

Original article

## **The Supernatural Dimension of Health, Disease, Illness, and Healing Practices: An Anthropological Ethnography amongst the Santal Migrants of Mousuni Island and Patibunia in South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, India**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Inscribed space defines the fundamental relationship between human and the environment they occupy which ecologically determines the supernatural dimensions of health, disease and illness. The present study is an empirical one, representing the ideological changes in supernatural beliefs and healing practices to manage health-related attributes of Santal migrants settled at Mousuni island and Patibunia of South 24 Parganas in West Bengal, India. The most revered anthropological fieldwork methods have been used in the present study. This study shows how inscribed space influence social-cultural lifestyle which creates a great effect on supernatural beliefs and healing practices, and also seeks to observe and interpret the new developments of age-old ideology in an altered spatial setting.

**Key words:** Health, disease, Illness, Healing, Inscribed space, Proxemics, Cultural adaptation, Supernaturalism

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concepts of health, disease and illness are amongst the fundamental concern of human beings which varies in different tribal communities across time and space. Accordingly, every community over the years have developed different ways to address health problems, be it plant medicine, magico-religious practices, and other scientific treatment modalities sufficing both

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diagnosis and curative needs. The collective usages of different forms mentioned hereby are referred to as ethnomedicine, a sub-specialized area of Medical Anthropology. Levinson and Gaccione said, medical anthropologists conceptualized health in various cultures and diverse ecologies, establishing that the notion of health differs cross-culturally, which is derived mainly from the traditional beliefs. Natural and supernatural causes were supposed to be producers of disease and illness. The natural means of ill health is easy to diagnose but the magical forces from the spirits and gods are considered to create an imbalance in body, mind and soul which is hard to diagnose for ordinary people but a magician or a shaman can. Classic shamanism or magico-religious practices are customary among the indigenous people is practiced by a charismatic shaman, a master of the supernatural spirits who specializes in contacting and controlling the supernatural. (Levinson and Gaccione, 1997) In differentiation between the concepts of disease and illness, Cassell wrote, “the disease is something an organ has while illness is something a man has. Disease refers to an abnormal condition affecting an organism. This abnormal condition could be due to infection, degeneration of tissue, injury/trauma, toxic exposure, development of cancer, etc. This abnormal condition could be due to infection, degeneration of tissue, injury/trauma, toxic exposure, development of cancer, etc. This is what needs to be ‘cured’, especially if it’s life-threatening. Illness on the other hand refers to the feelings that might come with having a disease. Feelings like pain, fatigue, weakness, discomfort, distress, confusion, dysfunction, etc. – the reasons people seek healthcare – and usually the way people measure their success with treatment. It is very important to understand that feelings of illness can be vastly affected by many non-disease factors, such as expectations, beliefs, fears, feelings/moods, and culture. Being ill is a very personal experience, and can vary tremendously and be affected by very different things between people with the same ‘disease’.” (Cassell, 1976)

To Foster and Anderson, illness can be theorized as personalistic, naturalistic and emotionalistic. Personalistic disease theories attribute illness to agents (often malicious), such as sorcerers, witches, ghosts, or ancestral spirits. Naturalistic disease theories explain the illness in impersonal terms, and emotionalistic disease theories assume that emotional experiences cause illness. (Foster and Anderson, 1978) Winkelman defined, the studies on ethnomedicine are extensively dispersed globally which comprehends medical beliefs, practices, remedies, folk therapies, and the notion of health and illness. The cultural symbolism in medical anthropology does emphasize the efficacy of ethnomedical systems and does relieve maladies. The presumed effectiveness of ritual healing implies that religion somehow has the power to heal. (Winkelman, 2009) The healing power is also produced through therapy, which in ethnomedicine includes magico-religious, medical,

and chemical procedures. (Lieban, 1973) It is also understood that there is an intimate and inexorable linkage between disease, medicine, and human culture. (Landy, 1977), and the diseases can be cured by supplicating and propitiating the associated gods, directly or indirectly through shamanism, because there is an extremely close relationship between medicine and other sub-systems like morality, religion, and magic (Elwin, 1964). Thus, medicine is often intermingled with superstition, religion, and magic. (Kurian and Bhanu, 1980) For proper understanding of superstitious beliefs on health attributes of a community, the patient and the practitioner's views and thoughts are equally important. Kleinman quoted, "ethnographic analysis and cross-cultural comparisons of medical systems have been mainly concerned with an in-depth description of the psycho-social or cultural dimension of illness and healing methodology cannot be understood without the context of meaning. To grasp these meanings, it is necessary to describe a patient as well as the practitioner categories." (Kleinman, 1980)

