CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSIONS
AND
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The purpose of the present investigation was to explore and find out the nature and degree of superstitious beliefs among the High School pupils of Kerala. The first level exploratory survey was confined to all the three regions of Kerala State - Trivandrum, Ernakulam and Calicut. Six hundred and ten types of superstitious beliefs were collected from 5544 high school pupils, studying in the 44 high schools all over Kerala. The percentage of pupils mentioning each type of superstitious beliefs was calculated for each of the three regions separately. It was found that the percentages do not differ significantly with regard to the more popular superstitious beliefs. So the second level correlation study was confined only to the Trivandrum Revenue District. One hundred and twenty popular superstitious beliefs were collected from the first survey to form the initial superstition inventory. And after item analysis on a sample of 370 high school pupils in the Trivandrum Revenue District, 60 items emerged and this
constituted the final superstition inventory. In addition to the superstition inventory a socio-economic scale, having four components (parental education, parental profession, parental income and home facilities) and a religiosity scale were also administered to the final sample of 1560 pupils selected from 13 high schools which were chosen on a stratified random basis from the Trivandrum Revenue District. The superstition inventory also obtained details regarding caste, community, religion and sex. The probable six factors causing superstitious beliefs were also printed at the end of the belief inventory in the form of a check-list.

Through the first level exploratory study 610 varieties of superstitious beliefs were collected. They can be classified under the following heads:

(1) Human Behaviour
(2) Days and Months
(3) Omens: Behaviour of Animals
(4) Human Body Characteristics
(5) Charms and Mantrams
(6) Behaviour of Women, Pregnancy, etc.
(7) Eating
(8) Omens Relating to the Behaviour of Birds
(9) Night Superstitions

etc. etc.
As regards the purpose of the second level study confined to the Trivandrum Revenue District, it was intended to find out the nature and degree of relationships between superstitious beliefs of the pupils and family background. The family background included parental education, profession and income and home facilities. It was also intended to find out whether sex, community, caste and religion of the pupils were related to superstitious beliefs. The nature and degree of relationship between religious practices in the family and the superstitious belief of pupils was also explored.

FINDINGS

Out of the sixty superstitious beliefs included in the superstition inventory more than 42 statements were heard by more than 50% of the 1560 high school pupils. The most heard superstition relates to the belief that "the sight of a cat on getting out of bed or crossing one's path when one sets out for a journey, will bring ill-luck". It is seen that 97.79% of the high school pupils have heard this superstitious belief. The least heard superstitious belief out of the sixty related to the statement No.40. "If a jack-fruit touches the earth in its natural growth, then the death of someone in that house
is foreshadowed". Only 26.73% of the high school pupils wrote that they have heard this superstitious belief. The majority of the superstitious beliefs related to omens with positive and negative implications. Most of the superstitions heard by the present sample (Trivandrum) are popular even outside India.

Regarding the number of pupils strongly believing each superstition, the statement No.44 (If one stamps the books accidentally with his leg it is believed to be harmful to his educational career) secures the first rank. And 25.19% of the pupils wrote that they strongly believed in this superstition. The second ranking superstitious belief relates to the use of right foot on auspicious occasions (When the bride comes to the house of the bridegroom for the first time, she must enter the house with her right leg, stamping the right foot on the floor). The last rank of 60% was obtained by the statement No.53 (If one happens to see one myna, it is well and good; but to see two mynas at a time is said to be bad). Only 3.01% of the high school pupils strongly believed in this superstition. But 14.3% of the pupils strongly believed that a large forehead indicates intelligence. And 16% strongly believed in 'ragukalam' (inauspicious time of the day). The chirping of the house lizard was a favourite superstition and 21.02% of the high school pupils strongly believed in it.
Even though the maximum possible score for the superstition inventory is '120', the minimum being 'zero', the total mean superstition score for the sample of 1560 high school pupils was only 26.02. So the majority of the pupils have scored comparatively low on superstition inventory. The radical socio-political changes taking place in Kerala could partly explain the low mean superstition score.

Regarding the sex differences, the boys (734) had a mean score of 20.74 and the girls (776) had a mean score of 31.32. The mean difference is statistically significant at one per cent level. Girls were found to be more superstitious when the sub-groups were compared. The maximum mean difference (girls scoring higher) was between urban forward Hindu boys (51) and urban forward Hindu girls (127) and the critical ratio is statistically significant at '1' per cent level. The highest critical ratio of 8.34 was obtained for rural boys versus rural girls. Moreover the girls were scoring higher for the superstition inventory with reference to the major religious groups - Hindu, Christians and Muslims.

