

A Psycho-socio-economic Perspective of *Pind Daan* Practice: A Systematic Review

Mishra Khushboo Ashokkumar

Assistant Professor, Gaya College (A constituent unit of Magadh University), Gaya, Bihar, India

*Corresponding author: mkak52@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pind daan has great significance amongst the followers of Hinduism in India and abroad. It is one of the most important forms of *daan* whereby the person performing the ritual offers homage to the deceased elders from the family. Research literature depicts that conformity to the social norms and affiliation to a specific religious group play important role in the inclination towards religious practices. The role of personality of an individual has also been found important in this regard. Even the economic situation influences and is in turn influenced by the practice of this religious ritual. In this article, the researcher plans to explore the underlying psycho-social-economic mechanisms behind the practice of the ritual. Various social, religious, economic and personality factors underlying the decision behind performing the *pind daan* ritual shall be tapped. The researcher further lays out a few important questions which need to be assessed empirically in the future.

Keywords: *Pind Daan*, Personality, Religious Attitude, Social Conformity, Economy, Religious, Rituals

Religious rituals can be seen prevailing almost in every corner of the continent. India is bestowed with a rich cultural heritage whereby various spiritual and religious practices are evident. One such practice is *pind daan* in which the child offers his/her last homage to the deceased members of the family. According to *dharmashashtra*, debt towards *pitra* is one of the most important debts on an individual. It is essential to perform this ritual to make the ancestors attain *moksha* (salvation) and also to attain the blessings of the forefathers. *Pinds* are round-shaped balls made of rice and barley flour, black sesame, and ghee, which are offered to ancestors during *shradh*. According to *Hindu* mythology, doing *pind daan* in Gaya city is considered most auspicious as the soul could be liberated from the agonies of hell and sent directly to heaven (*moksha* under the foot of Lord *Vishnu*).

Recently, *pind daan* is gaining worldwide fame and taking a global picture as even people who are not followers of Hinduism offer *pind daan* to their forefathers. Nowadays people are even performing online *pind daan*. Thus, with this kind of enthusiasm

being evident it becomes interesting to study the psycho-social factors which play a crucial role in the dynamics of this ancient ritual. The role of social and cultural values is essentially important in this regard. Social norms govern the behaviour of an individual to a large extent. The religious practices and attitudes are managed predominantly by the social group we belong to. Many religious practices are unconsciously learned and practiced only because of this reason. Thus, examining the role of connectedness with a social group and *pind daan* can be an important dimension that needs to be studied extensively.

In this regard, the role of social conformity behaviour is important. Social conformity can be operationally defined as an attribute whereby an individual tries to conform with the social norms to fit in the group. Thus, being part of the culture where religious practices like *pind daan* are performed, it will be interesting to study its role in this regard. Furthermore, an individual is composed of several dynamic components like, personality, religious attitude, and other individual factors which may

also play an important role in the decisions and behaviour of an individual. Spiritual inclination, social behaviour, religious practices are governed to a large extent by these factors. Thus, it will be interesting to study the importance of individual factors concerning the act of performing a religious activity like *pind daan*.

Literature suggests is a strong relationship between social dimension and religion. The connection is evident in terms of various social psychologists working in this field. As researched by social psychologists, beliefs and behaviour are adopted by the surrounding group (Sherif, 1936; Asch, 1951). Extensive work can be found on the attribute of social interdependence and feeling of belongingness to a particular group (Marshall, 2002) and how the rituals are framed (Levy & Razin, 2012). In one study the researchers studied the social conformity behaviour and inclination towards religion (Thiruchselvam, Gopi, Kilekwang, Harper, & Gross, 2017). Thiruchselvam *et al.* (2017) found that participants who scored low on social conformity were low on the inclination towards religiosity.

One connected and yet more important dimension is Economy and economic condition. Pind Daan being an elaborate practice entails money for execution of the ritual. Thus, the economic condition largely determines whether a person will attempt to indulge in the practice of this ritual or not. Not only this, *pitra paksh* is considered to be very productive portion of the year for the pandas and related persons as it brings a boom in their finances. Picker (2003)c quoted,

'For given religious beliefs, increases in church attendance tend to reduce economic growth. In contrast, for given church attendance, increases in some religious beliefs — notably heaven, hell, and an afterlife — tend to increase economic growth'.

Thus, due to the importance of religious practice like *Pind Daan* which is supposed to led one's ancestors attain *moksha*, people were found performing the ritual despite economic strain or difficulty.

Personality is another important variable that has been extensively studied with religion and religious rituals. 'conscientiousness', 'agreeableness', and 'extraversion' have been found positively associated with religiosity (Khoynezhad, Rajaei, & Sarvarazemy, 2012). On the other hand, 'openness'

and 'neuroticism' have been found negatively associated with religiosity (Khoynezhad, Rajaei, & Sarvarazemy, 2012). However, McCullough, Tsang, and Biron (2003) reported a positive significant correlation between religiousness and 'openness'. Studies regarding personality orientation in terms of locus of control (LOC) have also been reported in a few related studies. In a study by Amedome & Bedi (2018), a significant interactive effect was found between religiosity and locus of control on the perception of mental illness. Internal LOC was found to mediate the relationship between awareness of God and better psychological health, and external LOC was found to mediate the relationship between instability and poorer psychological health (Ryan & Francis, 2012).

Yet another dimension that is seen in the literature is religiosity and the practice of religious rituals. Religiosity and religious practices have positive effects on the perception of the value of older people (Leelavanichkul, Chamrathirong, Jampaklay, & Gray, 2017). Religious involvement was found as the predictor for reduced frequency of alcohol use (Thompson, 2017). Religious practices, positive attitudes, and coping behaviours were found among hospitalized medically ill older adults and were related to social, psychological, and physical health outcomes (Koenig, 1998). Religious attitude is found to be positively correlated with good psychological health (Habibian, Ahmadi, Vashian, Mortazavi, & Dadkhah-Tehrani, 2015).

