Phenomenon of Witch Hunting in the North-East

A Major Challenge to Women



Edited By

DR. ANIMA BAISHYA

Phenomenon of Witch Hunting in the North-East: A Major Challenge to Women- A collection of selected seminar papers presented in U.G.C. sponsored National Seminar on the same theme organised by the Women Cell, S.B.M.S. college, Sualkuchi, Assam and edited by Dr. Anima Baishya.

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WORDS FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Time and again, it is reiterated that the institutions of higher education in India must not remain as *Ivory Tower* beyond the reach of the so called laymen. The obligation of these institutions for the people, who apparently remain far away from the system, in no way, can be denied. In the emerging scenario, the relevance of such institutions is rather gauged by the concerns and contributions for the people around it. That is why, extension, the third dimension of higher education, has been acknowledged as an equally important function like teaching and research. It has, by and large delimited its age-old confinement to transaction of syllabi and has paved the way for reaching the unreached.

SBMS College is probably the oldest among the institutions of higher learning situated in relatively remote and exclusively rural area in the state of Assam. Its concern for the diverse problems of the rural populace is depicted in selection of the seminar theme by the esteemed lady teachers under the umbrella of Women Cell in this college. Their sensitivity towards crises crippling the underprivileged in general and the rural women-

folk in particular, is obviously praiseworthy. Witch hunting and its associated menace are found to be negatively related to exposure to formal education, modern health care facilities etc. The problem, therefore, must not be seen in isolation. It was an endeavor on our part to focus on the issue offering a common platform to interact and exchange of views amongst the academicians, researchers with the pioneers struggling at the grass root level against this misgiving. This volume is an outcome of the event and hopefully, will be able to prove itself as a good literature not only for the researchers but will also be able to sensitize the people at large to work together for achieving a control, if not the full stop so far as the menace is concerned.

SBMSC
22-03-2014

D. C. Bhagabati
Principal

THE LAST WORD

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped.
– Robert Browning

Publishing a book on the theme "Phenomenon of Witch hunting in the North-East: A Major Challenge to Women" is really a fascinating task for the Women Cell, S.B.M.S. College. Loaded with a collection of 31 bilingual papers on the issue of witch hunting, this book can be expected to open up new vistas for further research on the discourse. Keeping in mind the importance of the present theme, the discourse can be easily accessible to every individual and policy maker with a view to have rich academic and research materials. It is not possible to disseminate the outcome of the event to everybody nor, there is any easy source of access for them. The purpose of such events can be better served if it is made available everywhere and at all times. This can be done only by publishing them.

More or less all the papers have identified and discussed on some common aspects: the role of education vs. superstitions and age old beliefs, the role of Media, creation of awareness among the people, etc. The authors of various papers are basically academicians, teachers and research scholars.

Witch hunting, as a practice, is a serious threat to humanity. It is a fact that this malice is still rampant in twenty first century where we demand for cent percent literacy, women empowerment, etc. In contemporary society, this practice is not gender specific even though women are generally victimized in spite of women having the power to create, nurture and transform the society. The notion of women having been epitomised as the symbol of love, affection and compassion, is itself a paradox, as several women have been persecuted, tortured and killed in the grab of witch-craft in the past few decades in the entire North- East. Most of the women do not have the courage to protest against the harassment towards them. There are instances where some of them have not only been able to overcome the fear and trauma of being branded as witches but they have also emerged as path-finders for the victims. Birubala Rabha is a glaring example who, having been victimized of this shameful social stigma, decided to stand up against superstitions leading to serious and horrible incidents of witch hunting with her "Mission Birubala". We are fortunate enough to have Ms. Birubala Rabha amongst us who graced the occasion and her thoughts, ideas and experiences enriched the participants to modify their papers.

The recent turn of events has in fact made the topic the burning issue where there is a lot of hue and cry against practicing superstitions and age old beliefs. Though the government is of the opinion that witch-craft killings are being committed at village level and so the states should deal with them, it is widely

prevalent in the country to be seen as a regional problem. So there is a need to bring in a national law with its implementation in real sense, complemented by a strong social backing.

The very issues related to the present theme have a tremendous impact on the general masses. Expecting the book to be a great contribution to reveal the ugly face of the phenomenon of witch hunting every now and then in our country especially in the North-East region, both the individuals and policy makers can find out different important issues relating to witch hunting.

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WITCH HUNTING: A PRACTICE IN TRIBAL SOCIETY

Dr. Bhola Nath Ghosh

As we are in the twenty-first century, yet the problem of witch hunting continues to haunt us diminishing all the development of our country. Therefore, it is a matter of great concern, for the administration as well as social thinkers, activists, educationists, political and religious leaders, especially when the victims of this heinous custom are mostly women.

Much research has been done in this area of inhuman activity. Such researchers as Ghosh and Bandyopadhyay (1988), Das(1994), Ghosh (1991), Choudhury (1993), Kisku (1994), Mukherjee (1939), to name a few, have tried to understand and analyse different aspects of the problem. They have also tried to associate this problem with the problems of the society as a whole.

Ghosh and Bandyopadhyay(1998) and Choudhury (1993) have argued that economic factors are the main reasons behind this diabolic practice. The greed of grabbing one's land or properties stimulate witch hunting among tribal. Kisku (1994) has viewed witch hunting as the result of the ignorance of tribal about modern science and social outlook, as well as

their low level of education and lack of consciousness about the true cause of natural phenomena. Das (1994) has noticed the role of vested interests behind the perpetuation of witchcraft. He has also hinted at socio-cultural practices to be the cause of witch hunting.

All these, however, do not clearly answer the question, why mostly women become victims of this heinous system. There are also incidents of the property of a tribal person being illegally taken over by some vested interest without branding him or her as a wizard or a witch.

Witch hunting is an age-old phenomenon. At earlier days, this practice was prevalent all over the world. However, with the advent of science and technology and with the change in world outlook, this menacing belief has gradually become outdated and the developed continents like Europe, America are almost free from this practice though, it was quite inexistence there in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But a vast area of Asia, Africa and Latin America is still wrestling with witch-hunting. It is not that, this vast area, containing a large population, is totally deprived of any development that has taken place chronologically. Of course, doubtlessly, the level of development is not homogeneous throughout the world. Albeit, there has been development in terms of economy, culture, politics, education- in broad line, in terms of social structures. Nevertheless, the witch-hunting is still going on in certain aboriginal communities.

In India, this practice of witch-hunting exists among some tribal communities particularly among those, viz. Santals, Mundas, Mahalis,etc., who have been descended from Austric and pre-Dravidian groups.

In West Bengal, these groups are distributed over a number of districts – Maldah, Murshidabad, Midnapur, Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum and South 24-Paraganas.

In most cases the victims are women. A question creeps up, why are the women victimized in most cases? Till date, we do not have any exact answer to these questions. However, one can guess them banking on different studies which already have been carried out about the phenomenon of witch-hunting. Generally, orthodox culture, economic backwardness, ignorance about modern health services, high level of illiteracy and other factors derived out of these play a crucial role for outliving an ignominious practice like witch hunting.

However, the cultural factor stands as a main pillar for over living the practice a major obstacle to outdo this as well. The tribal, descended from Austric and Pre-Dravidian groups follow their belief system, founded almost in prehistoric ages, so rigorously that the erudite, who have come out today from those societies and strongly opposed to the gruesome practice, are not able to make a deep dent as yet.

To understand this, the belief systems of the tribes are required to be discussed in a nutshell. Ethnographers and Anthropologists have developed an idea that the tribal Aborigines in particular, had to face lot of troubles in settling on the earth and surviving the feats of the Nature. Centuries ago, almost from the dawn of civilization, people started believing in magic. They thought that behind any natural phenomenon, there was an invisible hand of any supernatural power. Metaphysics thus came into being. They resorted to different 'isms', viz., Animism, Animatism, Totemism etc. And the basic tune of the 'isms' was either to tame the Nature or at least to co-habit with all of her sudden outbursts in the forms of thunder, drought, flood etc. Those systems of belief are still existent in aboriginal societies. Nature is still their life-line and also the store of mystery as well. So also is for the women. Women's behaviours as well as their different phases of physical or biological changes, viz.,

menstruation, pregnancy, and child birth were also mysteries to the male folk of the tribal communities. At the same time they found women as a source of creation just like the land. Perhaps this simile of the Nature that they found in their womenfolk led them to believe women were equivalent to the Nature. To tame, therefore, the Nature, was equivalent to tame the women within clan, at least to their belief.

Now, to tame the Nature they had to perform some magical performances. Very popular forms of such performances were mimetic dances. Some men were also assigned to perform exclusively these performances that gradually held the supreme position in the clans as Priests, Shamans Magicians, Sorcerers, and Witch-doctors etc. That system is still obeyed traditionally. That's why the Jangurus (magicians) in tribal societies are enjoying a dominant position.

The ordinary members of the tribal communities believe that the Jangurus are the most knowledgeable persons who can ward off the evil-spirits which cast a spell always to do harm to the communities. These evil-spirits are commonly known as 'Bongas'. Whenever in the village there occurs any unnatural death either to any member of the community or to cattle or there happens some apparently unnatural mishap like drought, flood, famine etc., the tribes attach the events to some imprecatory evil-spirits and search for a witch or witches through whom the spirits cast their spell. It is interesting enough that they commonly find a woman. Because the Jangurus always make them believe that the women are uncanny, capricious, and irresponsible creatures that can even befool the Bongas to be their nefarious instruments. The Jangurus also believe that women are better acceptors of evil-spirits than men. They try to persuade people not to believe a woman. As Jangurus are at the place of reverence nobody counters their arguments.

As women are believed equivalent to the Nature, so the Jangurus always had tried to tame the women or in other words subjugate them in a belief that it would be effective in taming the Nature. It was thought at earlier ages. But it is still in practice because the tribes are very much orthodox in developing and surviving their societies. So, ultimately the women have become dominated by the males and always have been treated as the principal element of magical performances. Therefore, Jangurus find witch in women.

But, today, the incidents of witch-hunting are not simply because of belief system. Economic interests like grabbing property or land or socio-political interests like defaming one, wrestling power from one may play their roles which utilize their belief system in connivance with the Jangurus.

Ignorance about medical science is also a major factor contributing to witch-hunting. Similarly, when an old member suffers from any diseases due to ageing like "Dementia" or if any member suffers from "Fits" or Epilepsy" the ordinary members cannot understand the disease, go to Janguru and a witch-hunting is repeated.

It is also observed that, whatever be the case, whatever is the reason, today some groups have emerged within the Tribal clans who are tactfully exploiting the belief system. The groups are obviously vested interest groups. They take the advantage of the belief system of the Tribal communities.

Some Major Conclusions

1. Witch-Hunting is certainly a part of the Tribal culture. Furthermore, they apprehend an invasion on their culture as a whole. A certain level of cultural fundamentalism is responsible for witch-hunting.

2. Tribal societies are now facing a crisis of both leadership and identity. Because they are still deprived of infrastructural facilities and face the traditional challenge of the chauvinism of more powerful ethnic groups, they continue to feel insecure.

This is the scenario of practicing of witch hunting in Tribal communities not only in West Bengal but in North east also.

We should try to eradicate this practice from the tribal society in any way.

Some Suggestions

1. Women of Tribal societies should be given more attention.
2. The resistance movement that has already started should be given more support.
3. The local arrangements have to be made to protect the legal interests of such weaker section.
4. They should be made aware of the causes of various kinds of physical and mental diseases.
5. Effective audio-visual campaigns should be undertaken on the fallacy of such beliefs as well as on the civil and legal rights of the weaker sections of our society.

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THE "WITCH" IN THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

Syeda Umme Tasnim

The aim of this paper is to examine the psychological facets and archetypes used by the society to associate with witches. Psychology can be effectively utilized to analyse the manner in which aspects such as witch craft and witch hunt is dealt with by the society. The figure of the witch is studied applying larger psychological designs of psychologists Carl Gustav Jung and Sigmund Freud. The figure of the witch should be viewed as a construction of the society in which all negative aspects perceived in a woman is attributed to the accused. Thus, this paper will concentrate on the Jungian analysis of the figure of the 'witch' with slight references from Freudian psychology. The problems resulting from such constructs will be dealt with in the realm of North-Eastern India.

Since time immemorial, women have been essentially made the target of witch accusations throughout the world irrespective of age, nationality, culture, and geographical terrain. Then there was a time when men too have been associated with witchcraft and have been accused regardless. Feminists working against the

killing of accused witch suspects have theorized that the "witch" and "woman" were virtually synonymous, that the persecution is caused by society's misogyny. Women deviating and eluding the established patriarchal control was always under the radar of suspicion of dallying with the devil. Yet at the same time it is not appropriate for us to generalize such records across the world and especially in the North-East since despite the chauvinism of the time, men have been equally accused.

Though the term 'wizard' is more befitting for the male counterpart indulged in witchcraft; it was never utilized and used by the society and witch hunters. This fact can be looked at in the light of the feminist cry as the term 'witch' is a degenerate expression which is inherently feminine and any men associated or indulged in witchcraft is very much a feminine man. In other words he is unmanly and a coward who does not have the courage to face his enemies and foes without the aid of supernatural and magical devices. Thus the venerable term 'wizard', the meaning in the Oxford Dictionary is "(in legends and fairy tales) a man who has magical powers" and "a person who is very skilled in a particular field or activity", has never been associated with the evil practice of witchcraft. On the other hand the same dictionary states the meaning of the term 'witch' as "a woman thought to have evil magic powers, popularly depicted as wearing a black cloak and pointed hat, and flying on a broomstick", "an ugly or unpleasant old woman" and "a girl or woman who is bewitchingly attractive".

It need not be pointed out that the male counterpart of the witch which should have been a wizard or a warlock has been conveniently forsaken by the society and that magic involved in both the cases have yielded different interpretations and assumptions. A woman practicing magic is considered an evil person whereas a man practicing magic is an ingenuous and

a scholarly person. If the dictionary meanings are to be analysed further, it should also be noticed that any woman who is excessively attractive is also called a witch. Thus in a paradoxical turn we should note that in a world where beauty is such a coveted thing, it can also pave the way for a woman's downfall and in many cases to death. This can be seen in the light of the masculine society's fear that such beauty can bring only destruction to the society; in a manner that men can turn against fellow men in order to win her affections and also that the beautiful woman will always have the upper hand over the man and can pull all the strings. Helen of Troy was also called a witch as she led to the downfall of thousands and overturned the tide of history. Such a fear has driven not only men but also women who are apparently jealous and paranoid to annihilate such a woman's existence. Many witch accusations have been a result of such paranoia and jealousy.

To begin with the North-Eastern realm, it is necessary for us to keep note of the fact that the demographic make-up of India's North-East cannot be judged at par with the rest of mainland India. The lifestyle of its inhabitants has been widely reformed and re-reformed over the course of history. In the North-east the fervor of witch hunt has garnered a new impetus as a result of the intermingling of traditional tribal beliefs with Evangelicalism and Brahmanical religions. Jahnabi Gogoi Nath in her article "Witchcraft and witch hunting in Assam in Historical Perspective with Reference to the Bodos" has pointed out that the origin of the word 'daini' lies in the Indo-Aryan language which suggests that this has been a recent phenomenon in the demographic history of the region. Gogoi Nath also states that the entire notion of patriarchy was introduced into the tribal realm of the region only with the advent of established religions and the historical brush with the Indo-Aryan culture.

This is one of the facts to be kept in mind on the face of the arguments of many critics who believe that witch hunt is not necessarily an anti-feminist act, rather an act meted out towards men too in order to procure more wealth. The system of the patriarchal economy came into prominence with this encounter with the mainland established religions. Any person irrespective of gender who happens to stumble upon great fortune passed down from his or her ancestors can be subjected to witch suspicions. He or she might be accused of amassing great wealth by practicing black magic, while he/she has acquired a fortune; they have sucked out all the luck and wealth of their fellow villagers. It is undeniably a case of jealousy and anger sprouting out of fellow family members and neighbours to whom the sight of others rising above in life is a pain to the eyes. Hence they invent all sorts of vicious lies and ensure that their lies have fatal repercussions.

Stories and legends circling witchcraft and witch hunt do not spring up from a vacuum; they are a product of the cultural forces surrounding them. The term witch hunt is deeply fortified in psychology as it also refers to moral panic which is often a result of mistaken and a frantic perception of enmity between individuals. It often results in frenetic persecutions without the aid of reason and rationale. In Assam most of the witch hunting cases thrive in areas where there is a lack of public awareness and healthcare facilities especially in remote tribal and Adivasi dominated areas and these are mostly affected by malaria, diarrhoea, typhoid and dengue, etc. Villagers who get paranoid in such helpless situations instead direct their wrath towards innocent people who use herbal and medicinal plants to cure such diseases. Their hard conviction is that this is a work of the evil spirit who has been summoned by the witch doctor and unleashed on the people.

The intermingling of tribal religious beliefs with the established religion has yielded much positive outcome as they are now subject to many developmental activities especially education. But sometimes this coming together can have dangerous repercussions as the tribal beliefs of the almighty has an altogether a different sound to it from those of the established religions. Even till this day some tribes in almost all the states in the North-East, especially in Arunachal Pradesh still practice their tribal religious faith by worshipping the Earth mother, the Nature, etc. A tribal worshipping such deities after the conversion to an established religion is either discouraged by the religious leaders or perceived by the village people to be associated with dark magic and totally Unchristian.

Carl Jung saw the personal unconscious mind of each human being as a result of a much deeper universal layer of consciousness, called the 'collective unconscious' which is inherited from the society. It is acquired and not experienced. Archetypes are universal thought forms of this collective unconscious which leads to an individual's understanding and perception of the world. In such a case the figure of the witch in Jungian psychology corresponds to that of a 'terrible mother', who is the polar opposite of the 'wise old woman', the 'sibyl', or the 'priestess'. She automatically permeates utter fear and hatred in the society who feels the need to eliminate her. Many a times, the witch is also compared with a 'crone'; who is disparaged and marginalized by her segregation from the reproductive cycle, and her closeness to death places her in contact with occult wisdom.

Labeling a woman as a witch can be seen as a trick to seize land, resolve scores with her family's males, punishing her for turning down sexual advances, etc. Unmarried women have a

curse to live with; if a woman fails to arrange for a groom at the perfect age, she is often framed for being a witch. Another fact to be noticed is that most witch accusations are directed towards the elderly women who have no productive purpose once they achieve menopause which essentially slows down their body speed to get chores done and renders them incapable to procreate. Their inability to care after their children makes them the ideal image of the 'terrible mother'. In Jung's view all archetypes are subjected to positive and negative aspects, favourable and the unfavourable, good and the bad, etc. In ancient times a priestess or a sibyl or for that matter any woman with the ability to make intellectual enquiries had a darker counterpart in the figure of 'the witch' called by Jung the "terrible mother" (Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 1971). Even the good wise man has an evil counterpart in the dark necromancer and both the terrible mother and the evil sorcerer are the negative parental images of the unconscious mind.

The archetype of the 'anima' or the woman who seduces men and then sucks all life out of them is also associated with beautiful women who are generally believed to be witches. Also the fear of castration complex and emasculation triggers witch hunts where the powerful woman is seen as a potential threat to the masculine authority of the society which is majorly noticed in cases from Meghalaya. The chauvinistic society has always suffered from a castration complex arising out of the figure of the powerful woman and fear that they will surpass them. A beautiful woman is believed to be the harbinger of ill luck or even death, thus she is dealt with great precaution and often viewed to be a witch who is playing tricks with young men's' heart and breaking up marriages. But the rational of beauty and heart break is such that all men are infatuated and obsessed with women with attractive features and hence all

vie for her affections, ultimately leading to her choosing one amongst her many suitors.

It need not be stressed but powerful women in society, since ancient times with figures such as Cleopatra, Elizabeth I, Victoria, Rani of Jhansi, etc. have always been at the receiving end of society's misogyny. It is no wonder that they are often labeled as witches. Rounding up with the North-East scenario, it is but without wonder that constant modifications in society and remoteness and incomprehensibility on the part of the mainland Indians have sprouted the irrational ideas of witches working against the society. Herbal medicines have always found a way to the lives of most North-Easterners who have time and again resorted to nature to cure their diseases and deformities. There have also been strong cases of these medicines backfiring and causing some anomaly, also leading to deaths. Losing dear ones, and with hopes shattering to get cured, many patients turn on the practitioner and label him/her with the derogatory term, 'witch'. This term has proved fatal for many such so-called witch doctors in states like Meghalaya, Manipur and Assam as the society rises up against them in full fury. One man's hatred can turn and incite a mob, such is human disposition and no amount of reason or restraint can hold such fury and anger.

It is but the burden and responsibility of those who are aware of the gravity of the situation and have and help others to have a large heart and mind to accumulate and accept various religious and social practices. The North-East is the treasure of many tribes and cultural groups who all differ from each other in a positive way. One has to accept this diversity and have the stomach to acknowledge difference and pave the way for the future generations to keep such myths at bay.

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SUPERSTITION, SUPERSTITIOUS & SUPPLICATION AGAINST SUPERNATURALISM

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There lived a woman with her husband and child. The husband went away from the house for some work. The house was close ta dense jungle where a witch with her long arms lived. In her search for the prey in that area she used to thrust her long arms through the crack of a wall and pull out the innocent people. Everybody feared her. The witch came to this woman's house and asked her if her husband was there. The woman trembled in fear and told the witch that her husband was indeed there. The witch fairy left. For some time, every day, the witch visited the house asking her in a terrible voice, in the dead of night. After some time the husband returned and got to know from his wife about this witch and her fearsome ways. He was determined to solve this problem and teach a lesson to the witch. He sharpened his sword and told his wife to tell the witch that he was out when she came the next time. As usual the witch came and asked the same question. This time the wife said 'no he is out' to the witch's question. The fairy peeped through the hole and saw the husband with a sword in hand. She ran away from

the scene as fast as she could but the long arms obstructed her fast pace. Finding the witch did not thrust her arm as before, he chased her and cut the arms with his sword. She cried in pain and uttered "you liar, you said, your husband is out". Disappointed, she ran away. From that day onwards there was no threat to the people from the witch.(Folk-tale from Manipur)

Supernatural, Superstition & Folk: Points of Interrogation:-

The supernatural fascinates us all. The supernatural scares us all. The capacity of the supernatural to 'raise the hair'[1] rests in its narrative that deals with fantasy, morbidness, darkness, feverish imagination and that particular line that divides the world of belief and unbelievable. Not only scores of such anecdotal examples from folklores across languages and cultures offer us narratives[2] of supernatural, which reader has been able to forget Shakespeare and his witches[3]! The wealth of traditional beliefs that constitute the supernatural have been held by people across culture and time. The appeal of supernatural actually knows no boundaries of genre though manifestation of the same is most of the times a challenge to balance those incompatible worlds to construct something that the rational mind can grasp and reason with. After all, is it possible for the modern human mind that is so steeped in reasoning and rationale, to believe in something that defies science?

Even though 'too close analysis' defies the 'test of rationale' (Kubrick), why is it so that the Traveler's[4] uncanny feeling of

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1. "A story of the supernatural cannot be taken apart and analysed too closely. The ultimate test of its rationale is whether it is good enough to raise the hairs on the back of your neck". Stanley Kubrick; Filmmaker
2. account of connected events
3. *The Macbeth*
4. The Listeners: Walter de la Mare

the Listeners' presence spells uncanny for the reader too? If the supernatural is unscientific, magical, fantastic and imaginative; what is it that still holds our attention? In most of the narratives of supernatural—be it visual, print or folk, the so-called 'immature' morbid horror is ultimately justified through binaries like good v/s evil, right v/s wrong, life v/s death, so on and so forth. It becomes interesting to problematize the widespread interest, public concern, circulation, consumption and reception regarding / of the narratives of supernatural, especially folk, and our urban middle class engagement with it.

It becomes imperative at this juncture to offer a working understanding of supernatural and superstition for the purpose of this paper to understand better how these two elements rule our dogmas and narrative constructing strategies. The working distinction between supernatural and superstition lies between the directions of interaction. With superstition, the practitioner is always manipulating the material world in order to manipulate the supernatural world for her own benefit. This directly leads us to the economic, social, religious and political dimensions/ constructions of supernatural and the need to investigate the episteme — practices of knowledge production and validation as this distinction leads the thinking individual to discriminate the true from false, reliable from unreliable, rational from superstitious and helps her to reconcile her commitments to reason and science with her supernatural engagements. One becomes fascinated and enthralled with her engagement with supernatural through her interactions with Walter de la Mare or Coleridge or Shakespeare; not to forget the very indigenous folk tales. The narratives of human engagement with the 'other' in de la Mare and Coleridge[5] differ in their treatment of interaction.

5. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: Samuel Taylor Coleridge

It is easier, and perhaps also safer, to say while de la Mare's dramatic involvement with the audience deals with the supernatural it is difficult to establish Coleridge's albatross as a case of religious superstition.

The notional understanding of superstition stems from common experiential epistemology. These shared life experiences and common sense are also made distinct through various points of references; namely, religion, economy, education, magic, ritual, myth, and occult practices, generally regarded as erroneous beliefs (Dundes). The most commonly accepted truth behind the construction of the narrative of superstition is the element of fear and irrationality that defies the 'scientific truth'. It is also based on some irrational or mythological belief, generally involving some taboo. H. J. Rose's definition also attests it as "the acceptance of beliefs or practices groundless in themselves and inconsistent with the degree of enlightenment reached by the community to which one belongs".

Of all types of superstitions one that has the ability to harm is of utmost concern. Such superstitions, most of the times, stems from lack of education and therefore lack of informed assessment. Superstitions at times can also become life threatening when it is targeted towards on socially disadvantaged individuals and communities.

Witchcraft is one such belief that draws serious attention from the thinking minds across the globe. A witch is said to be generally a woman who uses magic or witchcraft for evil purpose. Epilepsy, hysteria, chicken pox, impotence and more recently HIV/AIDS have been attributed to spells cast by witches. And witch-hunting is searching for witches or evidences of witch craft often involving moral panic, mass hysteria and lynching. A belief in witchcraft allows people to make sense of the arbitrary misfortunes that affect their lives, and pin blame on a particular

person rather than on chance (Evans-Pritchard 1937, Ashforth 2002, Gaskill).

As we have seen before witches have permeated human experience since imagination has taken hold over intellect. Particularly in Indian context, unlike various cultural imports, we have had familiar encounters with witches since classical times. Vatsayana had divided women into four classes: padmini, shankhini, hastini and chitrini. He further divided women into eight categories: "goddess (deva-stri), demon (pishacha), demi-goddess (yakshini), heavenly ministrel (gandharvini), serpent (sarpini), donkey (kharini), monkey(vanari) and crow (kakini). Of all these types shankhini was first indentified with shakini, its corrupted form, a type of witch so called in Bengal and elsewhere" (Saletore:2014). From what Saletore has painstakingly documented from/regarding the narratives of / on witches that existed from the time that surpasses living memory to what can be called as a fairly modern time as late 19th century, from Vatsayana to Buddhist Jatakas to various parts of India, it is not very difficult to interpret certain kind of attribution of qualities to certain classes of women. Note this, all these categories of women who were termed as witches, whatever the parlance is – dakini, shakini, yakshini, yogini were …

… crooked nature womam, spelt disaster for the household she entered and was fond of mischief and harming others. She was ugly in appearance and dirty in her habits. She was extremely fond of enjoyments, her eyes were red, her limbs were very warm and almost hot. She relished in heavily spiced dishes and indulged in vulgur jokes. Kalyana Malla (16 C) more specifically states that a woman of this class (pishachasatva stri) had a short body, was very dark, warm, and had a forehead always wrinkled. She was unclean in her person, greedy, fond of flesh and forbidden things and however much she enjoyed was ever eager for congress

like a harlot. (Saletore: 2014: 112-113)

Since the attempt of this paper is to prove that our indigenous modes of narratives build the premises of history, it would not be illogical to point out at this juncture that the narratives of supernatural and superstition, embedded and embodied in our myths, folktales and other forms of expression (literature) which are documented (written, transmitted) by various people at various times and places, portray a particular worldview. These worldviews and lifestyles, in their mixture of imagination, creativity and reality, do reflect a pattern which very clears points towards an unequal treatment of women over men, even women over 'other' types of women. Even if one chooses not to engage with the imageries like harlot at this point of the paper, and even for that matter disagrees to engage with Vatsayana and his classifications of women, the point of such lengthy quote mentioning him was to drive home a point: our mental picture of a witch, in whatever modern mode of indigenous narratives we come across of, almost eerily resembles this above quoted description. What is it then that we, the creatures of living memories, rationale, and reasoning, are engaging ourselves with?

Important to answer this question as it is, another situation cannot avoid deliberation at this juncture. That situation is: what are we doing to / with our witches? That is apart from reading about them from ancient documents? The relationship between memory and representations of modernity in the social imaginary always produce the thread that tie together past and present experiences. In this article, we claim that the historical outcome of such memories is the resultant production of witchcraft and the ensuing witch hunt in India. Although the witches were 'notorious' beings, where the notoriety is open to interrogation and deliberation, the exploitation and violence attached to the

witch hunt is a modern phenomenon, resulting from the scientific intolerance of the 'unreasonable' supernatural and of course superstition. The very nature of attributing certain qualities to the women to call them as witches clearly alienate them from the 'normal' creates a social consequence of discrimination. Though superstitions are worldviews that speak to us from time immemorial, in the need to tame the unknown 'superstition'[6], more often than not, the public space of reason and rationale has resorted to brutal violence.

Witch/Witchcraft/Witch hunt and Superstition: The Politics of Reading the Narratives

A woman's self-respect and dignity directly come under threat by the practice of identifying and torturing women as witches, something that is rampant in India even in the 21st century. The number of reported witchcraft-related crimes in the country, in print, digital, visual and any other kinds of media indicates the dangerous practice of subjecting a woman to torture by accusing her of witchcraft. Given the fact that socio-political situations block most of such incidents from being reported, the potential proportion of the problem and its impact on the lives of such 'alienated' women are of real concern. This systematic act of violence against women is especially noteworthy as the entire community sanctions the punishment meted out to the person being accused of witchcraft. The difficulty to tackle this evil lies in the fact that the stimulus of such action is often rooted in the traditional spiritual and cultural belief system of the particular community which is misinterpreted by a select few to manipulate the situation. Witch hunting perpetuates mainly through a conspiracy of ignorance, fear and vested

6. Read witch/ witch craft/ witch hunt

interest. There is a strong negative relationship between economic growth and crime across countries. Witch hunting is also understood as a manifestation of the low social status of women where the patriarchal attitude of dominance and violence against women is legitimized by calling her a witch (Chaudhuri, 2012). Many middle aged and elderly single women in tribal as well as non-tribal communities are orchestrated as witches, leading to social stigma, displacement, economic boycott, torture and even murder.

Surprisingly though, witch hunting is one of the least talked about acts of violence on women in India. It is practiced in some form or the other in different parts of the country but mostly concentrated in the areas of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharastra, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal. And as mentioned earlier, women belonging to subaltern identities, such as various tribal communities are the affected groups. Ranjana Kumari, President of Centre for Social Research, Delhi says:

India has a patriarchal society and women here are tortured in the name of many myths and taboos. Crimes relating to witch hunting are basically committed against the women by family members along with the village authorities and so, State's responsibility towards the victim is highly necessary but unfortunately the increasing trends of tortures show that the government has actually failed to act against this heinous crime.

Adding a perspective on how woman is always misunderstood and used for selfish desires, Professor Bula Bhadra, a sociologist from Kolkata says:

We see that women who stay, are widow or estranged are the favourite targets for the culprits who kill women in the

allegedly for witch hunting as the society believes that women who are self sustained have no right to live and so, all their property and belonging should be easily snatched from them by giving an excuse of witch hunting.

That is why when recent movies like *Talaash*, *Raaz*, *Ek thi Daayan*, *Atma* and others belonging to this genre do a successful business at the box-office, dismayed women's groups argue that witch hunting is not entertainment but a tragic fact that has led to women being targeted and even killed.

Spiritualism/ Animism an integral part of tribal life

Till now whichever narrative reference has been referred to in the course of this study has been literary illustrations regarding supernatural or superstition and culmination of such concepts finding release through personifying them as daayans, etc. However, in real life, daayans or witches are almost always found to belong to the groups of subaltern citizens—tribals. Let us here narrate few 'other' types of engagements with superstition and supernatural.

Case 1.

Teerath, 45, is from Lachkera, a tiny farming hamlet in Chhattisgarh, the nucleus of India's so-called Maoist belt. The region has a majority of tribal population. But Teerath's story of violence has nothing to do with the Maoists, the Indian Army, the land grabs or even the local dacoits, or outlaws. It all happened ten years ago but the memory is still fresh. She recounts that some men came around 10 am to her house and ordered her to attend a meeting. "When I went to the village square, all the men had gathered there." It turned out that the local witchdoctor accused her and two other village women of being witches. He was drunk and had said that the three friends were performing black magic.

These three women were slapped into unconsciousness and then slapped back into consciousness. Their heads were shaved. They were beaten with sticks. Finally they were asked to strip as the final act of public humiliation. One of these women, Bisahin, was menstruating. "I was bleeding all over. I was naked in front of all the men in the village. They paraded us around the village and beat us and finally left us outside the temple," she says. These women were left broken, tortured, and bleeding outside the temple.

Teerath recounts that all three of them were commanded to hold live electric wires. If they were not witches, "nothing will happen to you". Shyam interrupts, "Of course we would be electrocuted by a live wire! We refused to hold the wire. They pulled out our hair, hit us, abused us and forced us to grab the wire."[7]

Is this, then, a modern narrative of a modern Darupadi? Or is this a subaltern narrative of a modern Darupadi? Or is this a modern narrative of a subaltern Draupadi?

Case 2.

16 years ago, Chhutney Mohato was stripped naked, beaten and nearly killed after she was accused of being a witch in her village in eastern Jharkhand State. She was forced to leave her home and abandon all that she owned. Today, Mohato runs a small organisation in eastern India that helps women who have been lucky enough to survive a similar fate.[8]

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7. http://www.rnw.nl/english/radioshow/chhattisgarhs-witches-maimed-life
8. http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/101east/2013/01/2013121101834161718.html

Case 3.

ON MARCH 28, Lalpari Devi, a 45-year-old Dalit woman was accused of being a witch by caste-Hindu, feudal villagers in Bihar who mercilessly beat her up, paraded her through the streets, tied her to a palm tree, cut her hair and smeared her face with limestone paste. She was saved from certain death by the timely arrival of the police. Lalpari somehow managed to survive the ordeal of social censure and hysteric, mob-driven humiliation. Many of her sisters have not been that lucky[9].

According to conservative (official, and outdated) estimates, 2,556 women were branded as witches and killed in India between 1987 and 2003(Kandaswamy:web). No doubt, the number has escalated further by now. The helpless 'witches' are hounded and punished by being stripped naked, paraded around the villages, their hair is burnt off or their heads tonsured, their faces blackened, their noses cut off, their teeth pulled out (they are supposedly defanged) so that they can no longer curse, they are whipped, they are branded, sometimes, they are forced to eat human faeces and finally, they are put to death (here again the Indian imagination takes over: the victim is hanged, impaled, hacked, lynched or buried alive).

It is no surprise that almost all the 'witches' have been Dalit, tribal or Adivasi women. Nowhere else in Indian history can we see such an explicit tie-up between patriarchal oppression and casteist/classist subjugation. (Kandaswamy: web)

Most of these cases, accusers have a pure belief that the death of an individual is caused because of a certain spirit or black magic used by someone believed to possess some 'supernatural' power. And the objective of such belief is to drive away that evil spirit that is responsible for deaths, diseases, natural

9. http://youngfeminists.wordpress.com/2008/04/14/dangerous-dalit-women-and-witch-hunters/

calamities or some seemingly unexplainable circumstances. This sentiment boosts or sanctions the violence on the women. Perhaps this is the easiest explanation of the process. But the narrative/s doesn't stop here. As time passes the dimension of the story starts taking new shapes. Questions, once believed to be easy to solve starts generating questions of their own, expanding the problem and slowly blurring the definitions. For instance, let us present the case study of Rashmi Rabha:

Case 4.

Rashmi Rabha is a resident of Jurigaon village in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya bordering Assam. She said that her own nephew spread the rumour that she and her 18 year old daughter were practicing witchcraft. This resulted in their forceful eviction from her village and her nephew seized all her property. "My nephew, who is a teacher, tried to confiscate my property by saying that I and my younger daughter practiced black magic and had harmed the villagers. Not only were we beaten up publicly, my youngest daughter was compelled to give up her job of an Anganwadi worker. I had to take shelter in a relative's house in another village for months along with my daughter, son, son-in-law and grandson," Rashmi said narrating her painful experience. When Rashmi's married eldest daughter protested against this unjust treatment meted out to her mother and siblings, Rashmi's nephew threatened to pronounce her a witch too. She was so much traumatized that created a fear psychosis in her mind and abetted her to commit suicide. Rashmi is yet to get her land back.

Detailed analyses of these cases reveal that :-

(1) There is a tremendous pressure of social forces on the accused,

(2) Accused are stigmatize with loaded question

technique,

(3) Accusers create a climate of fear,
(4) There is always lack of a fair trial,
(5) Use of simulated evidence,
(6) Simulated expert testimony,
(7) Reversal of polarity,
(8) Non-openness,
(9) A tendency to get benefited economically or otherwise.

As proactive and protective measures, NGOs, Government bodies, civil societies, medical bodies, educational bodies, the police and local bodies (can be women's forum, student's organization, etc) must necessarily work hand-in-hand to sensitise the people to counter these acts of aggression and violence. A systematic multi-step approach to reach out to the community members and mobilize them towards collective action may offer a satisfactory active solution to counter the immediate problem. The processes could be as follows:

- Ï% Select multi-layered backward areas through proper field-study, data collection and statistical analyses which are backward in multiple aspects
- Ï% Professionally analyse the situation to understand the ground realities of aggression and violence
- Ï% Establish communication through trust building with the community to gain access towards better understanding of the circumstances
- Ï% Identify the possible targets / victims
- Ï% Softly but steadily start awareness / sensitization programmes
- Ï% Follow the process meticulously by involving more members from the community
- Ï% Simultaneously form women's sympathatic groups
- Ï% Engage them in discussions related to these issues

Ï% Such participation would involve in women's increased involvement with the problems and possible solutions

In the way of conclusion: Hearing the Voices of the Subaltern Citizens

The notion of witchcraft is neither archaic nor static but is highly flexible and deeply attuned to the conundrums of our contemporary world. The notional witch provides commentaries on the meaning and merit of modernity as experienced in different historical and cultural settings, in our case a multi-layered post-colonial experience.

Till now, this paper has attempted to account for the narratives of supernatural and superstition, the practices of the superstition and the engagement of the modern thinking mind with the same. At this juncture, it becomes prudent to state that at the final analysis of these narratives the paper does not aim to value judge these practices and attach labels of good or bad v/s right or wrong to the practitioners. Nor do the presenters want to stop at sympathising and empathising with the victims. Acknowledging the fact, that there must be efforts to stop these malpractices and efforts to bring back the victims to the mainstream of life, this paper tries to delineate the point that all these rehabilitation processes, pro-active and corrective/protective measures by means of state and voluntary intervention also contribute to voice the unheard histories of our subaltern citizens.

What this paper, in effect, is arguing is that the world of witches was not a dead, insular domain. It intersected closely with changes in the socio-political milieu to acquire varied meanings and forms. The presence of different agents and forces with specific interests and locations—the colonial administration, ethnographers and anthropologists, tribal patriarchs and reformers, witch doctors, caste-Hindus,

Christian missionaries, and the post-colonial 'development' regime—invested the world of spirits and witches with an intensely political character. This paper therefore aims to examine what difference it makes when one subjects this material to the insights of women's history.

Witch hunting was closely linked to the colonial administration's effort to extend political and juridical domain; missionaries' zeal to 'civilise the pagan'; and ethnographers' and anthropologists' ardour to primitivise the adivasis. The compilation and documentation of the folklore related to witchcraft by the administrators, ethnographers, and missionaries and its frequent reproduction in gazetteers, administrative reports and official literature also gave a formal definition and structure to what otherwise constituted a scattered set of beliefs. There has been dispersion in the nature of witch hunts. Land and property disputes, notions of power, spurning of sexual advances, domestic squabbles, and family feuds have become very common factors. The site and territoriality of witch hunts have changed — they are no longer a phenomenon internal to a tribe but have become village affairs. Previously the accuser and accused formed a part of the same tribe. The violence inflicted on the accused has become layered and recurring and incidents of rape, physical torture or disfigurement of women's bodies are fast emerging as new dynamics in witch hunts.

The witch-craze is interpreted as the result of religious upheaval, of the growth of the nation-state, of the isolation of mountain folk-of anything, in short, rather than of what women were doing or were perceived as being. This approach enables one to see that women had served as healers, midwives, and counsellors, using an age-old combination of experience, which was earlier termed as common sense, and magical techniques to cure and advise.

By this time, in the development of witchcraft studies, a pattern of denial is clear. Historians were denying that misogyny and patriarchy are valid historical categories and were refusing to treat women as a recognizable historical group. Understanding of patriarchy as a historical category, how it functions in society to perceive women as victims of violence and how the civil society engages with these categorizations, would on one hand, contribute to the protective measures and on the other hand contribute to the understanding of women's pluralistic history in India. The question of epistemic violence is related to issues such as who produces knowledge, or how power and desire appropriate and condition the production of knowledge. We reformulate the term epistemic violence to introduce the oppositional discourse of witch hunt that questions the angered advocates of rights and wrongs. In Gayatri Spivak's formulation, epistemic violence results when in (post)colonial discourse, the subaltern is silenced by both the colonial and indigenous patriarchal power. We apply this concept of epistemic violence to characterize the resistant efforts and struggles that work for the victims of witch hunts; which include and not limited to the media, official reports of various women's groups, NGOs, government initiatives etc. When the subaltern(ized) speaks, s/he, we argue that the very action causes violence to the episteme of the dominant power both by the very fact of her/his articulation, and by posing a new knowledge contestory to the dominant one. To understand how any discussion on witch hunt empowers subaltern women in her new episteme, it is important to understand the female subalternity in the context of our postcolonial selves. There is a wide range of subalternity among Indian women. As mentioned earlier, economy, religion, class, caste, education, locale, visibility (tribals or adivasis identity is not enough; there's de-notified nomadic tribe [DNT] too) and all such dimensions contribute to the construction of the subaltern

female identity. The extent and impact of extreme violence that these poor women are subjects to, severely limit their access to power. However, in the processes of articulating such gendered violence through the collective narratives such as reports, suggestions, observations, laws there's an attempt to add agency to thus subaltern citizenship. This paper in a way of conclusion argues that these expressions of women's visibility is changing and at the same time challenging the historiography and episteme of south-Asian women.

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The Practice of Witch hunting A Call for its Abolition: 2010

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WITCH HUNTING AND THE POWER GAME

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Witch hunting has gained momentum in Assam recently. The practice is common in districts such as Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska, Sonitpur, Udalguri, Tinsukia, Dhemaji etc. The Times of India in its May 9, 2011 edition noted how an elderly married couple was killed by locals in Hadunguri village in the Majbat area in Assam's Udalguri district. Though the police arrested about fourteen people in this connection, those arrested showed no signs of remorse.

Instead, they kept telling the police that those killed were spreading disease through the practice of magic. Around 6 people were also killed in Kokrajhar after they were branded as witches.

Five among these were woman. The additional superintendent of police, Satyajit Nath explained that such killings were common in border areas where healthcare facilities are minimal and villagers either resort to quack for quick relief or brand a helpless woman as witch out of suspicion. Hadunguri, where the married couple was killed is located near Arunachal

Pradesh, while the killings in Kokrajhar district on April 2011 took place in villages near the international border with Bhutan. As recently as August 2013, there have been reports of the lynching of three persons on suspicion of being witches by their fellow villages. In this case, the twelve accuse belonged to the family of the victims.

Brian A Pavlac in his discussion on the historical causes behind witch hunting in the west explains that in most cases, the operating logic had to do with a fear of a counter narrative that could systematically dislodge the power center of Christian faith-the Vatican and more locally with a decentralized power structure that may prove menacing if uncontrolled in the long run.

The critic also gives a second explanation. He says that in Europe, the political elites often reiterated the claims of their religious counterparts in branding the marginal groups as witches because it suited their interests. They never stopped the hunts but "set the wheels of justice rolling to crush the witches" (Witch Hunting 5). Significantly, fear of witches was also present in the Roman Empire (509 BC to AD 476). Secret cults then attempted to communicate with the gods for fertility to lands and high productivity. Practices included making sacrifices using blood. But, official recognition to such cults was selective. Not all sects could be allowed to meddle with state endorsed information. Emperors, in particular, say Pavlac were concerned about the time of their deaths and did not want any erring religious sect disrupt a set of divine order.

The Renaissance recorded many witch hunts. Women were hunted by hard headed misogynists for demanding equal rights. Colonialists, ignorant of many indigenous religious practices or causes thereof decried their rightful validity, labeling them false or injurious to Christianity. Dominated populations had to be

marked as superstitious to assort to the colonizer a moral right to rule. Edward Said explains this tendency as a trope of power, the power to control as a necessary imperative. Krista Hunt observes with concern the entangling of neo-imperialism with a customary rhetoric for woman rights which in reality masks the true intention of capital which is to push for a regime of control and surveillance to control markets in all countries.

One has to turn to Foucault's idea of the "discursive field" to analyze and point to the ways how certain discourses claim greater legitimacy over other marginalities. The Bush administration of the idea of justice and the rights of woman which allowed it to target Afganistan is now seriously contended by woman activists there. In his first state of the Union address, after the September

11 attacks, Bush endorsed his attack on Iraq and other uncivilized Muslim nations as promoting human values. His arguments quickly came down to "free trade, free markets and free societies" even if that meant transforming a "self-centered nation into a self-sacrificing global leader"

(Hunt Discipline and Punishment in Global Politics 44) In his directions to the OIWI (office of International Woman Issues, United States Department) he suggested that woman's financial empowerment and their participation in all decision making should top the list of priorities. Such issues as "violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, female genital mutilation, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/ AIDS)" were considered secondary and unrelated. By virtue of this focus, says Hunt "Bush's pro-women foreign policy agenda remained fundamentally tied to the countries, region, and issues targeted by the war on terror" (*Discipline and Punishment 45)*. It is no surprise then that critics of war and Bush's neo-liberal policy

term his violence against all barbarians as an attempt to turn them in the image of America (Bacchetta 2001; Ali 2002; Chomsky 2002; Talbot 2003). Bush contends his critics when his says that his aim is just democracy and not the imposition of culturally specific values. In his address to the UN before and after his attack on Iraq 2003, he chastised the institution itself for failing to back it in its democratic mission concluding finally that he remained seriously committed to the UN's charter for human rights even in the face of opposition. So, while the rights of woman concerned him and his nation, he did not believe in securing woman more than securing "the civilized world" by replacing "terrorist regimes" with democratic, U.S.-friendly governments committed to promoting neoliberal economic restructuring. Hence, there is a need to demolish traditional structures, authoritarian regimes and closed economic zones with replacements offered by technologically advanced nations as cusp of liberal ideas.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund says as much when it tracks all barbaric regimes to lack of contact with modern ideas and markets which simplified translates to no government interference, a self-financing public sector open to market manipulation and private investments. This thrust on global competitiveness, a downsizing of government mechanisms, allowing only private players in responsibility of welfare leaves all marginal groups wrongly affected. Gayatri Spivak summarizes the position of such groups "the poorest in the South are at the bottom of a society where a welfare structure cannot emerge because of globalized exploitation" (Spivak 1996). Today, it is no news that Global Financial Corporations, Fortune 500 companies that include Gateway, Daimler, Time Warner, Smith Richardson, have donated money, equipment, and services to women's projects in exchange, to be sure, for lucrative

reconstruction contracts (OIWI 2003, 8) (qtd. Hunt 49). Woman are expected lead to such strong growth plans by making traditional clothes, weaving carpets, running bakeries that are highly feminized and nominal, depending on the trickle-down effect(OIWI 2003, 16). Afgan war rugs or carpets, defined as folk art allow such woman to "express their feelings about the war" and political sentiment about radical regimes in their country. One such rag for example shows American and British war planes with the words "root out terrorism with the help of America and Britain" in broken English. Such examples only show how neo-liberal policies are meant to discipline the financially poor segments of the population to produce exotic goods for consumption worldwide. Zillah Eisenstein argues, "global capital thrives because of a racial, patriarchal transnational sexual division of labour" that "disproportionately locates women and girls, especially those of color, in low-wage assembly and information jobs and in sexual ghettos elsewhere in the market" *(Global Obscenities 101).* Next in target is to allow such woman to consume goods produced by such makers as L'Oreal and Revlon, to join the sales line as entrepreneurs to support their family and the national economy. The proper words here are "woman's issues" and not "woman's empowerment." Interestingly, the US holds the line on patriarchal family values and sees much of the logic of Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Woman (CEDAW) as too radical because it allows reproductive rights. So, in order for targeted nations to be on good terms with the US, it is not necessary to supplement male chauvinism with woman empowerment but to allow transparency in discourse between the genders to allow the fairer sex a way into the "global market and marketing of women" (Eisenstein *Global Obscenities* 1996, 140) and so woman's rights are only relative.

Sima Samar, the woman affairs minister in Hamid Karzai's minister discovered this relative importance of her office when she was allowed no funds or equipment and criticized when she demanded aborting rights for woman, a demand she backtracked and erased with the word equality. Samar's replacement Habiba Sorabi argued for woman rights without anyway crossing the dictates of Islam. Malalai Joya, another minister in the cabinet had the guts to call the Afghan Parliament "worse than a stable" (The Daily Telegraph 2007) for which reason she was expelled from the legislative body and even fellow MPs had "[thrown] water at me, threatened me with death, and one of them shouted, 'Take her out and rape her' ... Then they turned off my microphone" (Daily Telegraph 2007).

So, why does the US not do anything to curb home grown goons? Hunt explains that the reason is that it needs such hooligans to fight the Taliban and minimize its casualties while it knows that one such group, the Northern Alliance was notorious for blatant violation of woman rights before the Taliban regime. Unfortunately, in the Indian context, one finds the same blatant violation of human rights, rights of subaltern groups, either in the name of globalizing goods or capital or for better effectiveness of managing public resources, which stands to lose its value if not immediately tugged to private capital. While India must keep its commitment to the IMF and the World Bank, millions of people are being dispossessed, their rights to home and resources snubbed for a nationalistic mission called prosperity. And when just ignoring the meddling masses don't help matters, the law of the land can be enforced. Such a "law" Arundhati Roy claims is benignly termed "structural adjustment" and that means no worker rights or enforcing traditional inequalities so that the "victim is bewildered" (Howard Zinn A People's History of the United

States). So, when a court of law, orders demolition of thousands of illegal business premises as in the case of the CJI Y.K. Sabharwal, or that of Nangla Maachi, which left million of poor laborers homeless in the "scorching summer sun" (Arundhati Ray, Listening to Grasshoppers 122), a way was cleared for air-conditioned city malls, deluxe flats for the super rich and less meddlesome shanties that are a blot on the city space.

This paper thus argues that all human rights violation, justified either in the name of law, or human rights, or democracy or liberal intervention of capital are attempts to clear the way for a select few at the cost of many others. Witch hunting cannot be seen in isolation. It is no pagan cult or just a problem of remote societies but operative of a power discourse, where all challenges to inequality should be cut short before they ripe to challenge authority. It is important also to understand that with India's lop-sided developmental policies, infrastructural investments are only visible and executed in terms of their need to help get the raw materials like coal, oil, natural gas etc carried away. Recently, the government of India announced an ambitious plan to develop highways in the north-east at some staggering crores. That would allow finished goods into the thriving market here while it's silk, muga, pat; petrol, diesel, and tea are at the mercy of middlemen, financial brokers and objective World Bank managers who see no reason for these to stay here. But, India's caste hierarchy with financial clout reserved for the upper castes-Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaidyas and the male as a class did for Hindu society what imperialism did to all the blacks and browns- make inequality a part of an untraceable birth defect explained by Manu as Karma or by Mill, Orwell, Kipling etc- the incorrigible claim of the white man to rule over the passionate, erotic, subhuman people of color-wild and unruly.

That made the rule of law, and then of force extremely useful and relevant. It made civilization- neocolonialism an exercise in diplomacy. Democracy was to be fulfilled in consumerism. And while the common people suffered, top bosses in the higher echelons of government and policy making were soon expecting things to be the way they are in America or Europe. It is not without reasons that judges deciding on the Sardar Sarovar Dam over Narmada asked the government lawyers if adivasi children in the resettlement colonies would have parks to play (Arundhati Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 10). It is unfortunate that the Indian national movement or the Congress leaders did not do much to integrate the lowdown orders into the mainstream. As a result, the power relations between them and those at the bottom continue to stay the way they had in pre-colonial and colonial times. Hence, the relations of labor to profit remain inversely proportional. The laborers remain tied to their occupation without any hope of making things better. In most tea plantations for example studied by Soma Choudhuri in Jalpaiguri, she discovered the workers poor and impoverished, without such basic amenities a drinking water or medicine and isolated from the outside world. Any possibility of protest turned inconsequential and dangerous with the management keeping an army of the North Bengal Mounted Rifles ready in case of any unrest.

It has to be mentioned here that the term adivasi has and did have multiple subjective connotations. They were at once wild (janglijatis), undesirable, with the men and their masculinities as ineffective. The women were taken to be highly sexualized, given to temptations etc. Over the years, adivasi has come to denote a better category of description because considered less offensive against the term (janglijati) but ideas of them being outside the caste system and so offensive to it has

remained permanent with most caste Indians. So, as the nation made a transition from an agrarian economy to an industrial one, the power relations between the adivasi and the larger population was affected by identifying scapegoats. But, even within the same worker population, witch accusation allowed for control of lives within the exploitative system of an industrial setup (Choudhuri, *Caste Class Patriarchy 10)*.