In the present study, inscribed space can be considered as one of the key components of the study where inscribed space produced and introduced an altered environment to the migrants which induced conflicts and changes in age-old beliefs and practices of a community in man-environment continuum. Low and Zuniga defined, inscribed space is solely a metaphor describing the relationship between humans and their physical and social environment they occupy. (Low and Zuniga, 2003) and seeks to identify the factors and variables behind the change in the light of proxemics, which is defined by Edward Hall, that humans have an innate distancing mechanism, modified by culture that helps to regulate contact in social situations. (Hall, 1968) The spatial domain of proxemics thereby becomes applicable in this present context of the study, where the migrants develop and evolve their age-old health and healing practices in an altered inscribed space of diverse ecology, which is greatly influenced by their traditional culture and social situations. The differences in environmental conditions make a society adapt to altered ethno-botanical settings, magico-religious performances and other culture traits in context of health and healing for a particular community settled in diverse ecological settings through migration, and have affected their social-cultural lifestyle, which is close to the theory of cultural ecology. For Steward, "A social system is determined by its environmental resources. The main idea of cultural ecology is to determine whether cultural adaptation toward the natural environment initiates social transformations of evolutionary change" (Tucker, 2013); and environment determines and limits a culture (Semple, 1911 and

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Kroeber, 1969). When a community relocates itself to a new locality, often it does not have the opportunity to restore its traditional cultural practices as the new environment does not provide them the variables required for sustenance of their tradition. Accordingly, age-old cultural practices may discontinue, and evolved form is produced in the altered ecological setting.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The study intends to observe the supernatural factors determining health, disease, illness and healing practices; and secondly, try to analyze and interpret the reasons behind such evolved beliefs and practices.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The present study has been conducted using the most revered anthropological method of firsthand fieldwork where its specialized techniques, namely observation, case study, interview, schedule, and questionnaire have been used for data collection. Through purposively selected informants, life experiences have been collected from their comprehensive replies to reconstruct supernatural beliefs of disease and illness, and its impact on health in an altered ecology.

The study is analyzed and interpreted primarily and predominantly through qualitative approach; however, quantitative information has also been used primarily through population composition and observations.

The study has been conducted among the Santal migrants residing in Mousuni Island and Patibunia of South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal, India who have been predominantly engaged in fishing activities from yesteryears. The study has been conducted among 403 Santal migrants, among which 188 are male and 215 are female. To meet the aforesaid objectives, relevant information has been collected to trace evolved supernatural dimensions of health and healing practices in an altered inscribed space as a production of cultural adaptation from multi-religious communities.

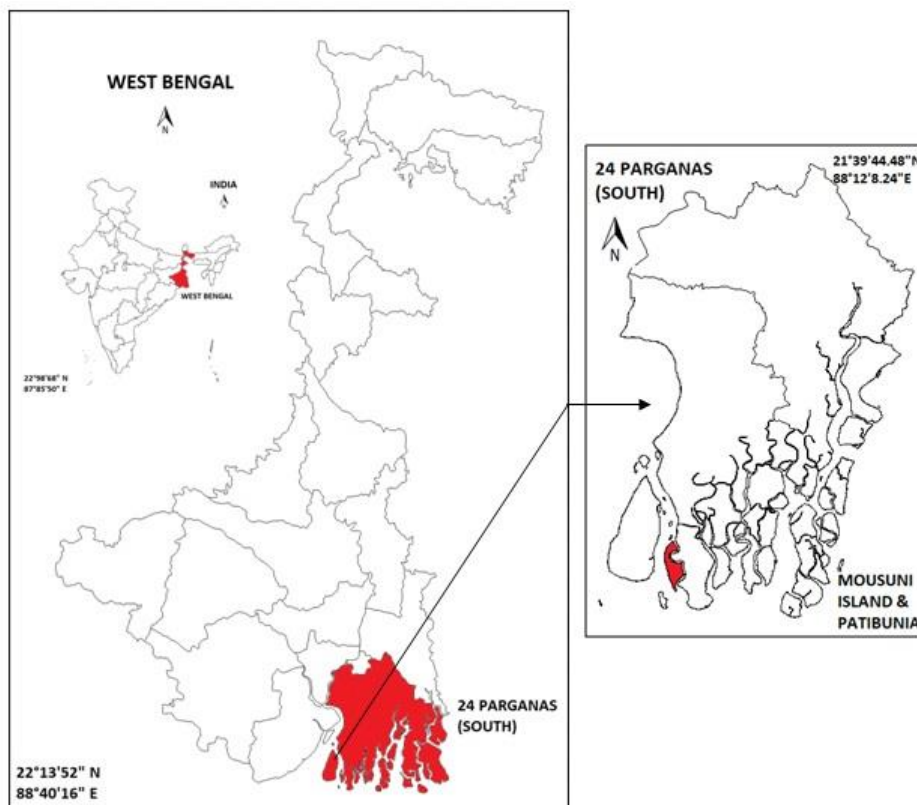
#### ***The Empirical Setting***

Mousuni Island is a landmass rinsed along with adjacent Patibunia by sea and river waters; all three sides are open to the Bay of Bengal and the river Muri-Ganga flows from the north-western part through Pitts Creek and meets the sea in the south. The community composition

of the villages includes Muslims, Hindus and Santals who thrive together in this marine environmental condition. The pictorial representation of the studied area is provided in figure-1.

