

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AMONG THE *FULBE* IN NIGERIA: CAUSES, TYPES, EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Superstitious beliefs are cultural practices, which have been found in many cultures, ethnic groups and religions around the globe. The research aims at investigating the superstitious practices among Fulbe in Nigeria. It also looks into the causes, types and effects of superstitious beliefs and practices. The study area and as well provides some solutions from the Islamic perspective. The research adopts fieldwork and conventional research methods to gather the necessary research information. This is done by consulting previous research works done on the subject like journals, articles, textbooks and interviews conducted. The research discovers that ignorance made the Fulbe adopt these cultural practices. It also finds that some of these beliefs were generated based on false hope or fear of unknown circumstances. Islam attacks superstitious beliefs, thus it is revealed that it leads Muslim believers to go astray. The research concludes that piety will be achieved if Muslim should embark on seeking Islamic knowledge. And in this regard, Modibbe (scholars), Government and Islamic organization have important roles to play in Fulbe communities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Superstitious beliefs, Fulbe, Nigeria, Islam

Introduction

There are numerous beliefs and practices that form part of everyday Muslim *Fulbe* life, which find no evidence or support from the Qur'an or *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). However, they find deep acceptance among people despite lack of Islamic legitimacy. Those that inherit beliefs and practices from their forefathers seldom question them in light of the scripture of Allah and continue to blindly uphold them.

Paranormal, superstitious, and magical beliefs have been found in a diverse range of cultures for thousands of years. Researchers have long speculated about the origins and functions of such beliefs.¹

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¹ Richard, Wiseman and Caroline, Watt. *Measuring Superstitious Belief* University of Hertfordshire, 2004. p-291

In Islam, it is a duty on all believers to strive hard to understand the message of Allah for themselves, wrestle with its arguments, study and ponder (*Tadabbur*) on its guidance to the best of their abilities, but the direct threat of assault ceaselessly coming from *Shaytan* (the Devil) on the human psyche is immense. The intent is clear: to lead Mankind off the straight path. The Devil has the potential power of leading the whole nation to complete misguidance.

Allah says: "I will certainly lie in wait for them in thy straight path. Then I will assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and left: Nor will you find, in most of them, gratitude" (for thy mercies) (Aaraf:16-17)

Allah said that after He gave respite to *Shaytan* (till the Day they are raised up resurrected) and *Shaytan* was sure that he got what he wanted, he went on in defiance and rebellion. He said: "surely, I will sit in wait against them (human beings) on your straight path. "Meaning" as You have sent me astray, Ibn Abbas said that '*Aghwaytani*' means, "Misguided me." Others said, "As You caused my ruin, I will sit in wait for your servants whom You will create from the offspring of the one you expelled me for." He went on, (your straight path), the path of truth and the way of safety. I (*Shaytan*) will misguide them from this path so that they do not worship You Alone, because You sent me astray. Mujahid said that the 'straight path', refers to the truth.²

Islamic scholars of *Fulbe* extraction in Nigeria performed outstanding preaching activities; the most renowned among them undertook this important mission with numerous extant scholarly works of Sheikh Uthman bn Fodio (d.1817), Abdulahi Ibn Fodio, popularly known as Abdullahi Gwandu, Muhammadu Bello, Umar Ibn Ibrahim Al-Fullati (Masabarma), Muhammad Ibn Tahir Al-Fullati and *Modibbo* Adama (d.1847)³These and many more are usually remembered for their activities in promoting Islam.

The Concept and Origin of Superstition

Many researchers and writers attempt to develop theories about the function and origin of superstitious beliefs because of the psychological and sociological correlation of such beliefs. Superstition, as an acquired culture, is an age-long belief that had been ingrained in the ancient societies.⁴Even the present generation, despite being relatively exposed to modernity in the form of both Islamic orientation and western education, still upholds some elements of superstitious practices.