With regard to each of the four components of the socio-economic scale negative but low coefficient of contingency was found, when correlated with the superstition inventory score. The contingency coefficients obtained were -0.117, -0.12,
-0.137, -0.098 respectively for parental education component, parental profession component, parental income component and home facilities component. When the reliability was tested via chi-square, it was found that the contingency ratio with reference to parental profession was statistically significant at 5 per cent level, and the ratio relating to parental income was significant at '1' per cent level. The other two ratios i.e., parental education and home facilities, were not statistically significant at 5 per cent level. Contingency co-efficient of -0.126 which is statistically significant at 5 per cent level was obtained for superstition inventory score versus total socio-economic variable§. Score for each component variable was converted into standard score before they were combined into a composite socio-economic score for calculating coefficient of contingency. So it can be concluded that there is a low but negative relationship between superstitious beliefs of high school pupils and their socio-economic background.). With regard to the most superstitious '60' pupils and the least superstitious '60' pupils it was consistently found out that the most superstitious pupils are consistently scoring lower for each of the four components of the socio-economic scale. Moreover with regard to parental education and home facilities the mean differences were statistically significant at 5 per cent level.
Similarly the children of the more educated parents (245) had a lower mean superstition score than the children of less educated (237) parents and the mean difference of 9.30 was found to be statistically significant at one per cent level.

With regard to religious factor, as a group the Christian pupils (321) were scoring the lowest for the superstition inventory and the Hindu pupils (1117) the highest and the Muslims (122) coming in between. The mean difference between Christian pupils and Hindu pupils (8.19) is found to be statistically significant at '1' per cent level. The mean difference between Hindu pupils and Muslim pupils (5.16) was statistically significant at '1' per cent level. But the Muslim and Christian pupils do not significantly differ with regard to the mean superstition score. The same trend was found when sub-groups were compared. With regard to sex and rural factor Christian rural boys were found to have the lowest mean score (19.02) and the rural Hindu boys (22.77) the highest mean score. With reference to all the sub-groups compared, the lowest mean superstition score was for the urban Christian boys (14.80) and the highest mean superstition score for the Hindu urban girls. (32.79).

The coefficient of contingency calculated between superstition score and religiosity score for the total sample was +.253 and this statistically significant at '1' per cent
level. There is positive relationship between superstitious beliefs of pupils and the religious practices in their families. Hundred pupils belonging to the most religious parents (religious practices in the family) and hundred pupils belonging to the least religious parents were compared. While the former group had a mean superstition score of 33.4, the latter group had a mean score of only 13.9 and the mean difference is statistically significant at '1' per cent level. This also indicates the positive relationship between superstitious beliefs and religious practices in the families.

The thirteen schools selected for the study had different mean superstition scores. High School, Kottukal had the highest mean score of 46.33 and the Government High School, Vakkom had the lowest mean score of 14.83. Without making a systematic study of the above schools it is not easy to explain this difference.

With regard to the causal factors behind the superstitious beliefs, first rank was obtained by the factor, "Told by parents and elders at home", and the second rank by the factor, "Learnt from friends at school", and the sixth rank for the last factor, "Learnt from servants at house".

A product moment coefficient of correlation of .732 significant at '1' per cent level was found when the superstition score of 120 high school pupils of Venganoor High School and 120 parents of these pupils were correlated.
With regard to the reliability of the Superstition Inventory, a Test-retest reliability co-efficient (product moment) of .932, significant at '1' per cent level, was found out when the scores obtained for the first and second administrations with reference to the 120 high school pupils of St. Joseph's English High School were correlated.

3. Correlation studies can be conducted to find out the nature and degree of relationship between intelligence and superstition beliefs of high school pupils. Family background variables can be controlled to estimate the nature and degree of relationship, if any, between superstition beliefs and intelligence among the high school pupils.

4. Correlation studies can be conducted to find out the nature of relationship between personality adjustment and superstition beliefs of high school pupils. Interscore coefficients can be calculated between superstition scores and adjustment scores.

5. A Pearsonian analysis can be developed to research paranormal tendency among the high school pupils and the relationship, if any, between this variable and superstition beliefs can be established.
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Since religion seems to be an important factor relating to superstitious beliefs, further correlation studies can be conducted with a standardized religiosity scale.

