



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### CULTURAL PRACTICES SURROUNDING MOTHERHOOD IN DEORIA DISTRICT: A COMPREHENSIVE CASE STUDY

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Childbirth rituals are profoundly embedded in cultural traditions. These traditions cover a diverse array of beliefs, rituals, and societal conventions that influence the experiences and choices of women throughout pregnancy, labour, and delivery. Sacred rituals, folklore, and customs handed down through the ages all have an impact on culture. **Objective:** The aim of this study is to explore the traditional and cultural practices followed during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum period. **Methodology:** Purposive sampling was used to choose the study participants. Data were gathered through comprehensive interviews. Thematic analysis was used to examine and understand the interview transcript and field notes. The researcher meticulously reviewed the transcript multiple times to enhance comprehension of the context and subsequently identified the principal themes and subthemes. **Result:** Respondents reported many cultural, traditional and religious practices experienced by the women of Deoria district during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum period. Practices like restriction, tying black cloth around arm, wearing small knife, food taboos, burying of umbilical cord, confinement in a room after delivery, drinking holy water, praying to god and body massage were some of the practices followed by the women. **Conclusion:** Traditional and cultural practices significantly influence women's experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period in the Deoria district. Numerous behaviours provide emotional and social support; nonetheless, it is crucial to comprehend them to ensure that maternal healthcare interventions are safe and culturally respectful.

## INTRODUCTION

India is a country known for its different culture, traditional beliefs and practices. These beliefs and practices are transferred from one generation to another, as a dimension of the socio-cultural structure, despite having so much advancement in science and technology. Cultural beliefs and practices also plays an important role in pregnancy, labor and postpartum period and care of neonates (Bazzano *et al*, 2008). Pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period are shaped not only by biological processes but also by deeply embedded cultural beliefs, social structures, and traditional practices. Across societies, these reproductive stages carry symbolic meaning and are often surrounded by rituals aimed at protecting the mother and infant, ensuring a safe birth, and supporting maternal recovery (Jordan, 1993). Anthropological research demonstrates that cultural norms influence how women interpret pregnancy symptoms, seek care, and negotiate the roles expected of them during and after childbirth (Sargent & Bascope, 1996). Childbearing is linked to both short-term and long-term memories formed from lived experiences, shaped by social, cultural, physiological, emotional, and environmental influences (Sennott & Yeatman, 2018) (cited in Ngotie *et al*. 2024). Culture shapes women's experiences of birthing and caring

(Callister, 2004; Olza *et al.*, 2020). In addition to being inextricably linked to day-to-day interactions, social norms and culture are the governing forces behind the behaviour of a society. In spite of the advancements that have been made in the modern world, there are still a number of conventional inequalities that occur throughout the perinatal period (Gedamu *et al*. 2016). Traditional knowledge systems—often transmitted through midwives, elders, or community healers—play a central role in guiding maternal behaviors. In many communities, pregnancy is conceptualized as a vulnerable state requiring ritual precautions, dietary restrictions, or spiritual protection, reflecting broader cultural worldviews about purity, danger, and womanhood (Davis-Floyd, 2001). These practices can provide emotional reassurance, social support, and a sense of continuity with ancestral customs.

## METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to explore the traditional and cultural practices followed during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum period.

**Study Area:** This study is conducted in one Block, Rampur Karkhana and one PHC which constituted eight wards of Deoria town were selected by purposive sampling.

Out of sixteen blocks in Deoria district, Rampur Karkhana has been selected on the basis of accessibility within 16 km of range from the district head quarter and on the limited time of the research. In this block there are 107 villages, out of which 25 villages were selected in terms of accessibility within 15 km through local transport.