² Iman Hafeez Imaduddin Abi-fida: Ismail Bn Umar Ibn Khathir al- Damashqy, *Tafsirul Qur'an Al-Azim*. Dar-al-Kootob al Ilmiyyah,, Beirut, Lebanon, 1998m/1419AH. P.21

³ M.B. Ibrahim, *Islam among the Bororo Fulbe of Yobe State, causes of their reluctance and ignorance of the Religion*, unpublished, 2013, M.A Dissertation submitted to the Department of Islamic Studies and Shari'ah, Bayero University, Kano. P.2

⁴Murtala, Ahmad. *Superstitious Beliefs in Hausaland: A Cultural Poison and an Islamic Antidote*, FAIS Journal of the Humanities, Bayero Univeristy, Kano. July 2013, P.97

Abdul Hamid, Is'haq Damat asserts that superstition can be likened to a rumor (i.e. something that just goes around) that has no reality.⁵ Richard Wiseman argues that Superstition is a reflect relatively caused by poor psychological adjustment, including low self-efficacy high trait anxiety, irrational beliefs, an external locus of control, magical ideation, psychopathology, field dependence and suggestibility, and dissociative experiences. Gender differences have also emerged, with women tending to show higher levels of superstitious beliefs than Men do.⁶

On the other hand, Khalid Zaheer sees superstition as primarily a faith-like understanding that a certain event happens because of another seemingly unrelated one. The cause-effect relationship is based on neither scientific nor religiously valid justification. It is in effect another faith which is based on neither textual nor logical religious grounds. Considering a black cat crossing one's path as a bad omen is one of the many examples of superstitious beliefs. A degenerated religious society abounds in superstition. While Islamic faith is based on sound reasoning as is evident from the verses of the Quran, superstition is completely devoid of reasoning except a vague reference to the experiences of some individuals.⁷ Modibbo Abdullahi Kuni views superstition as a belief or notion, not based on reason or knowledge. It is commonly applied to beliefs and practices surrounding luck, and spiritual beings, particularly the irrational belief that future events can be influenced or foretold by specific, unrelated behaviors or occurrences.⁸

Professor Ahmad Murtala makes the following submission: Superstition can better be described as an illness that causes great damage to human reasoning and stagnates its good understanding, more especially in shaping one's mode of life towards success. This is true for the effect of two intriguing things surrounding every superstition, namely, unreality and ignorance.⁹ Superstitions are only acquired by traditions and developed according to the care they gain from the prevailing customs. If it had been an integral part of human nature, all humankind would have shared a large body of it, like hunger, fun, crying, etc. But it is always a partial belief recognized only by some people, and at the same time it might have the opposite status in other different cultures. What is regarded as lucky and being highly appreciable in one culture, may turn out to be unlucky and a source of grief in other cultures. For example, among the traditional Kanuri society the sight of a cat in the dead of night is worrisome and is invariably seen as a bad omen. But among their traditional Hausa counterparts such a sight is not treated in the same vein. Therefore, it is not like a thirst or curiosity for knowledge, which is realistically part and parcel of human nature being naturally shared by every human being with the same footing.¹⁰ Also some of these superstitions are similar and spread across the northern parts of Nigeria take for example; sitting at doorstep is superstitious that will manifest the evil spirit to effect on him or beating someone with uses brooms is bring about poverty. There are two domains of human experiences of the observed phenomena: one is based

⁵ Abdul Hamid, I. D. *The Month of Safar*. Khanqah Akhtari, Second Edition, Muharram 1437/ November 2015 p-8

⁶ Richard, W.2004.p.3

⁷ Khalid Zaheer, *Magic and superstition: An Islamic perspective*, Published in The Express Tribune, Sunday Magazine, September 25th, 2011 p.2

⁸ Modibbo A. K.

⁹ Murtala, A. P.101

¹⁰ Murtala, A. P.98

on explainable cause-effect relationship of events and the other purports to explore phenomena that escape the notice of the human eye as well as defy human intelligence. While the first category of experiences is the province of science and is subjected to continuous study and appraisal, the second category is unclear because there is normally no way of intelligently grasping and, at times, confirming its veracity. Magic and superstition belong to the latter category.¹¹

The Causes of Superstitious Beliefs and Practices Among The Fulbe.

External Influence of other Ethnic Cultures

The practice of superstition among the *Fulbe* in Nigeria can be linked to the fact that they found themselves in the midst of different ethnic groups. Most of these people, prior to the advent of Islam, were pagans who worshipped idols and practiced magic. Their polytheistic beliefs were fraught with uncountable superstitions. The inter-cultural practices that later ensued gradually led to the widespread and entrenchment of superstitious beliefs and practices among the *Fulbe*, thereby weakening the Islamic articles of faith.¹²

Much later, weakening of faith in segments of Muslim societies did lead to seeping in superstitious practices from other societies. Weakening of our understanding of --- and belief in --- the article of faith inevitably leads to superstitions of one form or another. That, unfortunately, is the situation of large segments of our ummah today.¹³

Ignorance

Most superstitious people, it is observed, are illiterate and living in the darkness of ignorance, and for being untaught about the actualities of the true religion and how things are divinely fated.¹⁴ They naively concoct self-centered conceptions about the relationships between things. Their worldview usually differs from that of most educated and religious people. There are even instances in which some people who are seen as outwardly religious, but surprisingly engage in acts that could best be described as superstitious. Sorcerers and fortune-tellers are the focal point for diffusing most of the superstitions.

