



Effects of Superstition: Study of Travelogues, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahasweta Devi

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15858396>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 27-06-2025

Published: 10-07-2025

Keywords:

Superstition, A destructive element of the Earth.

ABSTRACT

World humanity is running along with rational speculation about tradition, culture, and art. While coming into contact with each other much influence is there upon each other. Many of the rituals and rites are there which are blindly being followed. Different nations or groups of people, share their ideas to their young once and the same one is followed later by the descendants or we can say by coming generation. Decades have passed so, We can say that the maximum thoughts we carry are transferred to us by our ancestors or by the group of people we sustain with. Actually 'friendship is great' and we live in the friendship of people and in some cases we reluctantly/ deliberately receive or imbibe the streams of ideology or consciousness which our community holds. We have a deep impact of our predecessors on our life, which almost changes our scope, way and mode of our life. But we must run behind the reason of customs, customs must be there to shake humanity, our culture shapes our personality. Some beliefs are being followed in such a way and manner among us which are going to be fatal for us. Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahasweta Devi, are two great Indian souls who travelled a lot in their life in order to see the reality of life and with respect to the time and incidents, they recorded



their insights about lives they witnessed while travelling. These are living records of facts which influenced them about the society of the places. Devi born in Bangladesh and lived in west Bengal, toured in many states of India like - Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa etc. she was closely attached with remote tribals of India. She had a deep emotion for them and contributed her works living among them. Her work deals with day to day problems of tribals in India. Travelling in life offered her a glimpse of the real plight where she created a concrete document in the form of art by writing as truth for the sake of humanity. Tagore too was born in West Bengal and became a world class person, similarly he too travelled the regions like west Bengal and Padma river area, Bangladesh, Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar and made a record in form of writing with his best efforts to tell something about the social aspects of humanity living in these same areas. While going through these records we find that some social, cultural, traditional superstitious thoughts/ beliefs are prevailed in these regions which is being followed/ practiced by the people without any logic still, and because of it people in these areas lagged behind in accessing the logical reason and accepted it as the blind faiths that's why we left ourselves blocked and remained mentally, economically and logically back. . This led us towards the loss of our nature and human wisdom. This created a number of problems for human as well as animal and botanical life.

INTRODUCTION

First Asian, Nobel Prize Winner, in literature, Vishwakavi, Rabindra Nath Tagore travelled world- wide and recorded his valuable insights in his artistic pieces. Among these places, being Indian he travelled on Indian lands like west Bengal, Jharkhand , Bangladesh, Japan, Indonesia etc. As he was the well wisher of humanity, he covered all significance issues in his writing which is laying the brick in the way to go through the contemporary factors affecting world human society. Similarly, a prominent figure like Teresa, Mother of tribal famous Gyanpith Puraskar awarded, great pen crusader - Mahaseta Devi came in the world just connecting with almost similar issues of the same lands or corner of the world.



Devi took birth in Bangladesh and travelled a lot in Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh etc. Both of the great persons have captured vivid pictures of the living issues and have made the English literature rich with their great wisdom. These documents are now getting used for the various facts about these areas and now the same pieces are being used for the sake of humanity. Devi in her work “Imaginary Maps”(1993) deals with a wonderful collection of three stories in which she has been talking about rural aspects of the villagers living in the area like Jharkhand ,Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. In the very first part of the book ‘ The Hunt’, she has been talking all about the Jharkhand region – DaltonGanj, Tohri, Chandwa, Maiklushki Ganj the Market and the town, a coal mining area and very rich with precious wood in the forest, abandoned by tribal. This account presents a superstitious element in the book where there was a custom among the tribal that each year there used to be in a program called hunting, according to which tribal had to be there in the forest for a long in a group in order to hunt the animals living in the nearby forest, it used to be a festive environment where they hunted, cooked, ate, drank, and danced in living forest only. Second story ‘Doulti The Bountiful’ embodies the miserable plight of bonded labour that prevailed in the society at that time in eastern part of India as prey of superstition, Because of which the rural people could not get redemption by themselves and became scapegoat of it. They accepted their superstitious thoughts as to be their faith blindly. A short story ‘Shishu’ is opening the facts of the life living in the rich natural area Ranchi, the present capital of Jharkhand in which we find the superstitious belief of the people because of which they are destined to follow their old custom of extracting iron from the land called a village Lohri, where ‘Agariya’ tribes lived to sustain their life, the system never allowed them to peep out of their rituals so that they could see the advancing reality of the human life , they remained drapped with these thoughts for a long. ‘Arjun’ is also a piece created by Devi showing the superstitious belief that Shabar tribes had accepted cutting wood, it was their fate they thought, hence these people could not escape themselves from this evil superstitious system. Apart from these all ‘Chhoti Munda and his Arrow’ a fine work talking and discussing about the pathetic condition of Munda tribes where they accepted themselves as to be the bonded labour of Mahajans, these tribes thought these Mahajans as their god, and followed them always.