**Participants:** From these 25 villages the available respondents were contacted and consent was sought to participate in the research. Out of all women, who had registered in the selected three months and who were located in 25 villages, identified on the basis of accessibility and were contacted and consent was sought. Fifty women gave consent to participate in the research and so those were finalized as respondents of the study. Out of these 50 participants, three were not available in the village and two did not agreed for further study, leaving a total of 45 respondents to be included in the study. The study also included 10 health professionals like ASHA, ANM, Health Visitor, Doctors.

**Data Collection:** This study uses purposive sampling and an interpretivist method to examine the actor's perspective and how the social milieu impacts the actor's perceptions and meanings. Due to the exploratory nature of the research and the need for a thorough understanding of the traditional and cultural practices women followed during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum period, a case study method and in-depth interviews were employed.

**Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis was used to analyze and interpret the interview transcript and field notes. The researcher read the transcript many times to gain a better understanding of the context and then identifying the major themes and sub themes. During the interpretation stage, the investigator avoided using the names of the respondents, preferring to employ pseudonyms.

## RESULTS

**Socio-Demographic Profile:** The data indicate that a majority of respondents (40%) were first-time mothers. A significant proportion originated from low-income households, with one-third reporting a monthly income of ₹10,000 and a small fraction indicating that their husbands were unemployed. Husbands and elder relatives predominantly dictated decisions about pregnancy, prenatal care, and childbirth, indicating that mothers possessed minimal autonomy over their own lives. A nearly equivalent proportion of women delivered in public (48.9%) and private (42.2%) healthcare institutions. Eight percent of women delivered at home due to an emergency, while 40% of births were conducted via caesarean section. A diverse spectrum of educational attainment existed, with about one-fourth of women being illiterate. This illustrates the impact of socioeconomic and educational factors on maternal health awareness and the frequency of health service utilization.

**Cultural practices and beliefs during Pregnancy:** In Deoria district many cultural practices and beliefs are experienced during the antenatal period for different reasons.

**Restriction:** Socio-cultural beliefs and practices are found to be prevalent in the research area covering antenatal through childbirth to the postpartum period. Interviews revealed that it was considered unacceptable to disclose a pregnancy until it

became visibly apparent. It is believed that individuals may employ their evil intentions to bring about an abortion in the early stages of pregnancy. Restriction on fast walking, lifting heavy weight and using stairs or going on open place like terrace during specific time restriction were common during pregnancy. As a result, confinement and constraint were commonly imposed during pregnancy.

Case 6 mentioned that she would cover herself with her *duppata* (piece of cloth) whenever she went out. She says:

*“My mother told me not to go in front of any outsider with the baby bump, and if somebody comes to you cover your stomach with your duppata’ (piece of cloth). Many women in the village perform balck magic and they can do anything to the child so it is better to stay away from these kinds of women.”*

Case 32 said she was advised against applying henna on her palms during pregnancy to prevent birth marks on her unborn child. Additionally, she was prohibited from going on terraces during and after *magribazaan* due to the belief that it is a time of evil spirits. She says:

*“During my pregnancy period I was told not to apply henna on my palms as it will leave birth marks on the body of the unborn baby. She further added: “I was not allowed to go on terrace during and after magribazaan because the older generation believes that it is the time of evil spirits which can harm the unborn child.”*

**Black cloth around the arm:** Culture significantly influences all aspects of pregnancy, labor, and the postpartum period. Culture is widely acknowledged to shape the customs and convictions of individuals worldwide. Various cultural customs have been observed among pregnant women, which have been transmitted from one generation to the next. According to Lefeber *et al.* (1997), the traditional practices in South Africa are thought to have their roots in cultural beliefs and superstitions related to pregnancy and childbirth. The rationale for prohibiting pregnant women from sleeping during daylight hours may be rooted in the notion that it could result in a challenging labor or complications during delivering.