A woman in a factory setup is doubly marginalized first by male supervisors and onlookers and then by her own male counterpart. It is a commonplace to especially see her compliant, a fact that is ensured by criticizing her conduct and then her dresses and this requires a civilizing mission. So, while she is admittedly a better worker because she participates in all requirements of labor, she cannot still make her decisions or be part of the decision making process in her family and outside because as woman her entry to such male domains as the gaon panchayat are limited. Partha Chatterjee calls this a double bind situation where woman are "simultaneously fetishized and pragmatically devalued" (2001, 6), leaving them susceptible and the sexual targets of "supervisors, contractors, traders and their managers" (Choudhuri 12). This vulnerability is increased at moments of economic crisis. Choudhuri found them caught in a web of conspiracy sometimes triggered by their male members who use "rumor and gossip"(Choudhuri 12) t manipulate the community and then direct their accusations against the erring woman. It is also possible that power groups in the vicinity use such accusation to further isolate the laborers from the greater society outside. It is also true that in all segments of the population, there is a strong belief in good and bad spiritual powers. Mostly, those who cannot afford the extraordinary medical expenses today depend on quacks for relief. Such village doctors are believed to posses some

extraordinary power like conversing directly with an outside spirit universe. However exotic this may sound, such beliefs are again heightened by images and memories of trance like states manipulated by such quack. Only when they fail, they resort to blasphemous accusations like the practice of criminal demonology by some member of the community as a last ditch effort to keep flow of their clientele. At times, such accusations cut across communities, class an religious identities. A report by Partners of Law in development says that most cases of hunting have an economic angle with victims being woman or widows having land or property. At times exceptional looking woman are targeted. In some cases when poor woman take to educating their children, they are believed to be witches. The probable cause says the report points to jealousy of the extended family of the victim. Jahnabi Gogoi Nath links the killing of old woman as witches in Assam to their medicinal knowledge, in particular those related to contraception and abortion.

It is possible says the scholar that the branding of such woman as withes is an effort by men to gain control of the patrilineal line by "effecting a loss of control in their wives of child bearing capacities" *(Witchcraft and Witch hunting in Assam).* Nath draws upon the empirical study of Dev Nathan, Govind Kelkar, and Yo Xaiogang whose investigations about the practice of witch hunting in a Santhal community which has this to say: While women's participation in rituals became evil, men alone could be the witch finders. The ojas, deoras and the jan-gurus perform this function with a combination of divining and knowledge in the contradictions existing in the village. Our discussions with the witch finders in the Maraghada region of Ranchi and with the Santhal women in the Giridhi and other districts showed that the witch finders

through their questions and other means (investigations by assistants) gathered information from the complainants. The identification of the witch is then based on the information gathered. Initially, the names of the witches are not mentioned. The complainants are left to make their own inferences. All this makes it very easy to identify the person whom the village (men) want to get rid of as the witch. Usually, the whole village knows beforehand who the woman is and who is going to be named a witch. The various tensions in the village and the identity of those women who are without support are well known(qtd. Jahnabi Gogoi Nath, *Witchcraft and Witch Hunting in Assam 237).*

In most cases the same process of prior identification is alluded to in Choudhuri's essay on categories of witchcraft where she points to a witch hunting case as reported by one of the witness from the chandmoni tea estate in Jalpaiguri: It seemed very random… the selection of the women… but you know that nothing is random. The names [of witches] that Hariram called out were all pre-decided. Suresh's friend, Lakhan had paid an additional five hundred rupees to the Janguru to call out Sanchari's name. Lakhan and Sanchari's husband had a dispute over money. Sanchari's husband accused Lakhan of stealing money from him. So Sanchari's accusation was not random. Same with Atashi, Binshu and Dhanshi. Their accusations were related to disputes that they had. Manashi's accusation however was random. She was an old woman. Maybe that is why she was selected. (Soma Choudhury, *Witches, Tea Plantations and the Lives of Migrant Laborers in India 108).*

It can then be pointed out that money matters are at the heart of many cases of hunting. This leaves a very pertinent question-the responsibility of the government in taking financial

institutions down to the grassroots and implementing welfare schemes for the public at large.

There is no reason further to ape the west as answer to India's social problems because the former have examples of witchcraft also. All laws that call for the empowerment of woman are as good as they are implemented. But with a majority of woman being labeled as witches, it is time for governments to think on priorities. Interestingly, many fundamental accusations of women witches come from the same gender itself. Conflict arises from the use of kitchen to garden produce even utensils and other items of daily use. Men are reported about the existence of witches by their women and the former in turn makes a complaint to the village sarpanch or headman to decide the problem. It is time that traditional biases against woman are reversed and they be allowed to study and work as equal citizens, not just remain docile and submissive to family responsibilities. But, as Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze points out, India's economy as much as its relevance to social needs requires restructuring. One of the reasons they point to is the "adaptive submission by the underdogs of society to continuing misery, exploitation and indignity" *(An Uncertain Glory)*. Both highlight the country's poor spending on education and also to private exploitative medical care. India's corporate sector is doing well but most of its profits are spent on expensive acquisitions outside like Jaguar and Land Rover by Tata Motors. And while the nation still needs highways or news and television channels, it has to be understood that globalization, dependent on borrowings not just of money but of conditions for loan has been a major cause in creating greater regional and financial imbalances as also much social unrest leading to marginalization of woman and their ever newer commoditization.

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WITCHCRAFT: A SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEF AMONG THE RABHAS OF ASSAM

Mahananda Das

Introduction

Witch hunting is a burning problem among the tribal people of Assam. Like other tribes, the Rabhas are also facing this problem. It is a great tragedy for Rabha society. Various causes and factors are connected with witch victims and witch hunting. Disease is one of the major causes for witch victims and witch hunting. The concept of health not only deals with the physical aspects of human being, but also has a social as well as cultural dimension. Among the Rabhas beliefs of causing disease and sickness by supernatural powers are widely prevalent. Diseases are treated either by magic or religious performances dealing with the soul of patient or in persuading or forcing the evil spirits that have entered the body of the patient to leave. The Rabhas believe, if man is offended supernatural mystical powers punish them by illness, death or other natural calamities. In Rabha society, there is an intimate relationship among the people their health and spirits.

Assam recorded 96 witch hunting deaths over a ten year (period) from 2001 up to June, 2011 as per statistics tabled on the floor of Assam Legislative Assembly on July 18, 2011.

Table 1
Records of witch hunting cases registered at various police stations in Assam from 2001 to 2011

Year	Cases registered at police station	Persons Arrested	Charge sheet	Final report	Cases under
2001	7	17	5	2	
2002	4	11	4		
2003	6	17	5	1	
2004	9	25	6	2	1
2005	14	28	6	2	1
2006	19	73	15	4	
2007	4	20	4		
2008	8	40	5	2	1
2009	2	55	1	1	
2010	9	49	2		7
2011	14	85	1		13
Grand total	96	420	54	14	23

Source: *Bibungthi a magazine published from Kokarajhar*

Objectives

The present study is confined to the investigation of the beliefs and practices of witchcraft among the Rabhas in Assam. The aspect of witchcraft is multidimensional in nature. It will be too ambitious to cover all the issues in a single study. Keeping

this in mind the scope of the present study has been confined to prevalent practices among the Rabhas of Assam those who are living in rural and interior areas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam.

1. The primary aim of this study is to understand the pristine concept of beliefs and practices mainly based on superstitious of the Rabhas.
2. The traditional remedies commonly adopted by the Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam to cope with diseases and ailments and beliefs of supernatural powers were given special attention.

Area of the Study

Assam is one of the states of India. It is situated in the North-eastern part of the country. Of all the seven states of North-east India Assam is the gateway of this region. The state is located in the tropical altitude 24.3′N and 28′ N and eastern longitude 89.5′ E and 96.1′ E. spread beneath the foothills of the Eastern Himalaya. Assam is surrounded by seven other states of India and two foreign countries. It is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Manipur in the East and the western border of Assam is hemmed by Meghalaya, West Bengal and Bangladesh. The Northern side of Assam shares its border with Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan and by Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura, in south.

The People

The Rabhas are one of the major aboriginal tribes of Assam. They are widely scattered in several districts of Assam such as undivided Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, and in the Garo hills district of Meghalaya. The Rabhas are divided into eight groups such as *Pati*, *Rongdani*, *Maitari*, *Dahuri*, *Bitalia*, *Kocha*, *Tatala*, and *Hana*.

Methodology

The data based on which the present study has been conducted were collected mainly from the Rabha concentrated areas in the remote places of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam. The present study is mainly based on the field work of the aforementioned areas. Basic quantitative information was collected with the help of observation methods, non participant observation method, interview method, unstructured interview method, case study method, scheduled method etc.

All secondary information relevant to the problems were collected from library works and various news papers, magazines, journals of the past and present have been gone through which were collected from different libraries. The study is of exploratory nature. Sporadic reports on Witches (*daini*) are published in news papers from time to time, it is also heard that various killings are held due to belief in witchcraft. People are secretive about the happening at the initial time. Most of the incidents remain undetected.

The Witch and the Witchcraft

The word "witchcraft" has been derived from the word "Wicca" which means the wise one. Witchcraft has been seen as a magical phenomenon, a pagan worship or religion, sorcery and others at different periods in witchcraft history (Bonewits 1971). Evans-Pritchard (1920s and 1930s) when studying the Azande of Sudan, defined witchcraft, as an ability to perpetuate evil that derives from an intrinsic quality of the evil doer that is not deliberately acquired. It is purely a psychic act. Pritchard observed that witch for the Azande a psychic power inherited from a parent of the same sex. Witchcraft may be used to harm others either consciously or unconsciously by sending out or activating witchcraft substance. Kluckhohn (1944) studied

Navaho witchcraft in the United States in terms of anxieties and tensions generated within small scale communities. His studies reflect the relationship between the insecurity and aggression of the victim and the like hood that he or she will accuse others of witchcraft has been widely recognized in both emic and etic ethnographic account.

Superstitious Beliefs Connected with Witch hunting

Superstitious beliefs are very deep rooted among the Rabhas of Assam, particularly in Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam. In the interior remote rural areas of both the districts the illiterate Rabha people are not conscious about their health and modern method of treatment of diseases. The Rabhas believe in a large number of ghosts and spirits. Some of them are malevolent and some are benevolent. The malevolent spirits are more active than the benevolent. It is mainly the belief that the witch is malevolent. The belief and practice of magic and witchcraft is most wide spread among the Rabhas, particularly the Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam. Witchcraft originally meant the work of a female sorcery among the Rabhas. Sometimes the person who exercises witchcraft is a public figure of fame and repute, while in other he / she may be disliked.

The Rabhas believe that a man or women can convert himself or herself into a demon or witch with magical power. The Rabhas believe that a man or woman can be convert himself or herself in to a witch. By dint of magical power, the head can be cut off from his or her throat. They believe that he or she walks with the help of his or her tongue and moves very fast hither and thither. Witch can also climb up the trees to eat jackfruits, mango, banana etc. Witches may be either male or female and they are commonly believed to have the power to fly, to move from place to place at high speed.

When a man, woman, or anybody is suffering from long sickness, a local medicine man or an *ojha* is called for curing the disease. After coming, the *ojha* at first declares without observation of the sick man or woman that witchcraft has got hold of this person. After that he or she begins the process of divination to discover the disease without considering whether the disease will be cured or not.

The *Tikkar bai* or *daini* (witch) is a malignant spirit. The men and women by dint of some magical power take the form of a *daini*. When somebody suffers from severe colic pain or pain in the chest or remains in a state of senselessness, it is supposed that the patient is over powered by a *daini*.

Superstitious beliefs and practice are connected with the religion of the Rabha people. Their religious beliefs and practice lead to a lot of activities connected with spirits, ghost, gods, goddesses, etc. The interior Rabha people are not conscious about their health and modern treatment of diseases. They do not like to approach modern medical practitioners for treatments of their patient. They do not treat their patients by the modern doctors. They still think that diseases are caused by the ghosts, satans, gods, and particularly the *daini* or witches. When some sins are committed by the people to offend them then these supernatural power of ghost and satans impose punishment by causing some disease. This belief in *daini* or witch is peculiar in the sense that it is a living thing and can live with special man or woman and acts as directed by the woman sometimes. The village people may attack and kill such woman, who is suspected as *daini* or witch.

The Rabhas believe that malevolent spirits always harm people and bring misfortune to them. They believe that the malevolent spirits are controllers of various diseases. So, to keep away disease these spirits are invoked.

Table -2. A List of Malevolent spirits of the Rabhas with names and disease caused.

	Name of sprits	Name of disease caused
1	*Bima bai*	Abortion , stomach pain in pregnancy.
2	Tikkar bai	Stomach pain, head-ache , etc.
3	*Bangra bai*	Body wound
4	*Baisayali bai*	Rheumatism
5	*Budha bai*	Post natal complicacies.
6	*Hudum bai*	Pain in body joint
7	*Jakhani bai*	Crying child
8	*Jakua bai*	Body pain
9	*Khism bai*	Various eye disease
10	*Kama bai*	Leprosy
11	*Kuber bai*	Dyspepsia
12	*Lambang bai*	Continuous ill health
13	*Khusami bai*	Fever in the evening
14	*Maira bai*	Head ache
15	*Rambang bai*	Epilepsy among the children
16	*Singra bai*	Fever

Findings

The Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts are very superstitious, particularly in interior areas. They strongly believe in presence of witches and witchcraft. They believe that various kinds of diseases, illness, misfortune, damage of crops, sudden death of the domesticated animals, etc are caused by the witches. Some causes of the suspicious of witch hunting were occurrence

of disease, women incapable to giving birth, sudden misfortune, neighbour quarrels, loss of property, psychic, drinking habit of rice beer etc. whenever such things occur in the village, the people think that the witches cause these.

Table -3
Year wise witch hunting among the Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts from 2000 to 2011

Year	Districts		Total Number
	Kamrup	Goalpara	
2000	Nil	3	3
2001	Nil	2	2
2002	Nil	Nil	Nil
2003	Nil	Nil	2
2004	Nil	2	2
2005	Nil	1	1
2006	2	7	9
2007	Nil	3	3
2008	1	1	2
2009	Nil	1	1
2010	Nil	2	2
2011	Nil	1	1
Total	3	25	28

Table-3 shows the year wise witch hunting cases among the Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts from 2000 to 2011. Out of 28 witch victims cases 26 were females and only 2 were males. Out of 28 persons, only 3 persons were victimised as witch in Kamrup district and 25 persons in Goalpara district. . In the year 2006 the highest number of witch hunting were committed, 9 persons were victimised in this

year. In the year 2002 there is no witch hunting cases found in both the districts.

Table -4

Year wise witch killing cases among the Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts

Year	Districts		Total number
	Kamrup	Goalpara	
2008	1	Nil	1
2009	3	Nil	3
2010	1	2	3
2011	Nil	Nil	Nil
2012	Nil	1	1
Grand total	5	3	8

Table-4 shows 2008 to 2012, during this period, eight persons both males and females were killed on suspicion as witch. The highest numbers of witch killing were in the years 2009 and 2010. In these years total six persons both males and females were killed on suspicion as witch. However, in 2011 there is no witch killing case found in Kamrup and Goalpara districts. It can be seen in the following diagram.

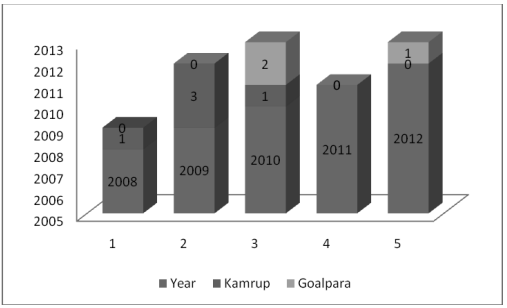

Fig.1. Year wise witch killing of Kamrup and Goalpara districts

In every witch hunting cases the reason is different like illness of villager or neighbour, various diseases, sudden death of domesticated animals, miscarriage of woman, food poisoning, ugly feature due to old age, neighbour's strain relationship, infertile, over drinking of rice beer, property dispute etc. Disease is the common reason for all the causes of witch hunting.

Table-5
Reason of suspicion as a witch and number of witch hunting in both the districts

Sl. No.	Reason of suspicion as a witch	Number
1	Disease	12
2	Infertile or barren woman	1
3	*Deodhani* (female dancer of *marai puja*)	1
4	Cultural differentiation	1
5	Neighbour's strained relationship	2
6	Bride fall down at the time of marriage ceremony	1
7	Rice beer offering to person	1
8	Over drinking of rice beer	1
9	Widow or widower	2
10	Food poisoning	1
11	Ugly feature due to old age	1
12	Miscarriage of woman	1
13	Property dispute	1
14	Damage of crops	1
15	Sudden death of domesticated animals	1
Total		28

Table-5 shows that out of 28 persons, 12 persons were victimised, the reason was disease of neighbour or villager. Only one woman victimised as witch due to another woman becoming infertile or barren. Again, one woman was victimised due to

worshipping deity every day. Due to practising *deodhani* (female dancer of *marai puja*) a woman was attacked by the villager. Again, two women victimised as witch due to strained relationship of neighbours. Rice beer offering and over drinking is one of the reasons of witch hunting, due to rice beer offering one woman and for over drinking of rice beer of a person, one woman victimised as witch. Two persons were victimised as witch as they were widow or widower. For food poisoning of a person especially for eating of wild tapioca, a neighbouring woman was victimised as witch. For ugly feature due to old age a woman was tortured as witch. Miscarriage is one of the reasons of witch hunting. A woman was tortured due to miscarriage of her neighbouring woman. Property is one of the main reasons of witch hunting due to property dispute among relatives where one blames another as a witch. One widower was victimised as witch due to jealousy of his ownership of land property by his relatives. Damage of crops is another cause of witch hunting. Due to damage of neighbour's crops one male was victimised as witch. In the village area there is no good veterinary doctor for treatment of domesticated animals. If the animals die due to disease then they think some man or woman of the same village cause it. Due to sudden death of domesticated animals, one woman was victimised as witch.

The Rabhas attribute the disease of a person to the action of some supernatural power and physical means. Each disease has some special symptoms. The Rabhas in general can identify few diseases, but number of diseases cannot be identified by the common people and only can be detected through the divination. Among the Rabhas of both the districts magico-religious beliefs and practises are closely connected with treatment of disease, which are directly linked with witch hunting. Diseases are treated either by magic or religious performances dealing with the soul of the patient. Beliefs, rituals and ceremonies are

connected with various aspects of social and religious life. The common beliefs, customs and practise connected with the health and disease have been found intimately related with the treatment of disease. Traditional medicine man or ojha plays a vital role in witch hunting. When a person suffers from long disease, feel weak, unable to eat normal food etc. they consider that condition to be caused by the neighbouring witches or *daini*.

In the present study it was found that 28 persons both males and females accused as a witch in the study area. Again, it was found that 8 persons killed are suspected as witches, out of 8 persons only one person was male. Illiterate witch hunters were very superstitious. Before committing killing of witches, they are motivated by various ways. They suspected witches are killed for various reasons. Witches are killed by grouping or sometimes individuals. Most of the witch killing cases are unrecorded at police station. After suspicion of a witch they are secretly killed by the villagers but it is not leaked out to other villages. Most of the witches are killed at night. A few witches are killed by the hunters on daytime. Out of 8 killing cases of witches 2 persons were beheaded while sleeping at night, one beheaded during the time of catching fish, 2 persons were physically tortured and burnt alive and 3 persons were physically tortured and killed at night.

Depending upon various cases of witch victims and witch hunting the findings of the case studies reveal that the following outcome.

i. In a family continuous illness and failure to get rid of it compels the illiterate sick person or the members of the family to suspect some neighbour or some distance relatives as witch who has caused that illness.
ii. There are some cases where close relatives or in -laws are suspected as witch.

iii. There are interesting cases when a person is accused after he confesses, before his friends that he has the power to kill people with his power of witchcraft.
iv. If a man or woman is suspected as a witch he or she is physically tortured and inhuman behaviour finally excommunicated from the village.

Backwardness among the Rabhas of Rabha dominated areas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts, which have the intimate relation with witch victims and witch-hunting. These are as follows-

i. Lack of awareness about the witch and the need significance of education.
ii. Non- availability of education institution in the remote rural areas.
iii. Lack of transport and communication facilities.
iv. Lack of modern medical facilities in the interior areas.
v. Traditional method of treatment is very popular among them.

Conclusion

Belief in witchcraft has been widely associated with tribal societies all over the world. In Assam, it has been frequently reported to be a social problem under which women especially old and infirm, poor, are accused and killed as witches. Witch hunting is not doubt a violation of human rights. Unfortunately, it is still very common in Assam, mostly in the districts of Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Kamrup(R), Chirang, Baksa, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, Udalguri, Tinisukia, Dhemaji etc. and among the Rabhas, Bodos, Mishings, Adivasis etc. Although it is most prevalent in tribal dominated areas of the state, it is also spreading to other communities. There is lack of awareness and lack of

medical facilities in the interior areas and people are still practising age-old traditional method of treating their disease with the help of traditional medical practitioner. Because of this condition, some innocent women are suffering and even die in inhuman conditions.

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PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL ASPECTS OF WITCH HUNTING

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Nihar Ranjan Kalita

Introduction

A discussion on the psycho-analytical aspect of witch hunting leads one to the early stage of human existence. So far as knowledge is concerned, there is always limitation of knowledge. Due to that limitation there are innumerable events and happenings around us since time immemorial which remain unexplained for common people. Due to limitation of knowledge events which are still non understandable, develop the concept of super natural power. Because knowledge gives power and ignorance develops fear and insecurity etc. in human mind. So human being develops the feeling that as certain things are beyond the understandable capacity of human mind-as they feel them something like unusual, so there must be some super natural power which actually regulates these unnatural happenings. Thus the concepts of some extreme powers have evolved. This concept of power has got two dimensions – GOOD ASPECT AND BAD ASPECT. Good aspect leads to

the development of religion, philosophy and concept of God. Philosophy is considered as the mother of all inventions. Philosophy develops the concept and to prove that concept science has emerged. Thereby human civilizations started their journey from none to fun. On the other hand evil aspect develops the concept of evil power, devil power and term like witch etc. All these lead to the belief of superstitions and rituals. At the same time feeling of insecurity, helplessness of human mind strengthen the above concept of superstition and rituals. Unexplained events help in sustaining the concept of superstition, blind beliefs and rituals.

The concept of soul functions like a breeze in between the two aspects that is good and bad of super natural power. The concept of soul is a matter of primary query from the beginning of human existence which also has two divisions-good and bad. The good aspect develops the concept of salvation of soul which means the merge of soul with the eternal power after death and bad aspect leads to the idea of non salvation of soul that means the inability of soul to merge with eternal power. As a result, the idea of ghost, devil, demon etc have developed. These things mean the evil spirit of soul which is considered as harmful for living being. Keeping in relation to the above concept of salvation and non salvation of soul, the concept of totem and taboo have developed in our society. The concept of totem and taboo are related to the appeasement of departed soul which may cast evil spell on individual or group of individual. It is believed that after death, the departed soul can come through the media of totem. Totem means the particular animal through which the departed soul is believed to come back to the earth. The particular animal which is considered to be the media of departed soul is different from community to community. The total idea of rituals associated with the departed soul is known as taboo. Now

again it is believed that as the departed soul can come back through the media of animal, so it is also possible that the departed soul can again come back through the media of human being. Now the person with some behavioral abnormality is usually considered as a media for that unsatisfied soul to come back to the earth. Due to limitation of knowledge the society is easily prone to accept that particular person as witch and starts to think him or her as harmful for society. As the society cannot understand the causes for unusual behavior, so they start to think that it is because of influence of certain evil spirit, the particular person is behaving like that. Under the influence of culprits, the society tags them as witch.

This is the initial idea but that idea is often molded and utilized by people with vested interest to get their personal score. Camouflaging of personal enmity, jealousy are often done by dominant people in village area over underprivileged, weaker section of the society in the name of witch hunting.

Recommendation

After through explanation of psycho centric causes of witch prevalent society we have found that to eradicate the problem, some steps must be initiated in every society. Social bondage is a critical factor for dissemination of information among rural people where other modes of communication are not still strong except oral communication and which is a key element to spread rumour. In the study we have discussed how a society is prone to exercise witchcraft, black magic etc .Whatever are the causes, removal of these kind of social menace are utmost necessary for society to continue their upward growth. For that we have forwarded some suggestions to eradicate the problem.

1. Existence of spirit is an age-old belief of a society, which, is deprived of education and health facilities since years. So

providing quality education and health support are very important for the society which has strong belief base for superstition. However, providing education and health facilities alone may not be a quick solution to stop the menace. Changing of mind set as well as traditional rituals is also important for the cause. This can be done by infusing modern outlook, scientific temperament into the society.

2. In our society, though much attention has been given to education sector, our school curriculums are quite silent about exercise of witch hunting in some remote areas. Instead of giving bookish knowledge, if curriculum allows our student to analyze real-life situation or to do case studies, the desired result could have been achieved. If a child or a student, at the initial period of their studies is exposed to discuss topic like witchcraft, superstition, black magic, evil spirit etc and informed about the scientific explanation of these things, then it may work as deterrent for new generation to fall prey against bad elements of the society. This generation equipped with scientific knowledge definitely would have inner strength to cope up with the adversaries of life in their adulthood and would guide them to tackle such unforeseen cases with modern outlook.
3. Apart from physical health, mental health is also very important to shape a personality of a person. A bit of mental disorder or illness are very common among people. Diseases like schizophrenia, social anxiety, social phobia, personality disorder, primary insomnia, impulse control disorder, pyromania, retrograde amnesia, kleptomania, hallucinogen can be treated and a person having these symptoms are very much natural. Unfortunately ignorance of these kinds of mental disorder often leads to mental

torture, lynching, murder etc in the name of witch. It is often seen that those people which are being tagged as witches are sometime may have mild degree of mental disorder or abnormality. And these abnormalities can be fatal in a society who still believes on witch. But with the help of modern medical science these kind of abnormality can be treated properly. So creating awareness about mental abnormality is very much important in the society particularly in the rural, remote society. The Government should take necessary steps to popularize the knowledge of psychiatry through local agency among the people and health worker of those areas where witch hunting is still very rampant.

4. It is quite shocking that in India, witch hunting cases are also recorded in some places which are no longer remote and habitant have got access to formal education, modern life style etc. Though it is often considered that the belief of existence of bad spirit is a characteristic of uncivilized society, the recent incidence of lynching and torturing in the name of witch hunting in some areas of Assam are comparatively developed. Though the reason for these incidences may vary case to case, one fact is clear that the schemes of socio-economic transformation of Indian government have failed to serve in right direction. In this regard, much is yet to be done. In the post liberalized era, the govt. has tried a lot to offer health facilities to the remote areas through National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). Under this mission various health workers like Asha, MPW(Multi Purpose Worker), GNM(General Nurse and Midwifery), ANM(Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife) have been introduced in addition to doctor and nurse in rural area. If these workers are trained properly about the

symptoms of mental abnormality and how it is to be treated, village people will get proper information easily. It may indirectly stop the mass hysteria formed against a particular person.

5. The need of awareness camp, science camp in remote village area where people still believe in traditional method of treatment is well understandable. Government has done various programmes with the help of NGO, SHG etc to curb the social nuisance in our state. However it is noticed that govt. officials, local administration, media unit often make beeline to the witch hunting reported area. But as an effective measure, Govt. should appoint some people to inform about the possible cases of witch hunting. If informers are rewarded properly they will come forward to inform beforehand. So it will be easy for everyone to work in the right direction once such cases are reported beforehand. However utmost cares need to be taken in handling such cases. Particularly the identity of informer must be kept confidential otherwise the situation may go against the informer at grass root level.
6. The Govt. may make it mandatory for local head of a village like Gaon Burha, Mukhiyal etc to give a declaration that no incidence of witch hunting are reported in their area. Such declaration should be taken into account in providing socio-economic benefit into the region. Sacking off from the leadership if the declaration is wrong, may work as catalyst to give proper report from village head. Increasing the intensity of developmental work and providing better facilities to the people as a reward for "witch free case area" would compel people to think positively. Thus the society would get benefit in the long run.

Suggestions are given to curb the menace in areas where people are either deprived off or ignorant about modern formal education and health facilities. In fact the social structure is also conducive to disseminate wrong, fabricated information among members. Proper guidance, removing information bottleneck, infusion of scientific temperament, development of logical thinking in addition to education and medical facilities are some core issues which need urgent attention to solve the witch hunting problem. However it is to be noted that though social problem like this cannot be curbed over night, stringent action against the guilty will minimize the intensity of the issue. We are hopeful that Govt. would take necessary step in this regard immediately.

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WITCH HUNTING AND ROLE OF EDUCATION TO EXTERMINATE THE MENACE FROM OUR SOCIETY

Nilotpal Chakravarty

Introduction

Witch hunting has been attributed as malice in worldwide from eighteenth century. The term witch hunting is defined simply as search for the witches or evidence of witch craft. The witch craft may involve moral panic or mass hysteria. Retrospection of history of the world reveals that countable or uncountable executions of witches were estimated mainly in Europe, America, Sub-Saharan Africa, France, Saudi Arabia, India etc. Witch hunting in medieval Europe has been linked to the attempt of men to professionalise and monopolise healing, taking it out of the hands of non-professional women. In France, the rural upper classes did participate in witch hunting, yet it was directed by representatives of the Church, the king and the governing orders of society.[1] Within India, north east India is

[1] Dev Nathan, Govind Kelkar and Yu Xiaogang, "Women as Witches and Keepers of Demons: Cross-Cultural Analysis of Struggles to Change Gender Relations", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 33, No. 44 (Oct. 31 - Nov. 6, 1998), p59

one of the effected regions as far as the places where incidents of witch hunting are seen in a prominent way. The incidents of witch hunting have taken many lives in north east India. These incidents are nothing but abuse of human rights occurred very frequently in society. Incidents of such dehumanize activities have been published on news paper in every alternative day that catch the eyes of mankind.

The main objective of the paper is to find out the root causes of the question; why this menace is prevalent in our society as far as Assam is concerned and what is the role of education to have deep insight to understand the problem and to eradicate this brutal practice still existing in our society when we are living in twenty first century. So, the objective of the paper is to study and analyze the importance of education to wipe out this practice through making education as the most powerful weapon. The data of the paper are exclusively based on secondary sources like books, journal articles, news reports etc.

In the popular imagination, witchcraft is often associated with the infliction of harm on people or property through the purported exercise of supernatural powers. In sociological and anthropological terms, it can be described as a phenomenon that is invoked to explain misfortune by attributing it to the evil influence of someone, either from within or outside the community. The witch craft has historically been employed to bring about "the death of some obnoxious person, or to awaken the passion of love in those who are the objects of desire, or to call up the dead, or to bring calamity or impotence upon enemies, rivals and fancied oppressors". [2]Ronald Hutton has identified five characteristics generally shared by those who believe in witches and

[2] The Practice of Witch hunting: A Call for its abolition, 2010 by Assam Mahila Samata Society, Assam, p3

witchcraft across different cultures and time periods: (a) witches use non-physical means to cause misfortune or injury to others; (b) harm is usually caused to neighbors or kin rather than strangers; (c) strong social disapproval follows, in part because of the element of secrecy and in part because their motives are not wealth or prestige but malice and spite; (d) witches work within long-standing traditions, rather than in on-time only contexts; and (e) other humans can resist witches through persuasion, non-physical means (counter magic), or deterrence including through corporal punishment, exile, fines of execution.[3]

A witch is called in Assamese vocabulary as 'daini' which used to identify a male or female performing magical powers that it used to bring evil to the community. Generally, in most cases, by the term "Witch", women are alleged to use their evil powers to harm others. Though, now-a-days, the alleged witches are both men and women, but in many of those accused of witchcraft are simply vulnerable women and children, the elderly or the mentally ill, and are sometime the victims of an accuser's personal grudge. In many cases they are killed with impunity. When a woman is accused of practicing of black magic and causes death to the villagers where she lives, she has to face trial self conducted by the villagers without taking any co-operation from the law and order of the police or administration of the locality. In between, local Ojhas (sorcerer) 'detects' and identifies witches. As soon as it is believed that a disease has been caused due to the 'witch craft' practiced by the suspected witch, people try to get rid of the witch or the so called 'daini' through prayers and offerings. Boiled rice together with a cock reduced to ashes is taken in a banana leaf and keep on the middle of a road as an offering to the 'daini'. People believe that without these offerings

[3] ibid

the patient would die. Its only after this, treatment through doctor is done. Sometimes patients die due to delay in appropriate treatment, since offerings and prayers are not the solution of a disease. If the patient dies the belief of existence of a witch becomes deeper and the 'identification' of the witch starts.[4]

Present scenario of witch hunting in Assam

As far as Assam is concerned, here in this region the practices of superstitious stigmas have an enormous effect on lives of victim. The districts in where the barbaric incidents of killing of women/men in the name of practicing witchcraft by miscreants are mainly concentrated in Sonitpur, Goalpara, and BTAD districts viz. Udalguri, Kokrajhar and Baksa. These districts are mainly habited by some of the backward tribal communities of Assam like Bodo, Misings, Rabhas etc. Apart from these communities, among Adivasis people residing in various tea garden areas, the practicing of witchcraft is very prevalent. As per the reports of media, in all over India reports of witch hunting has been prosecuted and these victims were trialed and killed in some states like Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. Total number of 2,556 women were branded as witches and killed in India between 1987 and 2003. In Bihar alone 522 cases of witch hunting were registered from 1991 to 2000.[5] But according to another report, as many as 200 lives have been lost in the past seven years in Sonitpur, Goalpara and the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts of Kokrajhar, Udalguri and Baksa.[6] In a written

4 ibid

5 "The Practice of Witch hunting: A Call for its abolition" report by Assam Mahila Samata Society, Assam, 2010.

6 Shivangi Koushik, "The Menace of Witch Hunting",The Assam Tribune, July 6th, 2011

reply to a question by Jibantara Ghatowar in the State Legislative Assembly, Forest Minister Rockybul Hussain has given the government tally that as many as 40 people were killed in witch hunting cases in the last three years.[7] The incidents which took place in different areas of Assam have two faces, 1) the incidents have a mourning consequence that totally damaged lives and victim's family 2) such incidents reveals that due to lack of education and lack of health education led such incidents occur very frequently. In an incident occurred on 6th September, 2009 at Rajapara village where villagers turned into a wild mob and attacked the house of Bishnu Rabha accusing Bishnu Rabha and his wife Purashi Rabha as practicing witchcraft and the wild mob attacked the whole family members, the couple were dragged out, beaten up severally till become unconscious and later according to their son Aman Rabha, the wild mob put their unconscious parents into fire. This heart touching incident was investigated and the place of incident was visited by members of Assam State Commission for Women and in their observation found that the village is pre dominantly inhabited by Rabha community and the villagers have belief on witch craft and black magic. Most of the villagers are illiterate and under low income group and the role of the people from conscious society like Gaonburah and ASHA workers were found very doubtful wherever these persons have the responsibility to uplift our society.

Violation of Human Rights

Gross human rights violation has been perpetrated in the name of detection of witch. Whenever something happens wrong in a community or in an area like having endemic diseases then the villagers find out some person to be responsible for

7 The Assam Tribune, July 19, 2011.

that. They think due to the black magic done by the person the wrong has happened. The alleged person drags into a public interrogation and later on the basis of suspicion they kill the person. Most of the time, without any proof, innocent people has been killed by the mob. Sometimes, the accused person and their family member did not have any terms with any kind of anti-social activities. Even the village council gave the clean chit to the victims but after the death of the innocent victim; though it was of no use. This incident was occurred when a mob in a village called Smit in Shillong accused three persons to spell and practicing witchcraft and hacked to death. But the village council of Smit has given a clean chit and said that nothing anti-social is known against them.[8] Such dehumanize activities only can lead to immense violation of fundamental human rights which we should have in a democratic country like India. The right to live with human dignity under the right to protection of life and personal liberty in article 21 of Indian Constitution has been violated by citizens living within our country. So, it is deregulation of rule of the law. The right to live life with dignity has been abused in such incidents. A man was assaulted in confinement and forced to eat dog excreta by relatives at Sohryngkham after accusing him of practicing witchcraft.[9] Such incidents show us the brutal animosities done to the victims. Moreover, killing of people in the name of witch hunting is the act of ultimate violation of human rights. Women's rights have been violated by the practice of witch hunting in many ways. It leads to a social stigma like psychological imbalance, forced displacement; break down of family, loss of property, loss of livelihood and the victim family have to face isolation in the society whereas the victim's children's education got hampered.

8 The Assam Tribune, August 22, 2013.

9 The Assam Tribune, August, 14, 2013.

It is often noticed that the whole family with the accused woman has been tortured. Anyone within the witch's social network may be a victim. Children and young people are attacked to obtain their life force or in revenge against their kin. Women may be victims for the same reason or frequently, it is said, because they have refused the witch's sexual advances, but not, apparently, because someone wishes to inherit from them. Men are attacked for inheritance or to obtain their life force, to undercut their pretensions or from malice.[10]

Education as a weapon to wipe out the menace

As far as the incidents of witch hunting are concerned, it is a threat to very existence of democracy like India. In a democracy, it has some important and particular characteristics and education nurtures these particular characteristics very well. In a democracy, each and every individual is important and the base of democracy is equality. No discrimination can be made on the basis of caste, creed, sex, religion etc. Here, in a democratic set up of education, every individual should be provided equal opportunities and from the stage of student life pupil should be educated to develop love and respect for others, by which human relation can inculcate among people. These are the psychological aims of education that we can learn in formal educational life.

Most importantly, education teaches us to follow the every aspect of surroundings with scientific reasoning. Science teaches us that there are no bases of black magic or witchcraft; these are nothing but mere superstitions. The rural areas of Assam are the worst affected by witch hunting because of intense lack of education. Lack of education has snatching the power of sagacity which helps to differentiate between what is good and what is

[10] Elizabath Colson, "The Father as Witch", Journal of the International African Institute, Vol.70, No. 3 (2000), p343

bad. So, lack of education is a fuel to rise up the dehumanize activities of witch hunting. Another factor that also responsible for rising tally of such incidents is poverty in rural areas of Assam. Apart from that, other actors like land inheritance, poor health care facilities and huge superstitions among the people. In the recommendations given by the Assam State Commission for Women in the Annual Report in 2008-09 that basic education is the key to removal of all these menaces. The Commission suggested that basic education should be made compulsory to each and every child and adult should be sensitized against superstitions and evil practices and made understand about importance of a doctor's treatment when somebody falls ill[11]. To stop this menace from our society first and foremost we have to change the mindset of the people in the witch hunting prone areas. It can be done through early intervention in the school level rescue, shelter and rehabilitation of the survivors. Health education is a must in such witch hunting prone areas. Health camps in the affected areas are a must and availability of doctors, ASHA workers can prevent the villagers from believing in black magic to cure any kind of diseases.

Non-state actors a medium to accelerate education in society

Our people in surroundings have been perpetrating the atrocities to human kind in general and to women in general in the name of witch hunting. But on the other hand, the non-state actors have been playing a pivotal role to exterminate the menace from our society. Whereas the state government is doing very least to stop such brutal incidents, killings and harassment of innocent people and not giving security to future and property, some of the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs),

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[11] Annual Report, 2008-09, Assam State Commission for Women

individuals have been doing a great endeavor against the malice. Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS) has been doing a great job to encourage, assist and to promote collective actions and decision making process by women regarding their empowerment and equal participation so that they can take active part in the process of learning for social change. Especially the rural women are being brought under this process through education initiatives. This NGO has raised a loud voice against the witch hunting and strived to improve the condition of health care, education and also promoting awareness in rural areas. North East Network (NEN) has also been acting as path finder to eradicate this menace.

Though state government is criticized for its ignorance in dealing with this menace, but one of the State Agency 'Assam State Commission for Women' worried over the rising incidents of witch hunting in the state over the decades so it has chalked out a series of measures to exterminate it. Thus, the Commission has decide to constitute vigilance committees comprising village headman, Panchayat member, local police officer, BDOs etc. and primary school teachers as members of the committee. A number of comprehensive awareness programmes have been organized to sensitize villagers, ASHA workers, women organizations, Anganwadi workers, Panchayats, Self-Help Groups etc. about the burning phenomenon. Moreover, medical facilities will be made available to the affected areas by the Commission.

Conclusion

In contemporary Assam, it has been noticed that Witch hunting is more prevalent among the backward tribal societies. Witch-killings were considered to be practiced principally by the tribes, and to be uncommon in caste societies. More recent scholarship has shown that many of these beliefs need to be

reformulated. Certainly, the tribes were not racially distinctive. While there were dissimilarities between the social structures of the two, there were significant similarities too. For example, though witch-killings were more prevalent among the 'tribes', they occurred among castes too.[12] When technological progress continues unbeknownst to those who initiated it and makes it independent of them, the threat is again embodied in woman, who from the beginning had no part in the process.[13] To save the women race in world, such malice is to be plucked up from the root. And education, awareness and sensitization against this menace in society are vehemently needed to exterminate witch hunting from our society.

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SCOPE OF COMMUNITY RADIO TO STOP WITCH HUNTING IN ASSAM

Sailendra Das

Introduction

A witch in Assamese vocabulary 'Daini', used to identify a male or female is alleged to have magical powers. "Witches' are in most cases women who are alleged to use their evil powers to harm others. In fact many of these accused of witchcraft are simply vulnerable women and children, the elderly or the mentally ill. In many cases they are killed with impunity. Witch practice is quite common among the communities: Rabha, Hajong, Missing, Bodo, Adivasi etc. It is also practiced among the Napalis. A witch in most of the cases is a woman who is alleged to be a partition of black magic and causes death to the village where she lives; Local ojha detects and identifies witches. As soon as it is believed that a disease has been caused due to the witch craft, people try to get rid of the witch or the so called witch through prayers and offerings, boiled rice together with a cock reduced to ashes is taken in a banana leaf and keep on the middle of a road as an

offering to the 'Daini'. General people believe that without these prayers and offerings the patient would die. Sometimes patients die due to delay in appropriate treatment, since offering and prayers are not the solution of disease. If the patient dies the belief of existence of a witch becomes deeper and the identification of the witch starts.

How can be identifying a witch

There are several ways of identifying a Daini among which two are mentioned below-

(a) Generally in a village there is a traditional astrologer, who looks into the matter and reveals a women's name. She is then considered as a 'Daini'.

(b) The second way of identification of a 'Daini' is by covering the patient with a net. The person is then pricked with thorns and other sharp things until it becomes difficult to bear the pain and finally he or she reveals the name of a women who is then accused on the name of 'Daini'

Witch hunt and Assam

The word Daini is the local form for the word witch. This word (daini) has come from the indo-Aryan word 'dakini'. According to Philp Roson-the orginal meaning of the word dakini can be traced in the Tantra meaning the female personification of stage of wisdom. It is a matter of surprise as well as concern that witch hunting is on the rise in Assam. The practice of witch hunting reflects the statues of women in a society. It is a shame for the civilized society. Till now a number of cases of witch hunting have been reported from various parts of the state particularly from districts like Goalpalra, Bongaigon, Baksa, Kokrajhar, Chirang and Sonitpur. The belief in the existence of witches is deep-rooted, especially in tribal

communities. Older women, especially widows, are suspected to have an evil eye and considered unfavorable. These days not only the women but also innocent men are punished in the name of witch hunting.

Even if in the tribal societies the prima facie causes of this villainous and barbaric practice emerges to be superstition and lack of education and awareness, various studies have revealed some other causes which are also equally responsible such as the urge to grab property, settle personal grudge, retaliation against resistance to sexual advances etc. Several cases of witch hunting occurred in the Chapaguri Koklabari area of Baksha District in the last 20 years, where angry villagers hacked to death more than 50 people, which included both men and women and several villagers were forced to leave their respective villagers. No organizations or individuals came of eradicating this evil practice till September 2006 in the area, But on September 23, 2006 altogether nine organizations which include CK primary Boro Sahitya Sabha, CK Branch of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, CK Anchalik ASSU, Rabang Anchalik AABSU, Jalah Anchalik ABBSU, Baksa Zila Abaouf and Koklabari Chapaguri Anchalik Bathou Dhouarimari Afat joined hands and constituted an organization namely, Dainee Biswas Pratirodhi Youtha Manch. Since its establishment the mancha has launched a strong awareness campaign among the Bodo villagers against this evil practice.

Causes of witch hunting

The causes of witch hunting in Assam revolve around patriarchy, greed, and fear. Gladson Dengdung in her article 'Hunting witch or hunting women?' says the greed for property and depriving women of traditional property rights is a sideline fact. Illiteracy, poor educational levels and superstitious beliefs

are reasons fit enough to be icing on the cake. Belief in ghosts and spirits and the lack of sufficient health care act as catalysts and leave people vulnerable to resorting to scapegoating for their problems. Main causes of witch hunting in Assam are–

1. Illiteracy
2. Superstition
3. Lack of access to modern medicine and health care.
4. Homelessness.
5. Generally single women, widows, women who have 'ugly' features and women separate from their husbands are targeted as witches.
6. Ostracism.

Witch hunting and violation of women human rights

Witch hunting is committed by non state actors. International human rights law remains silent over the atrocities committed by the non state actors. It has been established that the state has direct responsibility for the actions of non state actors that operate at the behest of the government. The Committee suggested in its report as follows

Para26. In addition to previously expressed concerns about customary practices, such as dowry, sati and the Devadasi system, the Committee is concerned about the practice of witch hunting which constitutes an extreme form of violence against women.

Para 27. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt appropriate measures to eliminate the practice of witch hunting, prosecute and punish those involved and provide for rehabilitation of and compensation to victimized women. It recommends that such measures be based on an analysis of its causes, including control over land. The Committee calls upon

the State party to create public awareness to curb violence against women rooted in custom as an infringement of women's human rights.

Role of radio as a social change

Radio as a communication medium plays an important role in the nation's socio-cultural, political and economic development. It has the unique advantage of being receivable through low cost, battery-operated and mobile receiving sets, affordable for almost everyone, even in the rural areas. With appropriate strategies, radio can expand its reach to sparsely populated areas and remote corners of the country[1]. According to Steve Buckley, radio is still the most appropriate medium for community access to the means of communication which is regarded as a vital component of democracy. Radio can be divided into three types on the basis of its purposes:

1) The commercial broadcast model
2) The public service broadcast model
3) The community radio

But, here our discussion will be centered on the community radio only.

Community radio as an instrument of social change

The media plays a key role in the development of a country. It can inform and educate people and give them the possibility to make informed decisions and enhance the quality of their lives. The media can facilitate dialogue and discussion, can give a voice to the voiceless and can create a diversity of views and opinions. They can be a factor of social cohesion and can contribute in reducing the gap between social groups. Community Radio acts as a medium for providing a voice to the voiceless, power to the powerless and gives way to help rural

masses to establish their right to information, development, communication, governance, and decision-making, and participation, freedom of expression, employment, health education and security through well desired programmes.

Community Radio is a new concept for society. It is a radio run by the community to run the community. It is radio for local development or Narrowcasting. It is a radio service offering a third model of radio broadcasting in addition to commercial and public broadcasting. Community Radio serves for geographic communities and communities of interest. It provides a platform for community people where community can involve with their thoughts, talents and problems. They can share there views through this radio. Community radio-stations are operated, owned and influenced by the community people. It is a Radio, generally non-profit making and provides a mechanism for enabling individuals, groups and communities to express there own voices.

The term Community Radio has two distinct communicative meanings. Community can refer to usually a small social unit that shares common values. Oxford advance learner's dictionary defines 'Community' as the people living together in a particular geographical area. Traditionally in sociology a community has been defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location. In this sense of the term, community media refers to the media form primarily developed.

In North-Eastern Region of India the concept of community radio is still at its budding stage. North-East is a place of various cultures. Where various tribes are located, the concept of Community radio is very urgent in North-East for local development. Community radio service is not immensely popular in the North-East Region unlike the southern part of India. Krishna Kanta Henrique State Open University took first

initiative to lunch the 1st Community Radio in North-East region. KKHSOU is the pioneer of open education in university level. KKHSOU started its Community Radio service on 28th of January, 2009 at 90.4 MHz with an experimental broadcasting from Assam Administrative staff College, Guwahati; Tarun Gogoi, Chief Minister of Assam, has formally launched the regular broadcasting of Jnan Taranga on 2oth of November, 2010. After Gauhati University took a positive step for Community Radio service in North East India, Radio Luit 90.8 Fm of Gauhati University was started on 1st March 2011. It is very significant that Radio Luit 90.8 Fm and Jnan Taranga 90.4 Fm are doing for development. These two organizations have been trying to air the programmes for student and their local community people. Part from no other Community radio make it possible to air the community programmes from any part of the North-East, but some educational institutions and NGO have applied for new community Radio service.

Functions of the community radio

Community radio outlets may carry news and information programming geared toward the local area. According to UNESCO handbook 2001 for Community radio the role and function of Community radio can be summarized as:

1. Facilitate open dialogue and democratization
2. Promote development of voices and opinion on air
3. Reflect and promote local identity and culture.
4. Provide a diversity of programmers and content.
5. Promote civil society.
6. Promote good governance.
7. Encourage participation, information sharing and innovation.
8. Give a voice to the voiceless.

9. Contribute to peace building and reconstruction.
10. Promote development and social change

Objectives of the study

(1) To highlight the scope of Community Radio for stop witch hunting.
(2) To highlight Community Radio as a tool of rural communication.

Methodology of the study

This study was conducted in Assam. In this Research primary data will be collected from radio activities in Community radio, community People and from some Books, Journal, Magazines, and websites and would hopefully surface the purpose of this research work as a secondary data.

Data presentation

The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting as also the Prasar Bharati has been unwilling to give up their monopoly of radio broadcasting. Frankly speaking brave attempts by individual's social action groups and small communications have succeeded in putting 'Community' radio on the map. It is true that Community radio can reflect and promote local identity character and culture by focusing principally a local content. Community radios, input to local performers, are encouraged to go on air uninhibited by consideration of the professional standard. Community radio has a rich history of challenging discoveries in mainstream media, airing alternative points of view, ampliting the voices of people who don't otherwise access to media production. It puts the tools of communication into the hands of communities for culture expression, news and information.

In India some community radio are giving lots of possibilities through their activities in women empowerment through curbing witch hunting, stopping women violence etc, So that local community people of that particular community are very happy for community radio service.

Name of Community Radio	Working area
1. PSG CRS 107.8 Fm, tamilnadu	Women empowerment
2. RONGU CRS 90.4 Fm, Tamilnadu	Women violence
3. GNGC CRS 90.4, Punjab	Women empowerment
4. Radio active 107.8 Fm, Bhagaws Mahaveer Jain College	Women empowerment
5. Anna CRS 90.4 Fm, Anna University, Chennai.	Social Issues (Magalir Neram)
6. Vayalaga Vanoli 90.4 fm, Madurai District Tank Farmers Federration	Women rights, women specific schemes (Pengal Paguthi)
7.Kongu Community radio 90.4 fm, Kongu engineering College, Perundurai, Erode	Through 'Skit'-Girl child infanticide.
8.CMS Community radio 90.4 fm, City Montessori Scholl, Lucknow	Women empowerment(Shakti and Anmol Ratna)

Apart from that Gauhati University's community Radio - Radio Luit90.8 fm and Krishna Kanta Henrique State Open University's Community Radio - Jnan taranga 90.4 are working for their community. Malini, Zunak, Kakoli, Samadhan,Gawyea Bhuyea are the most popular fixed time in Radio Luit 90.8 fm. This community radio derives their strength and popularity with their audience from the direct participation of the community in the station in both programme and management. We know that community radio is running for the community and by the community so that women are directly involved. They can share their problems. Community radio can give a platform for local people. Through community radio programmes audience can take good lesson.

In Assam Sonitpur, Kokajhar, Baksa, Nalbari, Kamrup Rural, are most affected districts regarding women violence and witch hunting. If educational intuitions and NGO's of that particular state take a positive step for opening Community Radio, then this burring problem can be solved.

Possible College and university can open Community Radio to stop Child Right violence		
Name of Institution	**District**	**Languages of Broadcast**
1. Bodoland University	Kokrajhar	Assamese, Bodo, Hindi
2. Tezpur College	Tezpur	Assamese, Bodo, Nepali
3. Tezpur university	Tezpur	Assamese, Bodo, Nepali
4. Bihali College	Sonitpur	Assamese, Bengali
5. Goalpara College	Golapara	Assamese, Rabha, Bodo, Bengali
6.Diphu govt. College	Karbianglong (Diphu)	Assamese, English, Karbi, Nagamise.
7. Ban Theatre (Cultural organization)	Tezpur	Assamese, Nepali, Bengali
8. Goreswar College	Baksha	Assamese, Bodo, Rabha
9. Nalbari College,	Nalbari	Assamese
10. Bajali College	Barpeta	Assamese, Bagali
11. D.K College, Mirza	Kamrup	Assamese, Bodo, Rabha

Assam is very familiar for witch hunting. If we look this data then we can say that a narrowcasting media can develop our society,

Violence committed	**No. of women affected**	**No. of men affected**	**No. of children**	**Total victims**
Tortured after accusation	70	14	0	84
Killed after accusation	42	20	0	62
Attempted murder	1	2	1	4

(Source- A report of Assam Mahila Samata Society)

Although print media, electronic media, social media rise day by day, small communities are still backward. Community radio can play a vital role for communities. In those districts Community radio can make a content and broadcast–

1. Science based programme.
2. Create a diversity of voices and opinions on air
3. Promote development and social change
4. Community radios derive their strength and popularity with their audience from the direct participation of the community in the station
5. Children based programme.
6. Student based programme.

Findings

From the above discussion we have seen a picture of the community radio running by the community and for the community. Data have proved that community radio is an instrument for their local community; community people are enjoying community radio as infotainments. In Assam also we have a wide scope to establish Community Radio. A community radio can solve communities' problems. Community Radio gives a voice for voiceless. Result of this research are-

1. A Community Radio can give a platform for Community people.
2. Women Empowerment.
3. Child Development.
4. Freedom of Expression.
5. Youth participation.
6. Build up Science among Women.
7. Capacity building among women.
8. Information Sharing.
9. Focus women rights.
10. Skill development among women and others.