Desire

Naturally, every human being has desire; always wants to be safe and to have something good. Therefore, *Fulbe* always have the desire how their herds to improve and multiply, and they fear anything (unknown circumstance) which makes their herds decline. However, this factor also contributed a lot to the *Fulbe* to be involved in practicing superstitious beliefs.

¹¹Khalid, Z. p. 4

¹² Modibbo Kuni,

¹³ Ibrahim sarica, *Prophet Muhammad Attitude's Towards Superstition*, Taken from Bengal, p.4

¹⁴Murtala, A.P.99

Types Of Superstitions

Different superstitions are being practiced among the *Fulbe*. As far as Mankind is living on this planet, superstition is likely to continue to exist because figuring out the immediate connection between cause and effect is, obviously, the natural function of the human mind. But when it fails to uncover the actual cause, the mind will not overlook the circumstance and leave it unresolved. It would definitely try other ways. That is why some people since the olden days have resorted to illusionary explanations, which exactly are superstitious, while scientific-minded people may, after being confronted with puzzles and mysteries, refuse to upset the status quo until the emergence of further discovery. However, religious-minded and research-minded people would always try, in the light of their perception, to interpret the corpus of superstitions as the factor that deludes the naturalness of the human mind and negates, in one way or the other, the purity of the religion. Despite all those divergent perceptions, some types of superstition, some may argue, have a positive cultural significance. For this reason, it is quite fair to make a content analysis in order to classify superstitions into types and then make slight explanatory comments on each.¹⁵

Superstitions about farming and grazing activities

The dominant economic activity of the people of Gombe is agriculture and rearing of animals, characterized by communal activities. Even well into the nineteenth century, agriculture was largely small scale, relying on old farming implements. The generally good quality of the soil has added incentive to the people as regards the production of crops and domestication of animals. The practice of agriculture is not geared towards accumulation of wealth, but it is for meeting the demands of the people.¹⁶ This aspect also does not escape from superstition. For example; Saduje are fifty days beginning from 1st day of Muharram to 20th Safar and according to their superstitious beliefs a farmer should not start any farming activities, but those who ignore it, their farm(s) will not yield or it cannot be farmed throughout the season. If an animal has three different colors (red, black and white) on its body and it is allowed to remain among the flock the rest will perish. Moreover, if a dark sheep (complete black) with white hair tail remains in the flock the rest will decline. Another superstition has it that if a dark cow (complete black hair) or a cow with a down-curved horn (known as *bijaji*) remains among the herd the number will increase. Migrating on Saturday and continuous counting of the animals in the herd are believed to lead to the decline of their number. Women are not allowed to eat the meat of any cow which was slaughtered because of birth problem. Based on their superstitious beliefs, if a woman dares consume such a meat she is likely to experience complication during child delivery. If harvested crops (grain) faces east the farm will not yield next season. Another superstition has it that a farmer who plants on the day of first rain of the season will have a poor yield. All these superstitious mindsets are baseless and they undermine the true tenets and the genuine essence of Islam. All the things in existence are Allah's property and creation and He is able to do everything. He is never asked about what He does with His power and greatness in the Qur'an (Ma'idah:17) He explains that whatever He wills happens, and what He does not will, does not happen. All

¹⁵Murtala, A. P.102

¹⁶Sani Abba, Aliyu and Others. op.cit. P.15

things, good and bad alike, are in His and will return to Him at a divinely appointed time. In another verse (Qasas:68) also view that Allah is the only One Who has the power to create and make decisions, and there is no one who can dispute with Him in that or reverse His judgment.

