wellbeing of individuals or groups of individuals, to particular sections of society such as the so-called 'lower' castes or vulnerable tribal groups, and women, or those that could be considered as not in keeping with the changing times in a modern society. It certainly is not meant to be an attempt consciously to hurt the sentiment of any one or a group.

The narrative about the degraded status, their exploitation etc, of the different castes and communities in the study should not be mistaken as views of the author or those sponsoring this study. Attempt to avoid repeating expressions as 'allegedly,' 'according to the belief' etc., the narrative here attempts to report the occurrences, and are not meant to be an expression of viewpoints. The author and those concerned with the study do not in any manner support the inhuman practices under discussion in the study, and any expression of referring communities as Untouchable, low or high in rank or status etc., are meant only to reflect the perceptions as they existed at different times in the past.

Chapter 2

History of Superstitions in Karnataka: The Malignant and the Not-so Malignant

The State of Karnataka, comprising parts of what is known as the regions that were under the erstwhile Bombay and Madras Presidencies, regions known as the Hyderabad Karnataka together with the areas that had been under the Princely State of Mysore, presents a veritable picture concerning superstitions and their practices. The coastal Karnataka has a rich tradition of Bhuta cult – that is, the worshipping of spirits⁷, the Bombay and Hyderabad Karnataka region well known for the cults of dedicating young girls and women as Devadasis. Inflicting injuries on oneself be it submitting oneself to be pierced with sharp objects, hook swinging, or hurting oneself with a leather hunter, besides many other ways.

Throughout the State, the practice of offering animals in sacrifice that too at public places is not uncommon. An occasional offering of an animal, such as hen, sheep or goat does not warrant any special concern. What does draw concern is when several of them in large numbers are sacrificed without concern for who is watching them and what would be

⁷See one of the descriptions of this form of worship from the colonial times as pertaining to the erstwhile Canara regions (present Udipi and Dakshina Kannada districts). Perjorative references to the spirits as ‘evil’ or otherwise are by the original author and not shared by the authors of this report:

The worship of evil (*sic*) spirits is almost universal among the Hindoo inhabitants ... Places of worship which are stones dedicated to them are frequently to be seen in the fields, and every village has its temple. There are persons of ... (specific) ... castes who on the occasion of feasts perform the services and are supposed to be possessed by evil spritis. They have their hair loose and flowing and carry a sword which they brandish about, jumping, dancing and trembling in a most frightful manner. Sometimes a rope is tied round their waist and they are held like infuriated wild animals’ (Pharoah 1855: 546) [Parentheses added].

the psychological impact of such acts upon young and impressionable minds, nor with any attention to hygiene and cleanliness. If commercial abattoirs are subject to norms governing health and sanitation, so should sacrificial acts of mass killing of animals. In a village of Magadi taluk where an intensive field research had been carried out during 1978-81, it had been observed that on a specified day prior to the commencement of harvest, almost all landowning households brought a sheep or hen to a central spot within the village where a black stone is erected with markings of moon, sun, earth and other planetary objects (maramma kallu), where the animal is concealed. On such a day over 50 animal heads would have been offered there, with considerable blood spewed around.

Practice of occult, witchcraft, *bhanamati* etc., some of which may involve human sacrifice too is not uncommon⁸. It is not uncommon to find early in the mornings even to this day a smashed lemon, *kumkuma* (calcium hydroxide) and turmeric disgorged at a spot where three roads meet. A few years ago when there had been a power struggle between different political parties in the State, similar objects were found outside the State legislature house, *vidhana saudha*, and it was widely rumoured to have been acts of sorcery and witchcraft, which fall under the stamp of witchcraft. Even to this day, certain regions of Karnataka, and one of the neighbouring States is reputed (often, notoriously) for superstitious practices of this nature, many of which are used for the purposes of divining hidden treasures, harming one's enemies, or attempting to enchant a person into submission (*vashikarana*). Many of these practices are not confined to any one religious followers, but across them.

On top of all these, to this day we know that in most households there is the practice of rituals to ward off or removal of the evil eye (*drishti* in Kannada or Sanskrit, *nazar* in Urdu). These are so common requiring a technical definition, although the rituals or practices associated with them does vary widely from region to region, or even within them. Even images of gods are not spared of the practices of removing the 'evil eye' as perhaps may be perceived as an act of this nature when a coconut is smashed on the ground prior to or after the procession of the image(s). A business establishment (such as a shop, workshop or industrial house) may have a seasonal and ceremonial removal of evil eye by offering an ash gourd (winter melon) into which a hole is punched and *kumkuma* is stuffed so as to give it an appearance of blood when it is smashed on the ground in front of the premises. A well

⁸See, C R Chandrashekhar ' (1992) *Bhanamati: Devva, Maata, Mantra, Maddidu –Ivella Nijave?* Bangalore: Karnataka Vijnana Parishat.

informed priest interpreted that offering *kumkuma* soaked lemon or ash gourd was a transformed vestige of animal sacrifice in the old days, or a contemporary substitute to it by those who are vegetarians or do not wish to kill an animal for this purpose.

The branch of medical sociology in India was, about two decades ago, full of accounts of superstitious practices as interventions for health care: patients – especially children – were branded with a hot iron as a ‘treatment’ of an ache or pain. Though the incidence is now dying, it is not uncommon even to this day to find a patient undergoing this form ‘indigenous’ interventions side by side other scientific methods of treatment.

There are many temples that are ‘renowned’ with a popular reputation of being capable of curing specific illness, be they of skin, stomach, or of mind. It is not uncommon that medical professionals to advise patients or their ‘attendants’ to ‘have faith in’ or ‘leave everything to Gods.’ Some temples even have little shrines somewhere within the hospital premises. One medical doctor pointed out that these are ways of helping the patients and/or their relations to contain with the anxiety over the illness or a person, and more often than not, helps the recovery process as part of ‘faith healing.’ The person preferring to remain anonymous pointed: ‘It is not as if faith replaces our interventions. But our referring to the supernatural forces reinforces confidence, and occasionally even the commitment to continue caring for the patient.’ For it was not an unknown practice to throw up ones hand when a member of a household was sick and to almost abandon the person. Even as the signs of an eventual death of a person become evident, members of the family used to, in the past, bring the person to the outer part of a house and wait for the end to come (e.g., See Thurston 1906: 133). It was not unusual for the family to take the person alive to a nearby river for him or her to die (see Ward 1817; Osborne 1884).

Even in contemporary times, we make strong associations between health and certain rituals and practices in the faith that good health is assured as a consequence of the latter. Mention could be made especially of the temples. A visit to which is said to assure speedy recovery or the visit is undertaken as an act of thanks giving. The ‘*Kavadis*, that is persons who have undertaken to perform a special offering at certain temples with their chins punctured, through which a brass rod would have been inserted, and carrying a floral offerings balanced on their shoulders, undertaken to do so as a mark of expression of gratitude for favours received for

oneself or members of a family. For a majority this becomes a family tradition, as a result of which annually they undertake to perform this ritual.

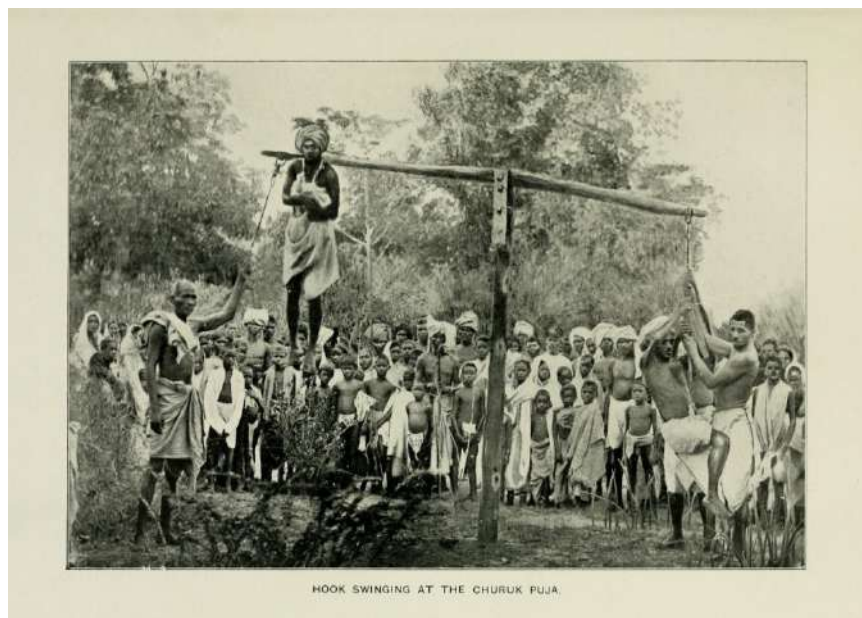


Picture 1: Persons with Hooks on his Back
(Source: Source: Google [Hook Swinging])

The story of hook swinging (see Chapter 4) too is no different when it comes to involving bodily mutilation and harm. The practice was wide spread in south of India, especially in the Madras Presidency of the British rule times, as also in many parts of Karnataka. In the northern India, especially in Bengal region too it was widely practiced. The annual fairs held in major temple towns the practice was a major religious attraction, which in Karnataka was known as *sidi* and in the Northern India as *Charak*. Needless, of course, to specially point out that the worshippers were by and large from the lower rungs of caste hierarchy (see Oddie 1986; Powel 1914; Sax 2009). Karnataka too has had its share of infamy for *Sati*⁹, falling under the wheels of the chariot of the presiding deities in annual procession, human sacrifice and other religious practises involving bodily harm (See, Thurston 1912; Pharoah 1855; Elliot 1871). A branch of one of the dominant castes of Karnataka, the Marasu Okkaligas had a strange custom involving the daughters of the house. This was amputating the first joint of the ring finger, as a sign of offering to the family deity (Bowring 1871: 40). Not only are there superstitious practices involving oneself as listed above, but also those risking the lives of others, especially children: e.g., tossing of children from a height or walking on burning coal while carrying children). Yet others are such practices involving others merely because of the superstition that such persons are beholders of evil spirits or supernatural forces. Thus some socially and economically backward castes and tribes (e.g., Male Kudias and Koragas) are required by compulsions of tradition to eat human hair and/or nails clipped from others as a ‘rite’ to remove sickness of a child or an adult;

⁹For a gory description of an incidence of Sati in the space between old Bengaluru and the British Cantonment, sometime the 1830s, see Campbell (1839: 51-31),

and as a ritual at the time of annual death ceremony of the so-called upper castes. The practice involving Koragas were known as *Ajalu*, meaning ‘as is customary’.



Picture 2: Hook Swinging Ceremony

(Source: <http://www.oldindianphotos.in/2013/03/hook-swinging-at-churuk-puja-chota.html>
From the book: Chota Nagpore, A Little-Known Province of the Empire 1910)

Notions of purity and pollution resulting from one’s or a group’s identity in terms of caste, and the resulting customs in vogue in respect of their lives too have violated human dignity besides risking lives of men and women. Practice of Untouchability towards certain castes is an example. Another example which has not been easy to overcome is the practices of making women to spend three to four days and nights in the wilderness or fields, but certainly outside the house among the Gollas in Karnataka. Incidentally, a much useful ethnographic source compiled and dated 1930, the Mysore Castes and Tribes (Nanjundaiah and Iyer 1930: 281-82) notes that the practices were of the past and they were being given up, while it was that that time reported to have been more frequent among the *Kadu Gollas* (the forest dwelling Gollas) (ibid. 225-26). What is of concern in this regard is the fact that as late as 2015-16, there were several instances of these practices pursued in many parts of Karnataka, that too among those who were village residents as opposed to the forest dwellers. The State had to specifically ban it. Contrary to common expectations that modernisation and influences of urbanisation would release people of superstitious practices such as condemning women into isolation in the wilds during menstruation. Instead, there seems to be persistence, if not an increased instances of such practices. However, many other castes too practiced in the past of confining a girl when she attains puberty in a

makeshift hut within the house (if large enough) or outside the house, which would be thatched with fresh and green leaves. Some such castes are the potters (Kumbaras), Kunchitiga Okkaligas, Morasu Okkaligas, Kurubas. The Ethnological Survey of Mysore that lists over 20 castes in the then Mysore State observed among nearly all the castes elaborate rituals prevailed concerning puberty (Nanjundaiah 1906; Vols. 1 to 24). While Kadu Gollas had the practice of keeping the girl upon attaining puberty far away from their settlement and in the wilds for as many as 21 days, the others put up a shed outside the house, in the open yard, and confined her there ranging from 3 to 15 days. Among many, in the olden days a girl had to occupy a new shed each day, with the family destroying by fire the previous ones. As times have passed, many such castes have tended to give up these practices, while young girls nowadays refuse to undergo any of the celebrations traditionally associated attainment of puberty.

It is not merely in Karnataka and elsewhere in India that we find the practice of social and physical isolation of women in menstruation ‘period’, but also in other parts of the world, which we describe as modern or advanced! Ananthakrishna Iyer notes in his ‘Castes and Tribes of Mysore’ (1935: 225-26) that even English women used to avoid whipping cream, or beating eggs, and even avoided all dairy work during their menstruation, for the fear that milk or egg may turn sour. Early European medical books had described menstrual blood could be highly dangerous not only to persons but also to the flowers and therefore, nature. Whether or not these beliefs are true, the resulting practices – at least in parts of India, and for women of certain castes and class tended to be highly discriminatory. The superstitious belief that they could cause harm, evil or bring about bad luck and cause ill effects upon environment in turn further degrades women as a gendered persons. Iyer cites the sources he consulted that the law of Moses ‘considered a woman during menstruation as unclean’ (1935: 226).

Besides women in menstruation, a woman was similarly confined to the outskirts of a village for about a week to ten days during and after a child birth. It was not uncommon for expectant mothers used to be brought to a cow shed, where the village’s traditional midwife (*daayi*) would serve as an attendant. Thus the birth of a child would be at a site that may not have been ideal from the point of view of hygiene or safety from insect bites, but in the belief that such deliveries would be warding off evil eyes had compelled people to follow the tradition. But behind such practices also was the fact that most often women specialising as traditional child-birth attendants were of such castes suffering the stigma of

Untouchability, or those who could not have entered the inner courts of the house of a so called higher caste.

Animal sacrifice and human sacrifice have had their origins in the prevalence of a myth or a legend. One such myth, as recounted by Nanjundaiah and Iyer (Vol. 4, 1931: 157-58) involves the marriage of a so-called upper caste Brahmin girl and a Dalit boy. The latter looked in appearance more like a Brahmin boy and sought employment the house of a Brahmin priest. Not only did he gain the status as a student with the Brahmin, but in due course was given his daughter in marriage. The family grew with children being born, the wife one day comes to know of the caste origin of her husband when the mother in law had visited them incognito. The wife burns down the whole house and with it perished the entire family. Given her virtue, it was ordained according to the myth that she becomes the Goddess of epidemics (cholera, small pox etc.), Mari, and would be worshipped year after year. The husband was cursed to be born repeatedly as a he-buffalo and her children as small kids, and her mother in law as sheep, all of which would be sacrificed to her. A systematic analysis of the myth shall reveal the link between the myth and the sacrifice – human and animal. It may also point out that the actions of sacrifice in turn may have given rise to a myth, as though to rationalise their beliefs.

Whether rural or urban, it was a common practice to have superstitious beliefs about the occurrences of epidemics such as plague, cholera or small pox. Each of these was attributed to the anger of the presiding deity, usually a female Goddess such as Maramma. Even in the modern days, whenever a child is infested with measles, besides depending on the medicines an offering is made to Maramma. If the devotee is a vegetarian by food habits, if not by caste norms, a bowl of fruits, nuts and milk or curds are offered to the Goddess. Those who consume meat offer a hen or a fowl. During the days of sickness several dietary restrictions are observed, so much so that certain cooking practice is altogether avoided; example seasoning of the cooked food with oil and mustard. The belief is that seasoning food may anger the Goddess. She is propitiated with margosa (*neem*; *Azadirachta indica*, a traditional medicinal herb) leaves. Whatever scientific rationale that there may be is underplayed by the veneration of these practices.

Yet another phenomenon, more frequent among women than men, is the ‘possession of Gods’ or going into a trance. There is a strong tradition of ‘Devil Worship’ in the Coastal Karnataka (as in Kerala, and elsewhere) as part of which the male priest is said to be

possessed by the spirit. As part of the worship, there are rituals of offering animals, especially a fowl, which the Spirit or Devil God in the form of the priest will bite neck to kill the animal. Sheep and goats are not a common in the coastal region and therefore offering them is not a common practice. While this is purely in the realms of religious faith, they are also recognised as being instrumental in healing and in counselling within village communities (Shields 1987). So much so, paradoxically enough, these rituals are resorted to, with a view to assure prosperity, wellbeing and success of the SEZ ventures in the coastal Karnataka. The worship is not merely by the ‘not workers but executives who undertake the primary role in *būta* rituals. In addition, the rituals’ main aim is towards not division but connection among modern technology, nature, and divinities’ Mihil: 2016: 1).

There are also the incidences of possession of persons by devils or spirits, besides Gods. Whether or not this are psychological ailments of varying degrees, the belief is so strong that it would be a soul of deceased person, a God or an act of witch craft that is responsible for such behaviour. It is not individuals alone who demonstrate this form of behaviour, but also groups of persons, men or women. In village outside of Channapatna town it was a common sight during 1993-94 to observe different women within a single household being thus possessed, each rivalling the other. It is only when a more vocal group of men who could bring the frenzy to order. It appears in the earlier days, other people would bring the required worship articles and offer them to the women to bring them to their normal State. Over the years the visitation of Gods or spirits have been so frequent that the religiosity is lost altogether, instead is seen as acts of settling scores by the daughters and mothers-in-law with each other.

The purpose of recalling some of the customs and superstitions behind them are to indicate, at least in some instances, the historicity of them. Bowring narrates a curious custom is narrated about a custom among the Kurubas in the old Mysore region. As will be evident in this report in the following pages, most superstitions involving the physical body of the other(s) tend to be enacted during the annual festival of a temple, known in Kannada as *jatre or parishe*. Among the Kurubas, eight days prior to the festival of Birappa, their family deity, the temple’s priest gets his head clean shaved, eats one meal a day, and on the day of the feast will kneel down in front of the idol. Devotees bring coconuts to be offered to the deity, which are broken open by smashing it on the head of the priest.

‘There he sits, till the great heaps of cocoa-nuts are piled up as high as an elephant on both sides of him. Though so many nuts are dashed upon his bare skull, the

priest feels no pain, does not utter a sound and never cries ‘Ap-pap-pa! Ay-yo! Kuy-yo! Morro!’ but sits kneeling, with his hands before him, holding out his head for the nuts to be broken upon.’ (Bowring 1871: 40)

As pointed out at the beginning of this study, it is not the intention to demonstrate all superstitions and practices following them are harmful. Karnataka State too has its share of such ‘harmless’ practices – at least to oneself or the others. Whether they prevailed in ancient times, medieval period or the more recent decades, it was always believed that as modernity, science and technology, new inventions and innovations begins to take firm roots in society, many of these beliefs and superstitious practices would have no place in Indian society. This faith has been belied to a large extent, for even in current times we find many practices – both harmful and offending the human dignity on the one hand, and the not-so-harmful – to be in operation. Some in the colonial times had argued that they have remained the same and unchanged from the times of Alexander the Great to the then current times (Campbell 1839: 22) Given the character of social stratification, based on class, caste and other ethnicities, there seems evidence enough to point out that it is the more vulnerable sections of society who are victims, and the more dominant as perpetrators.

There has been a popular belief that the British who ruled India for a couple of centuries did not prefer to interfere in matters of culture and religious affairs of the ‘natives.’ But notwithstanding this fair reputation, it must be pointed out that there had been sufficient cultural policing (Dirks 1997), legislations and rulings to prohibit several of the practices – rituals or otherwise: human sacrifice, female infanticide, widow burning, hook swinging, etc., are but a few examples. The Government of India Act XXI of 1845, legally banning human sacrifice, is one example of this. However, the often witnessed insurgencies against the colonial rule, taxation, freedom struggle etc., were often described as attempts on the part of people to claim their right to indulge in some of these bloody sacrifices (see, Bates: 2006) or banned practices.

In the contemporary times, whether in Karnataka or watching Television channels beaming from across the nations, or browsing through the ‘www’ we find innumerable programmes or insertions of advertisements about lucky gem stones, a powerful shield against evil or misfortunes, or purchase of jewellery on a certain date to enhance prospects of wealth, etc. There are also uncritical commentaries on superstitious practices that may help overcome losses in business, love, failure in studies, to build a house and so on. These

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and much other such advertisement may be true or not, that is not the concern here. At best some of these may result in a further financial loss to the extent these mystical support systems fail to produce the desired results. Belief in them, therefore, may not be inhuman in nature, or belittling human dignity. It is such practices which involve or result in such indignities that needs to be addressed, a cultural policy that can monitor them needs to be consensually evolved.

Before proceeding to discuss specifically some of the superstitious practices that are offensive, and causing human indignity, let us briefly take a look at some of the movements – with or without a role of the State in them – to fight against injustices resulting from perpetration of such superstitious practices, in India in general and in Karnataka in particular.

Chapter 3

Specific Superstitions and their Current Status

The current study was undertaken with an explicit objective of examining about seven specific superstitious beliefs and practices in Karnataka, observing which practices are considered as malignant, exploitative and offensive to human dignity. These seven practices are: Made Snana, Mass Animal Sacrifice, Tossing of Children, Bettale Seve, Jata or Jade, Devadasi System, and the ritual of Sidi (Hook Swinging). Although locations where these were practiced historically were specified to the fields of research, our work involved visiting other centres too that either had a history or was being practiced currently. In some places where a ritual was initially thought to be in practice, was found upon our visit to the location that either it had been given up or was modified. Thus, our analysis of each of the practices is to follow a pattern. First, a brief account of the history of the practice, of its myths if any, and this followed by if the practices are on the increase or on the decline. Thirdly, discuss, based on the field data, the perception of those who are opposed to the beliefs and practices based on such superstition.

However, prior to presenting an account of each of the superstitious practices, we shall first present a sketch of the background of the respondents whom we had interviewed in respect of each of the practices. As pointed out in Chapter 1 outlining the methodology of the study, a randomly chosen sample of about minimum of 80 or a maximum of 122 respondents were chosen made up of believers/ practitioners, non-believers and those who are activists in the region where the different practices are/were predominant. In respect of some practices, such as Ajalu, it was not practical to find any who admitted to be practicing it whether now or in the past given the current popular disapproval in Karnataka. Almost any one contacted was either strongly opposed to its practice or did not believe in its practice. The purpose of introducing a few characteristics of the respondents would be helpful in arriving at understanding of the status of these practices, and the factors associated with their decline or continued patronage.

The total 796 persons who were interviewed for the study were contacted in the region in which the specific practices prevailed in the past or currently. To the extent the superstitious practices were spread across different regions (districts, or parts) of the State, respondents were contacted in such locations too.

3.1 Sampling Frame and Method of Selection: There is no indication as to what could be the population of the Universe, which in one sense is the entire population of the State of Karnataka, in which the study was carried out. However, given the amorphous nature of the population, it was decided that respondents for the study shall be drawn from the specific regions in which the listed superstitious practices were found to be prevalent. Thus, in respect of Mass Animal Sacrifice (as an example,) respondents were chosen from the towns or places in which the temples were located, and the respondents were such devotees who visited the temple to offer their worship. While such respondents were by and large believers, they may have included practitioners of the specific ritual or those who had given up the practice. The section of those who were actively carrying out a campaign against such practices – rationalists, activists or non-believers, were contacted through the technique of snow-balling, but having first identified a few through their public presence as in newspaper, social media. Temple authorities too were asked to indicate such persons who may have been either in the past or present been active in educating the people against such beliefs and practices, or may have carried out demonstrations outside the temples at the time of annual fairs or occasions when the practices were being undertaken by the devotees. The four types of respondents – for each of the listed belief and practices were – thus made up of:

- i. Believers, and (in some cases) practiced the related rituals
- ii. Believers, but those who had not been practicing the rituals
- iii. Non-believers, and
- iv. Rationalists and or activists.

In the last mentioned category were included some respondents who were not confined in their activism against any one practice but towards all superstitions and practices around them at large. It must be pointed out that, however, some very well known rationalists in the State who have become almost celebrity figures owing to their stand on these matters were deliberately not contacted for the study since much of what they had to put forth as arguments against these practices were well known and much written about. Some of the books and other pamphlets had carried their views and we had consulted them

as part of our literature review (e.g., see Krishnappa 2000 and Chandrashekar 1992). Please see Table 1 for the size of the samples drawn in respect of each of the practices, and the type of respondents they were.

In addition to canvassing a structured questionnaire schedule to the sample respondents, interviews were held with a few priests and trustees of places of worship. Insights gained through such interviews have gone into our analysis of data gathered and/or instances of worship observed. Some such interviews further enabled to learn about the changes that may have taken place in respect of some such rituals.

Finally, one of the methods used for gathering information, especially about the processes of changes or absence of anticipated changes was through carrying out focused group discussion. To the extent these were possible to be held in a formal manner in the towns or villages where the worship takes place, we did carry them out. But, given the haste with which visiting devotees would like to finish their praying and following their other routines in a place of pilgrimage, it was not always possible to structure a focused group discussion. In some cases, we conducted FGDs in the town, or a nearby market place involving merchants, visitors, as also a few NGO representatives active in their campaigns against some such practices. The towns/villages in which such FGDS were held were also those very field sites in which the temples of located and were popular places of worship. In all 16 FGDs were carried out in such a way at two per listed practice was under discussion. The FGDs were held in Saundatti and Makaravalli for Jade and Devadasi as a theme, Machohalli and Bitanahalli (Mass Animal Sacrifice); Ramanatha Pura and Subramanya (Made Snana); Udupi and Kenjuru (Ajalu); Nagarala (Tossing Children); Chandragutti (Nude Worship); and Afzalpur and Ghattargi (for Sidi).

Based on the patterns of responses given to the battery of questions concerning respective superstitions, the respondents were classified into four major types: The first of them are labelled “Believers and/or practitioners.” Not only do such respondents believe in the superstitions, they practice also some of the activities concerning them. Thus, a person (and her/his household members, in some cases) believe that by offering a sacrifice of a sheep or goat, if not a fowl, in one the temples renewed for the practice they may get ‘blessed by a child; or the ‘loans they have as outstanding for a long time will get repaid soon enough.’ In accomplishing such a goal, they may indeed make an offering of an animal.

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Table 1-A: Type of Superstition & Practice and Type of Respondent						
Type of Superstition and Practice	Type of Respondent	Gender				Total
		Male		Female		
		No.	%	No.	%	
Mass Animal Sacrifice	Do Not Practice	6	50.00	6	50.00	12
	Believer / Practitioners	32	60.38	21	39.62	53
	Non-Believer	19	90.48	2	9.52	21
	Rationalist Thinker/Activist	34	94.44	2	5.56	36
	Total	91	74.59	31	25.41	122
Made Snana	Do Not Practice	20	52.63	18	47.37	38
	Believer / Practitioners	10	55.56	8	44.44	18
	Rationalist Thinker/Activist	22	91.67	2	8.33	24
	Total	52	65.00	28	35.00	80
Ajalu	Do Not Practice	32	42.11	44	57.89	76
	Rationalist Thinker/Activist	28	87.50	4	12.50	32
	Total	60	55.56	48	44.44	108
Tossing Children	Do Not Practice	58	96.67	2	3.33	60
	Non-Believer	34	94.44	2	5.56	36
	Total	92	95.83	4	4.17	96
Devadasi	Do Not Practice			2	100.00	2
	Believer / Practitioners			100	100.00	100
	Total			102	100.00	102
Nude Worship	Do Not Practice	48	77.42	14	22.58	62
	Believer / Practitioners	10	83.33	2	16.67	12
	Non-Believer			4	100.00	4
	Rationalist Thinker/Activist	10	83.33	2	16.67	12
	Total	68	75.56	22	24.44	90
Sidi	Do Not Practice	26	40.63	38	59.38	64
	Believer / Practitioners	16	61.54	10	38.46	26
	Non-Believer	6	100.00	0		6
	Total	48	50.00	48	50.00	96
Jata / Jade	Jata/Jade Practitioner			102	100.00	102
	Total			102	100.00	102
All Practices	Do Not Practice	190	60.51	124	39.49	314
	Believer / Practitioners	68	32.54	243	67.46	311
	Non-Believer	59	88.06	8	11.94	67
	Rationalist Thinker/Activist	94	90.38	10	9.62	104
	Total	411	51.63	385	100.00	796
Grand Total					48.37	

The second category of respondents is what we have labelled as those who “Do Not Practice.” They may believe a myth or a legend behind a superstition, but for a range of reasons (a law against it, their own age, etc.) may not, actually not practice the ritual. In some cases, they do not practice also because they do not believe in it, while being religious in nature, and may worship the presiding deity in whose precincts the practices take place (e.g., *sidi*, or *Bettale Seve*).

The third category is made up of the non-believers: they do not believe in the superstitious practice nor in the story behind it. But, they do believe in the existence of God, and are either moderately or highly religious persons as they may describe themselves.

Finally, the category of Rationalists/atheists/ activists are made up of those – as the name suggests – do not subscribe to any religious faith, besides not believing in any of the specific superstitions. Some of them are activists too carrying out a campaign against the practices.

As may be gleaned from Table 1, distribution of our respondents is such that there is a slightly higher share of the ‘Do not Practice’ category with 39.45per cent. Grouping them with the other categories each of which does not practice the rituals associated with the superstitions, they account for almost 60 per cent of the respondents. It must be reiterated here that the respondents were all randomly chosen, and certainly not being aware that they belonged to one category or the other. This random distribution should indicate, at least in a small measure, that the believers and Practitioners of the chosen superstitious practices are much less than those who work against it or those who do not believe in them.

A note of explanation should also be added to the differing extent of those who ‘do not practice’ or those who reported to have been ‘practitioners’ of some of the practices. The two may consist of those who may have had, in the past observed a ritual by themselves or someone in the household, while for the present they may not be practicing it any more. An example of this could be found among those who may have *sidi* (hook swinging), tossing the children, etc., some of which have been banned legally or administratively.

Table 1 (b): Locations where Sample Respondents (796) were Interviewed

Devadasi (102)	Mass Animal Sacrifice (122)	Jata / Jade (102)	Sidi (96)	Ajjalu (108)	Made Snana (80)	Tossing Children (96)	Nude Worship (90)
Kalapura	Davangere	Ugargol	Sidi	moodbidri	Sullia	Nagaral*	Chandragutti*
sirasangi	Hasan	karikatti	Ghattaragi*	Kundapura	udupi	Kalburgi	
Halakatte	Machohalli*	Saundatti*	Kaluru	Kukke subramanya	Kalavara	Tadkal	
Kudlivada	Bitanahalli*	Malur	Kalburgi	Udupi*	Hasan	Afzalpur	
Jeevapura	udupi	Mugunur	Tadkal	Kenjuru*	Ramanatha Pura*		
Goundwad	Kenjuru	Alangwadi	Afzalpur*	Kalavara	Subramanya*		
Yarajaralu	uppunda	Ihole	Kodaganchi				
Habenala	Byndoor	Dharwad	Khaja Kotnur				
Akandi	Kapu	Kelvarkoppa					
Ugargol	Bhatkal	Lakmapura					
Bandarhalli	Sullia	Kandonji					

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Munavalli	moodbidri	Bada				
Hiriyur	Hoskote	Chandragatti				
Madangeri	Kudligi	Makkarvali*				
Kulamanahatti	Kalavara	Nipani				
lingadahalli	Kundapura	Janavada				
Malapura		balake				
Gudikotabagi		Kuguluru				
belavadi		Gudaganntti				
Saundatti*						
Makaravalli*						
Ayalur						
Bailhongal						
Sangolli						
Akkisagara						
Korikoppa						
Inchal						
Achamatti						
Madlur						
Mutavada						
Hirebudanur						
Chachadi						
Chikkabudanur						
Pattihal						
Note: * Indicates locations where FGDs were Carried Out						

Source: Sample Survey

In terms of gender distribution of the sample respondents, the study was able to attempt a fair balance between males and females. At least three of the rituals/ practices centred primarily on women: Devadasi, Nude Worship and dedicating themselves because of matted hair (*Jata / Jade*). Although males too are found practicing the rituals associated with *Devadasi as Jogappa / Jogaiahs, jata/ Jade*, within the short span of time available for field data collection it was not possible to contact them for interviews.

It should be recognised here that some of these rituals and/or practices are applicable to both men and women, and both when becoming victims suffer the indignity, humiliation and offenses. But, being women they are more vulnerable, and the families (if not the community) at large imposes greater conformity to the traditions than they would be for men. Hence there may be a justification for an emphasis upon women respondents in our sample in respect of some of these rituals. As a disclaimer, it should be also pointed out that each of the rituals under lens here has both men and women participants, and therefore become religious victims.

Gender	Type of Respondent								Total
	Do Not Practice		Believer / Practitioner		Non-Believer		Rationalist Thinker/ Activist		
	No,	%	No,	%	No,	%	No,	%	
Male	190	46.23	68	16.55	59	14.36	94	22.87	411
Female	124	32.21	243	63.12	8	2.08	10	2.60	385
Total	314	39.45	311	39.07	67	8.42	104	13.07	796

Source: Sample Survey

A third characteristic a reader should be familiar about the respondents is their age composition, as presented in Table 3. A majority of the respondents for the study belonged to the broad age group of 22 to 50 years, representing slightly more than two thirds of the sample chosen. This was true in respect of all the eight different superstitions and practices. age group. Slightly over a quarter of the samples (27.5 per cent) were aged above 51 years, while about 6.5 per cent were much youthful, in the age group of 15 to 21 years.

As is the popular perception, age does seem to have an influence over whether a person believes in superstitions or not. As may be seen from Table 3, the more youthful or younger persons tend not to believe or practice superstitions while the older ones, especially as grouped here as Above 51 years, tend to believe and practice them. Conversely, the non-believers and those who do not practice or those who are rationalists or activists are lightly more in the younger age group. However, a majority among Rationalists or activists (61 per cent) had refrained from responding to our question pertaining to their age.

Age Group	Type of Respondent								Total
	Do Not Practice		Believer / Practitioner		Non-Believer		Rationalist Thinker/ Activist		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
15-21	22	42.31	14	26.92	8	15.38	8	15.38	52
22 to 50	245	47.85	161	31.45	44	8.59	62	12.11	512
Above 51	45	20.55	133	60.73	15	6.85	26	11.87	219
No Response	2	15.38	3	23.08	0	0.00	8	61.54	13
Total	314	39.45	311	39.07	67	8.42	104	13.07	796

Source: Sample Survey

Let us now turn to describing each of the eight identified superstitions and associated practices.

3.2 Mass Animal Sacrifice

Let us first begin by understanding the term ‘sacrifice.’ Among the different meanings that are associated with it, most relevant for the present are two, both derived from the Readers Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary.

1. ‘Slaughter of animal or person, surrender of possession, an offering to a deity, act of prayer, thanksgiving or penitence, as propitiation; What is thus slaughtered, surrendered, or done, victim, offering...
2. Giving up something for the sake of another that is higher or more urgent.

In built in the concept, therefore, are giving or offering that has had ‘life’ (with flesh and blood) in it; something that is precious, and is an act of either thanking for favours received or in anticipation of one. For a reputed authority on topics of religion, sacrifice and death, Robert Kastenbaum (2012) sacrificial objects include objects of value and symbolic significance, which therefore, are offered to the gods. The purpose is either to seek a favour or to express gratitude. In some renowned temples of India, e.g., Tirupathi’s Venkataramana Temple, devotees offer images or silver (if not gold) replicas of human organs such as a leg, hands, eyes, etc., or images of a house, cradle, and other material possessions, as a mark of expressing gratitude to the presiding deity. A miniature cradle is given to express thanks to the god the parents for having blessed a couple with a child; while ‘devotees offer miniature aircraft at Shaheed Baba Nihal Singh Gurdwara in Punjab to fulfil their dreams of going abroad.’¹⁰

History tells us that one of most powerful ways of appeasing gods has been through blood sacrifice, and in ancient times human blood too has been offered. It has been reported that human sacrifice, especially of young children or the first born was offered as in India as a token of appreciation. A woman, having remained, childless for a long time and to escape the humiliating stigmatic label as a ‘barren woman’ (*banje*), and to desperately avoid (in those days) of having to welcome a second woman as wife to her husband (*savati* in Kannada; *sauten* in Hindi) used to be under a vow that the first born would be offered to the God/Goddess. In this sense, infanticide and/or (as we shall see elsewhere in this report) Devadasi both can be traced in part to the very fear of childlessness and to overcome that State.

One may find conjectural evidence that human sacrifice, at least in India, lost support largely also because of the opposition to it from the British when they occupied

¹⁰See <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/aeroplane-gurdwara/998924/> Accessed on 16 November 2016.

India. There are gory descriptions of the rituals and of the passionate appeals made to legally prevent it. Indeed, *Sati* which was banned too was seen as a form of human sacrifice.

In any case the present reference to human sacrifice is mainly to point out that as forms of blood sacrifice, it was not only animals but also human beings who were offered as sacrifice. Even though this has been banned, one gets to read – and not infrequently – of a kidnap of a woman or a child to be offered as a sacrifice by those who are divining hidden wealth somewhere, or as a means of gaining something they desire.

Animal sacrifice has, however, remained throughout the country, and there have been temples or festivals which have come to be ‘renowned’ for this purpose. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, Kolkatta’s Kalikamba temple was quite famous, where it was reported hundreds of animals would have been offered as sacrifice to the goddess.