Conclusion

From the above discussion we see how a Community Radio can help for a community. A community radio service would change community people's behaviors, living standards, thinking capacity. Community Radio is a strong instrument for social change, so that every society should enjoy its own voices through a Community radio Service. A closer look at Community Radio in Assam as well North-East India will provide a platform for communication, which is needful for society. Community Radio is an instrument for social change. We don't want witch hunt and women violence.

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MENACE OF WITCH HUNTING: A LEGAL STUDY

Zafreena Begum

Introduction

Witch hunting is one of the most brutal forms of violence against women. In an era of modernization where a part of India is talking about technology, the other part practices witch hunting where women are being branded witches, humiliated, assaulted, paraded naked or worse, even gang raped. What is more surprising is that these practices prevail not because these women are believed to be evil or possessing evil powers, but they are victimized for settling personal scores, grabbing land, or even to punish her for turning down sexual advances. Witch hunting is just another grave crime against women that involves physical violence, often amounting to murder. Witch hunts are most common among poor rural community with little access to education and health services, and longstanding belief in witchcraft. In parts of India, witch hunting is not merely a dark part of history. It is still happening today. Assaults are widespread in rural areas, where dozens of women die every

year after being accused of witchcraft. Witch hunting is prevalent in many of the Indian states like Chhattisgarh, Assam, Orissa, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra and some of the north- eastern states.

What is witch hunting?

Witchcraft is not a new concept and has been prevalent since the ancient times. Witch hunts still occur today in societies where belief in black magic is predominant. Witch hunting refers to stigmatization of people belonging to specific groups, mostly women, by labeling them as 'witches' or evil spirits who bring bad omen to the society. Prevalent largely in rural and tribal areas, where blind faith guides the way of life, people after proclaiming the victims as 'witches' or 'daayan', subject them to inhuman atrocities ranging from mob lynching, gang rape, naked parades, blackening of face, shaving of head, beheading and coercing to consume human excreta, to burning alive. This blood-curdling violation of human rights is neither a dead nor a redundant practice of the past. Instead, it is very much persistent, accepted and tolerated in society and what is more bizarre is that the number of instances of witch hunting in India is on the rise.

Consequences of branding a woman as witch

Witch hunting involves the branding of women as witches, mostly after an 'ojha' or witch doctor confirms that a woman is a witch. A woman who is branded a witch is then subjected to numerous forms of torture: beatings, burns, being paraded naked through the village, raped, having wooden or sharp objects inserted in her private parts. In some cases her hair is cut off, her teeth is pulled out (she is supposedly 'defanged'), in some instances her nose or other body-parts are cut off, she and her

children are socially ostracized, her land and property is seized, and sometimes women are even put to death and their limbs hacked off. The subject of branding a woman as a witch not only exploits her economically, but also erodes her sense of confidence and self-esteem.

Reasons behind witch hunting

The most common reason is that of ignorance and underdevelopment of scientific temper in these regions which easily fuel superstitions, wherein rural folk throw the burden of their miseries- be it bad crop, ill health, natural disasters, unnatural deaths and the like, upon the 'evil spirits'. Moreover, witch hunting has become a customary practice, glorified by the upper castes 'witch doctors'. Acute poverty, little or no access to the most basic health care, education and sanitation are some of the factors leading to witch hunting. In these circumstances, superstition gains a force of its own. Bad crops, death in the family, loss of a child, persistent illness or drying up of wells or any such reason paves the way for this evil–problems are many but the solution remains the same: locate the witch responsible for the problem and punish her

Other reasons include backwardness and herd mentality. However, the root of this practice goes way deeper than this. The real driving force behind this practice is the lust for property. The dominant and powerful in such areas eye on the property (if any) owned by the weakest and most vulnerable persons in their community. Upon categorizing them as 'daayan', and causing their ostracism from the village or compelling them to leave their residence, it becomes easier for them to forcibly acquire and hawk on the relinquished property.

The victimization is reinforcement of power-play in the society. The rich, resourceful and upper caste men 'culturally

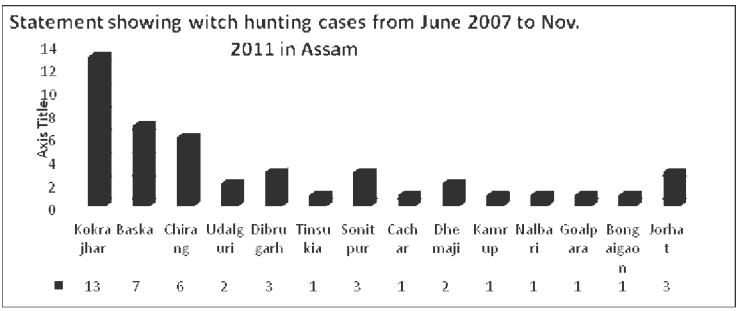
imperialize' the ones they consider not 'equal' to them. This tagging generates culture of subservience amongst the latter and enables the former to continue their supremacy in the community.

Sometimes, this practice is also adopted to show the woman her supposed 'place'. It could be any woman- the one who dares to speak against the patriarchy, or who is outdoing others (read 'men') in the community, or is self-sustaining, or someone who refuses to return sexual favours to the socially dominant.

Socio-economic factors such as land-grabbing, property disputes, personal rivalry and resistance to sexual advances are mainly the reasons for such killings. In the male dominated society if a woman inherits land from her deceased husband is asked to disown the land by her husband's family or other men. If she resists, they approach the Ojhas (traditional village doctors) and bribe them to brand her a witch.

Witch hunting in Assam

Witch hunting is a superstitious evil practice quite common among the communities Rabha, Hajong, Mishing, Bodo, Adivasi etc. Nowadays the trend is that not only females but also males have become target of witchcraft. With about 105 cases of witch hunting cases being reported during 2006-2012, the Assam State Commission for Women (ASCW) has urged the state government to immediately formulate a law to combat the menace, as the number of cases is on the rise. The commission has also undertaken a project titled "Targeted Intervention and Prevention of Witch Hunting in Affected areas of Assam". Several women's rights groups like Assam Mahila Samata Society and several NGO s have taken initiative addressing the issue of witch hunting.



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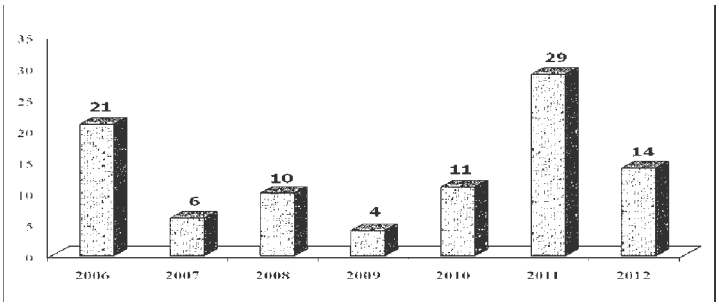

Witch hunting in the eyes of law

Despite multiple instances of this brutal practice witnessed over the years, hardly any concrete steps have been taken to bring the perpetrators behind bars. In absence of a special legislation, the only alternative for the victim is the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC). The various sections invoked generally in such cases are 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 323 (hurt), 376 (rape) and 354 (outraging a woman's modesty) among others. The lacunae, however, witnessed upon invoking these provisions are: firstly, the victims in such cases have little or no access to law or police, mainly because of their social, geographical and educational background, which makes it difficult for them to attain justice. Secondly, since this crime is socially manifested, out of either fear or acceptance of the practice, people prefer

remaining silent, which makes collection of evidence for investigation difficult. Thirdly, the punishment granted mostly is for 'hurt', which merely extends upto 1 year, with a fine of Rs. 1000.

Constitutional provision

1. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution **guarantees** Protection of Life and Personal Liberties: No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.
2. The Constitution also guarantees Equality before the Law (article 14): The state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India
3. Under Article 51(c) of the Indian Constitution, India shall endeavour to foster respect for International Law and treaty obligation in the dealing of organised peoples with one another.

International obligations and recommendations

1. India is a signatory to International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. *Article 2* : States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay……" (f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women
2. Article 3 of ICCPR provides that state parties shall undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women.
3. Article 6 of ICCPR states: Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life

4. India is also a signatory to The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."
5. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) long recognized to be customary international law, provides that all are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination.

Indian penal code, 1860

In absence of specific legislation, the cases of witch hunting are generally booked under Indian Penal Code, 1860.

1. **Section 300 and 302:** Section 300 deals with the offence of murder and Section 302 provides for the punishment of murder, i.e. whoever commits murder shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.
2. **Section 307: Attempt to murder.** The punishment is imprisonment that may extend to 10 years and shall also be liable to fine.
3. **Section 323:** Punishment for voluntarily causing hurt.—Whoever, except in the case provided for by section 334,

voluntarily causes hurt, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 1 year, or with fine which may extend to one thousand 1000, or with both

4. **Section 324:** Voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means. The punishment is imprisonment which may extend to 3 years or with fine or both.
5. **Section 325**: Punishment for voluntarily causing grievous hurt is imprisonment which may extend to 7 years and shall also be liable to fine.
6. **Section 354**: Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty. The punishment is either for a term which may extend to 2 years or with fine, or with both.
7. **Section 375-376**: Rape. Whoever commits rape shall be imprisoned for not less than 7 years but which maybe for life or for a term which may extend to 10 years and shall also be liable to fine.

State laws regarding witch hunting

Bihar was the first state in India to pass the ***Prevention of Witch (Dayan) Practices Act of 1999***. This was followed by ***Jharkhand's Anti Witchcraft Act in 2001*** along with the 2005/ 2006 Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan laws. There is no such law in Assam at present. But the Assam State Commission For Women has drafted a bill titled **The Prevention of Witch Practices Bill, 2011.**

National problem needs national legislation

Despite a visible increase in the number of women being killed as witches, the central government of India is not willing to bring in a national law to prevent witch hunting. The

government is of the opinion that witchcraft killings are being committed at village level and therefore the states should deal with them. However, social activists say that the issue of witch hunting is too widely prevalent in the country to be seen as a regional problem. To put things into perspective, out of 29 states of India, at least 12 states — Jharkhand, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Assam and Bihar — are recognized as areas where witch hunts are rampant today. So we need a national legislation.

Police can play pivotal role

Police is the protecting body. It should take up cases immediately and start investigation. It should do extensive monitoring and regular patrolling in vulnerable areas where there has been previous cases of witch hunting. There is no dearth of law. Indian Penal Code provides various offences. So there is no reason why police cannot take strong steps. The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 has given full power to police to take action suo moto in a cognizable offence. As a step towards eradication of witch hunting, the Assam State Commission for Women had also organized a "Sensitization Programme for Police personnel's on witch hunting" on the 19th of July 2013. Police personnel of 14 selected districts of the State, which had reported incidents of witch hunting, had attended the programme. The police personnel's were sensitized on the issue of witch hunting and the existing provision of law along with the roles and responsibilities of the Police.

Suggestions for eradicating witch hunting in Assam

1. The bill titled **Prevention of Witch Practices Bill, 2011** should be soon passed by State legislature, so that Assam can have a

proper law to deal with witch hunting cases and concrete steps can be taken to bring the perpetrators behind bars.

2. Basic education is the key to removal of all these menaces.
3. To create awareness against these evil practices an Intensive Awareness Campaigning should be carried out amongst the villagers by the Govt. Officials of Health / Education/ Social Welfare/Police Department/VOs,/NGOs and socially conscious people, Members of Panchayat/ASHA Workers/Anganwadi Workers etc. should work sincerely and dedicatedly to remove superstitions.
4. They should be sensitized against superstitions and evil practices and made to understand about importance of a doctor's treatment when someone falls ill.
5. Mobile health services may be provided to the interior places with medicines so that people can get medical facilities at the door step.
6. Police patrolling should be introduced in vulnerable areas.
7. Though there are examples of only women victim of witch hunting, male member also became victims some times. Therefore the problem of witch hunting is no more a gender based menace. Each member of tribal community should be sensitized against superstitions and encouraged to fight against it.
8. Media should play an important role in sensitizing the masses and bringing out the malpractices.

Conclusion

To conclude with, it can be stated that witch hunting is a gross violence against human beings. It has no more remained as a gender based issue. Both males and females have become victims of this serious threat. Hence we need a special legislation to deal with it. However, only having a law will not be able to

tackle the issue. Awareness and sensitization at the grassroot level and vulnerable areas is the need of the hour. It is a remediable threat, which needs an effectual solution from the legal system, complemented by a strong social backing.

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WITCH HUNTING AND WOMEN: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

Ritumani Rajbongshi
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Witch hunting is a dangerous superstition that stands as a threat to humanity. The belief in the practice of witchcraft is part of almost all living societies and some traces of it can be felt at various degrees among all cultures. The vulnerable sections of the society are usually identified as witches with an aim to denounce them from the community and take control over their land, property etc. This is the reason why mostly single women and widows become 'easy scapegoats' and are branded as witches to deprive them of their land and property, or punished for transgressing social norms or refusing sexual advances. Witch hunting is also understood as a manifestation of the low social status of women whereby male attitude of dominance and violence against women is legitimized by calling her a witch. Witch hunting is a systematic act of violence against women whereby the entire community sanctions the punishment meted out to the person being accused of witchcraft. As a social evil it is more difficult to tackle because the stimulus of such action is often rooted in the traditional spiritual and cultural belief system

of the communities. Generally, in context of spiritual matter individual are very sentimental. Some opportunists take the advantage of spiritual sentiment of individual to fulfil their own personal intension and as a result some vulnerable peoples are victimised. This evil practice prevalent in some parts of Indian society due to lack of education and proper counselling regarding moral values and perpetuates through a conspiracy of ignorance, fear and vested interest. Though various welfare policies adopted by the Government of India, yet witch hunting is going on as a burning problem which violates human rights. In Assam also witch hunting is still prevailing as a serious problem.

Objectives of the Study

(I) To identify the issues and challenges of witch hunting
(II) To explore the causes responsible for witch hunting
(III) To make recommendation for the solution to the problem of witch hunting

Witch hunting in India

Witch hunting is one of the least talked about acts of violence on women in India. It is practiced in some form or the other in different parts of the country but mostly concentrated in the areas (states/UTs) of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal. Here middle aged and elderly single women in tribal as well as non-tribal communities are orchestrated as witches, leading to social stigma, displacement, economic boycott, torture and even murder. In a country which ranks at 129 out of 146 in gender inequality index with a score of 0.6, the highest in South Asia, each year an estimated 200 women are killed as witches in rural India. According to the National Crime Record Bureau during the

year 2000- 2001 there were 253 cases of witch hunting (126 cases in 2000 and 127 in the year 2001). Again between 2008 and 2012, more than 768 women have been murdered for allegedly practicing witchcraft. There is also research evidence suggesting that there has been a disturbing rise in witch hunting cases in 2011. The rate of conviction in cases of crime against women is the lowest in India (26.9 %) when compared to other crimes and adding to this crisis is the fact that there is no specific law in India to fight against witch hunting. Witch hunting cases are currently registered under sections 302 (murder), 320 (grievous hurt), 351(Assault), 354 (Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 364a (kidnapping for ransom) and 503 (criminal intimidation) (Ghosh, 2012; WGHR, 2012; HDR, 2011; NCRB, 2011; NAWO, 2006).

The practice of witch hunting in India is more prominent among the tribal or indigenous communities. They are also the people who usually inhabit the rough or mountainous fringe areas within the country characterized by limited access to livelihood opportunities.[1] Woman as a witch is a common ploy to grab land, settle scores and personal grudges or even to punish her for turning down sexual advances. In a majority of the cases, it is difficult for the accused woman to reach out for help and she is forced to either abandon her home and family or is driven to commit suicide. Most cases are not documented because it is difficult for poor and illiterate women to travel from isolated regions to file police reports. Less than two percent of those accused of witch hunting are actually convicted, according to a study by the Free Legal Aid Committee, a group that works with victims in the state of Jharkhand. A 2010 estimate places the number of women killed as witches in India at between 150 and 200 per year or a total of 2,500 in the period of 1995 to 2009.

Witch hunting in Assam

In the north eastern region of India, which is home to diverse indigenous communities, the practice is more prominent in Assam. It may not be simply coincidental that Assam also has the lowest gender development index among the north eastern states. There have been at least 65 cases of witch hunting reported during 2007-2012 from Assam alone. The practice is more prominent among the Rabha, Hajong, Mishing, Bodo and the Adivasi community in Assam. The witch is called a 'Daini' in local parlance and believed to cause ailment to people, destroy crops and other livestock etc. She is usually identified by an 'Ojha', 'Bez' or 'Deodhani' (all names for witch doctors) and either banished from the community or killed. Sometimes the designated family of the witch is levied a hefty fine by the community leaders, by which she may be pardoned of her ill deeds/intentions against the fellow villagers. The process of identification of the witch is specified by the witch doctor by looking into the symptoms of the patient. The alleged recipient of witchcraft is usually seen suffering from symptoms like, fever, cough-cold, delirium or hysteria. As soon as it is believed that a disease has been caused due to the 'witch craft' people try to get rid of the spell through prayers and offerings. Boiled rice together with a cock reduced to ashes is taken in a banana leaf and kept in the middle of a road as an offering to the 'Daini'. People believe that without these prayers and offerings the patient would not survive. It is only after this that the option of medical treatment is explored. It is also believed that there are some diseases which cannot be treated by the medical doctor and needs to be addressed specifically by an Ojha. Sometimes patients die due to delay in appropriate treatment. If the patient dies the belief of existence of a witch gets further vindicated and the 'identification' of the witch starts. In the absence of any medical

facilities in the remote villages, the patient is taken to the Ojha for treatment. The patient, if suspected by the Ojha to be under the spell of a witch, is covered by a hunting net and poked with a sharp object till he/she names the witch. In other cases the Ojha performs some religious rites to arrive at the description of the person practicing the witch craft. Identified by this process, the alleged witch is then either lynched to death or forced to run away abandoning her family and property. Low levels of education and poor medical facilities are a driving force behind the belief in witchcraft among communities of Assam.

Though it is generally confined to schedule castes, schedule tribes, tea-tribes, and other tribal population yet sometimes witch hunting occurs among the upper castes too. It can be well understood that the witch hunting related tortures and deaths are not the remnants of the ancient barbaric world but it has some kind of relation with the process of modernization.

The villages and tea-gardens of Assam, where witch hunting is still prevalent are not always cut-off from the civilized world. For the last one and half decade, each village in Assam has a primary school at the minimum and either has public health centre of its own or nearby medical facilities are no more a far off cry. But, still the blame of somebody's sickness or the death of animals is put on jealously of some other woman and she and her family is not only tortured but even sometimes hacked or burnt alive to death. But, it is generally seen that often these incidents are ignored terming them as superstition. But it's important and necessary to understand that sometimes there may be socio-economic or even political reasons hidden behind such incidents. Moreover, in spite of schools and public health centres being established they are not managed or attended properly. Teachers in schools and doctors in health centres are unavailable most of the times. It has been observed that in every

society where witch hunting is practiced, generally women who are lonely, economically weak or is a widow are targeted and victimized. Moreover an independent, outspoken and straight forward woman is also victimized because she is seen as a threat to the male dominated social order. The aim behind brutally and publicly punishing the women by all the villagers co-operating in the process is to send a message to such other women in the society.

In Assam cases of witch hunting have been detected mainly in three districts- Goalpara, Kokrajhar and Sonitpur. Along with the increasing number of witch hunting cases in the state, the cases are becoming more complex. Originally, incidents were limited to tribes meting out public punishments to those charged with practicing black-magic. Today witch hunting cases often relate to personal rivalry, grabbing property or land and other divisive issues, apart from mere superstition. Lately there is also a trend of killing the suspected persons secretly, preferably at night, taking advantages of the darkness, so that no one can identify the culprits. In Assam, witch hunting is still very common in districts of Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska, Sonitpur, Udalguri, Tinsukia, Dhemaji etc. Another statistics available is that According to available statistics, 81 cases of witch-hunting were reported in the state between 2006 and 2010. While 57 of these victims were physically tortured, the rest were brutally murdered. This evil practice is mostly prevalent in the backward regions of the state where the level of literacy and health care is low. Since 2001, 38 cases of witch hunting have been reported in Goalpara district alone

The process of identifying a 'witch'

There are several ways of identifying a 'Daini' among which two are mentioned below:

(i) Generally, in a village there is a traditional astrologer, who looks into the matter and reveals a woman's name. She is then considered as a 'Daini' or the witch harming the village.

(ii) The second way of identification of a 'Daini' is by covering the patient with a net. The person is then pricked with thorns and other sharp things until it becomes difficult to bear the pain and finally he or she reveals the name of a woman, who is then accused as the 'Daini'.

Problem of individual as a victim of witch hunting

Once a woman, man or a family is 'identified' and branded as witch, she will be summoned before the whole community and process of confirmation of her as witch will start. Generally two methods are adopted in Assam. These are:

(i) If there is death of people in the village due to unknown diseases and a woman is suspected and later accepted by everyone as witch.

(ii) Second method is that woman branded as witch are covered with fish net and tortured brutally with the teeth of pig.

Sometime the ill person is also tortured in the same way to forcing to spell out the name of witch. Usually a sick person in his or her state of illness spells out the name of the person against whom they have a personal grudge. During such practice of torture woman usually breaks down and forcefully accepts herself as witch to get rid of the torture. Once confirmed the woman is either killed or chased away from the village. Sri Kula Saikia, IGP (Border) who worked extensively on the issues of witch hunting during his service in Kokrajhar district shared a disturbing fact. He said that if the woman alleged to be a witch

is killed, her body is cut into pieces and buried separately as it is believed that putting together all the parts of the body of the witch may result into rebirth of witch. Though in most the cases women are branded as witches, men are also not spared. Sometime the whole family is wiped out. The pieces of the dead bodies of the 'witches' are buried separately in different places as it is also believed that if they are buried together the witch will take rebirth and harm people.

After a 'Daini' is identified, she is punished for her act as in accordance with the rules and regulations of that society. The chief justice of that village gives the guilt's punishment verdict. The punishments are as follows:

i) Apart from physical and mental torture, the woman is lynched to death.

ii) All the belongings and the properties of the woman is taken away by the people and then the woman is driven away from her house. At this moment, the members of the family could hardly interfere as if they interfere there is a possibility for them to meet the same fate.

Suspected witches are frequently the victims of 'mob violence'. They are usually lynched or driven away from the village. The evident impact of this practice is the denial of right to life to an individual whose rights are otherwise protected by the constitution. Sometime if the woman is not killed by the villagers still the branded family suffers. The family will be socially confined and will be boycotted by the whole village and the community. This will result in loss of livelihood and movement will be restricted. This may also cause in forced migration or displacement and may cause illegal trafficking too. The children of the branded witches do not receive proper education and hence the next generations of the branded witches are too stigmatized.

Witch Hunting and violation of human rights

Human Rights are strictly a state subject and human rights violation can be committed by a state only. Witch hunting is committed by non-state actors. International Human Rights Law remains silent over the atrocities committed by the non state actors. It has been established that the State has direct responsibility for the actions of non-State actors that operate at the behest of the Government or with its knowledge or acquiescence. In most cases, an isolated private killing is a domestic crime and does not give rise to State responsibility. However, where there is pattern of killings and the Government's response (in terms either of prevention or of accountability) is inadequate, the responsibility of the State is engaged. Under human rights law, the State is not only prohibited from directly violating the right to life, but is also required to ensure the right to life, and must meet its due diligence obligations to take appropriate measures to deter, prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators. The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women considered problems relating to the persecution of witches on a number of occasions. With regard to India, in 2007, the Committee noted its concern about the practice of witch hunting, which it characterized as an extreme form of violence against women.

Recommendations

i) The operational area where the witch hunting is going on needs to be identified in the state by involving different stakeholders for strategic intervention. Stakeholder means Academic institution/ women commission / NGOs / District administration/ Social welfare Department to be involved to carry out a study in the state. Based on the findings of the study, awareness agenda should be designed.

ii) Prevention of witch hunting is a major focus of proposed plan of action central to intervention strategies that need to be developed. Activities is to be designed separately for state, district, block and community/village level focusing on prevention of witch hunting which will help to achieve long term result in addressing the issue of witch hunting.

iii) Witch hunting is a violation of human rights. Nation should provide shelter to the accused women and create awareness among the community. People involved in witch hunting should get adequate punishment. Hence the focus on interventions of the proposed plan of action should be to build capacities of Social Welfare Department, Women Commission, Police Department, Health Department, NGOs and others to take action for prevention and reporting.

iv) Women themselves can play a vital role in addressing witch hunting issues at the community level. Women collectives such as the SHGs, Mahila Samittees, Mahila Sanghas, Women Federation at Gram Panchayat and Block level, Adolescent Girls' club, Mothers' group and the other women groups formed by Govt. organization/NGOs can create protective environment. When women/ girls come together, they share knowledge/information, develop capacities to handle social issues, raise voice for their rights and protection. For example, Mahila Samakhya Programme in Assam cites good example in Goalpara district to demonstrate the strength of women's group in handling witch hunting issue).

v) ASHAs, ANMs, School teacher and President/ Secretary of Yubak Sangha (Youth club) to be involved in the awareness generation programme so that they can play crucial role towards promotion of protective environment.

This plan of action proposes the capacity build programme for these community level functionaries.

vi) Since the problem is deeply rooted in the tribals and Santhals, particularly among the Bodos, Rabhas and Tea-Tribes of Assam, the only way to tackle the problem is to expand education facility, health and communication and transportation facilities in the areas.

vii) Only public consciousness can bring an end to this problem. People must get rid of superstitious beliefs and take the help of doctors when sick, instead of going to the quacks or witch doctors.

viii) Visual, audio and print media should play a vital role in spreading awareness among people.

ix) School syllabus should incorporate essays and topics on such issues so as to sensitize young minds about such social evils.

x) People should have proper education so that they are not carried away by such superstitious concepts and are able to raise their voice against any type of atrocity being committed against them.

xi) The society of Assam can get rid of the stigma of witch-hunting only when women make themselves strong enough through knowledge and education to voice their protest against such inhuman practices.

Conclusion

In Assam, the problem of witch hunting is, thus becoming more and more vibrant day by day. Although the Indian Penal Code has declared this issue as illegal and many laws has been initiated by the Legislature of India to combat witch hunting, but the practice is still going on. It is important to mention here that the Assam State Commission for Woman has submitted a draft proposal to the government on the formation

of a law to deal with witch hunting in 2011. But things are still going on due to illiteracy, ignorance and unconsciousness of the people. Thus, until some strict laws are passed and provisions are made against this practice under the Constitution of India, awareness programmes, capacity building, workshops etc. must be organised in the affected areas. Post trauma counselling and free legal aid should also be provided to the victims. Then only we could throw away this evil practice from our society.

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WITCH HUNTING AND THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

Shrutilekha Barman

Introduction

Witch hunting is a superstitious practice that leads to the prosecution and death of hundreds of people in India every year. A 'witch' or its Assamese vocabulary 'daini' in Assam is used to identify a male or female is alleged to have magical powers that it used to bring evil to the community. "Witches" are, in most cases women who are alleged to use their evil powers to harm others. In fact, however, many of those accused of witchcraft are simply vulnerable women and children, the elderly or the mentally ill, and are sometime the victims of an accuser's personal grudge. Media has reported cases of witch hunting from various states of India viz. Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa apart from Assam. It has been reported that 2,556 women were designated as witches and killed in India between 1987 and 2003. This practice is prevalent in different parts of the country including North-East India and mostly single women and

widows become targets of this least talk violence on women. Witch hunting is killing of a 'witch', a superstitious evil practice quite common among the communities Rabha, Hajong, Mishing, Bodo, Adivasi etc. Rural Assam is a hotbed of several epidemics such as malaria, cholera etc. In such areas nearest hospitals are often several miles away. It is as such that the villagers often approach to the nearby "Bez" or "Ojaa", who is abundantly available in rural Assam. As understood, many of the patients could not be cured. As a result emotions run high and the villagers often accuse the "Bez" or "Ojaa" to be responsible for the death of the patient. On the other hand, there are some cases reported where it is claimed by a section of people that the witch killing are acts by the land mafia. In such cases, some miscreants use superstitions to destroy and uproot families completely from the land they have their eye on, so that this piece of property can later be acquired at dirt cheap prices. Once a woman, man or a family is identified and branded as witch, she will be summoned before the whole community and process of confirmation of her as witch will start.

Education and medical care in the rural areas must to drive this malice. But this is not enough. Civil societies, medical bodies, educational bodies, the police and local bodies have to work hand in hand to make the people educated and aware.

Role of Voluntary Organisations

Voluntary Organizations are non-profit driven, autonomous and non-statutory organizations that are run by individuals who don't get paid. The main aim of voluntary organizations is to deliver social benefit in a variety of forms. Several NGOs have made a public appeal to condemn witch hunting and take a stance against the social evil after one incident of witch hunting was reported from Balgaon

Baspara village of Titaguri Block in Kokrajhar district on October 6, 2010. According to report, 9 members of a family including 5 women have fled from home following an allegation centering on a village land dispute 10 days ago. They believed to have taken refuge in a rented house at Kokrajhar itself. The male head of the family according to the NGOs was also being branded as a daina by perpetrator and the entire family was under serious threat. Voluntary Organizations which include North-East Network, Assam Mahila Samata Society, Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti, Sodou Asom Pragatisheel Nari Sanstha, Women in Governance (WinG) and NEW Net, have been demanding from time to time that witch hunting be recognized as the shameful act and the gross violation of an individual's right to life of dignity and security, to recognize women as a risk group and most vulnerable in witch hunting. The NGO requested the public as well as concerned authorities to support their appeal for the greater good of our society. The NGOs mentioned the need to bring up a state policy to combat the discriminatory and harmful practice of witch hunting and associated violence against women; Further, the NGO sought immediate rescue of all the family members and providing necessary protection and social reintegration. Expressing anguish and concern over the spate of killing of women under the pretext of witch hunting in Kokrajhar district, twenty-nine organizations and distinguished citizens have urged the State Government to recognize witch hunting as an issue of grave public concern and prosecute and punish those involved in the gruesome practice. They also called for immediate and adequate rehabilitation and compensation to the victimized women and their families. The organizations demanded immediate installation of police checks-posts and arrangement of police patrolling in the sensitive areas.

Of the many women's rights groups addressing the issue of witch hunting is Assam, Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS) an autonomous body implementing the National Mahila Samakhya Programme (NMSP) in the state since 1995 remains prominent for its role in spearheading the movement. The main objective of the NMSP is to encourage, assist and promote collective reflection, decision- making and group action by women as a means to their empowerment and for equal participation in the process of learning for social change. Towards this end AMSS through its district implementation units has been mobilizing women to fight against the injustice, discrimination and domination that they face in the society – each unit focusing on issues specific to the local area. Goalpara is one of the worst affected districts in the state in terms of prevalence of witch hunting practices. 51 cases of witch hunting have been reported in this district alone since the year 1998 when the Goalpara district implementation unit of AMSS started operations. As such witch hunting has emerged as the focus area of AMSS in

Goalpara. The unit has been working towards prevention of witch hunting based on an agenda for awareness generation and capacity building of stakeholders for participation in creating a protective environment. The organization works through the creation of village level s*angha* or women's groups who are sensitized about women's rights, health issues and superstitions that are prevalent in the society disguised as traditions. The AMSS has been successful in saving the lives of many women branded as witches and facilitating their rehabilitation. Of the 51 reported cases, 32 have been successfully settled and the victims rehabilitated. Birubala Rabha, an eminent member of AMSS has been relentlessly fighting against this evil along with other welfare activities to

make the public aware of necessity of education, health and hygiene and ill-effect of liquor etc. She along with her collogues has been able to save at least 35 lives, whom local people tried to kill suspecting them of being witches. Besides, B. Rabha has also been successful in bringing back many such victims to their family members and respective villagers.

The NGOs from time to time has also mentioned the need to bring up a state policy to combat the discriminatory and harmful practice of witch hunting and associated violence against women. The All Bodo's Student Union(ABSU), an organization of Tribal Students has also launched various awareness program among the villagers. ABSU has been trying to mobilize sentiments against witch hunting in affected areas, also believes a stringent law will solve the problem to a great extent. Though various social and civil society organizations are making a collective effort to eradicate the social evil, results are not forthcoming because of an alleged lack of initiative and strong action from the administration and police. ABSU's Kokrajhar district committee president Lorence Islary says that improvement of basic healthcare and education in these areas may improve the situation to a great extent. Unfortunately, both healthcare and education infrastructure is very poor in all tribal-dominated areas in the state, he observes. Absence of doctors is directly related to the problem - villagers and tribes are compelled to visit local quacks for treatment of different diseases. During monsoons in particular, water-borne diseases like malaria, cholera, and diarrhea often take an epidemic form in villages. If the treatment is beyond their limit, these quacks, just to remain on safe side, accuse someone of the village of being a witch and declare that the bad spirit of that particular witch is responsible for diseases and deaths in the village! Such pronouncements and the prevailing superstitious beliefs in

witchcraft provoke ignorant villagers to target their own neighbours and acquaintances.

ABSU, the apex student body of the Bodos, has launched a vigorous awareness campaign to fight against superstition of witch-practices in the Bodo-dominated areas. The ABSU has been running the campaign since 2004. During the campaign launched from 2004, at least 45 persons, who were banished from their respective villages after being branded witches, had been rehabilitated. The Bodoland Regional Apex Weavers' and Artisans' Cooperative Federation, Maloti Rani Narzary who was a former leader of All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation strongly condemned the killings and demanded that the killer be brought to look in the witchcraft case. All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation has launched various rallies to hold public awareness campaign against violence and superstition like witch hunting in all 4 districts of Bodoland Territorial Council. The Assam Science Society has been trying to generate awareness among the people against this horrible practice, particularly in Kokrajhar district.

Conclusion

Witchcraft thus emerges as a multifaceted issue which gets entwined with superstition. Hence the promotion of scientific temper becomes as important as ensuring the empowerment of fringe communities. The overall institutional approach by the Government places witchcraft within the general category of crime against women. But the emotional stress and social boycott of the victims rarely gets captured in this dehumanizing framework. The stigma and social apathy faced by the victims puts them at a perpetual state of pain, agony and oppression. Empowerment, in this context can be achieved by a process which enhances the ability of disadvantaged individuals or groups

to challenge and change existing power relationships that places them in subordinate economic, social and political positions. The efforts by the NGOs in this context capture the core of the problem and address it through a mix of alternative approaches which go beyond mere awareness campaigns. The group building exercise among women within the communities not only creates a network of support system at the grass root level but also extends opportunities of employment generation through micro finance initiatives. The women's collectives also become the anchor point for initiatives in health awareness and adult literacy initiatives that appeal to the fundamentals of this social evil.

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WITCH HUNTING AND GENDER BIAS: A CHALLENGE TO MODERN CIVILISATION ANDMEDIA HIGHLIGHT OF THE ISSUE

Alakesh Das

Introduction

A witch hunt is a search for witches or evidence of witchcraft, often involving moral panic or mass hysteria. Before 1750 it was legally sanctioned and involving official witchcraft trials. The classical Period of Witch hunts in Europe and North America Falls into the early modern period about 1480 to 1750, spanning the upheavals of the Reformation and Thirty Years War, resulting in an estimated 40000 to 60000 executions.

Despite the landmark developments and achievements right throughout the world, in the twenty first century, the phenomenon of witch hunting is really posing a major challenge to the modern civilization and also proving to be a major hurdle on the way of all sorts of development around us. India also is no exception it this regard. Even in the era of nuclear technology, a booming economic development and the launching of ballistic missiles such as Agni 5, the menace of witch hunting and related incidents are still haunting many rural and tribal areas of the

country whose reports have been highlighted by the mass media of the country from time to time. The North Eastern belt of the country in particular, with its diverse ethnic groups and multifaceted cultural background has been quite vulnerable to this social evil and has witnessed a phenomenal growth of cases of witch hunting. Apart from high rate of illiteracy, poverty, backwardness, the other root cause of this social malice gripping the NE belt of the country is the gender bias still being prevalent amongst a major chunk of the population, particularly the rural and the tribal areas. From Media reports from time to time it has been noticeable that women become victims of this nefarious social evil. Particularly the widows, lonely women with paternal property, sometimes women rejecting illicit sexual offer from the opportunist kinds of persons, and also very weaker sections of the society many a times fall prey to this social malice. Many a time media have highlighted the fact that land grabbing intentions and the motive of taking revenge remain behind such heinous acts.

In the North East India almost all the states particularly the rural areas and predominantly the tribal areas and also the tea garden areas have proved to the hub of witch hunting activities. In Assam, the phenomenon of witch hunting has risen phenomenally in the districts like Kokrajhar, Baksa, Odalguri, Chirang , Karimganj apart from many parts of Kamrup rural, Goalpara and adjoining areas like Rabha Hasong belts, Bongaigaon etc. In Meghalaya In both Garo Hills and Khasi Hills the pulse quickening and heart shivering incidents of witch hunting came to light in media reports recently when the victims or suspects were forced to eat human excreta. So, these sorts of incidents automatically reflect how grave the problem of witch hunting has turned out to be in the North Eastern belt of the country.

According to a newspaper article published on 'The Assam Tribune' on September 22,2013 for the last couple of years the practice of witch craft has been prevailing in Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Bongaigaon, Tezpur among other places. Despite the remarkable development in science and technology which has given the modern civilization a new direction, yet amidst this progress, many unwanted incidents continue to occur like killing of innocent villagers by some miscreants in the name of practicing witchcraft. According to the newspaper article, in 2011 Assam Science Society had organized an awareness programme on witch hunting at Kokrajhar Girls Higher Secondary School at the initiative of Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon branches of the society. From the meeting it was revealed that witch hunting is always a pre planned activity. Sometimes the relative of the victim kills the lone member of the family, labeling her a witch for the property only. If somebody plans to kill someone then he calls a *bej* and spreads the message that all the negative developments in the village were due to that person. Immediately the villagers would kill the person in the name of witch hunting for the welfare of the villagers. In the case the villager was totally innocent and numerous such cases have been highlighted by the media from time to time. According to a newspaper survey at least 100 people have been killed in the last couple of years in the name of witch hunting in Assam.

In India, labeling a woman as a witch is a common ploy to grab land, settle scores or even to punish her for turning down sexual advances. In a majority of the cases, it is difficult for the accused woman to reach out for help and she is forced to either abandon her home and family or driven to commit suicide. Most cases are not documented because it's difficult for poor and illiterate women to travel from isolated regions to file police reports. Less than 2 percent of those accused of witch hunting

are actually convicted, according to a study by the Free Legal Aid Committee, a group that works with victims in the state of Jharkhand.

A 2010 estimate places the number of women killed as witches in India at between 150 and 200 per year, or a total of 2,500 in the period of 1995 to 2009. The lynching is particularly common in the poor northern states of Jharkhand, Bihar and the central state of Chhattisgarh. Here comes the concept of gender bias and its relationship in India including the NE belt and also Assam. In the tribal areas, Char areas and in the tea garden areas always it has been a tendency to swing the needle of suspicion towards the women particularly the widows and lonely women whenever anything bad happens in the village and in the process those unfort6unate women are branded as witches and they get tortured inhumanly and many a time get killed. It is really unfortunate that in spite of repeated media exposure to these heinous crimes the government and the police as well as the administration are not being able to take ample measure s to curb this social malice of witch hunting which has posed a grave threat to the modern civilization. This social malice has hollowed internally the so called modern civilization.

Faced with an entire village of outraged friends and neighbours, ostracized by people she had grown up with for daring to stand up for a woman accused of being a witch, Birubala Rabha refused to run, refused to cower. The 59-year-old widow, a tribal from Thakurbilla, a village on the Assam-Meghalaya border, has made it her life's work to rescue women from witch hunts. Bipul Rabha, the Gaon Burah (village head), a teenager at the time, remembers the villagers' harassment of Birubala. He remembers approving. Bipul is now one of Birubala's staunchest supporters. On line of Birubala Rabha, the brave lady who has dedicated her life to fight against the

menace of witch hunting ,a reformation or a mass movement is the need of the hour to uproot the menace of witch hunting completely from the society. Biru Bala Rabha has regarded the fight against witch hunting as her own fight setting an example for the unfortunate victim ladies of witch hunting in different parts of Ne India.

2. Objective of the Study :- The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between witch hunting and gender bias and its adverse impact on the modern civilization and also how media of north east have highlighted the issue.

3. Research Question :- Now the Research Question of the study is that why mostly the weaker sections of the society have to fall prey to the evil practice of witch hunting and particularly why the so called gender bias mostly makes the women vulnerable to being called as practising witch craft or necromancy. Another question in the study is that why mostly the tribal and backward areas of the region are so much vulnerable to the practice of witch hunting and has media highlighted the issue adequately.

4. Research Design :- The study is a descriptive one based on primary data of observation and content analysis of news reports and also secondary data have been collected in this context from internet and newspaper reports and some research articles. Some specific cases of witch hunting highlighted by the media has been analyzed in the seminar paper. The media have a great role to play in highlighting and raising public awareness on the issue of witch hunting. No direct field study has been there in the study.

5. Review of Literature :- As far as the review of literature is concerned, the reference has been taken from some journals and published research papers related to the theme. Also some newspaper articles have been referred to in the context.

6. Analysis and Interpretation of data :- The very rationale of the study is that why mostly the weaker sections of the society have to fall prey to the evil practice of witch hunting and particularly why the so called gender bias mostly makes the women vulnerable to being called as practising witch craft or necromancy. The answer to this question lies in the very infrastructural set up of the society we are living in particularly in the rural and tribal areas. These areas are stricken by the poverty, illiteracy, backwardness, lack of modern medical facilities, lack of a broad mindset, and the most importantly the attitude of gender bias makes the weaker sections of the women really vulnerable to the social malice called witch hunting. Gender bias is nothing but making the women always the reason behind the negative developments happening in the society. Another reason for this social malice gripping the society many a times is the lack of proper leadership such as Biru Bala Rabha who has fought a lone battle for a long time against witch hunting.

Now if we analyse some specific cases of witch hunting highlighted by then various me3dia particularly newspapers then we can see that a large no of women have got victimized of this social malice in different parts of Assam and the other states of NE States. According to an article 'Fight against superstition' by Dr. Jagadindra Ray Choudhury published on Assam Tribune dated 22 September, 2013, Police sources revealed that there were 21 cases of witch hunting registered during 2006, followed by 7 cases in 2007, 10 cases in 2008, 4 cases in 2009, 11 cases in 2010, 29 cases in 2011 and 14 cases in 2012 across Assam and yet till August, 2013 we are witnessing cases of witch hunting reported in various newspapers at least twice or thrice every month.

This is a very delicate issue which has to be handled by social activists in those villages where illiteracy rate is very high

and most people are economically weaker. In this regard first the attempt should be made to educate the illiterate masses so that they can develop the truthfulness of an allegation of superstitious charges. Most of the witch hunting cases take place due to poverty, so poverty alleviation is a major step that can be in this context. Usually the victim is a elderly woman or a widow having some property of her own and she is branded as witch in the process with help of the villagers who already have the seed of superstition in their minds.

Dr. Narendra Dabhokar, a Maharashtra based editor of a Marathi weekly called Sadhana, was a tireless campaigner against witch hunting. He found the Maharastra Andharshraddha Nirmulan Samiti (Commmittee for eradication of black faith) single handedly fought for a law against such practices. Although he was shot dead on August 20, 2013 after that the Maharashtra Govt. passed the Anti superstition and Black Magic Bill in the Legislative Assembly. The Journalists Forum Assam has demanded and urged the Assam government to take initiative for the same without any delay so the victim families can justice with the new law. Such laws can really turn out to be instrumental in eradicating the social malice. According to government figures a total of 80 people have been killed in Assam from January 2006 to February 2011, due to witch-hunting.17 people have been tortured in the name of witch hunting in these years. Witch hunting has claimed 12 lives in 2012. Although various steps have been taken both by government agencies and non-government organizations to stop the evil practice, yet very little success has been achieved. The Assam police have also launched 'Project Prahari' for participatory development and people friendly policing to fight social maladies and deprivation. Under the project, Assam police launched awareness drive against 'witch hunting' in state's remote areas.

Even as Maharashtra has a bill against superstition in the western part of the country, northeast still remains chained by the peril of the society. At a time when people of Maharashtra today can boast of having a law against such evil practices of the society, with three innocent lives being hacked to death in Assam, the need for such a law in this region is also being felt.

Around 15 masked men barged in to the house of one Dhiren Rabha of Ouguri Village in Kokrajhar district of Assam and hacked him to death. Rabha's only offence, few in the society believed him to been indulged in Witch Craft. On the same night similar penalty was meted out to Dhiren and Sukleswari Basumatary of Milanpur village, adjoining the ill-fated Ouguri.

Incidents of 'witch hunting' has increased in Assam in 2011 with Kokrajhar district in lower Assam recording the highest number of witch hunting-related deaths in the year. The issue was raised in the state assembly by Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF) legislator Pramila Rani Brahma long back. Brahma, who represents Kokrajhar constituency, also demanded a strong legislation to stop the social evil.

According to a media report Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi Monday (August 26) said his government would try to bring a legislation to stop the practice of "witch hunting", which is going on unabated across the state. Gogoi's statement came days after three people were killed by some villagers in Kokrajhar district of lower Assam after being branded "witches". "We are aware that the cases of witch hunting are going on and there is a need to stop the menace. We are going to bring a legislation to stop the evil practice," said Gogoi while interacting with media. Incidents of "witch hunting" have increased in Assam in 2011 and Kokrajhar has recorded the highest number of such deaths. At least five people were killed in the name of witch hunting this year in various districts of the state. The issue has become

so serious that it was raised at the floor of state assembly last year by the Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF) legislator Pramila Rani Brahma. Brahma, who represents Kokrajhar, demanded a strong legislation to stop the social evil. Last year, Assam Forest Minister Rockybul Hussain informed the state assembly that a total of 80 people have been killed in Assam in last five years – from January 2006 to February 2011 – for being "witches" while 17 were tortured for the same reason. According to the official statistics, a total of 29 women have been killed by declaring them witches in 2011. 10 of them hailed from Kokrajhar district. Witch hunting had claimed four lives in 2012, according to official sources. The evil practice of witch hunting is common among some tribal communities in various parts of Assam. Although various steps have been taken both from government agencies and NGOs to stop the evil practice, yet very little success has been achieved in this endeavour. The Assam Police had also launched 'Project Prahari' for participatory development and people friendly policing to fight social maladies and deprivation.

Birubala Rabha – the making of an icon :- Most prominent amongst the AMSS workers is Birubala Rabha, a 59 year old widow from Thakurbilla, a village on the Assam-Meghalaya border in Goalpara district. Today, Birubala Rabha is a name synonymous with anti witch hunting activism in Assam and holds the record of being the only women from the North-east to be nominated for the Nobel Prize. She was nominated for Nobel Peace Prize, 2005 by an international association called '1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize, 2005' in recognition of her effort to eliminate witch hunting. Birubala, who has been waging a long struggle against the practice of witch hunting in the state for the past two decades now has been instrumental in saving the lives of over 30 women branded as witches. Until 1985, Birubala herself subscribed to the traditional beliefs and

superstitions leading to the branding and ostracising of poor, helpless women as 'witches'. However, one incident changed the entire course of her life.

Birubala's efforts along with that of other sangha members of the AMSS seem to be steadily yielding positive results. Today Birubala is not alone and has been joined by many, including even those who had once taken the lead in her ostracization and character assassination. One activist has also mobilized a team of volunteers and launched a mission named after her – Mission Birubala - to fight the practice of witch hunting. There are various cases, for example, ***Junali Rabha - Case, Jogai Bala Rabha- Case, Khedai Bala Rabha - Case, Manomaya Rabha - Case*** that are handled by Birubala and the AMSS team.

The AMSS communication and mobilisation strategy :- From the discussion and cases studied above it can be summarized that the belief in witches among the indigenous communities of Assam gets perpetuated through a vicious combination of Government apathy and ignorance of the people. The communities that are otherwise deprived of resources probably express their frustration through the acts of witch-hunting. According to Niva Devi, District Resource Person, Goalpara District Implementation Unit, AMSS, the women within these communities become vulnerable owing to a lack of support system within the family or community; for not being economically self reliant; and for lack of information about better opportunities. Thus, the focus of the activities has to be on empowerment of women through mitigation of the social inequalities. As it is understood that empowerment of women is about changing social institutions and practices, about changing rules, norms and rights, and about changing the balance between women's obligations and responsibilities. (Elson, 1995)

The AMSS follows a systematic multi-step approach to reach out to the community members and mobilize them towards collective action. The first step is to select areas which are backward in multiple aspects – socially, economically and educationally. A situation analysis invariably follows in order to gain extensive understanding of ground realities that determine the prevalent circumstances. The next thing on the agenda is to build rapport with the community. The approach at this point is to gain access into the community and gradually build trust with a small group of people. House visits and discussions in small group meetings not only aid in better understanding of issues but also serve to recognize people's attitude towards the given issues which subsequently lead to identification of potential partners and sympathizers. Once the initial ice is melted, the softer strategy followed in the beginning takes on a little more aggression. The small group meetings are followed up with bigger awareness camps involving more members of the community where the Mahila Samakhya philosophy is gradually introduced. The message delivery mechanism is braced up by further increasing the frequency of house visits to reinforce and emphasize upon the issues brought out during the camps. As things progress a little, efforts are then concentrated towards the formation of women's collectives or *sanghas*. Women who would have been earlier identified to be prospective associates or molded during the previous interfacing are motivated to unite towards a common objective. Gradually, the *sanghas* are strengthened and given a more concrete shape by building the capacities of the individual members through sensitization and training camps. Participatory approaches to engage them in discussions lead to the emergence of issues of relevance and better understanding of the various dimensions and contours of such issues. Issue-wise training and further co-operative discussions

serve to deepen the *sangha* woman's involvement with the problems and intensify their motivation to look for solutions. As these women's collectivity grow in strength and their networks expand, they are mobilized to collective action through process of co-learning and participatory engagement. As they interface with other women, these women too gain a platform for expression of their problems and concerns and gain the strength and courage to fight and resist oppression.

7. **Findings and Conclusions :-** The general finding of this study is that in Assam as well as in some other parts of the NE states the menace of witch hunting is really looming large because of so many factors such as poverty, illiteracy gender bias, geed of property, low level of infrastructure, backwardness, mental narrowness, lack of a stringent law to tackle the menace and the most importantly the lack of a proper leadership like Birubala Rabha and Dr. Narendra Dabhokar.

In the conclusion I would like to state that the menace of witch hunting is mostly preplanned and hence a fear psychosis has to create in the minds of the perpetrators of the offence. Witchcraft thus emerges as a multifaceted issue which gets entwined with both the concerns for superstition and social disempowerment of women. Hence the promotion of scientific temper becomes as important as ensuring the empowerment of fringe communities. The overall institutional approach by the Government places witchcraft within the general category of crime against women. But the emotional stress and social boycott of the victims rarely gets captured in this dehumanizing framework. The stigma and social apathy faced by the victims puts them at a perpetual state of pain, agony and oppression. Empowerment, in this context can be achieved by a process which enhances the ability of disadvantaged individuals or groups to challenge and change existing power relationships that place

them in subordinate economic, social and political positions (Agarwal, 1995). The efforts by AMSS in this context capture the core of the problem and address it through a mix of alternative approaches which go beyond mere awareness campaigns. The group building exercise among women within the communities not only creates a network of support system at the grass root level but also extends opportunities of employment generation through microfinance initiatives. The women's collectives also become the anchor point for initiatives in health awareness and adult literacy initiatives that appeal to the fundamentals of this social evil.

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WITNESSING WITCH HUNTING IN THE STATE OF ASSAM: THE CHALLENGES AND THE SOLUTIONS

Juthika Das
Anubhab Sarmah

The genesis: the practice of witch hunting in Assam

Mayong, a place located in Morigaon district of Assam is popularly known as "Land of Black magic and witch craft." Even during the medieval period in ancient India Mayong was popular for the practice of black magic. It is to be noted that the majority of the people residing in the place know the art of black magic which is transmitted generation after generation. People from different parts also come to learn the art of black magic.[1] However this magical practice is not only limited to Mayong but it spread to many other parts and community residing in Brahmaputra valley. People who are associated with these dark acts are known as *Ojaa* or *Bez* mostly find in rural Assam. They were even treated as doctor by the rural local people and assume that they have the power

1 Witch Hunting in Assam, India-Myth or Reality?-ParaNexus...www.paranexus.org/index.php?topic-1356.msg6571;topicseen accessed on 4th August 2013.

to cure illness. In ancient time when there was minor access to health care facilities, limited development of science technology people used to approach the *Bez* or *Ojaa*. But often patient did not recover from ill health inspite of tall claims and predictions of the *Ojaas*. Sometime this led to the death of a person. Under such circumstances, society accused the *Ojaa* or the *Bez* for practicing witchcraft which resulted in the death of the person.[2]

It is to be noted that according to one writer in Assamese language the practice of witch craft among the Bodos in Assam prevalent from colonial period when they came in contact with the santhals. The santhals used to migrate to Assam from Jharkhand region during late 19th century. It is suspected that their contact with the culture of Mayong in Nagaon and other Assamese people may have created the concept of *Daini* (witch).[3]

The historical evidence and different scholarly investigations have found that the practice of witch hunting in Assam is somewhat related to idol worship also. The emergence of *Kamakhya* as the mother Goddess and her manifestations in different forms like *Kali* has developed many religious superstitious beliefs among the common men. In order to appease the mother Goddess people do not bother to scarify the life of other. Some innocent people are tagged as witch by a group of people and this group does not hesitate to kill a fellow being which they did for satisfying and offering *Puja* to their mother Goddess. It is to be noted that

2 Witch hunting in Assam- Capital of black magic to national shame, www.timesofassam.com/.../witch-hunting-in-assam-capital-of-black-magi...

3 Witch craft and Witch Hunting in Assam in Historical perspective… http://dspace.nehu.ac.in/bitstream/1/9360/1/witchcraft%20(JG%20Nath).pdf accessed on 25th July 2013

this trend still exists in some backward places and communities of Assam.