Environmental Superstitions

The natural surroundings as well as everything that affects an organism during its lifetime is collectively known as its environment. In another word environment is the sum total of interrelationships between water, air and land among themselves on one hand and human beings, other living organisms and non-living organisms on the other hand. It includes all the physical and biological surroundings and their interactions. Environmental studies provide an approach towards understanding the environment of our planet and its impact on human life. Thus, the environment is actually global in nature, and it provides the prerequisite conditions for development and growth as well as of danger and damage. However, it is observed that some superstitions are fabricated just for hygienic purposes and are meant to call for neatness in one's body and surroundings, take for example, leaving much hair on the head brings about headaches. Groundnut shells must not be left lying around the house; if they are, they will attract scorpions to the house. It has been also superstitiously circulated that among the factors that bring about poverty are leaving spider's webs in the bedrooms and blowing a puff air to put out a candle. A married woman must take bath and comb or tidy her hair before she goes into her husband's bedroom, but failure to do that will cause the herd or flock of her husband to decline. Sewing at night causes blindness. Sweeping at night causes poverty. If a woman uses her leg to push firewood, she will be offset. If a small boy/girl is sweeping, it forecasts the arrival of guests. If a girl dinks water uses in washing grains, she will face several problems in her wedding ceremony. If someone always became last in eating place, he would remain needy.

Such superstitions show the importance of environmental sanitation and keeping extra-care with all that can cause serious injuries and harmful. However, as for Islamic teaching, doing both has no power of blocking prosperity for anyone¹⁷Environment is an important aspect of human life generally and to Muslims in particular. The believers are emphatically encouraged to maintain its cleanliness in verses of the Holy Qur'an and traditions of the Noble Prophet (pbuh). Allah says: And purify your garments! (Mudassir:4) This meant do not let the garments you wear to be from earnings that are unlawful. It has also been interpreted as desisting from wearing clothes in disobedience to the Creator. Muhammad bin Sirin sees the above verse as the divine command for believers to clean garments with water. Ibn Zayd said, the idolaters would not clean themselves, so Allah commanded Him (Prophet (pbuh) to clean himself and his garments.¹⁸ Likewise, in the *Hadith* Prophet Muhammad urges Muslims to retain their cleanness of their body and to maintain neediness of the surrounding and courtyards, He says:

¹⁷Murtala, A. P.6

¹⁸Ibn Kathir, Surat Mudassir. P-7

Narrated by Salib bin Abi Hassan said: "I heard Sa'eed bin Al-Musayyab saying: 'Indeed Allah is Tayyib(good) and he loves Tayib (what is good), and He is Nazif (clean) and He loves cleanliness, He is Karim (kind) and He loves kindness, He jawad (generous) and He loves generosity. So clean your courtyards, and do not resemble the Jews.'" He said: I mentioned that to Muhājir bin Mismar, and he said: "Amir bin Sa'ad [bin Abi Waqqa] narrated it to me from his father from the Prophet, similarly, except that he did not say: Clean yourcourtyards.¹⁹

Religious Superstitions

Islamic practice reformed in northern Nigeria in 19th century following the jihad of *Shaikh* Usman Fodio. Before this era, the people of this part of Nigeria were mostly idolaters who had been practicing magic and superstitions even before the advent of Islam. The coming of Islam and its subsequent reformation through the Jihad only served to curtail some aspects of superstitious belief but its significant traces continue to exist up to date. For example, if one has sexual intercourse with a mad woman, undetected, one will become rich. This is, without doubt, a culmination of transgression upon innocence, which only the sensualist-minded and the perverts could even contemplate! Allah, the Provider, would not warrant wealth for the purpose of such an evil act. Rather it is destined by His ultimate will as He extends provision to only whom He wills. Human beings rejoice in the worldly life, which is nothing, compared to the Hereafter, except a brief enjoyment.²⁰ Allah says: Allah increases the provision for whom He wills, and straitens (it for whom He wills), And they rejoice in the worldly life whereas the life of this world compared to the Hereafter is but a brief passing enjoyment. (Ra'ad:26) Allah states that He alone increases the provisions for whom He wills and decreases it for whom He wills, according to His wisdom and perfect justice. So, when the disbelievers rejoice with the life of the present world that was given to them, they do not know that they are being tested and tried.²¹

Categorically Allah the Lawgiver and the Creator of the entire universe explained in the Qur'an that the essence of creating human beings Prophetic is to warship Him alone, this is explained in many Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Prophet. He says: And I created not the Jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me. (*Zariyat*: 56) Allah the Exalted, the Blessed created the creatures so that they worship Him Alone without partners. Those who obey Him will be rewarded with the best rewards, while those who disobey Him will receive the worst punishment from Him. Allah stated that He does not need creatures, but rather, they are in need of Him in all conditions. He is alone their Creator and Provider.²² Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu *Hurayrah* said that the Messenger of Allah says, Allah the Exalted says: "O Son of Adam! Busy yourself in worshipping Me, and I will fill your chest with riches and dissipate your meekness.