Offering of a sheep, or goat or a fowl, or two is something that could be seen as a form of worship. But their sacrifice in large numbers, at times more than a hundred, could be viewed as something that needs to be monitored.¹¹ In rural Karnataka, in many villages during the annual Uru Amma (the village Goddess with varying names in different villages) *Habba* or festival is observed, it is common for ceremonial sacrifice of a sheep in front of the deity’s shrine. The priest and a few elites of the village would have the ‘right’ (if any) or privilege of offering a sheep or goat as sacrifice at the shrine of the deity, which may or may not have had a ‘temple’ structure of the Sanskritic type.¹² As the procession of the deity progressed through the streets or lanes of the village settlement, each household (or if the cost of a sheep was unaffordable by some, a few in the neighbourhood by prior arrangement of sharing the cost) would make the offering in front of their respective houses. Customarily the ‘head’ of the sacrificed animal belonged to the *Madivaliah*, hereditary

¹¹ It is reported that in the neighbouring country of Nepal, during the two day festival of goddess *Gadhi Mai*, over 4000 buffaloes, goats, and pigeons are offered as sacrifice. Because of the income through tourism, the festival is sponsored by the Government despite a strong people’s campaign against the killing of the animals. See <http://www.businessinsider.in/Jaw-Dropping-Images-From-The-Worlds-Largest-Animal-Sacrifice/articleshow/45342118.cms> accessed on November 19, 2016.

¹²In southern or old Mysore region, in the past it may have been a stone slab covering, but in more recent years, it has everywhere come to have a formal temple with a tower and or a *pagoda*.

washer man under the *adade* or *jajmani* system of the bygone days.¹³ Although in a single day (i.e., night, during which the procession of Maramma or similar Uru Amma is taken out in procession) several hundred sheep/goat may be sacrificed by way of an offering to the Goddess, it is never at one spot, making the event to be a ‘mass animal sacrifice’.

Besides sacrifice of this nature during the annual festivals,¹⁴ there are also other occasions when similar rituals are to be performed by the entire community. In most villages in Karnataka there is a tradition of worshipping standing crops a few weeks prior to the commencement of harvest operations. Although different households may commence the actual work of harvesting their main crop (*ragi, jowar etc.*, but the crops providing them the staple diet) the village as a whole decides upon a specific date as the one meant for propitiating the Gods presiding over standing crops. Each landowning household in the village will put up a temporary shrine for the deity (in southern Mysore, especially Magadi Taluk, it is *Miniyappa*) in their respective agricultural fields, where a sheep or a fowl is offered as sacrifice. In such field that is adjacent to or on the way to a holy place, no animal sacrifice is made, instead a sweet delicacy is prepared and offered to *Muniappa*. In fact, the vegetarian Muniyappa is referred to as ‘sweet Muniyappa.’ Whether a sheep or a cock is offered as sacrifice depends upon the size of the household of the landowner, and the number of guests from other villages and towns invited for the special day. Sufficient planning in advance with mutual consultations goes into the process so as to ensure that the important relations invited for such rituals are on such dates without the event clashing with their own villages. Of equal importance is also to ensure that the day is astrologically auspicious one for any such ritual (e.g., the day not being a new moon day, a weekly market day, a day when a chariot festival of an important deity in the cultural region for the village.), but at the same time a day on which it is not a taboo to eat meat (usually, Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays in a week).

¹³A system of customary exchange of goods and services between the landowning households of (‘*eligible*’) castes, and the artisan or service caste households. See, Karanth (1987).

¹⁴Considering the costs involved to individual households, and the rigid conventions to be followed by the entire village, the tradition has been accommodative as to the frequency of such festivals. The grandeur and elaborate it is, the frequency is staggered: Instead of a festival (or *Jatra*) annual, in some villages, the event could be once in two, five, seven, or twelve years. Indeed, the less frequent a festival, greater the number of people who take part and greater the number of animals sacrificed, one may hypothesise. The *mela* referred to in Nepal above takes place once in Five years. In the event of a severe draught in a given year, such festivals too are deferred until the ecological circumstances (and therefore, economic and social circumstances) are more friendly. (See Karanth 1995).

Some major changes that have occurred in observing Muniyappa is that it is no longer a convention to carry it out on the same day for the whole village. Instead, the prime consideration is ‘personal or household conveniences’ rather than that of the community as a whole. This dispersed nature rather than as a collective has its advantages: staggering of whatever happens rather than their occurrence all at once and the attendant disadvantages if any. Secondly, there is a possibility of involving more number of people than restricting it to respective households and their members. But this dispersed celebration also is a result of lack of the much celebrated ‘village unity’ or the growing autonomy of households (See, Karanth et al. 1997). It is also not uncommon for the households nowadays to fulfil the obligation of an animal sacrifice for the local *Muniyappa* by a slight modification of the venue and time. Farmers may now decide to take their ‘worship’ and sacrifice also other venues such as Puradamma or Pura or Machohalli, etc., but that which is convenient enough to enhance their new social statuses. Thus a person working as a bureaucrat or a businessman in a small town or major city such as Mandya, Maddur or Tumkur, while being also a farmer by virtue of the lands he (rarely, she) owns a village may host a ‘puja’ in one of these better known ‘neo’-pilgrim centres and invite a large number of persons selectively but across villages and towns. In this instance, the local village *Muniyappa* festivities has gone beyond the conventional village borders. In the process, the person (and by default, the household) is celebrating its status both as a farming household of a given village and its new urban middle class household.

A third occasion when the village as a whole offers animal sacrifice, in most parts of the State as in the rest of South India, to ‘pass the evil’ off. This evil may be a real or perceived threat to human lives (an epidemic of cholera, plague, or small pox, usually prior to the onset of summer months when water borne diseases are highly likely to be affecting people), or lives of the cattle and the prospects of standing crops, if not the threat of a drought. It has been a tradition among farmers (and artisans), but of castes that have no caste-borne taboo on meat eating, to offer an animal that they can afford as an animal to be sacrifice to the god. On the designated day, usually a Tuesday, such households would go to a pre-designated spot to make their offerings. A sheep or a fowl is offered to the deity meant to ward off the dreaded event (plague, cholera, draught, etc.), and return to their homes to cook the meat as consecrated object and the grace of the presiding Goddess.

It was a convention, also, during this occasion and during the annual (or periodic) Uru Amma festival, the former Untouchable castes to make their own offerings to the

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presiding deity as may be applicable to their caste. While households among rest of the village (that is, households made up non-Dalit castes) made their offering to the deity, in terms of a sheep or goat, if not a fowl, the Dalits would have erected a make-shift (- if they did not already have a permanent -) shrine during such festivals. Here a buffalo was offered as sacrifice. Even though the practice is banned legally, we are informed that the practice continues despite the ban, thanks to the patronage and protection assured by village leaders of the more 'dominant' castes. In many villages this sacrifice is rarely talked about in the open, and when made a reference to all, it is as '*the Dodda bali*'(the big sacrifice).



Picture 3: The Dedicated Buffalo, Sirasi Marikamba Temple

In Sirasi's (Shivamoga District, Karnataka) Markamba Temple the traditional sacrifice of the buffalo is not longer officially practiced. The temple has a 'reining' he-buffaloe – dedicated to the Goddess Marikamba. A few decades ago, the animal would have been offered as sacrifice to the Goddess, but now with the ban on such sacrifices, the temple authorities facilitate drawing of an ounce or two of blood from the animal which is symbolically offered to the Goddess.

Wherever a buffalo was being offered as a sacrifice, whether in a temple-yard or a little away in a makeshift shrine as part of a *jatra*, or in a village as part of the Uru Habba or the festival of the village deity, the practice in recent years is to symbolically offer something rather than killing a buffalo. In many places the sacrificial animal has been swapped by a sheep, goat or a fowl. In many of the focused group discussions held as part of the study, however, participating people stoutly denied any practice of a buffalo sacrifice,

but in private conversations there had been one or two instances in which it was whispered that the sacrifice would go on, but discretely and not in public places. In one village it was informed that not offering a buffalo as sacrifice would bring ‘*vinaasha*’ (catastrophe) consisting of epidemics, and droughts. A Dalit woman who had been in Sirasi’s Marikamba temple informed that as per the myth, she belonged to the ‘house of the husband of *Ammanavaru* (the mother Goddess).’ The entire caste everywhere deem themselves as the members of her husband’s family, and during the festival, observed during alternative years, visit the temple and seek her blessings. On a specific day, the processional image of the deity is brought out to be placed to give the followers access to worship, when the blood drawn from the dedicated buffalo is consecrated to the Goddess. This blood is mixed with other food items that are offered to the deity, which are then carried away to be thrown in the eight different directions. The woman devotee pointed out also that ‘offering a buffalo, though is against the rules, is left to the choice of the devotees. They may do it in their own *Keri* or neighbourhood before coming here, or after returning from their pilgrimage.’

A few people spoken to in a group at Machohalli in Bangalore district also attributed the occurrence of a severe draught successively during the past two-three years (2016 and the preceding years), and drying up of water in the rivers, tube-wells and tanks to be due to the anger of the Goddesses: ‘*Ever since, we stopped the Bali to her, she has been taking our Bali.*’

Let us return to the theme of mass *Mari Bali* as focused upon in this study. Although there are reports of animals being sacrificed in large numbers on special occasions in many parts of the State, the study was able to contact respondents in a few that were frequently in the news. The temples and devotees of Puradamma Temple near Hassan, Durgamma temple in Davanagere, Markamba Temple in Sirasi, Chikkadevana Betta near Saragur (HD Kote Taluk), Holeyamma Devi Temple in Tabakada Honnahalli, Voddarahalli and Machohalli in Bangalore R District; Markikatte near Gokarna, Kapu and elsewhere in Utrara Kannada and Udipi Districts.

Who participates and practices in mass animal sacrifice, and who does not? Graph 1 gives a simple and clear indication, the pattern of which is not hard to expect. Respondents describing themselves as ‘strongly religious’¹⁵ in their orientations have had a higher rate of participation (by over 60 per cent) in mass animal sacrifice. Those who describe themselves

¹⁵ Each respondent, in respect of all the different superstitions and practices was asked to identify oneself as being a ‘strong believer’, ‘moderate in beliefs’ or as ‘non-believer.’ These are, therefore, subjective categories as ascribed to oneself in respect of religious superstitions and related practices.

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as ‘moderately religious’ too are not far behind, but marginally lower at about 55 per cent. To corroborate this pattern, we find those who do not practice animal sacrifice is lower among the strongly religious respondents and higher among the moderately religious persons.



Picture 4 : Puradamma Animal Sacrifice

Source: <http://newsable.asianetnews.tv/south/karnataka-government-vows-to-ban-animal-sacrifices> Accessed on 12 January 2017

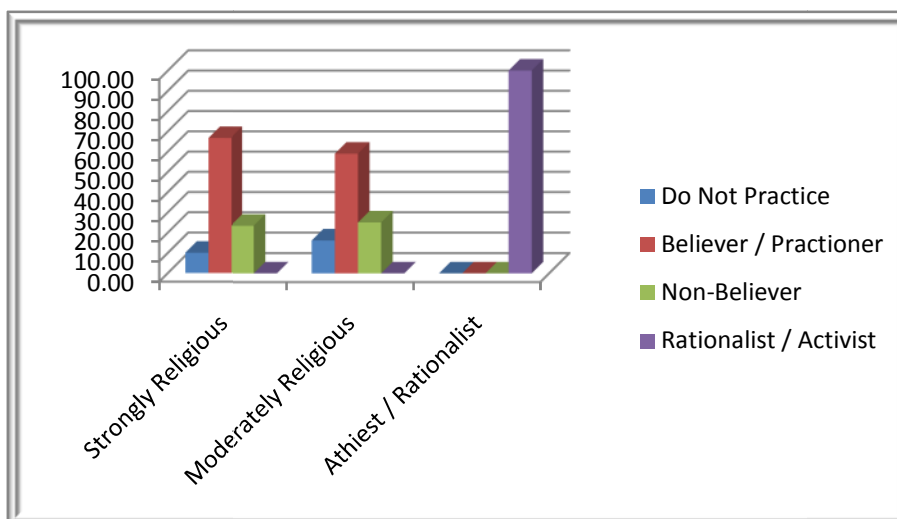
What is alarming is the fact that despite civil society actions against the practice of animal sacrifice in large or small numbers in the public spaces, and specific rules and law against the practice, one gets to hear about them being observed openly or discretely. For instance, it was reported in newspapers recently that despite the ban, worshippers sacrificed animals in the open fields prior to going to the temple to make their offerings. Likewise, in the heart of Bengaluru the festival of Nagaradevate Annamma’ (presiding deity of the town, Annamma) is celebrated with public in the respective locality making contributions. Each locality or extension of the city celebrates this festival and the festival is followed by a mass feeding of the poor. It is not uncommon in some localities to make a sacrifice of tens of sheep, goats and fowls, and the meat later cooked to be served as ‘*prasada*’ to the devotees. The procedures are followed rather discretely, at least attempts are made to keep the matter under wraps, so as not to attract the wrath of authorities concerned or organisations that are engaged in upholding animal rights or prevention of cruelty to them.

About 46 per cent of our respondents had reported that they or their family did practice *Maribali whether* as a one-off observance or an annual routine. Interestingly

enough, at least three who described themselves as Rationalists or activists working against the practice too had in the past an incidence of *Maribali* performed by members of their family – whether in recent years or over a decade ago.

A guided reading of the Table 4 will reveal some interesting findings. Focusing only on the believers and practitioners, we find about 68 per cent reporting to have observed *Maribali* during the last one year: this despite the ban on its practice. Another 20 per cent had performed it during the past two years. Of concern therefore is the need to implement a rule or a law much more rigorously than merely enacting them. A majority of the believers (41 per cent, based on interviews data not presented here as a Table here.) have had a tradition of visiting the temple at least once a year, the respective temples also having been their ‘family deity’ (*Kula or Mane Devaru*). As is well known, a popular belief is that by not following the tradition of visiting the temple and making the offerings, untold miseries will befall them either individually or collectively. For instance a popular belief about Puradamma near Hassan is that not visiting the temple or neglecting to fulfil the traditional obligations would result in ill health to the members of the family, loss in business, accumulations of debts and so on. Collectively too it is believed that not only would there be an outbreak of diseases and epidemics, but there would be draughts.

Graph 1: Religious Orientation and Practice of Maribali Sacrifice



(Source: Based on Sample Survey Data; Distribution in per cent figures)

Indeed, throughout the course of our fieldwork, some ardent believers kept repeating that the nagging draught that the State of Karnataka is facing during the past two-three years to be a result of either the State imposing a ban on what is to be practiced and what is not as religious faith, including the animal sacrifices.

Type of Respondent	Maribali: When Last Performed						Total [No]
	Every Year	During the last 12 months	2 Years Ago	3 to 5 years	Not applicable	No response	
Do not practice	0	0	0	0	100.00	0	12
Believer / Practitioner	5.66	67.92	20.75	1.89	0	3.77	53
Non-Believer	0	0	0	0	100	0	21
Rationalist Thinker/ Activist	0	2.78	2.78	0	19.44	75.00	36
Total	2.46	30.33	9.84	0.82	32.79	23.77	122
N	3	37	12	1	40	29	100

Source: Sample Survey

Little surprising, therefore, that about 45 per cent of the believers and practitioners of Maribali do assert that the practice is in fact increasing than declining on account of either the legal sanctions against it or declining faith among people. When asked about what major changes they find in the observation of *Maribali*, we were informed of the following:

- i. About a third of the respondents were undecided whether or not it was spreading, nearly 15 per cent were certain that over the years mass animal sacrifice was spreading to other castes and communities too. In the past, it had been confined to certain specific castes, but in late years it is observed even castes that were traditionally 'vegetarians' were taking part in it directly or contributing to its practice. In parts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts, as also elsewhere, the (so called) high caste priests and astrologers prescribed the auspicious dates on which the practice could be observed in a village or location. One respondent in Davangere went on to declare that he was aware of a few (high) castes that were hitherto vegetarian in their ways had been engaging in offering the animal for a sacrifice. Whether or not they themselves are present on the occasion, they give undertake to meet the costs and seek the services of a friend to make the offerings on their behalf.
- ii. Politicians undertake to offer 'hundreds' of animals as sacrifice at places in temple towns or villages as a mark of gratitude, in return for their winning an election or becoming a minister. One devotee of Puradamma temple, 'when ministers themselves engage in such acts banned by the State what is the point in banning mass animal sacrifice?'

- iii. A few of the respondents observed that in view of the regulations against animal sacrifice in the temples, devotees have been bringing a piece of the ear of an animal that may have been sacrificed earlier to make a formal and symbolic offering to the presiding deities. As pointed out to in reference to the case of Marikamba temple in Sirsi, in many other temples too a sample of blood is brought to the temple as an offering, while the animal would be offered as a sacrifice elsewhere. It was also pointed out that since the restriction is on the sacrifice of animals in the temple premises, devotees now offer the animal as a sacrifice in open fields and follow up with the offerings at the temple. Meat too is cooked in the fields and later offered as *naivedya* to the presiding deities.
- iv. About 73.6 per cent among the ‘believers and practitioners’ describe their practice as a part of their family tradition, with only about 13.7 per cent claiming to have adopted the practices ‘in recent years.’ In contrast, 45 per cent of the Rationalists / Activists interviewed are of the view that practitioners have taken to it in recent years, and the old ones are constrained or giving up the practice at holy places.

Several civil society organisations, quite a few under the leadership of religious progressive leaders (e.g., Shri Nidumamidi Matha’s Swamiji; Shri Dayananda Swamiji, etc.) have been at the forefront in educating the people against such mass animal sacrifice rituals. One such movement has been the *Ahimsa Pranidaya Sandesh Yatra*, while another is an organisation named Vishwa Prani Kalyana Mantap who has carried on campaigns against mass animal sacrifices in temples in the State.

There are also staunch supporters of the practice, who defend it by pointing out to how there is a practice of mass killing of animals in abattoirs, where too cruelty to animals are shown and the conditions of hygiene is no different than elsewhere. The question also the attempts to regulate or ban the practice, if the objection is over killing of animals, or the ‘mass’ killings.

3.3 Made Snana

Manner of offering worship to a God takes different forms. Having undertaken a vow to offer prayers at a temple, especially if it involves a travel to a distance (e.g., from within Karnataka, places such as Dharmasthala, Male Mahadeswara, Ediyuru, Idugunji, Kolluru etc.), people undertake to grow hair (and occasionally also nails) which they donot

cut or clip until the pilgrimage is performed. Not only does the long hair perform the duty of constant reminding of a unfulfilled vow or undertaking, but also a constant pointer to others that such persons are under a 'bond' to fulfil a sacred duty and so should not be harmed in any respect. Devotees undertake to go foot all the way from their homes to the places of worship, and often with many others who have similarly undertaken a vow. Even to this day we find scores of people covering the distance – rain or shine – by foot to places such as the ones mentioned above. People follow various and elaborate practices even in undertaking the journey – such as cooking their own food and not eating at other eating places so as to remain 'pure' in their dietary and eating habits – this includes having to fast part of the day; dressing in a particular manner; wearing no foot wear – wearing which is considered to be a comfort and a sincere offering to a god should not be with such comforts.

Once inside the temple, there is any number of practices besides taking a ritualistic glimpse of the images of the deity. Believers crawl from the main entrance to the sanctum sanctorum; roll on the floor and complete three rounds of the temple; and walk around the temple 'foot by foot' leaving no space uncovered between the steps, and so on.¹⁶

One such practice as a form of worship – either to fulfil a vow taken or to express gratitude for favours received – the practice of *Made Snana*. The term *Made* is a Tulu word and has the meaning as 'left-over food, after meal having been consumed. Term *Snana* means a 'bath.' The practice of *Made Snana* has been in the lime light for a few years now in Karnataka. The ritual is a variant of *urulu seve*¹⁷ and is supposed to be one associated with the Malekudiyatribe. Before the plantain leaves on which Brahmans have eaten their meals, are gathered and disposed devotees roll from one end of the row to the other on the floor. The act is in fulfilment of a vow or in anticipation of a boon. As a ritual this is observed mainly in the temples of Subramanya in Karnataka and in Tamil Nadu¹⁸. The

¹⁶ Although replete with reference to the 'native' practices that may be seen as 'politically incorrect' from a post-colonial studies point of view, one finds interesting accounts of a range of forms of worship that are 'self-inflicted punishments' over a century ago in a write up by Rev. W M Zumbro (1013).

¹⁷ Elsewhere, I have described *urulu seve* as 'An act performed by devotees, which involvestheir rolling over the floor around the sanctumsanctorum in temples. Some temples havemade special arrangements – such as building a foot-over bridge, or provided for separatetimings for devotees offering *urulu seve*, as inSabarimala. However, *urulu seve* is performedalso as an act of protest, or as a strategy to pressurisethe government.' (Karant 2012: 29).

¹⁸ Almost all discussions have pertained to the practice in Karnataka. It is reported that the practice is in vogue also in Sadasiva Bharmendrai Temple Nerur (Karur District, Tamil

temples that are well known for this ritual in Karnataka are Kukke Subramanya in Udupi district, Ramanathapura in Hassan, Subramanya temple within the Krishna Temple complex in Udupi.

It is said that members of a Scheduled Tribe, Male Kudiyas, who are devotees of the temple at Kukke Subamanya and elsewhere have traditionally the custom of rolling over the left overs as *Made Snana*. In Kukke, they have the traditional obligation of rendering their services in the upkeep of the chariot, decorating it and keeping it ready for its use for a procession of the presiding deity. As part of this obligation, they undertake to roll over the left over food and the plantain leaves, especially on the day of annual car festival (Rathotsava).

Male Kudiyas, who are mainly found in Udipi and Dakshina Kannada district, numbered around 2700 persons during 2007. Their involvement in the ritual has attracted the ire of many Dalit and other backward caste social activists in Karnataka. There have now been clarifications offered that none is coerced into perform the ritual and that is not merely Male Kudiyas or other backward castes who perform *Made Snana*. But, not any of these explanations meet the yardsticks with which modern and civilized society expects a society conduct itself.

A renowned and progressive religious leader, the head of Nidumamidi Matha went on to clarify that the opposition to *Made Snana* should not be considered as one against any caste, instead it as being a vestige of a society that is not rational. Dalit or a person from the so called higher caste, the practice of rolling over left-over foods by either is unbecoming of a culture priding itself for various other glorious fetes.

Yet, the initial reaction of a group of people, largely those associated with the temples and members of certain castes gave room to suspect that there is a vested interest in justifying the practice. Examples of the rationale offered to justify the continuation of the practice include those who claim a medicinal value to the practice. It is said that the rolling over the left overs has the curative value over skin disorders. A myth, derived from the epic Mahabharata and involving a son of Krishna, by the name of Samba, is invoked to

Nadu). See <http://indiafacts.org/made-snana-another-case-dismantling-hindu-practices/> Accessed on 23 December 2015.

demonstrate that the curative value is not something new but ancient. It is said that the mythical character of Samba insults a few sages, who in turn curse him to be inflicted with leprosy. Although in the myth it is said that Samba cured the dreaded disease by offering worship to Sun, by building a temple in the present Odisha, the story is linked to Subramanya. In any case, the deity is renowned for the belief that prayers here can cure skin disorders, and as a snake god, is associated with fertility cults. During the past couple of years, it has gained media-importance because of the visits to it perform various other rituals by celebrities from the fields of sports and cinema.

Ever since the protests over the practice of Made Snana broke out, particularly during the annual festival in 2011, there has been a tussle going on between those in favour and those opposed to it both in and outside the temple. The State government had ordered its ban, but a few days prior to the festival, the order was withdrawn on the grounds that it would not interfere in matters of faith. Several progressive organisations took objection to this and even tried to prevent the practice. Hindulida Vargadavara Jagritha Vedike (a forum for the backward classes) led a protest against it and along with his supporters was attacked by persons said to be Malekudiyas. The latter were upset that their traditions and customs were being opposed by a few for, it may be recalled, Male Kudiyas traditionally rendered some services to the temple and offered their worship as Made Snana.

The case is pending before the Supreme Court now, and both the Union and State Government proposes to legally ban the practice. On their part, the temple has come up with a modification of the ritual called *Yede Snana*. This involves offering of food to the presiding deity as *Naivedya*, which are then spread out on plantain leaves in the front courtyard of the temple. Cows maintained by the temple are then brought to eat the food thus served, over which the devotees are permitted to roll over as they may have done in *Made Snana*. The major difference between the two is that in one it was the food left over by human beings, and in the other, it is by cows. This modification has been effective since 2014 owing to the protests and legal hurdles over the practice.

Marshall Breman's observation that 'to be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradictions' (1982: 15) is quite relevant not only in regard to Made or Yede Snana but also many other superstitious practices. The discourse over the ritual in respect of rolling over leftover food, whether by humans or animals, has somehow shifted over to inter caste relations in a multicultural society as India. Several questions have persisted over the practice of Made Snana and many other traditions in the temples of Karnataka where food is

served to the devotees. For instance, the question lingers if it is appropriate to have separate arrangements for feeding devotees from different castes? Culturally food leftovers are considered to be unclean and unhygienic, and therefore, should such practice as rolling over them be permitted? Is it only restricted or practiced by members of any particular caste or also by others? If that is true, should that be permitted? Ever since Made Snana became a much discussed affair in the State, lesser known rituals elsewhere too have come into limelight throwing open not merely issues of caste into question but also one of propriety. For example, it was reported that about four to five hundred year old practice prevails in Nonavinakere, in Turuvekere taluk of Tumkur district. In contrast to the practice elsewhere, it is reported that Brahmans roll over the leftover food by Dalits who are fend in the famed Lakshmi Beteraya Vishnu temple. Here too it is believed that the practice will cure skin diseases, while the temple.

Among the many different practices that are proposed to be legally banned in Karnataka under Made Snana is one. For a variety of reasons, the issue has attracted much concern both among the followers or believers and the rationalists and activists. Let us examine how the respondents have reacted concerning the practice. Although the study did not make any specific queries about the proposed legislation, the idea seemed to be strongly present among most respondents, with or without resentment towards it.

In all 80 respondents were interviewed in regard to the superstitious practice of Made Snana. The locations of contacting them were, as in other cases, in and around the temple-towns that are known for the ritual being practiced in the temples. Further, there had been no special occasion of a car festival or the annual festival of the temple at the time of interviews. It would have been rather difficult to conduct our interviews on such occasions given the sensitivity over the issue.

Faith Type	Type of Respondent			Total [N]
	Do Not Practice	Believer / Practitioner	Rationalist / Activist	
Strongly Religious	75.00	25.00	0	40
Moderately Religious	46.15	53.85	0	13
Atheist / Rationalist	7.41	3.70	88.89	27
Total	47.50	22.50	30.00	80
[N]	38	18	24	

Source: Sample Survey

Some of the findings of the sample survey may be summarised. First, over three fourths of the respondents do not practice *Made Snana* (77.5 per cent). Second, whether a devotee describes oneself as having been strongly or moderately religious appears to have no bearing upon whether or not the person practices *Made or Yede Snana*. For, we find (as in Table 4) that those describing themselves as ‘Moderately Religious’ being more among those who practice *Made Snana* than the ‘Strongly Religious’ respondents. Correspondingly too, the latter are less in representing the ones who do not practice while the strongly religious ones are higher in this respect.

One would have hypothesised that the practice of the ritual to be much higher among those who are strongly religious than the moderately religious ones. What does this explain? A ready interpretation would be that strength of religiosity does not necessarily determine whether or not some of the rituals are observed, in this case *Made Snana*. To that extent, one may reiterate that superstitious practices are not necessarily reflective of whether a person claims to be very strongly religious, orthodox and the like. Instead it is the desire to achieve a goal – be it overcoming a hardship on account of health of oneself or a dear one, curing of a skin disorder, or to accomplish better prospects in life. At times, an individual has to be a part such rituals even if personally a non-believer, or as a household, there may be differences in their belief patterns. What we find in Table 4 as an otherwise contradiction thus gets explained. Even though a respondent describes oneself as rationalist or activist (against such superstitions) the person reports to have been believer or performer of the ritual (in this case, 3.7 per cent). As a member of a family there may be divergent religious views, where in one member may believe and perform the ritual while another may be strongly opposed to it or does not believe in it.

Slightly more than a third of the respondents have families in which the religious beliefs and practices are not shared by all members. Curiously enough, this incidence is highest among those claiming to be rationalists or those who are activists against the practice of *Made Snana*. This divergence is much less among those who do practice (22.2 per cent) but the least among those who do not believe or practice.

Type of Respondent	Beliefs by Members of Family			Total [N]
	Shared by all	Divergent Views	No response	
Do Not Practice	92.11	7.89	0	38
Believer / Practitioner	77.78	22.22	0	18
Rationalist / Activist	4.17	91.67	4.17	24
Total	62.5	36.25	1.25	80
[N]	50	29	1	

Source: Sample Survey

In other words, data on *Made Snana* indicates that among those who do not believe or practice the ritual, differences of religious opinion within the family is least (alternatively, sharing of religious views is highest). In contrast, divergence seems to be more frequent among those who do report to be practicing the ritual, and highest among those who are rationalists or activists. Obviously a progressive change takes time to set in amongst all in a house or community. In any case, 50 per cent of those reporting belief or having performed the ritual of *Made Snana* pointed out that they had any special religious experience (of a wish fulfilled), while about 28 per cent had no special experience to report either for themselves or members of the family. The rest chose not to respond the question on the issue of their having had a special religious experience.

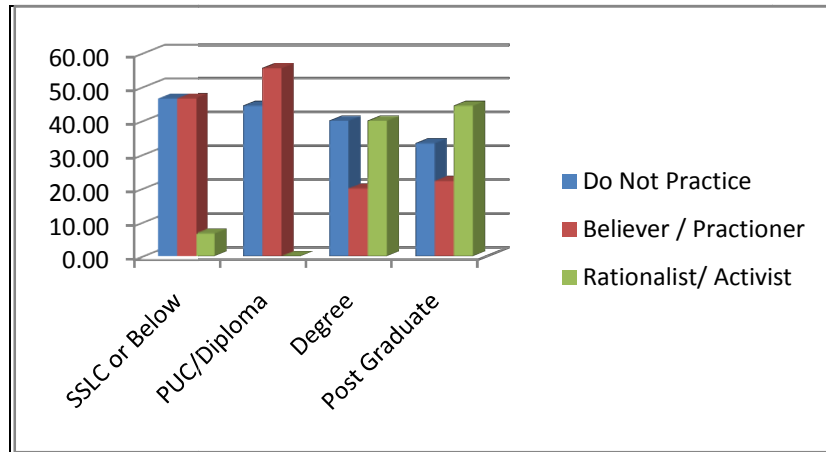
When we consider the educational status of the respondents, we find at least two distinct patterns of association between the two (See Graph 2). First, when we look at those who do not practice *Made Snana*, there is a clear and inverse association between level of education and the number of those who do practice *Made Snana*. In other words, more the educated a person, more likely he or she is not a practitioner of *Made Snana*. The converse is true also for the non-believing rationalists and activists. Higher the level of education is, more likely for such a person to be a non-believer and a rationalist.

Second, in respect of those who do practice *Made Snana* too we find the incidence declining with higher levels of education, except that at the level of pre-degree level of education (Pre-university) we find a slight rise in practice and to be higher than lower level of education. However, it declines marginally with the next level of education, while rises again with post-graduate levels of education. Perhaps with higher levels of education and corresponding employment, there is a greater level of anxiety and needs to meet which people surrender to superstitious beliefs and actions.

What would the believers or practitioners do if the State bans the practice of *Made Snana* Altogether? How would they seek a favour from the divine forces in the absence of this ritual? In asking this question we had in mind would they adopt some other means of performing the ritual, even if symbolically as done in the case of *Mari Bali* with offering a portion of an ear of a sheep or goat, or drawing a pint of blood from the animal? Most respondents had not elaborate answer to this query, although some merely said sincere prayers will reach the divine forces and their wish will be granted it 'if that is what is written' (or in store for us). Some activists in favour of the ritual in were more critical of the move to ban the practice by claiming that such actions are 'uncalled for interferences in

matters of faith.’ Most, however, seemed to be willing to forego the practice and open for other alternatives.

Graph 2: Educational Status and Practice of *Made Snana*



(Distribution in Per Cent figures; unless specified)

It would be perhaps appropriate to end our analysis of the faith and practice of *Made* or *Yede Snana* by recalling the views expressed by a priest in Udupi, who had spoken on the condition of anonymity:

‘Somehow, the debate about *Made Snana* has sidestepped itself from more important issues in matters of temple administration in our State. The issue first should be, if it is rolling over the left behind plantain leaves on which Brahmans have eaten, we then need to address the matter differently. Would it be possible to roll over selectively on such leaves used by Brahmans? The target should be to eliminate caste based separation in feeding at public places, whether a temple or a wedding hall. If after that, people still want to roll over such plantain leaves, we then do not have a caste related superstition, but a superstition that violates norms of hygiene or decorum. Let us handle it then, but deal with caste prejudices.’

May be there is a strong message in this Statement.

3.4 *Ajalu* Practice

The practice of *Ajalu* clearly and directly involves subjugation of a caste/or tribe which is considered to be very low in social, economic and ritual status. The people in question are Koragas, found mainly in coastal districts of Karnataka, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, but found also in the adjoining State of Kerala. Prior to its division into two districts, Dakshina Kannada had a Koraga population of about 12100 during 2011 Census.

Traditionally, a matrilineal group is over the years rapidly changing to be a patrilineal one, thereby also signalling the shift from woman centred social life to patriarchy. In the words of a woman activist from among the community, there is concern over the direction of such changes:

"My tribe is on the verge of extinction. The women are increasingly leaning towards patriarchal traditions. For instance, women are leaving their home to live with their husband. I guess following what the larger majority does seems more convenient. We need to find ways to strengthen our own traditions ..."¹⁹As a community they have a glorious past, that takes them to times when they were the original rulers of the land in the region, but who lost out to the invading races from the northern parts of the subcontinent. As a defeated population, they were either enslaved to the new masters or driven to wilds of the forests in the region.

The colonial writers, census commissioners and the administrators give them a label as varyingly as 'aborigine', a sub-caste of 'pariah' group, sub-caste of a forest tribe, a caste that pollutes, and so on at different times (Veluthat 2004). During the times when the British first encountered them, Koragas were found with an earthen pots round their neck such that should they ever spit their sputum out, it would not pollute the path on which others too may walk (See, Thurston 2009). As a community they lived outside the towns and villages, usually in a forest.

In a society that has been based on caste based divisions, determined by notions of perceived purity and pollution, the Koragas were considered to be among the lowest, and therefore lived a life of being Untouchables. For some they were even 'un-seeables,' for such persons (usually from the so called higher castes), as it was believed that sighting them too would pollute the beholder. Traditionally they lived on food they hunted for, but more upon the flesh of diseased animals which they were called upon to remove from towns and cities (Thurston 2009). Given such a circumstance, they were given to begging for alms and foods that were left over, or wasted as overnight food. During the later decades prior to Independence, there was a tendency for them to be employed in the civic administration

¹⁹Quote credited to Ms. Padma, Koraga Abivridi Sanghagala Okkoota, a federation of Koraga organisations based in Udupi district of Karnataka. Source: <http://m.dailyhunt.in/news/india/english/the+better+india-epaper-thebett/lessons+on+survival+from+a+tribe+that+is+not+only+surviving+but+also+thriving-newsid-42269543> . Accessed on 1 February 2017.

(municipalities) as scavengers, and waste disposal workers. Here too there was reification of their previously degraded status, for in the then emerging employment structure they were occupying the lowest rung in the hierarchy, positions which no other castes preferred to accept.

As though these features do not complete the picture of their socially degraded existence in parts of Karnataka (and in the adjoining States too) there were other features too which eventually had to be banned with a specific legal enactment. This is what is associated with their caste as a practice heaped on them, owing to both their low and degraded social status in the past times, but also the role played by certain superstitions concerning illness, evil eye, and the beliefs about ghosts, spirits, etc. This set of practices have come to be infamously known as ‘*Ajalu*.’

It is appropriate here to properly define the concept of *ajalu* as has come to be in the popular domains of discussion and legal administration. But there is also a need to contextually understand the phenomena in the wider rural Karnataka’s social history, although the latter may not have much bearing upon our present concern of describing *Ajalu* and inhuman superstitions. The Karnataka Koragas (Prohibition of *Ajalu* Practice) Act, 2000 defines

Ajalu practices as performance of any or ceremony

- i) differentiating between Koragas and persons belonging to other communities by paying no wages or lesser wages to Koragas for using their services,
- ii) treating Koragas as inferior human beings as compared to others,
- iii) mixing hair, nails or any other inedible or obnoxious substance in the food and asking Koragas to eat that food;
- iv) Driving Koragas to run like buffaloes before the beginning of Kambala.

The definition of *Ajalu*, as provided by the Act is fairly exhaustive to give an idea of the humiliating and exploited existence of Koragas. As was customary in rural economy in most parts of India, many of the local castes had specific obligations and rights towards each other resulting in exchange of goods and services. In the all India context this has been known as *jajmani system*, and in Karnataka, terms such as *bara baluti*, *adade*, *mirasi etc.* have been employed to describe the practice. The point made above concerning the social historical contextualisation of the meaning of *Ajalu* pertains to this system of exchange of goods and services prevalent a few decades ago that involved many castes. However, some of the castes that were considered to be below a line of social hierarchy,

especially resulting in their Untouchable status, the dual aspect of rights and obligations were found to in an imbalance. Castes that were considered to be polluting by touch (Untouchable) or by sight were thus placed in an unequal exchange position in the system. They were expected to render their services, whether or not in return such castes received any services from the others. Instead, in particular case of Koragas, myths and beliefs were made use of to justify why they should render their services – as a predestined *karma* to fulfil their obligation failing which they would suffer at the hands of Gods, spirits, or with ill luck. So much so, at one time Koragas would consult an oracle reader (the traditional healer cum magician within the community) as to why a person had died, and who had cast the spell of black magic to cause the death. If the indication was not the hand of a person, the cause would be attributed to failure to fulfil an obligation expected of the person – as *Ajalu* towards persons of other castes or duties towards one another within the community²⁰. Many of the obnoxious practices involving Koragas, thus, have to be appraised of in the context of such an uneven or unequal system of exchange, if it can be called as an exchange at all. What were the different things that they had to do as fulfilling the obligations under *Ajalu*?²¹

Picture 6: Kambla, the Buffaloes Race



Photo Credit: Arjun Prashanth

<https://www.google.co.in/search?q=Kambala&rlz...> Accessed on December 12, 2016

²⁰ Much of what follows as a narrative below is drawn from the very informative discussions with our respondents in the field. For they were not sure how fellow members of the caste and others with whom they interact or are dependent for their lives, none was willing to give us the permission to cite them by name.