Case 7 said, once she confirmed her pregnancy her mother-in-law tied a black cloth containing *ajwain* (carom seed) and *heing* (asafoetida) to get evil eye off from the unborn child. She further revealed that there are many women in the village who perform black magic and they can do anything to the unborn child so wearing a black cloth with *ajwain* and *heing* can protect them. Case 38 said, she had tied a black thread around her waist which was to be removed only after the delivery. She says:

*‘the thread is tied to protect the baby from supernatural powers and evil eye’.*

**Keeping sharp objects around the pregnant woman:** There are several beliefs that keeping sharp object around a pregnant woman can protect her from evil eyes and supernatural powers. During analysis of the interviews it was found that pregnant women in the research area were found wearing a small knife in a black thread around their neck since the day they confirm their pregnancy. Women in the district believe that keeping sharp object made of iron, near the pregnant women protects them from supernatural powers and evil eyes.

**Case 2 says:**

*‘since the day I came to know about my pregnancy I used to wear a small knife which is made up of iron in my neck so keep evil eyes off from my child’.*

**Case 35 says:**

*“a sharp object of iron was placed and a knife was put under my bedding where I was sleeping with my baby. She explained that it is done to keep supernatural powers outside the baby’s room”.*

**Religious belief and practices during pregnancy:** Pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period are associated with religious and traditional beliefs and practices in many countries around the world. These beliefs and practices often vary greatly depending on the cultural context and can include rituals, ceremonies, and specific roles for family members and community members. They play a significant role in shaping the experiences of pregnant individuals and their families, providing support, guidance, and a sense of belonging during this transformative period. During their pregnancy women perform all spiritual and traditional practices for their safe delivery. Pregnant women intensify their prayers to seek divine protection, a safe delivery, and blessings (Aziato *et al*; 2016). In the research area it was found that women from the Muslim community recites verses from the Quran while women from Hindu community performs holy rituals to make god happy. Some of the excerpts can be quoted here to present the religious and cultural beliefs followed by the women of the district. Case 2 said whenever she felt uneasiness during her pregnancy period, her mother-in-law give her ‘Zam Zam’ water to drink and sprinkle it on her head as the water is considered holy in Islam and the women believes that the holy water protects the unborn baby and the mother from evil eyes and other supernatural powers. She also reported, that during her pregnancy period she used to recite *Quran* as she believes that reciting or listening to Quran can have spiritual impact on the fetus.

**Dietary Restriction:** Various cultures have established specific dietary recommendations for pregnant women, highlighting the need of consuming some foods that are believed to enhance the health of the fetus, while discouraging the consumption of others that are considered hazardous. For instance, several Asian cultures recommend that pregnant women refrain from consuming "hot" meals, such as spicy dishes, due to the belief that they can generate internal heat and disrupt equilibrium while "cold" foods include cucumbers, dairy products and several other products. During the confinement period it was also found that women had different food restriction and they are usually advice to take green vegetables, lentils, and chapatti make up the confinement diet. Women are advised to consume large quantities of pulses because they enhance the quality of breast milk.

**Protein rich foods, green vegetables and Fruits:** Case 7 said she used to have more fruits like orange, pomegranates and apple. Case 8 said, her mother-in-law asked her to eat more fruits and keep healthy diet so the child will be born healthier. Case 15 said during her pregnancy she used to eat all foods with pulses and fruits in more amount. In fruits, she used to have oranges and pomegranates.

**Food taboos during pregnancy:** Every culture, whether rural or urban, establishes its own taboos throughout various aspects of life, which are adhered to by its members. These taboos primarily affect a woman's life, beginning from her birth and continuing through her menarche, marriage, childbearing, motherhood, and ultimately widowhood. These taboos exert control over many aspects of her life. There are numerous taboos associated with pregnancy and the postpartum period. Dietary restrictions are crucial during pregnancy, as violating them might lead to miscarriage or birth defects in the newborn (Chakrabarti & Chakrabarti, 2019). Foods were generally categorized as "hot" and "cold" food. Hot foods include papayas, brinjals, ginger, egg, pineapple, buffalo, milk, red meat, etc. while Cold foods include rice, green vegetables, yoghurt, cow milk etc. Many women considered pregnancy as a hot state, so they avoided hot foods which may lead to abortion. Case 2 and Case 4 said they avoided eating papayas and spicy foods. Additionally, they stated that papayas are prohibited while consuming spicy leads to stomach issues for them. Case 12 and Case 21 avoided papaya and spicy foods. Case 22 said she avoided 'hot foods' like fish, egg, ginger, garlic and buffalo milk during her initial days of pregnancy. Case 24 said she avoided papaya, eggplant and pineapples as they may harm her pregnancy.