¹⁹Tirmiziy, Hadith:1614, Volume-5, p.111

²⁰Murtala, A.P.109

²¹Ibn Kathir, Tafsir: Surat Ra'ad. P.36

²²Ibn Kathir, Tafsir: Surat Zariyat, P.32

Otherwise, I will fill your chest with distracting affairs and will not do away with your meekness.²³ Likewise in the *hadith* the Prophet (pbuh) indicated that Islam is to worship Allah alone and none else. This is the most essential aspect for the Muslims,

Other instances of superstition among the *Fulbe* in Nigeria are that: A widow must remain silent immediately after the death of her husband for a period of three days, and failure to do that will make her husband to face severe punishment in the grave. If a widow eats from a dish, it will not be used by any other person and a knife must be kept under her pillow when she goes to bed. Likewise, an escort must be provided for her when she goes to the toilet, especially in the night, if not, the evil spirit will affect her. If tamarind has produced plenty of seeds, that year there will be hunger. If a nursing mother raises her baby from the back, the baby will turn into a thief. The first person who goes to a spouse seeking marriage, will not marry her. If a spouse buys shoes to his spouse before engagement, she will march on him. If it rains heavily on the seventh of “Surfa” that year, there will not be hunger throughout the season. But if it not rainy throughout it forcast problems of food shortage. Sitting under tamarine tree causes madness. If a man sweeps with brooms, he will not get woman to marry. A person who is going for hajj will not say any word of goodbye to his family, because he will not return to them. But after his arrival he will be welcomed by all of his family members and he must enter through backyard, and failure to do these will cause his wealth to be perished. If a house faces east (qibla) the members of it, will leave in destitute. Ablution will not be performed with a kettle without rope at his next, it causes psychological problems. Any woman who didn't celebrate backing baby will not be married. If a widow sleeps in the last day of her waiting period she will be infested with shivering. If people witnessed a spider cycle the sun in the morning it is focused child mortality in that year. All these superstitious beliefs found no evidence from the Islamic scripture. In Islam a waiting period of a widow is four month and ten days, and she is required not to make any makeup that will attract someone. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) says:

It was narrated from Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet, (SAW) that the Prophet (SAW) said: The woman whose her husband has died should not wear clothes that are dyed with safflower or red clay, and she should not use dye nor kohl.²⁴

In this period of mourning, she is to continue her normal activities. In another *hadith* she is allowed to go out even in the daytime under necessity. It was narrated by Jabir bin Abdullahi, that his maternal aunt was divorced, and she wanted to go out to some date palms of hers, but she met a man who told her not to do that, she went to the messenger of Allah (SAW) and He said: Go out and take the harvest of your date palms, for perhaps you will give *zakat* or do some good (give voluntary charity).²⁵ The *Hadith* indicates that, if necessary, a mourning woman may work at home, and on a farm. It is quite possible she might have no one to work on her behalf. In addition, the divine law considers it of people's needs and inabilities.

²³Ibn Kathir, p.34

²⁴Nasa'i, Volume:6, Hadith:3535. P.203

²⁵Nasa'i, Volume:4, Hadith:3580, p.314-315.