²¹ Please see the italicised and last paragraph in Section 1.7 of Chapter 1 above in this report. The disclaimers are especially relevant here.

Besides serving at the beck and call of other landowning 'high' castes, Koragas were skilled persons in making basket wares, by drawing upon resources from the forests. As basket makers they had to supply the household and farm needs of making ropes to fasten animals, sieves and baskets to carry food grains and sieves for households use to clean good grains. The households to which they supplied these were in a way *patrons* from whom they received left over and overnight (*thangalu*) foods which often were unfit for any to eat. Occasionally they may have received little gifts of betel nuts and leaves to chew, bidis to smoke and some money to buy country liquor. Of course, they would not have been let inside the spacious and outer earthen compounds, but squatted on their knees. Should anyone notice them or approach them they would hide their head between the knees, if unseeability was their status with such patrons.

Despite such a deplorable status *vis-à-vis* patrons of caste and class above them, the system of *Ajalu* enabled them to ritually receive a gifting away of a child who may have been sick, to symbolically nurse the child and take over the sickness and the evils that may have been believed to be inflicting the child. A Koraga woman thus plays a ritual role of becoming a mother, by virtue of which, it is believed, that she transfers the strength to ward off and/or remove the evil forces affecting the child. The evil force could be an 'evil eye' of another – including a childless woman, enemies or those jealous of the wellbeing of the 'patron.' Being at the bottom of the local and caste based hierarchy, being the worst of polluted beings (*chandalas*) the conventional belief is that they are capable of holding up to any of the worst that can happen from such evil sources. *Above all socially and culturally stationed at the borders between nature (the wilds, forest,) and culture (the village, Ooru, Oni, Gadde or Bayalu)*²² they are perceived to be in a transcendent State and vehicles of bearing good or bad. One may thus interpret their untouchable and 'excluded' status to be a result of a belief of not wanting to let the bad things in, while using them under *Ajalu* to get rid of things they do not want. Thus a sick child is given away symbolically, and new name is given to it and is nursed as if it is now a child of the Koraga mother, and after insulating the child from everything evil is received back. Though brought back from 'evil quarters' the child is seen as pure and strong, strengthened now by the Koragas.

Another of obnoxious practice, to which the Act of 2000 makes specific reference, is to expect that Koragas to receive food that are mixed with inedible substances: hair, nail and the like. This practice takes place at least on two occasions. The first is when among the

²² Places of 'human' habitations – the village settlement, fields – wet or dry, the passages etc.

so called high castes such as the twice born ones who make an annual offering (*shraddha*) to their ancestors or on the last day of the rituals soon after the death of member of the household. The food that is symbolically offered to the souls or the *atma* (which is believed to be hovering around the house or the village), is given away to the waiting and hungry Koragas, for whom it is a feast. Since the food is to be transported to the souls on their way to the other world from which they will not (and should not return for that would be in the form of ghosts) it is given away to the supposedly expert mediums – the Koragas, and will contain things that are symbolic of the evil: fallen hair, cut nails etc. To receive such food too is an *Ajalu* for the Koragas, a customary practice in the past. When no Koraga is readily available, he or she (or a group of them) were being offered a fee to take the evil gifts away, some what similar to what Gordon Rahjeja describes as the *Poison in the Gift* in her book with the same title. To the extent Koragas were socially and economically vulnerable, there may have extra-supernatural coercion (e.g., physical harm, threat to deny other forms of patronage, refusal to hire them as workers, etc.,) to fulfil a superstitious belief. The belief is that unless Koragas take away such consecrated food, the departed souls would not rest in peace or reach their heavenly abode!

The second way by which obnoxious food is offered to the Koragas, believed to be powerful beholders and combaters of evil and the undesirable, is to make them consume bodily wastes of the person needing such a protection. For example a person who is likely to die in an untimely manner owing to a sickness or some terminal ailment is believed to be capable of being ‘rescued’ if nails clipped off from his/her fingers or toes, hair that has either fallen or clipped for the purpose is given away to the Koragas. They are expected to eat them, and therefore literally ‘digest’ the evil. But since the palate may not always accept such bodily refuses, they are mixed with something that they miss in their lives: deliciously coked fresh food. This too is done and was justified as *Ajalu*, failing to do which could have been at the cost of immediate loss of patronage in several ways, and the threat of bad *karma* for future births with better prospects than as being Koragas.

As though these *Ajalus* are not sufficient to keep the then feudal classes and castes comfortable in the present and future lives, Koragas were also expected to be objects of ridicule and ill treatment in several other respects. Closed embedded with the agrarian way of life and fertility cults has been a sport event in the coastal Karnataka known as *Kambala*, the race of prized he-buffaloes. Possession of he-buffaloes meant in the earlier agrarian social structure meant that the farmer was owner of a large extent of land that warranted him

(despite some being matrilineal, reference was most to him and not a her who inherited the property) to possess he-buffaloes to plough the wet fields. Others, and those owning smaller extent of land, had to depend on others buffalo owning buffaloes or hire from cattle rearers willing to rent them out. Either way, i.e., renting or rent-free, such dependence also rendered landowners subordinate to the cattle owners. In any case, in a majority of cases the persons who tended these he-buffaloes - stall feeding them, watering and supplying specially prepared food and beverages throughout the year, giving them a bath and leaning the stall -

In due course, the sport of Kambla too gained importance as a status symbol in a feudal setting that was about to take off into a capitalist agrarian economy. Koragas had an important role, importance as regard the responsibilities are concerned and not their importance as individuals who render those roles. Purushothama Bilimale gives us a vivid account of what goes on before, during and after the event of Kambla. The day after the event, paddy saplings are transplanted in wet fields which would have been the 'stadium' over which competing he-buffaloes would have run the race, and a pair winning the prize, medals and other honours that go with victory. For a farmer that a Kambla 'dhani' (lord, sponsor) also is, of equal importance is to have a well ploughed, evenly levelled wet fields plantation of saplings on which will assure a good harvest. In other words, the concern also is over fertility of the soil and of the saplings that are to be transplanted. A structural anthropologist may discern symbols and signs of fertility cult in many of the activities that go on prior to and during the event of Kambla. In almost all of them, it is the Koragas who render their 'services,' and because they are performed by members of a socially and economically depressed caste, they become objects of ridicule and gaiety for all who assemble to watch. So much so, in order to live up to the reputation of providers of gaiety, Koragas had to surpass the expectations and so the excesses. Greater the appreciation, more likely a generous reward, at least this must have been the spirit of voluntarism – if any, among the performing Koragas.

They had to run as messengers miles in all different directions wherever the friends and relations of the *Kambala 'dhani's'* family, other *Kambala dhanis* in distant villages. The invitations had to be ritualistic in the sense, oral conveyance of the programme and a symbolic handing over of betel leaves and nuts – which is a formal manner of invitation which one cannot easily put down. With limited facilities for communication and transport, undulated landscapes and not easy access the work had to be done by someone capable hard work. Again, who better than the Koragas of the times? At least this seemed to be the spirit

while deputing the task upon them. On the day of Kambala, they have to prepare the field ready by soaking it sufficiently enough and holding back enough water in such a way there is an impressive splash when the buffaloes run. There was also the need to ensure safety of the prized animals, such that no sharp edged objects – be they a piece of glass or a dry coconut shell, the Koragas were made to wade through every inch of the field. That way, the field too is levelled made easy for the animals to run. And of course, in distant parts people should know that the event is about to begin or the countdown has begun, and to ensure that the Koragas must beat their drums which are their symbols of their cultural pride.

Since so much labour and resources have gone in to prepare the field, ready the animals, food for the invited participant contestants, relations and friends, one cannot neglect the field and the surrounding space for the cheering audience to assemble. Someone must stand a watch over the entire space, and again the spirit must have been guided by assigning the task to Koragas. It must have been much simpler to apply the concept of Ajalu to this too. On the night, just to ensure the Koragas do not desert the fields and their ‘calling’ much liquor is provided for and food to eat. Bilimale gives an account of different kinds of activities that is said to have gone on during the night, almost with a no-hold to bar in otherwise a reasonably puritan society: hetero and homo sexual acts, dance and gesticulations suggestive of that which is forbidden and to the accompaniment of music. Indeed, the advertising handbills distributed at public places such as restaurants, bars and liquor shops, cock-fight yards etc, contained explicit references to the spectacular or grand Ajalu by Koragas as part of what was written as events not to miss.

It is not as if there had been attempts to prevent such obnoxious practices and exploitative humiliations. The name of Kudmal Ranga Rao and his efforts are well known in this regard. In the more recent years there have been well educated persons from within Koraga community who too have been spearheading a movement against such practices and to protect self respect and honour for themselves. The legal enactment has become a major source of strength, although there are reports from time to time, bringing to focus the breach of norms in this respect. One activist member of the community, a resident now in Bangalore also lamented that often the law is being misused against members of their own community. Preferring to remain anonymous for the fear of being ostracised by his caste, he narrated how it has become extremely difficult for professional musicians now to make a living by performing as ‘band set’ players for weddings and other similar occasions. People

wanting to hire the services of performing musicians prefer to avoid Koragas as a team, or if they are a member of all-caste team for the fear that a case may be booked against the organiser of the event on the grounds that he had compelled the Koragas to perform *Ajalu*. It is indeed a pity that legal measures meant to protect persons suffering indignities themselves become victims of the law but in a different way.

What does the field data tell us about *Ajalu* practice? While there may have been a passionate devotee who may have justified *Made Snana* or *Mari Bali* (or other practices that shall be of focus in the subsequent sections of this chapter), not a single respondent seemed to miss *Ajalu* practice either as a performer or as a recipient of the services. There may have been, here and there, a hushed remark about the ‘undue protectionism’ [sic.] that the State gives to please the community for political gains. But, there was none willing to defend or demand the practices associated with *Ajalu*. In this respect, whether a person was male or female, aged or young, well educated or not, of a so called high or low caste; none of these factors that were found to be associated with the phenomenon one way or the other had no association in respect of whether or not they demanded or procured *Ajalu* services from the Koraga community. Instead, each was open and seemed committed in their opposition to its practice anywhere. The stringent law and action taken by the administration in the two districts, and the strong presence of social activists certainly has a positive effect.

Of course, this being the districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, in which data on *Ajalu* was collected, there is a strong presence of spirit worship, with which most are familiar as *bhuta worship* or *Bhuta cult*. Whether or not one was a strongly or moderately religious person as one described her/himself, there was a much higher incidence of faith in the phenomenon of spirit, and therefore in concepts of rebirth, life after death, and other supernatural beings. Even the patterns of beliefs expressed by respondents were much more widely shared by the other members of their households than we found/ or shall find in respect of other superstitions. This finding be read in the present context as disapproval of *Ajalu* as a practice traditionally heaped over Koragas is a sentiment shared rather strongly among the different members of a household; so too other religious sentiments such as belief in supernatural objects, spirits, life after death or rebirth.

As a set of concluding remarks, we may point to a few observations made in response to a few questions we had asked the activists. We had shared some of our impressions as to how the data was suggesting a widespread disapproval of *Ajalu* and much significant progressive attitude towards Koragas (and other untouchable castes). But, we

had asked, what explains rather prominent headlines from time to time about atrocities against Koragas, practice of Ajalu having been tried out, or a priest refusing to officiate in a wedding of a Koraga couple, and so on. The response coming in from a cross section of respondents – cutting across caste identities – was that ‘one cannot rule out vested interests playing out unrelated issues. One example was given in which a professional music band which had been hitherto hired for playing music for a programme, but had been overlooked in the current year’s programme. A member of the band had attempted to lodge a complaint on the grounds that his had been asked to perform as Ajalu and he had refused. A Koraga woman pointed out that the discrimination being meted out is not to the same extent and character as the conventional Ajalu anymore, but we are being discriminated against as any other untouchable has been. ‘There may be no more Ajalu demanded. The challenge now is not so much one of humiliating social inclusion through practices like Ajalu, instead it is one of social exclusion, and cultural branding with degradation.’ “Why is it,” she went on to question, that even under contract labour system, it is largely the Koragas who are hired to do the menial work as scavengers (*safai karmacharis*) or sweepers and cleaners in hospitals, municipalities and other government departments?’

3.5 Tossing of Children

A widely ranging beliefs and superstitions abound the need to conceive to the wellbeing of children. Of specialised practices are to ensure that to be born child is male, and certainly not female. The time and date of birth of the child too has been so important from the point of view how the child will grow up into being an adult, what it would do in life and how it will fare. Birth stars and planetary positions are given such prominence that in recent years, particularly, there have been a rise in medicalised birthing of children – what the doctors refer to as “C Section.” The surgery is performed on such a day as to ensure the time and date of cutting the umbilical chord and separating the child from the mother is perfect in every sense. The concern is for the child to be good, well behaved, accomplishing ... all the desirable things to be in favour of the newly born.

Once born, the child has a constant company of a whole lot of beliefs and practices. The things done while giving a bath, to the feeding of the child in isolation such that none will get to see what and how much is the intake. Each time a child is visited by a neighbour or a relation or a friend from a distance, the child is taken away to a corner as soon as the

guest leaves only to 'take off the evil eye cast upon it' by the visitor. This is done by many different manner depending upon the severity of the effect anticipated: it could be waving of a couple of red chillies and salt held in the left hand, and at the conclusion of the waiver, the objects are symbolically spat at thrice and is then thrown into a fireplace. If the substance catches fire quickly enough, and makes crackling noise, it is understood that not had there been an evil eye cast, but that the crackling sounds are indications of that being released. A similar practice is to take a few sticks from the broom, wave them from top to bottom – without touching the child, of course, for broom and broom sticks are believed to be polluting and brings down virility of a person if male. The performance of waving is invoked by wishing that the 'evil eye' of a widow, a beggar, of a relative or a friend, of the enemy and a jealous person, and finally of the person who may be performing the ritual – all be removed and driven away. Usually this ritual is performed by a woman, be it a mother, sister or an aunt.

And if the child coughs, refuses to eat, vomits because of indigestion, does not suck milk, or is simply dull – there are rituals performed. If the child has not put on enough weight, or losing weight, soon more serious attempts are made to ensure good health. A talisman is sought from a priest in a temple or one who specialises in curing the child of minor or major ailments is tied to left arm, around the neck or waist. The talisman may contain 'sanctified' or 'magical' powders or a thin copper plate on which magical numbers and shapes are etched. At the Gali Anjaneya Temple in Bengaluru's Mysore Road, or the Kote Anjaneya Temple in Mysore's palace compound one finds several hundred of devotees – Hindus and Muslims alike – seeking these talismans. The priest sprinkles holy water on the face of the child to cause a surprise such that the dullness or mischievousness is cured by the 'shock'.



Picture 7: Tossing a Child from atop of a Temple

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatnews/6771374/Indian-baby-tossing-ceremony-may-be-banned.html>

Accessed on January 6, 2016

It is not the purpose here to present a catalogue of beliefs and superstitions concerning the well being of children. But the examples listed and at random are such that there is nothing that would warrant the wider society or agencies such as National Commission for Protection of Child Rights would take objections to. But the practice that has come to be known as ‘Tossing the Child’ or ‘throwing the baby’ from a height has in the recent past drawn attention of the law makers and agencies such as NCPCR. Among the several superstitious practices for which India (and Karnataka) has drawn national and international attention, this bizarre ritual too is one. The practice involves not merely Hindus, but Muslims as well. It is reported that the practice of throwing children from a height of say 15 ft to over 30 ft or more is practiced also in other States than merely Karnataka. Maharashtra’s Sholapur is one such town, and the practice is said to be at the Baba Umer Dargh. In Karnataka, the practice was found at the Digamareshwara Temple in the village Nagral, about 6 kms from the Taluka town of Bilgi and at a distance of about 40 kms from the District Headquarters Bagalkote.

Nagral is a quiet village in the hinterland, but comes to be a major hub or visitors from the neighbouring villages and towns, but also pilgrims from elsewhere in the State or

beyond during the annual festival of the temple. The local legend is that the temple is about 400 years old, constructed by a saintly person who demonstrated miracles by throwing the children from atop of the chariot (the car) which carry the image of the presiding deity. The event takes place on the last day of the three day annual *jatra*. During his life time, the Swami used to sit on the car, and with a view to cure a child of its illness, would receive the child only to throw it back from the height of about 30 feet. Anxious parents would be around a group of expert ‘catchers’, 8 or 10 of who would hold a thick blanket or any similar cloth to facilitate safe landing by the child. Onlookers were said to be cheering the Swamy and the other parents, and the child would be eventually handed over to the parents. It is said of Sholapur temple that a *pir* about 700 hundred years ago demanded that a mosque be built at a spot where he pointed out, and offered to cure children of their ailments by throwing the child from the top balcony of the temple. It is also said that initially there had been no ‘catchers’. Instead the steadfast faith of the devotees, particularly the parents, would ensure that the God would materialise a cloth or a net to hold the child to safety. The practice was, thus, initiated more as a demonstration of what faith could do, it appears.

Since 2009, owing to the protest from both local activists and those fighting for child rights protection in the State, the practice has been banned. The Deputy Commissioner and the police are charged with the responsibility of preventing the practice. Newspaper reports and insertions in the web pages claim the practice to have stealthily returned to these temples. When its observing is not feasible in the more renowned temples, it is claimed that the practice is taken to less known or least suspecting temples.

Although no loss of life or anything serious to have been in consequence, nothing much is known as to what happens to the child in later years. Whether or not there would be phobia of heights, or other psychological effects attend the child post such practices is not known or a study systematically does not seem to have been attempted.

None of our respondents, 96 in number, reported to be practicing it any more. Among the sampled respondents, about 19 per cent described themselves as strongly religious in their orientations, and the rest as moderately religious. We could find none who would fit the description as rationalists or atheists in this set of respondents – in and around Nagarala, for even after making such claims they were found to be strong or moderately believers in the idea of God, spirits, rebirth or life after death. Despite their strong or moderate religious orientations, none expressed a desire to perform or let their children to be thus thrown. While this is a welcome finding, one has to also bear in mind that the ritual is

no longer in practice. Further, that given the ban on its practice one may not want to express the desire to practice. For, over two thirds of the respondents are assumed to be believers while being not practitioners.

A school teacher pointed out that fortunately there is no lobby which is strongly in support of the practice, whether in Nagarala or elsewhere. The devotees who came to the temple's annual fair usually finished their visit during the first couple of days, and unless they were specific about the ritual, they did not stay on till the last of the proceedings. He was also happy that the ritual had been stopped, for it paved way for the building up the popularity of the temple and its annual festival for other reasons than a bizarre ritual. He concluded his observations, 'if parents are desperate about a child's well being they will look for other rituals and practices... including going to a good doctor or getting a thorough check up... than having to perform this ridiculous ritual of throwing the child from a height.' Another senior woman teacher joined the discussion by declaring that 'all unfounded rituals will eventually be tested and the truth will prevail.'

3.6 'Bettale Seve': Nude Worship

Nudity has been perceived in at least three different forms in literature, other than the usual ways in Indian society. The first is nudity as the purest form – without a thread on oneself, when it concerns devoting oneself to the divine forces. Among ascetics of *digambara* branch of Jains we find a somewhat similar guiding spirit, as several Hindu ascetics remained 'semi' naked with hardly a loin cloth over their persona a few centuries ago. The nearest to nudity as a State in relation to devotion and worship has been to be dripping wet clothes, with water as the most purifying agent, keeping the body pure. In many temples in South India it is a common sight to see the priest to be thus in wet clothes as he enters the sanctorum and to make the first offerings of a day. So too it is considered pure when the bereaved members make their offerings to the departed members of the family, wearing a wet waist cloth, and women in their traditional dress but wet, if not dripping. The objects we wear as clothes seem, then, never capable of being pure enough – despite their being washed and sun-dried, for there seems to be some 'impure' or unclean left or contained in them, hence the need to be a naked State when in communication with the divine. Is it? Is that too a superstition?

The second feature of nudity is as an expression of protest.²³ Manola (n.d) gives us two examples for this feature. One of them is of the 12th Century *Bhakti* poet Akkamahadevi who according to the legends remain unclothed as a mark of protest. As the author Manola avers that she has no claims over authenticity of the legend, the mention of it here is to be understood as how ‘cultural memories’ are preserved.²⁴

The third feature of nudity is as an ‘excess’ again drawing upon the work of Manola. This excess is one of what a society considers as decent and what is not. The latter is seen as an excess, although different groups – the onlookers, participants and those who comment on it – each may have a different observation or perception on it. In discussing the third dimension, she takes the example of the now famous and banned *Bettale Seve* (nude worship) in Karnataka. Whether or not one agrees with Manola’s views, a reference to her work is here made mainly to point out to the different features or dimensions perceived and preserved in cultural memories of a people.

It may be not be entirely wrong to observe that *Bettale Seve* or the form of nude worship that takes place in a few places of mid and northern Karnataka, such as Chandragutti or Uchchangi is more known in modern times for the happenings at and around Chandragutti during 1984-86, than the actual ritual that take place there. First a brief narrative about the ritual is in order. The account is kept to be as simple and short as possible, since as a theme much has been written including a couple of doctoral dissertation.²⁵ As in many other forms of ritual, obnoxious or otherwise, a person undertakes to perform a *puja* as an offering to the presiding deity of Renuka Yellamma in Chandragutti or Huligamma in Uchchangi. The undertaking is as a vow, that if a desired outcome is accomplished the *puja* is to be offered. The outcome could be relief from barrenness or to be blessed by the birth of male child; good health of a member of the family, overcoming a hardship in life including matrimonial conflict, or to seek prosperity. The special feature of the offering of *puja* is that the devotee who undertakes the vow has to bath at the pond at the temple yard or ideally, at the riverbank of Varada, walk out of water naked, and go by foot all the distance to the temple at a distance of about 5 to 6 kilometers.

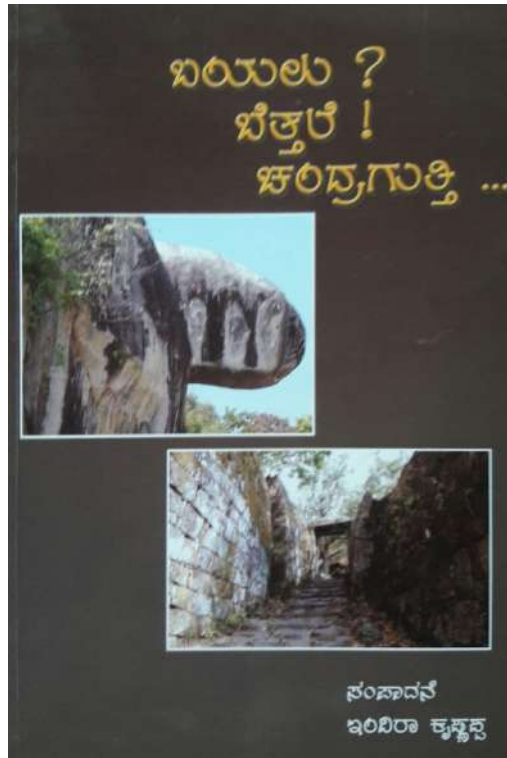
²³In referring to the second and third features of nudity, the author is indebted to a non-dated and electronic version of a paper by Gayatri Manola.

²⁴In Manola’s words: ‘Thus when talking about her legend, I do so without claiming these to be historical facts or disputing them, but simply bring them up in an effort to consider what a people are preserving in cultural memory, what people are allowing and giving space for in their cultural memory and imagination’ [p. 6].

²⁵See, for example, Epp 1997; and equally importantly, Krishnappa 2010; or Tharu 2014).

Because nudity was involved, it appears, the offering used to be always at nights on one of the two important occasions. During the three day annual festival of the temple, on the first day a much smaller car is pulled by devotees. On the second day, a much bigger and the more coveted car is pulled. The devotees who undertake to perform the worshipping in the nude would choose any one of the days.

As in most other rituals that are belittling human dignity – at least from the point of view of more contemporary values – the ones who observe this ritual too are from the so called lower rungs of social hierarchy: Dalits and members of other backward castes. Even though members of other castes did take part, they were invariably outnumbered by the others. A majority of the worshippers were also Devadasis, Jogaiahs, and those others who may have had a *jade or jate (matted hair)* who we shall discuss below. Contrary to the popular misconception, this ritual is not confined merely to women, but is practiced also by men and by transgender persons.



Picture 8: Front Cover Image of a Book on Bettale Seve in Chandragutti
India Krishnappa (2010)

But the reason it drew national and international attention during the mid 1980s was because of the popular misconception that it was a performance by women alone there is a myth behind the practice of *Bettale Seve*. The main character of the myth is the most

‘devoted-to-husband’ Renuka, wife of the short tempered Jamadagni and the mother of Parasu Rama, one of the ten *avatars* of Vishnu. Renuka was so devoted to her husband that she had gained supernatural powers, and therefore was capable of fetching water from the nearby water source in a basket without even letting go of a drop of water from its porous structure. It was with this water that her husband would perform his sacred rituals and she cooks the food. One particular occasion as she was scooping water, she is said to have been distracted by the masculinity of a young prince, Kshatriya by caste, who was bathing at the time. For a moment the imagination of Ahalya went wild and thus she lost all the powers she had gained hitherto through her ‘devotion-to-the husband.’ Consequently, the water bearing basket that day contained no water when she reached home. Her husband, who had waited for the wife to fetch water for his sacred duties, was angry and with his ‘divine vision’ could see what had transpired. Suspecting his wife’s chastity, he commanded his son Parasu Rama to behead Ahalya. The most obedient son carried out his father’s command without even thinking twice if it was justified for him to engage in an act of matricide. Even as the son chased the mother to fulfil his father’s command, the mother started running to save herself, and seek the protection of god Siva. The haste with which she was running was, in the thickly wooded and thorny path, the dress she wore were all torn and she became stark naked. The son was behind her, when finally the mother reached the cave shrine of Chandragutti temple. Hugging the Linga, she sought the protection of Siva, but that did not prevent Ahalya’s son to accomplish his goal of carrying out the patriarch’s command. He is said to have carried mother’s head to bring as proof of killing his mother as per the orders. The father was so pleased with the son, and granted him a boon of his choice. Parasurama sought that his mother be brought back to life. The father gave the clue to the son, that if were to place the head back on the body of the slaughtered woman she would come back to life.

The myth has much longer twists and turns in it, but with due respect, it may now be stopped to reflect upon its bearing upon the rituals in Chandragutti. Recall that the mother Ahalya had become naked, with all her clothes being torn away because of the thorns enroute to the temple. At the end of her journey, she seeks relief from the presiding deity but is naked at that time. It is for this reason that devotees perform the ritual of Bettale Seve to seek relief from whatever they may have been afflicted in life. One difference is that the devotees are made up of not merely women – young or old, but also men and young children. The journey commences from the water body where Ahalya’s ordeal began.

The myth also tells us that an associate of her, Matangi, the younger sister of Yellamma at Savadatti temple, and her relations give clothes to Ahalya to cover herself. Accordingly, the practice was that men and women who performed the ritual of Bettale Seve were given new clothes once they reached the temple and performed their *Puja*.

It is now clear that almost all rituals have one or the other myth behind it. They are myths because in the details of it there are such occurrences that ordinary reasoning cannot fully find evidence in a fool-proof scientific manner. Whether they were true at one time or not, the manner in which the practices are carried out in contemporary times may not meet the other standards that we maintain. The discourse on Chandragutti incident has spread out into so many related and unrelated dimensions, that it is not the purpose here to trace them all over again nor take sides. Instead, to focus on the who the victims are and if that is acceptable in the larger interests of a civilised society.

Faith Type Recoded	Type of Respondent				Total [N]
	Do Not Practice	Believer / Practitioner	Non-Believer	Rationalist / Activist	
Strongly Religious	78.57	14.29	7.14	0	28
Moderately Religious	78.26	17.39	4.35	0	46
Atheist / Rationalist	25.00	0.00	0.00	75.00	16
Total	68.89	13.33	4.44	13.33	90
[N]	62	12	4	12	

Source: Sample Survey

Late Mr. B Krishnappa who was in the forefront of the movement against Bettale Seve had shown how the ritual involved the subalterns in a caste and gendered society as ours, namely Dalits and the other backward classes, and mostly women. A law has been enacted to ban this form of worship, but critics and social activists have maintained that the practice persists almost as a secret cult and at places least known for the practice. The focus may have been on Chandragutti, but in the process there have been many other places where it is practiced, it is alleged. What do our respondents have to tell us about the ritual? Our sample consisted of 90 persons, with only about 25 per cent women respondents. About seventy per cent were in the age group of 21 to 50 years, most of who therefore may have been in their childhood or teenage when Chandragutti incident, as it is referred to, had occurred. Slightly over a half the respondents described themselves as moderately

religious in their outlook, while only about 17 per cent considered themselves as rationalists and or atheists. Interestingly, a third of the respondents did express the view that they believed in the form of worship, and all that is assured on its performance even though they did not practice Bettale Seve. About a dozen respondents did inform that there had been the practice, in their family, involving one or the other member. Drawing from the category who declared that they did not practice, together with those who said to have practiced, we found quite an impressive number who said in the past there had been such instances in their families too. We counted over 25 such respondents, among whom it was the respondent him or herself, or a mother, sister, brother if not a wife. Subscribing to the popularly held perception, a majority of those who believe in the practice and those who had practiced in the past were from Dalits.

The presiding deity had been a family god for most of our respondents, yet many did not believe that anything wrong or bad was happening to them owing to the practice having been given up. In fact, quite a few felt that the practice must be stopped for it portrayed Indian culture in poor light.

At least in respect of Bettale Seve as a practice, the prevailing ‘watch and ward’ approach as also a mutually supportive popular movement and administrative regime seems to have had an upper hand. The defiance witnessed during the mid 1980s is not evident in the present times.

3.7 Jata or Jade

As young children, or as adults now, we may have noticed how some people feel about an extra growth or a mark in their body. If it were to be a mole or a small and harmless patch of pigmentation (that which is not suggestive of any major skin disorder such as leprosy or leukaemia), it is generally deified. Depending upon where it is located, the results are predicted. If it were to be on the right side of a body, it is said to be a lucky sign, and if left, unfortunate. Interestingly, as if the woman’s body is a mirror image of a man, if the mole is on the left side it is then considered to be a good sign! Likewise if there were to be wart, it is usually not treated medically for the fear of offending the divine forces. So is the case with an extra finger in either a hand or foot. Indeed, whether left or on right side of the body, it is considered to be a good or lucky sign. So much so, the extra growth is not only considered as an indication of what is in store for the person, but also to his or her other siblings, uncles and aunts, besides parents.



Picture 9: A '*dedicated*' Woman with Matted Hair (at Savadatti)
Photo Credit: Manoj Kumar Kolla

Another interesting bodily feature that attracts attention is whether a person has one or two 'whirls' of hair in the head, or on the back. Two whirls are considered to be a bad omen not only for the person concerned but also to the others in the family. A whirl on the back imply that the children that follow one by birth may not be stable in health or there may be a delay in the arrival of the next one... and so on.

Not much is known whether or not even once persons believing in such omens or signs consult a medical specialist to seek their opinions. Instead, we tend to depend for guidance on a special brand of experts, the medical astrologers, who may give the affected an advice on how to overcome the ill effects if not get rid of the bodily symptoms

altogether. In fact, Made Snana as discussed in an earlier section is often prescribed as a means of overcoming certain skin disorders of this mild or more serious nature.²⁶

Of a much more scale and with greater significance in one's life is the phenomenon of matted hair in a person. This seems to be a global health problem although not much clarity has been made available as regards its etiopathogenesis (Dhashke 2014)²⁷; in most parts of India, Karnataka not excluded, a person who develops matted hair on her or his body gets stigmatised. This social stigma, accompanied by social isolation and exclusion, besides marginalisation, is despite the widespread belief that the occurrence of matted hair is a divine manifestation. Not only is discouraged from removing the matted hair, the immediate society prevents others from interfering with it in any manner. The process of deification is so strong that the affected persons spend the rest of his or her life as an ascetic. As Dhaske points out, the result is a lifelong multifaceted discrimination, mental and physical agony for the person. The subsequent growth of hair become, not just a personal affair of the affected woman, but every inch of it is observed as a divine process.

Citing other authorities on the subject, Dhashke points out that matting of hair has not been sufficiently and scientifically examined. It is a result of life style, improper personal grooming and unhygienic living conditions and once it occurs even in the minimum superstitions take over the rest. Pathologically, matted hair consists of entangled hair irreversibly cemented with crusted secretions, lice eggs, dirt, and bacteria (Dhashke 2014: 1-2). The phenomenon is labelled differently in different linguistic and cultural environments: jate, jade, jutt, rat's nest, jat and jedi. Medically it is referred to as Bird's Nest Hair, Twisted-Rolled hair Knots, Felted hair, Tangling of Hair and the Plaited Pigtail.

Given the lack of awareness and tendency towards superstitious interpretations of realities, most women get initiated into becoming a Devadasi if they manifest matted hair. It is believed that the occurrence is an invitation by the God or Goddess to the person to serve the superior being. That is how they become *jogitis* although there may be other reasons for a person to become a Devadasi. Men get dedicated as *Jogappas* or as *Jogi*. For those engaged in Tantric tradition of religion, matting of hair is a pre-requisite, and it is not

²⁶ See e.g., an interview with Dr. Nilakantan: 'Miracles from Medical Astrology' in the periodical 'WE: Women's Exclusive.' February 2017, Pp 34-35.

²⁷ The author is much in debt to the ideas contained in this very useful work by Dr. Dhashke.

impossible that they do everything possible to get their hair matted: not bathing or grooming the hair for years together.

It is not uncommon for older and senior Devadasis with matted hair to descend upon a family in which a female member is affected by matted hair. This is more common in the regions where the temples meant for dedication of women as Devadasis are to be found, such as in the Northern and North-Western Karnataka. The senior Devadasis or *Jogitis* eventually undertakes to get the new entrant initiated under the system of ritual known as *Paradi*. The affected woman rests her hair in the Paradi (a bamboo basket or a bucket), carrying which she offers food and flowers to the deity. These acts symbolises her dedication, and henceforth she is considered as married to the God/Goddess. To see one of them, and/or give an alma to them is considered as being equivalent to see the God herself. Women offer green bangles, turmeric and kumkuma, betel leaves and areca nuts, topping with some money as mark of their offering to her to seek good health not for oneself but also for those others important to them in their lives: husband, children, and so on. A visit to any of the Yellamma or Devi temple associated with Devadasi tradition, one may find several of them in and around the temples, a basket or 'butti' (bucket) in which the divine hari is placed. One can see it too being worshipped by the person as well as others (See Eck . 1999; Romberg 2009).

A few NGOs have undertaken the task of 'rehabilitating' the men and women of matted hair, even after they may have become Devadasis. Ramberg cites reports of an NGO which during April 2001 to March 2002, a thousand locks of hair had been cut from women dedicated to Yellamma. But there is a resistance from the affected person, for they would have internalised the idea that what they possess is a God's manifestation and that having got dedicated, they have accepted the invitation of the God, upon which they now cannot go back. Many of the Yellamma dedicated women with matted hair told us in the course of our interviews with them that they 'pray all the time to be born as with Yellamma in her body in the next birth also.' This is just an indication of the extent of internalisation of an idea which many others believe to superstition.

Of the 102 respondents that we contacted for information about their lives and views, we found only six persons describing themselves as activists while being believers in the religiosity of matted hair. They had been, mostly in their late 60s of age, and were campaigning for other and younger Jogitis to cut their hair and return to normal life. But, it

appeared that many of their targets were far too drawn away from their parental homes and environment to be accepted as normal persons. Even though some of them were ‘sent for’ to visit their parental homes, it is not before long they realise to be uninvited visitors at least by the new members of the household. To some such new members, the *Devadasi* is a contradiction – a welcome divine guest, but also a source of embarrassment.

In terms of caste of the respondents, over 50 per cent were Dalits, particularly of Madar caste. Another 32 per cent were of the Valmiki caste (also known as Bedaru). There were also six of Lingayats, and two each from Okkaliga, Madivala, Kuruba, Billava, Bestha, and two labelling themselves as Tribals. Almost all were believers in the existence of spirits, ghosts and believed there to be a possibility of rebirth and life after death.

There seemed hardly any regret over what others may consider to be their pitiable plight or ‘fate.’ A few of them remarked “we have become what we have, owing to some good act on our part in the previous births. We do not consider this to be a bad Karma.”

Once again with all respects to their faith and beliefs, what is to be noted is the need for a new secular education in the areas from which they come, which incidentally is not confined to northern Karnataka alone. Some of those we met at Savadatti had been originally from Mandya, and Mangalore, but rural hinterlands. Almost all of them had hardly education, with dropping out at around the fourth year of schooling. Only two persons had education up to SSLC, while about 16 of them had completed middle school education. Most of them had developed the matted hair at fairly a young age, certainly under 12 or 13 years.