**Cultural beliefs and practices during childbirth:** Childbirth is a natural biological process in humans, marked by two contrasting experiences. Women endure some of the most intense pain of their lives during labor and delivery, yet this hardship is followed by the overwhelming joy of welcoming a newborn, which helps ease the memory of the pain. Within the Deoria district, childbirth is accompanied by a wide range of cultural rituals and traditional beliefs that are observed to ensure the well-being of both mother and child. In the research area it was found that women from the Muslim community recites verses from the Quran while women from Hindu community performs holy rituals to make god happy. Some of the excerpts can be quoted here to present the religious and cultural beliefs followed by the women of the district. Case 10 said that one of her relative told to read a verse from *Quran* which will help in giving birth to a healthy baby boy. Case 17 said when she was in labor pain at the PHC but her baby was not descending her mother-in-law went and owe to 'samimai' (a goddess who is worshipped under a tree at the PHC) that she will offer oil to her if her daughters-in-law's delivery will be safe and smooth.

Case 31 said *“ I used to mop the house sitting down because people said it would make a normal delivery easier”.*

**Cultural Traditions and Beliefs During the Postpartum Period:** The postpartum period is not just a physical recovery phase but also a vibrant time of cultural celebration and social change. In many communities, new mothers are cared for closely at home, never left alone, as their every move—from what they eat to how they care for themselves—is shaped by deep-rooted traditions and rituals that honour this special time.

**Socio-cultural beliefs about dried umbilical cord disposal:** An analysis of the interviews and observation from the field reveals that the majority of the women, from both urban and rural areas, had certain attitudes and practices about the disposal of the umbilical cord. A number of interviewees mentioned associated cultural attitudes and activities once the cord had fallen. The most common of these was the notion that

once an umbilical cord has dried and fallen, it should be buried in the ground or thrown somewhere cold and out of sight, as women believed that if a barren woman ate the cord, she would get pregnant and the baby whose cord she had eaten would die. Some women also think that if someone from the outside obtains the dry cord, they will benefit at the expense of the mother and the child. They might also hurt the child to take personal or professional revenge on the parents.

Case 15 says:

*“When I discovered the baby's cord had fallen, I looked for it in my room, wrapped it in some cloth, and threw it into a pond close to my home because I was afraid that if someone else found it, she would use it to harm my baby or my family in order to seek revenge.”*

Case 32 says:

*“Once the naval cord is dried and falls off then they collect it and wrap in a piece of cloth and throw it in the bushes of bamboo so that no one can find it. She further explained the reason that it is believed that if a barren woman finds the dry naval and eat it then she will conceive and the baby whose naval she has eaten will die. The bushes of bamboo are considered cold place”.*

**Confinement period:** After giving birth, an Indian mother must stay in her home for 40 days. She stays with her parents during this time, especially if it's her first child, so she may get the finest care and rest possible and since all of her meals will be made for her. She might also feel more at ease around her mother. Further analysis of the interviews revealed reveal that women in Deoria district after their childbirth stay in a room for 40 days but on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of birth the women need to take bath and the room in which she stays is cleaned and mopped for purification. After that she can come out of the room and can roam anywhere but after completion of forty days she can stay in other rooms of the house. During this forty day the women of the family used to keep some sharp object and fire outside the new mothers' room to protect the new born baby from supernatural powers and evil eyes.