The Santal migrants have been predominantly engaged in daily labors of constructions sites and agricultural activities. The other forms of professional engagement include fishing, teaching, mason, shopkeeper, government services, etc.

**Figure 1.** The Field Unit: Mousuni island and Patibunia in 24 Parganas (South), West Bengal, India



**Source:** [www.wb.gov.in](http://www.wb.gov.in)

### ***The Population Composition of Santal Migrants***

From the historical past, the Santals have migrated predominantly from Bankura district of West Bengal and Mayurbhanj district of Odisha with a percentage of 47 and 41 respectively, and nine per cent of the rest were from erstwhile Midnapore, and the remaining three per cent

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were reluctant to provide information on it and excused their inability to recollect their ancestral place.

The studied area of Mousuni island and Patibunia is composed of 403 Santal migrants among which among which 188 (46.7%) are male and 215 (53.3%) are female, which is about 1.5% of the total population of 22073 as per the 2011 census, distributed over 62 households and 110 families at the time of fieldwork. The Santal migrants were settled in four villages of Mousuni Island namely Baliara, Poilagheri, Kusumtola and Bagdanga, and Patibunia close to the river 'Chinai'. Baliara is located on the coastline of Bay of Bengal where 187 (46.4%) individuals were lived in 25 households under a family count of 50. In Kusumtola, 54 (13.4%) people were distributed in 6 households under a family count of 16. Poilagheri had 60 (14.9%) in 8 households under a family count of 17, and Bagdanga had the least Santal count of 32 (7.9%) individuals were lived under 8 households under a family count of 10, and the rest 70 (17.4%) individuals live in Patibunia in 17 families over 15 households.

### **OBSERVATION**

Baskey (1987) states, the Santals manifested a polytheist nature of devotion which has been expressed through their restrained life from birth to death. They believe in nature worship. 'Thakur-jiu' is known as the creator of the whole universe. The supreme almighty provides survival logistics and ascertains the life spans of living beings. Later, Santals devoted to 'Bonga-buru' and disregarded 'Thakur-jiu'. 'Marang-buru' is a greatly illustrious deity of Santals, and worshipped in every ceremony and ritual for welfares. But, from the following Table 1, it becomes evident that a few Santal migrants and their families believe in idol worship. They follow the rituals and other norms as practiced by the other locally settled communities from the distant past. They worship Hindu and Christian deities together with their traditional deities who are believed to protect them from the disease and illnesses borne out of magical and supernatural forces.

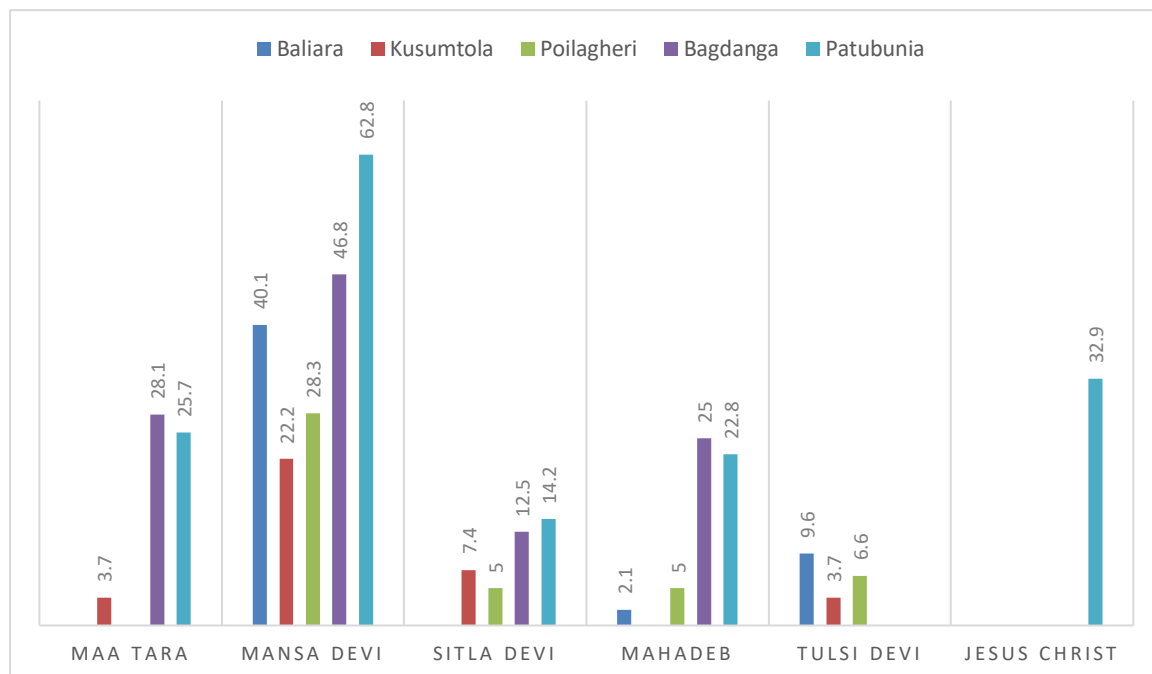
*We will hereby refer to a case of a female aged 59 years who believes that all supreme beings are one but their incarnations are different. She is devoted to the deities of both the Santals and Hindus. She believes in religious devotion for welfares and she participates in all religious festivals held in the village except those performed by the Muslim community, because the Muslims are very much conservative about their religion, and strict about Santals interference mostly in their religious ceremonies.*