One activist’s parting words are noteworthy to end this section but also to take note of for a strong recommendation. ‘Government’s policies are all aimed at Devadasis who end up in brothels, but we are no where... neither in the brothel nor at our natal homes. We may be Devadasis, but certainly nobody’s children.’

3.8 Devadasi System

Devadasi system is an age old system that prevails even to this day. According to one source, that of Saskia C. Kersenboom-Story cited by Romberg (2009) the earliest of reference to Devadasi is to be found in Tamil inscriptions of the Chola period during 850 – 1279 AD. The reference made is to the *tevatachis and tevaratiyars*. Historically the chief patrons of Devadasis were the kings and emperors and the temples. Almost all famed temples had in their premises a curricular or rectangular stage – called ‘Ranga Mantapa’

meant for the Devadasis to sing or dance as an offering to presiding deity. In fact, to be positioned as a dancer of the court – whether of the king or a God in a temple was a major honour to the person: a *raja nartaki*. It is said that the Raja Rajeshwari temple in Tanjore in Tamil Nadu possessed over 400 Devadasis, whose importance was second only to the priests of the temple. Someshwara temple in Gujarath is credited to have had maintained over 500 of them. All this already by 1004 AD.²⁸

By the time the British came and settled in India, and due to the successive wars within the country or due to external aggression there had been a steady decline in the fortunes of the Devadasis. Neither the king nor the temples had enough resources to support them. They were seen as women of loose morals, the dancing girls and as religious prostitutes. Each time an English officer and traveller visited an Indian landlord, king or an official of the royal court, there used to be *nautch* programmes which further brought down any social respectability there may have been for the Devadasis. Description of the temple car festivals invariably did not miss a reference to the ‘vulgar’ or ‘obscene’ dances by the Devadasis. The description of many art forms and performances in the colonial times and by the missionaries and administrators are somewhat similar to what an uninitiated Indian audience may have towards the performance in an English opera!

As early as 1885, the British government had banned dedication of girls as Devadasis. So attuned to the idea of maintaining them in towns and cities, and in villages that the Devadasis themselves were encouraged to submit a memorandum to the visiting Viceroy, at the famed Maduai temple. A report of missionary journal had this to say:

Characteristically enough, the grievance brought to his (Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India) attention was from the body of dancing-girls, and consisted in a recent ruling of the Madras high court to the effect that the dedication of girls to the Hindu temples was a criminal offence under the provisions of the Indian penal code. Prostitutes themselves, they sought to have this Christian ruler interpose to allow fathers to give their innocent girls to the perpetuation of their own shame

²⁸See *Genesis of the Devadasi System in India: Trafficking of Girls and Women By Religious And Social Sanction*, the Network Univ., http://www.netuni.nl/courses/library/0cb66d9bfeafc5f30f2dddca5/genesis_of_the_devadasi_system_in_indi1.doc

and the glory (?) of the temples. To his honour, be it said, he expressed himself as in favour of the law. As a native correspondent of The Madras Mail naively put it: “His Excellency was pleased to observe at the end: ‘I am afraid it is a good law.’” (Rev. John S Chandler, Madura Mission. 1887: 99-100)

In this instance too one finds a good example of internalisation of a plight which contemporary society tries to eliminate and rehabilitate the victims in mainstream society.

In any case, the status and conditions of Devadasis in India, especially during the post Independent period had been less of sacred servants of the god, but more of commercial sex workers. Or, at least that is how the popular perception had been. One source summed up the situation as “Present-day Devadasis are not the descendants of courtesans, nor are they proficient in any arts. . . . The only art they are conversant in is the art of submitting to any man who desires them and is willing to pay for their favours.” (Singhal 2015: 108). Another source summed up the situation thus:

Devadasis remained entertainers but their entertainment now was through their bodies. They evolved into practicing courtesans skilled in the art of love-making. The system spread across (a) Belgaum, Gulbarga and Bellary districts in Karnataka, and (b) Satara, Kolhapur, Solapur and Osmanabad districts of Maharashtra, both being in the Western regions of India. (Network University, n.d.: 2)

The decline and dreaded status of Devadasi women is evident also by looking at the ‘keywords’ in any well researched academic paper analysing their conditions. See one such example:

“Sacred. Prostitute. Chaste. Dancer. Matriarch. Victim. Sex Worker. Devotee. Daughter. Auspicious. Slave of the God. Nun. Dancing Whore. Female Servant of the Deity” (Candelario 2008:2)

Whether applicable to the past or as the system has survived in the more recent times, two related perceptions about Devadasi (or its nomenclature variant) system describes the underlying philosophy behind the acceptance of superstition. Looking at the accounts (e.g., Thruston, L K Iyer, etc.) of the system of dedicating girls who remain unmarried for long, especially long after their attaining puberty, as Basavis suggest that unwed women were being perceived as liabilities. Even though they remained in the natal homes after the dedication, and their children were seen as children of the natal homes the

‘pushing’ factor was getting rid of an obligation to get the girl married in the normal way. Hence, the practice of marriage of the girl to the God. Another perception, that could be seen extension of the demographic obligations of marriage, is the economics of it. Lucinda Ramberg argues that

The sacred marriage (Devadasi dedication) is a means to increase the value of daughters. She finds it to be “a way of producing daughters as sons entitled to inherit land and obligated to support their families... Practice of Devadasi dedication constitutes a sexual economy (that is) distinct from the sexual economy... (Of the) conventional marriage. Daughters are given, whether to mortal husbands or to the devi, to form productive alliances. However, when they are given to men (under the conventional marriage) the wealth they produce through productive, reproductive, or sexual labour flows out of the natal family. By contrast, when they are given to the devi, these forms of wealth accrue to the natal family.’(Ramberg 2011: 30) [Parentheses added]

Much less discussed issue was one of child sex abuse, since dedication of young girls as a *basavi or jogati* was more often when they were young and by definition, children.²⁹Some of the problems faced endlessly by women dedicated as Devadasis are well studied and documented by Mrudula Anne (2014).They include loneliness, financial insecurity, health problems, social stigma, powerlessness especially at the hands of an owner of a brothel and the middlemen, a range of symbolic and physical violence against the personal self and body, and a sense of abandonment at the later stages of life.

The Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982 came into effect in 1984, and is hailed as an important step forward. However, it had to wait for over 37 years of Independence and 28 years of State reorganisation. One criticism against the Act was that while holding responsible a parent, brother or sister for pushing a woman into Devadasi it exonerated a husband from it doing it. With a view to facilitate better implementation of the law an amended Act was legislated in 2009. According to this amendment, official machinery was to be in place at the district level for implementation of the Act. Despite stringent legal sanctions against Devadasi system, it is a well known fact that the system is

²⁹See, e.g., Satyanarayana TN and Babu G R (2012) Targeted sexual exploitation of children and women in India: Policy perspectives on Devadasi System. *Annals of Tropical Medicine and Public Health*. 2012 5:157–62.

flourishing and dedication of young girls continue if not unabated, but stealthily. Measures to rehabilitate the already dedicated is a slow process but attempts are being made. The role of several NGOs in this respect cannot be slighted, but the problem persists. Superstitions governing the dedications have not disappeared yet, and now to this wide range of factors associated with its persistence one may add poverty and the hardships of bringing up a girl child by the vulnerable family.

Let us now turn to the respondents of the study pertaining to Devadasis. Nearly all of our respondents were either currently Devadasis or had been in the past and now owing much to their advanced age had settled down differently although retaining their identity as Devadasis. Almost all of them had received one or the other benefits under the various schemes by the Government. In that sense, they were all 'rehabilitated' Devadasis although 42 per cent claimed to be currently Devadasis. However, for the record they admitted to be 'wage labourers.'

Nearly all of them had been religiously dedicated to the temple's Goddesses, and at fairly a young age. While about 18 per cent of women did not want to disclose their caste identity, a quarter of the respondents classified themselves under the generic category as Scheduled Castes. The remaining 59 per cent of women identified themselves as Madars. While in the case of women Yellammas or Jogitis we came across some from a mix of other castes too, as Devadasis our sample chosen randomly was almost entirely made up of Dalits. Dalit organisations and the Departments of Social Welfare and of Social Justice have quite a challenge ahead of them in view of this set of observations.

Older women tended to describe themselves as either atheists or as activists campaigning against the practice (about 26 per cent) while 43.1 per cent preferred to be 'strongly religious' in their orientations. The remaining 26 per cent labelled themselves as 'Moderately' religious. Infernalisation of the superstition behind their dedication was so strong that about 98 per cent of women did believe in the practice and either in the past or presently practiced being Devadasis. Not many were willing to speak about their children, if any, or about the patrons or 'clientele' seeking their services. As regards children were concerned, 'Do not worry, Yellamma (or the Goddess as the case may be) will take care of them.' One elderly Devadasi, Dyavamma, said 'none of us want our girl child to be one like us. But, who are we to question the will of our Amma? If she demands, not my daughter but her granddaughter too will follow my footsteps. Nothing is in our hands. Instead, we are in the divine hands of the Ammanvaru (the Goddess).'

Had they been well or even, better educated, they would have been proud to admit it. Instead, about 98 per cent preferred not to speak of their education. Two women, who did mention anything at all, did disclose that they had been in school up to the level of Middle School. Whether they well illiterate or better educated, obviously the compulsions must have been stronger than their education and awareness, pushing them to a life as Devadasi.

When asked about their health conditions, none wished to speak about it. A group, however, was more vocal, and asked us “are you asking this to know if we have AIDS? My answer to you, and I am sure my sisters here will all say ‘yes’, it is the Goddess who led us to be where we are, and we are sure she knows where to take us.’ Obviously the group has had enough experience of dealing with policy researchers like us. They may have been superstitious, retrospectively, but certainly they now know their way around now.

That calls for a different kind of policy challenge to be dealt with.

3.9 Sidi or Hook Swinging

Pain is never the sole creation of our anatomy and physiology. It emerges only at the intersection of bodies, minds and cultures. (Morris 1991:1)

Inflicting and bearing pain, foregoing pleasure and comfort, deferment of meeting the needs etc, have all been forms of expressing ones devotion to the superior being, especially the God. Penances were made, we were told, for years together in a standing position on one leg, foregoing food, water and any other comforts to experience the manifestation of the supernatural.

Historically and in different civilizations, bodily mutilation has been found either as an offering to the Gods or as an art of beautification of the self. For instance, it has been reported that some among the Australians, there was the practice of pulling off parts of their incisor teeth from their upper jaw, while Kadars of Cochin in India, or the Maladevadans of the Trivancore forests chipped all or part of their teeth as a mark of their good looks. The women of Marasu Okkaligas in Mysore used to cut off one of their fingers as an offering to the God (Nanjundaiah 1906; and Iyer 1935: 448 of Vol. 1). Iyer reports also that the worshippers of Subramanya and Venkatesha of Tirupathi pierce their chins for the insertion of a wire to maintain a vow of silence. This practice of piercing chins is found, but to a lesser extent in recent years in Bangalore, when devotees march from long distances to

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arrive at Narahari Rayara Gudda in Hanumantha Nagar, south of Bangalore. Men, women and children are seen carrying a bow shaped metal or wooden mobile shrine for the God, and the chins pierced through a needle to keep themselves in a *vra*th. Others accompanying them keep chanting '*haro hara!*'



Picture 10: Fire Walking.

https://www.google.co.in/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN735IN735&biw...

Accessed on 12 December 2016

Hook Swinging is a ritual the men and women, as well as children practiced in many parts of India. Much of what we know about it comes from the accounts of the writers and travellers in the colonial period who witnessed it being performed or heard others informing them. Unlike other rituals and practices such as fire walking or Sati, hook swinging has not had a literary tradition, of it being narrated in any of the sacred texts (Oddie 1986). For the purpose of introducing the concept of hook swinging during the colonial times, two short accounts are reproduced below. The first is an account, from the southern India by Abbe Dubois while the second is from the Central Provinces of India, and reported during the

early 1900s. Abbe Dubois labels the practice as *Chidi Mari*, which is much closer to the Kannada usage of *Sidi*.³⁰

Chidi-mari is another torture to which devotees submit themselves in honour of the goddess Mariamma, one of the most evil-minded and bloodthirsty of all the deities of India. At many of the temples consecrated to this cruel goddess there is a sort of gibbet erected opposite the door. At the extremity of the crosspiece, or arm, a pulley is suspended, through which a cord passes with a hook at the end. The man who has made a vow to undergo this cruel penance places himself under the gibbet, and a priest then beats the fleshy part of the back until it is quite benumbed. After that the hook is fixed into the flesh thus prepared, and in this way the unhappy wretch is raised in the air. . . . After swinging in the air for the prescribed time the victim is let down again, and, as soon as his wounds are dressed, he returns home in triumph. (1897: 597-98).

The second quote is from Crooke writing about the festival of colours, Holi, as part of which hook swinging too is performed.

... On this day, the rite of swinging the images of the gods is performed. In the olden days the hook-swinging of a human victim fastened to a pole was done, but this, except perhaps in some very remote parts of the country, has fallen into disuse since it was prohibited by the British Government. In the Chhindwara District of the Central Provinces the Bhumka or medicine-man of the forest tribes used to be swung on the Meghnad post at the holifeast, a hook being fastened in the flesh of his back; now he is secured to the cross-beam by a rope. (Crooke 1914: 69)

What is critical to note is that even as early as the 1900s, the colonial administrators took note of the practice of hook swinging, banned it, and further observed that its practice was declining everywhere. Yet, its vestiges remained for long and during the 2010s, the Government in Karnataka had to take fresh steps to ban its practice. Although it had been reported to have been observed in different parts of the State, as a ritual it had remained in some parts of northern Karnataka: Ghattargi in Afzalpur Taluk of Kalburgi district. When reeling under a severe draught farmers resort to several magical practices with the belief that doing such a thing or undergoing tortures of certain types, the gods of rain will be pleased to

³⁰Use of expressions as evil etc., to describe the deities are his and not by the author.

bring rains and minimise their hardships. *Sidi* is one such practice found in the villages of Haveri, Davangere, Koppal and joining districts. In each such area, members of specific caste offer to be the volunteers, or hired to perform the ritual. If not as a ritual, the practice is found in many other parts of the State, carried out as a means of livelihood earning by the *Dombars* and groups of others who go from house to house in towns and villages to seek alms by performing these practices.

On April 16, 2016 a young man of 21 years died following a crash of the pole from which persons used to perform *Sidi* in the village Hebbal, near Belur in Hasan district. Even as a person had been hooked on and being swung, the pole broke and crashed down, knocking Sunil Kumar fatally. He was declared brought dead to the hospital. Even though the persons who are heisted on the hook claim not to be in pain and ‘nothing happens’ to them, none verifies what happens to the person in the subsequent days or months. Abraham Kovoov examined the pros and cons in a very medically meticulous manner and disproved the theories claiming it be to miraculously harmless (Kovoov 1978).

For the study in respect of *Sidi* people were contacted in such locations, where ritual had been practiced in the past or from where devotees went on a pilgrimage to temples known to have been associated with the practice: Ghattaragi, Kaluru, Kalburgi, Tadal, Afzalpur, Kodaganchi, and Khaja Kotnur. In all 96 persons were contacted.

About 65 per cent of the respondents preferred to describe themselves as ‘strongly religious’ with another 15 per cent as having been moderate. The remaining 20 per cent described themselves as either rationalists or activists, working mainly against the practice of *Sidi* and other practices arising from superstitious beliefs. The latter group were quite happy to admit that their work had been sufficiently rewarded because there had been no hook swinging in recent times, and instead, persons would wrap themselves with a thick cloth or blanket to which a hook is fixed and thus they are suspended from a height. At least, there was no bodily harm, they claimed.

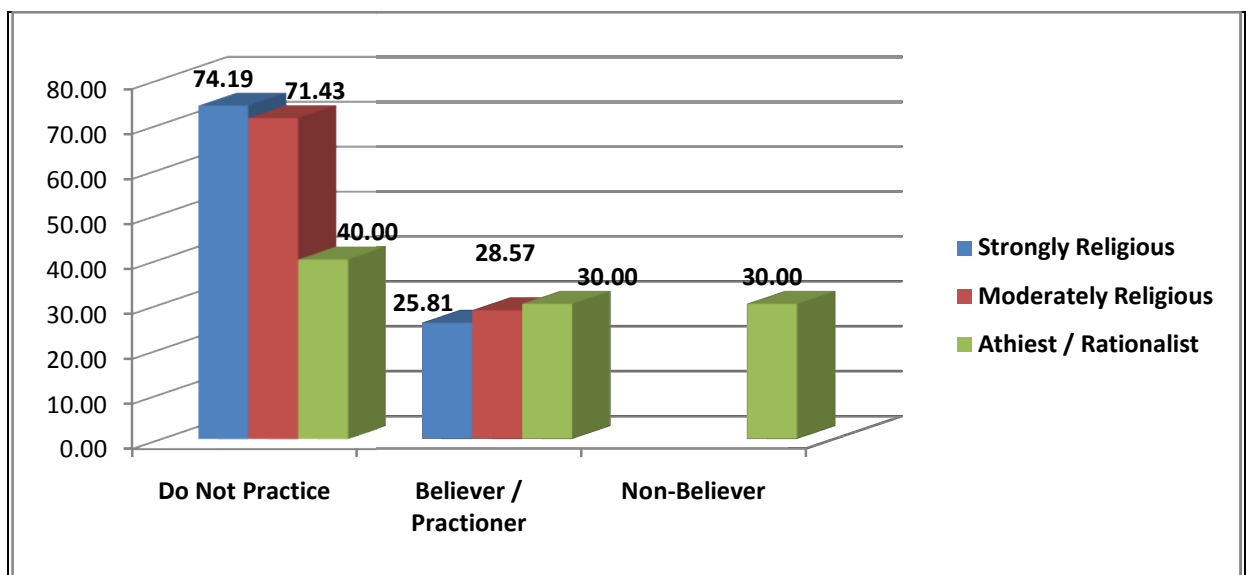
In respect of *Sidi* practice too we find a near perfect correlation between whether or not one believes or practices *Sidi* and the person’s religious orientation. In other words, there is a consistency as regards their faith and style of religious orientation. It is only among the rationalists and activists that we find some inconsistency – at least the manner in which data is grouped and analysed. They are shown also having had a belief and practicing *sidi*, but it should be seen as other members in the family having had a faith and having practiced in the past.

There had been divergent views within the family among 16.67 per cent of respondents, with an equal proportion between those who do not practice, and those who believed and/or had practiced. In that sense, unanimity of subscription to matters of faith was higher among the believers. Non believers had a higher proportion of divergent views within the family in respect of whether or not they believed or practiced *sidi* and did not practice in it.



Picture 11 : Fresco on the Wall of the Temple in Ghattargi, depicting a Woman Devotee performing Hook Swinging, and the Goddess Blessing the Devotee

Graph 3: Type of Sidi Respondent and Type of Faith



(Figures in Per Cent; Unless specified)

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Those who had practiced Sidi in the past, personally or other members in the households had now no difficulties in giving up the ritual. When asked if they had any fears of ‘ill fate’ or bad health falling upon them on account of giving up the practice, nearly all said not to have been afraid. About 12 per cent of those who had belief in the practice as being capable of producing good results for them or their family felt that they had no choice for the practice is being abandoned. They were of the view of dedicated devotion when they visit the shrine would be sufficient to assure those good results and not necessarily harmful ones.

Type of Respondent	Faith Type Recoded						Total
	Strongly Religious		Moderately Religious		Atheist / Rationalist		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Do Not Practice	46	71.88	10	15.63	8	12.50	64
Believer / Practitioner	16	61.54	4	15.38	6	23.08	26
Non-Believer					6	100.00	6
Total	62	64.58	14	14.58	20	20.83	96

Source: Sample Survey

Type of Respondents	Beliefs by Members of Family			Total [N]
	Shared by all	Divergent Views	No response	
Do Not Practice	84.38	15.63	0	64
Believer / Practitioner	84.62	15.38	0	26
Non-Believer	33.33	33.33	33.33	6
Total	81.25	16.67	2.08	96
[N]	78	16	2	

Source: Sample Survey

Did they get hurt and had the wounds taken time to heal after they or members of the household had performed the ritual. In a couple of cases, they showed the mark of healed wound now to be a scar, but claimed ‘nothing had happened to them.’

‘True faith will take care of all pains and injury’, was their conviction.

Chapter 4

Role of Change Agents and Socio-Cultural Resistance to Change

At the outset a few words about the purpose of this chapter should be helpful. The past 25 – 30 years have witnessed spectacular changes in our system of communication. From mere telephone to mobile phone, to web based technology, and a variety of social media means (Whats App, Facebook, Instagram and several other instant messaging applications) have kept people in constant touch with each other. Lack of information and/or inaccessibility to them seem to be phenomenon of the past, which the coming generation may not even be aware of as having a possibility at one time in the past. Flow of information has been harnessed and being made use of a variety of purposes: for telemedicine as a tool of long distance health care, for knowing how the market for different products are on any given day or time, and which market is likely to give a better return; searching for basic and advanced information for students as learning material, and for teaching purposes as teaching materials. Above all, information flow now has revolutionised the disaster management practices and early warning systems.

This is just one of the several revolutionising changes that have been going on in society, and India has been among the forefront of the developing nations to have caught up with these processes. In short, the horizon of knowledge has far exceeded what it may have been, say 25 years ago.

Yet contradictions galore with modernity and scientific advancement. One such contradiction is the nature of change in respect of our faith and beliefs in supernatural or superstitious causation. A few thoughts need to be shed on this dimension in any study of superstitions. Before taking on this issue for a debate, it is necessary also first to take stock of the changes, if any, as may be gleaned from the respondents in respect of the different superstitions.

There has been a long history of rationalist movement in the country. Just as India is known as land of religion, superstitions and blind beliefs, it is also known for its share of rationalism. This history of rationalism goes as far back as the Charwaka philosophy in ancient times, and the birth of Buddhism too is to be seen in the context of the proto-history of rationalism in India. Other prominent names and movements associated with rationalism are Basaveshwara, Sant Kabir, Sant Tukaram, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Phule,

Pandita Ramabai, Agarkar, Maharshi Karve, Â Raghunath Karve, Periyar E.V. Ramasami, M.N. Roy, Gora, Dr. Ambedkar , Abraham Kovoov etc, (see Nanavaty, n.d.; and his review of Quack 2012). A popularly known Karnataka rationalist in contemporary times is Professor Narendra Nayak.

As has been the history of several social reform movements characterised by giving birth to a new *avatar* of the very institution against which the movement may have been a protest and attempt to reform, some of these attempts too gave rise to newer versions of religions and the accompanying superstitions.

The late 1970s witnessed a State sponsored search for truth behind several of the commonly held superstitions and belief in occult and witchcraft in Karnataka. Among those in the forefront as Dr. H Narasimhaiah, the famed educationist and freedom fighter. The committee consisted of other prominent thinkers and scientists such as Dr. C R Chandrashekar, Dr. H S Narayan, Dr. S M Mallikarjunaiah, Dr. Keshav among others. Their responsibility was to find facts behind mysterious happenings in the name of Bhanamati. The committee itself came up with a report that the art of Bhanamati was merely a myth terrorising people, and the victims were largely with no education or awareness. Dr. Chandrashekar, the renowned psychiatrist, pointed out that Bhanamati and superstitions about them were all a result of some psycho-somatic disorders (Chandrashekar 1992; see also Gangolli 2012; Pasha 2014; and Dhabolkar and Arde 2014).

As late as 2013, in response to an invitation by the Government of Karnataka, a high powered committee went into understanding the body of blind beliefs and superstitions, arrived at a typology of superstitions that could be regulated under a law, and identified the extent of offence and punishment for carrying out acts based on such superstitions. It eventually arrived at a Draft Bill, popularly known as the Draft Superstition Bill which is pending before the Government.

As may be expected, any attempt to regulate phenomenon that has a religious flavour in it received strong protests from sections which feel threatened. The Draft Bill too is no exception. As Pasha (2014:198-200) points out, much of the opposition seems to have arisen more my not reading the draft Bill or recognising the fact that it is only a draft. The State has the scope to modify it as it deems fit based on the recommendations of its legal experts.

4.1 Changes and the Direction?

We may find a continuum of change in respect of belief or practice of the different rituals or practices concerning the eight superstitions we examined. At one extreme of the continuum is the process of modification as a response to changing forces, and at the other, abandonment. In between, we find replacement, or stealthily practicing some of them. Space does not permit me to go in each of the practice separately and discuss, although reference was made to such changes as we discussed each of the practices in the foregoing chapter. To recap, we may find ‘modification’ as a major pattern of change in respect of Mari Bali, Made Snana, and Sidi.

In Mari Bali, we find the sacrifice of animals occurring at one place and all at once or quick succession has declined as a ritual. Instead, bringing parts of the body of animals and offer it as a sacrifice is one such modification. People taking away the sacrificial animals and offering them as sacrifice in a symbolic platform for deity too is a similar modification. Many others change the venue of sacrifice, instead hold it in or in front of their respective houses too could be seen as a response to changing circumstance under which worshipping village gods and deities.

In respect of Made Snana, there had been much resistance on the part of temple administration or people who head such institutions. A case is pending disposal in the highest of courts in the country, the Supreme Court. Arguments are being made to invoke science, tradition, heritage and religious freedom besides the voluntary nature of participation on the one part, while on the other issues of human rights, offensively and humiliation, coercion etc. In the mean time a modification of the practice has been adopted – as Yede Snana which does not involve leftovers by human beings – of one caste or the other; yet food that has been offered to the God’s image and eaten by the temple cows. Whether or not this modified version has enough ‘sanctity’ as compared to the previous versions, the ritual has certainly not been as popular as the disputed Made Snana. But going by the mood of the respondents, there is a greater share of those who showed less faith the in the ritual.

In respect of *Sidi*, there is a near absence of its practice in crude form as it was in the past. The piercing of body for the purpose of swinging has more or less stopped, except for a sensational rare occasion. The modified version is wrapping the body with a thick layer of cloth and fixing a hook to it for the purpose of swinging. What has been modified here is

the body piercing, but what remains is the swinging at a height. Questioning this modification could lead one to justify bungee jumping that is undertaken as a sport, or parasailing and gliding, if not skiing on icy mountains.

At the other extreme is the response of abandonment of practices. Foremost of them and more obviously has been the practice of Tossing the children as a ritual. Nearly all the respondents contacted had given up the practice although there are rumours and occasional report of it being practiced in one or the other places. In Nagarala where it was hitherto in practice, we are informed the practice to have been abandoned altogether.

Also abandoned is the practice of Bettale Seve. But here we enter the domain of speculations and rumours competing with facts. Our discussions with NGOs and the activists in Savadatti, and Chandragutti gave us the impression that it had been given up, given the social storm it had created two decades ago. There is one version which claims that there are stray instances of its practice, in small numbers and in remote places. If this indeed is true, it speaks equally of the continued ignorance and the role of facilitating institutions or individuals. Another version of claims places the practice of Bettale Seve at the point of modification rather than abandonment. According to this version, men and women wear wet clothes – which in any case gets dried up by the time they reach the shrine, and therefore the practice is no different from any other form of prayers. We did not come across any who had witnessed it nor practiced it. The priests we spoke to deny this altogether while being unwilling to speak on the topic.

Ajalu too is another set of practices that is certainly on the way out, and as having been part of Kambla or annual rituals of being offered to eat human wastes, they are certainly things of the past. If there is a contradiction of rights of indigenous people and their right to preserve cultural heritage amidst the positive changes, Koragas present one rather dramatically, the drums they beat and their dances have been cultural symbols of their identity and pride. The occasions they beat it in the past were under humiliating circumstances and conditions. What is being attempted to change or abandon are the circumstances and the conditions under which they were being played and not the art forms altogether. Patronage for these art forms are currently and largely through commercial means. As market players they do not yet hold enough bargaining power and therefore, there is a thin line between the past and present circumstances. In the past one side of the line had been extra-economic (and therefore, historical, cultural and superstitious) factors at work, while in the present it is economic vulnerabilities. It is not hard to find reflections of

the others signs of humiliations from the past to be perceived in the present, either by themselves or by the others sponsoring them in the market conditions of wage payment. Also of importance is the absorption capacity or ability of the market in the light of their improved social aspirations and educational or skill capabilities. Just as they were / are taking off from the old shackles of defence and deprivations, the market is not ready to absorb. Contractual labour, daily wage labour and the like is pushing them back into the economic dependence of the old time. The point one needs to note is unless there has been a matching economic changes in the hitherto socially and culturally deprived sections of society, the past humiliations and indignities take longer time to disappear from their lives. This is not true just of Koragas, but all hitherto socially and cultural excluded communities of our society.

What then is the direction of social change in regard to superstitious practices. The driving force seems, as of now, the tightening legal and monitoring regime. Belief in the practices has not completely gone. This issue takes one to the need to educate and build awareness. The terms scientific temperament have been used so often, and for so long, perhaps its weight has been lost. Scientific temperament as a notion has to free itself from the mystery of science, but embrace the domain of common sense of linking cause and effect.

What needs to be hastened to add here is that scientific temperament is not meant to be directed again any religion or caste or creed. Nor is it being pursued to favour one against the other, for that seems to be what has been conveyed in the hitherto attempts to spread awareness.

In respect of which of the studied superstitions do we find a greater unanimity of opinion or religious orientation, and which the least? Table 09 gives us a clue in this respect, although in the manner it has been constructed we do not get to know if the shared value greater positively or in a negative manner. However, we do know that the dominant view is one of not practicing the rituals under (with the exception of Devadasi and Jade). The top three superstitious practices are Tossing the Children, Nude Worship, followed by Sidi. The fourth is Devadasi, followed by Ajjalu. Divergence of orientations is higher in respect of Jata/Jade, Made Snana, Mass Animal Sacrifice and Ajjalu. To the extent this divergence is in regards being atheist or an activist, while the other members of the household are not, there is less of a risk. But to the extent the divergence is about belief and

willingness to practice the rituals, we have a greater challenge of converting the entire household in the desired direction. For, there is not much gain having one person who may be opposed to a practice or does not believe in it, but owing to the need to fulfil the vows undertaken by other members of the family who continue to show belief in such practices. The effect remains the same notwithstanding what one holds as a religious orientation. It is here that we find a major challenge to the desired changes in respect of superstitious practices.

Data as collected from the respondents were looked at, as evident from the foregoing, in terms whether the respondents or their households believe in the named superstitions, or not; and if they believed did they also practice the rituals associated with it (either in the past or presently). Further, and in a separate question they were asked if their views about believing or not believing a superstition and the practice, were shared by the other members of their household (read, family). To this latter question, there were at least main responses, as values shared or not.

Table 9 : Shared Religious Orientations by Family Members (Figures in Per Cent; Unless specified)							
Type of Superstition and Practice	Beliefs by Members of Family						Total No.
	Shared by all		Divergent Views		No response		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Mass Animal Sacrifice	90	73.77	31	25.41	1	0.82	122
Made Snaana	50	62.50	29	36.25	1	1.25	80
Ajjalu	84	77.78	24	22.22	0	0.00	108
Tossing Children	94	97.92	0	0.00	2	2.08	96
Devadasi	80	78.43	14	13.73	8	7.84	102
Nude Worship	80	88.89	10	11.11	0	0.00	90
Sidi	78	81.25	16	16.67	2	2.08	96
Jata / Jade	38	37.25	60	58.82	4	3.92	102
Total	594	74.62	184	23.12	18	2.26	796

Source: Sample Survey

Sharing of values by members in a household becomes important in our analysis of threats because of the changing nature of family in India as elsewhere. One of the major changes in modern Indian families needs to be recognised at the outset. This is being increased recognised by scholars, See, example the following. ‘ A contemporary Asia-wide concern is the common fear that modernization or urbanization, migration, the demographic transition, new lifestyle aspirations and the spread of Western values have emphasized individual rather than collective familial interests and thus eroded filial obligations’

(Scroll2006: 473). This by extension is true also of the responses we as social scientists get when contacting a member of the household from whom we gather information not only about her/him but also about the those of the others in it. There is a general tendency to take it for granted that the response given by the respondent on behalf of the other members represent, indeed, the actual views, perceptions or opinions of the others whom the investigator may not have had an opportunity to contact (See, Bookwalter et al. 2006).

While examining the pattern of responses to these sets of questions, we were concerned with finding an answer. How safe and enduring are the behavioural change, if any. Let us elaborate. Should one derive a sense of contentment that a large section of people contacted do no longer believe in any or some of the superstitions and the associated rituals; or happy because they no longer practice any of the rituals even though they believe in the superstition. For, some of these superstitions have been at work for centuries and the fear of God or consequences of not following the tradition would be so powerful that at any time there is a crisis in their personal or family life, there would be the threat of some of these rituals returning to practice. We know by newspaper reports about the occupancy of a child or an adult being sacrificed to gain some thing or to overcome a hurdle in life. While there is limited scope for controlling such occasions prompting one to seek supernatural interventions to resolve the hurdles, at least one could attempt to assess the vulnerabilities and threats to positive change.

Accordingly data gathered was regrouped into three categories: First, consists of those falling under the large typology labelled ‘Threat’ to return to the pre-change situation, [in this case belief and practice of rituals are associated (in the past or presently), and their values shared also by the members of the family]. They account for 207 of our respondents, i.e, 26.00 per cent of the respondents. The second larger section consists of what we label as ‘vulnerable.’ They are vulnerable because they do believe in the superstitions, but presently do not practice the rituals concerned. Their belief too is a shared one with the members of their family. They become vulnerable because they’re not practicing the rituals is more out of the restrictions on it or the law against it. Should there be any laxity in regarding to monitoring the actions in the light of the law or policy, there is a fear that some such vulnerable persons or their families may become a ‘threat’ by practicing the rituals that are now forbidden. This may neatly apply to Devadasi, Ajalu, Jate or Nude Worship for reasons that are not far to find. This group accounts for 36.56 per cent

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of the respondents, and do cause an alarm, because together with the section posing ‘threat’ they add up to 62.56 per cent – almost two thirds of a randomly chosen sample. Under the category called ‘Vulnerable’ there is another section of people whose values or ideas are not shared by members of the household, but their values as grouped here consist not merely of not believing or not practicing a given ritual, but also if they are activists or rationalists. In that sense the threat comes directly from the non-believers of the safe values, or by themselves if their views were unsafe.

One of the common errors we tend to commit academic treatment of a social problem or planning and policy making is to treat a problem or a target in a residual manner as though whatever is attempted to rectify or improve the situation will apply equally to all. Instead, it would be helpful to assess the threats and vulnerability separately such that attempts to redress could be fine tuned to the specific needs of the different problems, which in our present analysis pertains to the specific superstitions. Is the threat or vulnerability perceived uniform to all superstitions and the associated practices, or are there some which are more vulnerable to threat or under threat than the others?

Table 10.: Changes in Belief and Practices and Perceived Threats
(Figures in Per Cent; Unless specified)

Beliefs, Practice and Shared Values									
Type of Superstition and Practice	Believe, Practice and Values Shared	Believe, Practice but Values not shared	Believe, do not practice, and Not Shared	Do not believe or practice, but Values Not Shared	Rationalist, Values not shared	Do Not practice, Shared by all	Rationalist, Values shared	No Response	Total [N]
	Pose Threat			Vulnerable		Safe			
Mass Animal Sacrifice	36.89		5.74	3.28	16.39	23.77	13.11	0.82	122
Made Snaana	17.50		5.00	3.75	27.50	43.75	1.25	1.25	80
Ajjalu				3.70	18.52	66.67	11.11		108
Tossing Children						97.92		2.08	96
Devadasi	78.43		11.76	1.96				7.84	102
Nude Worship	8.89		4.44	2.22	4.44	71.11	8.89		90
Sidi	22.92		4.17	12.50		58.33		2.08	96
Jata / Jade	37.25	58.82						3.92	102
[Column] Total (%)	26.01	7.54	3.89	3.39	8.29	43.97	4.65	2.26	796 (100.00)

Source: Sample Survey

Threat arising from those who do believe and practice, and which value is shared by all members of the family is relatively higher in respect of Devadasi with 78.43 per cent respondents reporting thus. There is yet another 11.76 per cent of respondents whose views are not shared by all in the family, and therefore the threat of practice persisting is perceived. Considering the fact that the practice is most dominant among the subaltern a highly discriminated section of society, which problem occurs for a combination of cultural and economic problem, there is a real threat facing the planners and policy makers of the State. The challenge is not merely achieving a target of rehabilitation, but one of ‘fresh dedications’ or ‘symbolic dedication and entry’ into the world of Devadasis. A further threat comes from the tendency among the socially excluded and economically weaker to look upon opportunities for income and livelihood pursuits through what may be referred to as mixing up of sacred marriage and sexual economy (Ramberg 2008). Jade/ Jata too poses a threat, but at a much lesser rate of 18.36 per cent. The risks involved are same as those in relation to Devadasi, and therefore the analysis is not repeated in its case.