Who are the Women alleged as witch or *daayan*

Witch hunting is a stigma to the society as well as humanity. It has been remarkably noted that although the sufferer of witch hunting is both male and female but women victims are more in numbers. There are numerous human rights organizations, NGOs, civil society organization who have begun taking up the causes and concerns of witch hunting or any kind of human rights violation, gender based violence etc. The Indian government has launched initiatives like Women's Development Programme (WDP) in 1984 which has focused on to end gender-based violence and the culture of silence that conceals the problems that destroys and sometimes ends women's lives[4]. In many of the WDP villages women were perceived as witches and alleged them as socially ostracized. It is seen that the women who have failed to fulfill the social norms is labeled as witch. This obstacle is visible in many parts of India. In Rajasthan the widow, the infertile women are treated as witch and the community punishes them for their inauspicious position[5]. The widows are deprived of holding the property of their husband which is snatched away by her in- laws or other family members. In Jharkhand the beliefs in ghosts, spirits, witches is inherent in Adivasi society consist of communities like Santhal, Ho, Munda, Kharia Adivasi has taken shape in the form of tradition and culture[6]. The widow, aged women are mainly the victim this evil system.

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4 Mathur, Kanchan (2004) : Countering Gender Violence: Initiatives Towards Collective Action in Rajasthan (New Delhi: India Pvt. Ltd)

5 ibid

6 In the name of Witch Hunting/JHARKHAND MIRROR, http://jharkhandmirror.org/2009/08/03/in-the-name-of-witch-hunting/- accessed on 4th August 2013

The North East India has also witness such brutal episodes which has created an alarming situation in the region. Particularly in case of Assam, it has been seen that there is a trend of so called "witch killing" is going on, on the basis of superstition. Even in this 21st century where on the one hand science and technology has reduces human worries on the other side there still exist some dreadful practice taking the life of innocents in the name of traditional rituals. In Assam the prevalence of witch hunting mainly confined to a few communities like Bodos, Rabhas, Misings, tea garden labourers etc. It is found that the tribal dominated areas in Assam there are numerous cases of witch killing mostly of women, who are widowed or old or lived alone. These women are assaulted, and sometimes killed and ostracized from the community after being branded as witch.

The continuing realities: the cases of witch hunting in Assam

Witch hunting as a social ailment is spreading rapidly in last few years. Although the causalities of this practice are both men and women, but women are majority in numbers. Suspected people are branded as witch and are buried or tortured brutally. In the last two three years the dailies published from Assam have reported numerous cases of witch hunting as well as the efforts of different organizations and commissions to eradicate the evil. Some of such cases are highlighted here to understand the gravity of the problem-

The tea garden workers residing in Assam are very much superstitious and also there is a practice of idol worshipping among them. Recently, two three months ago in the district of Cachar a gang of tea workers who drank and danced shouting *Jai Maa Kali* killed a person named *Jawaharlal Mora* to perform religious rituals. It has revealed that such ritual is performed to appease God. But through investigation it was said that

worshipping God at the cost of other's life is a case of witch hunting[7].

In November 2012, in Chirang district of Assam, a couple namely Mr. *Lakhi Ram Brahma* and his wife Mrs. *Nilap Brahama* were being suspected as witch or else they practices some witch craft. As a result, they were killed by a group of villagers[8].

In Jorhat, in 2011 another woman became victim of witch hunting. *Regina Daimari*, when her husband died, her in laws started demanding property of her husband. When she resented the relatives argued that widow did not need much to live on. So she would be given a maintenance amount. But she disagreed and because of this her relatives threatened her and later on recognized her as a witch who cast an evil eye on her husband.

Reason behind witch hunting in Assam:

The practice of witch craft and witch hunting has been time and again reported mostly from among some tribal communities, backward rural areas with low literacy rate, poor health facilities etc. Moreover witch hunting is typically seen in terms of superstition and religious perception. However in order to understand the reason behind witch hunting, it is important to note certain trends and scope of witch hunting.

1. Witch hunting is not restricted to any caste, religion or gender. Although there is a notion that witch hunting is the product of illiteracy, but the fact is that it is prevalent

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7 Witch-hunting in Assam to appease "Maa Kali" ~ i Assam, http://iassam.blogpost.com/2013/.../witch-hunting-in-assam-to-appease accessed on 4th August 2013

8 Two killed in Assam for practicing black magic- Prokerala, www.prokerala.com/news/articles/a342173.html accessed on 25th July 2013.

among the educated as well. Even at the age of science and technology, many people are still adhering to age old myths and blind beliefs. For instance, on October 9 2011, a seven years old boy was sacrificed inside the camp of 121 Border Security Force (BSF)Battalion at Paharinagar in West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya. But the unfortunate fact was that two BSF Jawans were also involved in that evil practice.[9] Moreover, not only the women are the sufferers of witch hunting, but men and children are also the victims.

2. Witch hunting is mostly seen to be inflicted on the vulnerable group like the women, elderly peoples, widows living alone, mentally challenged and ostracized. They form the risk group who are susceptible to witch hunting.
3. Witch hunting cannot be perceived merely in terms of superstition or illiteracy. The practice of witch hunting has to be analyzed from the gendered perspective and as a manifestation of patriarchy. The women are most vulnerable to witch hunting and they are tagged as witches with readiness and willingness without going deep into the fact even by family and society. In fact witch hunting is a systematic act of violence against women. But unfortunately it is one of the least talked acts of violence against women.
4. The practice of witch hunting also revolves round economic perspective. It could be witnessed in many cases that single women and widow with productive resources, land and property are targeted. Also the married women who are assertive, self- assured within the family are also victimized. Accordingly, property disputes, envy of economic progress of the woman or women's family are amongst other hidden

9 Rise of the occult: Witch hunt and Black Magic prevails in Assam; India Today, 29th October, 2011.

facts of witch hunting. For instance, on August 2000, a 40 years woman named Subhadra Basumatary from Tilapara village of Goalpara district of Assam was branded as witch by an *Ojha* after she demanded share in property of her late father.[10]

5. The trend also shows that any women who are deviant from accepted norms and traditions of the society, who is strong- minded and challenges the accepted standards of the society, are many a times tagged as a witch. They were lynched and driven away from the villages. It is thus an organized act of social exclusion.
6. The disgrace of labelling as a witch crossways generations. For instance, if a mother is tagged as a witch then the daughter or son also inherits the label of witch as it is believed that the mother transmits the knowledge of witch craft and black magic to their daughters or sons. It is mainly women who are the easy prey of labelling a witch which humiliate and haunt them across generations affecting their marriage, economic prosperity and social recognition. [11]
7. Witch hunting is not only the product of ignorance but more of a calculated attack. Behind the mask of witch hunting there is a clear purpose to serve personal motive or revenge of any type. In cases of calculated attack of witch hunt, one can find several patterns leading to witch hunt. The first step involves either some conflict between the accuser and the accused or some vested interest on the part of the accuser. The second step involves labelling of witch

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10 Witch Hunting Unbeaten in Assam. www.the freelibrary.com. accessed on 8th August 2013

11 Targeting of Women as witches, Trends, Prevalence, and the Law in Northern, Western, Eastern and Northeastern region of India; Partners for law in Development, p. 4-5

craft to the accused by the accuser mostly in the form of illness. The third step deal with identification of the witch, which is pre- calculated one and then starts campaign against the accused. The next step involves a trail and in the final step the entire village attacks the accused which in turn completes the vested interest or revenge of the accuser. [12]

8. One of the major causes behind witch hunting is lack of awareness and poor health facilities. There have been numerous such cases in the tribal dominated areas in Assam because such fringe areas are far away from modern education system and medical facilities. Due to lack of medical facilities people go to '*Ojaa*' or '*Bez*' for treatment who they believe to be witch doctor practicing black magic.

Activism and protest against witch hunt in Assam:

Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS), an autonomous society has been a pioneer organization to address the issue of witch hunting in Assam. Since 1995, AMSS has been implementing the National Mahila Samakhya Programme (NMSP) in the state with an aim to encourage, assist and promote collective reflection, decision making by women as a means to their empowerment and for equal participation in the process of social change. The AMSS has been focusing in the district of Goalpara which is one of the most affected districts in terms of prevalence of witch hunting. The organization has been generating agenda for awareness generation towards eradication of evil practice of witch hunting. It is noteworthy

12 Tempest in a Tea pot: Analysis of contemporary witch hunt in the tea plantation of Bengal; Soma Choudhuri, dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Vanderbilt University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Sociology December, 2008, Nashville, TN

that AMSS has been quite successful in saving the lives of many women tagged as witch. At the same time the organization also facilitated the rehabilitation of such victims of witch hunting.

The Project Prahari of Assam police Department is the only legal measure to restrain the evil practice of witch hunting in Assam. It was primarily under the initiative of then DIG of Assam Police, Kula Saikia, Project Prahari was launched in Kokrajhar in 2001 as a crusade against the evil practice of witch hunting. It is mainly an initiative for participatory development and people friendly policing to fight social maladies. Apart from fighting witch hunting, the project undertakes various schemes like building schools, roads, providing medical facilities, drinking water for over all development of many rural areas so that the people of those areas could come up from the lumber of illiteracy, ignorance and superstation. In this context reference could be made to some of the villages under Project Prahari like Thaigurguri Village of Kokrajhat District, Dariduri Village of Goalpara district, Ning gan village of Tinisukia district etc.

The Assam State Commission for Women (ASCW) has time and again appears strongly against the evil practice of witch hunting in Assam. The Commission has undertaken a project titled 'Targeted Intervention and prevention of witch hunting in affected areas of Assam'[13] under which the ASCW from time to time visited the affected areas and holds awareness meetings. Moreover the commission also urged the government to introduce stringent laws to check this evil. It is to be noted that the ASCW has been in collaboration with Assam police in reviving Project Prahari.

Various Bodo organizations including All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation, Bodo sahitya sabha, Bodo Samaj, ABSU

13 Assam State Commission for Women seeks law to combat witch-hunting Jul 20, 2013, Times of India

has been time and again launching public awareness campaigns against violence and superstitions like witch hunting, rape and violence against women.

What is happening? How to stop this crime?

It is very unfortunate that such evil practice is still prevalent despite the efforts of many organizations and Police department to curb this crime. It is because of the cause that there is lack of proper law against witch hunting. Whatever law is available is not properly implemented. In fact the only source to fight for justice is under Indian penal code. It could be seen that the villages where such practice is rampant is far away from proper administrative facilities. There is lack of police station, legal institutions etc, as a result of which legal breach exists. Disputes are mostly settled under the local authorities where most of the verdicts are partisan and biased against women.

While in one hand many of the cases of witch hunting goes unrecorded, on the other hand the casual approach by the police compromises such an evil act every time. It could be witnessed that most of the cases of witch hunting goes unrecorded and unreported and only a few gruesome cases are recorded. The women victims out of the fear of facing social stigma do not register a case. Moreover most of the victims are from poor background without access to social and economic resources. They are destitute and ostracized for which they could not borne the expense of the legal process. Even if the investigation proceeds it goes out in vein due to lack of witness.

The law is not proactive and the punishment in the law is worthless in actual sense. The punishment is often in the form of light imprisonment, not more than five years. The law failed to curb this crime as such trivial punishment did not act as a deterrent.

There is an urgent need to stop this crime. Some of the important recommendations can be helpful to deal strongly with the evil like witch hunting.

1. There is a need of strong and stringent law tailored exclusively to deal with the crime like witch hunting. The culprit should be given strong punishment in accordance with law that could act as a deterrent. Police should be specially trained with proper guidelines and operating procedures to make investigation more fruitful. There should also be a law for proper rehabilitation and shelter for the victims along with allocation of resources.
2. The public health care system should be made easily available. At the same time people should be made aware of the modern scientific medical treatment.
3. There should be regular orientation and awareness meetings and programmes in the villages prone to such evil practice. The people working in the PRI's, Aanganwadis, ASHA workers can offer orientation programmes.
4. There should be 24 x 7 helpline number for immediate help to the victims. It will be useful in curbing the evil practice before it happens.
5. Government initiative should be taken to endorse scientific thinking and gender sensitivity through text book starting from primary level.

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WITCH HUNTING AND THE ROLE OF MEDIA

Juhi P. Pathak

Introduction

People with super natural or extra sensory powers have been around from time immemorial. We are all acquainted with stories of witches, wizards, magicians brought down to us through comics, story books, folklores, dramas and through word of mouth from one generation to another. A witch, in popular imagination, is one with a long crooked nose, ugly face, wearing a dirty black gown and a cone shaped black hat, rides on her broom and makes magic concoctions in a huge cauldron placed on fire throughout the night.

It is high time we realize that man does not genetically become a witch or a wizard. There is no DNA or chromosomes found in the human body to create a witch. But yes, it is scientifically proved that spiritual knowledge is gained through our pituitary and pineal glands that are there in our brain; and the fact that they act as antennas to interact with the cosmos around us, take powers from them and spiritually uplift oneself.

And it is up to the person whether they want to use the derived power attained through manipulation of energy for self enlightenment, cause of the society or destruction of the society. It is not a myth that there exists people with mystical powers but it is inhumane to hunt and kill them for the same.

Objectives

1. To critically analyze with statistics the scenario of witch hunting in India
2. To critically analyze with statistics the scenario of witch hunting in North-east with special reference to Assam
3. To study the role of media in context of witch hunting
4. To suggest ways in which media can extend its role to fight against the evil practice of witch hunting

The research question

Apart from simple reporting of facts, what more ways can media extend its role to fight against witch hunting?

The research design

The research is a *Descriptive* and *Diagnostic* one. We have done *case studies* of incidents related to witch hunting at local, national and international level. Moreover it will be an *exploratory* study as not much literature was available on the topic and the study is this field is a new one so we have to explore the possible ways in which media can help to put a stop to the menace of witch hunting. The data are mainly collected through *secondary sources* like newspapers, magazines and internet sources *and primary sources like interviews*. Interview of Social worker, Birubala Rabha, Assistant Secretary of Mission Birubala, Mr. Dhiren Chandra Rabha, film-maker and critic, Utpal Borpujari was done through e-mail conversation and of veteran journalists

like Jitendra Choudhury of Dainik Axom and General Secretary of Gauhati Press Club, Nava Thakuria were taken through personal interview.

Review of Literature

To gain further insight of the context some literature were referred to of which one was 'The practice of witch hunting: a call for its abolition' by Assam Mahila Samata Society (Mahila Samakhya) Assam (.pdf file). They had referred to certain cases and statistics of the status of witch hunts in North East.

'Witch hunting in Assam: Strategising Alternative Media for Women Empowerment and Overcoming Superstition' by Joya Chakraborty and Anjuman Borah published in the Journal of North East India Studies (.pdf file) was also referred to for the same purpose. The study seemed mainly focussed on the work of Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS) and the content was similar with that of the status paper brought out by the organisation itself.

'Witchcraft Accusations: A Protection Concern for UNHCR and the Wider Humanitarian Community?' by Gary Foxcroft, Programme Director, Stepping Stones Nigeria to UNHCR (.pdf file) was referred to with the idea of getting a perspective of the status of witch hunting in other countries of the world which has a different cultural, socio-economic and political scenario than our country, India.

Definition and meaning of the terms, 'witch', witch craft' and 'witch hunt'

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term 'witch' as 'a woman believed to have evil magic powers.' The same dictionary defines 'witch craft' as 'the practice of magic' and 'witch hunt' as 'a campaign against a person with unpopular views.'

In the popular imagination, witchcraft is often associated with the infliction of harm on people or property through the purported exercise of supernatural powers. In sociological and anthropological terms, it can be described as a phenomenon that is invoked to explain misfortune by attributing it to the evil influence of someone, either from within or outside the community. Thus witchcraft has historically been employed to bring about 'the death of some obnoxious person, or to awaken the passion of love in those who are the objects of desire, or to call up the dead, or to bring calamity or impotence upon enemies, rivals and fancied oppressors'. Ronald Hutton, for example, has identified five characteristics generally shared by those who believe in witches and witchcraft across different cultures and time periods:

(a) witches use non-physical means to cause misfortune or injury to others;
(b) harm is usually caused to neighbours or kin rather than strangers;
(c) strong social disapproval follows, in part because of the element of secrecy and in part because their motives are not wealth or prestige but malice and spite;
(d) witches work within long-standing traditions, rather than in one-time only contexts; and
(e) other humans can resist witches through persuasion, non-physical means (counter magic), or deterrence including through corporal punishment, exile, fines or execution.

Witches are, in most cases women who are alleged use their evil powers to harm others. In fact, however, many of those accused of witchcraft are simply vulnerable women and children, the elderly or the mentally ill, and are sometime the victims of an accuser's personal grudge. In many cases they are killed with impunity.

The Indian scenario

The 'Shining India' that all of us talk about has many dark sides to it. We all know the deterrents that pull back India from actually being successful in world scenario and the most commonly pointed out problems are illiteracy, superstition, low national income, low per capita income and the list goes on and on. But this never ending list somewhere, at some point, intertwines and culminates to become the cause for this menace called witch hunting.

Stories of women beaten, poisoned, paraded naked or forced to eat human excreta are disturbingly common in parts of India. Sometimes these witch hunts deliberately target widows or women with property in an attempt to take advantage of them, but other times they are rooted in religious beliefs. Others have said that as women gain power in these communities, witchcraft is invoked as a way of keeping women in subservient roles. Women are also the victims of witchcraft accusations after refusing sexual advances from village men. But other times, these women are simply scapegoats. Women who are widowed, infertile, possess 'ugly' features or are old, unprotected, poor or socially ostracized are easy targets. In the tribal belt of India, a spate of witch hunts has created headlines. In villages around the region, middle aged and elderly single women are orchestrated as witches, leading to social stigma, displacement, economic boycott, torture and even murder

Year	Witch Hunts
1990	Over 500 KILLED
2004-2009	137 WOMEN KILLED
1995-2009	Over 2500 WOMEN KILLED

A 2010 estimate places the number of women killed as witches in India at between 150 and 200 per year. The lynching are particularly common in at least 12 states — Jharkhand, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh,

Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Assam and Bihar. These states are recognised as areas where witch hunts are rampant even today.

The scenario in North East with special reference to Assam

In today's age of modern science and technology there are people remain shackled within the cocoons of superstition. In the north-eastern region of India, which is home to diverse indigenous communities, the practice is more prominent in Assam. It may not be simply coincidental that Assam also has the lowest gender development index among the north-eastern states. There have been at least 65 cases of witch hunting reported during 2007-2012 from Assam alone.

Cases related to witch-craft in Assam, 2006-7

District	Cases Registered	Persons arrested	Charge sheeted	Final report	Total number of deceased victims
Kokrajhar	8	35	6	2	12
Goalpara	2	17	2	--	2
Sonitpur	2	2	2	--	6
Sivasagar	1	13	1	--	1
Chirang	3	6	1	--	3
Baksa	3	-	-		4

Cases related to witch-craft in Assam, 2007-8

District	Cases Registered	Persons Arrested	Charge Sheeted	Final report	Total number of deceased victims
Kokrajhar	2	1	1	1	3
Sonitpur	1	9	1	-	1
Nagaon	1	-	1		1
Baksa	2	6	2	-	2

Cases related to witch-craft in Assam, 2008-9 (up to September)

District	Cases Registered	Persons Arrested	Charge sheeted	Final Report	Total number of Deceased victims
Kokrajhar	1	1	1	-	1
Kamrup	1	25	1		2
Sonitpur	3	18	3	-	5
Dhemaji	1	-	-	-	1
Chirang	2	1	1	-	2
Baksa	4	13	2	-	4

The witch is called a 'daini' in local parlance and believed to cause ailment to people, destroy crops and other livestock etc. She is usually identified by an 'ojha', 'bez' or 'deodhani' (all names for witch doctors) and either banished from the community or killed. Sometimes the designated family of the witch is levied a hefty fine by the community leaders, by which she may be pardoned of her ill deeds/intentions against the fellow villagers. The process of identification of the witch is specified by the witch doctor by looking into the symptoms of the patient. The alleged recipient of witchcraft is usually seen suffering from symptoms like, fever, cough-cold, delirium or hysteria.

As soon as it is believed that a disease has been caused due to the 'witch craft' people try to get rid of the spell through prayers and offerings. Boiled rice together with a cock reduced to ashes is taken in a banana leaf and kept in the middle of a road as an offering to the 'daini'. People believe that without these prayers and offerings the patient would not survive. It is only after this that the option of medical treatment is explored. It is also believed that there are some diseases which cannot be treated by the medical doctor and needs to be addressed specifically by an ojha. Sometimes patients die due to delay in appropriate treatment. If the patient dies the belief of existence of a witch gets further vindicated and the 'identification' of the witch starts.

In the absence of any medical facilities in the remote villages, the patient is taken to the ojha. The patient, if suspected by the ojha to be under the spell of a witch, is covered by a hunting net and poked with a sharp object till he/she names the witch. In other cases the ojha performs some religious rites to arrive at the description of the person practicing the witch craft. Identified by this process, the alleged witch is then either lynched to death

or forced to run away abandoning her family and property. Low levels of education and poor medical facilities are a driving force behind the belief in witchcraft among communities of Assam. Witch hunting is killing of a 'witch', a superstitious evil practice quite common among the communities Rabha, Hajong, Mishing, Bodo, Adivasi etc. It is also practiced among the Nepalis. A witch in most of the cases is a woman who is alleged to be a practitioner of black magic and causes death to the villagers where she lives. Local Ojhas (sorcerer) 'detects' and identifies witches.

The number of cases related to witch hunting has increased in the last decade. In Assam, in the past five years, 59 people have been killed – 22 in 2005 alone.

The killing of innocent people under suspicion of practicing witchcraft has become a regular news item in Assam. Statistics reveal that over 40 people were killed in the last three years in such cases. The Assam government records say that 40 people died as a result of suspected witch hunting during June 2008 to June 2011. In the last decade more than 116 people have lost their lives because of the witch hunting in the state. Official data reveals that 66 women were killed in Assam during the last ten years in cases of witch hunting. However, unofficial information claims that the numbers would be over 300 women victims.

The role of media

Media is known as the Fourth Estate of our nation and so it is quite obvious that it has a very important role to play in taking our democracy forward.

The most important role of media is to provide its audience with authentic, truthful and factual reports of events that holds importance for them. Media has a moral responsibility towards the society and its people who trusts their content.

Though Indian media is being criticized for flouting journalistic ethics, it has successfully brought to light many cases of scams, kick backs, corruption and the like through its investigative reports.The role that Indian media has played in 'development reporting' is also praise worthy. In context of witch hunting, media, so long has only been reporting events after cases of lynching, murders, tortures and other atrocities have occurred. In recent times only we have seen media reporting of people like Patricia Mukhim from Meghalaya, Birubala Rabha from a village called Thakurbilla in Assam-Meghalaya border, efforts like Prahari and organisations like Assam Mahila Samata Society - (AMSS) an autonomous body implementing the National Mahila Samakhya Programme (NMSP) operating in the state since 1995 to campaign against witch hunting.

In a direct interview with Birubala Rabha who has been a fighter against the menace for a very long time pointed out some very pertinent points on the role of Media in the context of witch hunting. She said, "We make video recordings of our meetings. At one such instance the meeting was held in one of the Deodhani's place. He was reluctant to let us use the video cameras. But we were adamant that video recording is a must for our meetings. We questioned him on his activities and he accepted on camera that branding of witches is done arbitrarily. Media can use our footage to create general awareness among people. They can accompany us and bring to light our efforts and activities for the cause. They have the reach and can go a long way in helping us to make our efforts successful"

In an interaction with the famous Indian film maker and film critic, Utpal Borpujari, who was critically acclaimed worldwide for his film Mayong: Myth/Reality, said, "Media has a very big role to play in making people aware about the need to eradicate social evils like witch hunting. Such social evils

arise from illiteracy coupled with age-old superstition, and are deeply entrenched in the psyche of the societies where such things occur. Media can play a pro-active role in creating awareness against such social evils, by reporting objectively and extensively on incidents related to such evils, specifically highlighting any work that is being done by any individual and / or organisation to fight such social evils. As a part of their outreach programmes, media organisations - both electronic and print can organise awareness programmes in areas where such social evils are practised, with the participation of stakeholders, to create on-ground awareness."

It is time that media take up bold steps to play its role to bring a halt to this notorious concept of witch hunting. In an interview with one of the famous journalists from Assam, the General Secretary of Gauhati Press Club Nava Thakuria, who has covered several stories related to witch hunting said, "Actually media is not the authority which can stop the menace of witch hunting. It is just a medium to portray what is happening in the society as it is. All it can do is to make the authorities a little more responsible by questioning their stand on the matter."

Various activists and social organizations have been engaged in raising voices against the killings of innocent people in the name of witch hunting in Assam. Organizations like North East Network, Elora Science Forum, and Brothers etc. have also raised voices for a strict law with an aim to prevent the killings in the name of witch hunting and ensuing justice to the victim families.

Even the Assam police launched public awareness drives against the witch-hunting under the 'Project Prahari scheme. Various other organizations have taken initiatives for creating public awareness on the issue. Expressing concern at the trend, the Assam State Commission for Women (ASCW) had asked the State government at Dispur to immediately formulate a

law to combat the menace of witch hunting. Days back the ASCW chairperson Meera Barooah stated that the women commission had taken up various initiatives to prevent witch hunting in Assam and it has organized several public awareness and interactive sessions with the villagers, who are vulnerable for the evil practices.

Meanwhile, Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi has recently expressed his commitment for enacting a law to prevent various kinds of superstitious activities including the suspected witch hunting in the State. Pointing out the recent instances of killing in the name of witch hunting in various parts of Assam, Gogoi stated that he would initiate for adequate public awareness and also an anti-superstition law very soon. One can only hope that the assurance from the head of the State government would turn into reality little early.

The Journalist Forum Assam (JFA) has urged the state government to enact a law against superstition to prevent numerous killings in the name of "witch hunting" in the State.

The Assam based journalist body made the demand while expressing its utter dismay at the recent assassination of an editor of Sadhana, a Marathi weekly Narendra Dabholkar in Pine in Maharashtra on Tuesday by unidentified gunmen. Dabholkar was also a relentless campaigner against superstition. He had founded Maharashtra Committee for Eradication of Blind Faith and single handedly fought for a law against such practices.

Over 100 persons were killed in Assam in last couple of years in superstition induced attacks.

Some suggestions as to how can media extend its role towards this effort would be:

1. Local media should do a detailed analysis of the cases of witch hunting within its local ambit.

2. Team up with local police and bring to light the actual causes of murders and lynching and highlight if personal agenda is found to be the motive in the veil of witch hunt.
3. Team up with local NGOs and make people aware of the real statistics of witch hunt related deaths.
4. Highlight the role of people and NGOs that are working against atrocities on women, men and children in the veil of witch hunting.
5. Place informers and sources in places where witch hunting is a common phenomenon and take their help to prevent such acts and rescue the victims.
6. Television media should capture videos of the grim developmental situation of such areas where witch hunting is a regular phenomenon and bring the scenario to the notice of the government and other policy makers to take action and start development work as soon as possible.
7. Media should feature campaigns against witch hunting regularly, write human interest stories about such events – the myth, the pain and the trauma that these victims go through, make people aware of such inhumane acts, break the myth and mystery behind witches and educate people through regular write ups and broadcast of documentaries.
8. Radio has a good reach even in rural areas and this medium can be tapped to educate the people against superstitions and related evils.
9. NGOs should start Community radio stations in primitive rural places and take an initiative to educate them on social issues and self development.
10. Media should understand that to mobilize an angry mob on the spot is not easy so as the famous saying goes, 'precaution is better than cure' which means that they have to always remain alert so as to avoid any untoward happening.

11. Local media should regularly do follow-ups on such issues and see that the perpetrators of law are brought to book and the victims are given justice.
12. Local media should do development reporting in these areas and see that the government, NGOs and other policy makers are taking initiative to uplift the standard of living of these people and also develop their area of habitat.
13. Media should question the government as to why the data and statistics maintained in their files are wrong and demand answers to their questions.
14. Media should open old records of NGOs and question the police as to why most cases of witch hunts are not registered with them.
15. Media should question the police as to why in most cases perpetrators of law are not brought to book and punished.
16. Media should exert pressure on the government and police to set up surveillance cells so that these areas are constantly under police patrolling.
17. Media should give an opportunity for these primitive people to voice their opinions and make them feel that they are part of this developing nation and even their voices are heard and taken into account.
18. Those alleged to be witches, sorcerers, etc are usually killed by a mob which is incited by family members or enemies. It is difficult to pin down individuals from an entire mob unless someone gives evidence about who committed the act. Since such killings are among clans and close-knit communities, we usually don't have witnesses. This weakens the police case and does not result in a charge-sheet. Here, Media has to be more pro-active and compel the police to take their investigative work seriously and deliver results.

Conclusion

Media is truly a potential medium which, if steered through the right direction and used strategically, the menace of witch hunting can be dealt with in a progressive way. It is true that today's media is a corporate one and very much profit oriented and it is high time they also realize their social responsibilities and start giving back to the society that has given them their position and status. It is true that we still have media houses that have devoted themselves to social causes and they are the torch bearers in the context of media for social causes and development. People living in cities and town would have never known that such huge number of killings are regularly happening in the primitive areas around them had media, from time to time, not reported about them. The government sitting at the centre or even in the state capital would also remain blind to such events had media not been there to bring such events to light. But, now media should become pro active and be questioning and not just narrating. They should take the onus on them to question the people in the helm of affairs as to the present plight of the primitive people and make sure the benefits of our 'shining India' percolates even to the primitive most tribal of our country so that every Indian is free from the shackles of superstition and can decide for himself what is right and what is wrong and does not allow himself to be swayed away in the name of magic.

We should come out from the general notion that all persons having super natural or extra sensory powers are witches and the only way to get rid of them is to purge them. Just like every tiger is not a man eater and this fact is established by the books of Jim Corbett similarly all such people with enchanting or miraculous powers should not be branded as witches and hunted down.

Media should unofficially take up the role of local corporators or ward officers and take up the role for the welfare of the people by being the Sentinel of the area. Now it is media who has to play the role of informing people and creating social awareness against witch hunting and gradually put a stop to it.

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'WITCH-HUNTING' STIGMA OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY: A STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF NORTH-EAST INDIAN STATE, ASSAM

Mitu Baishya
Dhaneshwar Kalita

Introduction

'Witch hunting' is a social stigma of the Twenty First Century. Hunting down of innocent people and victimizing and killing after branding them as witches is prevalent even in this age of civilization. Today, human being lives in an age; where people are advanced in their thoughts and life style, science and technology lords over anything. But, yet the people cannot shake off the idea of hating and killing the so-called 'witches'.

The issue of witch hunting is one of the primary superstitions among the people. A 'witch' used to identify a male or female is alleged to have magical powers that it used to bring evil to the community or to the villagers. After a Witch is identified, she is punished for her act as in accordance with the rules and regulations of that society. In the past, the villagers used to banish men and women branded witches from their respective villages. But from early 1990s, the villagers had started

killing these witches and unfortunately, most of the victims are women. The most shameful aspect of witch- hunting is the participation of an entire village in such killings. This highly deplorable act is a crime against humanity and needs to be tackled it with an iron hand.

In the present scenario, it has been observed that such macabre incidents like witch-hunting seem to be alive in our Country, India. In India, this evil practice is still very much prevalent in states like Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh and of course in Assam. It is more wide spread in rural areas where people have low literacy level and thereby more faith in illogical superstitions. Many women become unfortunate victims of this irrational belief and die every year after being accused of witchcraft. A 2010 estimate places the number of women that were killed as witches in India between 150 to 200 per year, and a total of 2,500 in the period of 1995 to 2009.

Witch hunting has also been increasingly highlighted in the last few years in North-East India. An increasing number of women and men too, have been killed by ignorant villagers in remote areas of this region in recent times in the name of witch-hunting. In many times, this deep rooted belief seems to be motivated and propelled by the greed for land, property, personal revenge and of course long-standing beliefs in witchcraft. In north eastern region, this evil practice is particularly common in states like Sikkim, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram and in Assam also. The killing of innocent people in the name of witch hunting has become a regular news item in Assam. In the entire region, Assam is the worst-hit by this superstitious practice.

Considering the need of the work to be done in the field of witch hunting prevailing in Assam, a humble attempt has been made to focus some of the aspects related to witch hunting

of this state. Many things are yet to be explored as we are lacking in accurate evidence and correct information.

Study Area

The present study covers the state of Assam. Assam is the gateway state to North-East India which possesses a very marked individuality. It is one of the superstitious prone areas of our Country, India. Assam is situated in the north-east corner of India between 24°3/ N to 28°51/ N latitude and 89°51/ E to 96°1/ E longitude. It covers an area of 78,438km^2 (Bhagabati, Kar& Bora; 1) i.e. 2.39 percent of total area of India supporting a population of 311.69 lakh accounting for 2.58 percent of the total population of India. The state has witnessed many political events effected the demographic structure as well as territorial boundaries since independence. Assam is diverse in physical features and drained mainly on the north by the Brahmaputra river system and on the south by the Barak river system. The Brahmaputra river system is very much extensive and life-line of Assam having great impact on the topography, economy and culture of its people.

Objectives of the Study

1. To conceptualize the traditional belief about witch hunting and also the reasons and impact of this evil practice in context of Assam.
2. To analyze some dark incidents of witch hunting that happened recently in the state, Assam, with some preventive measures.

Data Sources and Methodology

The study is carried out based on the data collected from various secondary sources. Books, articles, research papers,

websites of various e-journals, newspaper records etc. are consulted for preparation of this paper. The collected data are represented through discussion and analysis.

Discussion and Analysis

Assam, a North-Eastern state is popularly known for its evergreen tea estates, tradition, large and old petroleum resources and also well known for superstitions and black magic. It is very interesting to know that Mayong also known as the land of black magic, is situated in Marigaon district of Assam, on the bank of river Brahmaputra is considered as one of the biggest hub for black magic in Asia and also known as Indian capital of black magic. The land of black magic is now a land of bloodshed in the 21st Century. It is a matter of great shame that such black magic practices or superstitious beliefs like 'witch-hunting' still continue to haunt the state, Assam.

Witch hunting is a superstition practiced in North-Eastern States in particularly in Assam and is wide spread to several caste, creed, colour, community and religion. The persecution and killing of individuals accused of practicing so- called 'witch-craft'— the vast majority of whom are women (amongst the victims, 90% are women) is a significant phenomenon in many parts of the state, Assam. This is a heinous crime primarily against innocent women. As we boast about the state, Assam being a place where women have traditionally enjoyed a revered societal pedestal, the crime statistics of recent years would negate that claim. As per the latest figures of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Assam has the dubious distinction of topping in the chart of crimes against women in 2012, with an abnormally high incidence of 89.54% against the national average of 41.7%.

Traditional Beliefs 'Witch' or 'Daini'

A 'witch' or its Assamese vocabulary 'Daini' in Assam is used to identify a male or female, believed to be one who practices black magic and as a result brings evil to the community. A 'witch' is in most cases a woman who is alleged to be the practitioner of evil powers and causes death to the villagers where she lives. The witches are supposed to have an evil eye and are considered inauspicious. In fact, many of these accused of witchcraft are simply older single women and widows and are sometime the victims of an accuser's personal grudge. Local Ojhas or Kabiraj (Sorcerer) detects and identifies the so-called witches. In many cases, they are killed with impunity. In Assam witch killings are reported mostly in the monsoon season in view of the outbreak of several deadly diseases. It is basically the search for witches or evidence of witchcraft, often involving moral panic and lynching.

Traditionally, in Assam it is believed that a disease has been caused due to the 'witchcraft' practiced by the suspected witch; people try to get rid of the witch through prayers and offerings. Boiled rice and cock together with some food items by making curry or fry is given in a banana leaf and keep on the middle of a road as an offering to 'daini'. It is said that in disguise of a cat or dog, a witch comes to took it and eats all the food stuff happily with her family members (Narzi, 252). People believed that without these prayers and offerings the patient would die. If the patient dies the belief of existence of a witch becomes deeper and the identification of a witch starts.

The process of identifying a 'Daini' or 'Witch'

There are several ways of identifying a 'daini' in Assam, among which two are mentioned below:

A. Generally, in a village there is a traditional astrologer, who

looks into the matter and reveals a woman's name. She is then considered as a 'daini' harming the village.

B. The second way of identification of 'witch' is by covering the patient with a net. The person is then pricked with thorns and other sharp things until it becomes difficult to bear the pain and finally he or she reveals the name of a woman, who is then accused as the 'daini'.

Once a woman, man or a family is identified as witch, she will be summoned before the whole community and process of confirmation of her as witch will start. Generally, two methods are adopted in Assam. One, if there is death of people in the village due to unknown diseases and a woman is suspected and later accepted by everyone as witch. Second method is that women branded as witch are covered with fish net and tortured brutally with the teeth of pig. Sometime the ill person is also tortured in the same way to forcing to spell out the name of witch. Usually, a sick person in his or her state of illness spells out the name of the person against whom they have a personal grudge. Once confirmed the woman is either killed or chased away from the village. If the women alleged to be a witch is killed, her body is cut into pieces and buried separately as it is said that putting together all the parts of the body of the witch may result into rebirth of witch and that harm people.

Prevalence of Witch hunting in Assam

Witch-hunts conjure images of 17th Century Salem, The Crucible and perhaps even Monty Python. As a result of Enlightenment and Scientific revolution, the practice of witch hunting subsided in the 18th Century and has almost become the thing of the past for most of the countries.

But unfortunately, we cannot say the same in case of India, especially in Assam. In Assam, such heinous crimes like witch-hunting, as one of the primary superstitions among the people is still very much common in districts like Goalpara, Chirang, Baksa, Sonitpur, Udalguri, Tinsukia, Dhemaji etc. It is more rampant in Kokrajhar district also. This evil practice is wide spread among the communities like Rabha, Hajong, Mishing, Bodo, Adivasi etc. in a number of rural and interior areas of the state. It is also practiced among the Nepalis as well. Witches are called 'bakshi' in their language. The Assam Government records say that 40 people died as a result of suspected witches from June 2008 to June 2011. In the last decade more than 116 people have lost their lives because of witch hunting in the state. About 96 cases of witch hunting were reported during 2006-2012. According to police sources, there were 21 cases of witch hunting registered during 2006, followed by 7 cases in 2007, 10 cases in 2008, 4 cases in 2009, 11 cases in 2010, 21 cases in 2011 and 14 cases in 2012 across Assam and yet in the year 2013 up to August we are still witnessing incidents of witch killing in our daily newspapers twice or thrice in a month. One can surmise that this is only the official statistics of witch hunting while the actual number of cases will be more.

Responsible Factors for the Prevalence of Witch hunting in Assam

Several factors or reasons play dominant role behind this inhuman torture and killings of witches in the state. Illiteracy, backwardness, poverty and Ignorance cause people to believe in superstitious beliefs like 'black magic, witchcraft', which further led them to go for witch-hunting and punish the witch. Lack of infrastructure facilities like good medical system, sanitation system, road –communication system, drinking-

water system in a number of interior and rural areas of the state, Assam, are also responsible for the spurt in cases of witch-killing. As a result of these, neither any patient nor any victim of any accident has any sort of help. But the most heartrending cause is the voracious attitude of the relatives or near and dear ones to gulp his or her property or land. Sometimes, these people also carry out witch-hunting because of personal revenge, jealousy and lust. Shortage of qualified doctors and paramedical staff, some communities in the interior areas of Assam repose their trust on local 'kabiraj' or 'bez', who on failure to cure serious diseases put the blame on witches (Bhattacharya, 31).

In addition to these, alcoholism also forms an important reason. Most of the locally or home brewed alcohol (rice beer) consumed in such areas contains a high alcohol content, running to even 40-70%. Due to regular consumption of such highly intoxicating alcohol, the thought process of the individuals essentially go way, overwhelmed emotions and it does not take much effort to convince such people that their neighbourhood is evil and then he or she needs to be killed. It is an irony that even in this modern age a significant section of the population in Assam are still under the spell of irrational beliefs and superstitions.

All these reasons act directly or indirectly to give birth such a belief in witchcraft or witch hunting.

Impact and Result of this evil practice

Suspected witches are frequently the victims of 'mob violence'. Apart from physical and mental torture, the women is lynched to death or driven away from the village. When the accused woman is ousted, her family breaks. The husband may marry another woman and other family members refuse to accept

her on any occasion and as result children of the accused woman miss their mother badly.

The evident impact of this evil practice is the denial of right to live to an individual whose rights are otherwise protected by the constitution. Some if the women are not killed by the villagers still the branded family suffers. The family will be socially boycotted by the whole village and the community. The children of the accused woman are treated with unfriendly manner in the society. They do not receive proper education and hence the next generation of the branded witches is too stigmatized.

In most of time, the accused woman loses control over her and her family property. They do not receive any works. They are exempted even if they were employed. Many accused women are to re-struggle for livelihood in middle age or in old age which is very difficult for them. This may also cause in forced migration or abetment of suicide. In some of the cases, the accused woman loses her psychological balance and is treated as a mad in the aftermath of accusation. Actually for a woman, accusation as a witch is a social stigma which she carried for life time.

Prevention of Witch hunting

In India, Bihar was the first state to pass the Prevention of witch (Dayan) practice act of 1999. This was followed by Jharkhand's Anti-Witchcraft Act 2001 along with the 2005/ 2006 Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan laws. In Assam, there is no such law, except a project called 'Project Prahari' was launched by Kula Saikia in August 2001. This Project was aimed at fighting against witch-hunting by uplifting the socio-economical status of the people. But this project too is not a continuous action. Now, in Assam, we need new laws to address this issue

and also need the proper enforcement of these laws. Because mere making laws without proper implementation will never be eradicate witchcraft from our society.

It is time that everyone has to wake up against this social evil of witch-hunting and take steps to prevent or eradicate it from society. Mainly health care facilities in the rural or interior areas of the state should be improved so that the patients can consult a doctor instead of a witch. The Health Department of Assam Government should held health camps in the interior areas, appoint new doctors and paramedical staff and also should introduce mobile medical vans.

To make the people educated and to fight against this traditional practice of Witch-hunting, the Government should provide basic education facilities to everyone and ensure enrolment of students in schools. The Education Department may introduce a subject relating to witchcraft in the syllabus of primary education in Assam. The idea behind introducing witchcraft in the curriculum of primary schools is to bring about awareness from an early age to do away with the primitive practice of Witch-hunting based on superstitious beliefs. Non formal education should also be given priority in the witch-hunting prone areas. Development of Education in the rural areas is a must to drive this evil practice out.

Women themselves can play a vital role in addressing witch-hunting issues at the community level. Women collectives such as Mahila Samittees, Mahila sanghas, Women Federation at Gram Panchayat and Block level can create environment to realize such kind of practice is a superstition, nothing else. They also should take up various activities like formal or informal discussion, workshop, fact finding mission, yoga training center etc., and should develop pamphlets, stickers, posters etc. in local language and holding public meeting to evolve participatory

approach to address this issue. Biru Bala Rabha is one of the sangha members who has been playing an active role to prevent or eradicate this evil practice from peoples' mind through logic, sharing knowledge and promoting education (Bhattacharya, 63).

The Government of Assam should adopt appropriate measures to eliminate the practice of witch hunting, prosecute and punish those involved, and provide for rehabilitation of, and compensation to victimized women. Nation should provide shelter to the victims. Both Police and Health Department may open a Helpline Emergency service for the accused women. An awareness drive in those places where incidents of witch killings are prevalent is a must to help the people of the state to give up their irrational beliefs, like witch-hunting. Witch-hunting can be prevented only through continuous efforts of the Government, The Assam state Commission for women, police, NGOs, judiciary and also public support. Everyone of the state will have to work hand-in-hand to fight against this sensitive social problem.

Conclusion

Witch hunting is now one of the major social stigmas in Assam. It is high time that NGOs, Government Departments like Social Welfare, Education and Health, The Assam State Commission for women as well as Local Organizations come forward to make people aware of such inhuman acts like witch-hunting and jump in action right way instead of holding symbolic protests and demands. The victims also instead of shedding their tears should come forward to protest and take initiatives to solve this issue. One Biru Bala Rabha is not sufficient, we need hundreds more from amongst us to put this stigma away and move forward and make the state, Assam truly beautiful from every corner.

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STIGMA OF WITCH HUNTING IN ASSAM AND BIRUBALA RABHA'S CRUSADE AGAINST IT

Neeta Sharma

A witch is said to be generally a woman who uses magic or witchcraft for evil purpose. And witch hunting is searching for witches or evidences of witch craft often involving moral panic, mass hysteria and lynching.

Witch hunts still occur today in societies where belief in magic is predominant. In most cases, these are instances of mob justice, reported with some regularity from much of Sub-Saharan Africa, from rural North and East India and from Paupa New Guinea. Moreover, there are some countries that have legislation against the practice of sorcery. Saudi Arabia is the only country where witchcraft remains legally punishable by death.

Coming to the context of India and the North-East of India, we see that labeling a woman as a witch is a common ploy to grab land, settle scores and personal grudges or even to punish her for turning down sexual advances. In a majority of the cases, it is difficult for the accused woman to reach out for help and she is forced to either abandon her home and family or is driven to commit suicide. Most cases are not documented

because it is difficult for poor and illiterate women to travel from isolated regions to file police reports. Less than two percent of those accused of witch hunting are actually convicted, according to a study by the Free Legal Aid Committee, a group that works with victims in the state of Jharkhand.

A 2010 estimate places the number of women killed as witches in India at between 150 and 200 per year or a total of 2,500, in the period of 1995 to 2009.

The inhuman trend of witch hunting is prevalent in the state of Assam too. Though it is generally confined to schedule castes, schedule tribes, tea-tribes, and other tribal population yet sometimes witch hunting occurs among the upper castes too. The question which arises is why even in this modern world with so much of progress and development in every aspect of life, the trend of witch hunting still continues to exist? It can be well understood that the witch hunting related tortures and deaths are not the remnants of the ancient barbaric world but it has some kind of relation with the process of modernization!

The villages and tea-gardens of Assam, where witch hunting is still prevalent are not always cut-off from the civilized world. During the last one and half decade each village in Assam has a primary school at the minimum and either has public health centre of its own or nearby medical facilities are no more a far off cry. Then why the blame of somebody's sickness or the death of animals is put on jealously on some other woman and she and her family is not only tortured but even sometimes hacked or burnt alive to death also. Often these incidents are ignored terming them as superstition. But it is important and necessary to understand that sometimes there may be socio-economic or even political reasons hidden behind such incidents. Moreover, in spite of schools and public health centres being established, they are not being managed or attended properly. Teachers in

schools and doctors in health centres are usually unavailable most of the times.

When we try to analyse the problem of witch hunting in Assam we notice that witch-hunting in Assam is prevalent mainly among the Boros, Rabhas and the Southali Tea Tribes. All these tribes are lagging far behind in the field of education, employment, income and other facilities. One thing is common among the witch-hunting tribes of Assam is that they are forest dwellers. As men went hunting in the forests, women went into the forests to collect foods- like fruits, roots, arum, leaves etc. Women had also the knowledge of various medicinal plants, roots and leaves, which was hereditarily inherited by their daughters and daughter-in-laws. Thus the women occupied an important status in the family because they not only served them economically but also were the food-servers of the family. The society not only recognized the strong status of women but also at times considered them to be possessor of divine powers. Later on, these tribes started permanent cultivation using the plough, instead of food-gathering and jhoom cultivation. In the Hindu society some restrictions existed in a woman's using the plough or being involved in cultivation. Once women got involved in cultivation and farming, immediately the question of their legitimate right on the production and also on the land arose. So, in the Southali agricultural system, unmarried women and widows had the provision of special rights. May be to deprive women of their traditional rights, it became important to identify them as unholy and ill-omen for the society.

It has been observed that in every society where witch hunting is practiced, generally women who are lonely, economically weak or is a widow are targeted and victimized. Moreover an independent, outspoken and straight forward woman is also victimized because she is seen as a threat to the

male dominated social order. The aim behind brutally and publicly punishing the women by all the villagers co-operating in the process is to send a message to such other women in the society. But one thing that comes out clearly is that in these societies, women still occupied a higher status and respect and were looked upon with a sense of awe even because both in the Bodo and Southali tribes, all the traditional and customary rules and regulations are followed in the process of labeling a woman as a witch. The whole society is involved in the process, total "public jurisdiction" is followed and a well-known "witch-doctor" is brought even from far-off places, if need be on payment. A public meeting is called where the witch-doctor determines and announces the witch or the women, generally holding her responsible for all the diseases or deaths in the village. Often death sentence is announced as a punishment for the witch. Everyone male, female, children in the village participate in executing the death sentence, so that the blame does not come on any one or two particular individual but is equally shared by all the villagers. The 'witch' is stabbed and cut because according to popular belief, the concerned patient is cured or the society is relieved from the ill-effects of the 'witch', only when she will bleed. No one either informs the police or the administration about such incidents, nor does anyone co-operate with the police in the investigations. In the tribal communities a woman in the family comparatively has a say and a preference over the man, so socially in order to establish their dominance man punish the 'witch' publicly. In the name of social good, even women are compelled to participate in this inhuman brutal act.

In Assam cases of witch hunting have been detected mainly in three districts- Goalpara, Kokrajhar and Sonitpur. Along with the increasing number of witch hunting cases in the state, the cases are becoming more complex. Originally, incidents were

limited to tribes meting out public punishments to those charged with practicing black-magic. Today witch-hunting cases often relate to personal rivalry, grabbing property or land and other divisive issues, apart from mere superstition. Lately there is also a trend of killing the suspected persons secretly, preferably at night, taking advantages of the darkness, so that no one can identify the culprits.

Moreover, in the past only women were vulnerable to be attacked as witches in traditional societies, but of late the attacks are focused on entire families, even if only one member is accused. For instance, five members of a family in Sadharu tea estate of Biswanath Chariali of Sonitpur district in central Assam were beheaded by their fellow villagers in March 2006. The hysteric mob then marched to the police station carrying the severed heads of the deceased persons. Again on June 10th 2008, four persons of a family under the Biswanath Chariali police station of the district were buried by the locals, on the suspicion of practicing witchcraft.

These incidents take place where there is severe lack of basic infrastructure including healthcare, education, sanitation, road network, drinking water and other facilities. But it is not only the disadvantaged and poor who have been targeted. In September 2008, Bishnu Roy, the senior most leader of North Salmara district of Koch-Rajbanshi Yuba Chatra Sanmilani, and his mother, in Abhayapuri police station of Bongaigaon district were targeted and attacked by a mob of 500-600 villagers on the suspicion of being witches.

However, the positive aspect which is emerging out presently is that, different NGOs and women social organizations and also student bodies are working and doing their best to develop awareness among these tribal communities against witch hunting practices. Some people like Upen Rabha Hakasam and

Mrs. Birubala Rabha are carrying on their fight against witch hunting at individual level.

Upen Rabha Hakasam, a professor at the Department of Folklore in Gauhati University has been fighting against the harmful practice over the years. He himself being a member of Rabha tribe has suffered a lot as some of his relatives too have become the victims of suspicion of practicing witchcraft or black-magic. He says, "I have been fighting against this social evil in our tribe for so many years, but there is hardly any change. The custom has been deep rooted in the minds of the people. Unless, there is a change in the policy framework, no one can do anything. I believe victims of witch practices themselves must come to the streets to assert their right for a dignified life, in the way the sex workers and homosexuals have done already. "Unless and until these victims themselves come to the street, I believe nothing will change and the vested interested people will always take the chance of their helplessness." Hakasam adds. He says the lives of those facing expulsion from their villages have become miserable, as they have to move to remote areas to escape the stigma-their 'witch' brand spreads very fast to nearby areas. In those places too, where these victims find new livelihoods, they have to hide their identity, for fear of the past catching up with them again.

Hakasam says that the low socio-economic status of these tribes and communities in the state is a major reason why such practices continue. But he also blames the willingness of people to believe in such accusations, and this is not just among the poor. "It is surprising that even a section of the educated people of these tribes and communities still believe in such superstitions, like the existence of witches. Also as some kind of religious practices have been attached to the belief, it becomes difficult for outside agencies or individuals to intervene in such situations and motivate them against such social evils", he adds.

This is one reason why, even as incidents of witch hunting have been increasing, there aren't many organizations working to tackle the practice. Instead, it has been left to national organizations and other platforms to do what they can. The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), the apex student body of the Bodos, has launched a vigorous awareness campaign to fight against superstition of witch practices in the Bodo dominated areas. The ABSU, which has been running the campaign since 2004, has so far rehabilitated at least 40 innocent persons who have been expelled from their original villages on the suspicion of witch practices, says Lawrence Islary, a senior leader of the student body.

The improvement of basic healthcare and education in these areas may improve the situation to a great extent. Unfortunately, both healthcare and education infrastructure are very poor in all tribal dominated areas in the state. Absence of doctors is directly related to the problem. Villagers and tribes are compelled to visit local quacks for treatment of different diseases. During monsoons in particular, water-borne diseases like malaria, cholera and diarrhea often take an epidemic form in the villages. If the treatment is beyond their limit, these quacks, just to remain on safe-side, accuse someone of the village of being a witch and declare that the bad spirit of that particular witch is responsible for diseases and deaths in the village! Such pronouncements and the prevailing superstitious beliefs in witchcraft provoke ignorant villagers to target their own neighbours and acquaintances.

In non-Bodo areas, there has been less progress against superstition and crimes linked to it. A lot more is needed to be done, across the state, to have a significant impact. Hakasam is also critical of the role played by the State Government. There has been no serious effort to punish the culprits, nor is there a proper investigation into incidents. In many witch hunting

related cases, the culprits are easily identifiable or in many cases they themselves admit their guilt. But serious punishment for such crimes is rare. This has encouraged the vested interests, aggravating the situation, says Hakasam. Unlike Bihar or Jharkhand, in Assam, there is no legislation to deal with the situation, despite the increasing incidents of which-hunting.

As I write this paper, another news today (17/04/2011) appeared as the headline of two women being killed in Assam's witch hunt. The news has come along with some recent data of 2010 and 2011. These data are reported ones but many cases of witch hunting go unreported to the police stations. Moreover, suspected cases of 'dainis' from a village are not even recorded; only serious crimes involving bodily harm are documented. So it is not possible to collect the exact number of persons who have been killed due to suspicion of practicing black magic or witch craft. Some of the data of the last few years, collected from internet sources and district police administration are given below–

District	Cases Registered	Persons Arrested	Charge Sheeted	Final Report	Total number of Deceased victims
Kokrajhar	19	40	08	03	16
Goalpara	27	–	–	–	–
Sonitpur	06	23	06	–	12
Sivsagar	01	13	01	–	01
Chirang	05	07	02	–	05
Baksa	09	19	04	–	10
Nagaon	01	–	01	–	01
Kamrup	01	25	01	–	02
Dhemaji	01	–	–	–	01

The above data are subject to little variations as many new cases may be added.

