

Studies of death rituals and of beliefs about the afterlife in India have mainly been carried out from the perspective of male members of high castes following the Sanskritic tradition. Contrary to this, the present study focuses on rural low caste women's discourses about death and afterlife. Their talk about death and afterlife is analyzed in a wider social context. This reveals that death is symbolically related to and meaningful for the social order, the recreation of life, and the status of women. It is important to control death as it is considered a vulnerable state of transition that is constantly endangered by impurity and by attacks of malign ghosts.