**Table 1.** List of Hindu’s and Christian’s Religious Deities Worshipped by Santals Migrants to Sustain Healthy Life and Well-Being in the Studied Setting.

Deity Worships to Sustain Healthy Life	Mousuni Island								Patibunia		Total	
	Baliara		Kusumtola		Poilagheri		Bagdanga		No	%	No	%
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%				
<i>Maa Tara</i>			2	3.7			9	28.1	18	25.7	29	7.2
<i>Mansa Devi</i>	75	40.1	12	22.2	17	28.3	15	46.8	44	62.8	163	40.4
<i>Sitla Devi</i>			4	7.4	3	5	4	12.5	10	14.2	21	5.2
<i>Mahadeb</i>	4	2.1			3	5	8	25	16	22.8	31	7.6
<i>Tulsi Devi</i>	18	9.6	2	3.7	4	6.6					24	5.9
<i>Jesus Christ</i>									23	32.9	23	5.7
Total	187	100	54	100	60	100	32	100	70	100	403	100

Source: The author.

**Figure 2.** Village-Wise Graphical representation of Hindu’s and Christian’s Religious Deities Worshipped by Santals Migrants to Sustain Healthy Life and Well-Being in the Studied Setting.



Source: The author.



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The studied Santal migrants of this locality believes that deities are also responsible for disease and illnesses. In the forested Mousuni island and Patibunia, a majority of 40.4% amongst the Santal migrants are devoted to Goddess *Mansa Devi* whom they worship in Hindu temples and household premises to protect them from snake-bites. They offer milk every Friday to '*mansar than*' to appease the deity.

*The case of a 43-year-old male who believes in other deities including goddess Mansa reveals the fact. The migratory reason for a better economy and a sense of insecurity in an alienated space has made him accultured to other religious deities for protection from disease and accidental deaths. He started worshipping Mansa Devi after he survived a forested island full of venomous snakes and he even found a snake in his household premises. A Hindu neighbor suggested him be a devotee of Mansa Devi, together with his faith in Santal traditional deities.*

The 5.9% Santal migrants also do worship the *Tulsi* plant which is (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) planted on a sacred platform locally called '*tulsi mancha*' located in the courtyard. They water the plant every day and burn fragrance sticks to worship Goddess *Tulsi Devi* for the good health of the family members. It is believed, that the aura of positive energies emanated from the idols of the Goddess *Tara* (7.2%) and the God *Mahadeb* (7.6%) who are believed to protect them from the control of evil spirits. Goddess *Sitla* (5.2%) is also worshipped to stay protected from diseases like measles.

*We are hereby narrating the case of a Santal lady aged 47 years who believes in the divine power of Sitla Devi. She has seen her Hindu neighbors as a devotee of Goddess Sitla. In the ritualistic part of Sitla puja, the Hindus do sacrifice a goat. Inspired from the neighboring Hindus, the Santal lady herself worshipped the deity when her grandson was suffering from measles. Her faith in the goddess is continuing.*

Apart from the Hindu deities, the Santal migrants of 32.9% from Patibunia and 5.7% of total are also devoted to Lord Jesus Christ. They believe that Christ has the power to heal the deadliest diseases which have no treatments worldwide.