**Table 10.1: Changes in Belief and Practices and Perceived Threats
(Distribution of Respondents in Numbers)**

Beliefs, Practice and Shared Values									
Type of Superstition and Practice	Pose Threat			Vulnerable		Safe		No Response	Total
	Believe, Practice and Values Shared	Believe, Practice but Values not shared	Believe, do not practice, and Not Shared	Do not believe or practice, but Values Not Shared	Rationalist, Values not shared	Do Not practice, Shared by all	Rationalist, Values shared		
Mass Animal Sacrifice	45	0	7	4	20	29	16	1	122
Made Snaana	14	0	4	3	22	35	1	1	80
Ajjalu	0	0	0	4	20	72	12	0	108
Tossing Children	0	0	0	0	0	94	0	2	96
Devadasi	80	0	12	2	0	0	0	8	102
Nude Worship	8	0	4	2	4	64	8	0	90
Sidi	22	0	4	12	0	56	0	2	96
Jata / Jade	38	60	0	0	0	0	0	4	102
Total	207	60	31	27	66	350	37	18	796

Source: Sample Survey

The second in order of seriousness of threat is to be perceived in respect of Jate or Jade. They are mostly sufferers of the disorder which they believe is a manifestation of Goddess on them. Thus they (37.25 per cent) believe and practice the superstition, and pose

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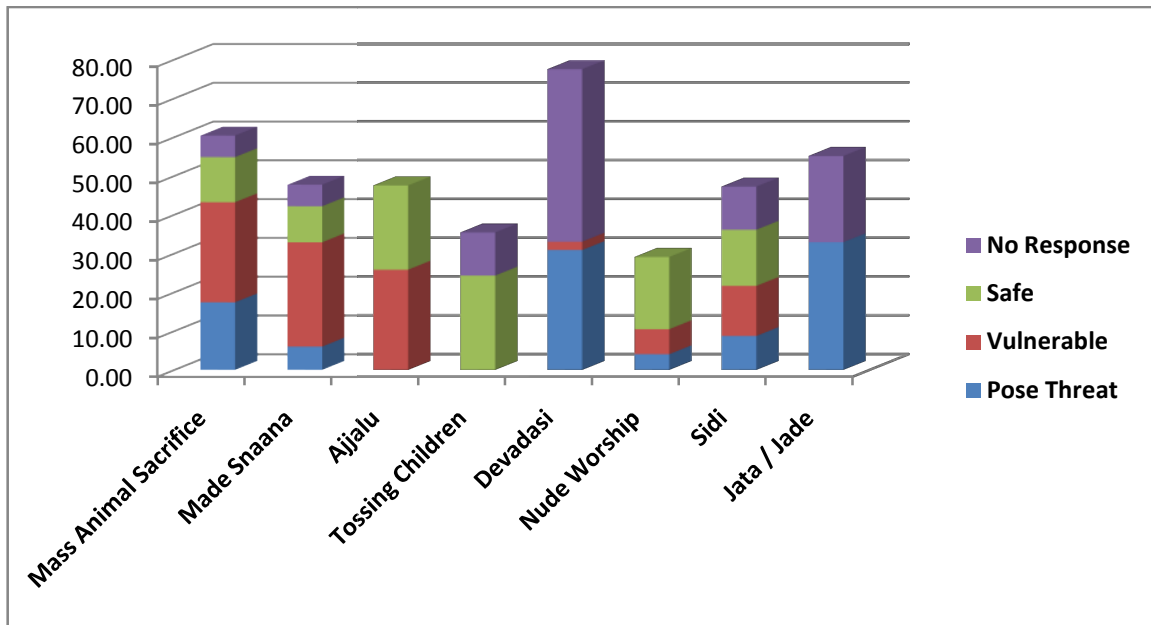
continued threat for its persistence. What is even more serious a development is that even if some in the family do not believe in the practice, the others do and so views are not shared by all, rendering the practice a persistent threat (58.82 per cent of respondents in this category).

Type of Superstition and Practice	Threats and Vulnerability									
	Pose Threat		Vulnerable		Safe		No Response		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mass Animal Sacrifice	52	17.45	24	25.81	11.63	45	1	5.56	122	15.33
Made Snana	18	6.04	25	26.88	9.30	36	1	5.56	80	10.05
Ajalu	0		24	25.81	21.71	84	0		108	13.57
Tossing Children	0		0		24.29	94	2	11.11	96	12.06
Devadasi	92	30.87	2	2.15		0	8	44.44	102	12.81
Nude Worship	12	4.03	6	6.45	18.60	72	0		90	11.31
Sidi	26	8.72	12	12.90	14.47	56	2	11.11	96	12.06
Jata / Jade	98	32.89	0			0	4	22.22	102	12.81
Total	298	100.00	93	100.00	387	100.00	18	100.00	796	100.00

Source: Sample Survey

Mari Bali involving mass sacrifice of animals is the third most threat-posing practice (36.89 per cent). Recall, this is one practice which has undergone much ‘modification’ in the continuum of change that we have outlined. Given this perceived threat, and the extent of shared belief within the family, this practice too deserves a special focus. Given the significantly changing dietary habits of people, and people taking to this superstition much more rapidly to ‘satisfy’ their needs, there is a need to regulate the practice. Lest it is mistaken as a caution exercised against any given caste or ethnic group, it may be suggested that a corresponding technology of animal sacrifice (as, perhaps, found in a modern abattoir) and mechanism for disposal of the consecrated blood, parts of the body other than skin and heads of the sacrificed animals. If Thirupati temple administration can regulate and accommodate pilgrims to the shrine, so too temple administrations can stagger ‘sevas’ based on the carrying capacity it has. For, sacrifice does not seem to be stopping altogether. If not within the designated space in the temple, it has been elsewhere – at a safe distance from the temple, if not at the respective houses of the devotees. The last mentioned could be even more a health hazard than *Mari Bali* as had been practiced hitherto.

Graph 4: Type of Superstition and Practice and Threats and Vulnerability to Persist



(Source: Field Survey; Respondents Distribution in Per Cent figures)

Some superstitions as Ajjalu and Tossing the Children seem to be least threatening. No respondent practiced it or believes in it anymore, and the values are shared by all by members of their family. Bettale Seve and Sidi, although showing much less threat, need caution as in all other case. These two, together with Made Snana and Tossing the Children are on the fault line of vulnerability, for a larger section of respondents to believe in the ritual but do not practice. Moreover, this belief of theirs is not shared by members of the family.

4.2 The change agents and their role

The past twenty five years or so have witnessed some very progressive legal enactments, as a result of which many of the superstitions under discussion have had significant impact. *Law has become thus the prime mover of social change in respect of beliefs and practices guided by superstitions.* The response from the wider community – believers or practitioners has been far more positive than what it was when *Sati* was banned. Of course, *Sati* took considerable time, so too it is to be expected, changes in respect of many of these superstitious practices.

Of all the different superstitious practices listed, the law to govern such practices was accounted to be the most efficient tool for bringing about a positive change. There was a standard and repetitive suggestion made also that there was a need for strict enforcement of the law once it is made. Appropriate law would be most effective, going by the response patterns to our question on the topic, in respect of Made Snana (opinion by 87.5 per cent), followed by Mass Animal Sacrifice (80 per cent), and Sidi. Law seems to be much less effective in respect of Devadasi system (25.47 per cent), and Nude Worship (31.11 per cent.) This set of views certainly calls for the efficacy of the prevailing laws and their implementation. What seems to be more effective for Devadasi to bring down its practice? Among all the different options given, paradoxically, it is law that gets a higher efficacy although, it must be hastened to add the scores here is not comparative to each other in their ability to bring about a change.

Next to law, it is the role of education that gets a greater importance (48.87 per cent) to bring about a change, when all the superstitions are taken together. But education has highest importance in bringing about the positive change in respect of Made Snana (at 97.5 per cent), followed by its impacting Ajalu and Sidi at 50 per cent each. Education seems to have least impact on the practices related to Devadasi (12.75 per cent), but a slightly higher impact -though in small proportion - on Jata / Jade (27.45 per cent). Nude worship too has much impact by education at 32.2 per cent).the impact of Television too is much lower than the others in bringing about a decline in beliefs over superstitious practices.

A significant agency of social change in respect of beliefs and superstitious practices has been the civil society organisations and groups of activists. In fact, one may go to observe that the key role of progressive and transformative legal system has been the key to the good work by the CSO or NGOs. The activists too have been very productive and that needs to be recognised. Their contribution in respect of abolition of Bettale Seve, Hook Swinging, Ajalu, or Tossing the Child is no less significant than what the law and NGOs have been doing. Indeed, in regard to a proper policy framework to be evolved their contribution has been most crucial.

Table 11. Factors Contributing to the <i>Decline</i> in Superstitious Beliefs and Practices (%)									
	Age	Law	Education	Social Media	Television	Print Media	Policies	Word of Mouth	Advts
Mass Animal Sacrifice	38.52	80.33	75.41	50.82	40.16	46.72	55.74	27.05	36.89
Made Snaana	3.75	87.50	97.50	38.75	42.50	46.25	47.50	3.75	1.25
Ajjalu	20.37	53.70	50.00	44.44	44.44	53.70	29.63	9.26	2.78
Tossing Children	48.96	48.96	48.96	48.96	21.88	23.96	50.00	3.13	43.75
Devadasi	4.90	26.47	12.75	8.82	5.88	18.63	14.71	9.80	2.94
Nude Worship	21.11	31.11	32.22	25.56	7.78	34.44	33.33	20.00	8.89
Sidi	0	50.00	50.00	15.63	14.58	6.25	37.50	0	0
Jata / Jade	3.92	41.18	27.45	2.94	16.67	28.43	8.82	0.98	0.98
Total (%)	18.47	52.51	48.87	29.90	24.62	32.66	34.67	9.80	12.94
No.	147	418	389	238	196	260	276	78	103

Source: Sample Survey

(Note: Per cent figures except the last row of total. They do not add up to 100 because figures in columns and rows are extracts pertaining to those who responded to the query on factors responsible for 'decline'. No Response or those who did not believe a given factor to be responsible for decline in superstitions are not taken into account in the table.)

A word of caution, however, is needed. The fight against superstition has to have its own strategy, praxis but cannot be a no-holds war at large. Dealing with cultural issues in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society needs much more *tact* than mere plans for onslaught. The lessons learnt from the past experience of social reforms need to be harnessed much more efficiently and tactfully.

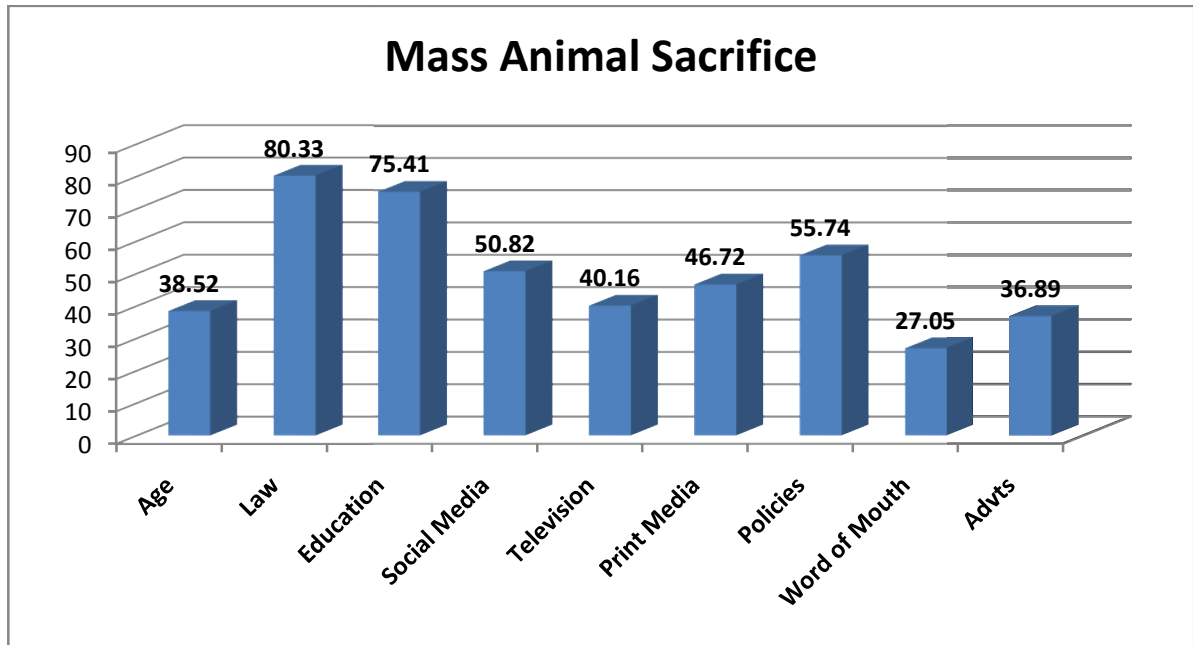
An important vehicle of social change, it has to be admitted, has turned out to be a vehicle of continuity of tradition, that too of that which society needs to get rid of: the media, especially regional and local media. Perhaps, the State needs to undertake a very serious content analysis of the programmes of 'entertainment' and gap-filler programmes in our popular media. This observation is certainly not against programmes that introduce places of religious interest, of tourist interest, or that celebrates other educational importance of the temples and temple towns. Nor is it targeted at programmes of religious discourses that has reference to the text of our heritage. But commentaries and programmes that propagate superstitions and beliefs need to be regulated in a positive manner. The least one could expect is to have 'runner' at the bottom to disown any claims being to be free from damages. What is being suggested is just as there is a runner about ill effects of

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstitions in Karnataka

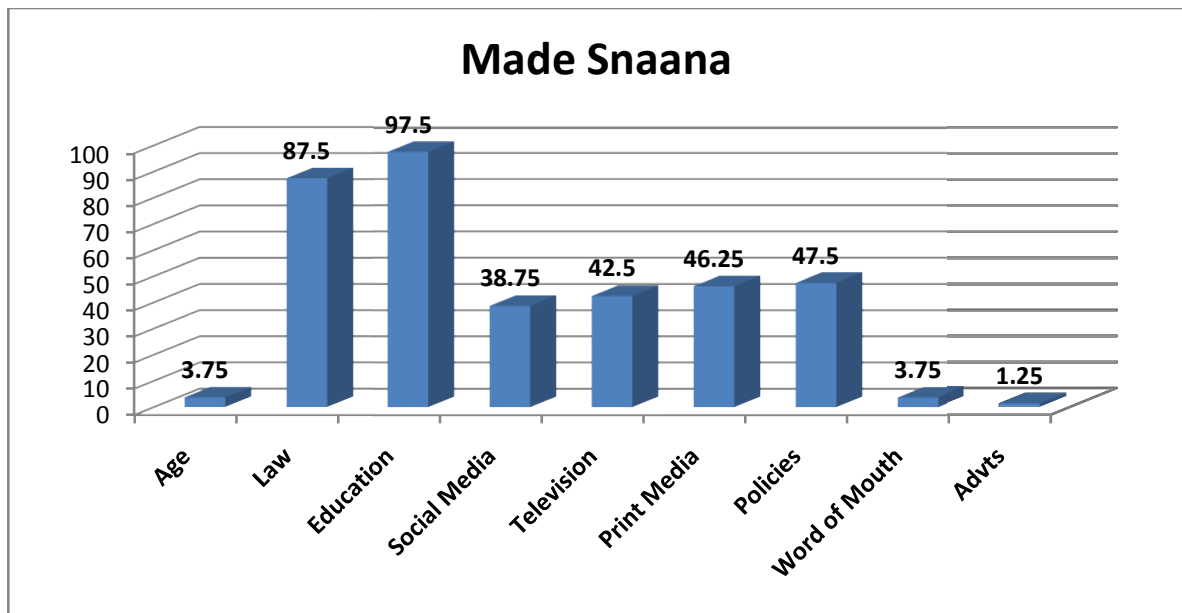
smoking tobacco or consumption of alcohol, there should be a disclaimer about the contents of some such programmes that could lead to a new wave of superstition – be it an image drinking milk, or a photograph showering the holy ash. In recent years, there have been attempts to regulate what advertisement of a commercial product can promise, so too, superstitious occurrences or prescriptions of a gem stone for success in one or the venture should be within the orbit of regulation.

One last observation that emerged from the interviews with our respondents needs a comment. Their religious orientations have gradually moved away from attaining ‘merit’ towards attaining ‘success, material gains and so on.’ No law can aim at ensuring merit through religion or rituals. That is a challenge left to the experts in the field.

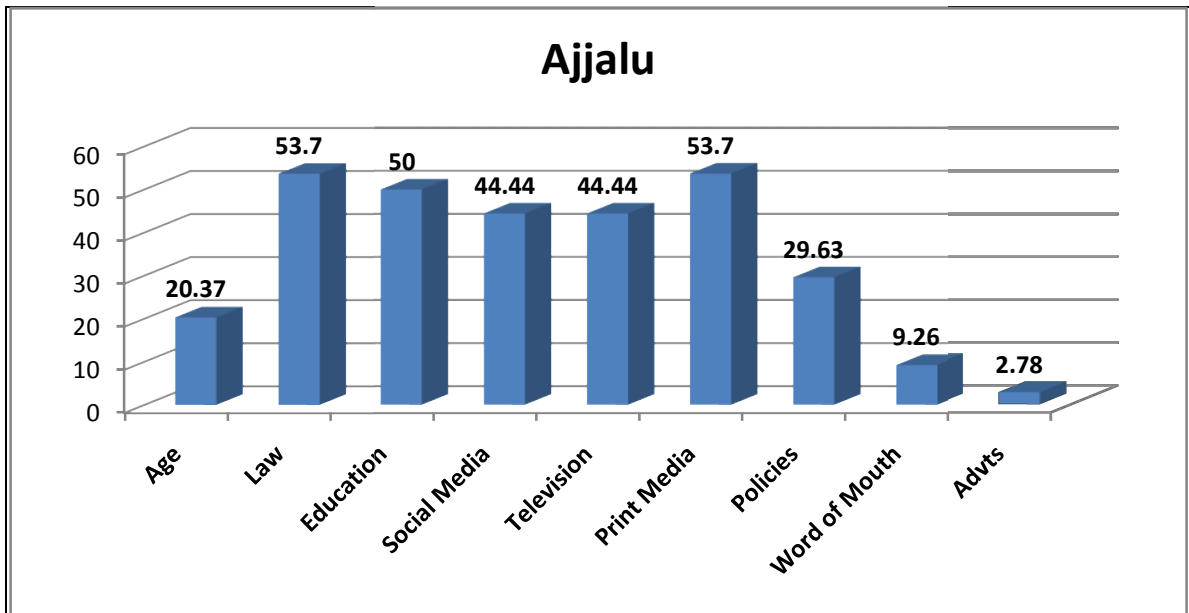
Graph 4.1 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practice: Mass Animal Sacrifice.



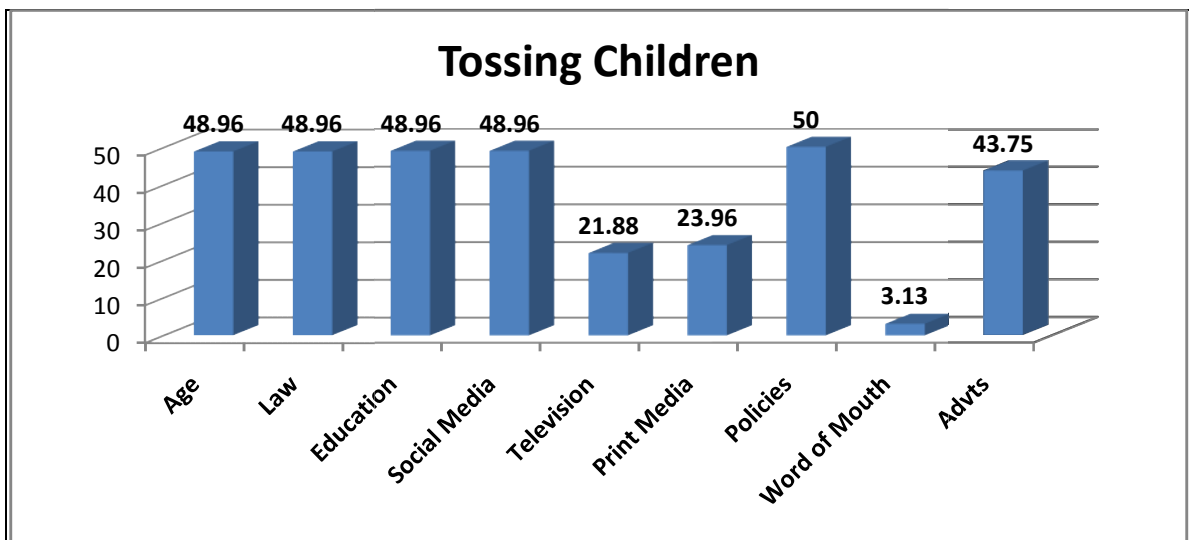
Graph 4.2 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practice: Madesnana.



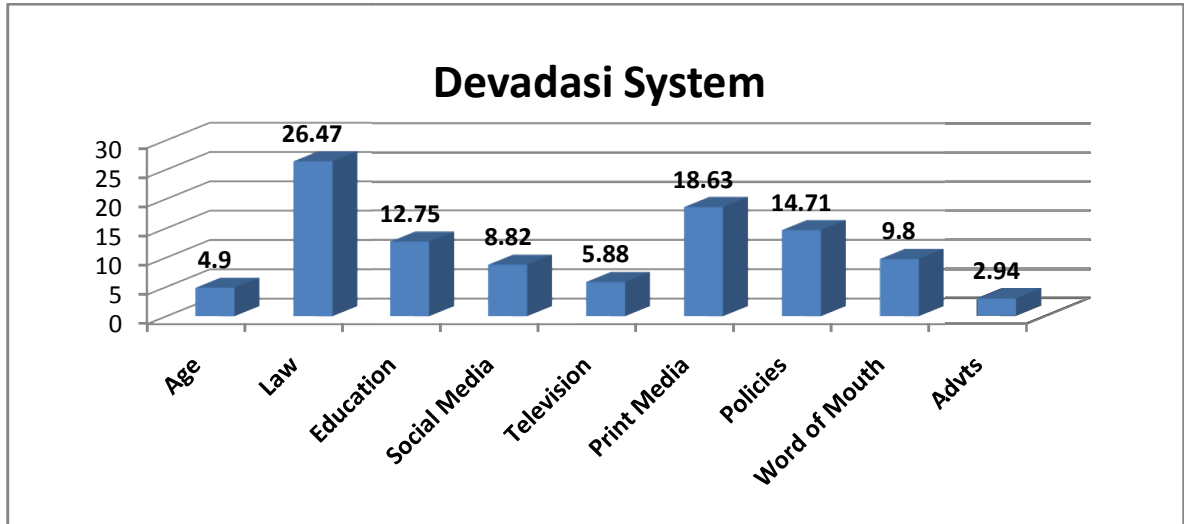
Graph 4.3 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practice: Ajjalu.



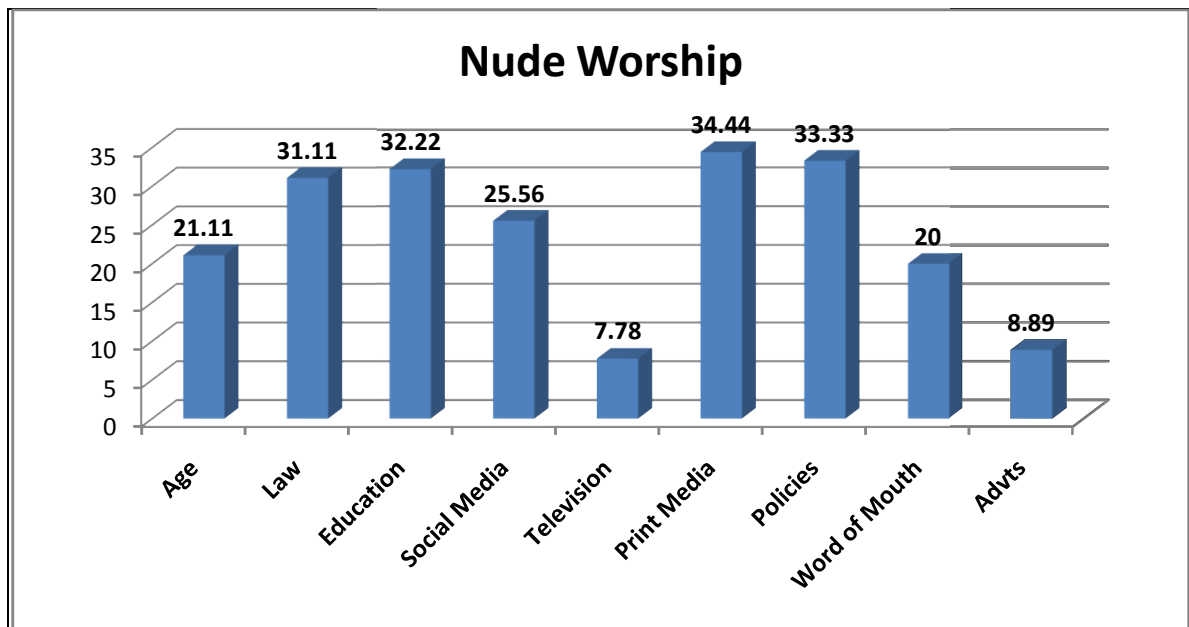
Graph 4.4 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practice: Tossing Children.



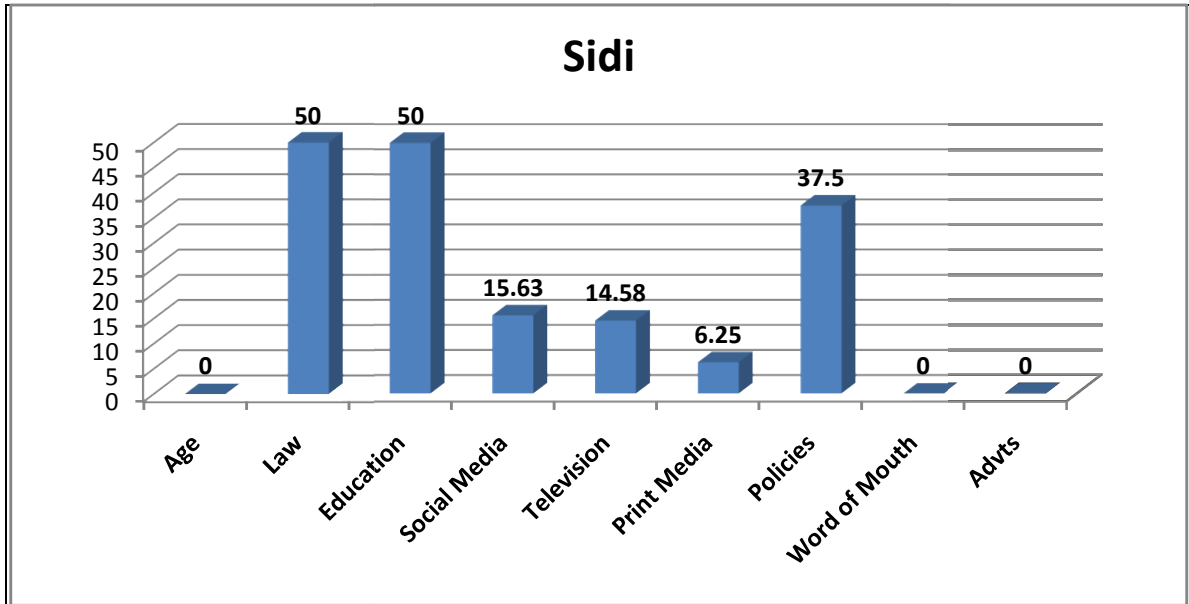
Graph 4.5 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practice: Devadasi System.



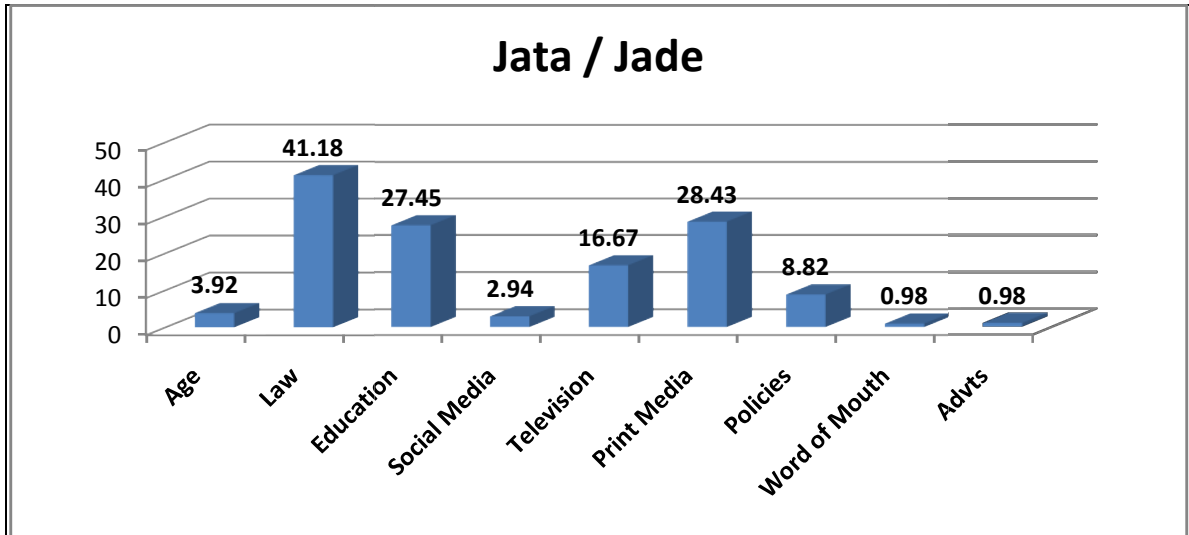
Graph 4.6 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practice: Nude Worship.



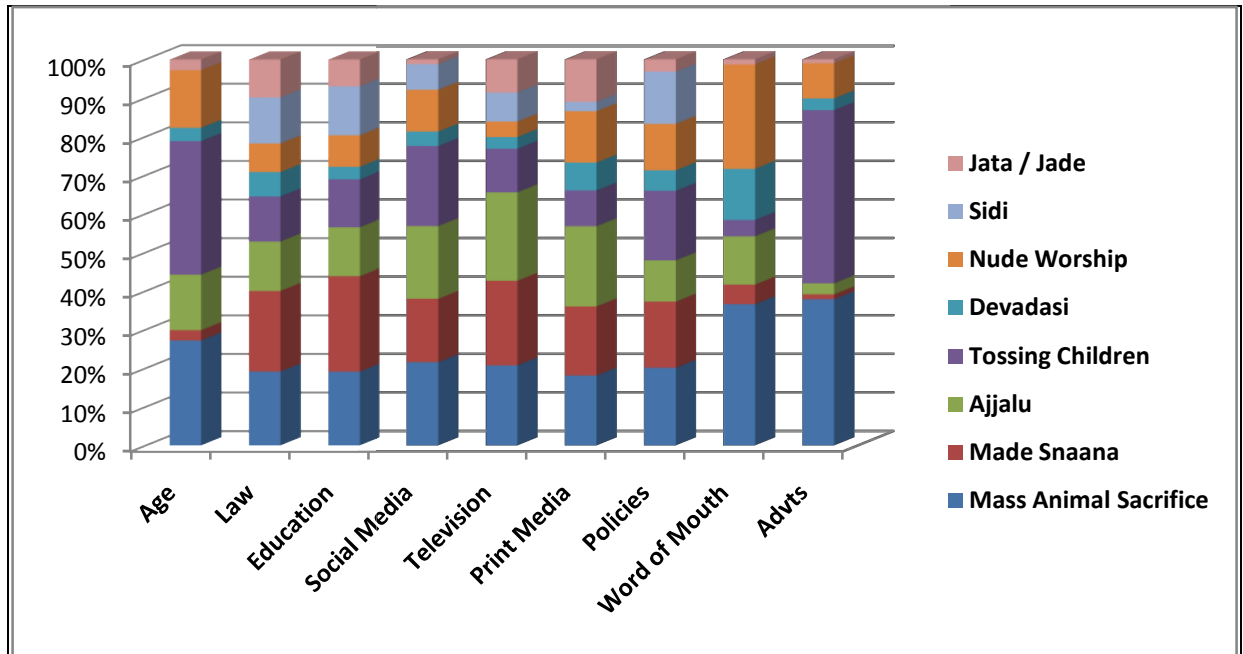
Graph 4.7 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practice: Sidi.



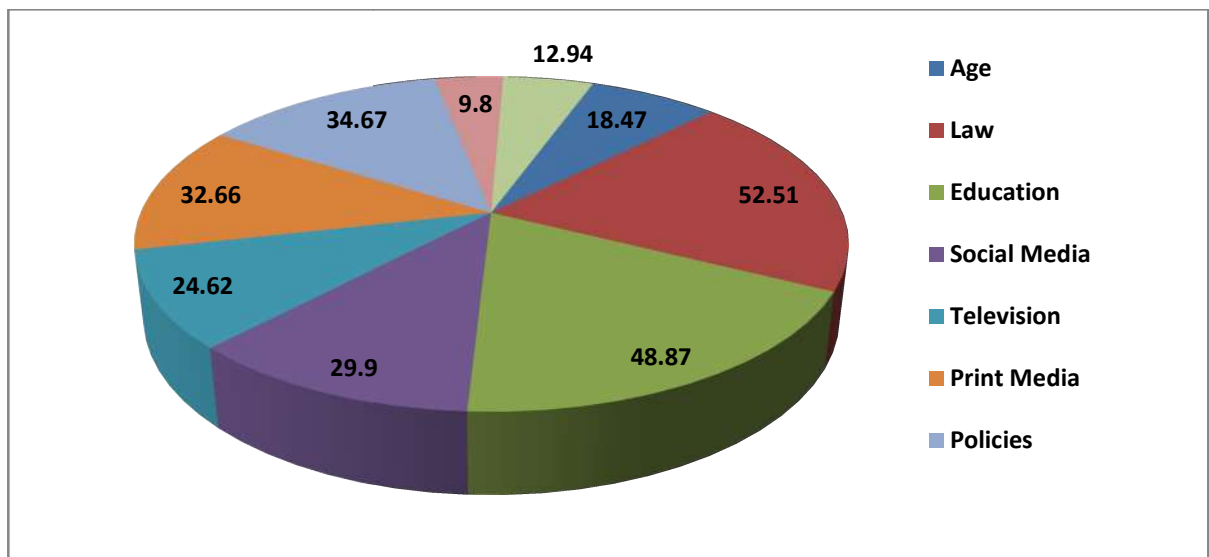
Graph 4.8 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practice: Jata / Jade.



Graph 4.9 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Different Superstitions and Related Practice:



Graph 4.10 Respondents' Perception on Factors that may contribute to the decline of Superstitions and Related Practices in General:



Chapter 5

Reflections, Conclusions and Recommendations

'To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradictions'

Marshall Breman (1982: 15)

Much of the scientific search for the so called truth has been with a strong disbelief of myths, and superstitions. Most of them had their origin and / or association with religion, although not all superstitious beliefs are religious in nature. Both in the western world and in India, superstitions have continued to dominate religious thought and therefore social life. So much so that religion in India is often perceived more as superstitions than worship. For, it is also believed that most Indians are religious and superstitious. Considering the number of temples and places of worship, and forms of worship involving a range of bewildering rituals, this Statement on religiosity of Indian reflects a reality. Indeed, the birth of a person is accompanied by a superstition based on time of the birth – it being an auspicious one or malevolent one, and this continues to the person's death – whether or not the person died on and at a time that was conducive for the good of one's own soul and for the peace of those left behind. Life between these two stages too is guided by several similar superstitions.

The sense of optimism expressed by the likes of H H Wilson during the late colonial period is somewhat of similar to sentiments of the nationalists at the dawn of Indian Independence, who then thought India to be a secular society in which caste and creed would have very little space. Blind beliefs and superstitions too would have no place in the newly Independent India. Yet, even as late as 2017, several of the States in the India. That is now about to cross seven decades of Independence and scientific progress, are enacting legislations that explicitly prohibits several of superstitious practices.

Superstitions are considered irrational because they are usually founded on ignorance or fear and characterized by obsessive reverence for omens, charms, etc. A much cited scholar, G Johoda sets the tone in the 1960s by defining superstition as a construction of an over generalised cause and effect relationship from events that may be more appropriately considered as coincidence. Tobacyk approvingly quotes Fiske and Taylor (1984) their assertion that 'superstition appears associated with greater susceptibility to the

construction of illusory correlations, i.e., the tendency, based on expectations of a relationship between two variables, either to overestimate the extent of a relationship or to impose a relationship when none exists.

5.1 When does Superstitions become a Problem?

Superstitions become a social problem when they extend to deny dignity to human beings – either collectively or individually, and/or violate human rights recognized morally or legally by a society, and/or affect the life chances of individuals or groups of people, humiliates an individual or an entire community, we have a social problem at hand. There are several personal practices arising out of such superstitious beliefs which may not affect or hurt anyone.

When we observe the results of several superstitions, what becomes evident is a matter with which social history of Indian society has to admit with a sense of guilt, namely another version of discrimination based on the then ‘rigid’ rules of caste system. The victims are, in a majority of cases, members of the so called ‘low’ castes, especially the socially excluded castes and tribes. Even though penned at a time when proselytisation of the heathen was the main purpose, a Statement made by a colonial missionary holds mirror to the situation much before Indian independence:

The lowest class have scarcely any religion at all; they are outcasts, and are neither expected nor considered fit to engage in religious exercises... But superstition supplies what religion denies them. Fear of demons and evil spirits haunt them constantly, and rites and processes are devised to get rid of these influences. Omens and portents are eagerly looked and watched for; and their domestic usages are naturally cast in the mould of these superstitions. (Osborne 1884: 131-32)

5.2 Objectives of the Study

In the recent decades it has well deservedly described as the State housing the ‘silicon valley of India’ and has been among forefront of nations in hosting renowned computer and information technological undertakings. Yet, in several other respects, the State has retained the not-so-fair reputation as being ‘traditional’ or orthodox. One such area pertains to the persistent prevalence of superstitious beliefs and practices

Despite a strong ‘anti-superstitions’ movement, vocal and active groups of rationalists, and a history of active and successful movement of the castes or communities that are usually victims of some superstitious practices (Dalits, Tribal groups, Women, Animal rights activists), Karnataka State has had its share of shameful incidents in recent times too.