2. Correlation studies can be conducted to find out the nature and degree of relationship between intelligence and superstitious beliefs of high school pupils. Family background variables can be controlled to estimate the nature and degree of relationship, if any, between superstitious beliefs and intelligence among the high school pupils.

3. Correlation studies can be conducted to find out the nature of relationship between personality adjustment and superstitious beliefs of high school pupils. Contingency coefficient can be calculated between superstition scores and adjustment scores.

4. A Paranoid Scale can be developed to measure paranoid tendency among the high school pupils and the relationship, if any, between this variable and superstitious beliefs can be calculated.
5. The climate in the family is likely to be related to the superstitious beliefs in pupils. A family climate inventory can be devised to measure family climate (authoritarian versus democratic climate) and correlation studies can be conducted against superstitious beliefs.

6. Most superstitious and least superstitious pupils can be selected after administering superstition inventory to a large sample, and causal comparative study can be conducted to find out the differentiating personality variables.

7. A developmental study on superstitious beliefs can be conducted from upper primary classes to the college level.

8. Studies can be conducted to find out whether there is any relationship between beliefs in positive and negative omens.

9. Experiments can be conducted under controlled conditions to examine whether pupils can be forced to believe in new superstitions and whether subjects differ with regard to proneness to superstition formation.

10. Controlled observation studies of superstitious beliefs can be conducted. Situations involving active reactions to superstitious beliefs can be manipulated and how different pupils react, can also be studied.
II. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this investigation the following recommendations can be made.

1. Since the present study has revealed that the majority of high school pupils in Trivandrum Revenue District believe in different superstitious beliefs, an effective attempt should be made to render the pupils more scientific in their attitudes and orientation. An attempt should be made through the mass media of communication such as the radio and the press to drive out the superstitious beliefs from the minds of the pupils. Radio talks relating to scientific discoveries and inventions should be broadcast frequently.

2. The curriculum and the methods of teaching should be such as to inculcate the spirit of scientific enquiry and rational and critical thinking among the school children.

3. While teaching children about our historical past and cultural traditions, care should be taken to free them from superstitious beliefs and practices. Myths and fables should be taught as myths and fables and not as sacred truths which cannot be questioned.
4. The teaching of science can be effectively employed to build up a scientific frame of mind in children. More than the content, emphasis should be on the processes and methods of scientific exploration and discovery. The major characteristics of scientific techniques and methods should be taught even at the middle school level. The importance of observation, experiment and verification of hypotheses and beliefs should be emphasised. Children should be well acquainted with the problem approach. (The transfer-oriented effective teaching and other dynamic methods of teaching such as the Project method and Dalton Plan.) Children should be encouraged to perceive challenging problems, suggest probable hypotheses, and test the deductive implications, following vigorously the steps of scientific method.

5. Children should be given proper instruction, in a non-prejudicial way, in regard to the popular misconceptions of their communities.

6. The children should be encouraged to read books and literature of a scientific nature.

7. The programme of Teachers' selection and training has important implications for building a scientific temperament in pupils. Highly superstitious teachers and highly
authoritarian characters who believe in implicit obedience and unquestioning respect for authority should be eliminated from the teaching field. The philosophy of science and scientific methods should form an important part of the curriculum for teacher education. The teachers should be better informed about pseudo-causal relationships and erroneous ideas which lead to superstitious beliefs.

8. A permissive and democratic class-room climate could foster the spirit of exploration and discovery in children. Children should have the freedom to challenge the statements based on authority and status. They should be free to critically examine the statements of their teachers and put challenging questions wherever necessary.

9. A programme of adult education should be so arranged that parents may have the maximum opportunity to become acquainted with the correct causal relationships relating to more common phenomena, objects and events. Parents should also be educated through radio and other mass media of communication to critically examine the superstitious beliefs and practices. They should be advised to give scientific explanations to the questions posed by their children. Parents should not give superstitious explanations to a natural phenomenon.
10. The religious leaders of the country should give the correct lead to the people regarding religious practices. Religious practices and beliefs should be evaluated in the light of scientific subjects like abnormal psychology and clinical psychology. Religious practices bordering on obsessive compulsive traits and those associated with superstitious beliefs should be dropped. The ethical, integrative and social aspect of religion should receive more attention than the magical and superstitious aspects. The central core of religion should be love, understanding and personality-integration and not compulsive adherence to superstition-laden rituals, observances and practices. The fact that the great religious leaders of mankind have stood for innovation and change, and have opposed authority and tradition, should receive increasing attention.