Social Superstitions

Each person is born into a social or cultural setting: family, community, social class, language, religion, etc. The characteristics of a child's social setting affect how he or she learns to think and behave, by means of instruction, rewards and punishment, as well as precedents. This setting includes home, school, neighborhood, and perhaps, religious. Then there are also the child's mostly informal interactions with friends, other peers and relatives. How individuals will respond to all these influences, or even which one among them will be the most potent, tends not to be predictable. There is, however, some substantial similarity in how individuals respond to the same pattern of influences, to being raised in the same culture. Furthermore, culturally induced behavior patterns, such as speech styles and body language become so deeply imbedded in the human mind that they often operate without the individuals themselves being fully aware of them. For example, among the *Fulbe* another superstitious belief has it that: A child whose body is crossed will become short and his health status will suffer some form of deterioration. The sound of a crow near the surroundings or on somebody's home forecasts the arriving of guests. The sound of a crow near the surroundings or on somebody's home foretells the imminent arrival of guests. During a journey, the vision of a peacock is said to be beneficial but listening to its high-pitched call signals the likelihood of robbery along the path. A dog wailing near a sick person is a sign of poor fate or viewing a cat early in the dawn will result in misfortune. A sparrow is famous for constructing a nest in a brand-new house for fortunate fate. It is believed to be a good omen if one witnesses a snake after beginning a journey. While seeing a blind person or woman on the contrary is interpreted as an indication of bad luck. Everyday living is also regulated by do's and don'ts for different days in a week. For instance, Wednesdays and Saturdays enjoy prominence for beginning an important activity such as farming, business and looking for a spouse. Tuesdays and Thursdays are seen as unlucky days for trimming and shaving hair. Likewise, Saturday is an unlucky day for braiding hair. Whenever there is itchiness in the palm of the right hand, it signifies luck and the coming of money and the inverse holds for the left hand. Departing for a tour or a journey is a really crucial occasion and absolute care has to be taken depending on the grandness of the trip. Ironically, flipping of the right eyelid is believed to be unfortunate and the blinking of the left eyelid is considered to be prosperous. Whenever an individual hiccups, it is believed that somebody is discussing or thinking about or missing them. Whenever an individual hiccups, is believed that somebody is discussing or thinking about him or missing him. If this really happens, then they are astonished to think about famous personalities and celebrities around the world. The falling down of a lizard on a person is considered extremely bad for the person on which it falls, and further ill predictions are made based on the part of the body on which the lizard falls. A pregnant woman should not wander out alone at night or enter an empty house or look into a well or go to the sea or river because evil spirits might affect her. Whoever marries a woman with red hair complexion will die. If a business starts with credit it, forecast lack of sales throughout in the day.

All these superstitious beliefs are fabricated based on fear of the unknown or false hopes that contradict the true teachings of Islam, because creation, provision, life and death are in the Hand of Allah the Almighty. Therefore, whatever someone possesses or loses is directly from Him. The Qur'an says:

Allah is He Who created you, then provided food for you, then will cause you to die, then (again) He will give you life. (Rum: 40)

Allah brings man forth from his mother's womb naked and knowing nothing, not able to see or hear, and having no strength. Then He provides him with all these things, giving him household effects, clothing, wealth, possessions and earnings.²⁶Therefore, the destiny which He has ordained cannot be changed by any other person or their beliefs. In another verse He says:

Verily, unquestionably, their fortune was with Allah, but most of them do not know” (Aaraf: 131).

The Position of Islam on Superstitious Beliefs

Superstition and many other related baseless practices come under the heading of myths that are forbidden in Islam. There is no limit to such myths among the people. Some regard seeing certain things as a bad omen. Islam, in uncountable ways, has waged vehement attacks against superstitions and blocked any possible ways to pessimism.²⁷The Prophet (pbuh) clearly condemned all sorts of superstitions by saying:

Narrated by Abu Huraira he says: I have heard the Prophet (SAW) had said: There is no 'Adwa (contagious disease being conveyed without Allah's permission) nor is there any bad omen, nor is there any Hamah, nor is there any bad omen in the month of Safar, and one should run away from the leper as one runs away from a lion.²⁸

Shaikh Muhammad ibn Saleh al-Uthaymin (RA) said: The word *tiyarah* is derived from the word (تطير) *tadayyur*, which refers to superstition about something that is seen or heard. In other words, it refers to superstition about anything that is seen or heard, or a time or place. This is more comprehensive as it includes things that are not seen or heard, such as superstition about certain times. The basic meaning of (تطير) *tadayyur* is pessimism but reference is made to birds (*tayr*) because most of the superstitions held by the Arabs have to do with birds, so it was connected to them. But the general definition of superstition is based on something that is seen, heard or known.²⁹ The Arabs used to regard certain birds, times and persons as unlucky, and this is shirk as the Prophet (pbuh) says:

Abdullāh [bin Mas'ud] narrated that the Prophet (SAW) said: "At-Tiyarah is from Shirk, and none among us

²⁶Ibn Kathir, Tafsir: Surat Rum., P.46

²⁷Murtala, A.P.94

²⁸Bukhari, Volume:7, Hadith:5707, p.126

²⁹General Supervisor: Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid *Islam Question and Answer* <https://islamqa.info/en/97221> Sun 3 Shb 1438 - 30 April 2017 P.3

(influences) except that Allah will remove it with Tawakkul (reliance).³⁰

In another Hadith narrated by Suhaibu that the messenger of Allah says: Amazing is the believer: There is no decree that Allah writes for him but is better for him. If an affliction strikes him, he is patient, and this is better for him. If a bounty is granted to him, he is thankful, and this is better for him. This trait is only for the faithful believer.³¹