It was felt that some of the superstitious practices needed to be reassessed as they were practiced, and examine the more recent changes, if any, as they were being practiced. There had been some which had been explicitly banned by an Act of legislation or executive orders (e.g., Bettale Seve, hook swinging or tossing of children), while there had been reports also of some of them being practiced secretly or in other places than where they were traditionally known for.

1. To document the local belief/legend/history of the following superstitions of Karnataka- Made Snana, Mass animal sacrifice, Tossing of children, *Bettale seve*, Jata or jada and Devadasi system, and the The practice of *Sidi*
2. To study and document as to whether belief in superstitions is increasing, decreasing or has remained almost the same in the past 25 years.
 - In case the superstition is pan district, documentation of inter-district variations
3. Has the spread of education and greater exposure to the world as a whole made any impact on the belief of superstitions?
4. What practices or measures can the government and governance follow to eradicate malignant superstitions and create a superstition free Karnataka?
5. Are there contradictions in State policies?

5.3 Research Methodology

By the very nature of the topic, the study aimed at employing qualitative techniques of data gathering: observation (where feasible), in-depth interviews and focused group discussions with a range of informants: members of the affected households or families, religious leaders, NGOs and activists, as also protagonists who support the practices and beliefs. A day’s consultations were held in Bengaluru with the participation of representatives from different sectors (religion, law, police, academia, and activists.)

Observations, discussions and interviews with a randomly chosen sample of 796 respondents gave us an indication of not only the way the practices have persisted but also

indicate the nature and extent of changes that were occurring. Above all, the latter gave us indications as to why some have persisted, and what seem to be limitations of the State initiatives in eradicating them. Policy recommendations are made at the end of this Chapter derived from such an approach.

Separate Interview and discussion were prepared and employed for data collection. Questions pertained to the perception of the origin of practices, narratives about the beliefs behind such practices, and the nature of changes if any.

Listed Superstitions: Current Status

5.4 Mass Animal Sacrifice: In some of the villages where mass animal sacrifice used to take place, it has now been stopped. Instead, one or two sheep are offered at the spot where the images of deities are placed, while the rest offer the sacrifices at their respective houses. In one village, Machohalli, a few people spoken to in a group attributed the occurrence of a severe draught successively during the past two-three years (2016 and the preceding years), and drying up of water in the rivers, tube-wells and tanks to be due to the anger of the Goddesses: *'Ever since, we stopped the Bali to her, she has been taking our Bali.* Respondents describing themselves as 'strongly religious' in their orientations have had a higher rate of participation (by over 60 per cent) in mass animal sacrifice. Those who describe themselves as 'moderately religious' are not far behind; lower at about 55 per cent. To corroborate this pattern, we find those who do not practice animal sacrifice is lower among the strongly religious respondents and higher among the moderately religious persons. What is alarming is the fact that despite civil society actions against the practice of animal sacrifice in large or small numbers in the public spaces, and despite specific rules and law against the practice, one gets to hear about them being observed openly or discretely.

A few of the respondents observed that in view of the regulations against animal sacrifice in the temples, devotees have been bringing a piece of the ear of an animal that may have been sacrificed earlier to make a formal and symbolic offering to the presiding deities.

5.5 Made Snana: The ritual is a variant of *urulu seve* and is supposed to be one associated with the Male Kudiya tribe. Before the plantain leaves on which Brahmans have eaten their meals are gathered for disposal, devotees roll from one end of the row to the other on the floor. The act is in fulfilment of a vow or in anticipation of a boon. The temples that are well known for this ritual in Karnataka are Kukke Subramanya in Udupi district, Ramanathapura in Hassan, Subramanya temple within the Krishna Temple complex in Udupi. It is said that members of a Scheduled Tribe, Male Kudiyas, who are devotees of the temple at Kukke Subamanya and elsewhere have traditionally the custom of rolling over the left overs as *Made Snana*. In Kukke, they have the traditional obligation of rendering their services in the upkeep of the chariot, decorating it and keeping it ready for its use for a procession of the presiding deity. Whether a Dalit or a person from the so called higher caste, the practice of rolling over left over foods is unbecoming of a culture that prides itself with various other glorious fetes. However, arguments in favour of the practice too have been put forth. Examples of the rationale offered to justify the continuation of the practice include those which claims a medicinal value to the practice. It is said that the rolling over the left overs has the curative value over skin disorders. A myth, derived from the epic Mahabharata and involving a son of Krishna, by the name of Samba, is invoked to demonstrate that the curative value is not something new but ancient.

On their part, the temple has come up with a modification of the ritual called *Yede Snana*. This involves offering of food to the presiding deity as *Naivedya*, which are then spread out on plantain leaves in the front courtyard of the temple. Cows maintained by the temple are then brought to eat the food thus served, over which the devotees are permitted to roll over as they may have done in *Made Snana*.

Some of the findings of the sample survey may be summarised. First, over three fourths of the respondents do not practice *Made Snana* (77.5 per cent). Second, whether a devotee describes oneself as having been strongly or moderately religious appears to have no bearing upon whether or not the person practices *Made or Yede Snana*. For, we find that those describing themselves as ‘Moderately Religious’ being more among those who practice *Made Snana* than the ‘Strongly Religious’ respondents. Correspondingly too, the latter are less in representing the ones who do not practice while the strongly religious ones are higher in this respect. Slightly more than a third of the respondents have families in which the religious beliefs and practices are not shared by all members. Curiously enough,

this incidence is highest among those claiming to be rationalists or those who are activists against the practice of *Made Snana*. In respect of those who do practice *Made Snana* too we find the incidence declining with higher levels of education

What would the believers or practitioners do if the State bans the practice of *Made Snana* Altogether? Most, however, seemed to be willing to forego the practice and open for other alternatives.

5.6 *Ajalu* Practice: The practice of *Ajalu* clearly and directly involves subjugation of a caste/or tribe which is considered to be very low in social, economic and ritual status. The people in question are Koragas, found mainly in coastal districts of Karnataka, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts. Besides serving at the beck and call of other landowning 'high' castes, Koragas were skilled persons in making basket wares, by drawing upon resources from the forests. As basket makers they had to supply the household and farm needs of making ropes to fasten animals, sieves and baskets to carry food grains and sieves for households use to clean good grains. The households to which they supplied these were in a way *patrons* from whom they received left over and overnight (*thangalu*) foods which often were unfit for any to eat.

Another of obnoxious practice, to which the Act of 2000 makes specific reference, is to expect that Koragas to receive food that are mixed with inedible substances: hair, nail and the like. This practice takes place at least on two occasions. The first is when among the so called high castes such as the twice born ones who make an annual offering (*shraddha*) to their ancestors or on the last day of the rituals soon after the death of member of the household. To receive such food too is an *Ajalu* for the Koragas, a customary practice in the past. When no Koraga was readily available, he or she (or a group of them) were being offered a fee to take the evil gifts away. The second way by which obnoxious food is offered to the Koragas, believed to be powerful beholders and combaters of evil and the undesirable, is to make them consume bodily wastes of the person needing such a protection. For example a person who is likely to die in an untimely manner owing to a sickness or some terminal ailment is believed to be capable of being 'rescued' if nails clipped off from his/her fingers or toes, hair that has either fallen or clipped for the purpose is given away to the Koragas. Koragas were also expected to be objects of ridicule and ill treatment in several other respects. The much discussed occasion has been the sport of Kambala.

While there may have been a passionate devotee who may have justified *Made Snana* or *Mari Bali* (or other practices that shall be of focus in the subsequent sections of this chapter), not a single respondent seemed to miss *Ajalu* practice either as a performer or as a recipient of the services. A Koraga woman pointed out that the discrimination being meted out is not to the same extent and character as the conventional *Ajalu* anymore, but we are being discriminated against as any other untouchable has been. ‘There may be no more *Ajalu* demanded. The challenge now is not so much one of humiliating social inclusion through practices like *Ajalu*, instead it is one of social exclusion, and cultural branding with degradation.’ “Why is it,” she went on to question, that even under contract labour system, it is largely the Koragas who are hired to do the menial work as scavengers (*safai karmacharis*) or sweepers and cleaners in hospitals, municipalities and other government departments?’

5.7 Tossing of Children: Once born, the child has a constant company of a whole lot of beliefs and practices. Among the several superstitious practices for which India (and Karnataka) has drawn national and international attention, this bizarre ritual too is one. The practice involves not merely Hindus, but Muslims as well. Since 2009, owing to the protest from both local activists and those fighting for child rights protection in the State, the practice has been banned. None of our respondents, 96 in number, reported to be practicing it any more. Despite their strong or moderate religious orientations, none expressed a desire to perform or let their children to be thus thrown. While this is a welcome finding, one has to also bear in mind that the ritual is no longer in practice.

5.8 ‘Bettale Seve’- Nude Worship: As in most other rituals that are belittling human dignity – at least from the point of view of more contemporary values – the ones who observe this ritual too are from the so called lower rungs of social hierarchy: Dalits and members of other backward castes. Even though members of other castes did take part, they were invariably outnumbered by the others. Contrary to the popular misconception, this ritual is not confined merely to women, but is practiced also by men and by transgender persons.

A third of the respondents did express the view that they believed in the form of worship, and all that is assured on its performance even though they did not practice Bettale Seve. About a dozen respondents did inform that there had been the practice, in their

family, involving one or the other member. The presiding deity had been a family god for most of our respondents, yet many did not believe that anything wrong or bad was happening to them owing to the practice having been given up. In fact, quite a few felt that the practice must be stopped for it portrayed Indian culture in poor light. At least in respect of Bettale Seve as a practice, the prevailing ‘watch and ward’ approach as also a mutually supportive popular movement and administrative regime seems to have had an upper hand. The defiance witnessed during the mid 1980s is not evident in the present times.

5.9 Jata or Jade: The phenomenon of matted hair in a person seems to be a global health problem although not much clarity has been made available as regards its etiopathogenesis. A person who develops matted hair on her or his body gets stigmatised. This social stigma, accompanied by social isolation and exclusion, besides marginalisation, is despite the widespread belief that the occurrence of matted hair is a divine manifestation.

Given the lack of awareness and tendency towards superstitious interpretations of realities, most women get initiated into becoming a Devadasi if they manifest matted hair. It is believed that the occurrence is an invitation by the God or Goddess to the person to serve the superior being.

A few NGO have undertaken the task of ‘rehabilitating’ the men and women of matted hair, even after they may have become Devadasis. Ramberg cites reports of an NGO which during April 2001 to March 2002, a thousand locks of hair had been cut from women dedicated to Yellamma.

Of the 102 respondents that we contacted for information about their lives and views, we found only six persons describing themselves as activists while being believers in the religiosity of matted hair. They had been, mostly in their late 60s of age, and were campaigning for other and younger Jogitis to cut their hair and return to normal life. But, it appeared that many of their targets were far too drawn away from their parental homes and environment to be accepted as normal persons.

There seemed hardly any regret over what others may consider to be their pitiable plight or ‘fate.’ A few of them remarked “we have become what we have, owing to some good act on our part in the previous births. We do not consider this to be a bad Karma.”

5.10 Devadasi System: The decline and dreaded status of Devadasi women is evident also by looking at the ‘keywords’ in any well researched academic paper analysing their conditions. See one such example: “*Sacred. Prostitute. Chaste. Dancer. Matriarch. Victim. Sex Worker. Devotee. Daughter. Auspicious. Slave of the God. Nun. Dancing Whore. Female Servant of the Deity*” (Candelario 2008:2)

One finds a good example of internalisation of a plight which contemporary society tries to eliminate and rehabilitate the victims in mainstream society. Internalisation of the superstition behind their dedication was so strong that about 98 per cent of women did believe in the practice and either in the past or presently practiced being Devadasis. Almost all of them had received one or the other benefits under the various schemes by the Government. In that sense, they were all ‘rehabilitated’ Devadasis although 42 per cent claimed to be currently Devadasis.

Nearly all of them had been religiously dedicated to the temple’s Goddesses, and at fairly a young age. A quarter of the respondents classified themselves under the generic category as Scheduled Castes, while 59 per cent of women identified themselves as Madars (also SC).

When asked about their health conditions, none wished to speak about it. A group, however, was more vocal, and asked us “are you asking this to know if we have AIDS? My answer to you, and I am sure my sisters here will all say ‘yes’, it is the Goddess who led us to be where we are, and we are sure she knows where to take us.’

5.11 Sidi or Hook Swinging: As a ritual it had been prominent in some parts of northern Karnataka: Ghattargi in Afzalpur Taluk of Kalburgi district. Sidi is one such practice found in the villages of Haveri, Davangere, Koppal and joining districts. In each such area, members of specific caste offer to be the volunteers, or hired to perform the ritual. If not as a ritual, the practice is found in many other parts of the State, carried out as a means of livelihood earning by the *Dom bars* and groups of others who go from house to house in towns and villages to seek alms by performing these practices.

There had been no hook swinging in recent times, and instead, persons would wrap themselves with a thick cloth or blanket to which a hook is fixed and thus they are suspended from a height. At least, there was no bodily harm, the activists had claimed.

Did the ones who had performed hook swinging as an offering get hurt and had the wounds taken time to heal after? In a couple of cases, they showed the mark of healed wound now to be a scar, but claimed ‘nothing had happened to them.’

‘True faith will take care of all pains and injury’, was their conviction

5.12 Change Agents and Socio-Cultural Resistance to Change:

The past 25 – 30 years have witnessed spectacular changes in our system of communication. In short, the horizon of knowledge has far exceeded what it may have been, say 25 years ago. Yet contradictions galore with modernity and scientific advancement. One such contradiction is the nature of change in respect of our faith and beliefs in supernatural or superstitious causation.

We may find a continuum of change in respect of belief or practice of the different rituals or practices concerning the eight superstitions we examined. At one extreme of the continuum is the process of modification as a response to changing forces, and at the other, abandonment. In between, we find replacement, or stealthily practicing some of them. We may find ‘modification’ as a major pattern of change in respect of Mari Bali, Made Snana, and Sidi. At the other extreme is the response of abandonment of practices. Foremost of them and more obviously has been the practice of tossing the children as a ritual. Also abandoned is the practice of Bettale Seve. But here we enter the domain of speculations and rumours competing with facts. There is one version which claims that there are stray instances of its practice, in small numbers and in remote places. If this indeed is true, it speaks equally of the continued ignorance and the role of facilitating institutions or individuals. Another version of claims places the practice of Bettale Seve at the point of modification rather than abandonment. According to this version, men and women wear wet clothes – which in any case gets dried up by the time they reach the shrine, and therefore the practice is no different from any other form of prayers. Ajalu too is another set of practices that is certainly on the way out, and as having been part of Kambla or annual rituals of being offered to eat human wastes, they are certainly things of the past.

What then is the direction of social change in regard to superstitious practices. The driving force seems, as of now, the tightening legal and monitoring regime. Belief in the practices have not completely gone. This issue takes one to the need to educate and build awareness. The terms scientific temperament have been used so often, and for so long, perhaps its weight has been lost. Scientific temperament as a notion has to free itself from the mystery of science, but embrace the domain of common sense of linking cause and effect.

Recommendations

Prior to making some recommendations³¹, it is appropriate to recall the views of Habermas on reason, secularism and religion. For, the spirit of what are listed here is guided by the debates in which he has engaged. Habermas has challenged reason to clarify its relation to religious experience and to engage religions in a constructive dialogue. ‘Given the global challenges facing humanity, nothing is more dangerous than the refusal to communicate that we encounter today in different forms of religious and ideological fundamentalism. (Habermas 2010)’ In order to engage in this dialogue, two conditions must be met: religion must accept the authority of secular reason as the fallible results of the sciences and the universalistic egalitarianism in law and morality; and conversely, secular reason must not set itself up as the judge concerning truths of faith.

Recommendations

1. All efforts need to be made to pass the proposed Bill. The Bill has been prepared with considerable intellectual inputs, but somehow has failed to gain people’s confidence and formulate guidelines for its effective implementation.
2. Many of the superstitions addressed in this study are already under the State’s administrative scan or specific laws enacted. A review by a legal expert and from the department of police is suggested to examine the loopholes in their implementation, and seek remedial suggestions, every ten years or so.
3. An urgent review needs to be undertaken, of the social and psychological impact of our advertisements, religious discourses, programmes and commentaries of religious/superstitious matters in popular media – both visual and print. This is not to suggest that they should be gagged, but an assessment to be made of the nature of impact. In the many other countries there is a major concern over political correctness of the programmes. In our context, there is a need to be concerned additionally with the ‘social’ and/or ‘cultural’ correctness of the programmes aired. This sensitivity is not something that can be imposed but as a value and responsibility, to be evolved.

³¹ These recommendations must be read in conjunction with the suggestions made by participants in the Workshop (See Annexure IX).

Censoring the programmes that exhibit or support evil practices needs to be considered.

4. It must be recalled that the State has a role to govern the places of worship such as temples. Over the years, the State has been financially supporting many of them, besides paying a salary and upkeep support of the temple structures if they are under Muzurai department. It is necessary that this relationship is made accountable with respect to what *Seva* is offered for a fee or *Kanike* at the temples. Just as a product cannot advertise things for which it is not capable, so too the *Sevas*. Such of the *sevas* that promote superstitious beliefs must be discouraged to be rendered as a service, at least in the Muzurai temples.
5. The Consumer Protection Act to be made applicable also to many of the services that are offered at a premium through public advertisements.
6. Many of the superstitious practices under considerations are carried out with a view to fulfil a vow taken much earlier than at the time of performing the act. Focus of the policy and implementing agencies seems to be more at the performance level and time than at the time taking vows. While it is not feasible to monitor the latter, much awareness is to be created about the restrictions in fulfilling such vows – whether in a temple or any other public place.
7. Such an awareness building cannot go hand in hand with the kind of publicity producing literature, audio-visual programmes etc. concerning places and forms of worship. State should have a say in the matters publicised in this realm, especially if any of the practices involve imposing indignities or violation of human rights of vulnerable groups of people.
8. **Knowledge and awareness about rejecting evil practices to be created in the young minds by introducing them in School curriculum- in Social Science & moral Science books and develop scientific values.**
9. **Kannada & Culture dept. to develop short documentary films on evils of superstitions and their consequences and generate awareness to eradicate them.**

10. The heads of religious institutions and similar others are not to be alienated from the drive to create a scientific temperament. They need to be involved actively in awareness campaign drive to get better and desired results.
11. Annual fairs, Melas, Jaatres to be monitored much more vigilantly to prevent any of the obnoxious practices.
- 12. CSR initiatives to be focused on eradication of superstitions, and promote Local NGOs, Youth Clubs, Mahila Mandals, Self Help Groups and other Associations to be involved in the process of eradication of superstitions.**

Annexure I: List of references cited in the report

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Annexure II. Terms of Reference of the evaluation study

SECTION-III

Terms of Reference of the status of some of the malignant, exploitative and offensive to human dignity Superstitions of Karnataka and the change in their status of prevalence in the past 25years.

1. Title of the study:

The study is titled “*Status of some of the malignant, exploitative and offensive to human dignity Superstitions of Karnataka and the change in their status of prevalence in the past 25years.*”

2. Background:

The word “superstition” is the modern form of the middle English word “superstition”, formed from the Latin “superstitiō” or “superstition”, which itself is derived from “superstes” or “superstit”, meaning *standing over*, signifying that superstitions prevail and override what is rational and logical. It is defined as (a) An irrational belief that an object, action, or circumstance not logically related to a course of events influences its outcome, or (b) A belief, practice, or rite irrationally maintained by ignorance of the laws of nature or by faith in magic or chance or (c) A fearful or abject State of mind resulting from such ignorance or irrationality. They are generally, but erroneously, considered as product of religious matters for religion never changes. The holding and clinging to old unproven matter, which is peculiar to the particular place, time or community is also superstition. Superstition gives birth to fanaticism and fundamentalism. It is hindrance to progress and development of human beings. It often blackmails the emotions of a person.

It may appear that superstitions should be confined to the illiterate and uninformed, but that may not always be the case. There are many doctors,

engineers, leaders and even scientists who are learned people and sufficiently enlightened persons, yet they believe in superstitions. Despite their modern living using all modern amenities and leading happy life, they are not performing science in practice. In fact these people, when superstitious, propagate superstitions among those whose role models and ideals they are. It is not education but scientific temper that can cure people of superstitious beliefs and followings.

The realization of superstitions threatening to mar the life and dignity of people is not new in Karnataka. Lately, with “Made Snana” leading the limelight, attention of the State fell on some of the superstitions that demean the dignity of human beings, subject people to become victims of circumstances than allowing them to take control of the situations, relying on miracles and magic and acts that subject animals to torture in the name of providing some remedies to human suffering.

3. Research Objectives:

The objective of the status study given to the Karnataka Evaluation Authority by the Planning department, Government of Karnataka is-

(A) To document the local belief/legend/history of the following superstitions of Karnataka-

1. Made Snana or Made Snana in which devotees roll over plantain leaves, after food has been taken over it by high caste devotees. It is practiced on certain festive days in Subramanya temples of Karnataka, but has also been performed at Vaishnavite places such as the Krishna Math, Udupi. The practice is actively practiced in the Kukke Subramanya Temple, and in the Subramanya temples of Kalavara, Kundapura Taluk and Ramanathapura, Hassan District.
2. Mass animal sacrifice in the temples including Marigudi (three temples) during Suggi Maripuja in Udupi, Gokarna in Uttara Kannada, Purdamma in Hassan, Durgambika Devi fair in Davanagere, temples of Voddarahalli and Machohalli in Bangalore during Makara

Sankranti etc.

3. *Ajalu* practice of Dakshina Kannada district which differentiates between Koragas and persons belonging to other communities, treating them as inferior human beings, mixing hair, nails or any other inedible or obnoxious substance in the food and asking them to eat that food and to make them to run like buffaloes before the beginning of Kambala (buffalorace).
4. Throwing of children from a height of 30 feet from the top Digambeshwara temple in Nagrala village of Bagalkot district, to be caught on blankets below.
5. *Bettale seve* (nude worship), which is a service or form of worship rendered in the nude by women to Goddess Renukamba at Chandragutti, Shimoga. Bettale seve is one of the forms of seve performed during the annual *jathre* (festival) at Chandragutti that draws about a lakh of devotees. Mostly women from the Dalit castes perform *Bettale seve* to fulfil a *harake* (vow) undertaken when a calamity has befallen the family (such as sickness or death), or for a wish to be fulfilled (such as a wish for a husband or a child).
6. The *jatahair* (nugget hair) practice where women having an unclean fungus infested clump of hair due to lack of proper care of hair and hygiene, is associated with the women being regarded as a devotional entity ending in the system of *Devadasitoo*.

7. The practice of dedicating girls to the service of God (Devadasi) in Yellamma cult in Saundatti, Belgaum district, and in the Uttangi Durga temple on Uchungi Hill, Davanagere district.
 8. The practice of *Sidi*, prevailing at Ghattaragi village in Afzalpur taluk of Gulbarga district and also parts of Bagalkot district wherein a man is hung from a cart at a height of 30 feet from his back with the help of a sharp hook. People believe this helps them overcome the drought problem.
- (B) To study and document as to whether belief in superstitions is increasing, decreasing or has remained almost the same in the past 25 years. (In case the superstition is pan district, documentation of inter-district variations may also be done.) What have been the reasons for the increase, decrease or unchanged status of superstitions in this period?
- (C) Whether spread of education and greater exposure to the world as a whole has made any impact on the belief of superstitions?
- (D) What practices or measures can be government and governance follow to eradicate malignant superstitions and create a superstition free Karnataka?

5. Research Methodology:

The following methodology and research tools will be employed (but not limited to) during the assessment.

- ***Literature Review***

The Consultant Evaluation Organization will have to review the existing literature that may exist in the Gazetteers of the districts of Karnataka (particularly those written in the British period) and news items reporting about the superstitions, and essays, theses or research papers on superstitions available. The review should also include documentation and review of the formal and

Informal measures taken by the government, district administration and society at large to counter superstitions and what was the result of these?

It is indicated that the book “Omens and Superstitions of South India” written by Mr. Edgar Thurston, CIE, first published in 1912 and recently republished in 2013 (on line available at www.gutenberg.org/files/35690-h/35690-h.htm) may be referred to in literature review. Another book titled “Superstition-A Rational Discourse” written by Yadnyeshwar Nigale and translated by Ms. Suman Oak, published by Lokbhumi Prakashan, Panaji, can also be found relevant in parts.

- ***Interviews with keypersons***

The Consultant Evaluation Organization will have to interview the following types of persons-

- Those who have suffered themselves in person or at one member of their family suffered, as a result of a superstition forced upon them in which they did not wish to be a part of.
- Those members of society, who have opposed any of the forecited specific superstitions for documenting the nature of their efforts, the support they received (or did not receive) from the society or State/ District administration in their efforts and the result of it?

- ***Focus Group Discussions (FGD)***

The Consultant Evaluation Organization should conduct FGD of groups each consisting of 10 to 15 participants. Separate FGDs should be conducted for men and women. The FGDs should focus on documentation of the aforecited superstitions prevalent in the area and on points (B) to (E) of Research Objectives detailed above.

6. The Final Report

The Consultant Evaluation Organization shall document the assignment in a final report; which should be in English and Kannada. The report shall include:

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- Executive Summary (say about 1500 words).
- Details of the Assignment methodology and analysis.
- Findings and Recommendations.
- Lessons learned from the study.
- Annexure including questionnaire.

7. Time Schedule:

On the basis of the proposed time schedule outline in these Terms of Reference, the consultant organization shall prepare a brief work plan. The work plan should set out the Consultant Organization's approach for conducting research activities. The period for the consultancy should not exceed 6 months starting with day of signing the agreement. They are expected to adhere to the following timelines and deliverables or be quicker than the follows.

- a. Work plan submission : One month after signing the agreement.
- b. Field info Collection : Three months from date of Work Plan Approval.
- c. Draft report Submission : One month after field data collection.
- d. Final Report Submission : One month from draft report approval.
- e. Total duration : 6 months.

9. Qualifications of the Consultant Organizations and method of selection:

Consultant Organizations should have and provide details of evaluation team members having in depth knowledge of the issue, have had done previous studies and written publications in this or relevant subject with support team having fluency in Kannada and English and skills in research methodology having technical qualifications/capability as including as follows:

1. Masters in Sociology/Anthropology/Social Work.
2. Masters in Psychology.
3. At least graduate in Medicine and Surgery (MBBS and above only).
4. Masters Women's Studies/Gender Studies or Graduate in Law.

Consultant Organizations at least three of the above appropriate kind of personnel will not be considered as competent for the status study.

10. Cost and schedule of budget releases:

Output based budget release will be as follows-

- a. The **first instalment** of Consultation fee amounting to 30% of the total fee shall be payable as advance to the Consultant after the approval of the Work Plan, but only on execution of a bank guarantee of a scheduled nationalized bank, valid for a period of at least 12 months from the date of issuance of advance.
- b. The **second instalment** of Consultation fee amounting to 50% of the total fee shall be payable to the Consultant after the approval of the Draft report.
- c. The **third and final instalment** of Consultation fee amounting to 20% of the total fee shall be payable to the Consultant after the receipt of the hard and soft copies of the final report in such format and number as prescribed in the agreement, along with all original documents containing primary and secondary data, processed data outputs, study report and soft copies of all literature used in the final report.

Taxes will be deducted from each payment, as per rates in force. In addition, service tax will be paid as prescribed by law.

11. Selection of Consultant Agency for Evaluation:

The selection of evaluation agency should be finalized as per provisions of KTPP Act and rules and the Empanelment Manual of KEA.

12. Contact person for further details:

Sri.B.K.Dikshit, Chief Evaluation Officer, Karnataka Evaluation Authority, No. 542, 2nd Gate, 5th Floor, M.S.Building, Bangalore. Phone number 22032561 and Sri.S.A.Katarki, Consultant Evaluation, phone number 22032189, will be the

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstitions in Karnataka
contact persons for giving information and details for this study.

**The entire process of study shall be subject to and conform to the
letter and spirit of the contents of the Government of Karnataka Order no.**

PD/8/EVN (2)/2011 dated 11th July 2011 and orders made there under.

**This ToR received the approval of the Technical Committee of the
KEA in its 19th meeting held on 18th August 2015.**

Sd/-

Chief Evaluation Officer
Karnataka Evaluation Authority

Annexure III: Inception Report the study along with the data collection instruments

STATUS OF SOME OF THE MALIGNANT, EXPLOITATIVE AND OFFENSIVE TO HUMAN DIGNITY SUPERSTITIONS OF KARNATAKA AND THE CHANGE IN THEIR STATUS OF PREVALENCE IN THE PAST 25YEARS

AN INCEPTION REPORT

BY

**Hyderabad Karnataka Centre for Advanced Learning, Gulbarga
State Office: HKCAL, Bangalore
68/14, Sai Deep, 1st Floor, 2nd Main, Krishna Block
Sheshadripuram, Bangalore -560 020**

SUBMITTED TO

KARNATAKA EVALUATION AUTHORITY

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

February 10, 2016

1. Title of the Study:

Status of some of the malignant, exploitative and offensive to human dignity Superstitions of Karnataka and the change in their status of prevalence in the past 25years

2. Background

All around the world, people who have different religions, beliefs, and thoughts; living in different geographical regions, under different conditions and with different social structures; having different traditions and cultures; coming from various ethnic backgrounds have believed in a variety of superstitions throughout history, including the beliefs in their social and psychological realities and have adapted and internalized these.

Sibel Akova (2011: 139)

Historically, much of the search for the so called truth scientifically has been with a strong disbelief of myths, superstitions, and other beliefs. Most of them had their origin and / or association with religion. Even before rational thinking got to be known as 'science' there had been such an opposition such as those reflected in the philosophical writings of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Lucretius or Cicero. Similar philosophies that opposed superstitions are to be found associated with the thoughts of Lokayatas (ancient materialists) or Charvaakas. Yet, both in the western world and in India, superstitions have continued to dominate religious thought and therefore social life. So much so that religion in India is often perceived more as superstitions than worship. For, it is also believed that most Indians are religious and superstitious. Considering the number of temples and places of worship, and forms of worship involving a range of bewildering rituals, this Statement on religiosity of Indian reflects a reality.

Each region or State in Indian peninsula has its own peculiar set of belief and superstitions, and a range of myths behind them often to demonstrate the validity of such superstitions or the practices associated with it. Some overlap across the States either due to the cultural spread or geographical contiguity.

Despite the spread of education, science, rational thinking and specific legislation against certain practices based on such superstitions, they continue to prevail in society. Often some of them violate the fundamental principles of Indian constitution or the or the tenets of human rights if not offending the collective conscience in the national and international community. Notwithstanding the law against it, one comes across a rare incidence of human sacrifice, of a sati or a dedication of a girl child that results eventually in human trafficking. The State of Karnataka, which has acquired a reputation for its giant leaps in information and space technology, presence of reputed educational institution of national and international institutions, too is not free from some superstitious beliefs and practices that are generally unacceptable from the point of view of a human rights and or rational society. This proposed study is about the nature and extent of some such beliefs and practices prevalent in Karnataka, and to assess the nature and directions of changes in them over the two or three decades.

3. Some Definitions

Even as steps are being undertaken to initiate the study, an attempt is made here to provide a few definitions of the concepts used here, especially that of superstition. This section is meant to be read as a preliminary note.

Although Cicero distinguishes clearly between religion and superstition, the latter has tended to be associated almost always and everywhere with religion. According to a popular web definition superstition is excessively credulous (i.e., that which requires little proof) belief in and reverence for the supernatural. Further, it pertains to a widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influences, especially as leading to good or bad luck, or a practice based on such a belief.

They are irrational because they are usually founded on ignorance or fear and characterized by obsessive reverence for omens, charms, etc. They are made up of a notion, act or ritual that derives from such belief.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, superstition is belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge, but is connected with old ideas about magic, etc. However, it may be added that reference to such ‘old’ ideas relate to practices and beliefs associated with forms or versions of religious beliefs of an earlier era. Thus a successive dominant religion may relegate which often are practices or beliefs associated with previously prevailing religious beliefs as ‘heathen,’ barbaric or primitive. It is another matter that many such practices may, indeed, be barbaric or inhuman.

According to Foster and Kokko (2009) ‘the concept of superstition encompasses a wide range of beliefs and behaviours, most can be united by a single underlying property—the incorrect establishment of cause and effect.’³² Likewise we get an excellent definition and interpretation of superstition in the work of Sibel Akova (2011) as under:

Superstition is essentially a concept that can be defined as the set of thoughts and beliefs that are incongruent with reality, and as a subjective concept that we can categorize as referring to the set of doings, behaviours, words, and beliefs that have different meanings for different individuals and cultures. A belief or practice that an individual or a culture considers to be superstitious, void or meaningless can be considered to be true by another. We know that a superstitious set of beliefs, which has been formed—or has emerged of its own accord—based on different perceptions and interpretations through time, exists in all societies.³³

³²Foster, Kevin R and Hanna Kokko (2009) The evolution of superstitious and superstition-like behavior. Published 7 January 2009. DOI: 10.1098/rspb.2008.0981. Proceedings of the Royal Society of Publishing B. <http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/276/1654/31>. Accessed on 06 February 2016.

³³ Akova, Sibel (2011) The Relationship between Superstitions, Metaphors, and Advertising. Journal Academic Marketing Mysticism Online (JAMMO). Vol 3. Part 9. 138-156. 29 November 2011. <http://www.journalacademicmarketingmysticismonline.net> Accessed on February 6, 2016.

4. The Indian Scene

As pointed above, Indian society has had a long tradition of beliefs in superstition and in superstitious practices. Some are so strong that the believers do not hesitate to engage in acts that are considered illegal, inhuman often involving human sacrifice, disfiguring one's own or of other's body, sacrifices of a wide variety. As late as 30 January 2016, the Times of India (Jaipur) reported from Ajmer that a person killed two neighbours because he had been advised by a shaman that the neighbours were responsible for a chronic pain with which he was suffering.³⁴ The paradox is that superstitious beliefs get subscribed so rapidly that any scientific contradictions of them never travel as far as the superstition themselves. Many temples in the country, especially those with a reputation for powers to heal, become a breeding centre for such superstitions. Quacks and local healers thrive on the illiteracy and ignorance of naive and gullible people and try to hoodwink them into believing that they have magic cures for their ill.

The most prevalent belief is that the people living in rural areas and in remote villages are far more superstitious than any others, but this is not necessarily true. People living in urban areas too have their own superstitions, if not carry-over from the rural hinterlands. In Indian villages myths, misconceptions, blind beliefs, and superstitions abound. Whether in villages or towns, quacks and local healers thrive on the illiteracy and ignorance of naive and gullible people and try to hoodwink them into believing that they have magic cures for their ill, or to attain a means for quick wealth.

One of the peculiar features of the world of superstitions is that they make almost any to develop a faith or belief in them, as if it is for 'just in case.' The disaster involving Apollo 13, the prayers before and after the successful launch of the spacecraft to the planet Mars; professionals such as doctors, engineers; irrigation specialists... from nearly all walks of life subscribe to one or the other superstition. Even the 'scientific temperament' is not free from superstitious beliefs, for the launch of invention has to often wait till it is an auspicious time and day. Each occupational group or a profession too tends to evolve its own ethics as well as set of superstitions. For example, a hair dresser does not touch his tools on a Tuesday in most south Indian towns and villages. The popularity of most television channels today are sustained not merely by a proper mix of soaps and drama, but also with a number of astrological consultations and/or shows that prescribe magical cures for various needs of the audience (be it for a timely marriage of an unwed daughter, or search for a lost son!)

5. When does Superstitions become a Problem?

When nearly all societies have had their share of superstitions, beliefs and practices based on them, one may ask – why should they become a worry? For, it is not uncommon to come across a belief or practice that an individual or a culture considers

³⁴ The Times of India, Jaipur Ed. January 30, 2016.
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Superstitious-man-kills-2-neighbours/articleshow/50791364.cms> . Accessed on February 6, 2016.

being superstitious, void or meaningless to be considered as true by another. Often inter-community or cultural stress and conflict is around such differences, especially among the tribal and similar primitive societies.

There are several superstitions that are in vogue, following which there are practices of avoidance, preference or rejection and so on. For instance, it is believed that it is a likely to be a bad day for a person, as she or he wakes up and rises from the bed to see the face of certain people known to be bearers of bad luck! Imagine if this belief is so strong that there were killing or defacing such persons believed to be bearers of bad luck! Indeed, some of the practices associated with Untouchability towards Dalits in India has had such a superstitious belief.

In any case, superstitions become a social problem when they extend to deny dignity to human beings – either collectively or individually, and/or violate human rights recognized morally or legally by a society, and/or affect the life chances of individuals or groups of people, humiliates an individual or an entire community, we have a social problem at hand. There are several personal practices arising out of such superstitious beliefs which may not affect or hurt anyone. For instance, foregoing of all food and beverages for a whole day as part of a practice to fast on certain days in a week or month may not hurt anyone or offend any others. But facilitating the bodily rolling over the left-over food served on banana leaves in a temple by a group of people could be considered as denying the human dignity. Likewise, insisting on members of a caste or tribe should eat the food particles removed from the gaps in finger nails of persons of another caste could also be a case of violation of human rights, inflicting inhuman practice upon others.

It is under such circumstances that we consider superstitions and practices arising out of them as social problem. This study pertains to some such superstitions.

6. Objectives of the Study

To document the local belief/legend/history of the following superstitions of Karnataka-

- **Made Snana**

Kukke Subramanya Temple,

Subramanya temples of Kalavara, Kundapura Taluk

Ramanathapura, Hassan District.

- **Mass animal sacrifice**

Marigudi during Suggi Maripuja in Udupi and Gokarna

Purdamma in Hassan, Durgambika Devi fair in Davanagere, temples of Voddarahalli and Machohalli in Bangalore during Makara Sankranti etc.