Some excerpts from the case studies are as follows:

Case 9 says:

*“She stayed in a room for 40<sup>th</sup> day, outside the room they used to keep an object made of iron like rod, axe or anything for 40 days. Along with this they keep burning lohban outside the room in an iron basket. If some outsiders came then they have to put their cloth above the fire and then they may enter the room of the new-born.”*

(Loban, also known as Gum Benzoin, has been used for centuries due to its aromatic properties. This resin is extracted from the bark of various *Styrax* tree species and is highly valued in perfumery and traditional medicine).

Case 26 said, her mother-in-law used to keep a sharp object made of iron (axe, pointed rod) outside the room in which she was staying with the child after delivery. She said, these object are kept at the gate for 40<sup>th</sup> days to protect the child from evil eyes.

Case 27 also said, she used to stay in a room for 40 day but after the second bath i.e. on 12<sup>th</sup> day she can go out of the room. She further added that a sharp object is placed outside the room for 40<sup>th</sup> day to protect the child from supernatural powers.

Case 32 also reported the same she says:

*“I she stayed in a room for 40 days with my baby but after 12<sup>th</sup> day of bath I was allowed to go out of the room. She further added outside my room a sharp axe made of iron was placed and a fire bowl was lit with lohban so that no supernatural powers or evil eye cannot enter the newborn's room.”*

**Body massage after delivery:** During the confinement period new moms receive a full-body massage, or *maalish*, once every day which helps the body in recovering from birth pains and it also helps to tone her physique. Her body will feel more at ease after a massage, which will also improve blood flow. Postnatal massage is given by traditional massage giver who is known as *maalishwali* or *hajamin* in Deoria. The *maalishwali* come once a day to the new mother house at a fixed time to give massage for 40 or 15 days. Women who delivery normally, start taking massage within a week of delivery however women with caesarean section delivery can begin their massage once their wound is sufficiently healed. In this case it is usually started after two weeks of surgery or after fifteen days. Women of the district informed that the massage oil contains mustard seeds, mustard oil and turmeric. Many women also give pain relief oil for body massage. Some excerpts from the case studies are as follows:

Case 22 says:

*“My mother-in-law called the hajamin and told her to give me massage for 40 days but she said she will give it for fifteen days only as she has to give massage to a girl who is bride to be. So, she massaged me for fifteen days and in return we give her cloth, money, rice, and wheat.”*

Case 23 said she used to take body massage for ten days because of her body pain. Case 39 reported experiencing physical pain as well. She said that she relieved her body pain by receiving a series of body massages from a *dai* over twenty days.

**Rituals performed for the new born:** In Indian culture, the arrival of an infant is a reason for joyous festivities, much like in any other society. The traditional rituals commence before to the birth of the baby and may persist for a duration of up to one year following the birth of the newborn. Multiple rituals and customs are practiced throughout this period. Field study analysis indicates that women from Hindu and Muslim cultures partake in a rite known as *chhatti* when the infant reaches six days of age. According to folklore, it is believed that on the sixth day following the baby's birth, Vidhaata, the deity associated with fate, would quietly visit the home at midnight to determine and record the baby's future. On this day, women, along with the newborn, engage in a bathing ritual, followed by the shaving of the baby's hair as a means of cleansing. Traditionally, on the day of *chhatti*, a newborn is ceremoniously exposed to many items that they will need throughout their life, such as a pen, paper, clothes, and toys. The hair shaving ceremony that follows *chhatti* is known as *mundane* or *tonsure*. The tradition is regarded as significant

and obligatory in Hindu culture. During the *mundan* ceremony, a barber is entrusted with the responsibility of removing the baby's hair by shaving it off. The *mundan* ceremony in Hindu culture often takes place within the first four to three years following a child's birth. Head shaving is mostly associated with the elimination of impurities. In Islamic tradition, the act is often performed throughout a period ranging from 7 to 40 days. In the Islamic faith, the Azan is softly recited into the ear of a newborn child immediately after birth. The timing and ceremonial practices of the *mundan* ceremony vary among different cultures. Indeed, numerous communities exclusively conduct the *mundan* rite for boys, while excluding girls. In Hindu cultures, it is customary for some families to execute a hair shaving ceremony on the sixth day after the birth of a baby. Some excerpts from the case studies are as follows:

Case 5 said, she took bath after 5 days and also shaved her baby's hair for purification. Case 7 said that she took proper bath when her stitches were cut and her family gave bath to the baby on the 12<sup>th</sup> day followed by a ceremony called '*Chhati*'. She further added that *Chhati* is performed on the sixth day of birth but as she had gone through surgery so she was not able to take bath on the sixth day so the ceremony was celebrated on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of birth. She explained that *chhati* is done because it is believed that on this day the *vidhaata* writes the future of the new born. Case 35 said that the baby's head was shaved on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of birth for purification. She further added that she stayed in a room for 40 days along with the baby but she was allowed to visit other rooms after 12<sup>th</sup> day of delivery. She says:

*"Within one hour of the birth my uncle whispered azaan in my child's ear"*.

**Practices related to food during the postpartum period:** A mother's body has been subjected to a significant amount of change and strain by the time she gives birth to her child. It takes time, patience and support in the form of postnatal nutrition to recover from giving birth. A healthy post-partum diet is very important for the health of women, breastfeeding and for the growth and development of the baby. Women after their delivery have to maintain certain food restriction in which hot foods are allowed and cold foods are restricted to maintain the balance of the body which was disturbed by the birth of the baby.

**Foods served during the postpartum period:** During the field work it was observed that women who had a normal delivery, were allowed to have normal foods after the birth of the baby. But women who gave birth through caesarean section was not allowed to have any kind of solid foods within 24 hours of delivery, from second day the women's are advice to have '*khichdi*' (a dish made of rice and lentils) and '*daal ka pani*' (pulse soup). After third day of surgery, the new mothers are advice to eat everything. It was also found that most of the women used to have *roti*, *sabzi* and *daal* (chappatis, vegetables and pulses) for a month and after that they start taking everything. Some of the foods which are served to women in her postpartum period are pulse soup, drinking dry fruits by mixing it in milk, turmeric milk. Additionally, some ladies were provided with '*gond ka laddu*', a nourishing and wholesome sweet ball consisting of edible gum, whole wheat flour, almonds, jaggery, and ghee. These '*laddos*' are claimed to alleviate chronic back pain and promote the strengthening and rejuvenation of the spinal bones in women. Additionally, it

aids in the process of lactation and enhances the quality of breast milk. It was also found that women after twelve days in caesarean section and five days in normal delivery are made to drink '*Achwani*'. *Achwani* is a homemade recipe for new mothers to boost immunity, keep warmth, give energy and also help in reducing cramps and back pain that are very common in postpartum problems. *Achwani* is made up of dry ginger, turmeric, poppy seeds (*khushkhus*), cumin, onion seeds (*kalonji*), jiggery and raisins. It was found that women were made to drink *achwani* by mixing it in cow milk. Many women used to make *achwani* as a pudding and keep it in a bottle for further use. It works as a best pain reliever for women after their delivery.

**Foods avoided during postpartum period:** After child delivery women does not eat rice for many months. Some women start having rice in small quantity after 15 to 20 days of delivery. Women who gave birth through caesarean section avoid having rice for many months. They avoid rice after their delivery as it is considered as cold food and women believes that rice can cause a '*hanging belly*' them. Apart from this, women used to drink *luke warm* water for months or a year. She is not given any cold food or juice to avoid cold and cough, which can affect the health of the baby and can also affect stitches in case of caesarean section. Along with this, women used to avoid spicy and other foods which can cause gastrointestinal problems.