No calamity occurs, but by the permission of Allah, and whosoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart And Allah is the All-Knower of everything. (Taghabun:11)

In the light of this verse Ibn Abbas says: By the command of Allah, His decree and will, whoever suffered (and tolerated) an affliction knowing fully that it occurred by Allah's judgment and decree, and he patiently abides, awaiting Allah's reward, then Allah guides his heart, and will compensate him for the loss in this life by granting guidance to his heart and certainty in faith. Allah will bestow upon him whatever he lost or what is far better.³²

Bad Luck in Three Things

False conception of causation is one of the major factors that promote superstitions and myths practice in societies. For example, three things, namely, woman, house and horse, are among things, which people often blame for attracting bad luck. Such beliefs were even in circulation during the Prophet's time, and he eventually addressed Muslims about the conjectural problems attached to them.³³ In one, *Hadith* Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) reported to have said:

Narrated by Ibn Umar (RA) said: they had discussed bad luck in the presence of the prophet (SAW) and He said: If bad luck was to exist in anything, it would have been in three things, in a horse, in a woman and in a house.³⁴

Many people take the literal meaning of the *Hadith* and this is not what is meant. The intended meaning is that if there was any bad luck then, it would have been in these three things but there is not any bad luck in these three things, so other things will also not contain any bad luck. This will be understood from another *Hadith* wherein Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is reported to have said, If He had to command anyone to make *Sajada* (prostration) to anyone other than Allah then He would have to command women to make *Sajada* to their husbands:

³⁰Tirmiziy, Volume:3, Hadith:1614, p.374

³¹Muslim, Volume:4, Hadith:2999, p.229

³²Ibn Kathir, Tafsir: Tagabun, p.12.

³³Murtala, A. p.116

³⁴Bukhari, Volume:7, Hadith:5094, p.8

Narrated by Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet &c said: If I were to order anyone to prostrate (sajada) to anyone, then I would order the wife to prostrate (sajada) to her husband.³⁵

This does not mean that a woman should make *Sajada* (prostrate) to her husband. It is totally *haram* for her to do so. What it means is that she should be obedient to her husband to a great extent.

The Effects of Superstitions

Belief in superstitions distracts the psyche of superstitious people, and if care is not taken it would gradually rescind their activities. Superstition can better be described as an illness that causes great damage to human reasoning and stagnates its good understanding, more especially in shaping one's mode of life towards success. This is true for the effect of two intriguing things surrounding every superstition, namely, unreality and ignorance.³⁶ Any superstitious belief or practice that claims to change human destiny is trying to attain help a being or object other than Allah and blocks people consulting trustworthy sources; such acts have been clearly and absolutely rejected and forbidden in the Quran and the hadiths (sayings of the Prophet).³⁷ Superstition also contradicts the realities that happen in daily life. The occurrences that go contrary to the superstitious beliefs are multiple in number than those that are similar to them. But unfortunately, superstitious people do not totally bother to observe such contradictions so as to take heed of that! Rather they actually choose to deter their faculty of reasoning from realizing the facts and realities that drift before them.³⁸ If a person opens the door to superstition, the world will become a hard place for him, and he will imagine that everything is a bad omen. There are even some people who, if they get up in the morning and go out and meet a man who only has one eye, they will regard it as a bad omen and say: Today is a bad day, so such a person will close his shop and not sell or buy anything.³⁹ The solutions to these effects some to be explained but few; thus, *Fulbe* must solely trust and depend on Allah alone, that He is the only one who knows the future and He is the only one who can help or punish in any shape of form. It is required by Allah and His Messenger that Muslims should consult Islamic clerics in every matter arise in every aspect of life to be solved islamically which found they do not have Islamic teaching background on it. Moreover, they should seek protection from Allah, on what confuses them and leads on to suspicion. And the only way to build strong faith on Allah by sincerely trusting His message [Al-Qur'an] and avoid all forms of Superstitions, as mentioned from the following Ayats; if we try to have trust and sincere belief on Allah alone, then we must first empty it from all other fake gods. Allah says:

They upon those-besides Him whom you protect.