- **Tossing of children from top Digambeshwara temple in Nagrala village of Bagalkot district**

- **Bettale seve at Chandragutti, Shimoga and elsewhere**

- **Jata or jada and Devadasi system**

Dedicating girls to the service of God – instead of female infanticide as elsewhere: Yellamma cult in Saundatti, and in the Uttangi Durga temple on Uchungi Hill, Davanagere district

- **The practice of *Sidi* , prevailing at Ghattaragi village in Afzalpur taluk of Gulbarga district and also parts of Bagalkot district; but also in other villages of Davanagere**

- **To study and document as to whether belief in superstitions is increasing, decreasing or has remained almost the same in the past 25 years.**

In case the superstition is pan district, documentation of inter-district variations

- **Has the spread of education and greater exposure to the world as a whole made any impact on the belief of superstitions?**

- **What practices or measures can the government and governance follow to eradicate malignant superstitions and create a superstition free Karnataka?**

- **Are there contradictions in State policies?**

7. Research Methodology

By the very nature of the topic, the study aims at employing qualitative techniques of data gathering: observation (where feasible), in-depth interviews and focused group discussions with a range of informants: members of the affected households or families, religious leaders, NGOs and activists, as also protagonists who support the practices and beliefs. Preceding the field work, we propose to undertake a systematic survey of literature especially from the colonial times written by administrators cum anthropologists (e.g, Edgar Thurston), and several missionaries with their commentaries and the descriptions made in the District Gazetteers. The recent report submitted by a high-powered committee set up by State Government on Blind Beliefs and Superstitions shall be consulted, and discussions with the members of the committee will be held.

Another important source of information, which also will be within the focus of literature review are the newspaper reports and analysis over the past two or three decades.

Such a comprehensive review will establish the base information about the beliefs and practices but will also enable us to arrive at superstition-specific checklist for interviews and group discussions, and give a perception over the changes since they were first described or analysed in such documents and/or literature. Observations, discussions and interviews will give us an indication of not only the way the practices have persisted but also indicate the nature and extent of changes, if any. Above all, the latter will also give us indications as to why they have persisted, and what seem to be limitations of the State initiatives in eradicating them. Policy recommendations can emerge from such an approach which are far more likely to be realistic than mere review of literature.

Separate Interview and discussion guides shall be prepared for employing at the time of data collection. Questions shall pertain to the perception of the origin of practices, narratives about the beliefs behind such practices, and the nature of changes if any. Questions shall be raised about the challenges to eradicate such practices and changes in the system of beliefs.

8. Deliverables and Time frame

HKCAL will commence the work immediately on approval of Inception Report (Work Plan).

Excluding the time taken for approval, the evaluation study shall be completed within Six months time.

Time Frame

Work plan submission	Within one month after the release of first installment of the contract sum.
Review of Literature and Preliminary visits to the field sites	During the Zero and the first month
Preparation of research tools, list of persons to be contacted	Simultaneously during the first month
Primary data collection (Field level)	Will be completed within Three months after the work plan is approved by KEA.
Preparation of the draft report of the study and its submission	Within one month after completing filed data collection for approval by a joint team of KEA.
Final report submission	Within one month after the draft report is approved.

Work Flow Chart

Work Plan for the Study on Superstitions								
No.	Step	Month Order						Remarks
		First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	
1	Work Plan Submission	■						
2	Review of Literature		■					
3	Discussions with the Research Team		■					
4	Preliminary Visits to field Site		■	■				
5	Identification of key Informants		■	■				
6	Preparation of Research Tools		■	■				
7	Field Data Collection			■	■	■	■	
8	Analysis of data and Draft Report				■	■	■	
9	Submission of the Draft Report						■	
10	Final Report Submission							■

9. Research Team and Research Processes

The study team will consist of:

- Principal investigator – **Professor G K Karanth**
- Mechanical Engineer –
- Data analyst/Statistician –
- Field investigators –
- Orientation training to be imparted to field investigators for collection of primary and secondary data.
- FGDs with stakeholders will be carried out by experienced personnel

Experienced researcher/ statistician for data analysis

10. Questionnaire and other Research Tools (Please see Annexure I)**11. Structure of the Final Report (Tentative)**

Preface and Acknowledgements

Contents

List of Tables / Figures / Pictures

Executive Summary

Ch. 1 Introduction

Ch. 2 History of Superstitions in Karnataka: The Malignant and the Not-so Malignant

Ch. 3 Specific Superstitions - History and Myths, Current status, regional variations if any, and specific caste/communities involved, social and economic implications, legal status, changes over the year.

Ch. 4 Socio-Cultural Resistance to Change and the Role of Change Agents

Ch. 5 Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Research Tools***Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status: Ajalu***

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstitions in Karnataka

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in	
2	Moderate religious person		a	God
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:			

(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a to e)

3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
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Please explain:

5. If the answer is "No" to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their

	Out of	
--	--------	--

view:

[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6. Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

a. ---

- b. Was there any specific experience involving
- Self, the respondent
 - A member of the household (please specify)
 - Someone close as a relation/friend/
 - Combination of the above

[Please describe the experience:]

7. Do you perform Ajalu?

- i. Yes [1] / No [2] / Do not believe in it [3]
- ii. Other members in the family believe in it Yes [1]/ No[2]/ Do not believe [3]
- iii. When was the last time you performed it: _____ / Not applicable
- iv. Is there a belief that your family will not flourish if that is not practiced
 - a. At least once in life time
 - b. Annually
 - c. Whenever you visit the temple
 - d. Only if there is any specific problem
 - e. Any other
 - f. Not applicable (Do not believe in it and do not practice)

8. Has anyone advised you to practice it at any time? (Elaborate)

9. Do you think that Ajalu practice is

Increasing / becoming popular	Yes	No	Same	Can't Say
Specific to any one caste:	Yes	No, by others also in the past	Spread to Others	Can't Say
Was confined only to any one group but now becoming a practice among others also	Yes	No, by others also in the past		Do not know
Was practiced in the past also by the family and you are now following it: (Tick any One)	Yes	No, only now	Not now, but yes in the past	Neither then or now

10. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your beliefs in Ajalu?

- a. Yes / No / Don't Know
- b. If yes, where is it located?
- c. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?
- d. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?
 - i. Yes / No / No idea
 - ii. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)
 - iii. If the answer to 8 (d) is "No": Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

11. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so concerning Ajalu?

- i. Yes / No
- ii. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?
- iii. Have all the other members done the same?
 - a. Is there any particular group or association that is strongly supporting the practice?
 - i. Yes / No
 - ii. If yes, specify which group or Association

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstitions in Karnataka

iii. If yes, why:

- b. If yes, could you explain why you continue to believe in the practice? (Not Applicable)
- c. If the practice is completely banned, what would you or the other believers may do or practice to solve their problems?
- d. Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice of Ajaalu?
- e. Over the past 20 years or so, what would you think are the major changes concerning this practice? (open question, first, and then following by the suggested responses)

12. Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

13. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Ajalu	Tossing of children	<i>Bettale seve</i>	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	<i>Sidi</i>	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remarks:

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstitions in Karnataka

14. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs about Ajaḷu in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

A. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

B. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

What is your view of the State planning to ban Ajaḷu?

Name of the Investigator

Name and Signature of the Respondent

Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status: Bettale seve

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in		
2	Moderate religious person		a	God	
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost	
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death	
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth	
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers	
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:				

(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a to e)

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstions in Karnataka

3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
-----	---	----	---

Please explain:

5. If the answer is "No" to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their view:

	Out of	
--	--------	--

[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6 Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

c. ---

d. Was there any specific experience involving

- i. Self, the respondent
- ii. A member of the household (please specify)
- iii. Someone close as a relation/friend/
- iv. Combination of the above

[Please describe the experience:]

7 Do you perform Bettale Seve?

- ii. Yes [1] / No [2] / Do not believe in it [3]
- iii. Other members in the family believe in it Yes [1]/ No[2]/ Do not believe [3]
- iv. When was the last time you performed it: _____ / Not applicable
- v. Is there a belief that your family will not flourish if that is not practiced
 - a. At least once in life time
 - b. Annually
 - c. Whenever you visit the temple
 - d. Only if there is any specific problem
 - e. Any other
 - f. Not applicable (Do not believe in it and do not practice)

Has anyone advised you to practice it at any time? (Elaborate)

8. Do you think that Bettale Seve practice is

Increasing / becoming popular	Yes	No	Same	Can't Say
Specific to any one caste:	Yes	No, by others also in the past	Spread to Others	Can't Say
Was confined only to any one group but now becoming a practice among others also	Yes	No, by others also in the past		Do not know
Was practiced in the past also by the family and you are now following it: (Tick any One)	Yes	No, only now	Not now, but yes in the past	Neither then or now

9. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your beliefs in Bettale Seve?

- e. Yes / No / Don't Know
- f. If yes, where is it located?
- g. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?
- h. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?
- iv. Yes / No / No idea
- v. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)
- vi. If the answer to 8 (d) is "No": Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

10. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so concerning Bettale Seve?

- iv. Yes / No
- v. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?
- vi. Have all the other members done the same?
 - a. Is there any particular group or association that is strongly supporting the practice?
 - i. Yes / No
 - ii. If yes, specify which group or Association
 - iii. If yes, why:
 - b. If yes, could you explain why you continue to believe in the practice? (Not Applicable)

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- c. If the practice is completely banned, what would you or the other believers may do or practice to solve their problems?
- d. Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice of Bettale Seve?
- e. Over the past 20 years or so, what would you think are the major changes concerning this practice? (open question, first, and then following by the suggested responses)

11. Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

12. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Ajalu	Tossing of children	Bettale seve	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	Sidi	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remarks:

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstions in Karnataka

13. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs about Bettale Seve in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

C. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

D. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

What is your view of the State act to ban Bettale Seve?

Name of the Investigator

Name and Signature of the Respondent

Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status: Children Throwing

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in		
2	Moderate religious person		a	God	
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost	
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death	
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth	
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers	
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:				

(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a to e)

3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

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Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
-----	---	----	---

Please explain:

5. If the answer is "No" to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their view:

	Out of	
--	--------	--

[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6. Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

e. ---

- f. Was there any specific experience involving
- i. Self, the respondent
 - ii. A member of the household (please specify)
 - iii. Someone close as a relation/friend/
 - iv. Combination of the above

[Please describe the experience:]

7. Do you perform Children Throwing?

- Yes [1] / No [2] / Do not believe in it [3]
- Other members in the family believe in it Yes [1]/ No[2]/ Do not believe [3]
- When was the last time you performed it: _____ / Not applicable
- Is there a belief that your family will not flourish if that is not practiced
 - At least once in life time
 - Annually
 - Whenever you visit the temple
 - Only if there is any specific problem
 - Any other
 - Not applicable (Do not believe in it and do not practice)

8. Has anyone advised you to practice it at any time? (Elaborate)
9. Do you think that Children Throwing practice is

Increasing / becoming popular	Yes	No	Same	Can't Say
Specific to any one caste:	Yes	No, by others also in the past	Spread to Others	Can't Say
Was confined only to any one group but now becoming a practice among others also	Yes	No, by others also in the past		Do not know
Was practiced in the past also by the family and you are now following it: (Tick any One)	Yes	No, only now	Not now, but yes in the past	Neither then or now

8. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your beliefs in Children Throwing?

- i. Yes / No / Don't Know
- j. If yes, where is it located?
- k. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?
- l. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?
- vii. Yes / No / No idea
- viii. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)
- ix. If the answer to 8 (d) is "No": Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

9. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so concerning Children Throwing?

- vii. Yes / No
- viii. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?

ix. Have all the other members done the same?

- Is there any particular group or association that is strongly supporting the practice?
 - Yes / No
 - If yes, specify which group or Association
 - If yes, why:
- If yes, could you explain why you continue to believe in the practice? (Not Applicable)

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- If the practice is completely banned, what would you or the other believers may do or practice to solve their problems?
 - Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice of Children Throwing?
 - Over the past 20 years or so, what would you think are the major changes concerning this practice? (open question, first, and then following by the suggested responses)
- 10.** Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

11. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Ajalu	Tossing of children	Bettale seve	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	Sidi	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remarks:

12. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs about Children Throwing in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

E. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

F. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

What is your view of the State planning to ban Children Throwing?

Name of the Investigator

Name and Signature of the Respondent

Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status: Devadasi

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in		
2	Moderate religious person		a	God	
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost	
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death	
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth	
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers	
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:				

(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a to e)

3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

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Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
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Please explain:

5. If the answer is "No" to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their view:

	Out of	
--	--------	--

[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6. Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

g. ---

h. Was there any specific experience involving

- i. Self, the respondent
- ii. A member of the household (please specify)
- iii. Someone close as a relation/friend/
- iv. Combination of the above

[Please describe the experience:]

7. Do you perform Devadasi?

- i. Yes [1] / No [2] / Do not believe in it [3]
- ii. Other members in the family believe in it Yes [1]/ No[2]/ Do not believe [3]
- iii. When was the last time you performed it: _____ / Not applicable
- iv. Is there a belief that your family will not flourish if that is not practiced
 - a. At least once in life time
 - b. Annually
 - c. Whenever you visit the temple
 - d. Only if there is any specific problem
 - e. Any other
 - f. Not applicable (Do not believe in it and do not practice)

8. Has anyone advised you to practice it at any time? (Elaborate)

9. Do you think that Devadasi practice is

Increasing / becoming popular	Yes	No	Same	Can't Say
Specific to any one caste:	Yes	No, by others also in the past	Spread to Others	Can't Say
Was confined only to any one group but now becoming a practice among others also	Yes	No, by others also in the past		Do not know
Was practiced in the past also by the family and you are now following it: (Tick any One)	Yes	No, only now	Not now, but yes in the past	Neither then or now

10. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your beliefs in Devadasi?

- m. Yes / No / Don't Know
- n. If yes, where is it located?
- o. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?
- p. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?
 - x. Yes / No / No idea
 - xi. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)
 - xii. If the answer to 8 (d) is "No": Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

11. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so concerning Devadasi?

- x. Yes / No
- xi. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?
- xii. Have all the other members done the same?
 - a. Is there any particular group or association that is strongly supporting the practice?
 - i. Yes / No
 - ii. If yes, specify which group or Association
 - iii. If yes, why:
 - b. If yes, could you explain why you continue to believe in the practice? (Not Applicable)

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- c. If the practice is completely banned, what would you or the other believers may do or practice to solve their problems?
- d. Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice of Devadasi?
- e. Over the past 20 years or so, what would you think are the major changes concerning this practice? (open question, first, and then following by the suggested responses)

12. Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

13. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Ajalu	Tossing of children	Bettale seve	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	Sidi	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remarks:

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstions in Karnataka

14. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs about Devadasi in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

G. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

i)

ii)

iii)

H. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

i)

ii)

iii)

Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

What is your view of the State banning Devadasi?

Name of the Investigator

Name and Signature of the Respondent

Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status: Jata hair

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in		
2	Moderate religious person		a	God	
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost	
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death	
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth	
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers	
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:				

(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a to e)

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstions in Karnataka

3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
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Please explain:

5. If the answer is "No" to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their view:

	Out of	
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[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6. Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

i. ---

j. Was there any specific experience involving

- i. Self, the respondent
- ii. A member of the household (please specify)
- iii. Someone close as a relation/friend/
- iv. Combination of the above

[Please describe the experience:]

7. Do you perform Jata hair?

- i. Yes [1] / No [2] / Do not believe in it [3]
- ii. Other members in the family believe in it Yes [1]/ No[2]/ Do not believe [3]
- iii. When was the last time you performed it: _____ / Not applicable
- iv. Is there a belief that your family will not flourish if that is not practiced
 - a. At least once in life time
 - b. Annually
 - c. Whenever you visit the temple
 - d. Only if there is any specific problem
 - e. Any other
 - f. Not applicable (Do not believe in it and do not practice)

8. Has anyone advised you to practice it at any time? (Elaborate)

9. Do you think that Jata hair practice is

Increasing / becoming popular	Yes	No	Same	Can't Say
Specific to any one caste:	Yes	No, by others also in the past	Spread to Others	Can't Say
Was confined only to any one group but now becoming a practice among others also	Yes	No, by others also in the past		Do not know
Was practiced in the past also by the family and you are now following it: (Tick any One)	Yes	No, only now	Not now, but yes in the past	Neither then or now

10. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your beliefs in Jata hair?

- q. Yes / No / Don't Know
- r. If yes, where is it located?
- s. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?
- t. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?
- xiii. Yes / No / No idea
- xiv. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)
- xv. If the answer to 8 (d) is "No": Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

11. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so concerning Jata hair ?

- xiii. Yes / No
- xiv. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?
- xv. Have all the other members done the same?
 - a. Is there any particular group or association that is strongly supporting the practice?
 - i. Yes / No
 - ii. If yes, specify which group or Association
 - iii. If yes, why:
 - b. If yes, could you explain why you continue to believe in the practice? (Not Applicable)
 - c. If the practice is completely banned, what would you or the other believers may do or practice to solve their problems?

- d. Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice of Jata hair?
- e. Over the past 20 years or so, what would you think are the major changes concerning this practice? (open question, first, and then following by the suggested responses)

12. Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

:

13. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Ajalu	Tossing of children	<i>Bettale seve</i>	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	<i>Sidi</i>	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remarks:

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstions in Karnataka

14. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs about Jata hair in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

I. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

J. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

What is your view of the State planning to ban Jata hair?

Name of the Investigator

Name and Signature of the Respondent

Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status: Made Snana

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in		
2	Moderate religious person		a	God	
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost	
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death	
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth	
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers	
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:				

(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a to e)

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3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
-----	---	----	---

Please explain:

5. If the answer is "No" to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their view:

	Out of	
--	--------	--

[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6. Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

k. ---

- l. Was there any specific experience involving
 - i. Self, the respondent
 - ii. A member of the household (please specify)
 - iii. Someone close as a relation/friend/
 - iv. Combination of the above

[Please describe the experience:]

7. Do you perform Made Snana?

- i. Yes [1] / No [2] / Do not believe in it [3]
- ii. Other members in the family believe in it Yes [1]/ No[2]/ Do not believe [3]
- iii. When was the last time you performed it: _____ / Not applicable
- iv. Is there a belief that your family will not flourish if that is not practiced
 - a. At least once in life time
 - b. Annually
 - c. Whenever you visit the temple
 - d. Only if there is any specific problem
 - e. Any other
 - f. Not applicable (Do not believe in it and do not practice)

8. Has anyone advised you to practice it at any time? (Elaborate)

9. Do you think that Made Snana practice is

Increasing / becoming popular	Yes	No	Same	Can't Say
Specific to any one caste:	Yes	No, by others also in the past	Spread to Others	Can't Say
Was confined only to Male Kudiya but now becoming a practice among others also	Yes	No, by others also in the past		Do not know
Was practiced in the past also by the family and you are now following it: (Tick any One)	Yes	No, only now	Not now, but yes in the past	Neither then or now

10. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your beliefs in Made Snana?

- u. Yes / No / Don't Know
- v. If yes, where is it located?
- w. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?
- x. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?
- xvi. Yes / No / No idea
- xvii. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)
- xviii. If the answer to 8 (d) is "No": Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

11. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so?

- xvi. Yes / No
- xvii. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?

xviii. Have all the other members done the same?

- a. Is there any particular group or association that is strongly supporting the practice?
 - i. Yes / No
 - ii. If yes, specify which group or Association
 - iii. If yes, why:
- b. If yes, could you explain why you continue to believe in the practice? (Not Applicable)
- c. If the practice is completely banned, what would you or the other believers may do or practice to solve their problems?

- d. Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice of Made Snana?
- e. Over the past 20 years or so, what would you think are the major changes concerning this practice? (open question, first, and then following by the suggested responses)

12. Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

13. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Tossing of children	<i>Ajalu</i>	<i>Bettale seve</i>	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	<i>Sidi</i>	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remarks:

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14. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

K. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

L. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

What is your view of the State planning to ban Made Snana?

Name of the Investigator

Name and Signature of the Respondent

Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status: Mass animal sacrifice

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in		
2	Moderate religious person		a	God	
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost	
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death	
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth	
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers	
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:				

(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a to e)

3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstions in Karnataka

Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
-----	---	----	---

Please explain:

5. If the answer is "No" to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their view:

	Out of	
--	--------	--

[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6. Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

m. ---

- n. Was there any specific experience involving
- Self, the respondent
 - A member of the household (please specify)
 - Someone close as a relation/friend/
 - Combination of the above

[Please describe the experience:]

7. Do you perform Mass animal sacrifice?

- Yes [1] / No [2] / Do not believe in it [3]
- Other members in the family believe in it Yes [1]/ No[2]/ Do not believe [3]
- When was the last time you performed it: _____ / Not applicable
- Is there a belief that your family will not flourish if that is not practiced
 - At least once in life time
 - Annually
 - Whenever you visit the temple
 - Only if there is any specific problem
 - Any other
 - Not applicable (Do not believe in it and do not practice)

8. Has anyone advised you to practice it at any time? (Elaborate)

9. Do you think that Mass animal sacrifice practice is

Increasing / becoming popular	Yes	No	Same	Can't Say
Specific to any one caste:	Yes	No, by others also in the past	Spread to Others	Can't Say
Was confined only to any one group but now becoming a practice among others also	Yes	No, by others also in the past		Do not know
Was practiced in the past also by the family and you are now following it: (Tick any One)	Yes	No, only now	Not now, but yes in the past	Neither then or now

10. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your beliefs in Mass animal sacrifice?

y. Yes / No / Don't Know

z. If yes, where is it located?

aa. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?

bb. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?

xix. Yes / No / No idea

xx. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)

xxi. If the answer to 8 (d) is "No": Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

11. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so concerning Mass animal sacrifice?

xix. Yes / No

xx. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?

xxi. Have all the other members done the same?

a. Is there any particular group or association that is strongly supporting the practice?

i. Yes / No

ii. If yes, specify which group or Association

iii. If yes, why:

b. If yes, could you explain why you continue to believe in the practice? (Not Applicable)

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- c. If the practice is completely banned, what would you or the other believers may do or practice to solve their problems?

- d. Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice of Mass animal sacrifice?

- e. Over the past 20 years or so, what would you think are the major changes concerning this practice? (open question, first, and then following by the suggested responses)

12. Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

13. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Ajalu	Tossing of children	Bettale seve	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	Sidi	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remarks:

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14. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs about Mass animal sacrifice in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

M. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

i)

ii)

iii)

N. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

i)

ii)

iii)

Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

What is your view of the State planning to ban Mass animal sacrifice?

Name of the Investigator

Name and Signature of the Respondent

Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status: Sidi

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in		
2	Moderate religious person		a	God	
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost	
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death	
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth	
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers	
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:				

(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a to e)

3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

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Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
-----	---	----	---

Please explain:

5. If the answer is "No" to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their view:

	Out of	
--	--------	--

[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6. Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

o. ---

- p. Was there any specific experience involving
- i. Self, the respondent
 - ii. A member of the household (please specify)
 - iii. Someone close as a relation/friend/
 - iv. Combination of the above

[Please describe the experience:]

7. Do you perform Sidi?

- i. Yes [1] / No [2] / Do not believe in it [3]
- ii. Other members in the family believe in it Yes [1]/ No[2]/ Do not believe [3]
- iii. When was the last time you performed it: _____ / Not applicable
- iv. Is there a belief that your family will not flourish if that is not practiced
 - a. At least once in life time
 - b. Annually
 - c. Whenever you visit the temple
 - d. Only if there is any specific problem
 - e. Any other
 - f. Not applicable (Do not believe in it and do not practice)

8. Has anyone advised you to practice it at any time? (Elaborate)

9. Do you think that Sidi practice is

Increasing / becoming popular	Yes	No	Same	Can't Say
Specific to any one caste:	Yes	No, by others also in the past	Spread to Others	Can't Say
Was confined only to any one group but now becoming a practice among others also	Yes	No, by others also in the past		Do not know
Was practiced in the past also by the family and you are now following it: (Tick any One)	Yes	No, only now	Not now, but yes in the past	Neither then or now

10. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your beliefs in Sidi?

cc. Yes / No / Don't Know

dd. If yes, where is it located?

ee. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?

ff. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?

xxii. Yes / No / No idea

xxiii. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)

xxiv. If the answer to 8 (d) is "No": Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

11. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so concerning Sidi?

xxii. Yes / No

xxiii. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?

xxiv. Have all the other members done the same?

a. Is there any particular group or association that is strongly supporting the practice?

i. Yes / No

ii. If yes, specify which group or Association

iii. If yes, why:

b. If yes, could you explain why you continue to believe in the practice? (Not Applicable)

c. If the practice is completely banned, what would you or the other believers may do or practice to solve their problems?

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- d. Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice of Sidi?
- e. Over the past 20 years or so, what would you think are the major changes concerning this practice? (open question, first, and then following by the suggested responses)

12. Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

13. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Ajalu	Tossing of children	Bettale seve	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	Sidi	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remark

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14. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs about Sidi in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

O. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

P. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

What is your view of the State planning to ban Sidi?

Name of the Investigator

Name and Signature of the Respondent

Superstitions in Karnataka and the change in their status

Date	Location	Belief Code	Respo Type Code	Interviewed by

1. Personal Information:

1	Place		2	Name	
3	Age		4	Gender	
5	Marital Status		6	Education	
7	Occupation		8	Annual Family Income	
9	Caste		10	Religion	
11	Contact Particulars	Mobile:			

2. How would you describe yourself?

1	Strong religious person		More Specifically Do you believe in	
2	Moderate religious person		a	God
3	Agnostic		b	Spirits / Devil / Ghost
4	Rationalist / Not a Religious Person		c	Life After Death
5	Atheist.		d	Rebirth
6	Any other (Specify)		e	Supernatural Powers
7	if there is any difference between the two sets, or contradictions, please explain your position:			

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(Example: Moderate? 1, 2, or 3 but believes in a toy e)

3. Since when would you say you have been a person of the above description

Since childhood / Always	1	6 to 10 years	4
For less than a year	2	11 to 20	5
For less than 5 years	3	For over 20 years	6

4. Do all members of your family share the same view as yourself?

Yes	1	No	2
-----	---	----	---

Please explain:

5. If the answer is “No” to Q. 4, give particulars of those who differ in their view:

	Out of	
--	--------	--

[If the answer is No, please ensure that Q. No. 5(a) is asked to the persons who did not have the same belief / view]

5(a) How would you explain the differences in belief among members of your family? That persons point of view if possible?

6. Can you describe the reason for your becoming a person of the above description?

q. ---

- r. Was there any specific experience involving
 - i. Self, the respondent
 - ii. A member of the household (please specify)
 - iii. Someone close as a relation/friend/
 - iv. Combination of the above

7. Is there a temple or a place of worship associated with your religious beliefs?

gg. Yes / No / Don't Know

hh. If yes, where is it located?

ii. If yes, how often do you visit the place of worship?

jj. Would you describe this place of worship as something associated with your family god (Mane Devaru / Kula Devaru)?

xxv. Yes / No / No idea

xxvi. If yes, do you find any difference in the devotion to this deity between your own generation and that of your parents/elders? **Yes / No Difference** ?Not applicable (i.e., adopted the belief and practice in one's own generation)

xxvii. If the answer to 6 (d) is “No”: Is this belief or practice something new to your own generation? Yes / No. Please explain why? If no, how did you come to be associated with the practice/ belief?

8. Is there a practice or belief which you gave up during the past 20 years or so?

xxv. Yes / No

xxvi. If yes, please describe the practice and the reasons?

xxvii. Have all the other members done the same?

9. Would you be able to describe any of the so called “blind beliefs” in our State?

10. Concerning the following, what have you to say: (List the different practices / beliefs as per the Study's ToR) and elicit responses over the following issues:

Questions	Made Snana	Mass animal sacrifice	Tossing of children	<i>Ajalu</i>	<i>Bettale seve</i>	Jata or jada and Devadasi system	Fire walking with children	<i>Sidi</i>	Any Other
Which of these has a greater following? (Rank 1 to 8 or more)									
Specific caste or religious group associated with it? (Specify which)									
Temple / Caste Association / Religious body / Political Party / any other group.									
Major changes over the past ten to twenty years in respect of these beliefs.									
Your opinion of the practice / belief									
Declining or Increasing?									
Why is the State unable to control or reduce the faith and practice in each of them?									

Any Other remarks:

11. Do you think the following has contributed to reduction / increase or with no effect on practices and beliefs in general over the years:

Source of Change	Nature of Change (For each Row tick any one Cell)			
	Reduction	Increased faith	No Effect	Any other (Specify)
Age				
Law				
Education				
Global Influence				
Internet / Social Media				
Films				
Television				
Print Media				
Government Policy				
Word of Mouth				
Temple Publicity Material				
Any other (Specify)				

Q. Which of the above is most effective in Increasing faith in these practices: (Top 3)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

R. Which of the above is least effective in Reduction in faith? (Last three)

- i)
- ii)
- iii)

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Any Other General Observations about the State and Policy on Superstitions, beliefs and religious practices

Additional Questions

1. Do you watch any particular TV programmes that depict beliefs in religious practices?
 1. Yes
 2. No
2. On an average, how much money is spent on the practice (including the cost of transportation, accommodation, etc.)
3. What are your views on Vaamachara? Maaya and Maata or Mantra?
4. Under what circumstances would you practice any of them?

Annexure IV: A more complete description of the methods and methodologies used

The study was carried out using a set of different methods. It involved, where feasible, observations by the investigators. Several temples and/or other places of worship were visited and when certain rituals and practices were in progress, they were observed. Interviews – both formally and informally (i.e., without a structured interview schedule on hand, but guided by a checklist of key issues to be discussed) were carried out on site or at places that were convenient to the respondents. The respondents were the believers and or practitioners, rationalists and activists, and in the officiating priests, administrators of the temples etc.

The method consisted also of canvassing a structured questionnaire, administered by trained research investigators, to the above listed sets of respondents. These respondents were chosen randomly and having been guided by key informants through ‘snowballing’ technique. For instance, while interviewing a temple administrator, we had asked for his (it usually was a man, never a female administrator of any temple!) suggestions as to whom we may contact as a firm believer, or one who may be a strong activist.

Group discussions too were held involving a cross section of people, usually in the vicinity of the places of worship, occasionally in a village (e.g., Gavi Nagamangala, Machohalli) or a temple town such as Udipi, Kapu, Ramanathapura, Kukke Subramanya, Afzalpura, Davangere, Savadatti, Gokarna, etc.) However, in nearly all of these places, given the pace with which life is carried out by either the residents or pilgrims, these group discussions were not as structured as one may anticipated in a formal setting. The purpose was, however, to gather information, opinions and impressions from a cross section of people. These groups discussions lasted for about 20 to 30 minutes, and invariably the participants too tended to consist of the ‘floating’ pilgrim population, local traders and officials or priests of the temples. To the extent they were able to spare their time, they participated. One of the investigators, usually the more senior of the two, concentrated on conducting the discussions while the other recorded the comments and opinions that were being aired in response to our questions.

A detailed questionnaire was constructed, addressing queries concerning each of the eight superstitious practices that were listed as part of the objectives of the study. These research tools were to the extent of 30 per cent open ended questions for which the

respondents were free to express their views in their own words. The 70 per cent of the queries were close-ended, making the data processing much easier.

As is the ethics of research studies, especially those involving sensitive matters of faith, practices some of which are legally banned, etc., the investigators were requested by the respondents to keep their identities concealed. Although the names and phone numbers were collected from the respondents, we do not believe all these were genuine. In fact, in some cases where we felt there had been missing information or something over which we needed further clarifications, we had attempted to contact such respondents over phone. To our surprise, either the person had given us a wrong name or we were contacting a ‘wrong number.’ What is even more surprising was a few of even those claiming to be activists had declined to give us their full name and contact particulars.

Finally, all the methodological details have been discussed at the appropriate section of the report and as such there is nothing more to be added here as “more complete description of methods and methodologies.”

Annexure V:List of individuals of groups interviewed / consulted and sited visited

The research study's sample survey involved, in all, 796 respondents. Their social characteristics are discussed in the main report. Their names are not being listed here, both for the sake of brevity of the document here but also since a CD containing the data of the research including the respondents' identities. Since we as investigators had assured the respondents of all confidentiality of their identity as also particulars of their income, loans or religious views, it is hoped that the data in the CD is used only for academic purposes.

Other than the above set of respondents, the study involved having to hold discussions – formally and informally with a range of persons. Some names are listed below, and in alphabetical order.

Professor/Dr/Shri/Ms.

Baburaj T P
Bala S Chauhan
Chandan Gowda
ChoodamaniN A
Dasanuru Kusanna
Dejappa K
DeshpandeR S
Dhanush
GurappaN R
Gurulingaiah M
Hayavadana
Janaki N
Japhet S
Jogan Shankar
Krishna BhatP V
Kumar Baipadithaya
Lakshmi RevannaN R
Mahadev M
Mahadeva
Manohar Yadav
Manoj Kumar Kolla

Marula Siddaiah

N Ramegowda

Nagesh Erukone

Purushottama Bilimale

Rajan Gurukkal

Ramaswamy V

RameshS T

RanganarasimhaiahN R

Ravindranath Rao Y

Shivananda

Shri Nidumamidi Channamalla Veerabhadra Swamiji

Sivanand

Sobin George

SridharV S

Srinivas Adiga

Sudha Sitaraman

Sudheshna Mukherji

ThimmappaM S

... and many more in groups or as individuals.

Annexure VI: Dissenting views by evaluation team member or client if any

None expressed or recorded. We do not believe there is any dissenting view among the members of the research team.

Annexure VII: Short biography of the principal investigator

Professor G K Karanth is a sociologist, with over four decades of experience as a teacher, researcher, as well as a professional evaluator. He has had his degrees from Bangalore University (B.A.), Jawaharlal Nehru University (Ph.D) and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (One Year Certificate Course in Social Research). He has taught in both graduate and post-graduate departments of Sociology, in a few Colleges (APS College, Bangalore, Vijaya College, Bangalore) and in Post-Graduate Department of Sociology in Mangalore University. For over two decades he was the Professor and Head of the Sociology Unit (later renamed as Centre for Study of Social Change and Development) in the Institute for Social and Economic Change. For some time he had been the In charge Director of this Institute, as also as Director of the Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research, Dharwad. Both these research institutions are well known institutes of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

He has authored three books and co-authored four books and monographs, some of which are published by reputed publishing houses such as Sage, Penguin, West view and Concept, in India and abroad. Among his other publications numbering over 35, are national and international journal papers and articles. The journals include 'Food, Culture and Society,' 'Journal of International Development Policy,' 'Contributions to Indian Sociology', 'Sociological Bulletin,' 'Review of Development and Change,' and 'Economic and Political Weekly.'

He has been a Visiting Professor at the Ecole Polytechnique Federal de Lausanne (Switzerland), and University of Glasgow (Scotland). He has delivered invited lectures in the Universities of Cambridge, Oslo, Bergen, Uppsala, Gothenburg, and Stockholm, in School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), American University in Cairo, Centre for Development Studies in Copenhagen, Norwich, and in Wales. He was appointed as the ICCR India Chair Professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Lund during 2011-12, and as an Erasums Mundus Mobility Professor in the University of Aarhus during 2015-16.

Among the different agencies for which he has rendered his services as a consultant scholar or as an evaluator are Danish International Development Agency, International Development Research Council, European Union, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, International Labour Organisation, National Human Rights Commission, National Child Labour Project, Sarva Sikshana Abhiyan, Karnataka State Labour Institute, and the World Bank.

He was awarded the ICSSR National Fellowship by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, for the years 2014-16. During the tenure of this Fellowship he was in affiliation with the Jain University, Bangalore. Currently, Professor Karanth is an independent researcher.

Annexure VIII. Evaluation questions and answers matrix

The study being reported has not been an Evaluation, and at the time of entering into a contract to undertake the study, there had been no Matrix of Research Question evolved. However, whatever research questions were posed has been answered and are available for consultation at Section 3: Logical Framework.

Annexure IX

A short note on the Half a Day Workshop on the theme of Superstitions in Karnataka, held in the KEA, Bangalore on January 9, 2017

List of Participants

Shri Nidumamidi Channamalla Veerabhadra Swamiji
Dr. S T Ramesh
Professor Sudheshna Mukherji
Professor Gurulingaiah M
Professor Marula Siddaiah
Professor N A Chudamani
Professor R S Deshpande
Professor Sudha Sitaraman
Professor V S Sridhar
Professor V Ramaswamy
Mr. Dhanush
Mr. Manoj Kumar Kolla
Smt. Aparna Kolla
Mr. Shivaraj Singh
Professor G K Karanth

Status and Nature of Changes in Some Superstitions in Karnataka

A Note

Prepared by

Professor G K Karanth, Manoj Kumar Kolla and Aparna Kolla

“Rationality, secularism, religion, and superstition are parts of the same continuum called culture.”

Devdutt Pattanaik

In recent years there has been a renewed interest over what the stand should be by the State towards beliefs and practices that are branded as superstitious. Some States such as Maharashtra have even taken legal steps to ban some of them while other States have witnessed popular demand (and opposition to) banning several practices. Even to this day, we read news reports of secret practices of human sacrifice, inflicting bodily harm or digging up graves to remove corpses as a means of securing some personal or collective gratification – be they unearthing hidden treasures, removal of some illness or bring prosperity through proper rains.

Sending women into the fields or forest for a child birth or to make them spend the days and nights of menstruation in such places has been a common practice among some castes. Among some castes such women were kept excluded – physically and socially during this period, even within the house. Devdutt Pattanaik asks us if such practices are ‘rational,

emotional, religious, scientific, traditional, or superstitious? Obviously, much depends on how we categorise them and /or value them. How different are the practices or even norms of having to stand up in attention when National Anthem is being played, or stand in silence as 'mark of respect' for someone is who is dead, he asks.