Some of the excerpts can be quoted here to present the foods avoided during postpartum period.

Case 6 says:

*"I avoid spicy foods and didn't eat rice for almost a year. I also used to drink luke warm water"*.

Case 7 also avoided spicy foods after her delivery. Case 13 said she used to have all foods but avoided fried and hard foods because this will cause stomach issues to her child. She says:

*"once I eaten pakore (fritters) and the whole night my baby cried. My mother scolded me a lot and told me that fritters have created stomach pain in baby and that is why she is crying"*.

## DISCUSSION

The study investigates and documents the cultural and traditional perspectives on pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal practices in the Deoria District. The findings revealed that socio-cultural ideas and behaviours were widespread, encompassing antenatal care, birthing, and the postpartum period. The findings support the view that cultural and traditional practices are important during these period (Choudhry, 1997). The findings further revealed that it was considered unacceptable to disclose one's pregnancy until it became visibly apparent. There is a belief that certain people may employ their evil intentions to induce an abortion in the early stages of pregnancy. In the research it was found that restriction on fast walking, lifting heavy weight and using stairs or going on open place like terrace during specific time restriction were common during pregnancy. Consequently, it was normal practice to confine and restrict pregnant women.

It is believed that people all across the world are shaped by their cultural practices and beliefs. Pregnant women have a number of cultural rituals that have been passed down through the years. During the analysis of the interviews of the respondents, it was found that women in the research area follows a common cultural practice of tying a black cloth around their arm during the entire pregnancy and postpartum period. After the birth of the child similar cloth is tied around the arm of the baby also. Many women have reported of keeping a sharp object around them. There believe that keeping sharp object around a pregnant woman can protect her from evil eyes and supernatural powers. Religious belief and practices are another important factor found in this study. During their pregnancy women perform all spiritual and traditional practices for their safe delivery. During pregnancy, women intensify their prayers to God for protection, a safe birth, and blessings (Jesse *et al.*, 2007). Pregnant women choose various methods of connection with God, depending on their individual religious affiliation, in order to ensure a healthy delivery. In the research area it was found that women from the Muslim community recites verses from the Quran while women from Hindu community performs holy rituals to make God happy. It was also found that after birth women have to stay in a room for 40 days but after 12th day of birth, they need to take bath and the room in which she stays is cleaned and mopped for purification. After that she can come out of the room and can roam anywhere. During confinement period the new moms receive full body massage or *maalish* which helps the body in recovering from birth pains. Some women have also reported certain beliefs and practices about the umbilical cord. The most common of these was the notion that once an umbilical cord has dried and fallen, it should be buried in the ground or thrown somewhere cold and out of sight, as women believed that if a barren woman ate the cord, she would get pregnant and the baby whose cord she had eaten would die. Further analysis from the fieldwork reveals that women from both Hindu and Muslim communities perform a ceremony called *chhatti* when the baby is six days old. On this day women along with the baby took a bath and then the baby's hair was shaved off for purification. The pregnancy and confinement period are followed by dietary taboos in the form of 'cold' and 'hot' foods. Women adhere to specialized postpartum diets and consume particular foods following childbirth. Additionally, women were also provided with '*gond ka laddu*', a nourishing sweet ball prepared from edible gum, wheat flour, almonds, jaggery, and ghee. These '*laddos*' are claimed to alleviate chronic back pain in women. Women are also given "*Achwani*" to drink or eat. It is believed that this will boost immunity, keep warmth and help to reduce cramps and back pain which is common in postpartum problems.

## CONCLUSION

The enduring nature of cultural and religious rituals during pregnancy, labour, and the postpartum period in Deoria district underscores the profound impact of tradition on maternal health. Although these activities offer emotional solace and social reinforcement, it is crucial to differentiate between those that enhance well-being and those that may present hazards. Enhancing awareness and incorporating advantageous traditions with contemporary medical advice will guarantee safer results for both mother and child.

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