In the Indian scenario religion is one topic that is much discussed amongst researchers especially in humanities and social sciences. Several scientific studies in the field of religion have also been done (Verma, 1978). Much work can be seen in the direction of mental health (Joshi & Kumari, 2011; Behere, Das, Yadav & Behere, 2013). Religious belief is also found to be associated with psychological well-being (Joshi, Kumari & Jain, 2008). Religious attitude has been found to have a positive relationship with happiness (Aghili & Kumar, 2008). In a study on the South Indian population, Power (2018) found a positive relationship between collective religious rituals and social cohesion.

Pind daan is important to maintain cultural integrity. Today family structure is in a dynamic phase whereby most families are constantly moving towards nuclear family culture. In this respect, we

shall be at a better place in explaining the possible reasons behind breaking families and ways in which the integrity of the families can be maintained. Culture and religion are considered constituent element of a healthy society. Every religion has a specific set pattern of practices which the members of that specific religious practice on daily basis. For example, praying, celebrating a specific festival, etc. Religious rituals, in this respect are very crucial as they define religious integrity. *Pind daan* is a ritual that dates long back. It is one of the best examples of family cohesiveness and feeling of affiliation even to the deceased members of the family. The attribute of belongingness, sense of responsibility and satisfaction with life is enhanced by the practice of *pind daan*.

The ritual itself is very important and holds value on the national economic front. Lots of foreign reserves are generated each year by the *pind daan* activity. So, its promotion and popularity are very essential to protect the cultural heritage and economic security. Despite many studies have been done to tap the underlying factors behind religious practices, we can find that scientific interest in the practice of the *pind daan* ritual is very new. In the light of the major research work reviewed, it is evident that very few studies have been reported which have attempted to assess the underlying mechanism involved in performing *pind daan*. The essential element like the role of family relations and bonding needs to be assessed in a better way in the light of the issues.

REFERENCES

Aghili, M. and Kumar, G.V. 2008. Relationship between Religious Attitude and Happiness among Professional Employees. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, **34**: 66-69.

Amedome, S.N. and Bedi, I.K. 2018. The Effects of Religion and Locus of Control on Perception of Mental Illness. *Journal of Religion and Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0658-3>

Asch, S.E. 1951. Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgments. In H. Guetzkow (Ed.), *Groups, leadership and men; research in human relations* (pp. 177-190). Oxford, England: Carnegie Press.

Behere, P.B., Das, A., Yadav, R. and Behere, A.P. 2013. Religion and mental health. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, **55**(Suppl 2), S187-S194.

Copeman, J. 2011. The Gift and Its Forms of Life in Contemporary India. *Modern Asian Studies*, **45**(5): 1051-1094.

Joshi, S. and Kumari, S. 2011. Religious Beliefs and Mental Health: An Empirical Review. *Delhi Psychiatry Journal* **14**(1): 40-50.

Joshi, S., Kumari, S. and Jain, M. 2008. Religious belief and its relation to psychological well-being. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, **34**: 345-354.

Khoynezhad, G., Rajaei, A.R. and Sarvarazemy, A. 2012. Basic religious beliefs and personality traits. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry*, **7**(2): 82-6.

Koenig, H. 1998. Religious Coping and Health Status in Medically Ill Hospitalized Older Adults. *The Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease*, **186**(9): 513-521.

Leelavanichkul, S., Chamrathirong, A., Jampaklay, A. and Gray, R. 2017. Religiosity, the Practices of Religions, and the Perception of Older People Among Muslims and Buddhists in Thailand. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, pp. 1-21.

Levy, G. and Razin, R. 2012. Religious Beliefs, Religious Participation, and Cooperation. *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics*, **4**(3): 121-151.

Marshall, D.A. 2002. Behavior, Belonging, and Belief: A Theory of Ritual Practice. *Sociological Theory*, **20**(3): 360-380

McCullough, M.E., Tsang, J. and Brion, S.L. 2003. Personality traits in adolescence as predictors of religiousness in early adulthood: Findings from the Terman Longitudinal Study. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **29**: 980-991.

Picker, L. 2003. Religion and Economic Growth. The Digest, 11. Retrieved from URL <http://surl.li/bdxlp>

Power, E.A. 2018. Collective ritual and social support networks in rural South India. *Proceedings. Biological Sciences*, **30**; 285(1879): 1-7.

Ryan, M.E. and Francis, A.J.P. 2012. Locus of Control Beliefs Mediate the Relationship Between Religious Functioning and Psychological Health. *Journal of Religion and Health*, **51**: 774-785.

Sherif, M. 1936. The psychology of social norms. Oxford, England: Harper.

Habibian, N., Ahmadi, R., Vashian, A., Mortazavi, S.M. and Dadkhah-Tehrani, T. 2015. Investigating the Correlation between the Life and Religious Attitudes with Psychological Well-Being in Nurses Working in Health Centers at Qom Universities of Medical Sciences in 2014. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, **6**(6 S4): 168.

Thiruchselvam, R., Gopi, Y., Kilekwang, L., Harper, J. and Gross, J. 2017. In God we trust? Neural measures reveal lower social conformity among non-religious individuals. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, **12**(6): 956-964.

Thompson, W.E. 2017. Social Support, Religious Involvement and Alcohol Use among Students at a Conservative Religious University. *Behavioral Sciences*, **7**(34): 1-12.

Verma, S. 1978. Scientific Study of Religion in India. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, **17**(2): 173-179.