³⁵Hamid bin Muhammadu bin Hussaini bin Muhsin, *Fathul Al-Majid Fi Sharhi Kitab Al-Tauhid*, Firsrt Edition, Dar Al-Muayyid, 1417AH/1996. P.477

³⁶Murtala, A. p.101

³⁷Modibbo Abdulla Shabewa, 61years, Scholar, Shabewa Village, Dukku Local Government, 1st January, 2018, 09:22am.

³⁸Murtala, Ap.101

³⁹Modibbo Abdullahi Kuni, 55years, Scholar, Fattude hirnare,kuni village, Zange, Dukku Local Government, 4TH April, 2017, 10:25am. (08052155288)

They have neither the power to remove the adversity from you nor even to shift (it from you to another person) (Isra'i:56)

The meaning is that the only one who is able to do that is Allah Alone, with no partner or associate, Who is the One Who creates and issues commands.

And to Allah belongs the Ghayb of the heavens and the earth, and to Him return all affairs (for decision). Worship Him and put your trust in Him. (Hud:123)

He explains that everyone who does a deed will give them their deed (reward for it). Unto Him belong the creation and the command. Then He, the Exalted, commands that He should be worshipped and relied upon, for verily, He is sufficient for whoever trusts and turns to Him. And He says:

Know you not that it is Allah to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! And besides Allah you have neither any Wali (protector or guardian) nor any helper.

Allah directed His servants to the fact that He alone is the Owner of His creatures and that He does with them as He wills. Indeed, His is the supreme authority and all creation is His, and just as He created them as He wills, He brings happiness to whom He wills, misery to whom He wills. Therefore, *Fulbe* do not allow a damn about all of these myth practices, it is simply nothing but fake and it cannot do anything good, nor it can harm.

Conclusion

Many of the *Fulbe* are practicing superstitious belief and it continues to linger and exists from one generation to another, in which some of them are taking it as an important aspect in their life activities. This attracted many Muslim scholars to embark on how they should avoid any beliefs and practices which are based on lack of evidence to be extirpated it and encourage them to adopt the correct teachings of Islam.

However, it is discovered that the Muslim jurist and scholars still have the difficult task of finale the chasms that are existing by producing more works that immensely to the lives of *Fulbe* and entire Muslim *ummah*, in different ethnic and culture in the country.

In the light of this work, *Fulbe* makes a very important impact on Islam in Africa, because *Fulbe* was the first group of people in West Africa to convert to Islam through *Jihads*. They established themselves not only as a religious group, but also as a political and economic force, they later become most dedicated disseminators to Islam. In the end the work portrays the concept of superstition and how it affects Muslim believers to be astray. It is identified that superstition is an age-long phenomena which continues to linger and exist from one generation to another. And it is found that superstition is

always caused by poor psychological adjustment or beliefs which have no any experimental evidence or is a practice which base on false hope, fear of unknown, desire and anxiety. Women are more superstitious than men and youth. The research also revealed that the causes of superstitious beliefs among the *Fulbe* are: external influence of alien ethnic societies and ignorance, because *Fulbe* found themselves in Nigeria among different tribes and ethnic groups. Therefore, *Fulbe* must observe and weight the cultural practice of other ethnic groups that are totally forbidden in Islam to avoid committing *haram*. Ignorance plays a vital role for the spread of many superstitious practices among *Fulbe*. Many are illiterate and leaving in the darkness of ignorance they always concentrate on the nomadic activities. From the types of superstitions examined by the research it is found that farming and grazing activities superstitions take a big portion of superstition because it is traditional in nature and grazing is the main source of wealth to *Fulbe*. That makes them migrant, and they are always thinking of how their herd to be increased. Some certain examples of such superstitions were mentioned, to justify it. Social superstition, religious superstition, environmental superstitions are equally outlined. Islam, in uncountable ways has waged vehement attacks against superstitious belief and blocked any possible way to it. Any act of worship in the name of religion should not be practiced except by the approval of Allah and through His prophet (pbuh). Islam is not a religion based on superstitious dogma. And as such to attribute every ailment, calamity and hardship to “evil spirits” is to be a defeatist. Muslims victims of suspicion hatred and fear. They become blind to their own weaknesses and shortcomings and simply attribute all their ills to some external forces. *Fulbe* must wake up and embark on spreading knowledge of Islam to discourage people following the ornate and fancies of evil. The research also recommends that Islamic Organizations which are established based on the teachings of Islam (Qur’an and Sunnah) must design a road map of *da’awah* that will cover every nook and cranny in the area to inculcate the Islamic knowledge and correct practices among the *Fulbe* and entire *Muslim Ummah*.

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