Besides this Tagore a sentinel travelled a lot with his father and alone too where he collected the truths of the lands in his letters and these letters came into the form of book named ‘Glimpses of Bengal’ , ‘Selected short stories’ of Rabindra Nath Tagore’ in which he is painting all about the various social aspects of the spots he visited,while doing this in Shahzadpur in 1891 he recorded the superstitious thoughts of the people about river Ganga for blowing the ashes of dead one into it, at the same time and



place he writes in one of the another letter about some mysterious Mongolian magician type men who fulfilled the wishes of the men as demanded, for this an amount was also needed to be paid else the work would not show its effect. While making the tours in Sheildah on 9th of Dec, 1892 he wrote in his letter about Rebirth. Again on 16th of May 1893 at the same time in Sheildah once again he wrote about this Rebirth longing to come and see the world again. In Patisar on 19th of feb, 1894 he talks about the pathetic condition of women where they have been depicted as to be victims of their old customs as being superstitious women of the age. On 13th and 19th of Aug, 1894 he wrote in his letter about the mystery of God's worship and has also given the reference of 'Paradise lost' of Milton for the creation of this mysterious world which is a fine source of superstition.

Going next we find one more letters written by Tagore in which he has written about religion by saying that we must not be blind to our religion we must follow the right and truer part of it, though many have diverted from their religion coming on the belief of the trivial ideology by some evil and illiterate people. 'The Spirit of Japan' is an another important account in which Tagore is broadly talking about Japanese power of culture, tradition and art where he could not stop himself by saying about superstition, and added that we should not follow the ideology of those filial people who thinks themselves to be the holder of truth as they are the disguised face with help of which they wanted to capture the humanity, while addressing Japan he warns the people there to get alert against all those superstitious people of European countries who wanted to bake their bread by giving them the lessons of superstition which are actually there for their personal hidden profit. In the same book he strongly opposes the tradition of offering animals on the name of god as a superstition; he goes against offering animals in the name of god which only fills the non – veg desire of the people to eat the meat. He says, 'we must not vitiate our children towards these superstitious beliefs rather than being scientific'. Both of the writers are against the system of superstition as it is a destructive element of the world and humanity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to find out the desirable outcomes of the research both online and offline materials have been adhered /accessed, and really the paper is going to depict the chore aspects of superstition prevailed among different races of humans or nations. While going through the facts, documents which are studied are the very first one book which I want to talk about is the collection of three stories written by Devi is 'Imaginary Maps' in which the starting one account 'The Hunt' is opening the truth about a tradition or superstitious culture according to which all men and women of the village used to go forest on a hunting



programme. Many people lived together there in the forest for a long time, killed the animals, cooked and ate them only being there in the jungle. It used to be a festive environment among them at the time. Second important story of this same book is talking about the belief of bonded people in Bihar where as a stream of thought poor or tribal of these places had to accept the rich as to be their master. It was based on a superstition that poor thought that they were rich as their Swami (God). Thus rural people could not get redemption by themselves and became scapegoats for it. 'Shishu' a short story published in 1993 is opening the facts and fates of 'Agaria' tribes living in the adjoining village of Ranchi called Lohri. Where the book is unfolding the mystery of superstition of the poor people living in the village that their miserable plight of life is just because of the curse of their god who used to give them the facilities and materials like fire, coal and iron upon which they sustained their life. 'Arjun' a revolting short story set in Purulia, West Bengal, originally written in Bengali but later translated into English in 2011 is unfolding the mystery of Shabar tribes who were superstitiously convinced that Shabar meant cutting the tree, for which they were given some money so that they could keep their body alive and again got ready to cut the trees for brokers. 'Chhoti Munda and his Arrow' by Devi is too necessary account to be seen in this prospect because the book is presenting the plight of poors in Santhal Pargana Jharkhand, as to follow the Mahajans as though they are only their master who could rule on their life, and they must worship them as their god.

Going further for the purpose, books written by Tagore on his journey to the different part of the world specially India, Bangladesh, Japan, and Indonesia etc, has composed many works in the form of travelogues among which a book named 'Glimpses of Bengal' is the significant piece he mentions in his one of the letter written in Shahzadpur in 1891, the traditions of blowing ashes of dead one and sometimes some carcasses in pious river Ganga, thus as a curse of superstition Ganga has been source of pollution and contamination of water furthermore in the same book he explains about the Mongolian magician who were worshiped, followed and respected as having a divine power with which they fulfilled the wishes of the people and they were given wealth in respect to the superstitious service they practiced for common people. When he was there in Sheildah during 1892-93 he wrote in one of his letters about Rebirth which undoubtedly pushed humanity towards the darkness of superstition. In Patisar in one of his letter written on 19th of feb, 1894 he talks about the pathetic condition of women where they have been depicted as to be victims of their old customs as being superstitious women of the age. Adding more while writing he gives a reference to Paradise Lost written by famous English writer John Milton and says that we must accept the truth of the world by practical observations not by the



superstitious belief which being carried somehow for a long time. Tagore wrote in his one of the other book 'Spirit of Japan' delivering lecture on the occasion he strongly supports and admires the rich powerful culture and tradition of Japanese which really made them hard working and artistic, along with it he addresses there the superstitious elements which were folding the Japanese civilization towards hollowness, he was actually trying to say with the help of the book that some European countries had been trying their best to mould the minds of the Japan for their personal profit by pouring superstition in the young minds, they in fact never intended to uplift Japanese tradition and culture they did the things only for their own selfish purpose hence Japan must prevent itself by these hurdles so that the real spirit or identity of the nation can be established. For the accurate and better research some research papers have also been studied so that gaps and lacking of the facts that are coming out of the work can be taken out to the world or we can see, it can be seen and discussed in order to tell the contemporary issues related future effect for the important knowledge. Thus while going with papers written by Anindita Das from IIS university Jaipur in July 2019 we find that she has been talking about the Socio- psychological consciousness and growth of women studying comparatively the short story of Tagore and Devi. One more paper presented by researcher Satyam Kumar from Patna University in 1998 is talking about the negative effect of superstition rather than studying more on short stories of Devi. Apart from this many other scholars have studied the travelogues but a special paper on the travelogues of Tagore and Devi upon the effects of superstition in India and outside India, has not been explored and the same is the chore purpose of this paper.

Methodology/Experimentation

Inductive method of transdisciplinary approach has been adhered to for this valuable research which is giving concrete proof for the content with proposed elements to be found out of these documents, both online and offline materials have been used in order to find out the facts. For means of this research, valuable works of Mahasweta Devi and Rabindra Nath Tagore have been studied which really have the supporting contemporary issues to be talked about in this paper. A book originally written in Bengali written by Devi and later translated into English by Gayatri Spivak Chakravarti. 'Imaginary Maps' is the the collection of three books in which the very first one is set in Jharkhand region DaltonGanj, 'The Hunt' where we find tribal customs and tradition as a superstition affecting various aspects of the life, second work of the same book 'Douloti the Bountiful' is a fine piece dealing with stream of superstitious belief among tribal and Zamindars in Bihar. And the last third one is an account about the pathetic condition of people in Madhya Pradesh. 'Shishu' a short story about the capital of



Jharkhand talks about the 'Agariya' tribes who fell into the vicious net of superstition and accepted their fate to be under consideration. 'Arjun', a revolting text by Devi, is proof of having a thought of destroying nature just because of blind belief. 'Glimpses of Bengal' a book by Tagore is presenting the thoughts of people in West Bengal and Bangladesh as at that time Bangladesh was not separate from India he made tours in these areas and noted his art in form of letters in the book which is embodying the thoughts about Ganga river treating it severely in same Mongolian magician have been shown who looted wealth by simple people of India by making them believed in occult. 'Spirit of Japan' is a book recording the words by Tagore when he delivered his message to the Japanese, while addressing them there Tagore strongly opposes those powers and people who were trying their best to change and mould the beautiful culture of Japan and destroying their spirit, He suggests them to prevent themselves by these elements.

Apart from this some online research papers have been studied in order to find the gaps of research and found that Anindita Das from IIS University Jaipur in July 2019 has presented paper talking about the Socio-psychological consciousness and growth of women studying comparatively the short story of Tagore and Devi. In another paper by researcher Satyam Kumar from Patna University in 1998 is talking about the negative effect of superstition which is playing an important role against the development of our nation and humanity.

Result/ Discussions

Superstitious beliefs and the elements have been running among humanity since the creation of the World, it is a dark side of our society, these are the thoughts and the speculations adopted by us without any logic, advancing era and the opinion of the time has always been affected by these elements human civilization is draped with these thoughts, it is human who create thoughts, systems and civilizations, and in order to go with the rational human society it becomes necessary to remain under scientific term and logic, if we follow any belief without any scientific proof or logic there is maximum possibility that we would go towards the darkness and remain devoid of core knowledge of the world and thus we hardly reach to the truth pleasure of life. Accepting the terms beyond logic and science is superstition. We must think about the hollow facts and effects of the superstition prevailing among us which is not only on our life but nature, future and civilization. Our India seems to be the most superstitious country by the books, where we find various superstitious thoughts which have been followed for a long time. It leads us towards the dark side of reality where we hardly become ready to know the reason and logic behind the term. The anecdotes or the facts that we get out of the documents covered by the regional and classical



scholars and their contemporary thoughts about this term shows that this superstition has not only gripped physical things but captured many lives, and mentally also which is not better for the welfare of the world.

When we go through 'Imaginary Maps' very first part of "The Hunt" is a witness of a kind of superstitious rituals according to which men and women went into the forest for hunting in Dalton Ganj area, Jharkhand, they hunted the animals there in the forest cooked, ate, drunk, and danced, this promoted the system of destroying nature. I have to tell in this context that I being permanent resident of Jharkhand, reminiscing that I have also seen once, while I was a child that few people had come in my village, my mother told me they were 'Shikari' the hunter, who used to come nearby forest to catch animals and did same as I told you above now. At that time I had not understood the thing but now when I read the book I came to know that these were the same rituals which have played a vital role to distract the ideal speculations of the humanity. What I want to say you is that if animals are being killed in this way of superstition what a catastrophic result going to come we should think, we are the eye witness of its lingering danger, even now a days a large numbers of animals are being offered in Durga Pooja, Bakrid, Kali Puja, or by so many others in the name of god which is illogical, no one teaches non – violence, no religion demands blood, Murder, in fact a large number of People have become fond of eating non- veg, they only look for loop hole to devour it but we must be aware of its consequences that it is biological chain which is going to be disturbed only by our own hands, we would hardly be able to handle it as it is the work or system made by nature, it has made everything in the world for a certain purpose, if we interfere in it, we would fall in problem by ourselves, by the way we are challenging the nature, animals are the inseparable part of our life, ages have been witness of it that we have not become successful to sustain our life without animals, but our blind faiths are somehow responsible for killing the animals there in the forest, or outside of it even on the name of god, they are reducing and living for less time in less number, we too are living less, disturbing the balance of nature, we must not do this. Everything present on the surface of the world is equally important to run the world. Animals are an essential part of a universal device or system.

'Douloti the Bountiful' and 'Chhoti Munda and his Arrow' are living account of Bonded labour where the tribal worshipped upper class as they were mind washed or convinced superstitiously that they must accept or followed them as god, it was nothing but superstition that upper caste were born to rule. They could do so as they were only the literate community to befool the innocents. Rich provided them everything they longed for in order to capture their support. This is the system which is eating up



humanity. 'Shishu' and 'Arjun' like story set in West Bengal and Jharkhand respectively present superstitious belief of Agariya and Shabars tribes for their fate to be permanent wood cutters. The people in these stories are suffering by their luck just because of superstitious streams of thoughts. In the book by Rabindra Nath Tagore "The Glimpses of Bengal" Tagore has been talking about a kind of superstitious belief about blowing the ashes of dead on into Ganga, along with getting the water contaminated whole environment is affected, not only this but the river Ganga has been source of exploitation due to human superstition, no moral tells filthy elements to be included with our civilisation . In the same book, he is talking about Mongolian Magician who looted the people by showing some cult. The system distracted the people against the reality and kept things in the dark in order to rule over the innocents by taking help of some superstitious beliefs. One more book 'Spirit of Japan' contains the lecture while travelling into Japan. It is one of his lectures, many times he is indicating Japanese to protect themselves against the superstitious beliefs which were being tried to be filled in the minds of young Japanese by the Europeans in order to bake their bread. Tagore found these elements to be dominating that's why he mentioned and made them aware emphatically. Tagore made them realize the power of their culture there, along with it we once again see here that superstitious beliefs could be used as a weapon to destroy humanity.

Conclusion

As a conclusion it comes out in front of us after going deep with the facts that superstition has been the main factors for being backward mentally and economically for the humans, we remained backward to see the reality of the world, this superstition never allowed us to go beyond the facts, we are destroying ourselves deliberately by killing animals and cutting the trees in the way of superstition, still the custom is on its height, because of the superstition we are losing our nature, future and humanity. As a superstition, killing animals, cutting trees, exploiting humanity is nothing but only a kind of curse. Superstition has disturbed the balance of the environment by cutting trees and killing animals. Nature and humanity has become the pray of superstition We have fallen in various problems for disturbing the system of nature just because of Superstition, we must not kill animals they are the inseparable part of our environment, practice of killing the animals is leading the people towards the height of cruelty, loss of humanity is there. We must go behind the logical things. We should follow the facts of science. Cutting the trees means cutting our life span, we would hardly be able to balance it in this situation. Now a days we are facing a lot of problems just because of a stream of superstition which are being followed for a long period of time by us or our ancestors. Present generation hardly try to know the facts, present generation does not take interest on these things they blindly start following the rituals given by their forefathers, they never use their wit to know the reality behind those superstitious thought, consequently we are facing with fatal environmental, natural, mental and social problems, it is not hidden by anyone. We must try our best to handle it, otherwise we are definitely going to push ourselves to the mouth of



problems and death. Mis-convincing innocents in the way of superstition is a sin, it never encourages interest in knowledge which is a dark side of life. In this modern world still many are victims of it.

We must come out of these problems else humanity would last without being mature. Superstition has been a source of ruling on the poor and innocents by some literate and superior ones. Superstition keeps humanity away from reality thus reality keeps humanity away from the chore facts and knowledge of the world. If we would have known the reason behind these blind thoughts, humanity would never be in a kind of suspicion. This system is robbing our peace, nature, future, knowledge system and the whole earth in fact. If the system continue in same way, human would never be able to live their life happily on the planet, because we can live on the surface of it only if we accept happily the rule of the nature, company of everything that the god made for the welfare of the world is mandatory, not a single grain of sand is without any use here, we need

only to know the importance of the thing, a leaf of grass is there on the surface, it also has significance in the world. It is another thing whether we don't feel the need for universal things in our life. We are limited with our knowledge and mundane articles. We would never be able to follow our life rightly until we come out of superstitious thoughts. The truth aspect of life can be seen only after taking off the glass of superstition from our eyes. At last this is to be proved with this paper that if we follow superstition in the way it is being done we are surely going to make our future challenging as it destroys our nature, future and humanity. Superstition is like termites making the world gradually hollow and devoid of knowledge power.

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