Society at large upholds certain values standards of living and directions of thinking. Whether In the name of upholding tradition or merely a strong commitment to certain values and practices, several of beliefs and practices have persisted in Indian society. Some such that are harmful to oneself and the wider community, malignant, exploitative or inflicting indignity upon others or oneself have always been sought to be given up or changes incorporated to keep up with changing times. In some societies this process may take a long time – even centuries as in the case of decline of Shinto among the Japanese, or as a gradual process among the Europeans in their transition from Medieval to Modern society, if not in a revolutionary manner as in many of the Soviet societies or elsewhere. Of course, in all these societies there occurs an episode of practice from the past if not a 'fundamentalist' group attempting to revive it – as is the case among Aghoris or similar other *tantric* panths in India.

The Department of Planning, Government of Karnataka, was keen on taking a fresh look at some of the religious practices considered to be malignant, exploitative and offensive to human dignity with a view also to document significant changes in such beliefs and practices. With this as an aim it engaged the services of an academic and policy consultancy firm, HKCAL, Bengaluru and Gulbarga with Professor G K Karanth – a sociologist – as the principal investigators. With him are two others Shri Manoj Kumar Kolla and Smt. Aparna who have carried out the fieldwork in many parts of Karnataka.

It is the responsibility of all mature societies and institutions that govern them to keep a tab on such practices that are viewed as malignant, harmful and causing indignity individuals or groups of people. Some such practices have been recognised and constitutionally banned, as for instance, the practice of Untouchability, practice of *Sati*, infanticide, etc.

Some of the characteristics of Superstitions may be summed up as:

- belief in supernatural causality—that one event causes another without any natural process linking the two events—such as astrology and certain aspects linked to religion, like omens, witchcraft and prophecies, that contradict natural science.
- Makes almost any to be superstitious: Space scientists (Apollo 13); Mangalayan, Doctors; engineers; irrigation specialists; businessmen, treasure hunters, childless couples, or any others from any walk of life
- Temples also as breeding grounds and nurturing fields of superstitions
- Indian religion is not one of worship, but one of fear and **superstition**.
- In Indian villages myths, misconceptions, blind beliefs, and superstitions abound.
- They tend to perpetuate and promote exploitation, slavery, Untouchability, inferiority complex, superiority complex, caste, creed, gender and Varna based inequalities. They became instruments in the hands of few to exploit, cheat and deceive the ignorant people.³⁵

³⁵W.P. No. 1750/2008, decided on 13.09.2010 cited in CSSEIP: 2010, p. 47) Centre for the Study Social Exclusion & Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), National Law School of India University, Bangalore

- Quacks and local healers thrive on the illiteracy and ignorance of naive and gullible people and try to hoodwink them into believing that they have magic cures for their ills
- Even ‘scientific temperament’ not free from Superstitious beliefs –often attempting to finding scientific rationale behind many of our beliefs and practices.
- TV Channels and Superstitions: Prescription of means to overcome sufferings or failures.

The practices that form the focus of the present study are:

- Made Snana
- Mass animal sacrifice
- Ajalu
- Tossing of children from top
- *Bettale seve*
- Jata or jada and Devadasi system
- The practice of *Sidi* ,

Objectives

- To study and document as to whether belief in superstitions is increasing, decreasing or has remained almost the same in the past 25 years.
- In case the superstition is pan district, documentation of inter-district variations
- Identify the reasons for the increase, decrease or unchanged status of superstitions the past 25 years
- Has the spread of education and greater exposure to the world as a whole made any impact on the belief of superstitions?
- What practices or measures can be government and governance follow to eradicate malignant superstitions and create a superstition-free Karnataka?

Methodology

- Review of Literature (Missionary reports, Thurston and others)
- History of Rationalist Movement, esp. Kerala, Maharashtra and elsewhere
- Discussions with Religious leaders, community spokespersons, Activists, NGOs and Protagonists
- Editorials of several national news papers
- Interviews and case studies of victims / family members
- FGDs of men and women in the regions of study.
- A survey of believers / practitioners (up to about 60 persons for each practice in the region designated), activists and others.
- Consultations with informed public
- Current Status of the Study

The study is now nearing completion with data collection. Field work has been completed in almost all the ‘designated areas’ that is the towns and villages where some of these superstitions and practices are found. As we assemble for our consultations, data collection is in progress in regard to Sidi and Fire walking. Simultaneously data entry for the purposes of analysis has commenced and it is too early to speak of the findings. However, some of the impressions are as follows:

- ✓ Faith and or actual practice concerning many beliefs are not necessarily shared by all in a household / family.
- ✓ Divided opinion as a pattern is true also among many rationalists or intellectuals opposed to the practices: their views were not necessarily shared by all in their own households.
- ✓ Those who practice or participate in many of the rituals are also such persons who do it to fulfil a wish of an elder or a member in the household.
- ✓ Among the believers and practitioners of the rituals, the tendency is more towards to fulfilling a vow to perform a ritual than it being an inescapable annual ritual performed.
- ✓ Health, economic causes and family related issues (disputes between relations, matrimonial issues etc.) are the more frequently mentioned cause on account of which people take part in many of the listed practices.
- ✓ Fear of failure to perform or observe the rituals related to many of the superstitions are very strong compulsions to believe and / or perform the rituals.
- ✓ Many of the rituals – such as Sidi, Fire walking or Mari bali – are performed more in anticipation of a gratification, while some others are more common as an expression of ‘thanks giving’, while a few are also as an expression of anticipation and thanksgiving.
- ✓ Some present and former ministers and popular leaders of political parties were cited as having performed a few of the rituals both in anticipation of their political success and as thanks giving upon successful completion of a fete – be it getting elected to an office or becoming a minister.
- ✓ A majority of those contacted for information – among the practitioners – the practice was not a family tradition. Instead, performance of the ritual was more of an act on their own rather than as fulfilling a family tradition.
- ✓ Nearly all the practitioners were willing to comply with the State’s regulations if these practices were banned by law.
- ✓ Just as the practices were not a family tradition, they were not specially applicable to any one caste such.
- ✓ Many of those who had taken to these practices – with the exception of those such as Devadasi or Bettale Seve – were made known to the practitioners also by word of mouth or through media coverage about them.
- ✓ Priests or astrologers often prescribed these practices as a way of overcoming their hardships or meeting their requirements.
- ✓ It is not as if all superstitious practices have been without changes either in becoming severe or relaxed about the requirements – women’s or Dalits entry into places of worship, for example.
- ✓ Age, education, urbanity or rurality, gender etc. seem to have little determining influence over whether a person practices or advocates faith in them.
- ✓ Income, on the other hand seems to be more associated with whether people believe and practice in many of rituals under focus: Higher the income greater the propensity to practice certain rituals.

These findings are presented here hesitatingly, for the statistical analysis is yet to be completed. Nor are they meant to be exhaustive, but indicative.

Purpose of the Consultations

State's intervention in matters related to faith is a sensitive issue not merely from the point of view of maintaining law and order, but also from the point of view of healthy democracy. The need to ensure both and many other unlisted goals is a critical option especially in a multi-ethnic society as India. No State can afford the risk of alienating one section of its population whose identity may be perceived to be under threat merely because one or the other religious practice is under the State's legal scrutiny. Human values of dignity, decency and respect for cultural rights of all are a priority for any government, but not at the cost of inflicting humiliation upon others. Likewise, it is also necessary for a State to ensure acts that are incongruent with the system of emerging values and norms of progressive society are put down, and firmly but without hurting the sentiments of others who may wish the persistence of such practices. The State also needs to be sensitized about the need for it to be aware of the nature of continuum, of the thin line between religious tolerance and promotion of some beliefs and practices (be it a 'bagina' for a brimming river or performing a special puja for a relief from draughts!). It is not as if every religious practice is being opposed here, but the obligation to clarify the blurring borders between benignant and malignant.

Also of concern are some of the practices finding alternative routes to keep the believing clients intact: e.g., emphasizing on voluntary nature of some practices such as Madesnana or Fire walking; relocating the sites where nude worship takes place, etc.

What should be the concerns of law making, and of enforcement? What has been the experience of the agency responsible – police force and or the judiciary in implementing and monitoring the implementation of the law banning some of the practices such as Devdasi, Bettale Seve, or tossing of children?

Is law a sufficient agency to prevent the perpetration of superstitious beliefs and practices? How exhaustive should such a law be, and how to identify them as Malignant, benign enough to warrant an exception from the applicability of a law.

What should be role of print and visual media in regard to the superstitions and beliefs? Who and how shall the 'coverages' made the media is not resulting in popularizing superstitions than carrying on a campaign against it? Would a non-believer, therefore, become a believer and practitioner after s/he discovers things to be as "Heegu Unte?" or "Simple Vaastu" solutions.

When does a religious rite remain a harmless worship and when does it become an act of 'Tantra', 'Maaya' or 'Maata'? Sociologists and social anthropologists of health have a rich knowledge about folk cures that could be as dangerous as tossing a child from atop of a temple or hot-iron-branding of a child to cure its cough.

Each participant is requested to make her/his observations of the issues listed above or also, bring other questions we may have overlooked to list here. Kindly restrict your comments and observations to about 10 minutes such that each gets a chance of express them and there could be sufficient time for a healthy and productive discussion.

Some Key Issues that Emerged in the Workshop

- Not all rituals are to be seen as involving obnoxious superstitions. A separation should be made between harmful and harmless superstitions, but such a separation is not an endorsement of unfounded beliefs.
- Not included in the list of superstitious beliefs in the study are fire walking, child birth and/or menstruating women in the open fields, infanticide and human sacrifice (for wealth or seeking health). Human sacrifice must be constantly on a social scan.
- There should be sound understanding of the local vested interests in perpetuating some superstitious beliefs and practices.
- The critique of superstitions should not be mistaken as targeted movement against any specific caste or religious group, although the victims are most often persons from the (so called) low castes.
- Just as we strive for preserving our cultural heritage, there should be a campaign against the ‘negative heritage’ in the form of superstitions.
- Beliefs and practices that are harmful to oneself or to the others must be condemned and stopped at all costs.
- Social and gendered ostracism during certain festivals, e.g, Holi’s “Okali” that are insults to castes and women, should also be banned.
- Superstitious practices that are evident among all religious groups – not merely among Hindus – must also be studied and policy recommendations are made.
- The Government should appoint ‘psychiatrists’ and counsellors in the temples especially those propagate such beliefs and practices that are socially and psychologically harmful.
- Temples specializing in the so called curing of mental illness, or dispossession of spirits from human beings should be under the scan.
- The police force too need to be trained with a scientific temperament, and the ‘new secrecy’ that is getting associated with some of the banned practices must be exposed and brought under the legal scan (Devadasi, Bettale Seve, etc.).
- Those responsible for monitoring and implementing ‘social legislations’ should also be given the services of counsellors.

- Emerging practices of marriages – e.g., Gujari marriages, Mutham Marriages, and marriages as ‘sex slavery’ should also be put under legal lens much more rigourously. They are no different from Devadasi system.
- Examine carefully if the education system that we now have is not a fertile ground for the birth and growth of superstition.
- Are our Television programmes taking us back to the Middle Ages?
- It is necessary to recognize superstitions also an economic phenomenon, for their presence seems to be most harmful and make victims of those who are economically vulnerable too.
- It is not a strange coincidence that regions that are economically backward in Karnataka are also the regions in which a wide range of harmful superstitions flourish (be they Devadasi, Hook swinging, Tossing of Children, Bettale Seve, etc.)
- Efforts to eradicate superstitions will not succeed as long as they are initiated merely and only by the State (Government); it should be a civil society movement. Excessive academic debate has led to defeat the enactment any law against the superstitions.

The Workshop ended with a vote of thanks to the KEA which facilitated the consultations, and to all the participants who gave their valuable time and suggestions.

Annexure – X

Responses and Compliance Report on the Comments Received on the Draft Version of the Report on Superstitions

The ECO and the Principal Investigators wish to place on record their appreciations over the critical comments and suggestions made by the referee on the study. The following are the responses and report of action taken based on the comments and suggestions received.

Part A: Review - Generals

Comments / Observations	Responses
On the whole DER Generally conforms to the TOR on the subject study report	Noted

Part B: Specific Review

1. Title of the Study **No Response Required**
2. Executive Summary **No Response Required**
3. Introduction, Objective and Methodology

Comments / Observations	Responses
1. Sampling Methodology not properly spelt out, which statistical methodology or tools adopted? Is the methodology according to the generally accepted sampling principles and practices?	Please refer to Pages 3, 37-38 and 48 to 52 in the report, for an account of sampling methodology. However, in the light of the comments received, additional account has been inserted in pages 37- 39. Incidentally, the sample size and its mode of selection of sample were in accordance with the advice given by the Technical Committee appointed by the KEA.

<p>2. How was the sample chosen? Sample size is too small.</p>	<p>Please see page 48-52 for a description of the sample selection procedure, which incidentally is scientific and in keeping with the established procedures. Due representation for different practices, believers and non-believers, and rationalists etc has been taken care of. Similarly there is adequate representation of men and women respondents too, and of different age group of respondents. As regards the sample size being small, our responses are the following. Even though there had been a technical committee which advised the research team on methodology and sample size, the actual size of the sample was enlarged so as to make it a bit more diverse in nature. Secondly, the time and financial budget of the study was such that it had been meant to be of a relatively small sample than a large one.</p>
<p>3. How many FGDs and where were they held?</p>	<p>Please see Page 52. In 16 FGDs and they were carried out in Saundatti and Makaravalli for Jade and Devadasi as a theme, Machohalli and Bitanahalli (Mass Animal Sacrifice); Ramanatha Pura and Subramanya (Made Sanana); Udupi and Kenjuru (Ajalu); Nagarala (Tossing Children); Chandragutti (Nude Worship); and Afzalpur and Ghattargi (for Sidi).</p>

4. Area of Study

Comments / Observations	Responses
List of locations where the study was carried out	Please see Table 1(b) in Page 52.

5. Limitations of the Study

No Corrections or additions needed.

6. Review of Literature

Comments / Observations	Responses
... While a good record of facts and instances are available in the draft report, but an insight of origin and background of such practices and mindset of such people appears to be missing.... Reviews are mostly one sided criticizing everything Indian including faith in God...More Indian authors / literature would have given better picture...	We are afraid that the referee here misses the spirit in which literature from the colonial times is cited. Colonial administration, which to a large extent determined the State policy orientation towards Indian culture and customs, had the longest years as compared to the rein of Indian independent administration. Secondly, the missionary writings by and large denied any substance to the faith of Indian origin. Thirdly, much of the policy on religion, culture and social institutions (caste, marriage, family, etc.) were all determined by the stand that the State then took than what the indigenous scholarship or knowledge demanded. Finally, the technically committee while assigning the study to the ECO and while approving the Inception report had clearly indicated that there ought to be thorough review of colonial writings on the theme. As regards the origin of many of the beliefs and practices, the referee needs to take note of the myths depicted as a prelude to the introduction to many of the practices. In

	<p>many other practices, e.g., sidi, or tossing the child, etc., are of more recent origin and as such there are not much written literature whether by Indian or foreign authors. Finally, the extent to which historical literature have been consulted, the purpose was to establish a bench mark against with the changes are to be traced or recorded.</p>
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7. Analysis and Discussion

Fine tuning of the chapter: Taken care of in the light of the suggestions made by the referee.

8. Recommendations, especially pertaining to No. 4, 5 or 6.

The views of the referee are well taken and some modifications have been effected in the text of these recommends. However, these will remain in the set of recommendations since these pertain to the State's role in matters pertaining to faith and governance of religious feelings. Wider discussions may be held on these matters than them being views of any one or two individual including those of the author of this report. In any case, such of those recommendations that are not acceptable to the State may be ignored or suitably modified as the State deems it fit.

12. The observations made are valuable and are well taken. All cautions are taken not to hurt any sentiments or to be one sided in reporting. Some Statements, such as the one by Osborne 1884 is relevant event to this day.

Please refer to the PI's own work cited in the list of references, as also to many other works cited, both Indian and foreign. They do uphold an opposite view also. Further kindly refer to the section in Chapter, labelled 'When do Superstitions become a Social Problem? It is our view that when any superstition affects one caste or community, or a group of persons (men or women, or children) one way or the other, such practices need to be reviewed and a stand taken on whether or not such practices be permitted in any modern or civilized society. In that spirit critically looking at practices such as nude worship, or dedication of a girl child to become a Devadasi etc, need not be considered as

having been one sided. In any case, the purpose is not to uphold one religion against another, nor to defend every practice that takes place in the name of religion. Suitable changes have been effected.

In the light of comments and suggestions received, the final and revised version of the Report has been submitted.

However, it is requested that the KEA may kindly consider two important features of the study. First, the study is not an evaluation, even though it has been sponsored jointly with the line department and Karnataka Evaluation Authority. Secondly, it may make a more elegant title if it is shortened rather than it being a lengthy and worded one. As authors, we have proposed it to be ‘**Malignant, Exploitative and Offensive: Superstitions in Karnataka.**’

It is earnestly hoped that these suggestions gain the acceptance of the Sponsors of the study.

Finally, as authors of this study we wish to State that during the course of the study and since submission of the draft report, several learned scholars and informed persons sought a clarification over the purpose of the study when a Bill was pending before the honourable Legislative bodies in Karnataka. It would be worth sharing our responses to such queries, for the record. It is our view that undertaking a study either prior or during the course of enactment of a law or passing of a Bill does not amount to challenging the process. On the contrary, such studies only highlight several other issues that are pertinent. If one were to look at the scholarly literature on land reforms or studies on child labour, reservation for women in representative bodies (Panchayat to Parliament) even as the Bills were pending or issues under discussion, undertaking a study does not warrant any special attention. Instead, the findings could only serve as a bench mark of status even as the Bill was taken up for a motion. These were the views expressed by the team of scholars who undertook the study.

May 27, 2017
HKACL,

Kalburgi

Comments and suggestions Received and Responses / Report on Action taken

Sl. No.	Comments/ Suggestions	Response or Action Taken
1	Title	Accepted and Change effected accordingly
2	Bar charts/ Graphs etc to be inserted for important tables	Accepted and over 12 new graphs/ charts inserted
3	Data to be rearranged in Table 9, 10 and 11	Accepted and Change effected accordingly
4	Data Labels in the text and table 1.	They do match. However, the sequence have been now modified to avoid the kind of confusion that led to this comment
5	Gender disaggregated Data for Table 1	Accepted and Change effected accordingly
6	Basis for classification as the specific categories of responses in Tables 7, 7b or Graph 3.	Comment applicable Also for Graph 1 and Table 5. Please refer to Foot Note no. 15 on page 61 which States as follows: "Each respondent, in respect of all the different superstitions and practices was asked to identify oneself as being a 'strong believer', 'moderate in beliefs' or as 'non-believer.' These are, therefore, subjective categories as ascribed to oneself in respect of religious superstitions and related practices." This was the first time that the labels appeared, and so a clarification had been offered. It may not appear elegant to insert the same note for each table where the labels appear.
7	Graph 3 does not have a corresponding table on page 117	The most commonly practiced convention has been not to present a Graph and Table together. However, since a suggestion has been made, the corresponding table has now been inserted. Please see Table 7(a) on Page 108
8	Some Newspaper clippings to be appended	We are trying our best to access some of them to be inserted
9	Recommendations to be Redrafted.	Accepted and Reworked. Pl see section on Recommendations in both the Executive Summary and Main Report
10	Inserting the extract of the Bill on superstition	Inserted.

Annexure XI: **The Karnataka Prevention of Superstitious Practices Bill, 2013**

	<p style="text-align: center;">THE KARNATAKA PREVENTION OF SUPERSTITIOUS PRACTICES BILL, 2013 A Bill</p> <p><i>to make special provision for the prevention of superstitious practices that are harmful, exploitative and offensive to human dignity with a view to eradicate them; to establish the Karnataka Anti-Superstition Authority at the State level and Vigilance Committees on Superstitious Practices at the district level to ensure such prevention, extend protection to those who expose the ill-effects of superstitious practices and create awareness regarding such effects; and other matters connected therewith or incidental thereto</i></p> <p>Be it enacted by the Karnataka Legislature in Sixty-fourth Year of the Republic of India as follows:</p>
	<p>Chapter I: Preliminary</p>
<p>Short title, Extent and commencement</p>	<p>1 (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Prevention of Superstitious Practices Act, 2013.</p> <p>2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.</p> <p>3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification appoint.</p> <p><i>Provided, that different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act and any reference in any such provision to the commencement of this Act shall be construed as a reference to the coming into force of that provision.</i></p>
<p>Definitions</p>	<p>2. 1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,</p> <p>a) ‘Authority’ means the Karnataka Anti-Superstition Authority established by Section 9 of the Act;</p> <p>b) ‘Committee’ means the Vigilance Committee on Superstitious Practices under Section 15 of the Act;</p> <p>c) ‘Fund’ means the Prevention of Superstitious Practices Fund established by the State Government under Section 8 of the Act</p> <p>d) persons’ includes both natural persons and legal persons;</p> <p>e) ‘prescribed’ means prescribed by rules made under this Act;</p> <p>f) ‘propagate’ means advertisement, publication, broadcaster communication of any content in support of superstitious practices;</p> <p>g) ‘regulations’ means the regulations made by the Karnataka Anti-Superstition Authority or regulations made by the Vigilance Committee on Superstitious Practices in each district under this Act,</p>

	<p>as the context indicates;</p> <p>h). rules’ means the rules made under this Act;</p> <p>i) ‘Schedule’ means the Schedule to this Act;</p> <p>j) ‘superstitious practice’ means any act which:</p> <p>i. Causes grave physical or mental harm to; or</p> <p>ii. Results in financial or any sexual exploitation of; or</p> <p>iii. Offends the human dignity of; another person or a group of persons, by invoking a purported supernatural power, with the promise of curing such person or group of persons of disease or affliction or purporting to provide a benefit, or threatening them with adverse consequences; or</p> <p>Any act specified in the Schedule.</p> <p>k) ‘Victim’ means a person who is gravely harmed physically or mentally, exploited financially or sexually, or whose dignity is offended by the commission of a superstitious practice.</p> <p>(2) Words and expressions used but not defined herein, shall have respective meanings as assigned to them in the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954 and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.</p>
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Chapter II: Prohibition of Superstitious Practices

<p>Offence of committing a superstitious practice</p>	<p>3. (1) Any person who promotes, propagates or performs superstitious practice shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one year but which may extend to five years or with fine which shall not be less than ten thousand rupees but which may extend to fifty thousand rupees, or both.</p> <p>(2) Consent of the victim shall not be a defence under this section.</p> <p>(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, a victim of a superstitious practice shall not be guilty of committing or abetting that practice.</p>
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Offences by Companies	<p>4. (1) Where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company, every person, who at the time the offence was committed was in charge of, and was responsible to, the company for the conduct of the business of the company, as well as the company shall be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly:</p> <p><i>Provided that,</i> nothing contained in this sub-section shall render any such person liable to any punishment under this Act if he proves that the offence was committed without his knowledge or that he had exercised all due diligence to prevent commission of such offence.</p> <p>(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company and it is proved that the offence has been committed with the consent or connivance of, or is attributable to any neglect on the part of any director, manager, secretary or other officer responsible for exercise of proper care or supervision of the company in that respect, such director, manager, secretary or concerned officer shall be deemed to be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.</p> <p>Explanation - For the purposes of this section -</p> <p>(a) “Company” means a body corporate and includes a firm, association of persons or body of individuals, whether incorporated or not; and also includes a trust, whether registered under any law for the time being in force or not.</p> <p>(b) “director” in relation to a firm means a partnering the firm and in relation to a body corporate, an association of persons or body of individuals, means any person controlling the affairs thereof; and in relation to a trust includes the person managing the Affairs of the trust.</p>
Abetment	<p>5. Whoever abets any offence punishable under this Act shall, whether or not the offence abetted is committed, be punishable with the same punishment as is provided for the offence which has been abetted.</p> <p>Explanation: For the purpose of this Act, ‘abetment’ has the meaning assigned to it in the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860).</p>
Offences to be cognizable and non-bailable	<p>6. Unless specifically indicated in the Schedule, all offences punishable under this Act shall be cognizable and non-bailable.</p>
Jurisdiction to try offences	<p>7. No court inferior to that of a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Magistrate of a First Class shall try any offence punishable under this Act.</p>

<p>Prevention of Superstitious Practices Fund</p>	<p>8. (1) The State Government shall establish the Prevention of Superstitious Practices Fund to</p> <p>(i) provide relief, compensation and rehabilitation to the victims of superstitious practices;</p> <p>(ii) promote awareness and education on development of scientific temper and the need to prevent superstitious practices;</p> <p>(iii) Undertake such other activities consistent with the provisions of this Act.</p> <p>(2) The procedure and manner of contribution and disbursement of moneys under such Fund shall be in accordance with the rules prescribed in this behalf.</p> <p>(3) Nothing contained in this Section shall derogate from the power of the Court to pass an order to pay compensation under Section 357 of the Code.</p>
<p>Chapter III: Karnataka Anti-Superstition Authority</p>	
<p>Karnataka Anti-Superstition Authority</p>	<p>9. There shall be an authority known as the Karnataka Anti-Superstition Authority</p>
<p>Composition</p>	<p>(1) The Governor shall appoint the Chairperson and Members of the Authority.</p> <p>(2) The Authority shall consist of:</p> <p>i. A retired judge of the High Court of Karnataka, to be appointed on the recommendation of the Chief Justice of the High Court of Karnataka, Chairperson;</p> <p>ii. Two eminent persons, who shall be academicians, social workers or legal experts who have special knowledge, experience or expertise in relation to superstitious practices and ill-effects thereof, Members;</p> <p>(3) The Secretary to the Department of Social Welfare shall be the Member-Secretary of the Authority.</p>
<p>Term of office and conditions of service</p>	<p>11. (1) A person appointed as the Chairperson or Member of the Authority shall hold office for a term of three years from the date on which he enters such office.</p> <p>(2) The salary, allowances and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members shall be such as may be prescribed.</p> <p>(3) The Chairperson or Members may by writing under his hand addressed to the Governor resign his office.</p>
	<p>12. It shall be the duty of the Authority to:</p> <p>i. Ensure effective implementation of the provisions of this Act;</p>

<p>Powers and Functions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Collate reports submitted by District Vigilance Committees established under this Act; iii. Oversee the administration of the Prevention of Superstitious Practices Fund set up by Section 8 of this Act; iv. Recommend appropriate measures for the prevention and eradication of superstitious practices in State institutions and by Ministers, officers and employees in their official capacities; v. Scrutinize and audit primary and higher education curricula to further the development of scientific temper and recommend appropriate corrective measures; vi. Facilitate research and studies on the effects of superstitious practices; vii. Perform all other functions ascribed to the District Vigilance Committee in Section 17; viii. Undertake such other functions for the eradication of superstitious practices as are consistent with the objects of this Act. <p>1) Only in exercising the functions conferred on the Authority under this Act, the Authority shall have all the powers of a civil court, while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908) in respect of the following matters, namely:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath; ii. requiring the discovery and production of any document; iii. proof of facts by affidavits; and iv. Issuing commissions for examination of facts and documents. <p>any other, as may be prescribed</p>
<p>Officers and Employees</p>	<p>13. (1) The State Government may appoint such number of officers and other employees it may consider necessary for the discharge of functions of the Authority under this Act.</p> <p>(2) The terms and conditions of office of the officers another employees of the Authority appointed under sub-section</p> <p>(1) Shall be such as may be prescribed.</p>
<p>Meetings and Procedures</p>	<p>14. (1) The Authority may meet at such time and place as the Chairperson may decide</p> <p>(2) The Authority shall have the power to specify, by regulations, the procedure for the discharge of its functions under the Act.</p>

Chapter IV: Vigilance Committee on Superstitious Practices	
Vigilance Committees	<p>15. There shall be a Vigilance Committee on Superstitious Practices In each district, to be constituted by the State government by notification in the Official Gazette, for a term of three years.</p>
Composition	<p>16. Each committee shall consist of:</p> <p>(1) The District Magistrate or any other person nominated by him, chairperson.</p> <p>Provided any person nominated by the District Magistrate shall be a person who enjoys the powers of Executive Magistrate under the Code:</p> <p>(2) Three persons residing in the district to be nominated by the District Magistrate, including the District Social Welfare Officer and one district level officer of the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement, Members;</p> <p>(3) Five members from civil society to be nominated by the State Government, who shall be academicians, social workers or legal experts who have special knowledge, experience of expertise in relation to the superstitious practices and evil effects thereof, Members;</p> <p>Provided further, at least three non-official members nominated under this sub-section shall be persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.</p>
Functions	<p>17. It shall be the duty of each Committee:</p> <p>(1) To undertake district-wide surveys to identify superstitious practices and make suitable recommendations to the State Government for their inclusion in the Schedule;</p> <p>(2) To hold awareness programmes and campaigns for people within the district regarding the ill-effects of superstitious practices, especially involving vulnerable sections of society;</p> <p>(3) To receive individual complaints from any person or take <i>suo motu</i> cognizance of violations of this Act by any person or organization and report them to the jurisdictional police for necessary action.</p> <p>Explanation: This provision is without prejudice to the general powers and jurisdiction of the police to directly</p> <p>(4) To entertain and inquire into grievances from individuals and organizations that expose and fight superstitious practices and to extend appropriate protection under law and take all such necessary measures including issuing directions to the law enforcement agencies</p>

	<p>for this purpose.</p> <p>(5) To make enquiries into allegations of willful negligence of the duties under this Act by public officials</p> <p>(6) To issue appropriate directions to any persons, authorities or agencies to carry out the purposes of this Act, especially to prevent the violation of the provisions of this Act.</p> <p>(7) To undertake comprehensive socioeconomic rehabilitation measures for the victims of superstitious practices.</p>
Powers and jurisdiction	<p>18. (1) Only in exercising the functions conferred on the Committee under this Act, the Committee shall have all the powers of a civil court, while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908) in respect of the following matters, namely:-</p> <p>(a) Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;</p> <p>(b) requiring the discovery and production of any document;</p> <p>(c) proof of facts by affidavits; and</p> <p>(d) Issuing commissions for examination of facts and documents.</p> <p>(e) Any other, as may be prescribed.</p> <p>(2) The jurisdiction of the Committee extends to the entire revenue district.</p>
Meetings and Procedures	<p>19. (1) The decision of the majority of the members of each Committee shall be considered as the decision of the Committee.</p> <p>(2) Each Committee may constitute subcommittees for the purposes of specific and urgent action, which shall be later ratified by the Committee.</p> <p>(3) The quorum for the meetings of each Committee and the sub-Committee(s) shall be, as may be prescribed.</p> <p>(4) Each Committee may meet at such time and place as the Chairperson may decide <i>Provided</i>, it shall meet at least once every three months.</p> <p>(5) The fees and allowances paid to the Chairperson and Members shall be such as may be prescribed</p> <p>(6) Each Committee shall have the power to specify, by regulations, the procedure for the discharge of its functions under the Act.</p> <p>(7) No act or proceedings of the Committee shall be questioned or invalidated merely on the ground of existence of any vacancy in, or defect in the constitution of the Committee.</p>
Chapter V: Miscellaneous	

<p>Application of other Laws</p>	<p>20. The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time being enforced.</p>
<p>Power to Make Rules</p>	<p>21. (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of this Act.</p> <p>(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions, such Rules may provide for:</p> <p>(a) Contribution and disbursal of moneys under the Fund as per Section 8(2)</p> <p>(b) Salary, fees, allowances and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members of the Authority and the Committee under section 11(2)</p> <p>(c) The terms and conditions of office of office-bearers and other employees of the Authority under Section 13(2)</p> <p>(d) Quorum for meetings of the committee under section 19(3)</p> <p>(e) Fees and allowances to be paid to the Chairperson and Members of the Committee under Section 19(5)</p> <p>3. Every rule made under this Act shall be laid as soon as may be after it is made before each House of the State Legislature while it is in session for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions and if, before the expiry of the session in which it is so laid or the session immediately following both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or both Houses agree that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule.</p>
<p>Power to make Regulations</p>	<p>22. The Authority and Committee may issue regulations to give effect to the provisions of this Act and the Rules framed hereunder by the State Government.</p>
<p>Power to Remove Difficulties</p>	<p>23. (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as may appear to it to be necessary for removing the difficulty: <i>Provided</i>, that no such order shall be made under this Section after the expiry of a period of two years from the commencement of this Act.</p> <p>(2) Every order made under this Section shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of the State Legislature.</p>

Savings	24. All Rules, Regulations, orders, notifications, or circulars relating to matters provided for in this Act, which are in force on the date of commencement of this Act, shall continue to be in force to the extent that they are consistent with the provisions of this Act, unless superseded by any action taken or any Rule, Regulation, notification or order made under this Act.
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Schedule [Section 3]

1. The following offences shall be cognizable:

a. (i) Sacrificing a human being for gain or for appeasing a deity

Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, the punishment for the performance of human sacrifice shall be death or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine

(ii) Spreading belief in human sacrifice or persuading others to perform human sacrifice.

b. Attempting to cure illness or carry out supposed exorcism or bhutochhaatane using violent means.

(i) Carrying out aghori, siddubhukti or similar practices in violation of S. 297 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860;

(ii) forcing others to indulge in such practices; or

(iii) using the threat of supposed powers gained from such practices to economically or

Sexually exploit persons.

c. Declaring possession by a purported divine or spiritual entity, and using such declaration to

(i) promise remedies or benefits in exchange for consideration; or

(ii) Threaten divine displeasure or spiritual censure for personal gain.

e. Invoking black magic or performing maata, whether or not in exchange for consideration, that is intended to harm targeted third persons and which gravely threatens them.

f. Persuading, propagating or facilitating rituals that involve self-inflicted injuries such as hanging from a hook inserted into the body (sidi) or pulling a chariot by a hook inserted into the body.

g. Persuading, propagating or facilitating rituals involving harm inflicted on children in the name of curing them, such as throwing them on thorns or from heights.

h. Superstitious practices against women:

(i) Forcing isolation, prohibiting re-entry into the village or facilitating segregation of menstruating or pregnant women

(ii) Throwing coloured water on women from vulnerable sections of society, resulting in their humiliation or offending their human dignity, such as okuli

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- (iii) Subjecting women to inhuman and humiliating practices such as parading them naked in the name of worship or otherwise, such as bettale seve
 - (iv) Exposing women to sexual exploitation invoking supernatural means, with the promise of conferring social or personal benefits including pregnancy.
 - i. Forcing any person to carry on practices such as killing of an animal by biting its neck (gaavu), that cause harm to public health.
 - j. Facilitating made snana or similar practices that violate human dignity
 - k. Discrimination on the basis of caste or gender in the name of superstition
 - (i) Forcing any person belonging to vulnerable sections of society to carry out humiliating practices such as carrying footwear on his or her head
 - (ii) Carrying out practices such as panktibheda or segregation of people on the basis of caste while serving food
2. The following offences shall be non-cognizable
- a. Making harmful predictions that result in
 - (i) stigmatisation or condemnation of any person on the basis of time or place of birth;
 - (ii) performance of humiliating practices by victims in the belief that it will fulfil said predictions; or
 - (iii) severe financial loss caused to victims
 - b. Declaring the guilt or innocence of any person by subjecting them to physical or mental harm such as forcing him to hold a flame with bare hands.

Statement of Objects and Reasons

1. A disturbingly high number of superstitious practices which cause significant harm and exploitation of common people especially in vulnerable sections of society continue to be perpetuated across the State today. Practices such as *aghoris*, *made snana*, *bettale seve* and other similar practices which are offensive to human dignity are widely prevalent. At the same time there are several forms of superstitious practices, both in urban and rural areas which result in severe financial exploitation and mental agony for victims. Such practices have no place in a civilised society governed by the rule of law.

The right to life with dignity is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution of India and reinforced in several judgments of the Supreme Court of India. The wide existence of such practices squarely infringes such right. Further, while all persons are entitled to the freedom of conscience or belief, certain superstitious practices negatively impact public order, morality and health. With several recent incidents of this nature coming to light, the specific criminalisation of such practices along with spreading awareness of the ill-effects of superstitious practices of this nature have become imperative. The Karnataka Prevention of Superstitious Practices Bill, 2013 seeks to achieve these objectives.

3. Specifically, the Bill seeks to make the promotion, propagation or performance of certain superstitious practices which causes grave physical or mental harm to others, financially or sexually exploits them, or offends their basic human dignity, with a promise to cure them or provide a benefit or with a threat of adverse consequences, by invoking purported supernatural powers, a criminal offence. Stringent punishment to those guilty of such offences, it is believed, will ensure effective deterrence thereby preventing the recurrence of such practices, gradually leading to their eradication.
4. At the same time, it is essential that common people are educated on the evil effects of such practices, and when they do occur, have a forum to report such occurrences to. Thus the Bill seeks to set up the Karnataka Anti-Superstition Authority as the nodal State level authority responsible for ensuring overall implementation of the Act. The Authority is to be supplemented by Vigilance Committees on Superstitious Practices at the district level which can receive complaints, redress grievances, assist the jurisdictional police in investigation and prosecution, take *suo motu* action as appropriate and undertake educational and awareness campaigns sensitising people, especially in vulnerable sections of society, to the ill-effects of superstitious practices.
5. The Bill would thus enable the development of the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform, a fundamental duty of every citizen under Article 51A (h) of the Constitution of India. At the same time by preventing the perpetuation of superstitious practices, it would allow them to lead a life of dignity, guaranteed under the Constitution.

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The Bill seeks to achieve the above objectives.

**EVALUATION OF STATUS OF SOME OF THE MALIGNANT,
EXPLOITATIVE AND OFFENSIVE TO HUMAN DIGNITY SUPERSTITIONS
OF KARNATAKA AND THE CHANGE IN THEIR STATUS OF PREVALENCE
IN THE PAST 25 YEARS**

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