*The case of a Santal male aged 45 years is to be mentioned here. He is agricultural labor diagnosed with an unknown disease that seemed to be fatal. He was unable to bear the expenses for the treatment. His disease was considered to be contagious and therefore he was left alone in a secluded place outside the village and started counting days for death. A few days later, a Father of a Church while propagating Christianity, assured him of his wellness and cure. The Father took the person to his church and after few months of treatment, his conditions improved and he returned to the village full of*



*zeal and no feeling of illness. He was the first to adopt Christianity after this incident. Initially, the local Santals isolated him for this conversion. The people of the village didn't accept him but later two other families also benefitted from the local church and then steadily their living conditions improved. But, today, a predominant section of the Santals in Patibunia has converted to Christianity.*

In the present context, occupations also determine supernatural beliefs among the resettled Santal migrants in the studied area where new occupational pursuits can be correlated with professional hazards in form of disease and illness, which made them to worship the concerned deities from Hindu tradition related to some of the occupational hazards. Among them, who are employed as agricultural labors do fear snake bites and have started worshipping Goddess *Mansa Devi*. Likewise, the fishermen are devoted to Goddess *Ganga Devi* to protect them from fishing-related accidents. Some of the educated Santals who profess teaching, Government services are devoted to Goddess *Saraswati Devi* and God *Biswakarma*, and Santal businessmen like shop owner worship Laxmi-Ganesh. Although the aforesaid deities are not always directly related to health hazards.

The following Table 2 demonstrates that the Santal's belief is entirely hemmed by deity and spirits from yesteryears. They have a strong mental and psychological connection to the supernatural world of magic, witchcraft, and souls and spirits, concepts of heaven-hell, transmigration, and reincarnation. The social context of illness relies on spiritual beliefs. The supernatural energies can afflict health and illness. The magico-religious practitioners or healers, who are specialized in controlling supernatural activities, do magical performances with *mantras* or magical spells and *jhar-phook* or magical acts to treat illness. The magical healers are from multi-ethnic communities and they are addressed as *ojha* by the Santal migrants and Hindus and *moulabi* by the Muslims of Mousuni island and Patibunia.

The social context of illness is distinct from the biological phenomenon. The Santals migrants have their indigenous notion of health. A person is considered healthy when he consumes food as usual and successfully carries out normal activities and is not suffering from any disease, illness and worries.

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**Table 2.** List of Supernatural Causes of Disease and Illness Believed and Followed by the Santal Migrants of the Studied Setting.

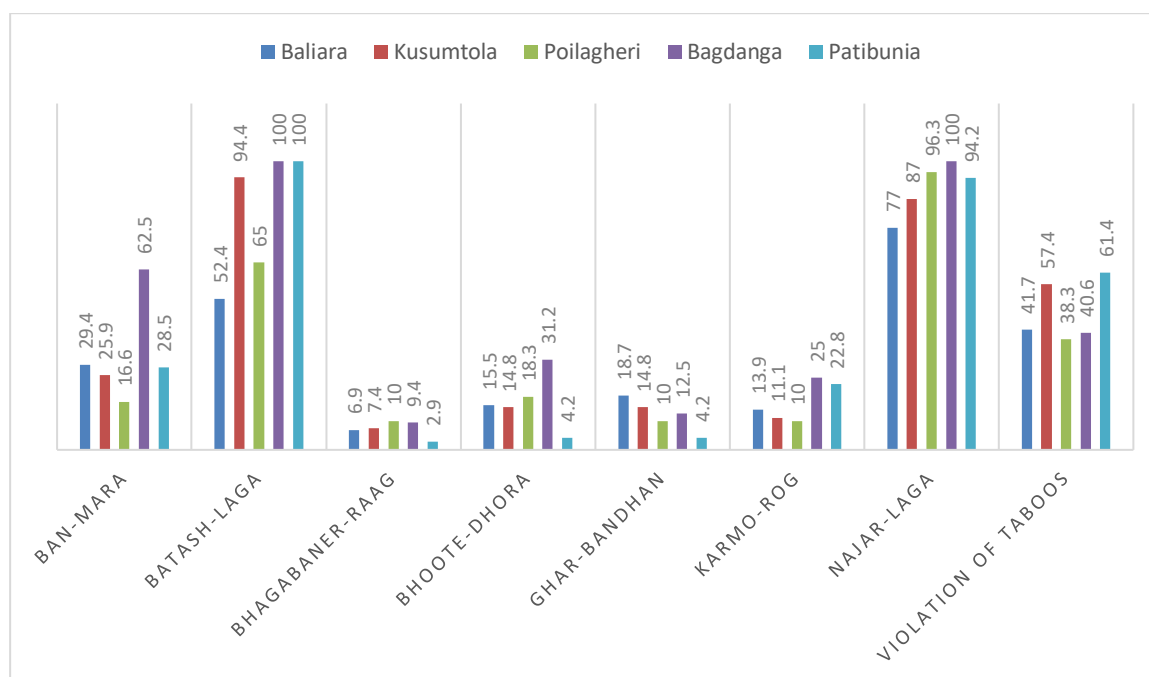
Supernatural Causes of Disease and Illnesses	Mousuni Island										Total	
	Baliara		Kusumtola		Poilagheri		Bagdanga		Patibunia			
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<i>Ban-mara</i>	55	29.4	14	25.9	10	16.6	20	62.5	20	28.5	119	29.5
<i>Batash-laga</i>	98	52.4	51	94.4	39	65	32	100	70	100	290	71.9
<i>Bhagabaner-raag</i>	13	6.9	4	7.4	6	10	3	9.4	2	2.9	28	6.9
<i>Bhoote-dhora</i>	29	15.5	8	14.8	11	18.3	10	31.2	3	4.2	61	15.1
<i>Ghar-bandhan</i>	35	18.7	8	14.8	6	10	4	12.5	3	4.2	56	13.9
<i>Karmo-rog</i>	26	13.9	6	11.1	6	10	8	25	16	22.8	62	15.3
<i>Najar-laga</i>	144	77	47	87.0	58	96.6	32	100	66	94.2	347	86.1
<i>Violation of Taboos</i>	78	41.7	31	57.4	23	38.3	13	40.6	43	61.4	188	46.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** The author.