So since the problem is deeply rooted in the tribals and Santhals, particularly among the Bodos, Rabhas and Tea-Tribes

of Assam so the only way to tackle the problem is the expansion of education, health, communication and transportation facilities in the areas. Only public consciousness can bring an end to this problem. People must get rid of superstitious beliefs and take the help of doctors when sick, instead of going to the quacks or witch doctors. Visual, audio and print media should play a vital role in making people aware and critical towards these superstitions beliefs. School syllabus should incorporate essays and topics of awareness on such issues related to supernatural powers and beliefs. In a male dominated society, women should have proper education so that they are not carried away by such superstitious concepts and can raise their voice against them. The society of Assam can get rid of the stigma of witch hunting only when women can make themselves strong enough through knowledge and education to voice their protest against such inhuman practices.

Birubala Rabha's Ceaseless Fight and Crusade against the Stigma of Witch Hunting

Birubala Rabha is one of the simplest women I have ever met. Whenever one meets this woman, one can hardly imagine or believe that this is the woman who single handedly began the protest against this social evil of witch hunting. Birubala Rabha is a very simple village woman who lives in Thakurvilla, a village situated in Goalpara district bordering of the state of Meghalaya. She has been working not only for the people of Assam but also for the people living on the borders of the neighbouring state of Meghalaya. She was born in 1956 in Thakurvilla and at a very early age she was married to Chandicharan Rabha who was a resident of the same village. Birubala went to the primary school and inspite of her strong desire to study further she had to give

up her education. But inspite of not having a school or college degree she was very courageous and straightforward in her views and opinions. After her marriage, she got together with the other women of Thakurvilla and formed the Thakurvilla Local Women's Committee. This committee not only worked for the growth and development of the village locality but also protested against violence and exploitation of any kind against women.

Now let us come to the point that how Birubala Rabha got involved with witch hunting. It so happened that her eldest son Dharmeshwar Rabha had been mentally challenged since childhood. A certain Deodhani (who,people believed was an incarnation of God) told her husband that their son would die within three days and this was very painful for the whole family but Birubala did not lose heart. However her son did not die and is still alive. But this incident shattered her traditional beliefs and aroused too many questions in her mind about the authenticity of these superstitious beliefs. Right from her childhood she had seen how some women in her village and in the surrounding area were ostracized, tortured mentally and physically and were thrown out of their villages, after being branded as witches. Sometimes even their own families distanced away from them. All this happenings disturbed her but an uneducated tribal woman like her had no idea as how to fight this situation. In an interview to CNN-IBN Birubala Rabha said that to stand against this evil she engaged herself in the village Mahila Samiti and by virtue of being the secretary, she was invited in a discussion by the Assam Mahila Samata Society in Goalpara on the issue of witch hunting. In that meeting there were five women who were victims of witch hunting but when asked by the activists about it, no one was ready to open their mouth even though everyone knew the truth. Birubala was

enraged and so she stood up and disclosed the five women who were the victims of witch hunting .And that was the beginning for Birubala Rabha. She joined the Assam Mahila Samata Society and started visiting rural areas to identify and rescue victims of witch hunting. According to Birubala one of the biggest issues was the deep rooted faith of the people in the village quacks who claimed to treat diseases.

Once when Birubala raised voice against the social boycott of a village lady after branding her as a witch, almost the entire village went against her but she was unfazed and stood her ground. She was forced to resign from her post and was ostracized. She was though not thrown out of the village but was socially boycotted for raising her voice in favour of the witch hunting victim. She dared to oppose a collective decision of the villagers. Initially the villagers expected that she would melt under pressure but when she challenged the villagers, it became a clash of male ego versus women, trying to cross her social limits.

Birubala Rabha remained socially boycotted in her own village for more than three years. In her interview she said that during this period she travelled with NGOs to campaign against witch hunting. Whenever she received any news of witch hunting cases, she would immediately visit the place of occurrence and save the victims who otherwise would have been killed. In a way while fighting for these victims, Birubala Rabha fought for herself and for womanhood. She fought against patriarchy because most of the quacks are men and most o the victims were women. Till date, of all the 35 persons she has rescued, 33 are women and 2 are men. As her acquaintance grew with senior police officers and district administration officials, her morale and confidence grew. With their support she got the strength to convince the people of her village and explain to them as to why they were wrong in what they were doing.

Gradually many people started extending their support to the good work being done by Birubala. The support of the elite and educated society encouraged Birubala more and more. With more courage, commitment, and determination Birubala engaged herself in her fight against the evil of witch hunting. Gradually as she became well known and people began to recognize her endeavours and respect her, people of her own village also started accepting her and tried to understand her views and opinions against the stigma of witch hunting. The same people who had once ostracized Birubala in her own village, now came to realize their mistakes and started sharing the opinion and views of Birubala. After a long gap of three years during which she remained ostricised in her own village , Birubala was inducted once again into her own village with due respect by her own people. Moreover as a result of her closeness to the government officers, she was instrumental in getting the pucca road constructed in the village.

Today Birubala Rabha is a symbol and voice of protest not only against witch hunting but she protests against anything which is illegal, unjust and all sorts of exploitations. Today not only in Goalpara but also in the adjoining eastern and western part of the district of the state Meghalaya, Birubala Rabha is a voice against violence against women, any kind of anti-social activity, social injustice , human rights violation , violence of women's rights etc. Now people look upto her whenever something wrong happens in the society. She is now a strong leader of the crusade against all kinds of injustice in her village and its surrounding areas. Once some innocent boys from her village were arrested by security forces and were branded as rebels. Birubala fought for them and was able to convince the senior police officers and finally was able to seek release of the boys. This incident increased her respect among her village people

and many such incidents were eye openers for them. It is not possible Birubala Rabha to reach every nook and corner of the state with her own limitations and her limited resources.

Birubala Rabha has recently along activist Dinesh Das and a team of volunteers has launched MISSION BIRUBALA to carry on her mission of eradicating witch hunting and she invites educated and conscious citizens to join her mission. The aims and goals of this mission are–

1. To create awareness among the people against all kinds of superstitions and evil traditions.
2. The mission will be totally free from any kind of political interference. It shall be totally independent.
3. Everyone with a scientific outlook and views, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, language are welcome to join this mission.
4. The mission shall be committed towards the all round development of the society and its people like-education, health, art, industry, rehabilitation, employment etc. Moreover it will raise its voice on behalf of protecting the human rights of its citizens and will be alert on deliverance of judicial justice.
5. The mission shall protest against corruption and unite people against it. It will continuously work for the benefit and welfare of the people.

Birubala Rabha has been rewarded with many awards and honours by various organizations , from time to time .

1. In 2005 , Birubala Rabha's name was nominated for World Nobel Peace Prize .
2. In 2005 IBN-18 Network along with Reliance honoured her with 'REAL HEROS' award and presented her an amount of rupees five lakhs.

3. In 2011 Birubala was honoured with 'SAMAJPRAN SARBESWAR DUTTA SMARAK BATA' by S. I. FOUNDATION OF MEDIA ANDSOCIAL WELFARE OF ASSAM, of Jorhat.
4. In 2011, she was honoured with the 'URMILA DAS MEMORIAL AWARD' by ASSAM ACADEMY of Chandmari, Guwahati.
5. In 2012, the ASSAM LADIES' CLUB of Dibrugarh honoured Birubala with the 'SATI JOYMATI AWARD'.
6. In 2012, she received the 'SIGNATURE AWARD' in Guwahati.
7. In 2012 she was also honoured with the 'SUCHIBRATA ROYCHOUDHURY MEMORIAL TROPHY'.

Birubala Rabha was formally felicitated and honoured by many organizations and institutions as–

1. Ellora Science Mancha
2. Nikhil Rabha Jatiya Parishad.
3. Assam Mahila Samata Society.
4. Nikhil Rabha Chhatra Sangtha.
5. Dudhnoi Purbanchal Rabha Samaj.
6. Udalguri Jatiya Parishad.
7. Rabha –Hasong Sahitya Parishad.
8. Sadau Assam Pragatisheel Nari Sangtha.
9. Jharkhand Kalyan Ashram.
10. Darrang Zila Rabha Sahitya Sabha.
11. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi on behalf of the Government of Assam.
12. 'JEEVAN' magazine.
13. Sadou Assam Chattra Sangtha.

A woman like Birubala Rabha with minimum of education, minimum of facilities and minimum of financial

resources has been trying earnestly too make people aware about the inhuman practice of witch hunting which is undoubtedly a serious and uncivilized social evil. To some extent she has been successful in curbing this evil in her own district of Goalpara and the adjoining areas of Meghalaya. But the situation remains grim and unchanged in other parts of Assam. Almost every other day we read about people being tortured to death for being suspected as witches. Police administration, social organizations, government administration and bureaucrats, NGOs, National Women Commission, State Women Commission, the various students' organizations of the state etc. all seem to be mere silent spectators. Till date, there has not been any significant steps taken nor any organized protest has been launched on a wider scale against witch hunting. The police often cite lack of evidences and witnesses to pursue such cases. As a result of this, most of the time the culprits escape without being punished. It is high time that strict laws against the practice of witch hunting are passed by the government and are enforced. We, the educated people of our state, should also take initiative at our own level for spreading awareness and educate the people against such cruel, baseless, illogical, superstitious practices. We should take responsibility of cleaning our society from such evils.

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STRUGGLE AGAINST WITCH HUNTING IN ASSAM: ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS & VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Nabajyoti Dutta

Introduction:

Witch-craft is a century-old belief among people in many a countries of west as well as east. In India, in some rural areas, the *ojha*, a man practicing traditional medicine(also, known as *kabiraj*) is revered for the skills he has acquired to counter this 'black magic.' Witches are also believed to be born with enough powers. However, generally the *kabiraj* is a male one in patriarchal society. When a woman tries to practice traditional medicines—it is considered as an evil thing. In such situation also, rural people suspect the concerned women of practicing 'witch-craft' (in place of 'traditional medicines') and then many a times it is seen that believing her to be the cause of all kinds of deaths, sickness and all other problems—she is killed or severally beaten by the villagers.

In many other cases, it is seen that the victim don't practices even any medicine; but she is branded as 'witch' and punished only after suspicion, However, though mostly women are victims of 'witch hunt', men are also hunted.

Witch hunting: a social dilemma

Witch hunting is a social dilemma mostly disturbing women. It is surprising that in developed western countries like USA, UK etc too this evil practice is still observed. In India, along with Assam in states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharastra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha (formerly Orissa), Jharkhand, Chattishgarh, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya etc. the graveness of the problem is seen rising day by day. If media-reports are to be believed, in India in the last fifteen years— about 2,500 rural women were designated as witches and killed.

Witch hunting—the Assam scenario

The increasing as well as alarming incidents of witch hunting in the state of Assam have shocked the conscious quarters. But, surprisingly no concrete step has been seen initiated by govt. still to prevent such shameful incidents.

At least half of the districts in the state have witnessed witch hunting in recent years. Statistics reveals that more than 116 people had to loss their lives in such incidents in the state during the last decade. Of them 66 are women. However, unofficial sources claim this number be very high including more than 300 women victims.

Struggle against witch hunt in Assam

Witch hunting is a violation of human rights particularly in the context of women in the state. The increasing as well as alarming incidents have shocked the conscious quarters. But, hardly proper steps have been initiated except for a few undertaken by a few social workers as well as few voluntary organizations.

Social worker:

Birubala : the relentless crusader–

Owing to personal bitter experience regarding blind faith of 'witch' in case of her eldest son, Birubala Rabha(Devi), presently a 62 year old widow from Thakurvila village in Meghalaya bordering Goalpara district in Assam started awareness drive personally in her locality about this blind faith and evil practice of witch-hunting. She says, "I was faced with a dilemma when my eldest son suffering from mental problems was diagnosed by an *ojha* to be assailed by a demoness and sentenced to death in 1991.However, still he is alive and presently he is in an asylum in Shillong. From then onwards I have been trying my best to eradicate such evil-practice from the society."

She formed Thakurvila Mahila Samity and worked as the secretary of the body to spread the message of empowerment in all respect among the local woman.

Later, she handled the responsibility as the secretary of greater Barjhara Mahila Samity. In 1999, she came to know about Asom Mahila Samata Society. She attended a meeting of the district project unit of the society in October, 1999 and from then onwards she started working actively with the organization. Since then, she has relentlessly been fighting against this evil besides performing other welfare activities.

She along with her colleagues has been able to save at least 35 lives till the preparation of this seminar-paper—that local people tried to kill branding them as 'witch'. Besides, she has been successful in re-uniting many a victims with their family-members as well as respective villagers—bringing back a touch of trust in their heart.

For this relentless fight against this evil-practice, she was nominated as a possible recipient of Noble peace prize for the

year 2005.Her name was recommended by North-East Network, a Guwahati based NGO. She has also found mention in the Switzerland 1,000 women peace project—which surveyed 1,000 peace women from 150 countries of the world.

In 2008, she was felicitated in Mumbai by Reliance Industries Limited under their third edition of Real Heroes—ordinary people, extra-ordinary service.

She was felicitated first time from the entire north-east region for her two decades long crusade against witch-hunt on November 9, 2010 in Jorhat by SI Foundation for Media & Social Welfare, Asom—a state-level voluntary body. The organization conferred Somajpran Sarbeswar Dutta Memorial Award, 2011 on her. This paper presenter feels proud to be the director-in-chief of the foundation concerned. Later on October 7, 2012 she was also conferred prestigious 'Jaymati Award' by the 'Ladies Club', a frontline women body of Dibrugarh.

…….Alongwith Birubala, there are some other prominent social-workers too like Usha Rabha of Dudhnoi—but Birubala's name comes first as she is the pioneer to start the crusade.

Voluntary Organisation:
'Project Prahari'

The Project Prahari scheme was undertaken by Assam Police in 2001.Kula Saikia, the then DIG(P),Western Range initiated the 'project' in Kokrajhar to intensify drive against this menace, to campaign among village-chiefs as well as elders.The *Project Prahari* scheme has engaged itself in some particular activities to enlighten the villagers against this shameful practice. With the co-operation from the village headmen concerned, the project has successfully been implemented in more than 50 villages mostly in Goalpara district so far—with an objective of empowering the local women.

Asom Mahila Samata Society

Asom Mohila Samata Society, a frontline women organization of the state struggling to improve the plight of the state women by eradicating the hindrances therein—has been struggling against the menace for the last one decade. The women's body with active support from Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and '*Project Prahari*' scheme of Assam Police has been able to rescue many a victims of this evil practice.

The organization established way back in 1996 with its base in Goalpara has been working for total upliftment of the rural women even in the field of health & hygiene, education etc. too. The frontline body has engaged itself particularly in lower Assam districts—Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri, Dhuburi etc. besides expanding its activities to other neighboring states i.e Meghalaya, West Bengal etc. Presently, Mamoni Saikia is the Project coordinator of the body.

Mission Birubala

Mission Birubala is the brainchild of Birubala Rabha(Devi)—established on October 23, 2011—to fight the problem of witch-hunt in a more effective way. The organization headed by Birubala Rabha, headquartered in Guwahati will try its best to expand its activities to all the 'witch-hunt' prone areas in real sense—informed Usha Rabha, an aid of Birubala—while preparing this paper. The body which still awaits registration as an NGO has planned to work in upper Assam areas too very soon.

SI Foundation for Media & Social Welfare, Asom

Birubala Rabha (Devi) was formally recognized by this voluntary organization headquartered in Jorhat for the first time

from the entire north-eastern region by conferring the prestigious 'Somajpran Sorbeswar Dutta Memorial Award, 2011' for relentless crusade to eradicate the evil-practice of witch hunting. From then onwards till date Birubala , her close aid Usha Rabha have been in close touch with the organization. In upper Assam this voluntary body with Ananta Kumar Nath as its Secretary-in-Chief has been trying to create awareness among people against this ill-faith. During October 5-10, 2012 this voluntary body arranged many programmes in Dibrugarh centered on Birubala as well as her struggle against witch hunting. During her stay there under the banner of the organization, an agreement was also made between the foundation and Mission Birubala empowering the foundation to work as the associate organization of the Mission in upper Assam. During her stay there, arrangements were done by the foundation for Birubala to address a huge public gathering there at DRDA Public Hall and there she was accorded warm welcome by more than 30 local organizations. This paper presenter, chief of the foundation interviewed her for the first time for electronic media in Assam on October 5, 2011 on behalf of Dibrugarh Doordarshan (DD North-East) . S.I. Foundation activists also helped her to have her first ever private channel interviews there through the local channels i.e V&S Television, UA Television and UC Manthan Television. On October 6, 2012 two of her interviews were taken by All India Radio- Dibrugarh , one of which was a 'Live' broadcasting. These activities, no doubt helped the people –particularly of upper Assam to understand the motto of Birubala, importance of spreading her struggle among the masses. However, the organization feels that at least a few educated youths of an area—where incidents of witch-hunting occurs have to come forward first; only then organizations like it with the help of administration can take proper steps to fulfill its aim.

'Brothers' and 'Buruj'

'Brothers'

'Brothers'-an NGO headquartered at Guwahati with Dibyajyoti Saikia as its Secretary General has been seen instrumental in Dergaon, Jorhat, Gohpur etc. areas of upper Assam to fight against the evil-practice of witch-hunting. In some cases, the organization have approached local administrations .The body also have organized a few public meetings, press meets etc. to create awareness in this regard.

'Buruj'

'Buruj' is a social organization of Dibrugarh. The body along with other activities, of late has started to act with an aim of eradicating this evil-faith too. After coming to the touch of Birubala under the aegis of SI Foundation, this voluntary body too has started thinking in this regard. On September 21, 2013 the organization staged a full-fledged Assamese drama 'Daainy'(witch) at District Library Auditorium, Dibrugarh to create awareness among people against this social dialemma. The play which was able to touch the hearts of the audience was inaugurated by Birubala Rabha. The same day, the organization organized an awareness meeting at DDR College, Chabua with the co-operation of the college authority which was graced by Birubala Rabha alongwith her close aids.

.....I have just mentioned the activities of Birubala Rabha, the pioneer social-activist and of a few organizations working in this field. There are many such others working with an aim of eradicating the evil-practice of witch-hunting from the society. The need of the hour is to unite all such social-workers as well as organizations under the same umbrella, only then it will be easy to achieve the aim.

What should be done?

Govt. of Assam has not initiated any concrete step yet by criminalizing the evil. In September, 2011 the Assam State Commission for Women—which has a wide-spread mandate to improve women's plight in the state –presented a draft legislation to criminalize witch-hunting. But, it awaits the legal recognition still by the state govt. As a result, the criminals are not getting proper punishment. That is why the legislation must be there. However, it is true that merely passing an act will not surely bring an end to the menace of cruel practice of witch-hunting, but it could be a good beginning. It can at least create panic among the witch-hunters and at the same time can boost the spirit of a few social organizations for struggling against the century-old shameful practice. However, It is a matter of pleasure that of late the Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi during a routine law and order related meeting had instructed the state Home department officials to visit Maharashtra to study the Maharashtra ordinance on witch hunting properly, so that such tough law can be prepared in the state too to combat this social evil.

The govt. should also introduce schemes to create awareness among the students in particular and the public in general in the witch-hunt prone areas regarding this evil-practice.

Conclusion:

We know that articles 14,15 and 16 of constitution of India state that preventing a person from peacefully residing in his/her own locality and from using the common facilities and depriving him/her from pursuing his/her livelihood amounts to the violation of the right of equality. On the other hand, the same matters violate the freedom of a citizen granted under article 19 of the constitution. Again, article 21 of the constitution

proclaims that no one shall b deprived of his/her life and personal liberty except according to the framework established by law.

So, it is an established fact that all kinds of atrocities on a person suspecting him/her a witch as well as witch hunting are totally unconstitutional. So, criminalizing witch hunt and punishing the culprits by introducing strict law is the need of the hour. At the same time, the public–particularly the voluntary organizations, social workers have to take oath to create awareness among people against this evil practice.

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WITCH HUNTING AND THE ROLE OF MEDIA

Smita Bhuyan

Introduction

> **"Witch hunting is like an infectious disease and is slowly spreading to newer areas. Solutions will have to be found to eradicate this evil practice"**
> – Neeva Konwar, National Commission for Women, India.

A witch hunt is a search for witches or evidence of witchcraft, often involving moral panic, or mass hysteria. Before 1750 it was legally sanctioned and involving official witchcraft trials. Witch hunts still occur today in societies where belief in magic is prevalent. In most cases, these are instances of lynching and burnings. Labeling a woman or a man as a witch is a common ploy to grab land, settle scores or even to punish her for turning down sexual advances. In a majority of the cases, it is difficult for the accused to reach out for help and she is forced to either abandon her home and family or driven to commit suicide. Most cases are not documented because it's difficult for poor and illiterate women to travel from isolated regions to file police

reports. The mass media are diversified media technologies that are intended to reach a large audience by mass communication. The technology through which this communication takes place varies. Broadcast media such as radio, recorded music, film and television transmit their information electronically. Print media uses a physical object such as a newspaper, book, pamphlet or comics, to distribute their information. Outdoor media is a form of mass media that comprises billboards, signs or placards placed inside and outside of commercial buildings, sports stadiums, shops and buses. Other outdoor media includes flying billboards (signs in tow of airplanes), blimps, and skywriting. The digital media comprises both Internet and mobile mass communication. Internet media provides many mass media services, such as email, websites, blogs, and internet based radio and television. This evil practice can be broadcast as well as can bring upgrade knowledge to the people. Hence, mass media plays an important role in preventing the evil practice of witch craft.

Role of media in preventing witch craft

Media, in all its diversity, is a primary source of information through which people learn about the world around us. Media is a source of communication through which message is transmitted from sender to receiver. It is the means of communication, as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, that reach or influence people widely. Media helps to bring light the cases related to witch crafts. It helps in transmitting message from a far away place. Thus people can be aware of such practices. Some enlightened people can help such victims. Law can help such victims to recover from such problems. Media either print, or oral media can help people. Oral media is better as it can be known by illiterate people also. The Additional Director-General of Police (communication), Assam Police, Kula Saikia, who was the man

behind Project Prahari, said besides the police and social organisations, the media could play a pivotal role in preventing witch hunting, because although witch hunting had been prevalent since ages, society become aware of it only after newspapers started reporting about such incidents prominently. The original role of the media was and still is to give to the public all relevant information about occurrences in the country and the world. Now the written media includes a host of publications, dailies, fortnightly, weeklies, monthly all giving information about events with supplement of suggestions and comments by learned people. Today, the print media has acquired such proportions that, there is absolutely no avenue of knowledge or information that is left out. Society is influenced by media in so many ways. It is the media for the masses that helps them to get information about this inhuman practice and also to form opinions and make judgments regarding such issues. It is the media which keeps the people updated and informed about what is happening around them and the world. Media has played significant role in making world a global village and to reduce the communication gaps amongst the people living in the far areas.

The AMSS communication and mobilisation strategy

Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS) is an autonomous society registered in 1996 under society registration act 1860. In Assam AMSS has been implementing the main objective of the MS program is to encourage, assist and promote collective reflection, decision- making and group action by women as a means to their empowerment and for equal participation in the process of learning for social change. Birubala Rabha, the pioneer in saving the lives of hundreds of women from the clutches of superstitious villagers and working with the sole aim to uproot the witch hunting problem, is a 59 year old widow from

Thakurvilla, a village on the Assam-Meghalaya border in Goalpara district. Today, Birubala Rabha is a name synonymous with anti witch hunting activism in Assam and holds the record of being the only women from the North-east to be nominated for the Nobel Prize. She was nominated for Nobel Peace Prize, 2005 by an international association called '1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize, 2005' in recognition of her effort to eliminate witch hunting.

Communication & Mobilization Model of AMSS (Source: AMSS)

The communication strategy adopted by AMSS is responsive to this socio-economic reality of the target communities whereby rather than addressing the problem of witchcraft within the target community as a primitive custom, the compositional issues like literacy, health and economic self-reliance are taken up as the initiation agenda. It follows from the understanding that empowerment of the underprivileged women within the community holds the key to addressing this social evil. According to Niva Devi, District Resource Person, Goalpara District Implementation Unit, AMSS, the women within these communities become vulnerable owing to a lack of support system within the family or community; for not being economically self-reliant; and for lack of information about better opportunities. Thus, the focus of the activities has to be on empowerment of women through mitigation of the social inequalities. As it is understood that empowerment of women is about changing social institutions and practices, about changing rules, norms and rights, and about changing the balance between women's obligations and responsibilities. (Elson, 1995)

The AMSS follows a systematic multi-step approach to reach out to the community members and mobilize them

towards collective action. They follow a complete based on extension activities. The first step is to select areas which are backward in multiple aspects – socially, economically and educationally. A situation analysis invariably follows in order to gain extensive understanding of ground realities that determine the prevalent circumstances. The next thing on the agenda is to build rapport with the community. The approach at this point is to gain access into the community and gradually build trust with a small group of people. House visits and discussions in small group meetings not only aid in better understanding of issues but also serve to recognize people's attitude towards the given issues which subsequently lead to identification of potential partners and sympathizers. Once the initial ice is melted, the softer strategy followed in the beginning takes on a little more aggression. The small group meetings are followed up with bigger awareness camps involving more members of the community where the Mahila Samakhya philosophy is gradually introduced. The message delivery mechanism is braced up by further increasing the frequency of house visits to reinforce and emphasize upon the issues brought out during the camps. As things progress a little, efforts are then concentrated towards the formation of women's collectives or sanghas. Women who would have been earlier identified to be prospective associates or moulded during the previous interfacing are motivated to unite towards a common objective. Gradually, the sanghas are strengthened and given a more concrete shape by building the capacities of the individual members through sensitization and training camps. Participatory approaches to engage them in discussions lead to the emergence of issues of relevance and better understanding of the various dimensions and contours of such issues. Issue-wise training and further co-operative discussions serve to deepen the sangha women's involvement with the

problems and intensify their motivation to look for solutions. As these women's collectives grow in strength and their network expands they are mobilized to collective action through process of co-learning and participatory engagement. As they interface with other women, these women too gain a platform for expression of their problems and concerns and gain the strength and courage to fight and resist oppression.

Cases relating to witch hunting

Sometimes lust accompanied by greed motivates miscreants to kill innocent women in the name of witch. In a ghastly incident on June 22, 2011, three members of an Adivashi family, including two female members and a neighbour were lynched in Sonitpur district. The arrested culprits admitted they were instigated by vested interests groups to accuse the deceased family members of practicing witchcraft that caused illness among plantation labourers.

In a village meeting on November 4, 2013 three elderly members of a family were denounced as witches. The following day, about 25 local Karbi youths entered the house and beat them to death. They later buried the bodies in a paddy field. The police so far arrested 20 people for their involvement in the killing. This was the second such witch hunting incident in the same village within a month. In October, 2013 villagers also assaulted a 30–year old woman accusing her of practicing witchcraft. She was subsequently admitted to Nagaon civil hospital in critical condition.

Regina Daimari's is another case. When 23-year-old Daimari's 50-year-old husband died two years ago, he left behind some land. Soon his relatives began hounding the young widow for the property, but she resisted. They then branded her a witch and got her thrown out of the house.

Subhadra Basumatray, 40, a Bodo woman in Tilapara village of Goalpara district in Assam and the mother of three sons and three daughters, had the courage to denounce rituals conducted by the *kavirajs* or *ojhas* or witch-doctors, in her village. She suffered a fractured right arm, broken ribs and badly bruised legs. She had thrice been branded as witch as there had been three instances of a disease affecting people in the village. On the fourth occasion, members of her family ganged up against her, for she demanded a share in the property of her late father. They got the local *ojha*, a woman, to declare Basumatray a witch, saying that she was responsible for the spate of illnesses in the village. On August 25, at 10 p.m., Basumatray was dragged out of her house by a group of people and beaten until 2 a.m. Intervention by her husband proved futile. He was also beaten. The villagers wanted her to confess in writing that she was a sorceress. Various studies undertaken to understand the practice of witch hunting worldwide attribute it to different reasons beyond mere superstition. The vulnerable sections of the society are usually identified as witches with an aim to denounce them from the community and take control over their land, property etc. This is the reason why mostly single women and widows become 'easy scapegoats' and are branded as witches to divest them of their land and property, or punished for transgressing social norms or refusing sexual advances. Witch hunting is also understood as a manifestation of the low social status of women whereby male attitude of dominance and violence against women is legitimized by calling her a witch (Chaudhuri, 2012).

Conclusion

The evil practice of witch craft especially in the tribal population of the North-East, the belief in witches among the indigenous communities of Assam gets perpetuated through a vicious combination of Government apathy and ignorance of the people. It cannot be denied that helpless women become

common targets of witch hunting. According to state government records, 66 women had been killed in witch hunts since 2005 to 2013. A study made by a former IPS Officer on Santhals, observes that "often sickness and land disputes coincided so perfectly that it was difficult to discern which was the real reason for a woman being declared" a witch. The practice of persecuting witches may be as old as witchcraft itself. But, of late there has been a sharp rise in the number of women being denounced as witches and sentenced to gory deaths. This trend is all the more alarming because the victims have often been women from Dalit or tribal communities and the reasons for the "witch hunt" have actually been political, property-related or gender-specific. Media is the mirror of the society. It can make people aware of their rights, expose its violations and focus attention on people and areas in need of the protection of human rights and pursue their case till they achieve them.

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ROLE_OF_MEDIA_IN_SOCIAL_AWARENESS

WITCH HUNTING AND WOMAN IN ASSAM: A CHALLENGE TO MODERNISM

Geetali Sarma
Shubra Ghosh

Introduction

Witch hunting is one of the superstitions in the evolution of the human civilization. According to Raymond Lamont Brown, "Superstition is a belief, or a system of beliefs by which almost all religious veneration is attached to things mostly secular, a parody of religious faith in which there is a belief in an occult or magic connection." Throughout the ages and in all countries people feared what they did not understand, and through religion or science, people tried to satisfy their puzzled minds. Some people accepted these phenomena and simply took up practices of rituals known as superstitions to protect themselves. Superstitions are never based on reason, knowledge or experience and these beliefs centre on luck, prophecy and spiritual gains, particularly the irrational belief that the future events can be influenced or foretold by specific unrelated prior events.

People in the rural areas mostly believe in the 'Ojha', a traditional medicine man also known as the 'Kabiraj' who is

revered for his skills in black magic. These ojhas can cure people by using mantras (magic). During the monsoon season the people of the rural areas suffer from water borne diseases like malaria, cholera and diahorea, and due to the lack of infrastructural facilities in these areas, they are forced to go to the quack doctors for treatment. It is also believed that some ojhas keep domestic ghosts as servants called ' Beera' or 'Beera-Bhoot'. These people believe in the existence of spiritual beings which are the main cause behind sickness, famine, earthquake and many such unnatural calamities. This spiritual being is called 'Daine' (witch) who may be any old man –woman or a young lady. If a female practices traditional medicine it is considered to be an evil.

Background of witch hunting

Witch- hunting dates back to thousands of years when man lived primitive lives. Suffering from diseases was very dangerous as people had to die without proper treatment. During those days there were some wise women who had the knowledge of curing and healing people with herbs. Many people were cured by their home – made natural medicine. They also acted as midwives and assisted in the delivery of babies using plants and herbs to lessen the pain and suffering experienced by a woman during child-birth. At that time Christianity started spreading across Europe and the Clergyman belonging to different Churches could not tolerate the idea of a woman possessing the intelligence and skill of curing others. These learned women were targeted by the church and if an unfortunate incident like miscarriage, still-born or any death occurred due to illness, at the time of undertaking treatment, they were accused of practicing witchcraft or black magic. Ultimately they were brutally tortured, publicly punished which became easier to

arouse fear in the minds of the common people. The word 'witch' is derived from the word 'wicca' which means 'wise one', because of their capacity to heal others through herbs. The church being all powerful accused these women as witches and ordered that all types of treatment with natural medicine can be done only by the man of the church.

Witch hunting is a kind of punishment which was going on in full swing in Europe, England and America during the 16th and 17th centuries. Instances of witch hunting were also present in India during the British period at the outset of modernism. Data are available of these brutal activities in the states of Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Assam and other north-eastern states. For the first time these superstitious beliefs were noticed among the Santhals, Bodos and Adivasis which came to the limelight after1980. According to a source (The Times of Assam), 2500 people were victims of witch craft from 1995 - 2009, an average of 150-200 per year. According to a CID report eleven cases of witch-hunting were registered in 2010, 29 cases in 2011, and 14 cases in 2012.

Mayong in Assam is known to be a land of black magic, which is the biggest center of black magic in Asia. The word Mayong has originated from the word 'Maya' (illusion) which is full of supernatural stories. Black magic has been in practice till today among the other tribes and communities along the Brahmaputra valley. For example, the Rabhas worship 'Daine' (Tikar) in order to get immediate relief from some special diseases. According to them there are two types of Tikar, namely 'Byoti kar' (Maha kali) and 'Kyoti kar'(Nara daine). Daines are also worshipped in two other forms named 'Byoti kar' (Laxmi) and 'Kiti kar'(dog-witch). Another belief prevelant among the Dimasa community is the presence of four types of Dainees - Madaidakhin, Diligic, Jagama and Chagaingic who were born

to harm people. The people in the Bodo community believe in Modai(invisible spiritual beings)and in order to appease them they make frequent offerings of pigs ,goats, poultry, rice, plantains etc. People who are harmed by these dainees take help from the Ojhas to cure themselves. Till now people in the civil societies believe in the presence of witches in the name of 'pisol Manuh, Ulanga manuh etc.

Incidents of witch hunting in Assam

In this era of modernism we witness several cases of witch-hunting in Assam which has caused destruction of many innocent families. It is a common phenomena specially in the rural areas of Kokrajhar, Baksha,Chirang, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Sibsagar, Cachar, Goalpara and Bongaigaon. Examples of some cases of witch hunting are shown in the table below from the period of 2003-2009

Victims of Witchcraft in Assam From the Year 2006 –2009

DISTRICT	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009
KOKRAKHAR	12	03	01
GOALPARA	02		
SONITPUR	06	01	05
BAKSHA	04	02	04
CHIRANG	03		02
SONITPUR	06	01	05
KAMRUP			02
SIBSAGAR	01		
NOWGONG		01	
DHEMAJI			01

Source:*Various issues of newspaper.*

Within a span of four months in 2011, six persons belonging to ST, SC, OBC and MOBC were brutally murdered in different villages of lower Assam. Again a middle aged tribal

couple was harassed and killed on Nov 21, 2012, at Tangshigami village in Chirang. In the year 2013, from January upto the month of August, nine persons were brutally murdered in different districts of Kokrajhar, Baskha, and Chirang. In another incident a couple was severely attacked by a group of people belonging to political party,in Lahowal, Dibrugarh dist. Fortunately they were able to save their lives but their house was totally burnt down.

Factors responsible for witch craft

Taking into account the various records of witchcraft we can derive different factors responsible for these types of barbaric atrocities on the victims of superstition which are mentioned below-

Extreme poverty and illiteracy
Absence of health –care facilities
Blind faith in certain religious beliefs in the remote villages
Lack of scientific knowledge
Poor socio-economic status of some communities
Lack of basic infrastructural facilities
Political interest
Mental imbalance due to alcoholism
Grudge or personal hatred against women to grab land
Turning down of sexual advances by a woman
Absence of women empowerment
Absence of gender sensitivity

Woman and modernism

The term modernism is a set of cultural tendencies and an array of associated cultural movements, originally arising from wide scale and far reaching changes to western society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modernism was a revolt against the conservative values of realism. It was embraced by the society

when people felt that the traditional forms of art, architecture, literature, religious faith, social organisation and daily life were becoming outdated in the new economic, social and political conditions of an emerging and fully industrialised world.

Gender issues have always been a topic of discussion both in society and literature, and therefore it became an important subject matter for the modernist movement. For centuries women have always been regarded as inferior to men and are victimised in the name of superstition. According to James Branch Cabell, Women were considered nothing more than conveniences; they were useful for keeping a household as well as for copulation and pleasure. Throughout centuries evil has always been attributed to women. Male philosophers and social theorists identified women with disorder, savagery, chaos and unreasonable. Evil as a trait dates back to the Biblical allusion of Eve's temptation of Adam in the Garden of Eden, where Eve had been designed to be the victim of temptation and these traits were thought to be in women till the early part of twentieth century. But with the progress of modernity women started becoming economically, financially and intellectually independent which in turn has become a threat to the male-domination. At present "Indian society shows a strange mixture of traditional and modern values. On the one hand we have the belief that women must get education, employment, better health care and more freedom of choice; we also accept their entry into the professions and possessions of power. On the other hand the basic view of women as inferior and subordinate remains unchanged"(Kudchedkar&Al-Issa). Manu, the great philosopher, said long ago—"Where woman are honoured there resides God." But it is very unfortunate that even in the modern society women become the victims of deep rooted superstitions.

The modern age has shown progress in various fields, in which women have come out with flying colours. Their contributions in politics, social services, science and technology have also been quite significant. To mention only a few of them— Indira Gandhi –Prime Minister, Prativa Patel- President of India, Meira Kumar- Speaker of Lok Sabha, Kiran Bedi –IPS, Bechendri Pal- conqueror of Mt. Everest, Kalpana Chawla- traveller to the space, Kamaljit Sandhu – Asian Games Gold Medalist, Saina Nehwal and Mary Kom- bronze medallists of Olympics. Even after establishing themselves, the police records in India show a high incidence of crimes against women which is rising alarmingly day by day and they have to struggle against such social evils in the male-dominated society.

In such a situation, being women we are often perplexed by a set of questions. Do we exist in a civilized society? Can we call ourselves human beings? The land where women are worshipped in the forms of Goddess, can we accept these gruesome activities to keep on happening? Is it not a challenge and shame to modern civilization? Cannot we try for some solutions?

Measures of eradication

Poverty eradication policies of the Government should be extended to the remote areas. Economic packages and special schemes for women should be implemented along with suitable resource allocation for loss of livelihood and property. The mission Literacy for all should reach each and every corner of the state. Importance must be given to informal and women education.

Improvement of health care is the most important factor in the rural areas National Rural Health Mission.(NRHM) can provide necessary facilities in inaccessible areas . Health policies should be nationalised and public consciousness is an important factor. Experienced doctors should come forward to serve the

poor and needy villagers so that the rural folk are not forced to go to the ojhas or quack doctors in the hour of need.

Knowledge based on science against superstitious beliefs should be used to change the mindset of the people.

Infrastructural facilities along with sanitation, drinking water must be upgraded in the inaccessible areas. It is often noticed that health care and educational infrastructure is very poor in most of the tribal dominated areas. For example in the year 2010 in Parbotjhara subdivision of Kokrajhar there was only one MBBS doctor entrusted with the duty of treating a large number of population.

Local administration should take proper steps, so that innocent people are not politically harassed in the name of superstition.

Proper training can be given to women of rural areas to make them eligible for self employment and thereby make them financially empowered. The role of co-operative societies and the self help Groups can play a vital task in improving the socio-economic status of women.

The government has to implement stringent legal action to eradicate the menace of witch hunting from our society.

Intellectual people should come forward to form strong public opinion to create awareness among the masses.

Conclusion

Witch hunts still occur today in societies where belief in magic is predominant. Cases of witch hunts in the recent period are continuously reported by UNHCR of the UNO as violation of human rights. It is very depressing that in India only a handful of states (Bihar, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra etc.) have laws against witch-hunting. In most cases it constitutes an attempt to murder. "Witch hunting cases are dealt with under Section 323 IPC that

prescribes just one year of imprisonment and a fine of just Rs.1000. Such laxity could tempt criminals to commit heinous crimes for selfish gains under the guise of witch hunting."(Social activist Prativa Brahma). It is important to note that different individual and social organisations are making a collective effort to prevent this social evil, but till today positive results are not forthcoming due to the lack of initiative and strong action from the administration. Government of Assam, National Women Commission with Social Welfare and health department made a proposal to work together against this system, but practically it has not done. Different students' Union, NGO'S, Bodo Women's Justice Forum, Bodo Sahitya Sabha and some other organisations like Ellora Bighyan Mancha, Brother's-A, Journalist Forum, etc are making continuous effort to eradicate this social evil. Another organisation named the Assam State Commission for Women (ASCW) has undertaken a project called 'Targeted Intervention and Prevention of witch hunting in affected areas of Assam.' Ms. Promila Rahang a victim of witch hunt was fortunate enough to be saved by ASCW from the clutches of these people of blind faiths. It is very unfortunate to note that the commission has been repeatedly urging the police personnel to be prompt in registering the cases of the victims but most often the police personnel are found reluctant to register such cases.

It is found that sometimes literacy is not a barrier for superstition. As for example in the recent incident of East Khasi Hills which is considered to be the most progressive district with the highest percentage of literates, it is ironical to find that people are facing the brunt of beliefs that have cost much loss of lives. The media has therefore to play an important role to launch a massive campaign in every nook and corner of the state against superstition.

It is praiseworthy and a matter of pride to find courageous individual like Birubala Rabha fighting against witch hunting inspite of being illiterate and facing a lot of trouble from the superstitious society which she belonged. Upen Rabha Hakasam ,who has been fighting against this social evil feels that this deep rooted custom can be changed if the victims themselves come forward to assert their rights without any fear. It has also been difficult to fight against this issue because of certain religious practices associated with it. In a similar circumstance, Narandra Daboholkar, an anti-superstition campaigner, had to lose his life while pushing for a law to crackdown on black magic. . The Assam Government has taken initiative to enforce law to combat against witch hunting. Our honourable Chief Minister Mr. Tarun Gogoi ensured to take stringent steps so that innocent people are not targeted in the name of witch hunting. It is our earnest hope that the efforts and sacrifice of the great crusaders of anti-superstition do not go in vain.

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WITCH HUNTING AND THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

Nripen Das
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Bandana Deka

The word "witch" means a person, now especially a woman, who professes or is supposed to practice magic, especially black magic or the black art. It can also mean a female magician or sorceress and a woman supposed to have dealings with the devil or evil spirits and thereby able to perform supernatural acts. The performance of such acts is what we know and understand as "witchcraft".

The Christian concept of witchcraft as a sin has a long history. When the Church gradually began to build its beliefs and laws based on the Bible, it incorporated the idea that supernatural power was meant to belong to God alone. Hence, it considered any kind of witchcraft as a rebellion against God's biblical rules. Consequently witchcraft became one of the most horrible sins one could be accused of and its punishment too was also equally gruesome.

Actually the term "witch hunting" had its origin in medieval Europe. Literally, the word meant hunting for witches. From the 14th to the 15th century, a witch hunting epidemic prevailed

in Europe, and many thousands of innocent people were tortured and executed in fanatical and hysterical persecution. Because of their ignorance, fear, intolerance and dogmatism, thousands of human beings lost their lives. The majority of the victims were women as the clergy thought them to be more open to the Devil's influence than men. However, thousands of men and even children were killed too. Many of the victims were lynched by angry mobs, while others were ceremoniously executed in church-approved public gatherings by hanging, decapitation; pressing with heavy stones, or burning alive at the stake.

After Europe, the fear of witches and witchcraft reached America when the first English settlers took it to their new colonies. In 1692, a series of notorious witch trials took place in Salem, Massachusetts. In all twenty seven people were tried and convicted. Of these, nineteen were hanged and one man was pressed with stones. The special court imprisoned about one hundred and fifty more. The witch hunt was brought to a halt and those imprisoned were freed in 1693. Fortunately, the fear of being attacked by evil, devil-worshipping, human-sacrificing witches has declined in the Western world with the evolution of society. Nowadays most Western people are more educated and less vulnerable to superstition and religious and fundamentalism than their old European ancestors.

But unfortunately enough, the horrifying menace of witch hunting reveals its ugly face every now and then in India, particularly in its North Eastern region. In spite of the tremendous progress in science and technology, education and social awareness, we are shocked to hear about cases of witch hunting almost every day. Most people think that illiteracy, superstitious beliefs and mass ignorance are the chief causes of such barbaric, in human and dastardly acts. But the amazing fact is that these are not the only and, sometimes even, the actual reasons.

If one observes carefully, one will find that most of the perpetrators of the crimes are motivated and propelled by the greed for land, property and revenge. Again it is often noticed that the quacks who fail to save the ailing persons are usually victims of their family's revenge. In this connection we would like to mention that our findings and observations will solely be based on the witch hunting related cases recorded in Assam. It would be worthwhile to point out that the Assam State Commission for Women is not happy at all with the police inaction in most of the cases related to witch hunting. Along with this, students, women activists and social workers in the backward North Eastern States are deeply concerned over the increasing killings in some remote areas of Assam. They are apprehensive that the social menace of witch hunting will soon spread to the other states as the same factors and illiteracy are prevalent in the entire region.

But what is causing concern among them is that in the past, the villagers used to banish men women branded as witches from their respective villages. However, from the early 1990's, the villagers had started killing these witches and most of their victims are women.

It is interesting to note that the entire region of Assam is worse-hit by this superstitious practice. Only a close examination reveals that the perpetrators of this crime were actually motivated by their petty, selfish and vested interests like greed for land, property and revenge. According to the police, the prime accused persons are those who stand to gain at the branded witches. Another startling fact is that witch killings are reported mostly in the monsoon season due to the outbreak of several deadly diseases. When an ailing person could not be saved despite administering herbal concoctions, the quacks and "shamans" are branded and killed in revenge by the family members.

Unfortunately enough, the police claim of having arrested the criminals has not served as a deterrent since there are increasing instances of killings. As such many non-governmental organizations are mulling over the possibility of launching massive awareness campaigns in some of the North Eastern States. For instance, the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), an organization of the tribal students, has launched an awareness programme among the villagers. As a result of this, during the campaign launched from 2004, at least forty-five persons, who were earlier banished from their respective villages after being branded as witches, had been rehabilited. But sadly enough, the government has not extended a helping hand towards the rehabilitation of these persons. Besides, no financial solarium is given to the bereaved family members of the slain witches.

Deeply troubled by such indifferent attitudes of the local government and the police authorities, several NGOs have made a public appeal to condemn witch hunting and take a stance against the social evil. NGOs, which include North East Network, Assam Mahila Samata Society, Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti, Sadou Asom Pragatisheel Nari Santha, Women in Governance (WinG) and New.NET, request the public as well as the concerned authorities to support their appeal for the greater good of our society. The appeal demanded that witch hunting be recognized as a shameful act and a gross violation of an individual's right to life of dignity and security, to recognize women as a risk group and most vulnerable in witch-hunting which also encourages mitigation and displacement and finally into trafficking sexual abuse. The NGOs also mentioned the need to bring up a State policy to combat the discriminatory and harmful practice of witch hunting and associated violence against women. Along with this the NGOs sought immediate

rescue of all the family members and provision for the necessary protection and social reintegration.

One praiseworthy step taken by the State police is that it had decided to join hands with the State Women Commission and other voluntary organizations to combat the menace of witch hunting in Assam. Assam police, in 2001, started Project Prahari following the death of five persons in the name of witch hunting in an under developed village called Thaigarguri in Kokrajhar district.

It is clear, therefore, that the police want to expand their programme and fight the superstition more effectively. This was disclosed by the then Additional Director General of Assam Police, Kula Saikia. Social activists and experts during a consultation advocated a special legislation and State action plan to deal with witch hunting which was showing no signs of relenting even as the state boasts of ushering in development in many fronts. In this regard Assam State Women Commission Chairperson Mridul Saharia said that the superstition of witch hunting was mostly prevalent in Kamrup (Rural), Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur and Karbi Anglong districts.

Over fifty civil societies and many social activists in Assam have jointly demanded National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) should be involved in fighting the superstition of witch hunting. The Sadou Asom Bodo Samaj has demanded formulation of a strict law to deal with witch hunting killings of Bodo inhabited areas and other areas of Assam. The different voluntary organizations have expressed deep concern over the fact that nearly two to three hundreds of people lose their lives in the state every year in incidents of witch hunting.

And it is here that the various NGOs and voluntary organizations can play a vital role in removing the plague of

witch hunting. They can do so by creating a mass awareness among the people living in the backward areas in ways such as by organizing educational camps and thereby sensitizing them about the evils of the menace. They can also, in the process, do away with the different types of misconceptions and myths that people generally associate with witch hunting. Again they can help the local people to constitute some sort of patrol and security (defence) group which can keep an alert eye and check the harmful activities of such people who indulge themselves in witch hunting.

In the award winning documentary "The Great Indian Witch Hunt" shown in the National Geographic channel, it was brought to light that despite the brilliant success of initiatives like Project Prahari, it has not received due support from the government of Assam to spread it state-wide and eradicate superstitions and social evils. It is not known how much the NGOs are doing in this regard. The role of NGOs should be based on total commitment in synchronization with government efforts. Political lobbies as well as vested interests should not be used to satisfy their narrow interests by glamorizing the position of witch-doctors among tribal communities. Various science societies can use the concept of vigyan yatra to educate the people in the remote villages that witches do not exist on earth. If one has any disease, one should go to the doctor in the nearest hospital.

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EDUCATION: AN IMPORTANT REMEDY FOR ERADICATION OF WITCH HUNTING IN ASSAM

Gitika Sarma

Introduction

In this advanced age of civilization human being have achieved great success in science and technology. But in suppressing the wild instincts within themselves they have failed very badly. This can be seen in the rapid increase of violence and crime in present human society. Once upon a time the entire north east was known for its peaceful atmosphere and simplicity of the behaviour of its people. But unfortunately in the last few years all types of crimes specially crime against women have increased in such a way that it is now known as one of the most violent states of India. Besides the other crimes, witch hunting is the most dangerous one. In the tribal dominated and backward areas of Assam like BTAD areas, Sonitpur , Udalguri, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Karbi Anglong Dhubri, lakshimpur, Tinsukia etc. witch hunting nowadays is quite common. In most of the incidents some particular individual especially women are supposed as witchs or 'dainis' and are held responsible for any

bad incident like epidemic or unknown disease in their village. Once the village ojha declare any individual as the culprit for such bad incident, then that person is supposed as evil element or 'daini' by the illiterate village people. The village people either drive them out from the village or beaten to death. Originally although unknowingly people performed this evil practice, but nowadays influential personalities with evil intention involve in this practice The vulnerable section of the society are usually identified as witches with an aim to denounce them from the community and take control over their land, property etc. This is why mostly single women and widows become easy 'scapegoat' and are branded as witches to divert them of their land and property or punished for transgressing social norms or refusing sexual advances. The illiterate village people guided by superstitions easily motivated by those cunning personalities and involve themselves in such barbaric practice. In this way in a country like India which ranks at 129 out of 149 in gender inequality index, each year an estimated 200 women are killed as witches. 81 cases of witch hunting were reported in the state between 2006 and 2010. While 57of these victims were physically tortured, the rest were brutally murdered.

During middle age although witch hunting was prevalent in western countries, nowadays no such evil practice is seen in western society. Now the question is why in this modern age such an unscientific and illogical practice is prevalent in Assam? Actually ignorance of the village people due to lack of education is the main cause of it. As our village society is still dominated by superstitious beliefs, we can not say that India has achieved any development. Although free and compulsory primary education system has been introduced in India, in fact nothing has been done to remove the darkness of ignorance from the rural and backward areas of India and of Assam in particular. So

in this paper an attempt has been made to study the witch hunting problem in Assam and to examine the role of education in eradicating the problem of witch hunting.

Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are-

1. To study the problem of witch hunting in Assam and to find out the root cause of it.
2. To examine the role of education in eradicating the problem of witch hunting from Assam.

Methodology

Data used in this study are mainly taken from secondary sources like books, journals, newspapers and internet.

Problem of witch hunting in Assam

The history of witch hunting in Assam dated back to several hundred years. During the period of 14th to 17th century prosecution of witches had led to the torture and murder of thousand of innocent women and men even children. In the classic book, "Witches, Midwives and Nurses- a History of women Healer" Written by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English explores how in the middle age the witch hunts were well organized, campaigned, initiated, financed and executed by church and state. However in England, Scotland and Ireland between 1542 and 1735 a series of witch craft laws were passed to punish the individuals practicing or claiming to practice witch craft and magic. Witchcraft still occurs today in societies where belief in magic is predominant like some African countries, Srilanka, New Guinea, Nepal, rural India etc. The states in India where witch hunting is practiced are—Gujarat, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Assam.

In Assam and other north eastern states, the practice of witch hunting is not a new one. Mayong in Marigaon district, now a major tourist hub, used to be known as the Indian capital of black magic. The practice of witch craft was patronized even by many kings across the state during premedieval period. Witch craft is prevalent amidst several communities and particular tribes across the Brahmaputra Valley like Bodo, rabha, hajong, mishing. Cachari, Adivasi etc. Basically the tribal people believe in old customs and superstitions. Moreover the area where they live is backward, remote, and lacking minimum required modern facilities of livelihood. In other words the socio economic condition of interior rural tribal society in Assam is too poor to cope with modern thinking and modern life style. As a result of it, in witch hunting affected areas local people refuse to condemn this heinous practice. Behind the problem the main cause is illiteracy and lack of proper educational infrastructure. Only because of their ignorance when someone is seriously ill, the village people following the advice of the 'bez' or ojas (local healer) held some innocent person responsible for the illness. As the illiterate peoples can not recognize what is wrong and what is right, treat that person as 'daini' (evil element) and torture upon him or her inhumanly. It is also said that lack of proper medical facilities in remote areas of Assam is an important cause of witch hunting. It is true, but if they would have proper education definitely they would not believe in the sayings of the 'ojas' and would be able to take minimum health care treatment by themselves when epidemic occurs in their village. Education provides scientific outlook and the power of logical interpretation of any thing. Another aspect of the problem is that at present in many cases of witch hunting it is found that some greedy influential persons with personal motive try to grab the property of lonely individual specially woman and branded

her as witch. Illiterate and poor village people are not given to participate in the decision making process of the village. Therefore in many such cases they could not protest when their dare ones were brutally tortured or murdered in the name of witch hunting. Women are mostly targeted as witches because the position of women in our society is still lower than men. As the village people are lacking basic education, so most of them are not aware about the fact that killing of innocent people in the name of witch hunting is a crime. Therefore along with general literacy, legal literacy is also needed in those areas. Birobala Rabha, one of the eminent social workers against witch hunting is also of the opinion that absence of education is creating the major problem in removing this practice from the village areas. In this regard the NGO of Assam Mahila Samata Samity has played an outstanding role to improve the condition of health care, education, and also promote awareness for this social cancer.

The following table 1 shows the presence and increasing rate of witch hunting incidents in Assam in the last seven years.

Table No -1

Year	No. of cases
2006	21
2007	7
2008	10
2009	4
2010	11
2011	29
2012	14

Source: *Dainik Assam, August 24th, 2013*

One important thing here to be noted that the problem of witch hunting occurs in some particular areas only, which are characterized by backwardness and poor educational infrastructure like Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Goalpara, Baska, Chirang, Karbi Anglong, Sonitpur, Udalguri, Tinsukia etc. On the basis of the census reports of 1991, 2001 and 2011, table no- 2 shows the level of literacy in some districts of Assam and proves that in witch hunting affected districts literacy level is lower than the other districts. The table also shows that in developed areas literacy rate is higher than the backward areas. Although it is not shown in the table, as per census report of 2001 there was a large gender gap in literacy rate, 71.93% for male and 56.03% female. It is more visible in witch hunting affected areas. For example in 2011 census report male literacy rate in Kokrajhar district was 73.44% while female literacy was 59.54%. Then again the process of urbanization in those areas is also slow. For example, as per 2011 census, 98.71% of population of Baksa district lives in rural area while only 1, 29% lives in urban area.

Table No -2

District	**Literacy Rate (%)**		
	1991	**2001**	**2011**
Kokrajhar	40.47	51.63	66.63
Dhubri	38.36	48.21	59.36
Goalpara	46.81	58.03	68.67
Barpeta	43.24	56.24	65.03
Marigaon	47.95	58.53	69.37
Sonitpur	48.14	59.00	69.96
Kamrup	65.04	74.16	72.81

Jorhat	65.51	76.33	83.42
Sibsagar	64.46	74.47	81.36
Chirang			64.71
Baksa			70.53
Kamrup (metro)			88.66
Karbi Anglong	50.28	60. 95	73.52
Nalbari	55.99	67.23	79.89
Bangaigaon	49.06	59.33	70.44
Tinsukia	50.28	60.96	70.92
Lakshimpur	58.96	68.56	78.39
Karimganj	57.76	67.62	79.72

Source: census report.

The reason behind low level of education in those areas is not one, but many more like poverty, unemployment, lack of required number of primary schools and teachers, lack of proper management of primary education, lack of toilet facilities for girl students, insufficiency of school and teachers, unwillingness of parents and children for studies, unwillingness of the teachers to work in remote areas and so on.

If we examine the problem from the point of view of the communities affected by this practice, it is seen that all these communities like Bodos, Hajongs, Adivasis, Mishings, Rabhas, Karbis etc. are marked by some serious economic and social problems like insufficient infrastructural facilities, economic backwardness, negligence of women education, superstitions and conservative attitude. Thus in this age of modernization most of the witch hunting affected areas are still living in lower level of civilization. Of the three basic pillars of rural development village

school, village panchayat and village co- operative, the school is the most vital component of human development and the most enduring tool for rural transformation. Considering the fact Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan has been launched in 2001 throughout the country including Assam. Unfortunately it has not been working properly in rural Assam. And therefore problem like witch hunting becoming more serious and it has gravely polluted the image of Assamese people. Efforts have been made in different levels to remove the menace from our society. Project Prahari of Assam Police, organizations like Assam Mahila Samata Samity (AMSS), All Bodo Studens Union (ABSU), All Bodo Women Justice Forum, Assam Northeast Network, and State Commission for Women etc. are actively working in this regard. But most of the women who are branded as witches are still living in tremendous miserable condition. They are homeless, property less and some of them are psychologically so badly affected that they are not even able to come out of the trauma. Recently not only the woman but her male family members are also targeted for witch hunting. As there is no separate law for the accused of witch hunting, they are tried under criminal laws. Therefore the culprits are not afraid of punishment after doing such heinous crime. Actually it is more like a social issue rather than criminal issue. It should be treated as serious issue of human rights violation.

Findings

From the above description regarding the problem of witch hunting in Assam, following facts are found.

1. Witchcraft had been practiced in Assam from long period of time.
2. The tribal dominated rural areas of Assam are worst affected by witch hunting because of intense lack of education, poor medical facilities, lack of health care knowledge, socio-economic backwardness and belief on superstition.

3. Because of illiteracy and ignorance of village people, influential and greedy peoples can easily grab the property of lonely women in the name of witch hunting.
4. The level of literacy in witch hunting affected areas is low in comparison to other areas of Assam.
5. In those areas with low female literacy rate in comparison to male literacy, indicates dominance of patriarchy and low level of women empowerment.
6. Low level of education makes the village people conservative and superstitious. This in turn leads to no access to information and lack of scientific outlook.
7. Awareness programs against the menace have been initiated by different organizations at different levels; but to educate the village people in real sense of the term lots of things have to be done.

Suggestions

Witch hunting is a serious problem in Assam which is deeply rooted with the belief system of the tribal community. So its solution needs proper observation of the problem. Considering the fact some suggestions are given below.

1. Local social workers of witch hunting affected areas have to let the concerned authority know about the poor educational infrastructure in the village and to actively take part in building an educational atmosphere in the village.
2. Transport and communication system in remote areas of Assam should be developed under governmental initiative so that school teachers and doctors do not hesitate to work there and at the same time village people can get proper medical and educational facilities and can have access to the world of information.
3. Adult education should also be introduced so that the

ignorant people can change their mindset and can develop scientific outlook.

4. Along with general education, legal education should also be given importance. Because people should be given to know that for every crime there is punishment.
5. Girl and women education should be given special attention so that their self confidence can be developed and they can be empowered.
6. As various organizations are working for the same cause so a proper coordination among them can make the movement against witch hunting more strong and affective.
7. NGOs can invite educationists, media persons, psychologists, lawyers, police, and doctors etc. to impart informal education in their respective fields to the witch hunting affected area, so that the conservative attitude and old beliefs of village people can be replaced by rational and scientific outlook.
8. To keep the children far from the effects of this superstitious belief, in the curriculum of primary education a topic can be given on witchcraft in the past and its bad effects at present.
9. The State Human Rights Commission in Assam should take necessary action when someone is tortured in the name of witch hunting.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above discussion it may be concluded that witch hunting is not a problem of some particular areas or some particular tribes, it's a problem of our Assamese society which was in the past known for its simplicity and generosity. As this practice is deep rooted in the social system of some communities, simply introduction of new laws or exposing the

evil practice through media alone can not eradicate it from the society. Knowledge can eradicate this darkness of ignorance and education can give such knowledge. Education can play a multidimensional role like – infusing in the minds of the village people the capacity to understand what is wrong and what is right, to protest against evil things, to become economically self dependent, to understand health care measures and above all it can provide the village people accessibility to information so that they can remain safe and develop themselves.

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WITCH HUNTING – A MAJOR CHALLENGE TO WOMEN AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN ITS ERADICATION

Archana Deka

Introduction

Human existence is incomplete without women. They constitute half of the world population; contribute more than half of duties and responsibilities to the family. Existence of the society is completely impossible without the female members. Both male and female members are equally important for effective organization and development of the society. Women are the most precious human resource and creator of the society.

They are most victimized category over the world. Right of women is grossly violated in every sphere of life. One of the most deep rooted causes of womens' human rights violation which has continued to be active from the older times in the world is witch hunt. Witch hunt is the strong superstition and prejudice of people in our society. It is a major challenge to women at present era. Labelling a woman as a witch is very common thing in places like Rajasthan, Maharashtra along with North-East India. It is mainly practiced in tribal dominated areas

of North-East India. Suspected women are publicly beaten, paraded naked in the village.

It happens because women are not educated and economically sound. Therefore, education must play a greater role to eradicated witch hunt from the society. Education always tries to create awareness among the women folk to make them aware to their rights. Education must help women to stand against witch hunting.

So in this paper an attempt has been made to investigate about witch hunt and its development in the society with special reference to women. This paper also highlights the role of education in eradication or root out women witch hunting.

Objectives

- To highlight the superstitions, beliefs, prejudices suffered by women in North-East India
- To emphasise on witch hunt
- To focus on the social status of women in tribal dominated areas.
- To develop awareness among women through education
- To make aware of their rights and responsibilities
- To root out women witch hunt from the society

Data Collection

The study is based on secondary sources. Secondary data sources are :-

- Libraries
- Books
- Journal
- Magazine
- Newspaper
- Research Proposal etc.

Witch Hunting-The Dangerous Prejudice

At present, the very strong and dangerous prejudice, superstition and belief are 'Witch hunting'. This prejudice exists in the scientific era of 21st century. The belief of witch contributes to create the environment of witch killing. The concept of witch was developed in ancient period and on the basis of this belief the witches were killed by the public.

In Indiaspecially in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar and Assam the witch hunting nourished. The witch hunting system is more in the areas of Assam Tribal areas, Bodo, Rabha and Tea schudual people etc. It is mainly prevailing among depresses and weaker section of the society and minorities. For example, we can mention that the event of DASPUR (West Midnapore) regarding witch hunting is noticeable. In a chilling reminder of the honour killing in Haryana on rulings by Khap Panchayats, three women from two adivasi dominated villages in West-Midhapore's Daspur area were stripped, beaten to death and buried on the banks of Kasai river on Tuesday evening on October 18, 2012 after a salishi sabha decreed them guilty of witchcraft. One of them was tortured and all of them, aged between 40 and 70, were stripped before being beaten to death. The son of one of the victims identified the bodies on Wednesday, his mother Sambari Sing (40) grandmother Fulmoni (70) and his mother's Namesake, a 50 years old neighbour from adjacent Harirajpur village.

Witch hunting and Women with Special Reference to Assam

Witch hunting is a major problem for women. In the man dominated society they have become the victims of numerour superstitions social evil etc. The situation of Assam regarding women human right violation has been going from worse to worse. Regarding the condition of tribal women especially in

Bodoland, we have noticed that there is a very gloomy picture of their family life. Superstitions, beliefs, black magic and demonology are integral to tribal customs in part of Assam. In tribal dominated area a mere superstition of witch hunt has taken away a considerable number of lives of women. Many innocent villagers are expelled from the village on the charge of being witch.

The suspected women are publicly beaten, their heads shaved off, gang raped or parade naked in the village, all because they happen to be all powerful witches who had wrecked in the village. There is no scientific reason behind this. It generally happens in places like Bodoland, Tribal dominated areas where there is almost no economic development with little or no access to basic education and health care. In Kokrajar, Goalpara, Dudhnoi, Bishwanath Chariali, Krishnai of Assam,, we notice some of these cases. In this kind of atmosphere people tend to develop a very strong superstitious belief and anything bad that might befall on these villagers like bad crop, disease, sudden death of someone or drying of well tend to be considered the work of some evil witch. It is woman who is branded a witch.

In the tribal dominated areas of Assam, the status of women is very miserable. The victim of woman witch hunt has often been from SC/ST communities and weaker section of the society. The reason of witch hunt has often been for political representation, property rights related and gender specific. Thousands of women were killed in that area on the charges of being witch.

According to Indian Human Rights 2006, in Assam lots of women become the victim of evil practice of witch killing. In majority of the cases it is difficult for the accused woman to reach out for help and she is forced to either abandon her home

and family or driven to commit suicide or is brutally murdered.

In Assam, we see that the women such as, Birubala Rabha, Subbhadra Basumotary, Usha Rabha etc. are working on wiping out of superstitions that lead to witch hunting deaths in various tribal areas of the state. Birubala Rabha is an eminent social worker in Goalpara district. She has been nominated for Samajpara Sarbeswar Dutta memorial award in 2011 by the SIF foundation for media and social welfare Assam. Birubala Rabha and Subhadra Basumotary are fighting against witch hunting because they suffered in the belief of witch hunt. But they were able to overcome death for their brave and logical power and since then have relatively been fighting against this evil.

It was the most dangerous and fearful evil of witch hunting happened in a village of Bishwanath Chariali on 18th March, 2006. That day five members of one family were killed and their heads were shaved off. These are very common things with tea schedule caste and tribes of Assam.

Another case happened in Mirza of Kamrup district. In the village Rajapur near Mirza one old couple was killed on the charge of being witch. The man and woman working in tea garden always sacrifice their life for suspected of other people as witch.

Witch hunt still occurs today in the societies of Assam. The evil of witch is increasing day-by-day. On 22nd August, 2013 at Kokrajhar, we have noticed that three persons become the victim of witch hunting. They are Biren Basumotary, aged 60 years, of village Milanpur and his wife Sucrashwari Basumotary (55 years) and Gobinda Rabha (64 years) of village Ouguri.

The following list has shown some events of witch hunting in Assam

Time of Events	Name of witches	Sources of information
1998, September	Saige Bala Roy, Luteswar Raja- Dudhmoi	News Paper
1999 August, September	Satya Basumotary and his family- Dudhnoi	All News Paper
1-3-2000	Bapuram Kashari (45 years) and Debale Bala Rabha (55) -Salapara, Dudhnoi	Dainik Assam, 2-7-200
1-7-2000	Sabitri Basumotari, Mowamari- Lelagaon	From Police Information
25-8-2006	Subhadra Basumotary (55) and her husband - Dudhnoi	All News Paper
18-3-2006	5 family members- Biswanath Chariali	All News Paper, 19-03-2006
22-8-2013	Biren Basumotary (60), Sukreswari Basumotary (55), Gobinda Rabha (64)- Kokrajhar	Dainik Assam, 23-8-2013

The above mentioned table reveals that women have been victimized as witches. Some of them are publicly beaten, heads shaved off, parade naked, brutally murdered etc. We notice that in the era of 21st century also the belief and superstitions of witch is taking place. If the women are thus victimized and murdered, our country can never develop. Therefore, it is very important to eradicate this belief and superstition from the society. That is why to eradicate this social evil, first of all we have to take some steps for educating women so that the knowledge, awareness, and power develop and peace and tranquility return in the society.

Role of Education in Eradication of Women Witch Hunting

Education is one of the most important means for development of knowledge, skill and self confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls or women. If the women fail to receive education they cannot fit for facing the challenges of life. One of their major challenges is 'witch hunting'.

Thinkers say that status of a society is determined by the status of women living in that society. A society, where no

discrimination is made among the inhabitants, is regarded as good society. But, in our society there is always discrimination between men and women. In this regard the following view of the Manusmriti is notable –

"During childhood, a girl is under the influence of her father, after marriage, she is under the influence of her husband and at old age, She is under the influence of her son."

Education is regarded as extremely essential for consolidating one's status and position is a society which is largely driven by customs or traditions prevailing in a male dominated society. It is indispensable that education enables women not only gain more knowledge about the world outside of her home, but helps her to get status, position, self-esteem, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life.

One of the main problems before education is as how to root out the superstitions, prejudices & beliefs. Many ways and means have been discovered to root out the superstitious belief, but education is considered to be the best means for this purpose. In order to remove superstitions, prejudices from the society, we have to change the minds of the people. We will have to change the methods of their thinking and arriving at decisions through education.

The women of tribal dominated areas must receive education to face challenges of life. Through education they can develop their knowledge and become empowered. It helps them to gain self-confidence and to be self- dependent. To reduce poverty from the society the educational provisions for women should be made available in every backward, rural community mainly in tribal dominated areas.

It is education which provides knowledge, awareness in regard to social, civic, political, economic and environmental issues and skills for securing employment and means of livelihood. In this regard, University Education Commission, 1948-49 states that –

"There cannot be an educated people without educated women. If general education is to be limited to men or women, that opportunity should be given to women , for them it must surely be passed on to the next generation."

The Government of India has taken various measures for imparting education especially for women. Government of India has adopted following steps for the education of women in India:-

1. To make women literate through the programme of National Literacy Mission
2. To make primary education universalisation
3. Women should be engaged in different educational activities through non-formal education

Thus, it may rightly be said that if all women of North-East India become educated, then it must be possible to remove or eradicate all the prejudices, superstitions and belief from the society. Education also helps them to become fit for facing all challenges of life specially to wipe out the women witch hunting.

Suggestions

From the above discussions we can say that women are most victimized category in the male dominated society. To root out the prejudice and superstition of witch hunting, we should take up some steps. Through education the women develop their knowledge and skills and are aware about their rights and power. Some suggestive measures are given below :-

1. Positive attitude should be developed among parents so that they provide necessary support to their daughter to impart education.
2. Girls should be encouraged to enroll themselves in the non-formal education to continue their education to become self dependent and conscious about their rights and responsibilities.
3. To improve the knowledge and experience of women are encouraged to take part in the adult education programme provided by government.

4. Encouraging girls for all kinds of vocational and technical and professional education as per their needs, interests and attitudes to become a productive member of the society.
5. Special arrangement should be made in the form of establishment of evening schools so that women engaged in domestic work can get education.
6. Voluntary organization should be formed in those villages where superstitions and belief take place & such organization should create awareness among the women to eradicate witch hunting.
7. Value based education can be imparted for all men and women of the society. The education should be emphasized to bring self-confidence among them and it also helps them to face their problem of witch hunting.
8. We have noticed that women are branded witches in economically backward, poor areas of the society. For economic development of the society women should be empowered. For empowering women in these areas the government should make some provisions.
9. In the technological and scientific era, the mass-media should take part to remove the problem of women witch hunting. The mass-media can play a vital role in eradicating the evils from the society.
10. The film directors and producers should make some films related to these prejudices and superstitions. They must be given opportunity to communicate with people of that areas where the witch hunting takes place in order to encourage them to root out this prejudice and aware them about their crimes. Already we noticed that a film producer took this step. He produced a feature film named 'Mrityu Upatyaka' related with witch hunt. More and more cinemas should be telecast in the backward areas where those types of evils occur.

Conclusion

To conclude the present analysis it may be said that witch hunting is a social evil or social problem. To eradicate the problem each and every individual has a great responsibility in creating knowledge based society. Besides, planner, educator, administrator, state and central agencies must come forward to tackle this social problem so that we can maintain peace, harmony and tranquility in our society. For this more seminars and workshops and awareness programmes should be organized in the educational institutions as well as in the society. To retain the peace, tranquility, this type of event is very essential. We have to minimize this evil or problem through education. Therefore we must educate all the man and women of that place where this type of evil occurs. Education will have to take effective steps in this direction.

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ডাইনী হত্যা ঃ আর্থ-সামাজিক আৰু ৰাজনৈতিক স্বার্থপূৰণৰ ফল

চাহিন জাফ্‌ৰি

প্রস্তাৱনা ঃ

ডাইনী বুলিলে সাধাৰণতে এনে এগৰাকী মহিলাক বুজোৱা হয়, যাৰ মাজত আসুৰিক, অলৌকিক শক্তি নিহিত হৈ থাকে, আৰু তেনে শক্তিৰ প্রয়োগেৰে তেওঁ সমাজত কু-প্রভাৱ পেলাই বুলি সামাজিক বিশ্বাস প্রচলিত হৈ আহিছে। তেনে মহিলাৰ উপস্থিতি সমাজৰ বাবে ক্ষতিকাৰক বুলি ভাবি লোৱা হয়। গতিকে তেনে মহিলাৰ উপস্থিতিত গাঁৱত শস্যৰ উৎপাদন কম হয়, মহামাৰীয়ে দেখা দিয়ে, মানুহ তথা পোহনীয়া জন্তুৰ অপমৃত্যু হয়, খাদ্য সংকত আদিয়ে দেখা দিয়ে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। গতিকে দেখা যায় যে যেতিয়া এনে ধৰণৰ অভিযোগবোৰ কাৰোবাৰ গাত জাপি দি ৰাজহুৱা বিচাৰ ব্যৱস্থাৰে বিচাৰ কৰি শাৰীৰিক, মানসিক অত্যাচাৰ চলাই যেতিয়া হত্যা কৰা হয়, সেই হত্যাকেই ডাইনী হত্যা বুলি কোৱা হয়।

দেখা যায় যে মানৱ সমাজত ডাইনী বিশ্বাস বা ডাইনী হত্যাৰ পৰম্পৰা বহু আগৰে পৰাই চলি আহিছে। অতীতৰ পৰা অকল ভাৰততে নহয়, আফ্রিকা, দক্ষিণ আমেৰিকা আদি মহাদেশসমূহতো ডাইনী বিশ্বাস প্রচলিত আছিল। ১৫শ শতিকাত ইউৰোপৰ বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলত ত্রিশ হাজাৰৰ পৰা চল্লিশ হাজাৰ পুৰুষ-নাৰীক ডাইনী সজাই হত্যা কৰা হৈছিল। ইংৰাজী সাহিত্য তথা গ্রীচৰ কাহিনী গীত (বেলাড)চ থকা ডাইনীবোৰ হ'ল- হাতত ঝড়ু লোৱা জোঙা

টোপী পিন্ধা বৃদ্ধা মহিলা। এইলোকে সমাজত কু-প্রভাৱ পেলাই বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়।

ভাৰতৰ প্রেক্ষাপটত দেখা যায় যে ভাৰতো ডাইনী হত্যা বা ডাইনী বিদ্যা বিশ্বাসৰ লগত অতীতৰে পৰা জড়িত হৈ আছে। ভাৰতৰ অথর্ব বেদত অলৌকিক আহৰণ তথা ডাইনী সম্পর্কে আভাষ পোৱা যায়। কুৰি শতিকাৰ সত্তৰ আশী দশকত অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশ, বিহাৰ, অসম, গুজৰাট, ৰাজস্থান, পশ্চিমবংগ, মহাৰাষ্ট্র আদি বিভিন্ন ৰাজ্যত ডাইনী বিশ্বাস প্রচলিত হৈ আছে। অসমৰ ক্ষেত্রত মৰিগাঁও জিলাৰ মায়ঙক কোনো কোনোৱে ডাইনীৰ উপস্থিতি আৰু বিশ্বাস সম্প্রসাৰণত ইন্ধন যোগোৱা বুলি ক'ব বিচাৰে। বহু আগৰে পৰা মায়ঙ অলৌকিক শক্তি কলা যাদু আহৰণৰ স্থল হিচাপে বিবেচিত হৈ আহিছে আৰু হয়তো ইয়াৰ পৰাই ডাইনী বিশ্বাস পৰম্পৰা সমগ্র অসমতে বিয়পি পৰিছিল বুলি ভাবিবৰ থল আছে।

অসমৰ বিশেষকৈ চাহ জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোক, ৰাভা, হাচং, বড়ো, মিচিং আদি সম্প্রদায়ৰ মাজত ডাইনী বিশ্বাস বা ডাইনী হত্যাৰ প্রৱণতা বেছিকৈ দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। এই জনজাতিসমূহে তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজ বা গাঁৱত যেতিয়া, দুর্ভীক্ষ, প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগ বা বেমাৰ-আজাৰ আদিয়ে দেখা দিয়ে তেতিয়া তেওঁলোকে ইয়াৰ অন্তৰালত ডাইনীবিদ্যা বা কলা যাদু নিহিত হৈ আছে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। গতিকে সমাজক অপায়-অমংগলৰ পৰা মুক্ত কৰিবলৈ সেই কলা যাদু প্রয়োগকাৰী জনক চিনাক্ত কৰি উলিয়াই তেওঁক সমাজৰ পৰা বহিস্কাৰ বা হত্যা কৰিলেহে তেওঁলোকৰ অপায়-অমংগল নোহোৱা হব বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। জনজাতীয় এই বিশ্বাসক ইন্ধন যোগায় তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজৰ বেজ বা উজা সকলে। এওঁলোকেই সেই ডাইনীৰ শৰীৰৰ অৱয়ব বা স্থিতি সম্পর্কে কয় আৰু সন্দেহৰ ভিত্তিত কোনো লোকক ডাইনী সজাই গাঁৱৰ পৰা বহিস্কাৰ কৰা তথা হত্যা কৰা হয়। জনজাতীয় লোকসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে, মহিলাসকলে কিছুমান গোপন ব্যৱস্থাৰ জৰিয়তে অলৌকিক শক্তি আহৰণ কৰে আৰু সমাজত বেমাৰ-আজাৰ বিয়পাই তেওঁলোকে আহৰণ কৰা শক্তিৰ পৰীক্ষা কৰে। এনে ধৰণৰ জনবিশ্বাসৰ ভিত্তিতেই আজিলৈকে ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে এক জঘন্য ঘটনা ঘটি আহিছে।

অশিক্ষিত, ভিতৰুৱা অঞ্চলৰ জনসাধাৰণৰ মাজত প্রচলিত অন্ধবিশ্বাস কু-সংস্কাৰ হেতুকে ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে অমানৱীয় তথা ভিত্তিহীন প্রথা প্রচলিত

হৈ আহিছে। যদিও এই অন্ধবিশ্বাস, কু-সংস্কাৰ অনুসূচীত জাতি-জনজাতি, চাহ-জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতেই দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়, তথাপিও কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্ৰত কেতিয়াবা সমাজৰ উচ্চ শ্ৰেণী বা সৰ্বসাধাৰণ লোকো এনে অন্ধবিশ্বাস, কু-সংস্কাৰৰ গ্ৰাসত পৰা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। বিজ্ঞান আৰু প্ৰযুক্তিবিদ্যাৰ সৰ্বত্ৰ সাফল্যৰ সময়ত সমাজত প্ৰচলিত এনে প্ৰথাসমূহ আমাৰ সমাজখন সঠিক দিশত আগুৱাই যোৱাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত এক প্ৰাচীৰ ৰূপে থিয় দিয়ে।

অৱশ্যে কেৱল অন্ধবিশ্বাস বা কু-সংস্কাৰৰ বাবেই ডাইনী হত্যা হয়নে? বৰ্তমান সময়ত এই বিষয়ে আলোচনাৰ প্ৰাসংগিকতা আছে। এই সমস্যাৰ গভীৰতালৈ গলে দেখা যায় যে পূৰ্বতে যাদু মন্ত্ৰ চৰ্চা কৰা লোকক সমাজত ব্যাধি বিয়পোৱা বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰি শাস্তি দিয়া হৈছিল। প্ৰধানকৈ প্ৰচলিত অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ কাৰণেই ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে ঘটনা সংঘটিত হৈছিল। কিন্তু বৰ্তমান সময়ত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ সংজ্ঞা দিয়াৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত কিছু জটিলতা আহি পৰিছে। কিয়নো বৰ্তমান সময়ত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অন্ধবিশ্বাসতকৈ আন কেতবোৰ আনুষাংগিক কাৰণেহে নিহিত হৈ থকা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। বিশেষকৈ ডাইনী হত্যাৰ আঁৰত ব্যক্তিগত শত্ৰুতা, মাটি সম্পত্তিৰ অধিকাৰ, যৌন স্পৃহা পূৰণ কৰা আদি বিষয়সমূহে অন্ধবিশ্বাসতকৈ আগস্থান পাইছে।

আর্থ-সামাজিক প্রেক্ষাপটত ডাইনী হত্যা ঃ-

বৰ্তমান সময়ত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ আঁৰত আওপকীয়াকৈ অৰ্থনৈতিক, সামাজিক বা ৰাজনৈতিক কাৰণহে নিহিত হৈ থকা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। সমাজৰ একাংশ কু-প্ৰবৃত্তিৰ লোকে তেওঁলোকৰ ব্যক্তিগত লাভালাভৰ বাবে ডাইনী হত্যাৰ সুযোগ লৈ তেওঁলোকৰ কু-প্ৰবৃত্তি বাস্তৱ ৰূপত প্ৰতিফলিত কৰিবলৈ অহৰহ চেষ্টা কৰি আহিছে আৰু বহু ক্ষেত্ৰত তেওঁলোক সফলো হৈছে। দেখা যায় যে যেতিয়া কোনো এজন পুৰুষে এগৰাকী নাৰীক বিয়া কৰাই আনে তেতিয়া পুৰুষজনৰ ঘৰৰ মানুহে নাৰী গৰাকীৰ ঘৰৰ পৰা যৌতুকৰ আশা কৰে। কিন্তু যেতিয়াই নাৰীগৰাকীৰ ঘৰৰ মানুহে তেওঁলোকে বিচৰা সা-সামগ্ৰী, টকা-পইচা দিবলৈ অপৰাগ হয় তেতিয়াই নাৰীগৰাকীক পৰিয়ালৰ লোকসকলে মিলি পৰিকল্পিতভাৱে ডাইনী সজাই নিজৰ প্ৰতিহিংসা পূৰণ কৰিবলৈ হত্যা কৰে। আকৌ দেখা যায় যে কিছুমান স্বার্থলোভী, সম্পত্তি লোভী লোকৰ প্ৰৰোচনাতো ডাইনী হত্যা সংঘটিত হয়। যেতিয়া এই চাম

লোকৰ আত্মীয় বা পৰিয়ালৰ মাজত বেমাৰ-আজাৰে দেখা দিয়ে বা ৰোগত আক্রান্ত হৈ কোনো লোকৰ মৃত্যু হয়, তেতিয়াই এই শ্রেণীৰ স্বার্থলোভী লোকসকলে তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত প্রচলিত ডাইনী প্রথাৰ সুযোগ লয় আৰু তেওঁলোকৰ সকলো অপায়-অমংগল বা বিপদৰ কাৰণ হিচাপে কোনো অসহায় বিধবা মহিলা বা বৃদ্ধাক লক্ষ্য কৰি লয়। এনে অৱস্থাত স্বার্থলোভী লোকসকলে সমাজৰ কোনো দুষ্ট প্রকৃতিৰ লোক, ওজা তথা পুৰুহিতক বিভিন্ন প্রকাৰে হাত কৰি লৈ সেই অকলশৰীয়া বিধবা মহিলা তথা বৃদ্ধাগৰাকীৰ বিষয়ে ডাইনী বুলি সমাজত অপপ্রচাৰ চলাই আৰু যথা সময়ত তেওঁক গাঁৱৰ পৰা বহিস্কাৰ কৰা তথা হত্যা কৰা হয়। কাৰণ তেনে মহিলাৰ অনুপস্থিতিত সমাজত স্বার্থলোভী লোকসকলে তেওঁলোকৰ মাজত হোৱা বেমাৰ-আজাৰ বা মৃত্যুৰ ক্ষতিপূৰণ হিচাপে গাঁৱৰ পৰা বহিস্কৃত তথা ডাইনী সজাই হত্যা কৰা মহিলাগৰাকীৰ সকলো সম্পত্তি অধিকাৰ কৰে। এনে ঘটনাৰ সত্যাসত্যতা কিছুদিনৰ আগতে সংঘটিত হোৱা খেদাইবালা ৰাভা নামৰ মহিলা গৰাকীৰ ক্ষেত্রত ঘটা ঘটনাই প্রমাণ কৰে। খেদাইবালা ৰাভা তেওঁৰ স্বামী আৰু দুটি সন্তানৰ সৈতে গাঁৱত বাস কৰিছিল। কিন্তু তেওঁৰ স্বামীৰ মৃত্যুৰ পাছত গাঁৱৰ এচাম লোকে সেই অসহায়, অকলশৰীয়া মহিলা গৰাকীৰ গাত ডাইনী লম্ভা বুলি অপপ্রচাৰ চলাই তেওঁক গাঁৱৰ পৰা খেদি পঠিয়াই সম্পত্তি অধিকাৰ কৰিবলৈ উঠিপৰি লাগিল। অৱশেষত মহিলাগৰাকীক দুটি সন্তানৰ সৈতে গাঁৱৰ পৰা খেদি পঠিওৱা হ'ল। কিন্তু সুভাগ্যক্রমে 'অসম মহিলা সমতা সমিতি'ৰ সহযোগত তিনি মাহৰ মূৰত খেদাইবালা ৰাভাক তেওঁৰ গাঁৱত পুনৰ সংস্থাপন কৰোৱা হয় আৰু বর্তমান তেওঁ সেই গাঁৱতে সামাজিকভাৱে আগৰ দৰে জীৱন নির্বাহ কৰি আছে। গতিকে খেদাইবালা ৰাভাৰ দৰে আৰু বহুতো ভিতৰুৱা অঞ্চলৰ মহিলাক হয়তো এতিয়াও ব্যক্তিগত লাভালাভৰ বাবে ডাইনী সজাই হত্যা অথবা নির্যাতন চলাই সমাজৰ পৰা বহিস্কাৰ কৰি থকা হৈছে।

তাৰ উপৰিও আন কিছুমান ক্ষেত্রত পুৰুষ প্রধান মানসিকতাই আমাৰ সমাজত ডাইনী হত্যা, নাৰী নির্যাতন আদি ঘটনাৰ বাবে জগৰীয়া বুলি কব লাগিব। আমাৰ ভাৰতবর্ষত নাৰীক পুৰুষৰ সম অধিকাৰ দিয়া হৈছে। আনকি নাৰীৰ বাবে আসন সংৰক্ষণ, আগস্থান দিয়া তেওঁলোকৰ অধিকাৰৰ বাবে বিভিন্ন জনে যুঁজ দিয়াটো সম্প্রত্তি নৈমিত্তিক ঘটনালৈ পৰিবর্তন হৈছে। কিন্তু নাৰী সুৰক্ষা প্রদানৰ বাবে তৈয়াৰ হোৱা আইনবোৰ বাস্তৱ ক্ষেত্রত প্রযোজ্য

হোৱা দেখা নাযায়। গতিকে শুনিবলৈ বেয়া হ'লেও আমি এটা কথা স্বীকাৰ কৰিবই লাগিব যে বৰ্তমানো আমাৰ সমাজখন পুৰুষ প্ৰধানেই হৈ আছে আৰু এনে মানসিকতাৰ কাৰণেই নাৰী নিৰ্যাতন, ডাইনী হত্যা আদি ঘটনা অতীততৰ পৰাই ঘটি আহিছে আৰু বৰ্তমানেও অব্যাহত আছে। জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ একাংশই নাৰীসকলক এটি ভোগৰ সামগ্ৰী হিচাপে গণ্য কৰি আহিছে। তেওঁলোকে সদায় নাৰীক লাও সদায় পাতৰ তলত ধাৰণাৰেই বিশ্বাস কৰে। নাৰী সম অধিকাৰ, সমাজত নাৰীক অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ দিয়াৰ কথা মানি লব নিবিচাৰে। গতিকে দেখা যায় যে, এনে সমাজত যেতিয়াই কোনো নাৰী অৰ্থনৈতিকভাবে সবল, নিজৰ অধিকাৰৰ তেনে উত্থান দেখি নাৰীগৰাকীৰ প্ৰতি ঈৰ্ষা জন্মে। তেনে পৰিস্থিতিত পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজে তেনে নাৰীক সমাজত হেৰ প্ৰতিপন্ন কৰিবলৈ বিভিন্ন ধৰণে উঠিপৰি লাগে। অৱশেষত যেতিয়া সমাজত সামাজিক, অৰ্থনৈতিক বা শাৰীৰিক ব্যাধিয়ে দেখা দিয়ে তেতিয়া সেই লোকসকলে তেনে অৱস্থাৰ সুযোগ লৈ সকলো অপায়-অমংগলৰ কাৰণ সেই মহিলাগৰাকীৰ ওপৰত জাপি দিয়ে। মহিলাগৰাকীৰ গাত অপদেৱতা লম্ভা বুলি সমাজৰ মাজত অপ্ৰচাৰ চলাই সংঘবদ্ধভাৱে, প্ৰতিহিংসা পুৰণৰ বাবে ডাইনী বুলি শাৰীৰিক, মানসিক নিৰ্যাতন চলোৱাৰ লগতে হত্যা কৰে। আকৌ আন কিছুমান ক্ষেত্ৰত দেখা যায় যে, কোনো এগৰাকী স্ত্ৰীয়ে বিয়াৰ পিছত যদি কোনো পুত্ৰ সন্তান বা কোনো সন্তান দিব নোৱাৰে তেতিয়া সমাজত তেনে নাৰীক কুলক্ষনী, অমংগলীয়া, তেওঁ মুখ চালে অমংগল হব বুলি এক যুক্তিহীন বিশ্বাস গা কৰি উঠে। তেনে পৰিস্থিতিৰ সুযোগ লৈ বিবাহ পাশত আবদ্ধ হোৱা পুৰুষজনে সন্তান জন্ম দিব পৰা আন কোনো নাৰীক বিয়া কৰোৱাৰ উদ্দেশ্য আগত ৰাখি পূৰ্বৰ নাৰীগৰাকীৰ পৰা মুক্তি পাবলৈ পৰিয়ালৰ লোকসকলৰ লগত চক্ৰান্ত কৰি তেওঁক ডাইনী ৰূপ দি সমাজৰ বা গাঁৱৰ পৰা বহিস্কাৰ তথা হত্যা কৰি দ্বিতীয় বিবাহৰ পথ সুগম কৰি লয়। ঠিক তেনেদৰে কেতিয়াবা আকৌ এনে সমাজত যদি কোনো মহিলা অকলশৰে বাস কৰে তেতিয়া একাংশ পুৰুষৰ মাজত তেওঁৰ প্ৰতি কামনাৰে ভাৱ জাগি উঠে। যদি মহিলাগৰাকীয়ে তেওঁলোকৰ এনে অসৎ উদ্দেশ্য সাধনত বাধা প্ৰদান কৰে বা তেওঁলোকৰ বিৰুদ্ধে মাত মাতিবলৈ আগুৱাই আহে তেতিয়া আকৌ অসহয়তাৰ সুযোগ লৈ ওলোতাই নাৰীগৰাকীৰ ওপৰতে বিভিন্ন দোষ জাপি দি অত্যাচাৰ কৰি ডাইনী সজাই

তেওঁলোকৰ প্ৰতি হিংসা পূৰণৰ চেষ্টা চলায়। তাৰ উপৰিও কিছুমান ঘটনালৈ মন কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে ডাইনী বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা মহিলাগৰাকীৰ লগতে সমগ্ৰ পৰিয়ালটোকে লক্ষ্য কৰি সামাজিকভাবে নিৰ্যাতিত কৰা অথবা হত্যা কৰা হয়।

উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে ২০০৬ চনত শোণিতপুৰ জিলাৰ বিশ্বনাথ চাৰিআলিৰ 'সাধাৰু' চাহ বাগিছাত একে পৰিয়ালৰ পাঁচজন সদস্যক শিৰচ্ছেদ কৰি হত্যা কৰা হৈছিল। গতিকে এনে ঘটনাৰ আঁৰত অন্ধবিশ্বাসতকৈ ব্যক্তিগত লাভালাভ, সম্পত্তি লাভৰ উদ্দেশ্যহে নিহিত হৈ আছে সেই কথা ধুৰুপ।

ওপৰত উল্লেখিত ঘটনাসমূহক ভালকৈ চালে দেখা যায় যে, ডাইনী হত্যাৰ আঁৰত জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোক বিশ্বাসতকৈ সুদীৰ্ঘদিন ধৰি চলি থকা আৰ্থ-সামাজিক বা ৰাজনৈতিক দণ্ড সংঘাটকহে বেছি জগৰীয়া যেন লাগে। তাৰ উপৰিও স্বাৰ্থলোভী তথা বস্তুবাদী মানসিকতাৰ বাবেও ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ঘটনাসমূহ দিনক-দিনে বৃদ্ধি পাবলৈ ধৰিছে। বিজ্ঞান আৰু প্ৰযুক্তিবিদ্যাই পৰ্বত্ৰ সফলতা লাভ কৰা সময়তো সঘনাই ঘটি থকা এনে ধৰণৰ ডাইনী হত্যা বা অত্যাচাৰৰ ঘটনাই সমগ্ৰ মানৱ সমাজকে কুলষিত কৰিছে।

সামৰণি ঃ-

শেষত এটা কথা কব লাগিব যে ডাইনী হত্যা বা নাৰী নিৰ্যাতন বন্ধ কৰিবলৈ সমাজৰ সকলো মানুহ সচেতন হোৱা সময় আহি পৰিছে। নাৰীসকল আমাৰ সমাজৰ চালিকা শক্তি। গতিকে পুৰুষসকলে পুৰণিকলীয়া মানসিকতা ত্যাগ কৰি নাৰীসকলকো সমানে আগুৱাই নিবলৈ সহায়ৰ হাত আগবঢ়াব লাগে। জনজাতীয় ভিতৰুৱা অঞ্চলৰ লোকসকল অধিকাংশই নিৰক্ষৰ, গতিকে এনে ক্ষেত্ৰত চৰকাৰেই হওঁক বা বিভিন্ন বেচৰকাৰী সংস্থা সমূহেই হওঁক তেওঁলোকৰ মাজত ডাইনী প্ৰথাৰ দৰে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সজাগতা বৃদ্ধি কৰা লগতে নাৰীসকলক তেওঁলোকৰ আইনী অধিকাৰ, শিক্ষা, কৰ্তব্যৰ বিষয়ে অৱগত কৰাব লাগে। অৱশ্যে অসমত 'অসম মহিলা সমতা সমিতি' নামৰ মহিলা সংস্থাটো ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে কিছু উল্লেখযোগ্য ভূমিকা হাতত লোৱা দেখা গৈছে। এই নাৰী সংস্থাটোৱে এই সংস্থাটোৰ লগত জড়িত বীৰুবালা ৰাভা নামৰ মহিলাগৰাকীৰ সহযোগত কোকৰাঝাৰ, বঙাইগাঁও, ওডালগুৰি আদি বিভিন্ন জিলাত ডাইনী হিচাপে সমাজৰ পৰা বহিস্কৃত বহুতো মহিলাক

উদ্ধাৰ কৰি তেওঁলোকৰ নিজ নিজ ঠাইত পুনৰ সংস্থাপন কৰি এক প্রসংশনীয় পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ কৰিছে। তথাপিও এনে পদক্ষেপ সমূহেই যথেষ্ট নহয়। ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে সামাজিক ব্যাধিৰ পৰা নির্মূল কৰিবলৈ হলে লিংগ বৈষম্যতা দূৰ কৰি নাৰীশিক্ষা, নাৰীবাদ, নাৰীসবলীকৰণৰ ওপৰত অধিক গুৰুত্ব দিব লাগে। বর্তমানো জনজাতীয় সমাজসমূহ যথেষ্ট অনুন্নত হৈয়ে আছে, গতিকে সু-পৰিকল্পিত যাতায়ত, বিদ্যুৎ, স্বাস্থ্য, শিক্ষা ব্যৱস্থাৰ প্রৱর্তনে এনে সমাজক অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ পৰা মুক্ত কৰিব বুলি আশা কৰিব পাৰি।

এইক্ষেত্রত সমাজ কল্যাণ, শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য আদি চৰকাৰী বিভাগসমূহে তেওঁলোকৰ দায়িত্বসমূহ সঠিক ৰূপত পালক কৰিব লাগিব। তাৰ উপৰিও ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ক্ষেত্রত থকা আইন সমূহৰ ক্ষেত্রত কিছু সুৰুঙা থকা যেন অনুভৱ হয়। কিয়নো কোনো লোক যদি ডাইনী হত্যাৰ লগত জড়িত থকা বুলি আইন মতে দোষী সাব্যস্ত হয়, তেনে দোষীক কেৱল এক বছৰ কাৰাদণ্ড আৰু ১০০০ টকা জৰিমনা বিহা হয়। গতিকে এইক্ষেত্রত আইন অধিক কঠোৰ হোৱাৰ প্রয়োজনীয়তা আছে বুলি অনুভৱ হয়। আমাৰ সমীক্ষাৰ পৰা আমি এই সিদ্ধান্তত উপনীচ হব পাৰো যে ডাইনী হত্যা নিঃসন্দেহে আর্থ-সামাজিক আৰু ৰাজনৈতিক স্বার্থ পূৰণৰ ফল। বিজ্ঞান আৰু প্রযুক্তিবিদ্যাৰ চৰম সাফল্যৰ সময়তো বর্তমানেও সমাজত এনেদৰে নাৰী নির্যাতিতা হোৱাতো অতি লজ্জাজনক কথা। বর্তমান প্রত্যেক গৰাকী নাৰীৰ বাবে ই অতি গুৰুত্বপূর্ণ প্রত্যাহ্বান। নাৰী সুৰক্ষা আইন সমূহৰ যথোপযুক্ত প্রয়োগৰ উপৰিও নতুন প্রজন্মৰ সক্রিয় ভূমিকাই নাৰীক এনে প্রত্যাহ্বান পৰা মুক্ত কৰিব পাৰিব বুলি আশা কৰিব পাৰি। পৰিস্থিতি আৰু সময়ে ভৱিষ্যতে ইয়াৰ কি সমীক্ষা দিয়ে তাক একে আষাৰতে কোৱা টান। কিন্তু মোৰ বোধেৰে বর্তমান প্রজন্মই এই সমস্যা নির্মূল কৰিবৰ বাবে যত্নপৰ হলেহে ভৱিষ্যতে এই সমস্যাৰ ওৰ পৰিব। গতিকে সমাজৰ উন্নয়নৰ স্বার্থতে হওক বা নাৰী মুক্তি তথা নাৰী অধিকাৰ প্রতিষ্ঠাৰ স্বার্থতেই হওক, সমাজৰ সকলো লোক একত্রিত হৈ ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে সামাজিক ব্যাধিৰ পৰা সমাজক মুক্ত কৰিবলৈ আগুৱাই আহিব লাগিব।

বিঃ দ্রঃ - উক্ত আলোচনা পত্রিকাখনি, বিভিন্ন বাতৰি কাকত, ৱেবছাইট, আলোচনী আদিৰ পৰা সংগৃহীত তথ্যৰ সহায় লৈ উপস্থাপন কৰা হৈছে।

মিচিং সমাজত ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সন্দেহৰ মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিশঃ (বিশেষ উল্লেখসহ লখিমপুৰ জিলা)

ৰঞ্জিত টাকু
ঋতুপর্ণ দাস

মিচিং সকলৰ চমু পৰিচয় ঃ ভাৰতবর্ষৰ উত্তৰ-পূৱ প্রান্তৰ অসম আৰু অৰুণাচল প্রদেশৰ ঠাই বিশেষে অতীজৰে পৰা বসবাস কৰি অহা জনগোষ্ঠীসকলৰ ভিতৰত অসমৰ জনজাতি জনগাঁথনিৰ দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম জনগোষ্ঠী মিচিং সকল অন্যতম জনগোষ্ঠী। বাৰে ৰহণীয়া কলা, কৃষ্টি-সংস্কৃতি আৰু নিজস্ব ঐতিহ্য পৰম্পৰাৰে সমৃদ্ধ মিচিংসকল বৃহৎ মঙ্গোলীয় জনগোষ্ঠীৰ তিব্বতী-বর্মী শাখাৰ এটি প্রশাখা। মিচিংসকল বিশ্ব সৃষ্টি কর্তা "চেদৃ মেঃল" ৰ দ্বাৰা সৃষ্ট "দঃঞিং-পঃল" অর্থাৎ সূর্য-চন্দ্রৰ পৰা সৃষ্টি হোৱা "তানি" (মানৱ) জনগোষ্ঠীৰ বংশধৰ বুলি নিজকে পৰিচয় দিয়ে। তেওঁলোকৰ আদি পুৰুষ "আবুতানি" (আবু-পিতৃ, তানি-মানৱ) অর্থাৎ "মানৱ জাতিৰ পিতৃ পুৰুষ।"

মিচিংসকলৰ প্রধান বসতিস্থল ঃ অসমৰ ধেমাজী, লখিমপুৰ, শোণিতপুৰ, যোৰহাট, গোলাঘাট, শিৱসাগৰ, ডিব্রুগড় আৰু তিনিচুকীয়া জিলা। অৰুণাচলৰ লোহিত, ডিবাংভেলি আৰু পূৱ চিয়াং জিলা। অৱশ্যে সাম্প্রতিক কালত দুই এক ব্যক্তিয়ে অসমৰ অন্য জিলাসমূহৰ উপৰিও অসমৰ বাহিৰৰ ৰাজ্যসমূহতো নিগাজীকৈ বসবাস কৰা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে।

জনসংখ্যা ঃ ২০০৬ চনৰ লোকপিয়ল অনুসৰি মিচিংসকলৰ জনসংখ্যা অসমত **১২,৫৭,৫৯৬** জন। বর্তমান মিচিং জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মুঠ জনসংখ্যা ১৪ লাখৰো অধিক বুলি অনুমান কৰিব পাৰি।

উদ্দেশ্য ঃ উদ্দেশ্যবিহীন অধ্যয়ন অথবা জীৱনে কোনো কাম সাফল্যমণ্ডিতভাৱে সমাপন কৰাত সহায় কৰিব নোৱাৰে। সেয়ে নিম্নলিখিত উদ্দেশ্যসমূহক আগত ৰাখি অধ্যয়নৰ কাম আগবাঢ়িছিলো।

(ক) মিচিং সমাজৰ ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সন্দেহৰ মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিশ সম্পর্কে অৱগত হোৱা।

(খ) সাম্প্রতিক সময়ত ডাইনী সম্পর্কত (মৰুমনী) মিচিং সমাজৰ মানসিক অৱস্থা সম্পর্কে অৱগত হোৱা আৰু প্রতিকাৰৰ বাবে পৰামর্শ দিয়া।

পদ্ধতি ঃ কোনো বিষয়ত নিখুঁতভাৱে সংশ্লেষণ আৰু বিশ্লেষণ দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ হ'লে কেৱল পদ্ধতিগত অধ্যয়নৰ জৰিয়তেহে সম্ভৱ। উক্ত কথাৰ প্রতি লক্ষ্য ৰাখি মই মোৰ অধ্যয়নত অনুসন্ধান আৰু পর্যবেক্ষণ পদ্ধতিৰ সহায় লৈ মূল্যৱান তথ্য তথা সমল সংগ্রহ কৰিছিলো।

সমল ঃ সমল সংগ্রহ কৰোঁতে মুখ্য উৎস (primary source) আৰু গৌণ উৎস (secondary source) ৰ সহায় লব লগা হৈছিল। অৱশ্যে মিচিং সমাজৰ ডাইনী সম্পর্কে তথ্য সংগ্রহ কৰোতে মৌখিক তথ্যৰ বাহিৰে লিখিত তথ্য পাবলৈ সক্ষম হোৱা নাছিলো। সেয়ে এই টোকাতো সম্পূর্ণৰূপে মৌখিক তথ্যৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি কৰি প্রস্তুত কৰা হৈছে।

তদন্তৰ ফলাফল ঃ মিচিং সমাজৰ 'ডাইনী' (মৰুমনী) সন্দেহৰ ওপৰত অধ্যয়ন কৰোঁতে নিম্নলিখিত মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিশসমূহ লক্ষ্য কৰিছিলো।

১.০১ ঃ মিচিং সমাজত ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সন্দর্ভত বিশ্বাস কৰা প্রাৰম্ভিক পর্যায়টো হ'ল - যদি ডাইনী- গৰাকী- বা জন কোনোবা মানুহৰ প্রতি চকু যায় অর্থাৎ লোভ লাগে, সেই মানুহজনৰ পিন্ধা বা ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা কাপোৰ পালে উক্ত ব্যক্তিজনৰ মৃত্যু অনিবার্য।

১.০২ ঃ ডাইনী গৰাকী বা জন ব্যক্তিজনৰ বা মানুহজনৰ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা কাপোৰ নহ'লেও চুলি পালেও মানুহজন ডাইনীৰ কবলৰ পৰা মুক্ত নহয়। অর্থাৎ মৃত্যু নিশ্চিত।

১.০৩ ঃ মানুহৰ বৃহঃস্পতি গ্রহ বা গুৰু দশা বেয়া হ'লেও ডাইনী গৰাকীয়ে (মৰুমনী) বিভিন্ন পন্থা অৱলম্বন কৰি মানুহ হত্যা কৰিব পাৰে। যেনে চেঙেলী মাছ টেকেলীত ভৰাই ইয়াৰ সোপা বান্ধি থৈ দিয়ে। উক্ত কাম যিজন মানুহৰ নাম লৈ সম্পাদন কৰে, সেইজন ব্যক্তি বা মানুহৰ মৃত্যু হোৱাটো খাটাং। মাছটো যিমান দিন টেকেলীত শান্তিৰে তিষ্ঠি থাকিব পাৰে, সিমান দিন মানুহজনেও শান্তিৰে জীয়াই থাকিব পাৰে। যেতিয়া মাছটো খাদ্য অনাহাৰত

আৰু অক্সিজেন গেছৰ অভাৱত ছট্‌ফটাবলৈ আৰম্ভ কৰিব, তেতিয়াৰ পৰা মানুহজনৰ শাৰীৰিক মানসিক অৱস্থাও অৱনতি ঘটিবলৈ আৰম্ভ হয়। এটা সময়ত খাদ্যৰ তাড়নাত আৰু অক্সিজেনৰ অভাৱত মাছটোৱে মৃত্যুক আকোৱালী লৈ পেট ফুলিব। লগে লগে মানুহজনেও পেট ফুলি মৃত্যুক আকোৱালী ল'ব লগা হ'য়।

১.০৪ ঃ ডাইনী গৰাকী পুখুৰীত বা নদীত নামি প্ৰায় বুকুলৈ পোৱাকে (নগ্ন অৱস্থাত) ভূতক উদ্দেশ্যি এটা ৰঙা মতা কুকুৰা ডিঙিকাটি পূজা কৰে। উক্ত পূজা যিজন মানুহৰ (ব্যক্তিৰ) নামলৈ সমাপন কৰে সেইজন ব্যক্তিৰ মৃত্যু হোৱাটো নিশ্চিত।

২.০১ ঃ ডাইনী গৰাকী বা জনক (মৰুমনী) কেনেকৈ চিনিব পাৰি সেইলৈও মিচিং সমাজত অন্ধবিশ্বাস আছে। ডাইনী গৰাকী যেতিয়া নিয়মীয়াকৈ মানুহ খাবলৈ নাপায়, তেতিয়া ডাইনী গৰাকীৰ চকুৰ পানী অনবৰতে ওলাবলৈ আৰম্ভ হয়।

২.০২ ঃ- ডাইনী গৰাকী ৰ'দৰ বা জোনৰ পোহৰত কেতিয়াও মানুহৰ আগত খোজ নাকাঢ়ে। কাৰণ ইতিমধ্যে যিমানখিনি মানুহ হত্যা কৰিছে, সেই সকল লোক ডাইনী গৰাকীৰ কান্ধত ওলমি ফুঁৰে। মিচিং সকলে বিশ্বাস কৰা মতে ডাইনীৰ কবলত অকালতে মৃত্যুক আকোৱালী লোৱা সকল স্বৰ্গ আৰু নৰকত স্থান নাপায়। সেয়ে ডাইনীৰ কবলত পৰি অকালতে মৃত্যুক আকোৱালী লোৱা মানুহৰ প্ৰেতাত্মাবোৰ ডাইনীৰ কান্ধতে ওলমি ফুঁৰে। সেয়ে ৰ'দৰ বা জোনৰ পোহৰত ডাইনী গৰাকী (মৰুমনী) মানুহৰ আগত খোজ কাঢ়িব নিবিচাৰে। কাৰণ ইতিমধ্যে অকালতে মৃত্যুক আকোৱালী লোৱা ব্যক্তিসকলৰ প্ৰতিচ্ছবি ডাইনী ছাঁত ধৰা দিয়ে।

২.০৩ ঃ ডাইনী গৰাকীৰ চাল-চলন, আচাৰ-ব্যৱহাৰ স্বাভাৱিক মানুহৰ দৰে নহয়। মাজনিশা অকলশৰীয়াকৈ ঘূৰি ফুঁৰে। কৃত্ৰিম মৰম-স্নেহ প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰে ইত্যাদি।

২.০৪ ঃ ডাইনী গৰাকীৰ কবলত পৰি অকালতে মৃত্যুক আকোৱালী ললে, পৰৱৰ্তী পৰ্যায়ত ধৰিব পৰাৰ বিশেষ চিনো মিচিং জনসমাজত প্ৰচলিত আছে। মিচিং সমাজত মানুহ মৰিলে মাটিত পোতাৰ প্ৰথা প্ৰচলিত। সেই অনুযায়ী ডাইনীৰ কবলত অকালতে মৃত্যুক সাবতি লোৱা ব্যক্তিজনৰ শৱদেহ মাটিত পোতা হয়। তেনেস্থলত এটা দিশ লক্ষ্য কৰিলে প্ৰমাণ পোৱা যায় যে য'ত শৱদেহ পোতা হয়, সেই স্থানৰ পৰা এটা ডাঙৰ ফুটা ওলাই আহে।

কাৰণ ডাইনী গৰাকী পোহপাল কৰা ভূত-প্ৰেত বিলাক ইতিমধ্যে মাটিৰ তলত পুতি পেলোৱা শৱদেহৰ কলিজা খাবলৈ তললৈ সোমাই যায়। আৰু মাটিৰ তলৰ পৰা ওলাই অহাৰ চিনস্বৰূপে উক্ত ফুটাটো থাকি যায়। অৱশ্যে এই চিন মৰাৰ তিনিদিনৰ ভিতৰত প্ৰত্যক্ষ বা দৃষ্টি গোচৰ হ'লেহে হ'ব।উল্লেখ্য যে বেমাৰত মৰিলে বা মৃত্যু হ'লে উক্ত ফুটা দৃষ্টিগোচৰ নহয়।

২.০৫ ঃ ইতিমধ্যে ডাইনীৰ ৰোষত পৰি নৰীয়াত পৰা ব্যক্তিজনৰ আচাৰ-ব্যৱহাৰ আৰু কথোপ-কথন নিৰীক্ষণ কৰিও ধৰা পেলাব পাৰি।কাৰণ যিজন ব্যক্তিৰ ওচৰত ডাইনীৰ নজৰ পৰা বুলি সন্দেহ কৰা হয়। সেই জন ব্যক্তিৰ আপত্তিজনক আচৰণ প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰা লক্ষ্য কৰা যায়। যেনে ৰাম নামৰ ডাইনী গৰাকী মোক শান্তিৰে শুব দিয়া নাই, খাব দিয়া নাই, মাৰিবলৈ আহিছে, কাটিবলৈ আহিছে আৰু মোৰ অংগ সমূহ ছেদন কৰিছে ইত্যাদি।

৩.০১ ঃ ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) উপদ্ৰৱ কৰা ঠাই হিচাপে চিহ্নিত গাঁও ঃ লখিমপুৰ জিলাৰ অন্তৰ্গত কলি গাঁও, এৰা দৰ্গে, ৰিজাৰ্ভ দৰ্গে, মেৰুগুলি, ২নং গেৰেকী, ৩ নং গেৰেকী, পামে গাওঁ, সোণালী টাকু, তেতেৰে গাওঁ, দুখীয়া চাপৰি, আলিমূৰ গাওঁ, বাঁহবাৰী আৰু কাংকান চাপৰি ইত্যাদি।

৪.০১ ঃ ডাইনীৰ (মৰুমনী) কবলৰ পৰা পৰিত্ৰাণ পোৱাৰ উপায় স্বৰূপে মিচিং সমাজে বিশ্বাস কৰে 'মিবু'। মিবুয়ে নিজৰ ঐশ্বৰিক গুণৰ বলত ডাইনীৰ কবলত পৰা ব্যক্তিজনক মৃত্যুৰ মুখৰ পৰা উদ্ধাৰ কৰিব পাৰে। সেয়ে 'মিবু'ৰ উপস্থিতি অনুভৱ কৰা বা প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰা মিচিং সমাজে আজিৰ তাৰিখতো তেখেতৰ ঐশ্বৰিক শক্তি আৰু (সমাজত) অগ্ৰণী ভূমিকা স্বীকাৰ কৰে। আৰু 'মিবু'ৰ অনুপস্থিতি অনুভৱ কৰে। কাৰণ তেখেতৰ ঐশ্বৰিক গুণৰ বলত ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ দৰে অন্ধবিশ্বাস তথা সামাজিক ব্যাধিৰ দ্বাৰা সংঘটিত অপ্ৰীতিকৰ পৰিস্থিতি চুড়ান্ত অৰ্থাৎ চৰম পৰ্যায়ত এতিয়ালৈ মিচিং সমাজত উপনীত হোৱা নাই। উল্লেখ্য যে 'মিবু' দঃঞি - পঃল'ত (সূৰ্য-চন্দ্ৰক) বিশ্বাসী তানীসকলৰ ধৰ্মীয় পুৰোহিত। এই শ্ৰেণীৰ লোকসকলক 'ন্যিবু' বা 'ঞিৱ' বুলিও কয়। অৱশ্যে 'মিবু' ক পোনপটীয়াকৈ পুৰোহিতৰ লগত তুলনা কৰিব পৰা নাযায়। কিয়নো 'মিবু' পুৰোহিতৰ দৰে কেৱল ধৰ্মীয় কাম-কাজেই পৰিচালনা নকৰে। অন্যান্য কামৰো নেতৃত্ব বহন কৰে। তদুপৰি 'মিবু' বা মিৰূ'ৰ আছে প্ৰকৃতি প্ৰদত্ত এক দৈৱিক শক্তি। যি শক্তি পুৰোহিতৰ গাত নাই। সেই কাৰণে 'মিবু'ৰে দৈৱিক শক্তিৰে শক্তিবান হৈ পৰ্বত-পাহাৰ, নৈৰ জলাধাৰ

পাৰ হৈ জন্তুৰ ৰাজ্যত জন্তু হৈ, পক্ষীৰ ৰাজ্যত পক্ষী হৈ আত্মাৰ লগত কথা পাতিব পাৰে। অপায়-অমঙ্গলৰ কাৰণ সুধিব পাৰে। আৰু নিৰাময়ৰ পথবো সন্দান দিব পাৰে। সেয়ে পুৰুষানুক্রমে পুৰোহিতৰ পুত্র পুৰোহিত হ'ব পাৰিলেও 'মিবু'ৰ পুত্র 'মিবু' হ'ব নোৱাৰিব পাৰে। কাৰণ 'মিবু' হ'বলৈ হ'লে দেৱতাৰ আশীর্বাদৰ প্রয়োজন হয়। সেয়ে ইচ্ছা কৰি কোনো ব্যক্তিয়ে 'মিবু' হ'ব নোৱাৰে।

৪.০২ ঃ বর্তমান সময়ত যি অঞ্চলত বা গাঁৱত ডাইনী সন্দেহ ঘনীভূত হয়; সেই অঞ্চলৰ জনতাই ৰাতি পহৰা দিবলৈ গাঁওৰক্ষী বাহিনী গঠন কৰি দিয়ে। গাঁৱৰ গাওঁবুঢ়া, ডেকা বৰা , তিনি বৰাক সেই গধুৰ দায়িত্ব অর্পন কৰে। গাওঁবুঢ়া, ডেকা বৰা আৰু তিনি বৰাই গাঁৱৰ সাহসীয়াল যুৱকক লৈ উক্ত গধুৰ দায়িত্ব মূৰ পাতি লয়। তেওঁলোকৰ পহৰা দিয়া কাম সহজসাধ্য কৰি তুলিবলৈ প্রতিটো ঘৰৰ চাৰিও দিশ (ওখকৈ) বাঁহৰ জেওৰা দিয়া হয়।

৫.০১ ঃ মিচিং সমাজত যাদু আৰু তন্ত্র-মন্ত্রবো বিশ্বাস আছে। এই তান্ত্রিক বিদ্যা, এজনে আন এজনলৈ অতি কৌশলৰে হস্তান্তৰ কৰে। মন্ত্র মূলতঃ দুবিধ। এবিধ মানৱ কল্যাণকাৰী আৰু আনবিধ অপকাৰী। এজন মানুহে যেতিয়া মানুহৰ কল্যাণার্থে এজন তান্ত্রিকৰ পৰা তেনে মন্ত্র দিবলৈ অনুৰোধ কৰে, তেতিয়া অপকাৰী মন্ত্রবোৰকো লবলৈ বাধ্য কৰোৱা হয়। যেনে জৰা-ফুকা কৰি দাঁতৰ পোক সৰোৱা, সর্প দংশনৰ পৰা মানুহক ৰক্ষা কৰা গা-বিষ আৰু মূৰৰ বিষ নাইকীয়া কৰা আদি উপকাৰী মন্ত্র। অহিত চিন্তা কৰা সকলৰ বাবে লাভাৱান্বিত হ'লেও পৰোপকাৰ বিচৰাসকলে বাধ্যত পৰি মানুহৰ ক্ষতিকাৰী মন্ত্রবোৰো ল'বলগীয়াত পৰে। অপকাৰী মন্ত্রবোৰ হ'ল ক্রমে টেকেলী বান, বায়ুবান, বৰুণ বান আৰু অগ্নিবান ইত্যাদি। টেকেলী বানত মানুহজনৰ পেট ফুলি উঠে। বায়ু বানত অলিয়া - বলিয়া হয়। আৰু অগ্নি বানত পেট গৰম হৈ দেহ-মন পুৰি যোৱা অৱস্থা হয় বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰে। উল্লেখ্য যে এই তান্ত্রিক মন্ত্রৰ দ্বাৰা বশ কৰি ভূত-পিশাচো ৰাখিব পাৰে। নৰ ৰক্ত পিপাসু পিশাচবোৰে বহু দিন তেজ পিবলৈ নাপালে মালিকক হাৰাশাস্তি কৰি মাৰে। পৰিণাম স্বৰূপে ইচ্ছা নাথাকিলেও তান্ত্রিকজনে মন্ত্র আৰু পিশাচৰ সহায়ত মানুহ মাৰিবলৈ বাধ্য হয়। শুনিবলৈ পোৱা মতে, 'মানুহ খোৱা' তান্ত্রিকবোৰৰ কান্ধত তেওঁ মৰা মানুহৰ প্রেতাত্মাবোৰ বহি থাকে। সেইবোৰ হেনো পানীত দেখা পায়। সেইকাৰণে তেনে তান্ত্রিকবোৰে মানুহৰ আগত কেতিয়াও পানীৰ কাষলৈ নাযায়। আৰু দলং পাৰ নহয়। মিচিং সমাজত প্রচলিত বিশ্বাস মতে মন্ত্র বা বান মাৰি এজন মানুহক মাৰিবলৈ হ'লে

মানুহজনৰ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা এডোখৰ কাপোৰ অথবা ভৰিৰ খোজৰ মাটি অলপ পাব লাগিব। তেহে মানুহ মাৰিব পাৰে। তাৰোপৰি এজন মানুহক মৰাৰ পিছত মৃতকৰ 'আগ' বা কবৰৰ পৰা যাদুকৰজনে মাটি এচপৰা আনিবই লাগিব। অন্যথা তেওঁৰ নিজৰে বিপদ অনিবার্য্য। সেয়ে সন্দেহজনক ভাৱে মানুহ মৰিলে সেইদিনা গাঁৱৰ ৰাইজে কবৰত পহৰা দিয়ে। তান্ত্রিকজনে সাপ, নেউল আদি ৰূপ লৈ মাটি সংগ্রহৰ বাবে চেষ্টা কৰে। এই কার্যত তান্ত্রিকজনৰ বিফল হ'লে নিজৰে মৃত্যু অনিবার্য্য হৈ পৰে।

৬.০১ ঃ ডাইনী (মৰুমনী)ৰ সন্দেহৰ পৰিণতিস্বৰূপে দুই এক বিক্ষিপ্ত ঘটনাৰ বাহিৰে, মিচিং সমাজত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ তথ্য এতিয়ালৈ পোৱা নাই। সেই সন্দর্ভত আমাৰ তদন্ত কালতো মিচিং সমাজক ডাইনী হত্যাৰ পৰিসংখ্যাত স্থান তালিকাভূক্ত কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম নহ'লো। কেৱল ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ কিছু মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিশৰ বাহিৰে লখিমপুৰ জিলাৰ অন্তর্গত যিকেইখন গাঁৱৰ নাম আমি ইতিমধ্যে উল্লেখ কৰি আহিছো উক্ত গাৱঁবোৰতো ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে কোনো ঘটনা সংঘটিত হোৱাৰ ইতিহাস উদঘাটন কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম নহলো। কাৰণ ইতিমধ্যে 'মিবু'ৰ অগ্রণী ভূমিকা উল্লেখ কৰি আহিছো ঠিক সেইদৰে বর্তমানেও গাঁৱৰ গাঁওবুঢ়া, ডেকা বৰা, তিনি বৰাই অতি সুশৃংখলিত ভাবে যিজন ব্যক্তিক ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) বুলি সন্দেহৰ ঘনীভূত হয়; সেই ব্যক্তিজনৰ ওপৰত ঘূৰণীয়া ৰাইজমেল আয়োজন কৰে। আৰু অতি সুক্ষ্ম বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষেণেৰে এটা সুস্থিৰ সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণত সহায় কৰে। ৰাইজেও তেওঁলোকৰ চুড়ান্ত-ৰায়ৰ প্রতি সন্মান জনায়। এই প্রথা মিচিং সমাজত প্রচলিত হৈ আহিছে। এই প্রথা অনুযায়ী ৰাইজেও ৰাইজৰ বিভিন্ন ঘটনা পৰিঘটনাৰ বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষণৰ সর্বোচ্চ ক্ষমতা তেওঁলোকৰ ওচৰতে অর্পন কৰাৰ নজিৰ পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। সেয়ে তেওঁলোকেও 'মিবু'ৰ পিছতে ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ দৰে সামাজিক ব্যাধিৰ ওপৰত এতিয়ালৈ কোনো বৈজ্ঞানিক বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষণ দাঙি ধৰিব পৰা নাই। মিচিং পণ্ডিতলোকেও বর্তমানলৈ ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সন্দেহৰ সপক্ষে ৰাইজৰ ওচৰত কোনো মতামত দাঙি ধৰিব পৰা নাই। সম্ভৱত সেইকাৰণে মিচিং সমাজে 'ডাইনী' হত্যাৰ দৰে সামাজিক ব্যাধিৰ পৰা আতঁৰি থাকিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। অৱশ্যে আমাৰ পূর্বপুৰুষ সকলৰ দিনত ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ কি মনোভাব বা পৰিবেশ আছিল, সেই সম্পর্কে সবল তথ্য আৰু লিখিত ইতিহাস নথকাৰ কাৰণে লিখক হিচাপে ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ দৰে সামাজিক ব্যাধি পূর্বপুৰুষ সকলে

কিদৰে দমন কৰিছিল বিস্তৃত ভাৱে দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ সক্ষম নহ'লো। বৰ্তমানৰ বুঢ়া-মেথা আৰু বিদ্বৎ সমাজে জনোৱামতে ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সন্দেহ মিচিং সমাজত তাহানি যুগৰে পৰা প্রচলিত। যদিও ডাইনী হত্যাৰ তথ্য পোৱা নাযায়।

৭.০১ ঃ বৰ্তমান শিক্ষাই মিচিং সমাজলৈও পোহৰ বিলাবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। কলা, বিজ্ঞান আৰু বাণিজ্য আৰু অন্যান্য মাধ্যমত শিক্ষা গ্রহণেৰে মিচিং সমাজেও বৈজ্ঞানিক বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষণ, যুক্তি-তর্ক ইত্যাদিৰ ভেটি মজুত কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। সেয়ে আজি যিকোনো বিষয়ৰ ওপৰত ঘণীভূত অন্ধবিশ্বাস, কু-সংস্কাৰ ইত্যাদি বৈজ্ঞানিক চিন্তা-চর্চাৰে বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষণ কৰি সমস্যাৰ সমাধান বিচাৰে। য'ত যুক্তি তর্ক আৰু বৈজ্ঞানিক বিচাৰ-বিশ্লেষণ দাঙি ধৰিব নোৱাৰে তাত সার্বজনীনতাৰ ভেটি স্থাপন কৰিব নোৱাৰে। সেই কথা প্রত্যেক শিক্ষিত মিচিঙে অনুভৱ কৰে। সেয়ে পূর্বৰ তুলনাত বৰ্তমান মিচিং সমাজত ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ দৰে সামাজিক ব্যাধিৰ পৰিমাণ বহুগুণে নাইকীয়া হৈছে। সেয়ে প্রত্যেক শিক্ষিত মিচিঙে মিচিং সমাজত ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ দৰে সামাজিক অন্ধবিশ্বাস নাই বুলিহে কব বিচাৰে।

৮.০১ ঃ (লিখকৰ মন্তব্য) তদন্ত কালত গম পোৱা মতে মিচিং সমাজত যাদু-মন্ত্র কৰাবোৰকো 'মৰুনাম' বুলিয়ে কয়। অৱশ্যে 'মৰুনাম' যাদু মন্ত্রতকৈ সম্পূর্ণ বেলেগ। 'মৰুনাম' মানে বিষাক্ত দ্রব্য খুৱাই তিল তিলকৈ মানুহ এজনক মাৰি পেলোৱা কার্য। এনেদৰে বিহ খুৱাই মানুহ মৰা পৰম্পৰা মানৱ সমাজত বহু পুৰণি। মহাকাব্য আৰু জনশ্রুতি সকলোতে এই কথা প্রকাশ। সেয়ে মিচিং সমাজত প্রচলিত 'মৰুনাম' অন্ধবিশ্বাস নহয়। কাৰণ খাদ্যত বিষাক্ত দ্রব্য মিহলি হ'লে মানুহ মৰিবই। মিচিং সমাজতো তেনেকুৱা ঘটনা ইতিমধ্যে ঘটি গৈছে। জানিব পৰা মতে তামোলৰ লগত , আপং, ভাতৰ লগত বিহ মিহলাই দি 'মেৰুনাম' কার্য সংঘটিত কৰে। তিনি দশকমান আগতে এনে অমানবীয় কার্যৰদ্বাৰা জেঙেৰাইমুখ, ঢকুৱাখনা, লখিমপুৰ আদি মিচিং অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চলত বহু নিৰপৰাধী মানুহ অকালতে মৃত্যুক সাবটি ল'বলগা হৈছে। এনে 'মৰুনাম' কর্মত জড়িত থকা বুলি সন্দেহ কৰা লোকক সমাজচ্যুত কৰা তথ্যও পোহৰলৈ আহিছে।

বিহ খুৱালে মানুহ মৰিব পাৰে। কিন্তু বিহ খুওৱা বুলি এজন মানুহক কেৱল সন্দেহৰ বশবর্তী হৈ জীৱন্তে মাৰি পেলোৱাটো সভ্য সমাজৰ কাম হ'ব নোৱাৰে। উপযুক্ত প্রমাণ পালে আইনমতে বিচাৰ হ'ব লাগে। আনহাতে ভূত-প্রেত পঠিয়াই, যাদু-মন্ত্রৰে মানুহ মাৰিব পাৰে বুলি ভবাটো অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ

বাহিৰে আন একো হ'ব নোৱাৰে। বিজ্ঞান আৰু প্ৰযুক্তিবিজ্ঞানৰ অভূতপূৰ্ব সফলতা, মানৱ সভ্যতা সংস্কৃতিৰ অকল্পনীয় পৰিবৰ্তনৰ সময়ত, এনে পশ্চাদগমনে সমগ্ৰ মানৱ জাতিৰ বাবেই এক ভাবুকি স্বৰূপ। উল্লেখ্য যে মিচিং সমাজত ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সন্দেহত বৰ্তমানলৈ ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে অমানৱীয় ঘটনা সংঘটিত হোৱাৰ তথ্য পোহৰলৈ অহা নাই। অৱশ্যে ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সন্দেহৰ পৰিমান দ্ৰুত গতিত বাঢ়ি গ'লে ভৱিষ্যতে মিচিং সমাজতো ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) ৰ সন্দেহত নীৰিহ মানুহক ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সজাই হত্যা কৰাৰ সম্ভাৱনা নুই কৰিব নোৱাৰি।

৯.০১ ঃ (প্ৰতিকাৰৰ উপায়) শিক্ষাই সামাজিক বংশগতিৰ অসামাজিক গুণবোৰ পৰিশোধন কৰিব পাৰে। ইতিমধ্যে শিক্ষাই মানৱজাতিক বৈজ্ঞানিক চিন্তা-চৰ্চা, ধ্যান-ধাৰণা আৰু সভ্যতাৰ গতিত আৰোহণ কৰাত সহায় কৰিছে। সেয়ে শিক্ষা অবিহনে কোনো জাতি বা দেশ উন্নতি, অগ্ৰগতি, প্ৰগতি আৰু শান্তি প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিব নোৱাৰে। গতিকে জাতিৰ মেৰুদণ্ডস্বৰূপ আৰু দাপোণস্বৰূপ শিক্ষা সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ লোকক বৰ্ণ বৈষম্য, লিংগ বৈষম্য আৰু ধৰ্মীয় ভেদাভেদ পৰিহাৰ কৰি প্ৰদান কৰিব লাগিব। অৱশ্যে এই ক্ষেত্ৰত ভাৰত চৰকাৰে স্বাধীনতা অৰ্জনৰ পিছৰে পৰা বিশেষ পদক্ষেপ গ্ৰহণ কৰি আহিছে, যদিও বিভিন্ন কাৰণত সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ লোকক সাক্ষৰ কৰি তুলিব পৰা নাই। যাৰ পৰিপ্ৰেক্ষিতত এতিয়াও হাজাৰ হাজাৰ লোক বিনামূলীয়া বাধ্যতামূলক সাৰ্বজনীন প্ৰাথমিক শিক্ষা গ্ৰহণৰ পৰা বঞ্চিত শোষিত হৈ থাকিব লগা হৈছে। ইয়াৰ ফলস্বৰূপে ২০০৯ বৰ্ষটো ভাৰত চৰকাৰে শিক্ষা অধিকাৰ আইন হিচাপে ঘোষণা কৰিছে। এই অধিকাৰ আইনখনেও গুণগত প্ৰাথমিক শিক্ষা উপলব্ধত সাধাৰণ ৰাইজক কিমান দূৰ উপকৃত কৰিব সেয়া সময়ে কব। যা হওঁক চৰকাৰে গুণগত, পৰিমাণগত আৰু বিজ্ঞানভিত্তিক শিক্ষা প্ৰদানেৰে সাধাৰণ ৰাইজৰ জীৱন ধাৰণৰ মানদণ্ড উন্নত কৰিব লাগিব। অন্যথা সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত শিপাই থকা অন্ধবিশ্বাস আৰু কু-সংস্কাৰ আতঁৰ কৰা সম্ভৱ নহ'ব।

নিম্নলিখিত দিশসমূহ চৰকাৰ, স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংগঠন, বিদ্বৎ সমাজ আৰু শিক্ষক সমাজে সততা আৰু নিষ্ঠাৰে ৰূপায়ন কৰিব পাৰিলে জনজাতীয় সমাজত শিপাইথকা অন্ধবিশ্বাস আৰু কু-সংস্কাৰ বহুগুণে নাইকিয়া কৰিব পাৰিব। যেনে -

* জনজাতীয় অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চলবোৰত উন্নত স্বাস্থ্য সেৱা কেন্দ্ৰ স্থাপন কৰি উন্নত চিকিৎসা সেৱা প্ৰদান কৰিব পাৰিলে ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) সন্দেহৰ পৰিমাণ হ্ৰাস কৰিব পাৰিব।

* বিজ্ঞানভিত্তিক শিক্ষা প্রদানৰ জৰিয়তে শৰীৰতত্ত্ব সম্পর্কে সাধাৰণ ৰাইজক জ্ঞান দিব পাৰিলে ডাইনী (মৰুমনী) ৰ দৰে সামাজিক ব্যাধি নাইকীয়া কৰিব পাৰিব।
* অনুন্নত অঞ্চল হিচাপে চিহ্নিত জাতি জনজাতি অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চলবোৰৰ যাতায়ত ব্যৱস্থা উন্নত কৰি সাধাৰণ ৰাইজৰ জীৱন ধাৰণৰ মানদণ্ড উন্নত কৰিব পাৰিলেও ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে সামাজিক ব্যাধি, কু-সংস্কাৰ আৰু অন্ধবিশ্বাস হ্রাস কৰিব পাৰিব।
* ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে চৰকাৰে কঠোৰ আইন প্রণয়ন কৰা আৰু ইয়াৰ যথোপযুক্তভাৱে ব্যৱহাৰত গুৰুত্ব প্রদান কৰা।
* চৰকাৰে স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংগঠনৰ দ্বাৰা জনসজাগতা কার্যসূচী ৰূপায়ন কৰিব পাৰে। যেনে - বক্তৃতানুষ্ঠান, কর্মশালা, আলোচনা চক্র আৰু বাটৰ নাট ইত্যাদি।
* গৱেষকস্বৰূপ, পথপ্রদর্শকস্বৰূপ আৰু পৰামর্শদাতাৰূপে খ্যাত শিক্ষক সমাজে উন্নত মানদণ্ডৰ গৱেষণাৰ কাম সম্পাদন কৰি বৈজ্ঞানিক তত্ত্ব আৰু সূত্র আৱিষ্কাৰ কৰিব পাৰে। যাতে সাধাৰণ ৰাইজ সামাজিক ব্যাধিৰ বিৰুদ্ধে যুজ দিব পৰা মানসিকতা অর্জন কৰিব পাৰে।
* জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ ভাষা-সাহিত্য, কলা-কৃষ্টি, সংস্কৃতি আৰু ধর্মীয় পৰম্পৰা বিকাশত ৰাজ্য আৰু কেন্দ্রীয় চৰকাৰে বিশেষ পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ কৰিব পাৰে।
* এই দিশৰ অগ্রগতি আৰু প্রগতিত বিদ্বৎ সমাজেও উল্লেখযোগ্য দিহা পৰামর্শৰে চৰকাৰ আৰু জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ মাজত মধ্যস্থতাকাৰীৰ ভূমিকা পালন কৰিব পাৰে।
* সমাজসেৱকৰূপে খ্যাত চিকিৎসক সমাজ আৰু চিকিৎসা জগতত কর্মৰত কর্মচাৰী সমাজেও জনজাতীয় সমাজলৈ সেৱা আগবঢ়াবৰ বাবে মানসিক আৰু শাৰীৰিকভাৱে প্রস্তুত থাকিব লাগিব।
* আধুনিকতাৰ লগত খাপ খোৱাবৰ বাবে বিদ্যুৎ আৰু যোগাযোগ ব্যৱস্থা উন্নত কৰিব লাগিব।
* চৰকাৰে জনজাতীয় সমাজৰ আর্থ-সামাজিক বিকাশ আৰু সাধাৰণ ৰাইজৰ কর্ম-সংস্থাপনৰ বাবে বিভিন্ন কার্যসূচী ৰূপায়ন কৰিব পাৰে, ইত্যাদি।

সহায়ক গ্রন্থ ঃ-

সদানন্দ পায়েং — মিচিং জনজাতি ঃ সমাজ আৰু সংস্কৃতি।

অন্ধবিশ্বাসজনিত কু-পৰম্পৰা ডাইনী হত্যা

ৰিম্‌ঝিম চেতিয়া

তন্ত্ৰ-মন্ত্ৰ, বেজ-বেজালি, ভূত-ডাইনী আদি ধাৰণা বহু যুগ ধৰি আমাৰ সমাজ জীৱনত আংগিকভাৱে টলি আহিছে। সমাজৰ অধিকাংশ লোক অশিক্ষিত হোৱাৰ বাবে বেজ-বেজালিৰ ওপৰত তেওঁলোকৰ অটুট বিশ্বাস। নিৰক্ষৰ আৰু বহুক্ষেত্ৰত অজ্ঞান হোৱা হেতুকে এচাম সুবিধাবাদী দলে তেওঁলোকৰ নিজৰ মতে পৰিচালিত কৰে। অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ কৰাল গ্ৰাসত পৰি সন্দেহবশতঃ যাদু-মন্ত্ৰ, বেজ-বেজালি কৰা পুৰুষ বা মহিলাক ডাইনী সজাই হানি-খুচি অতি নিমৰ্মভাৱে হত্যা কৰা হয়। বিজ্ঞান আৰু প্ৰযুক্তিবিদ্যাৰ উন্নতিৰ সময়ত এইবিধ অন্ধবিশ্বাস জনিত কু-পৰম্পৰাৰ বিষ বাষ্পই সমাজক আগুৰি পেলাইছে। অন্ধবিশ্বাস সমূহেই আহি আজি পৰম্পৰাৰ ৰূপ লৈছেহি। এই পৰম্পৰা সুখজনক নহয়।

ডাইনী শব্দৰ অর্থ হ'ল ভূত পোহা তিৰোতা। ভূত-প্ৰেত আদিৰ বিশ্বাস পৃথিৱীত মানুহৰ জন্ম লগ্নৰ প্ৰায় লগে লগেই সৃষ্টি হোৱা বিশ্বাস। ডাইনী বুলিলে আমাৰ চকুত কুৎচিত, কদাকাৰ চেহেৰাৰ নাৰীৰ অৱয়বহে ধৰা পৰে, তথাপি পৃথিৱীত যে অকল নাৰী ডাইনী আছিল তেনে নহয়, বহু ঠাইত পুৰুষ ডাইনীও আছিল বুলি জনা গৈছে। কিন্তু সেই সংখ্যা আৰু তাৰ গুৰুত্ব তুলনামূলকভাৱে কিছু কম হোৱাত ডাইনী বুলিলে নাৰীৰ ছবিহে আমাৰ মনলৈ

আহে। ভূত-প্রেত আদিৰ বিশ্বাস পৃথিৱীত মানুহৰ জন্ম লগ্নৰ প্ৰায় লগে লগেই সৃষ্টি হোৱা বিশ্বাস। সেয়েহে কোনো এটি বিশেষ যুগক ডাইনীবিদ্যাৰ জন্মযুগ বুলি ক'ব নোৱাৰি। ডাইনীবিদ্যাৰ কথা বিতংভাৱে আলোচনা আৰু চৰ্চা কৰাৰ বাবে 'ডাইনীতন্ত্ৰ' ইউৰোপীয় গুপ্ত বিজ্ঞানৰ এটি বিশেষ বিষয় হিচাবে চিহ্নিত হৈছে। ডাইনী বিদ্যা সম্পৰ্কীয় তথ্যসমূহ বিশ্লেষণ কৰিলে পোৱা যায় যে ইয়াৰ এক সুদূৰ বিয়পা অতীত আছে আৰু ইয়াৰ ইতিহাস ঘন ৰহস্যৰ মায়াজালত আৱদ্ধ।

ডাইনী বিদ্যাৰ মূল হ'ল মানুহৰ এক অৰ্থহীন আদিম বিশ্বাস আৰু যুক্তিহীন আদিম ধৰ্মীয় চেতনা। এই বিশ্বাস আৰু ধৰ্মীয় চেতনাৰ হাত ধৰিয়েই যুগ যুগ ধৰি পৃথিৱীত চলি আহিছে ডাইনীবিদ্যা। শতাব্দী শতাব্দী ধৰি চলি অহা এনে বিশ্বাসৰ মাজেৰে গঢ় লৈ উঠিছে ডাইনীসকলৰ ধৰ্মবিশ্বাস আৰু অনুষ্ঠান সম্পৰ্কীয় নিয়মতন্ত্ৰ, ইংৰাজীত যাক আখ্যা দিয়া হৈছে 'উইচ্ কাণ্ট'।

অতীতৰ বিভিন্ন দেশৰ ডাইনী নিৰ্যাতনৰ কাহিনীবোৰৰ কৰুণ পৰিণতি অতি ভয়লগা আৰু শিহৰণকাৰী। ডাইনী গৱেষকসকলৰ মতে ইউৰোপৰ ডাইনী বৃত্তি আৰু ধৰ্মীয় অনুশাসন ভংগৰ অভিযোগতেই কমেও নব্বৈ লাখ নাৰী-পুৰুষক নিৰ্বিবাদে হত্যা কৰা হৈছিল। অতীতৰ গ্ৰীচ, ৰোম, স্কটলেণ্ড, ইটালী আদি বিভিন্ন দেশত ডাইনী বিদ্যাৰ চৰ্চা হৈছিল।

মানুহে ডাইনী বিদ্যাৰ আৰম্ভণি ঘটালে ক'ত ৰাু কিয়? প্ৰশ্নটোৰ সঠিক উত্তৰ নাথাকিলেও ইয়াৰ থুলমূল ব্যাখ্যা এনেদৰে দিব পাৰি যে - যি প্ৰয়োজনত বিজ্ঞান প্ৰযুক্তিবিদ্যাৰ উদ্ভৱ হৈ আজি তাৰ বিকাশ হ'ব লাগিছে, সেই একেই প্ৰয়োজনত হয়তো পৃথিৱীত উদ্ভৱ হৈছিল ডাইনীবিদ্যাৰ।

কিম্বদন্তী অনুসৰি অসমৰ কামৰূপ জিলাৰ প্ৰতিগৃহত শাক্ততান্ত্ৰিক সাধনাসংগিনী দেৱী গুণসম্পন্ন নাৰী বা যোগিনী আছিল। প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতৰ কামৰূপৰ তন্ত্ৰসাধনা তথা এক কোটি যোগিনীৰ কাহিনী সৰ্ববিদিত আছিল। ডাঃ দেবব্ৰত ভট্টাচাৰ্যই তেওঁৰ এখন গ্ৰন্থত উল্লেখ কৰিছে - 'কামৰূপৰ কামাখ্যা অঞ্চলৰ ডাইনী যোগিনীসকলে ৰাতিৰ অন্ধকাৰত গছৰ ডালত বহি থাকে, এডালৰ পৰা আন এডাললৈ বা আকাশত উৰি ফুৰে স্বচ্ছন্দে .... এই কথা ভাৰতৰ বহু প্ৰান্তত বিশ্বাস কৰা হৈছিল।

বৰ্তমান অসমত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে ঘটনা বৃদ্ধি পাবলৈ ধৰিছে। এফালে বিজ্ঞান প্ৰযুক্তিবিদ্যাৰ অগ্ৰগতি আৰু আনফালে নিৰক্ষৰ জনসমাজৰ অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বলি হোৱা ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে ঘটনা। অসমৰ বিশেষকৈ কোকোৱাঝাৰ, ধুবুৰী, গোৱালপাৰা, শিৱসাগৰ, বিশ্বনাথ চাৰিআলি আদিৰ বিভিন্ন ভিতৰুৱা নিৰক্ষৰ সমাজত এই নাৰকীয় ঘটনা সংঘটিত হৈছে। কোকোৱাঝাৰৰ চাপৰ থানৰ অন্তৰ্গত বড়োমালাত (৫ অক্টোবৰ ২০০৫), শিৱসাগৰৰ ৰাজমাই বাহ-বাগিচাৰ ১৯ নৱেম্বৰ ২০০৫, চেৰফাংগুৰি থানাৰ কলাইগাঁওত এক দম্পতীক ডাইনীৰ সন্দেহত হত্যা কৰা হ'ল আৰু বৰ্তমান সময়তো এনেধৰণৰ নাৰকীয় ঘটনা ঘটিয়েই আছে। আৱেগৰ সতে যেতিয়া বিশ্বাস আদিৰ সমন্বয় ঘটে তেতিয়া মানুহৰ প্ৰতিক্ৰিয়া অত্যন্ত শক্তিশালী ৰূপত প্ৰকাশ পায়। এনে অৱস্থাত অসম্ভৱকো সম্ভৱ কৰি তুলিব পাৰে।

আট্ছাৰ সভাপতি প্ৰহ্লাদ গোৱালাই এই সম্পৰ্কত মন্তব্য দিছিল এনেদৰে - 'ডাইনী নিগ্ৰহ, ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে ঘটনা আমাৰ সমাজৰ বাবে লজ্জাজনক। শিক্ষণৰ অভাৱেই মূলতঃ এনে ঘটনাৰ বাবে দায়ী। সজাগতাৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিব লাগিব ৰাইজৰ মাজত যাতে এনে ঘটনাৰ পুনৰাবৃত্তি নঘটে।'

ABWWF ৰ সভাপতি কাননবালা বসুমতাৰীৰ মতে - 'আমাৰ বাবে ইয়াতকৈ লজ্জাজনক আৰু কি হ'ব পাৰে। তুলনামূলকভাৱে বড়ো সমাজতেই বেছি ঘটে 'ডাইনী হত্যা'ৰ দৰে কাণ্ড। ..... আচলতে শিক্ষিত অশিক্ষিত বুলিয়েই নহয় এনে ধাৰণা মানুহবোৰৰ মাজত প্ৰাচীন সময়ৰে পৰা আছে বাবেই এইবোৰ ঘটনা ঘটে। ..... ডাইনী হত্যাৰ আঁৰত বৃহৎ স্বাৰ্থ জড়িত হৈ আছে আৰু 'ডাইনী'তো পুৰুষো হয়, কিন্তু ডাইনী বুলি নৱৈ শতাংশই নাৰীকহে হত্যা কৰা হয়।'

আবছুৰ সচিব কমলাকান্ত ৰাভাই ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে ঘটনা সম্পৰ্কত কৈছে - 'এইবোৰ কথাৰ যে কোনো বৈজ্ঞানিক ভিত্তি নাই কোনে বুজাব তেওঁলোকক। আচলতে অন্ধবিশ্বাস সমূহেই আজি পৰম্পৰাৰ ৰূপ লৈছেহি। ..... এই ধাৰণাবোৰ মানুহৰ মনৰ পৰা নোহোৱা হোৱাত সময় লাগিব, কিন্তু তাৰ বাবে আমিও নিশ্চয় প্ৰচেষ্টাও অব্যাহত ৰাখিব লাগিব।

সমাজত যি সকলক আজি মাহেকে-পযেকে ডাইনী বুলি নিৰ্যাতন কৰি হত্যা কৰা হয় তেওঁলোকে প্ৰকৃতাৰ্থত 'ডাইনী'ৰ কোনো ক্ষমতাই বহন নকৰে

বা কৰিব নোৱাৰে। 'ডাইনী'ৰ শক্তি এক 'বীৰ' শক্তি, এক যোদ্ধাৰ শক্তি, এক ধর্মগুৰু অথবা ঋষিৰ শক্তি, এক ৰাজনীতিজ্ঞৰ শক্তি, এক মনঃস্তত্ত্ববিদ, এক বৈদ্য আৰু এগৰাকী দয়াশীল মাতৃৰ শক্তি, এই ব্যক্তিত্ব স্বয়সম্পূর্ণ। প্রাচীন সময়ত মন্ত্র আৰু ঔষধি গছৰ শিপাৰে চিকিৎসা কৰা ডাইনীসকল অত্যন্ত শ্রদ্ধাৰ পাত্র আছিল। এওঁলোকে পৰৱর্তী সময়ত নানান আর্থ-সামাজিক বিশৃংখলতা আৰু বিভিন্ন ক্ষমতাশালী শ্রেণীৰ লোকৰ ৰোষৰ বলি হয় আৰু সেই সন্মান আৰু শ্রদ্ধা ক্রমশঃ হেৰুৱাই পেলায়। আজি 'ডাইনী' সকল কেৱল ঘৃণাৰ পাত্র। দৰাচলতে এই ঘৃণাহে প্রকৃত 'অসুৰ'।

বর্তমান ডাইনী চিহ্নিত সকলক সাংবিধানিক সুৰক্ষা দিয়াৰ প্রশ্ন বহুতে তুলিছে। অসমতকৈ তুলনামূলকভাৱে ঝাৰখণ্ড, মধ্যপ্রদেশ, বিহাৰ আদি ঠাইত ডাইনী নিগ্রহৰ দৰে ঘটনা অত্যন্ত বেছি হোৱাত কেন্দ্রীয় চৰকাৰে 'ডাইনী হত্যা'ক কেন্দ্র কৰি বিশেষ আইন প্রণয়নৰ যো-জা কৰিছে। এই কু-পৰম্পৰাক ৰোধ কৰিবৰ কাৰণে বিভিন্ন সামাজিক অনুষ্ঠান, সংগঠন আদি আগবাঢ়ি আহিছে। ই যথেষ্ট প্রশংসনীয় বিষয়।

অন্ধবিশ্বাসজনিত কু-পৰম্পৰা ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে ধাৰণাবোৰে যুগ যুগ ধৰি মানুহক পৰিচালিত কৰি আহিছে। দণ্ড ভয় দেখুৱাই বা আন ভাবুকি প্রদানেৰে নতুবা দৃষ্টান্তমূলক শাস্তিৰে এই বিষাক্ত ধাৰণা নির্মূল সম্ভৱ নহয়। এই ধাৰণাবোৰ মানুহৰ মনৰ পৰা নোহোৱা হোৱাত সময় লাগিব, অৱশ্যে তাৰ বাবে আমি নিশ্চয় প্রচেষ্টাও অব্যাহত ৰাখিব লাগিব।

গ্রন্থপঞ্জী ঃ

১। চৌধুৰী, প্রসেনজিৎ ঃ বিজ্ঞান আৰু অন্ধবিশ্বাস, জ্যোতি প্রকাশন, প্রথম প্রকাশ, ১৯৯৩
২। মহন্ত, মাইনী (সম্পা) ঃ নন্দিনী, জুন, ২০০৬
৩। দাস, শশী (সম্পা) ঃ বিস্ময়, জুলাই, ১৯৯৯

ডাইনী বিশ্বাস আৰু ডাইনী হত্যা ঃ চৰকাৰ, শিক্ষানুষ্ঠান, সামাজিক সংস্থা আৰু কলা সংস্কৃতিৰ ভূমিকা

অতুল চন্দ্ৰ দাস
ড° অনিমা বৈশ্য
ড° মনালিছা বৰা

১.০০ প্ৰস্তাৱনা ঃ-

মানুহৰ সভ্যতাৰ ইতিহাস বিশ্লেষণ কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে যাদুবিদ্যা বা ঐন্দ্ৰজালিক বিশ্বাসে অতি প্ৰাচীন কালৰে পৰা মানুহৰ জীৱনৰ ওপৰত গভীৰ প্ৰভাৱ বিস্তাৰ কৰি আহিছে। ভাৰতীয় সমাজ জীৱনত এই যাদুবিদ্যাৰ প্ৰভাৱ আৰু সুদূৰ প্ৰসাৰী। অৱশ্যে ভাৰতত উপনিবেশিক শাসনৰ লগে লগে ঐন্দ্ৰজালিক বিশ্বাসে এক নতুন ৰূপ লাভ কৰে বুলি Anthropological Survey of India ৰ ভূতপূৰ্ব সঞ্চালক প্ৰধান কে. এছ. সিং-এ (K. S. Singh) মন্তব্য দিছে ঃ 'the advent of witchcraft in India probably coincided with the arrival of colonial rullers. The local people had a larger view of shamanism (the world of good and evil spirits), but with European influence in began to get identified with black magic, white magic and witchcraft' কোৱা বাহুল্য যে ডাইনী বিশ্বাস যাদুবিদ্যাৰ উদ্ভৱৰ সমসাময়িক।

২.০০ অধ্যয়নৰ পৰিসীমা ঃ-

প্ৰায় পৃথিৱী জুৰি পৰিব্যাপ্ত ডাইনী বিশ্বাস সম্পৰ্কে বিভিন্ন দৃষ্টিকোণেৰে বিভিন্ন আলোচনা হৈছে। ডাইনী বিশ্বাসৰ সমগ্ৰ দিশ এই আলোচনা পত্ৰত

প্রবিষ্ট কৰা অৱকাস নাই, এই পত্রত ডাইনী বিশ্বাস প্রশমনৰ বাবে চৰকাৰী পক্ষ, শিক্ষানুষ্ঠান, সামাজিক সংস্থা, কলা-পৰিবেশ কলাৰ সম্ভাৱনাপূর্ণ কৰণীয় সম্পর্কে হে আলোচনা সামৰি লোৱাৰ প্রয়াস কৰা হৈছে আৰু এই আলোচনা মূলতঃ অসমৰ প্রসংগতহে কৰা হৈছে।

৩.০০ সমল ঃ-

এই আলোচনাৰ বাবে মূলতঃ চাৰিটা ক্ষেত্রৰ পৰা সমল আহৰণ কৰা হৈছে ঃ-

ক) 'মিছন বীৰুবালা'ৰ সঞ্চালিকা শ্রীমতী বীৰুবালা ৰাভা আৰু বিষয়ববীয়াসকলৰ সৈতে হোৱা সৌহাদ্যপূর্ণ আলোচনা।

খ) আলোচনী বাতৰি কাকত আদিত প্রকাশিত প্রবন্ধ আৰু বৈদ্যুতিন মাধ্যমত প্রচাৰিত আলোচনা আদি।

গ) ইণ্টাৰনেটত প্রকাশিত প্রবন্ধ আৰু

ঘ) স্বকীয় অনুভৱ।

৪.০০ পদ্ধতি ঃ-

আলোচ্য বিষয়টিক সমালোচনামূলক, তুলনামূলক আদি বেলেগ বেলেগ পদ্ধতিৰে আলোচনা কৰাৰ অৱকাস আছে যদিও ইয়াত বর্ণনাত্মক পদ্ধতিহে গ্রহণ কৰা হৈছে।

৫.০০ ডাইনী কি ? ঃ-

'ডাইনী' শব্দটিৰ অভিধানিক অর্থ হ'ল নাৰী ভূত। বাংলা ভাষাচার্য সুকুমাৰ সেনে কৈছে যে নাৰী ভূতৰ নাম হ'ল প্রেতনী। এই প্রেতনীৰ প্রসংগতে ডাইনীৰ কথা আহিছে। ডাইনীৰ মাজত মানুহ আছে, গন্ধর্ব আছে, দেৱী আছে আৰু প্রেতনী আছে। 'ডাইনী' শব্দটো 'ডাকিনী' শব্দৰ পৰা আহিছে। বংগীয় শব্দকোষৰ ব্যাখ্যা অনুসৰি ডাকিনী হৈছে কালীৰ গণবিশেষ লগতে কোৱা হৈছে যে উপদ্রৱকাৰিণী নাৰীয়েই হ'ল ডাকিনী।

ডাইনী বা ডাকিনী বুজাবলৈ ইংৰাজী ভাষাত ব্যৱহৃৎ শব্দটো হৈছে 'উইচ (Witch)'। 'উইচ' শব্দটোৰ অর্থ Encarta Dictionary ত এনেদৰে দিয়া হৈছে ঃ'With magic power, especially a woman, who is

supposed to have magical or wonder working powers that are most often used malevolenthy.' শব্দৰ পৰা অহা বুলি ধাৰণা কৰা হয় কিন্তু ডাইনী বিশেষজ্ঞ কুমাৰী মাৰ্গাৰেট মাৰেৰ মতে — 'উইচ শব্দটো 'উইট (Wit)' শব্দৰ পৰাহে আহিছে। উইট শব্দটোৰ অর্থ হ'ল 'জনা (To know)', অর্থাৎ ডাইনীসকলে বহুত কথা আগতীয়াকৈ জানিব পাৰে, ভৱিষ্যতবাণী কৰিব পাৰে। ৰোমান কে. হোমাৰৰ মতে — 'যিবোৰ নাৰীয়ে দুষ্ট শক্তিৰ ওচৰত নিজৰ আত্মা বিক্রী কৰে, সিহঁতেই ডাইনী।'

অসমৰ প্রসংগত সাধাৰণতে দেখা যায় যে পিছপৰা গাঁও অঞ্চলত, বিশেষকৈ জনজাতি প্রধান এলেকাত কাৰোবাৰ কোনো নৰিয়া হ'লে নিদান বিচাৰি কোনো স্থানীয় কবিৰাজ, ওজা বা বেজৰ ওচৰ চপা হয়। কবিৰাজে ঐন্দ্রজালিক ব্যৱস্থাৰে জৰা-ফুকা কৰি ৰোগীৰ বেমাৰ ভাল কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰি যেতিয়া বিফল হয় তেতিয়া তেওঁ ৰোগীৰ গাত আন কু-প্রবৃত্তিৰ মানুহৰ নজৰ পৰিছে, কোনোবাই বীৰা লগাইছে, ঔষধ পুতিছে বা সৰহ ক্ষেত্রত ডাইনী লম্ভিছে বুলি অপপ্রচাৰ চলায়। কবিৰাজৰ অপপ্রচাৰত ভোল গৈ মানুহে কোনো নাৰীক ডাইনী বুলি সন্দেহ কৰে আৰু সেই নাৰী গৰাকীক সামাজিকভাৱে অবর্ণনীয় অত্যাচাৰ চলায় বা প্রায়ে হত্যা কৰা হয়। ভাৰতবর্ষৰ প্রায় সকলো ৰাজ্যতে বিশেষকৈ বিহাৰ, পশ্চিমবংগ, অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশ, উৰিষ্যা, ঝাৰখণ্ড, অসম তথা উত্তৰ-পূর্বাঞ্চলৰ চুকে-কোণে ডাইনীৰ বিশ্বাস এই একবিংশ শতিকাতো প্রৱল।

৬.০০ ডাইনী বিশ্বাসৰ কাৰণ ঃ-

ডাইনী বিশ্বাসৰ কাৰণ থাওকতে কোৱা টান। বিভিন্ন ঠাইত বিভিন্ন কাৰণত ডাইনী বিশ্বাসৰ ধাৰণাই গঢ় লৈছে। এইবোৰৰ কেইটামান কাৰণ হ'ল —

ক) অন্ধবিশ্বাস। বেছিভাগ ক্ষেত্রত অন্ধবিশ্বাসেই ডাইনী ধাৰণাৰ প্রধান কাৰণ।
খ) শৈক্ষিক অনগ্রসৰতা।
গ) অর্থনৈতিক দূৰাৱস্থা।
ঘ) ৰাজনৈতিক চতুৰালী।
ঙ) মনস্তাত্ত্বিক।
চ) লিংগ বৈষম্য।
ছ) অসূচল যাতায়ত ব্যৱস্থা।

৭.০০ ডাইনী আছেনে ঃ-

ডাইনী সঁচাই আছেনে? আমাৰ দ্বিধাহীন উত্তৰ হ'ল ডাইনী নাই। ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ ভুক্তভোগী উৰিষ্যাৰ সুন্দৰ গড় জিলাৰ কলনী এটাৰ নাৰী ৰাণী বিৰুৱাই (ব্যথিত কণ্ঠে সাংবাদিকক কৈছিল, 'Do we look like witches?We are tortured for no fault of ours. We know nothing about witchcraft'

প্রকৃততে ডাইনী পুৰুষতান্ত্রিক সমাজৰ সৃষ্টি। মানুহৰ দৰিদ্রতা আৰু অশিক্ষাৰ সুযোগ লৈ পুৰুষতান্ত্রিক সমাজৰ স্বয়ম্ভু ধ্বজাবাহী সকলে যুগে যুগে মানুহৰ ওপৰত আৰোপ কৰি আহিছে নানা ধৰণৰ অযৌক্তিক বাধা নিষেধ আৰু অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ গধু�ৰ বোজা। সামন্তবাদী যুগত বা আজিও সামন্তবাদী ধ্যান ধাৰণাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত এনে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বোজা বৈ বৈ মানুহ হৈ পৰিছে আত্মবিশ্বাসহীন আৰু কুসংস্কাৰাচ্ছন্ন। সামন্তবাদী চিন্তা চেতনাৰ দালালে নিজৰ মুনাফাৰ বাবেই সমাজত ডাইনী, যক্ষিণী, পিশাচ-পিশাচিনী, বীৰা আদি অপশক্তি/অপদেৱতাৰ সৃষ্টি কৰি এই উচ্চ প্রযুক্তিৰ যুগতো (Hitech era) নিজৰ শাসন শোষণৰ বাট মুকলি কৰি আছে। সেই কাৰণে বেছিভাগ ক্ষেত্রতে ডাইনী সজোৱা হয় নাৰীক — তাকো দাৰিদ্রত পোত গৈ থকা নাৰীক। ডাইনী বিচাৰি উলিওৱা হয় অশিক্ষিত অর্ধশিক্ষিত লোকৰ পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ আওঁতাত থকা অতি পিছপৰা গাঁৱত। যদি ডাইনী আছে, তেন্তে সম্ভ্রান্ত পৰিয়ালৰ শিক্ষিতা নাৰীক ডাইনী আখ্যা দিয়াৰ সাহস হ'বনে?

৮.০০ সজাগতা আনিব পৰা আহিলাবোৰ ঃ-

ডাইনী বিশ্বাস আৰু তৎজনিত নিগ্রহৰ ঘটনা অতীজতো ঘটিছিল, আজিও ঘটি আছে আৰু অনাগত দিনতো যে নঘটিব তাক ন দি কব নোৱাৰি। সেয়ে ডাইনী যে নাই, ই এটা ভুৱা বিশ্বাস, এই সম্পর্কে ভুক্তভোগী সমাজত কেনেদৰে সজাগতা আনিব পাৰি তাৰে আহিলা চিনাক্ত কৰি কার্যক্ষম কৰিব লাগে। এই প্রসংগতে আমাৰ আলোচনা পত্রত তলত উল্লেখ কৰা দিশ/আহিলাবোৰ ওপৰত আলোকপাত কৰা হ'ল।

৮.০১ চৰকাৰৰ আহিলা ঃ-

ক) **আইন প্রণয়ন** ঃ- ডাইনী হত্যা প্রতিৰোধ কৰিবৰ কাৰণে চৰকাৰে এখন আইন প্রণয়ন কৰিব লাগে আৰু তাক কঠোৰ হাতেৰে বলবৎ কৰিব লাগে।

খ) ডাইনী সন্দেহ আৰু ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে ঘটনাৰ বাবে আমাৰ শিক্ষা পদ্ধতিও বহু পৰিমাণে দায়ী। ইউৰোপীয় সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ পৰা ডাইনী সন্দেহ আঁতৰ কৰাত সেই দেশৰ শিক্ষা ব্যৱস্থাৰ প্ৰভুত অৰিহণা আছে। ভাৰতত কিন্তু কোনো এটা শিক্ষা ব্যৱস্থা সমাজৰ পৰা অন্ধবিশ্বাস আঁতৰ কৰাত বিশেষ বৰঙণি আগবঢ়াইছে বুলিব নোৱাৰি। গতিকে সমাজৰ মানুহৰ প্ৰকৃত বিজ্ঞান মনস্কতা গঢ়িবলৈ এটা সম্পূৰ্ণ বিজ্ঞানসন্মত শিক্ষা পদ্ধতি প্ৰৱৰ্তন কৰিব লাগে। ভুক্তভোগী ৰাজ্যসমূহৰ পাঠ্যক্ৰমত +২ পৰ্যায়লৈ ডাইনী বিষয়ক সচেতনা সৃষ্টি কৰা নাই (Lesson) বাধ্যতামূলক কৰিব লাগে।

গ) ভূক্তভোগী ৰাজ্যসমূহত অতি পিছপৰা অঞ্চললৈও স্বাস্থ্য সেৱা প্ৰকৃতাৰ্থত সুলভ কৰিব লাগে। লগতে অনাময় ব্যৱস্থা, বিশুদ্ধ খোৱাপানীৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰিব লাগে। তেতিয়া বেমাৰ-আজাৰ কম হ'ব লগতে জনস্বাস্থ্য সচেতনাও বৃদ্ধি পাব।

ঘ) ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ ভূক্তভোগী ৰাজ্যসমূহৰ অতি দুৰ্গম অঞ্চললৈ যাতায়ত ব্যৱস্থা, যোগাযোগ ব্যৱস্থা আৰু বিজুলী যোগান ব্যৱস্থা সূচল আৰু সুলভ কৰিব লাগে।

৮.০২ শিক্ষানুষ্ঠানসমূহৰ ভূমিকা ঃ-

ডাইনী সন্দেহ বা ডাইনী হত্যা প্ৰশাসনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত স্থানীয় শিক্ষানুষ্ঠানসমূহৰো গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা আছে। শিক্ষানুষ্ঠানসমূহ অকল ছাত্ৰ গঢ়াৰে কমাৰশালা নহয়, সমাজ গঢ়াৰো পাঠশালা। শিক্ষানুষ্ঠানসমূহৰ বিভিন্ন অনুষ্ঠান, অভিভাৱকৰ সভা, মাতৃগোটৰ সভা, জ্ঞানদয়িনী সভা আদিৰ জৰিয়তে এনে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰি সজাগতা আনিব পৰা যায়। মহাবিদ্যালয়ৰ NSS গোটসমূহে ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ ভূক্তভোগী সমাজৰ মাজলৈ গৈ সজাগতা অনাত প্ৰভুত বৰঙণি আগবঢ়াব পাৰে।

৮.০৩ সামাজিক সংস্থাসমূহৰ ভূমিকা ঃ-

আমাৰ সমাজত ভালেমান সামাজিক সংস্থা আছে। এইবোৰৰ ভিতৰত পঞ্চায়ত, ৰাইজ গয়ৰহ, স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংস্থা, যুৱক সংঘ, মহিলা সমিতি আদি অন্যতম। এই সংস্থাসমূহে বিভিন্ন স্তৰত ডাইনী বিশ্বাস আঁতৰাবৰ বাবে বিভিন্ন সেৱা আগবঢ়োৱাৰ অৱকাস আছে।

৮.০৪ কলা-সংস্কৃতিৰ ভূমিকা ঃ-

সমাজত ডাইনী বিশ্বাস প্ৰশমনৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত কলা-সংস্কৃতিৰ সবল ভূমিকা আছে। Melville J. Herskovites য়ে তেওঁৰ Cultural Anthropology (p. 316) গ্ৰন্থত উল্লেখ কৰিছে যে সমাজ সংস্কাৰৰ কলা-সংস্কৃতিয়ে নিৰবচ্ছিন্ন ভাবে সেৱা আগবঢ়াই আহিছে। গতিকে ডাইনী সন্দেহজনক বিশ্বাসক প্ৰতিহত কৰিবলৈ কলা-সংস্কৃতিৰ অৰ্থবহ সহায় অৱশ্যে বাঞ্ছনীয়। এইক্ষেত্ৰত প্ৰথমে মনলৈ আহে সাংস্কৃতিক সঞ্চালকালয়ৰ নাট আৰু গীত মাত শাখাৰ কথা। এই শাখাটোৱে ডাইনী সজাগতামূলক কাৰ্যসূচী লৈ ভুক্তভোগী অঞ্চলবোৰত প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰিলে সজাগতা বৃদ্ধি পোৱাৰ সম্ভাৱনা আছে।

দ্বিতীয়তে, কথাছবি আৰু দূৰদৰ্শনৰ ধাৰাবাহিকবোৰৰ সহায়েৰেও ডাইনী বিশ্বাস সম্পৰ্কে সজাগতা আনিব পাৰি। তাৰ বাবে প্ৰযোজক পৰিচালকবোৰ আগবাঢ়ি আহিব লাগিব।

তৃতীয়তে, অসমৰ গাঁৱে-ভূঞে, চহৰে-নগৰে গঢ় লৈ উঠা অপেছাদাৰী নাট্য দলবোৰেও ডাইনী সম্পৰ্কে সহজে সজাগতা বৃদ্ধিত অৰিহণা যোগাব পাৰে। কাৰণ এইবোৰ একো একোটা শক্তিশালী গণমাধ্যম।

চতুৰ্থতে, অসমত বহুলভাৱে প্ৰচলিত দুটা কলা মাধ্যম হ'ল ভ্ৰাম্যমান নাট্যদল আৰু যাত্ৰাভিনয় বা খোলাগান। এই দুটা কলা মাধ্যমে অসমৰ গ্ৰাম্যঞ্চলৰ লাখ লাখ দৰ্শকক মনোৰঞ্জনৰ খোৰাক যোগাই আহিছে। এই দুটা গণমাধ্যমক ডাইনী বিশ্বাসৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সজাগতা বৃদ্ধিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত ব্যৱহাৰ কৰাৰ আৰু তাৰপৰা প্ৰভুত সফল হোৱাৰ যথেষ্ট অৱকাস আছে। এই দলবোৰে ডাইনী বিশ্বাসক বিষয়বস্তু হিচাপে লৈ পূৰ্ণাংগ নাটক বা নাটিকা মঞ্চস্থ কৰিলে দৰ্শক ৰাইজ এই সম্পৰ্কে শিক্ষিত হ'ব। শংকৰদেৱে ভাওনাৰ জৰিয়তে যদি ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ কৰিব পাৰে, ভ্ৰাম্যমান নাট্যদল আৰু যাত্ৰাভিনয়ৰ দলবোৰেও সমাজৰ পৰা এই কুপৰম্পৰা আঁতৰ কৰিবলৈ ফলপ্ৰসু নীতি গ্ৰহণ কৰা উচিত।

৮.০৫ লোক পৰিবেশ্য কলাৰ ভূমিকা ঃ-

সমাজত লোক পৰিবেশ্য কলাৰ প্ৰভাৱ অপৰিসীম। এইলোক পৰিবেশ্য কলাৰ সহায় লৈ সমাজত চলি থকা ডাইনী বিশ্বাস আঁতৰ কৰিবলৈ কাৰ্যসূচী যুগুতাই উলিয়াব পাৰি। লোক পৰিবেশ্য কলাৰ ভিতৰত পুতলা নাচ, ঢুলীয়া, ওজাপালি, নাগাৰা নাম, লোকগীত-মাত আদি অতি জনপ্ৰিয়। এইবোৰত

ডাইনী বিশ্বাসৰ বিৰুদ্ধে অনুষ্ঠান সংযোগ কৰি লোক সমাজত প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰিলে সজাগতা বৃদ্ধি পাব। সেইদৰে নানাধৰণৰ সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান বা বিহু অনুষ্ঠানৰ সহায়তো এনে সজাগতা অনাৰ প্ৰবল সম্ভাৱনা আছে। এনে পৰিবেশ্য কলাসমূহে ব্যাপক হাৰত জনসচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি কৰিব পাৰে।

৯.০০ সামৰণি ঃ-

সমাজ আৰু ব্যক্তিৰ জীৱন বিপন্ন কৰিব পৰা ডাইনীৰ লেখিয়া অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰসমূহ নাইকীয়া কৰিবলৈ সামাজিক সজাগতা বৃদ্ধি কৰিব লাগে। ছপা আৰু বৈদ্যুতিন মাধ্যমসমূহেও এইক্ষেত্ৰত গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা ল'ব পাৰে। দেশৰ সাংস্কৃতিক ক্ষেত্ৰখনো আগবাঢ়ি আহিব লাগে। অন্যথা ডাইনী আদিৰ নামত সমাজত বিভেদ, সন্দেহ আৰু অমানৱীয় কাৰ্য সংঘটিত হৈয়ে থাকিব।

প্ৰসংগ গ্ৰন্থ আৰু তথ্য ঃ-

১। সাহিত্য অকাডেমী ঃ বংগীয় শব্দকোষ, নতুন দিল্লী, ২০০১
২। Macmillan : Encarta Dictionary,1999
৩। বিভিন্ন আলোচনী, বাতৰি কাকত
৪। Internet ৰ বিভিন্ন Website.

ডাইনী হত্যা ঃ বর্তমান সমাজৰ এক কু-সংস্কাৰ

মিনাক্ষী দাস

প্রস্তাৱনা ঃ-

আধুনিক মানৱ সভ্যতাই উন্নতিৰ চৰম শিখৰত আৰোহণ কৰিছে। তথাপি আজিও আমাৰ সমাজত, কিছু পৰিমাণে মানুহৰ মনৰ মাজত প্রবাহিত হৈ আছে কু-সংস্কাৰ আৰু অন্ধবিশ্বাস। জগতৰ অজান আৰু গোপনীয় শক্তিসমূহে মানুহৰ মনত বিস্ময় আৰু ভীতি বিহ্বসতাৰ ভাবে আৰু প্রতিজন মানৱক কম বেছি পৰিমাণে অনুভূতি আৰু কার্যৰ একো একোটা স্বকীয় জগত সৃষ্টি কৰিবলৈ বাধ্য কৰিছে। ইয়াৰ পৰিণতিত মানুহে তেওঁৰ চতুর্দিশে আৱৰি থকা নৈসর্গিক শক্তিসমূহক বশীভূত কৰি শুভফল লাভ কৰিবলৈ বিভিন্ন উপায় অৱলম্বন কৰিছে। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও সেই শক্তি সমূহৰ আক্রমণক প্রতিহত কৰিবলৈ বিভিন্ন প্রকাৰে চেষ্টা কৰি আহিছে। ফলস্বৰূপে ইয়াৰ পৰিণতিত জন্ম বিশ্বাস, অন্ধবিশ্বাস, ক্রিয়া কাণ্ড আদিৰ। জীৱন আৰু জগত সম্পর্কীয় ভিত্তিহীন বিশ্বাস অবিশ্বাস, স্থুল কল্পনা আদি অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ পটভূমি।

ডাইনী প্রথাৰ ইতিহাস ঃ-

বর্তমান বিজ্ঞান আৰু প্রযুক্তিৰ আশ্চর্যজনক উন্নয়নৰ যুগতে আমাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত বর্তি থকা অন্যতম কু-সংস্কাৰ হ'ল 'ডাইনী প্রথা'। ডাইনী প্রথা আৰু ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ইতিহাস বিচাৰি আমি উভতি যাব লাগিব খ্রীষ্টপূর্ব

কেইবা শতিকা আগলৈকে। ডাইনী হত্যা সমগ্ৰ বিশ্বতে বিয়পি আছে। উদাহৰণ স্বৰূপে ৩৩১ খ্ৰীঃপূঃত ইটালীৰ ৰোম নগৰত সংক্ৰামক ৰোগে মহামাৰীৰ ৰূপ ধাৰণ কৰাৰ বাবে দোষী সাব্যস্ত কৰি ১৭০ গৰাকী মহিলাক ডাইনী আখ্যা দি প্ৰাণদণ্ড বিহা হৈছিল। ৰোমান সাম্ৰাজ্যত চতুৰ্থ শতিকালৈ মহিলাৰ নামত অত্যাচাৰ, উৎপীড়ন চলি আছিল। বিশ্বৰ ইতিহাসত সবাতোকৈ নৃশংস আৰু লোমহৰ্ষক ডাইন সন্দেহত গণহত্যা সংঘটিত হৈছিল তেৰ শতিকাৰ প্ৰাৰম্ভতে। পুৰুষ, মহিলা, শিশু নিৰ্বিশেষে প্ৰায় দহ লক্ষ নিৰীহ ব্যক্তিক ডাইনী ঘোষণা কৰি পোপ তৃতীয় ইনচেণ্টে সৈন্য বাহিনীৰ হতুৱাই বৰ্বৰ ভাবে হত্যা কৰাইছিল। ১৪ আৰু ১৫ শতিকাত দক্ষিণ ফ্ৰান্স আৰু ছুইজাৰলেণ্ডত ডাইনী হত্যাই ভয়ংকৰ ৰূপ ধাৰণ কৰিছিল। ১৫৬৩ চনত ৬৩ জনী ডাইনীৰ সত্য আৰু লোমহৰ্ষক কাৰ্য নামৰ এখন গোহাৰি পত্ৰত দক্ষিণ পশ্চিম জাৰ্মানী ডইজেনষ্টিগৰ সামন্তীয় শাসকৰ দ্বাৰা ডাইনীৰ আটক, বিচাৰ, দোষী সাব্যস্ত আৰু জীৱন্তে দগ্ধ কৰাৰ বিস্তৃত বিৱৰণ লিপিবদ্ধ কৰা হৈছিল। ১৫৪২ খ্ৰীঃৰ পৰা ১৭৩৫ খ্ৰীঃৰ ভিতৰত ইংলেণ্ড, স্কটলেণ্ড আৰু আয়াৰলেণ্ডত এলানি ডাইনী চৰ্চা নিষিদ্ধকৰণ আইন গৃহীত কৰা হয়। এনে আইনৰ যোগেদি ডাইনী চৰ্চা অব্যাহত ৰখা অথবা ডাইনী প্ৰথা তথা যাদুমন্ত্ৰ, সম্মোহন আদি কাৰ্যত লিপ্ত ব্যক্তিক শাস্তি বিধানৰ ব্যৱস্থা গ্ৰহণ কৰা হয়। ফান্সত ডাইনী প্ৰথা অনুশীলন কৰাৰ অপৰাধত প্ৰাণদণ্ড বিহা অন্তিম জন ব্যক্তি আছিল লুইচ ডেবাৰাজ। ১৭৪৫ চনত তেওঁক প্ৰাণদণ্ড বিহা হৈছিল।

ভাৰতত ডাইনী হত্যা ঃ-

ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ প্ৰেক্ষাপটত যদি বিচাৰ কৰি চোৱা হয় এটা কথা লক্ষণীয় যে ঘাইকৈ জনজাতীয় আৰু আদিবাসী লোকসকলৰ মাজতে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ প্ৰাৰ্দুভাৱ বেছি। ইয়াৰ অন্তনিৰ্হিত কাৰণসমূহ যদি বিশ্লেষণ কৰি চোৱা যায় তেনেহলে দেখা যায় যে এনে জনগোষ্ঠী সমূহে ঘাইকৈ এক নিজা সামাজিক আৱেষ্টনীৰ মাজত নিজকে সীমাবদ্ধ কৰি ৰাখিব বিচাৰে। শিক্ষা, জনস্বাস্থ্য, চিকিৎসা, আধুনিক বিজ্ঞানমনস্কতা আদিৰ প্ৰভাৱৰ পৰা এওঁলোক বহুত দূৰৈত। অতীজৰে পৰা এনে জনগোষ্ঠী সমূহে শোষণ আৰু নিস্পেষণৰ বলি হৈ আহিছে। উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে বৈদিক যুগত এই বিশেষ শ্ৰেণীৰ লোকসকলক অসুৰ, ৰাক্ষস, ম্লেছ, অনাৰ্য আদি আখ্যা দি জ্ঞান প্ৰদানৰ পৰা বঞ্চিত কৰিছিল।

ইংৰাজ ৰাজত্ব কালতো ব্ৰিটিছ প্ৰশাসক সকলে উচ্চ বৰ্ণৰ ব্যক্তিৰ মাজতহে শিক্ষা বিস্তাৰত অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ দিছিল।

২০১০ চনৰ এক পৰিসংখ্যা অনুযায়ী ভাৰতবৰ্ষত প্ৰতিবছৰে ১৫০ ৰ পৰা ২০০ গৰাকী তিৰোতাক ডাইনী সন্দেহত হত্যা কৰা হৈছিল। ১৯৯৫ চনৰ পৰা ২০০৯ চনৰ এই সময় ছোৱাত মুঠ ২৫০০ গৰাকী ব্যক্তিক একে কাৰণতে হত্যা কৰা হয়। ইয়াৰে প্ৰায় ভাগ হত্যাকাণ্ড সংঘটিত হৈছিল উত্তৰ ভাৰতৰ ঝাৰখণ্ড, বিহাৰ আৰু ছট্টিশগড়ৰ দৰে ৰাজ্যত যত এনেবোৰ শাস্তি বিহা হৈছিল গ্ৰাম্য বিচাৰ ব্যৱস্থাত।

অসমত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ প্ৰভাৱ ঃ-

ভাৰতক বাদ দি অসমৰ পৰিপ্ৰেক্ষিতত বিচাৰ কৰি চালে দেখা যায় যে বিক্ষিপ্তভাৱে সমগ্ৰ অসমতে এই অন্ধবিশ্বাসে গা কৰি উঠিছে। বিশেষকৈ কোকৰাঝাৰ, ওদালগুৰি জিলাৰ লগতে কামৰূপ (গ্ৰাম্য) গোৱালপাৰা, চিৰাং, বাগছা, লক্ষীমপুৰ আৰু কাৰ্বি আলং জিলা কেইখনৰ লগতে চাহ বাগিচাৰ শ্ৰমিক সকলৰ মাজত ডাইনী প্ৰথাৰ বিশ্বাস যোগ্যতা অধিক যদিও সামগ্ৰিক ভাৱে গোটেই অসমতে এই অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ প্ৰৱণতা প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰা হয়। তদুপৰি উজনি অসমৰ চাহ বাগিচা সমূহৰ শ্ৰমিক সকলৰ মাজতো এনে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বলি হোৱা দুৰ্ভগীয়া লোকৰ মৰ্মান্তিক, হৃদয় বিদাৰক কাহিনী প্ৰায়ে সংবাদ মাধ্যমৰ যোগেদি পোহৰলৈ আহে।

ডাইনী হত্যাৰ কাৰণ ঃ-

মানুহৰ মনৰ মাজত অপায় অমংগলৰ কাৰণে আনক দোষ জাপি দিয়াৰ প্ৰৱণতাৰ বাবে এনে জঘন্য কাণ্ড সংঘটিত হয়। সামাজিক শৃংখলাবদ্ধতা অভাৱৰ কাৰণে মানুহে এনে দুস্কাৰ্য কৰিবলৈ কুণ্ঠাবোধ নকৰে। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও উপৰোক্ত জিলা কেইখনৰ লগতে চাহ বাগিচাৰ অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চল সমূহৰ আৰ্থ-সামাজিক অৱস্থা আৰু এই অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ কাৰণ সমূহ যদি বিশ্লেষণ কৰা হয় তেনেহলে দেখা যায় যে ক্ৰমবৰ্ধিত নিৰক্ষৰতা, পুতৌজনক যাতায়ত, যোগাযোগৰ ব্যৱস্থা শিথিল, চিকিৎসা আৰু স্বাস্থ্যসেৱাৰ অভাৱ, উপযুক্ত শিক্ষা আৰু বিদ্যালয়ৰ অভাৱ, শিক্ষা সম্পৰ্কে মানুহৰ মাজত অস্পষ্ট ধাৰণা, জনস্বাস্থ্য আৰু বিশুদ্ধ খোৱাপানীৰ দৰে মৌলিক বুনিয়াদী সা-সুবিধাৰ তীব্ৰ

অভাৱেই প্রধানকৈ জড়িত। এই অঞ্চলবোৰত চিকিৎসক আৰু চিকিৎসালয় নথকাৰ সুযোগ লৈছে গাঁৱলীয়া বেজ বা ওজা আৰু নিজকে চিকিৎসক বুলি জনাই ফুৰা এচাম সুবিধাবাদীয়ে। অনিবার্যভাৱে স্থানীয় লোকসকলে বিভিন্ন ৰোগৰ পৰা আৰোগ্য লাভ কৰিবলৈ তথাকথিত বেজ বা ওজাৰ শৰণাপন্ন হবলৈ বাধ্য হয়। ইয়াৰ পৰিণতিত সেই সকল লোকৰ জীৱনলৈ নামি আহে ঘোৰ বিপর্যয়। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও এনে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ ঘটনাসমূহ সূক্ষ্মভাৱে পর্যবেক্ষণ কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে এনে কু-কার্যৰ আঁৰত নিহিত হৈ আছে কিছুমান ন্যস্তস্বার্থ জড়িত ব্যক্তিৰ কু-অভিপ্রায়। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও কিছুমান ব্যক্তিক উদ্দেশ্য প্রাণোদিত ভাবে ডাইনী সজাই হত্যা কৰা হয় ভূমি সম্পত্তি আত্মসাৎ কৰাৰ কাৰণে। আন কিছুমানে পুৰণি আখেজৰ প্রতিশোধ পূৰণৰ কাৰণে এনে কর্মত লিপ্ত হয়। কেতিয়াবা আকৌ অকলশৰীয়া মহিলাক যৌন শোষণ কৰাত ব্যর্থ হোৱাৰ প্রতিশোধকল্পে ডাইনী আখ্যা দি ৰাজহুৱা ভাৱে লাঞ্ছিত কৰে। আধুনিক চিকিৎসা আৰু স্বাস্থ্য সেৱাৰ অভাৱত বেমাৰ-আজাৰৰ পৰা হাত সাৰিবলৈ মানুহে গ্রাম্য চিকিৎসক বেজ, ওজা আদিৰ ওচৰ চাপে। তেওঁলোকে বনৌষধিৰ দ্বাৰা ৰোগ নিৰাময়ৰ ব্যর্থ চেষ্টা কৰে। যদি ৰোগী সুস্থ নহৈ মৃত্যুমুখত পৰে তেতিয়া এনেবোৰ বেজ ওজাই নিজৰ জীৱনৰ নিৰাপত্তাৰ খাটিৰত কোনো ব্যক্তিক একপক্ষীয় ভাৱে দোষ জাপি দি ডাইনী সজোৱা হয়।

ডাইনী হত্যা প্রতিৰোধৰ উপায় ঃ-

ডাইনী প্রথা বা ডাইনী হত্যা সমাজৰ এক কু-সংস্কাৰ। ইয়াক নির্মূল কৰিবলৈ আগবাঢ়ি আহিব লাগিব সমাজ, স্বেচ্ছামূলক সংগঠন, প্রচাৰ মাধ্যম আৰু চৰকাৰ। মানুহে মানুহৰ প্রতি থকা হিংসা উমত্ত বন্যভাৱ নাইকিয়া হলে এনে জঘন্য হত্যাকাণ্ড কিছু পৰিমাণে হলেও হ্রাস পাব। সমাজত পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে চলি অহা ধ্যান-ধাৰণা, নীতি-নিয়ম, বিশ্বাস-অন্ধবিশ্বাস পৰিৱর্তন হোৱা উচিত। মানুহে প্রকৃত মানৱ ধর্ম পালন কৰিব পাৰিলেহে সমাজত হিংসা, প্রতিহিংসা দূৰ হব। আদিবাসী, জনজাতি আৰু পিছপৰা অঞ্চলৰ মানুহৰ মাজত শিক্ষাৰ জ্ঞানৰ পোহৰ পেলাব লাগিব। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও শিক্ষাৰ প্রতি সজাগতা সৃষ্টি কৰি শিক্ষাৰ প্রতি আগ্রহ জন্মাব লাগিব। অসমৰ আদিবাসী আৰু জনজাতি অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চল সমূহক বেজ, ওজাৰ কৱলৰ পৰা মুক্ত কৰি আধুনিক চিকিৎসা বিজ্ঞানৰ প্রভাৱ বিস্তাৰ কৰাৰ প্রয়োজন। উপযুক্ত

চিকিৎসালয় আৰু চিকিৎসকৰ দ্বাৰা এনে অঞ্চলৰ বেমাৰ-আজাৰ নির্মূলৰ ব্যৱস্থা গ্ৰহণ কৰা উচিত। বিভিন্ন সামাজিক আৰু বেচৰকাৰী অনুষ্ঠানৰ দ্বাৰা ৰাজ্যখনৰ স্পৰ্শকাতৰ অঞ্চল সমূহত পৰিস্কাৰ পৰিচ্ছন্নতা স্বাস্থ্য সম্পৰ্কীয়, বিভিন্ন ৰোগৰ সজাগতা সভা অনুষ্ঠিত কৰা উচিত। যোগ প্ৰশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্ৰৰ দ্বাৰাও মানুহৰ মাজত সজাগতা আনিব পাৰি। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও নাৰীৰ ওপৰত চলা অত্যাচাৰ বন্ধ কৰি মহিলা সবলীকৰণত গুৰুত্ব দিব লাগিব। প্ৰচাৰ মাধ্যম সমূহেও সমাজ জীৱনৰ এই ধৰণৰ অভিশাপ দূৰ কৰাত সহায় আগবঢ়াব লাগিব।

সমাজৰ ভূমিকা ঃ-

সমাজত ডাইনী প্ৰথাৰ ঋণাত্মক প্ৰভাৱ লক্ষ্য কৰি চৰকাৰকে মূখ্য কৰি বিভিন্ন দল, সংগঠনে কু-প্ৰথা নির্মূল কৰিবলৈ মাৰ বান্ধি ওলাই আহিছে। ১৯৯৯ চনত চৰকাৰে ডাইনী চৰ্চা নিষিদ্ধকৰণ আইন প্ৰণয়ন কৰে। ২০০১ চনত অসম আৰক্ষীৰ তদানীন্তন অতিৰিক্ত আৰক্ষী সঞ্চালক প্ৰধান কুল শইকীয়াৰ ঐকান্তিক প্ৰচেষ্টাত 'প্ৰজেক্ট প্ৰহৰী' নামৰ এক সংগঠনৰ জন্ম হয়। অসম ৰাজ্যিক মহিলা আয়োগ আৰু বিভিন্ন সামাজিক অনুষ্ঠানৰ সহযোগত 'প্ৰজেক্ট প্ৰহৰী'য়ে অসমৰ প্ৰায় ৫০ খন গাঁৱত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বিপৰীতে সজাগতা সৃষ্টি কৰি এই কু-প্ৰথাৰ বলি হোৱা ব্যক্তিৰ সংখ্যা হ্ৰাস কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছিল।

সামৰণি ঃ-

ডাইনী ব্যৱস্থা এটা কু-প্ৰথা। ইয়াক সমূলি নিৰাময় কৰিব নোৱাৰিলে সমাজত মংগল সাধিত হব নোৱাৰে। এই প্ৰথা চলি থকা মানে সমাজৰ দুৰ্বল শ্ৰেণীৰ মানুহে সদায় ভীতি বিহ্বলতা আৰু ভীতিগ্ৰস্তৰ মাজত থাকিব। সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা সৰ্বতো প্ৰকাৰ উন্নতিৰ বাবে এনে ভীতি কেতিয়াও শুভকৰ হব নোৱাৰে। এই আলোচনাত আগতে উল্লেখ কৰিছো যে এই কু-প্ৰথাত আটাইতকৈ বেছি বলি হৈছে নাৰীসকলে। বহুতো নাৰীবাদী বুদ্ধিজীৱি আৰু নাৰীৰ শুভ চিন্তক পুৰুষে নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি চলা অবিচাৰ নাইকিয়া কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰিছে। নাৰীক আধ্যাত্মিকভাবে মংগলময় আৰু সাহিত্য ধৰ্মী ভাষাৰে অৰ্ধাকাশ আখ্যা দিয়া হয়, তথাপি কিন্তু কব লাগিব যে আজিৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত প্ৰায় সমগ্ৰ বিশ্বতে

নাৰীয়ে যেনেদৰে নিজৰ পূৰ্ণ অধিকাৰ লাভ কৰিবলৈ সমৰ্থ হোৱা নাই তেনেদৰে শোষণ নিষ্পেষণৰ পৰাও সম্পূৰ্ণ ৰূপে মুক্ত হোৱা নাই। ডাইনী এনে নিষ্পেষণ আৰু অত্যাচাৰৰ এক নিৰ্মম উদাহৰণ। গতিকে এই কু-প্ৰথাৰ অবলুপ্তি যিমান সোনকালে ঘটে সিমানে দেশ, জাতি তথা বিশ্বৰ কাৰণে মংগলময় হ'ব।

গ্ৰন্থ পঞ্জী ঃ-

১। শৰ্মা, নবীন চন্দ্ৰ ঃ- অসমীয়া লোক সংস্কৃতিৰ আভাস। বাণী প্ৰকাশ, গুৱাহাটী ১৯৯৮

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৩। Gaskill Malcolm (2010) :- Witchcraff a very short introduction, Oxford University.

৪। Rajkhowa Benudhar :- Assamese Popular Superstitions and Assamese Demonology Gauhati 1973

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কাকত/আলোচনী ঃ- অসমীয়া খবৰ, সংখ্যা ১৯৯
৩ জনু, সোমবাৰ ২০১৩

ডাইনী হত্যাত অন্ধবিশ্বাস আৰু পুৰণিকলীয়া বিশ্বাসৰ সম্বন্ধ

জোনালী মালাকৰ
টুটুমণি কলিতা

প্ৰস্তাৱনা ঃ-

ডাইনী হত্যা সাধাৰণতে অনগ্ৰসৰ অঞ্চলৰ অন্ধবিশ্বাসত বিশ্বাসী এচাম লোকৰ মাজত দেখা দিয়া এক প্ৰকাৰ সামাজিক ব্যাধি (Social Evil), মানসিক আতংক (Moral Panic), আৰু গণমৃগি (Mass Hysteria) স্বৰূপ, যিয়ে মানৱ অধিকাৰ সম্পূৰ্ণৰূপে উলংঘন কৰে। ভেল্কিবাজী, মোহিনীবাণ, কুমন্ত্ৰ ইত্যাদি অপকৰ্ম প্ৰয়োগকাৰী পুৰুষ বা মহিলা উভয়কে সন্দেহবশতঃ ডাইনী সজোৱা হয়। ধৰ্মৰ অংগ হিচাপে ঈশ্বৰক পাবৰ নিমিত্তে, চিকিৎসাৰ উদ্দেশ্যে আৰু আনৰ অনিষ্ট সাধন কৰিবলৈ যাদুবিদ্যাৰ প্ৰয়োগ অতীজৰে পৰা চলি আহিছে। একবিংশ শতিকাৰ বিজ্ঞানৰ জয়যাত্ৰাৰ ফলত মানুহে মংগল গ্ৰহত বসতি স্থাপন কৰিবলৈ অগ্ৰসৰ হোৱাৰ সময়ত ডাইনী হত্যাকাণ্ডৰ ঘটনাই সমগ্ৰ মানৱ সভ্যতাকে উপহাস কৰিছে। পুৰুষতকৈ বেছি দুৰ্বল শ্ৰেণীৰ (Vulnerable Group) অকলশৰীয়া আৰু বিধবা মহিলাসকল এই অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বলি হয় বাবে ইয়াক লিংগভিত্তিক উলংঘন (Gender Based Violation) বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। ভাৰতবৰ্ষত ঠাই বিশেষে ই আকৌ জাতিভিত্তিক উলংঘন (Caste Based Violation)ৰো ৰূপ লয়।

ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বাবে অন্ধবিশ্বাস জগৰীয়া কৰা হয় যদিও ই একমাত্র কাৰণ নহয়। এই অমানবীয় কাণ্ডত বিভিন্ন ধৰণৰ ধর্মীয়, আর্থ-সামাজিক আৰু ৰাজনৈতিক কাৰকে প্রভাৱ বিস্তাৰ কৰে।

আত্মবিশ্বাসহীন দুর্বল মনৰ এচাম মানুহৰ যাদুবিদ্যাৰ প্রতি থকা অগাধ বিশ্বাসে ডাইনী হত্যাত সাৰ-পানী যোগাইছে। যাদুবিদ্যা হ'ল শক্তিৰ ঋণাত্মক প্রয়োগ আৰু ইয়াক সাধাৰণতে চয়তান মনৰ এচাম মানুহে প্রয়োগ কৰে। এ এক প্রকাৰ কলা আৰু অতি কৌশলেৰে ইয়াক প্রয়োগ কৰা হয়। ধর্ম আৰু সংস্কৃতি ভেদে যাদুবিদ্যাৰ প্রয়োগৰ ধৰণ ভিন ভিন হব পাৰে। কিছুমান লোকৰ বাবে যাদুবিদ্যা এক জীৱন ধাৰণৰ অর্থনৈতিক সম্বল।

এই গৱেষণা পত্রৰ জৰিয়তে আমি ডাইনী হত্যাত অন্ধবিশ্বাস আৰু পুৰণিকলীয়া বিশ্বাসৰ সম্বন্ধ সম্পর্কে আলোকপাত কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰা হৈছে। আমাৰ অধ্যয়নৰ পৰিসৰ অসমৰ লগতে ভাৰতৰ ডাইনী অধ্যুষিত কেইখনমান ৰাজ্যতেই সীমিত।

ডাইনী হত্যাৰ প্রচলন ঃ-

১৪ পৰা ১৫ শ শতিকাত চুইজাৰলেণ্ড আৰু ফ্রান্সৰ দক্ষিণ অঞ্চলত বহুলভাৱে ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ঘটনা সংঘটিত হৈছিল। এইখিনি সময়ৰ ভিতৰত হাজাৰ হাজাৰ নির্দোষী মহিলা-পুৰুষ আনকি শিশুকো বিভিন্ন ধৰণে শাৰীৰিক, মানসিক নির্যাতন চলাই ডাইনী সন্দেহত হত্যা কৰিছিল। ১৪৩১ চনত জেন ডা আৰ, নামৰ এজনী ১৬ বছৰীয়া ছোৱালীক অতি ভৌতিক বা অলৌকিক শক্তি থকা বুলি সন্দেহ কৰি ইংলেণ্ডৰ কবলৰ পৰা ফ্রান্সক ৰক্ষা কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা চলোৱাৰ অভিযোগত কৰায়ত্ত কৰি হত্যা কৰা হৈছিল। ইণ্ডোনেছিয়া, শ্রীলংকা, ভাৰত, উগাণ্ডা, পাপুৱা নিউ গুইনিয়া, কম্বোডিয়া, টানজিয়া, দিক্ষণ আফ্রিকা, এনগোলা, মালি, কংগো, নাইজেৰিয়া, নেপাল, চৌডি আৰবিয়া আদি ৰাষ্ট্রত ডাইনীৰ সন্দেহত হত্যা সংঘটিত হয়।

ভাৰতৰ ভিতৰত হাৰিয়ানা, ঝাৰখণ্ড, ছত্তীছগড়, পশ্চিমবংগ, অসম, উৰিষ্যা, মধ্যপ্রদেশ, বিহাৰ, ৰাজস্থান, অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশ, গুজৰাট, মহাৰাষ্ট্র আদি ডাইনী অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চল। তথ্যমতে, ১৯৮৭-২০০৩ চনৰ ভিতৰত ভাৰতত ২৫৫৬ টা ডাইনী হত্যাকাণ্ড সংঘটিত হৈছিল।

আমাৰ অসমৰ কোকৰাঝাৰ, গোৱালপাৰা, চিৰাং, বাগছা, শোণিতপুৰ, ওদালগুৰি, তিনিচুকীয়া, ধেমাজি ইত্যাদি অঞ্চলত বহুলভাৱে ডাইনী হত্যাকাণ্ড সংঘটিত হয়। বৰ্তমান কোকৰাঝাৰ আৰু গোৱালপাৰা জিলাত ইয়াৰ প্ৰচলন অধিক। অসমৰ ডাইনী হত্যাকাণ্ড সংঘটিত অঞ্চলসমূহ মূলতঃ আদিবাসী প্ৰধান আৰু জনজাতীয় প্ৰধান হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। অসমত ৰাভা, হাচং, মিচিং, বড়ো, নেপালী, আদিবাসী, আদি জনজাতীয় লোকৰ মাজত ইয়াৰ প্ৰচলন সৰ্বাধিক। চি. আই. ডি. ৰ ৰিপোৰ্ট মতে অসমত ২০০২-২০১২ চনৰ ভিতৰত ১৩২ জন মানুহ ডাইনী সন্দেহত হত্যা কৰা হৈছিল। আকৌ অসম চৰকাৰৰ তথামতে, ২০০৬-২০১২ চনলৈ অসমত ১০৫ টা ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ঘটনা সংঘটিত হৈছে। অকল গোৱালপাৰা জিলাতে ২০০১ চনৰ পৰা ৪০ টা তকৈ বেছি এনে ঘটনা সংঘটিত হৈছে। যোৱা দশকটোত ১১৬ জনতকৈ বেছি মানুহ গৃহহীন হৈছে ডাইনী সন্দেহত। এইবোৰ পঞ্জীয়নভূক্ত তথ্যহে। পঞ্জীয়নবিহীন ঘটনা ইয়াতকৈ আৰু অধিক হব।

চন	অসমত ডাইনী হত্যাকাণ্ডৰ সংখ্যা
২০০৬	২১
২০০৭	০৭
২০০৮	১০
২০০৯	০৪
২০১০	১১
২০১১	২৯
২০১২	১৪

বিশ্বাস আৰু অন্ধবিশ্বাস ঃ-

মানুহে সমাজবদ্ধ জীৱন-যাপন কৰিবলৈ লোৱাৰ সময়ৰে পৰা প্ৰয়োজনৰ খাতিৰত নিজৰ সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ মাজৰে এজনৰ নেতৃত্ব বা প্ৰভুত্ব স্বীকাৰ কৰি লৈছিল। সকলো ধৰণৰ সামাজিক সংঘৰ্ষ বৰ্জিত এটা যাতে শান্তিপূৰ্ণ, শৃংখলাবদ্ধ জীৱন-যাপন কৰিব পাৰে তাৰ খাতিৰতে মানুহে কিছুমান সামাজিক আচৰণবিধি মানি চলিছিল। কোনো প্ৰতিবাদ নকৰাকৈ কাৰোবাৰ নেতৃত্ব

মানি চলাৰ মানসিকতাই জন্ম দিছিল বিশ্বাসৰ। অতীতৰে পৰা সামাজিৰ প্ৰাণী হিচাপে আমি সকলোৱে এটা নির্দিষ্ট পর্যায়লৈ বিশ্বাস বশবর্ত্তী হওঁ। বিশ্বাসৰ লগত সদায় এটা আবেগ (Emotion) জড়িত হৈ থাকে। যেতিয়া আবেগৰ লগত যুক্তিৰ সংযোগ ঘটে তেতিয়াই সৃষ্টি হয় বিশ্বাসৰ। গাণিতিক ভাষাত, আবেগ + যুক্তি = বিশ্বাস। গতিকে আমি আবেগ + অযুক্তি = অন্ধবিশ্বাস বুলি কব পাৰো। যিবোৰ কাৰকে বিশ্বাস সৃষ্টিত সহায় কৰে সেইবোৰ হ'ল — বিবেচনাপূর্ণ সন্মতি (Conscious Acceptance), জ্ঞান (Knowledge), যুক্তি (Argument) কার্য (Action), গ্রহণযোগ্যতা (Acceptance), তথ্যসম্বলিত খবৰ (Information) ইত্যাদি। কিবা এটা নিয়মৰ প্রতি মানুহে যেতিয়া জ্ঞান আৰু যুক্তিৰে বিচাৰ কৰি চাই সেইটো গ্রহণ কৰিবলৈ বিবেকসন্মত সন্মতি প্রকাশ কৰে আৰু কার্যত তাক প্রয়োগ কৰে তেতিয়াই বিশ্বাসৰ জন্ম হয়। অন্ধবিশ্বাস হ'ল ইয়াৰ সম্পূর্ণ বিপৰীত ধাৰণা। যেতিয়া কোনো এটা নীতি-নিয়ম মানুহে জ্ঞান আৰু যুক্তিৰে বিচাৰ নকৰাকৈ সেইটো গ্রহণ কৰিবলৈ সন্মতি প্রকাশ কৰে আৰু কার্যত তাক প্রয়োগ কৰে তেতিয়াই অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ জন্ম হয়। তথ্যসম্বলিত খবৰে বিশ্বাস আৰু অন্ধবিশ্বাস দুয়োটাই সৃষ্টিত গুৰুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন কৰে। বিশ্বাস আৰু অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ লগত যুক্তিৰ এক ওতঃপ্রোত সম্বন্ধ আছে।

অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ ইংৰাজী প্রতিশব্দ Superstition পদটো লেটিন পদ Stare ৰ পৰা বিকাশ হৈছে আৰু ইয়াৰ প্রতিশব্দ Survival (উদ্ধর্তন) ইংৰাজী Superstition ৰ সমার্থক গ্রীক শব্দ Deisidaimonia আৰু ইয়াৰ অর্থ ঈশ্বৰৰ প্রতি ভয়। গ্রীক Deisidaimoni পদটোৱে পৰিদৃশ্যমান জগতৰ অন্তৰালত থকা অনির্ণেয় শক্তিসমূহে মানৱৰ অন্তৰত কিদৰে বিশ্বাস প্রৱণতাৰ বিভিন্ন চক্র নির্মাণ কৰি আহিছে তাৰ ইংগিত বহন কৰে।

অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ প্রক্রিয়াই আনক অপকাৰো কৰিব পাৰে। কোনো কোনো সংস্কৃতিত বিদ্যুৎতাহত জনক অথবা পানীত পৰি মৰিবলৈ ওলোৱা জনক ৰক্ষা কৰা নিষিদ্ধ কর্ম, কাৰণ তেনে কৰিলে দেৱতা বা আন শক্তিৰ ইচ্ছা বা কার্যত বাধা প্রদান কৰা হয় বুলি অন্ধবিশ্বাস প্রচলিত। অনেত ক্ষেত্রত নিষিদ্ধ কথা বা কামে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ সৃষ্টি কৰে। অন্ধবিশ্বাস যুক্তিহীন বিশ্বাস (Irrational Belief) বা অর্ধবিশ্বাস (Half Belife) অথবা আচৰণ। প্রকৃতিৰ অলৌকিক

কার্যৱলীৰ প্ৰতি সহজ বিশ্বাস প্ৰৱণতা, অজ্ঞেয়ৰ প্ৰতি যুক্তিবিহীন ভীতিবিহ্বলতা অথবা ৰহস্যাবৃত ঘটনা আৰু ভুল পথে পৰিচালিত শ্ৰদ্ধাৰ ওপৰত নিৰ্ভৰশীল আচৰণ, কার্য-কাৰণৰ মিছা ধাৰণা (False Conception of Causation), অনুষ্ঠান আৰু বিশ্বাসৰ প্ৰতি আনুগত্য আদিয়েই অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বুনিয়াদ। অনেক ক্ষেত্ৰত দেখা যায় যে, লোক সমাজৰ পৰা অভিজাত সমাজলৈ অন্ধবিশ্বাসাদি পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে আহে। অৱশ্যে আনুষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষা-দীক্ষা আদিৰ লগত অন্ধবিশ্বাস, লোকবিশ্বাস আদিয়ে অহৰহ সংগ্ৰামত অৱতীৰ্ণ নোহোৱাকৈ থাকিব নোৱাৰে। তেনেদৰে প্ৰত্যেক মানুহেই কম বেছি পৰিমাণে অন্ধবিশ্বাসী, যদিও সৰহভাগেই কথাষাৰ স্বীকাৰ কৰিবলৈ টান পায়। চার্লচ প্লেটৰ ভাষাত — 'Nearly everyone is more or less Superstitions, though most people would deny this, Nevertheless, ninety-nine persons out of a hundred walk around ladder rather under it.'

গতিকে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ নির্দিষ্ট এটা সূত্ৰ দিয়া অতিকৈ জটিল। চেমুৱেল এডামচ্, ড্ৰাকে খৃঃ ১৯০০ চনত অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ সূত্ৰ নির্ণয় কৰিবলৈ কৰা প্ৰয়াসৰ প্ৰসংগত কৈছিল — 'অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ এটা সূত্ৰ নির্ণয় কৰা সহজ নহয়। ফ্ৰেজাৰ আৰু টাইলাৰৰ মতে অন্ধবিশ্বাস উৰ্দ্ধতনৰ বাহিৰে আন একো নহয়। ক্ৰেপ - এ ধৰ্মৰ সৈতে অন্ধবিশ্বাসক তুলনা কৰিছে। তেওঁৰ মতে অন্ধবিশ্বাস কিছুমান বিশ্বাস আৰু ক্ৰিয়া কাণ্ডৰ সমষ্টি, যাক পৃথিৱীৰ প্ৰধান প্ৰধান ধৰ্মই (খৃষ্টিয়ান, ইছলাম, বৌদ্ধ আদি) অনুমোদন নকৰে। খৃষ্টিয়ান ধৰ্মৰ কোনো এটা সম্প্ৰদায়ে ক্ৰছ চিহ্নক অশুভজনক ঘটনা বা কার্যৰ প্ৰতিষেধক ৰূপে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰে। যিবিলাক ধৰ্মীয় বর্ণনা বিশ্বাসযোগ্য নহয় সেইবোৰ অন্ধবিশ্বাস। বিশ্বাসযোগ্যতাই অন্ধবিশ্বাস নির্ধাৰণ কৰাৰ একমাত্ৰ নির্ভৰযোগ্য নীতি হ'ব নোৱাৰে।'

ভৱিষ্যদ্বাণী সম্পৰ্কীয় চিহ্নৰ ব্যাখ্যা এনেদৰে দিব পাৰি — সৌভাগ্য আৰু দুর্ভাগ্যৰ পুর্বাভাস সম্পৰ্কীয় লক্ষণ, বতৰৰ লক্ষণ, সপোনৰ লক্ষণ আদি বিষয়ক অন্ধবিশ্বাসাদি ভবিষ্যত বাণী সম্পৰ্কীয় চিহ্নৰ অন্তর্গত। সংযুক্তিৰ ফালৰপৰা অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ সংজ্ঞা দিয়া বাবে লিখক পাকেট প্ৰশংসাৰ যোগ্য, তেওঁ আকৌ কু-সংস্কাৰৰ সংজ্ঞা এনেদৰে দাঙি ধৰিছে — 'Superstitutions are traditional expressions of one or more conditions and or more results with some of the conditions signs and others causes'

অর্থাৎ এটা বা ততোধিক উপকাৰণ চিহ্ন তথা অন্য কাৰণ প্রযুক্ত অধিকতৰ বিশিষ্ট পাৰস্পৰিক অভিব্যক্তিয়েই অন্ধবিশ্বাস। উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে - আমাৰ অসমত বিশ্বাস আছে যে শেষ নিশা ফেচাই 'নিউ নিউ' বুলি মাতিলে কোনোবা আত্মীয়ৰ মৃত্যু হ'ব পাৰে। ভৰিষ্যত বাণী সম্পর্কীয় অন্ধবিশ্বাসবোৰ প্রায়ে একাধিক উপকাৰণ বিশিষ্ট। আকৌ অসমত বিশ্বাস আছে যে মাঘৰ দোমাহীৰ দিনা ৰাতিপুৱা যদি গোহালিত বান্ধি থোৱা গৰুবিলাক থিয় হৈ থাকে তেনেহলে সেই বছৰটোত প্রৱল বানপানী হ'ব, আৰু যদি সেইদিনা গৰুবিলাক ৰাতিপুৱা গোহালিত শুই থাকে তেনেহলে সেই বছৰতো খৰাং হয়।

প্রায়বিলাক অন্ধবিশ্বাসেই উপকাৰণ নির্মাতা অর্থাৎ অধিক সংখ্যক অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ লগত একোটা চর্ত বা উপকাৰণ যুক্ত হৈ থকা যেনে — 'যদি', 'যেতিয়া' ইত্যাদি। দৃষ্টান্ত স্বৰূপে যদি শগুণ ঘৰৰ চালত পৰে ... ইত্যাদি 'যেতিয়া বাঁহ ফুলে তেতিয়া দেশত দুর্ভিক্ষই দেখা দিয়ে' .... ইত্যাদি।

ডাইনী হত্যাত অন্ধবিশ্বাস আৰু পুৰণিকলীয়া বিশ্বাসৰ সম্বন্ধ ঃ-

দেশে দেশে ভিন্ন ভিন্ন অন্ধবিশ্বাসেৰে আচ্ছন্ন মানুহ। আমাৰ দেশত ক'লা-মেকুৰীক দেখাটো অশুভ গন্য কৰা হয়। ইংলেণ্ডত আকৌ ক'লা মেকুৰীয়ে সুখৰ বার্তা কঢ়িয়াই। গ্রীচত বাদুলীৰ ক্ষুদ্র হাড় পিন্ধি ল'লে অশুভ শক্তিৰ পৰা ৰক্ষা পাব পাৰি বুলি পৌৰাণিক যুগৰেপৰা জনবিশ্বাস চলি আহিছে, কিন্তু তাৰ বাবে বাদুলী হত্যা কৰাটো আকৌ ভয়ংকৰ বিপর্য্যয়ৰ কাৰক হ'ব পাৰে বুলি বিশ্বাস। আইৰিছসকলে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে অশুভ শক্তি আৰু বেমাৰ-আজাৰক কমাৰ সকলেই খেদি পঠিয়াব পাৰে। ইয়ালীত মেকুৰীৰ হাঁচি শুনিবলৈ পোৱাজন সৌভাগ্যবান। চীনা বিশ্বাসমতে ঝাৰুত ভূত থাকে। গতিকে ঝাৰুৱে কাৰোবাৰ মূৰ স্পর্শ কৰিলে তেওঁৰ বিপদ অনিবার্য্য। জাপানীসকলে নিশা ঘৰৰ দাপোন কাপোৰেৰে ঢাকি থয় কাৰণ এন্ধাৰত আইনা চোৱা মানেই দুর্ভাগ্য কঢ়িওৱা। দৈনন্দিন জীৱন যাত্রা, ঘটনা-পৰিঘটনা, কর্ম-আচৰণক লৈ এনে অলেখ অন্ধবিশ্বাস নানা দেশত অতীজৰেপৰা চলি আহিছে। বিজ্ঞান যুক্তিৰ সলনি ধর্ম আৰু পৰম্পৰাই হ'ল এনেবোৰ অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ আধাৰ।

সামাজিক প্রাণী হিচাপে আমি প্রত্যেকেই কম বেছি পৰিমাণে দৈনন্দিন জীৱন যাত্রাত ঘৰে-বাহিৰে, জন্মৰ পৰা মৃত্যুলৈ কিছুমান বিশ্বাস আৰু

অন্ধবিশ্বাসক প্রশ্রয় দিও। জ্যোতিষ শাস্ত্র, বাস্তু শাস্ত্র, ফেং-চুই, পুৰণি নীতিনিয়ম (Old wives' tale), বেজালি, তন্ত্র-মন্ত্র ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন আলমৰ ওপৰত নির্ভৰ কৰি এটা সাচ্ছদ্যপূর্ণ, আড়ম্বিত জীৱনৰ সন্ধান কৰো। আঁৰি দিও ঘৰৰ দুৱাৰমুখত নতুবা নতুন গাড়ীখনৰ আগত নেমুটেঙা আৰু জলকীয়াৰ মালা। কেঁচুৱাটোক অপশক্তিৰ কৱলৰ পৰা দূৰত ৰাখিবলৈ দর্জা-খিৰিকীৰ ওপৰত বান্ধি দিও বগৰীৰ কাইট আৰু মাছ মৰা জাল। হাতত পিন্ধি লও ৰত্ন কুবেৰৰ পৰা কিনা বিশুদ্ধ(?) নৱগ্রহৰ পাথৰ। ডিঙিত আঁৰি লও বিভিন্ন আকৃতিