

# **Belief on Evil Eye Among the Jaffna Tamils: A Sociological Perspective**

K. Visakaruban

## **Introduction**

The belief on evil eye is very broad and popular among various communities in the world. This belief exists among people beyond the distinction of the literate and the illiterate. The evils originate from eyes are known as 'Kanneru' and evils associated with tongue (One's speech) are 'Naavuru' in the tradition of Tamils. The assumption behind this belief is that the eyes of certain people have the capability to cause malice. The generally recognized world notion is that the eye manifestations are more powerful than the manifestation of any other part of the human body.

This article is intended to study the belief on evileye among the Jaffna Hindus on a sociological perspective, based on the data elicited from field research conducted at Valikamam, Vadamaradchy, Thenmaradchy and Island areas. Some others burn the composition in the oven in their houses.

## **Evil Eye : Word and Meaning**

Evil Eye is creating harm by an individual envying another individual or the property of another individual through praising world or looking at.

## **Evil Eye in the Western Tradition**

A strong belief on evil eye could be observed among the western people.

There are clues which speak about the practice of erecting statues for the deity Nemesis, worshipping and invoking it for blessing among Greeks and Romans to defend themselves against the evils of evil eye<sup>3</sup>

Rituals were observed in Rome seeking to curb the destruction caused to crops by evil eye.

Scholars have illustrated the various beliefs on evil eye in countries like Morocco, Egypt and Russia. 5

It is appropriate to view the interpretation about evil eye, in this context, by Bacon, a western scholar.

“People have a belief on how evil functions. That is evil effects evil immediately on any object which it concerns with. This belief has prevailed in all the times in all the countries.”

The above interpretation signifies the universal existence of this belief regarding evil eye.

### **People who cause evil eye**

According to the data elicited from research, exorcists, sorcerers, those who are afflicted by malicious planets in their horoscope envious people, people with abnormal physical shape. people suffering from diseases, divine people and women under going menstruation period are found to have the capability to cause evil eye. Those people who have this kind of capability against their will seem to be unaware of the evils of their eyes. Some people tend to assume that this capability is hereditary . This is notable that this assumption is found among the nations of England and East Africa, according to the view of scholars. 7

Research data ascertain that women outnumber men in effecting evil eye. The excessive craving of women is believed to be behind this tendency of women. 8

### **Protection from Evil eye**

Protective measures against evil eye could be discussed under two titles.

1. Prevention before the infliction of evil eye.
2. Freeing oneself from the inflection after being inflicted.

There is popular tradition of hanging a human like image, made out of hay, rags, sticks and clay pot, called scarecrow, on houses, at gardens and in business centers

as a protection against evil eye,<sup>9</sup> This image is called “Pulluru” by people of Tamil Nadu.<sup>10</sup>

There is a belief that babies are the most victims of evil eye and when parents take their children away from home, they wear a big black ‘Poddu’ ( a round mark of paste) on their children’s forehead. Hence the concentration of those who inflict evil eye could be drawn to the ‘Poddu’ and the affliction to the children is considerably reduced.<sup>11</sup>

Another protective measure of people is to keep their progress and other developments in life, a secret. Responding indifferently to the queries of those who are supposed to inflict evil eye on others progress is some other form of protection.

Most of the people in the research area avoid having meals in front of those who are unfamiliar or those who are believed to have the capability to inflict evil eye. Most women do not like the others to watch them serving food to their husbands, for sake of preventing the effect of evil eye.<sup>12</sup>

### **Harm caused by Evil Eye**

Evil Eye is believed to cause various forms of harm. The Tamil proverb “Kallerikku Thappinalum Kannerikku Thappa Mudiathu” (One can escape the stone thrown at but not the evil eye) is well known in the research area. Ill health particularly headache, hiccough, yawning, lack of appetite etc and death are thought to be some forms of harm. Setback in business and occupational ventures can also be mentioned here.<sup>13</sup>

Not only humans but other animate and inanimate objects like trees, fields, gardens, newly contracted buildings and vehicles could be affected by evil eye.

### **Anti Evil Eye Materials**

The materials supposed to eliminate the effect of evil eye seem to have common properties in the research area. Reciting mantras, holy ash, camphor, saffron, thread, kumkum, hen, lemon, salt, conch shell, street soil, dry chilly, water, grain, bodily parts of animals, aromatic smoke, blood, musical note etc are worth mentioning.<sup>14</sup>

## **Elimination of the effect of Evil eye**

Preventing the effect of evil eye and defusing the effect are the two means of eliminating the effect of evil eye. These means are protection before the harm and protection after harm respectively.

Alleviating the effect of evil eye includes the practices of 'Suththippoduthal', blessing the victim with a tray bearing sacred objects, applying holy ash to victim's body, wearing black 'poddu' on the victim's forehead, dyeing the victim's eyebrow sides, bending the fingers with a cracking sound, spitting, wearing special jewellery to the victim, wearing talisman to the victim, wearing the fur or tooth of animals like pig and bear to the victim.

It's notable that "Suttipoduthal" and blessing with camphor incense are the major practices in the research area. Several people retain the practice of wearing big black 'Pooddu' on the forehead of babies when they are taken away from home and brought back home. The ash on the cooking vessels is used for this purpose. <sup>15</sup>

It is assumed that newly married couple are next to children as the victims of evil eye. Hence when newly married couple go out of home together, they are made to under go some traditional practice supposed to eliminate the effects of evil eye.

Suththipoduthal has to be considered a kind of conventional practice. <sup>16</sup>

The material composition used in 'suththipoduthal' includes three dry chillies, three salt pieces, Neem leaves, street soil (The soil trodden by the one supposed to have inflicted evil eye is specially considered), leaf piece of either palmyrah or coconut composition being carried by the right hand is rubbed against the victim's body from head to foot. Mantras are also recited by some while doing so. Lastly spitting drops of the victim are received on this composition and the whole thing is left burnt on the street yard. Some throw the composition into ponds.

The extent burning is corresponded to the extent of the evil eye. If the dry chillies are not thoroughly burnt and salt pieces do not burst, the effect of evil eye is believed to be considerable. This ceremony comes to an end with marking a "Pooddu" on the forehead of the victim. using the dissolved dry chilly powder.

Mostly women involve in the "suttipoduthal" ceremony. Women having fulfilled

the sanctities of life and elderly ones who are honored in the society are regarded eligible to involve in the ceremony.

Saliva is assigned prominence in the ceremony to mitigate the effects supposed to be caused by tongue. The ceremony is referred to as “Thuppikkaliththal” (Mitigating by spitting off) by the residents of the research area. This is performed by articulating “Thoo Thoo” thrice while spitting out saliva. <sup>17</sup>

The mitigation ceremonies could be viewed as a part of magico Religious Folk Medicine. Such ceremonial practices seem to come under the branch of contagious magic. <sup>18</sup>

The effects of evil eye are believed to pass on to the mitigation articles like street soil, dry chilies, salt, saliva etc. during the ceremony. The assumption behind the whole ceremony is that the entire evils will be destroyed as the mitigation articles are burnt.

## **Conclusion**

The belief on evil eye widely survives among people beyond the distinction of the literate and the illiterate, in the research area.

The involvement of women inflicting evil eye and in mitigating it is immense. Men in less number also are observed to participate in the ceremonies. Men's participation is encouraged only when qualified women are not found available on such occasion. In the mitigation practices, “Suthipoduthal” or Thudaiththupoduthal” is the one practiced most.

The remedies against evil eye could be regarded as part of traditional counselling.

## **Foot Notes**

1. Encyclopedia of Religion and ethics; Charl'es Scribner's Sons; Newyork; 1995; VOL.V; PP 608 – 609.
2. Alan Dundes; Interpreting Folklore; Bloomington; Indiana University press; 1980; P.93.
3. Frederick Thomas Elworthy. The Evil Eye and Account of the Ancient and widespread superstition; London; 1995; P.14
4. Encyclopaedia Britannica; Macropaedia; Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc; Helen Hemingway Benton Publisher; Chicago, U.S.A; 1973 – 1974 , P.916

5. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics; Vol – 8; P.609.
6. Ibid; P.608.
7. Ibid; P.16.
8. Source of Data.  
Mrs.M.Annammah; Female; Age 76;  
Nainativu South; Nainativu.  
Mr.K.Sinathmby; Male; age; 70;  
Vellampkkaddy; Kodikamam.  
Mrs.V.Thangaratnam; Female; age; 60,  
Veeraoathurar Kovilady; Uduppiddy.  
Mr.N.Sathiyaventhana; Male; Age: 26  
Paddinasabai Veethy; Manipay.
9. This tradition is widely found in the research area.
10. Encyclopaedia; Tamil Valarchchik Kalagam; Madras; 1961; Vol 8; P.466.
11. Sources of data.  
Mr.S.Kuganesan; Male; Age; 37;  
Delft east; Deift.
12. Source of Data.  
Mrs.N.Meenadchi; Female; Age; 60  
Kanagampuliyadi Junction; Sarasalai.
13. Source of Data.  
Mrs.N.Rajitha; Female; Age;30;  
Mahathma Veethy; Nellyyadi.
14. The same articles are used in the mitigation ceremonies among the people of Tamil Nadu, India.
15. Source of Data.  
Mr.S.Thavaseelan; Male; Age 58;  
Kokuvil West; Kokuvil
16. Sivalingarajah.S., Cultural heritage in Jaffna, Kumaran Book House; Colombo; 2003;  
PP 67 – 73
17. Source of Data.  
Mrs.V.Krishnapillai; Female; age.70;  
Manalthrai Lane, Kandarmadam.
18. Sivasubramaniam.A; Mantras and Rituals; Peoples Publications; Madras; 1999.  
P.33.

# **Constrainsts Analysis for Non Functional Biogas Plants in Hariyana**

Ojha Attatrana

## **Introduction**

India is facing an energy crisis with rapid deforestation and fast depletion of fossil fuels. Dung cakes are used as fuel in majority of the households. However dung is an organic source of manure and helps to maintain the fertility of soil. In this context biogas technology play a vital role both in providing cheap source of fuel and as organic manure as slurry. Realizing the potentiality of biogas technology, the government is also propagating the use of biogas plants in rural areas. The government is providing incentives in the form of enormous subsidy to the extent of 50-60 per cent of the estimated cost for installation of biogs plants. But, it has been reported that a large number of biogas plants were not in working order. It is, therefore, essential to identify the constraints of non-functioning of biogas plants installed earlier. The identification of constraints would help the planners an adminstraiors to remove these 'bottlenks in implementation and propagation of biogas programmes. It will also provide useful information to extension workers for the propagation of biogas technology. Thefore, in the present study attempts have been made to study the important resons for non - working of biogas plants.

## **Methodology**

A sample of 50 non-fuctional biogas plants owners was selected at random from the study area and the constraints faced by them were studied. The information was collected through well structured questionnaire. The constraints categorised into six groups. namely, economic, sociological, health, operational, labour and inputs. The sample was further grouped into Janata and KVIC type biogas plant owners. There were 29 Janata type and 21 KVIC type biogas plants. The constraints were analysed separately for each category. In different categories only those constraints were taken

into consideration that were reported by more than 30 per cent of non-functional biogas plants owners. The constraints were tested for their ranking with the help of rank correlation technique.

$$R = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d_i^2}{n^3 - n}$$

Where R = Rank correlation of co-efficient

$d_i$  = Difference between the ranking

n = Number of categories

Rank. correlation was tested with the help of test where

$$t = \sqrt{\frac{n-2}{1-R^2}}$$

With (n-2) degree of freedom

## Results

The rank correlation was found to be 0.83 (P<0.01). It was observed that constraints were almost similar in both the KVIC and the Janata category. Table 1 gives the ranking of major categories of constraints. The order of placement of major category of constraints was operational, economic, sociological, inputs, labour and health. These are discussed further to identify the items of constraints in each one of the category and given as below.

### Operational

There were two items exclusively for Janata biogas plants and two exclusively for KVIC type of biogas plants. The items which were exclusively meant for Janata type got a response of 86.21 per cent for "cracks in walls" and 82.76 per cent for "leakage in dome". The items exclusively meant for KVIC type got 90.48 per cent "corrosion in the tank" and 7.1 per cent for "drum is destroyed". The percentage response of these exclusive items was highest compared to 11 common items, indicating the relative importance of the above constraints in Janata type biogas plants. There were 11 items common to both type of plants. The ranking of their items is presented



in Table 2 (D). Some of the important reasons for non functioning of biogas plants were accumulation of water in gas pipe, choking of outlet with slurry, leakage in gas pipe line, difficulties in use/ disposal of slurry and non-availability of gas during winter season. It could be observed that faulty construction and use of inferior quality materials were the main cause for non-functioning of biogas plants. These bottlenecks required to be removed to make the biogas plants functional and restore confidence to biogas plant owners on the operational aspects of biogas plants.

### **Economic**

Out of the 7 items included in this category the main economic constraints according to order of importance for the non functioning of biogas plants given in table 2(A) were loans are not available for repairs, maintenance cost is very high, there is no direct income, installation cost is very high (because of these funds are not available for maintenance) and frequent repairs of biogas plants. The main economic reason for non-functioning of biogas plants seems to be non availability of funds for maintenance. In addition to loans for the installation of biogas plants, small amount of loan needs to made available for repairs and maintenance of biogas plants. This could make non functional biogas plants back to functional category.

### **Sociological**

These constraints are given in Table 2 (B). The main constraints advanced by non-functional biogas plants owners was that the family members do not like the food cooked on biogas. Other reasons were difficulties in the use/disposal of slurry, hesitation for mixing of cow dung and emptying of slurry tank by the family members and dislike for gas coming from cow dung. Some non-functional plant owners also reported that the biogas plants spread bad odour and increased the flies and mosquitoes. The main sociological reason appears to be aversion for food cooked on biogas, members do not cooperate in mixing and emptying the slurry and difficulties observed in the use/disposal of slurry. However, these constraints could be dispelled with the help of proper education and extension work.

### **Inputs**

In the input constraints important ones were non availability of spares and scarcity of water in summer. The biogas plant owners thought that, these constraints had led

to non-functioning of biogas plants and are presented in table 2 (G). Easy availability of spares would to some extent mitigate the problems faced by non-functional biogas plant owners.

## **Labour**

Lack of availability of skilled labour for repairs of the biogas plants. The reasons are given in Table 2,(F) Other reasons advanced were high cost of labour and insufficient family labour for running the biogas plants. After the installation of biogas plants it should be placed on the department of biogas to provide skilled man power for repairs of biogas plants to ensure their functioning at reasonable rate. This would result in reducing the drop out of biogas technology.

## **Health**

Health reasons appeared not to be the main constraints for non -functioning of biogas plants [table 2 (C)]. People reported that food cooked on biogas plant is not good for health and gives an unpalatable smell of biogas in food. None of the respondents reported any health problem due to gas plants.

The foregoing analysis indicated the main reasons for the non-functioning of biogas plants which were mainly operational, economic and sociological.

Accumulation of water in gas pipe, cracks in walls, difficulties in use/disposal of slurry, requires frequent repairs, non-availability of the spares, high cost of replacement of spare parts, non-availability of loans for repairs, disliking of food prepared on biogas were the important reasons which resulted in non-functioning of biogas plants.

The important items worth mentioning in the economic constraints were high installation and maintenance cost. This was in agreement with Jaiswal (1986) and Sohal and Fulzele (1987).

The important sociological constraints that family members do not like the food cooked on gas plant and do not like the gas coming from cow dung are in agreement with Sohal and Futzele( 1987) ad that family members hesitate in mixing and emptying of slurry tanks is shared by Khandewal (1977)]

The results reported on operational constraints in the present study were also supported by earlier workers. Accumulation of water in gas pipe, leakage of gas pipe, cracks in the walls were in agreement with Jain and Misra (1978) and Khandelwa (1981), requires frequent repairs was with Jaiswal (1986).

The above results point out that education and training to biogas plant owners is necessary to operate the biogas plants effectively. Extension workers should take more responsibility in dispelling some of the false notions of biogas plant owners like foods cooked on biogas plants is unpalatable, hesitation in mixing and emptying the slurry tank ect. by visiting the beneficiaries frequently and educationg them through effective extension education technique.

### References

- Bhati S. K., Laharia S.M.& Patel S.S. (1986) Extend and nature of adoptions of biogas plant in Haryans. *Agril. Situations in India* 41 (2): 75-79
- Jain M. K. and Mishra M.M. (1976) Biogas plants are alternative technology for energy and manure, food farming and agriculture 9 (10) 292-296.
- Jaiswal S. C. (1986) A study of socio-economic psychological characteristics of adoption of biogas plants in rural area (Karnal district), Unpublished M. Sc. Thesis, NDRI Karnal;
- Khandelwal K. C. (1961) Making the cow dung gobar gas plants work round the year. *Intensive Agriculture*.19(10): 12-14.
- Sharma, N. L. (1987) Economic viability of biogas plants in Una district of H. P., Unpublished M. Sc. thesis (Agril Econ) HPKV, Palampur.
- Sohal T. S. and Fulzele R. M. (1987) Transfer of biogas technology function and training needs. *Proceedings of Nationals Workshop and Biogas Technology*, PAU Ludhiana, July 3-4.

**Table 1. Ranking or major category or constraints for non- functional biogas plants.**

Reason	Janata Type		KVIC Type		Overa11	
	% age	Rank	%age	Rank	% age	Rank
1. Economic	44.19	II	49.98	II	46.50	II
2. Sociological	36.40	III	36.92	IV	38.66	III
3. Health	19.54	VI	24.34	VI	23.56	VI
4. Operational	49.24	I	61.93	I	47.65	I
5. Labour	35.63	IV	32.53	V	34.33	V
6. Input	31.72	V	40.92	III	35.60	IV

$$Re = 0.83 (P>0.01)$$

**Table 2: Ranking of Various Items under each major category of constraints (non-functional bio gas plants)**

**A. Economical**

i) Installation cost is very high	44.83	4	61.90	3	52.00	4
ii) Interest rate on loan is very high	31.04	6.5	33.34	7	30.00	7
iii) Maintenance cost is high	55.17	2	71.43	1	62.00	2
iv) Loans are not available for repair	68.97	1	66.67	2	68.00	1
v) Burner requires frequent repair	42.86	5	37.93	5	40.00	5
vi) Family size had reduced	31.04	6.5	42.86	4	36.00	6
vii) No direct cash income	55.17	3	37.14	6	56.00	3

**R = 0.78 (P<0.01)**

**B. Sociological**

i) Neighbours ridicule while mixing slurry	34.48	5	38.10	5.5	36.00	5
ii) Family members hesitate in mixing slurry and emptying tank	44.83	3	42.86	4	44.00	3

iii) Family members don't like food cooked on gas plant	58.63	1	61.90	1	60.00	1
iv) Difficulties in disposal of slurry	51.72	2	57.38	2	54.00	2
v) Don't like gas coming from dung	37.93	4	47.62	3	42.00	4

**R = 0.95 (P<0.01)**

**C. Health**

i) Chapati/milk is not tasty when cooked on gas	55.17	1	61.90	1	58.00	1
ii) Biogas gives an unpalatable smell in food prepare	34.48	2	47.62	2	40.00	2
iii) Increase in flies and mosquitoes	27.59	3	38.10	3	32.00	3

**R = 0.92 (P<0.01)**

**D. Operational**

i) Accumulation of water in gas pipe	72.41	1	71.43	1	72.00	1
ii) Accumulation of cow dung in gas pipe	37.93	10	52.38	8.5	44.00	9
iii) Leakage in gas pipe	55.17	3.5	61.90	4	58.00	4
iv) Difficulties in use/disposal of slurry	51.72	5	57.38	5	54.00	5
v) Biogas plant has outdated its life	41.37	8.5	52.38	8	46.00	2

*Constraints Analysis for Non Functional Biogas Plants in Haryana*

vi) Requires frequent repairs in winter season	62.07	2	66.67	2.5	64.00	2
vii) Gas was not produced in winter season	44.88	6.5	57.14	6	50.00	6
viii) Gas breaks up in between cooking	44.48	6.5	52.38	8.5	48.00	7
ix) Requires more time for cooking due to low pressure	34.48	11	47.62	10	40.00	11
x) Choking of outlet of plant with slurry	55.17	3.5	66.67	2.5	60.00	3
xi) Defective construction	41.37	8.5	42.86	11	42.00	10

**R = 0.92 (p<0.01)**

**E. labour**

i) Lack of skilled labour for repairs	51.72	1	57.14	1	54.00	1
ii) Labour is costly	44.83	2	38.10	2	42.00	2
iii) Family labour is insufficient for running the gas plant	34.48	3	28.57	3.5	32.00	4
iv) Labour is not available for mixing and emptying slurry tank	31.03	4	28.57	3.5	30.00	3

**R = 0.99 (P<0.01)**

**F. Inputs**

i) Spares are not available easily	51.72	1	61.90	1	56.00	1
ii) Lack of availability of water nearby	31.04	3	38.10	3	34.00	3
iii) Scarcity of water in smnmer	37.93	2	47.62	2	42.00	2

**R = 1.00 (P<0.01)**