*A male informant aged 49 is agricultural labor who was suffering from multiple problems like loss of energy during work, indigestion issues and losing weight a few days back and considered himself as sick. He was treated by an Ojha who restored his health within few weeks. The Ojha diagnosed him to be suffering from ban-mara, contagious magic caused by someone envious of his health and wealth.*

The common magical act of *jhar-phook* is performed to address the problems caused by evil spirits. The *moulabi* and *ojha* also perform sorcery that creates energies to ruin someone's life. *Ban-mara* is one of the malevolent imitative magical acts. There are 29.5% of Santal migrants do believe in *ban-mara*, and the prevalence is found in every village in the studied setting, where harmful acts are performed on a mud-doll which symbolizes an act of evil on anyone with magical spells. The septicemia, boils, sterility, and death of all family members are considered to be an outcome of *ban-mara*.

**Figure 3.** Village-Wise Graphical Representation of Supernatural Causes of Disease and Illness Believed and Followed by the Santal Migrants of the Studied Setting.



**Source:** The author.

Santal migrants in a percentage of 71.9 widely do believe that the cold breathe of evil spirits turns the air into evil whose effect is referred to as *batash-laga* which can cause fever, indigestion, stomach ache, insomnia and other effects especially on the children who are badly affected. *Jal-pora* along with magical spells is prescribed and provided by *ojha* and *moulabi*. This *jal-pora* implies consuming purified water thrice a day by the affected person until he or she gets well.

#### **Case of a Healing by a Moulabi:**

*C (F, 36) resides at Baliara village in Mousuni Island, she suffered a few days back when her child suddenly falls sick after returning from an invitation. The kid suddenly had a high temperature along with an intense stomach ache. Her neighbors suggested she consult the local moulabi and she did so. Her child recovered in 2 days after undergoing magical spells or phook-mantra from the moulabi. The unavailability of traditional Santal magical healers compels the Santal migrants of Baliara to depend on the local moulabi or ojha to overcome the community identity.*

Several diseases and illnesses of Santals were caused by the curse of deities which is called *bhagabaner-raag*, which is less believed by Santal migrants of 6.9%. If they failed to perform

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any rituals, the anger of that particular deity is expressed in the form of the disease. Similarly, disregarding the other religious deities can harm them. The affected person is taken to the *ojha*. Through magical performances; the *ojha* connects with the supernatural world. The offerings are made to appease that particular deity whose curse is responsible for the disease.

The existence of immaterial non-divine beings causes different health problems like mental disorder, changes in eye color, eating raw meat is considered to be symptoms of *bhoote-dhora* or spirit-possession, and 15.1% of Santal migrants are found to be believed in *bhoote-dhora*.

*We will refer here to the case of a male aged 46 years who believes in the existence of spirits that enter into the living human body to complete the unfinished works and desires, which the spirit has left behind before death. The spirit possession causes serious health problems manifested by abnormal behaviours. A middle-aged man was possessed when he was returning from his work late at night. After returning home, he had a high fever and started talking abnormally in his sleep. He was treated by both Moulabi and Ojha, and the spirit left the body of the host. A goat and a hen were sacrificed as a ritual.*

The community members believe that no one can control the inhuman energy of the possessed body. The possessed person is taken to the *moulabi*. He sprinkles *jal-pora* to the ill person. The *moulabi* tries to fetch and understand the unfinished desires and tasks of that controlling spirit from the magical world. The offerings along with sacrifices of big and small animals are made to fulfil and satisfy the spirit's desires. The Santal migrants believe that the multi-spirit possession is extremely harmful than a single spirit. The possessed person starts losing his life every other day. A united group of magical experts tries to pull out evil souls from the possessed body but the patient's life is not safe. A deep mental injury is suffered by the possessed person. To protect the family from evil spirits and *ban-mara*, 13.9% believe in supernatural protection of the home which is known as *ghar-bandhan*.

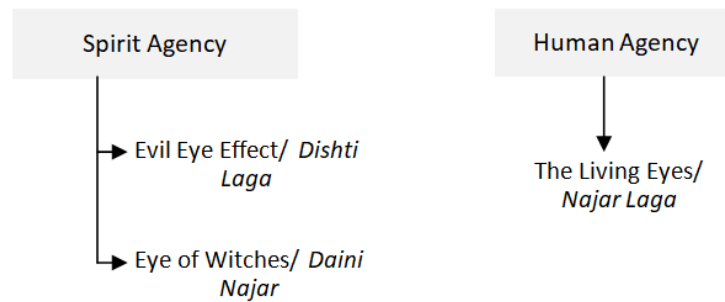
*A male informant aged 51 years was suffering from ban-mara. Gradually he began to lose weight and one of his wounds became incurable even after medications from hospitals. Then he was taken to an Ojha where he got some initial treatments. Later, that Ojha came to his place and perform ghar-bandhan to protect his house from evil spirits by doing 'jagya', a ceremony to drive evils away. The ritual art was carried out with four small copper pots filled with flowers, vermillion, and sacred water and other ceremonial sacred materials were buried in the four corners of the home to drive away from the spiritual activities.*

*Kormo-rog* (disease borne out of worldly deeds) is another concept prevalent amongst the Santal migrants of 15.3% in the studied location. Any forms of unnatural death and or suffering from deadly diseases are considered to be an outcome of erroneous mundane activities. The sufferer gets connected to the supernatural world of deities through magical performances controlled by the magical healer be it *moulabi* or *ojha* who tries to find out the exact cause of suffering. But the healer cannot trace the cause and cure the patient every time. It depends on the way an experienced healer controls the benevolence of the concerned deity on the patient. If the misdeeds of the patients weigh more, chances of healing reduce indicating that the patient is not forgiven by the concerned deity.

The effect of the evil-eye which is locally addressed as *drishti-laga* or *daini-najar* or *najar-laga* is greatly believed by Santal migrants of 86.1% which is directly associated with health and illness.

*The case of a lady aged 38 who considers that evil spirits and negative energies are everywhere and they always try to find sins committed by a person to take control of the situation. If a person dies an unnatural death, his unfinished desires keep on haunting the soul. One of her children of the aforesaid lady got affected by evil eyes and started suffering from indigestion, vomiting, and continued crying for the whole day. The kid was thereafter taken to the Moulabi for treatment. After applying both jal-pora and phook-mantra, her child became normal. She trusted the Moulabi instead of the traditional Santal medicine man as most of her fellow villagers benefitted from him and got cured of the effects of the evil eye and other ailments from supernatural consequences.*

The aforesaid evil eye treatment modality based on its modus operandi can be divided into two agencies namely the spirit and human agency. Children and pregnant women are most susceptible to its effect. If a person envies a child or pregnant woman for clothes, food, good health or others then the child is believed to suffer from indigestion, vomiting or crying the whole day. The pregnant women will have a fever, anxiety, and aversion to food. Furthermore, the dead or evil-eye effect or eyes of witches are more dangerous than the living eyes. The places where a person died accidentally or murdered or any suicidal acts have done are considered as the place of negative energies. Any visit or having food at those places in mid-afternoon or at night is hazardous.



**Source:** The author.

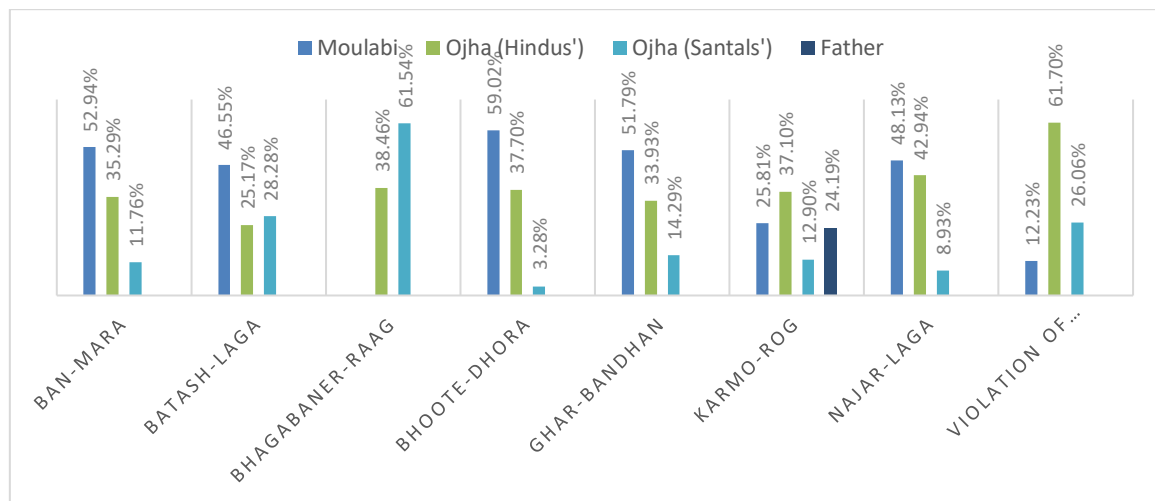
They also have different taboos which is followed by 46.6% amongst the Santal migrants for newborns, newly married couples, and pregnant women. A few of those taboos and prohibitions are made to safeguard them from evil interferences. The violation of taboos may lead to miscarriage, infertility, illness, abnormal health problems, and deaths. The ancestral worship is made to fix the disturbed violators' fate, as it is believed that ancestors fight back against evil spirits to protect their descendants. In some critical cases, big or small animal sacrifices are made to appease the evil with fresh blood.

The resettled Santal migrants of the locality has a strong believe on supernatural, and magical factors determine health, disease and illness. They believe that the spirits and malevolent deities are responsible for such aforesaid disease and illnesses.

In the following Figure 2, we are presenting data of magico-religious healers from whom the Santal migrants get healing from the existing supernatural causes of disease and illnesses in the studied setting, which is mentioned in the aforesaid Table 2.

The Figure 4 shows that the supernatural cause of illness needs magical and supernatural attention and treatment after connecting those illnesses to the world of magic to trace, diagnose, and heal by the experts using different methods and techniques. The scattered settlements of migrated Santals in Mousuni Island and Patibunia lack able and experienced Santal magico-religious practitioners. The insecure mindset of Santal migrants has made them trust *moulabi*, Hindu *ojha* and father to get rid of such disease and illnesses, and they have to visit the healers overcoming their theological dissimilarities, and the healers treat them to sustain their professional integrity.

**Figure 4.** Graphical Representation of Healing Existing Supernatural Causes of Disease and Illnesses of Santal Migrants by the Magico-Religious Healers in the Studied Setting.



**Source:** The author.

*A case of a male, aged 48 years, a local resident of Baliara in Mousuni Island reveals his faith in modern allopathic treatment for natural and Moulabi for treating the supernatural illness. For the informant there's no good Santal traditional healer available in the island and those who practised traditional healing does not have enough knowledge to cure every type of disease and illnesses because there is no good learner available in the vicinity. But in his old traditional settings of Mayurbhanj, Odisha, he had strong faith in traditional healers and himself got cured from different disease and illnesses with the help of traditional medicines.*

## CONCLUSION

The supernatural dimensions of health, disease and illness should be interpreted in a spatialized way particularly for the migratory and relocated Santal population, who has redefined the available inscribed space. Their supernatural and cultural adaptation from the other religious communities have fostered proxemics becomes evident from their new faith in Hindu idol worship and other associated rituals and performances which helps them to protect themselves from disease and illness caused by magical and supernatural forces. The spatial shift in the new inscribed space has introduced new occupational pursuits for the Santal migrants, which can be very much correlated to professional hazards in form of disease and illness. Addressing these forms of economic variables controlling health conditions is the key to a healthy society



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where the occupational position of the community members define their health and the ability to recover. Most of the Santals migrants still attribute disease and illness to supernatural causes in the new environment. Accordingly, they depend on magico-religious healers of multi-religious communities in the vicinity who perform magical activities for healing and well-being.

In concluding words, the supernatural dimensions of health are needed to be understood in spatialized ways and the cultural attributes borne out of it. Inscribed space forms the guiding principle of a healthy society from the distant historical past and cultural adaptation served as the operational procedure through the medium of proxemics. Henceforth, we should also visualize health, disease, illness, and healing practices as a condition with a distinct social entity.

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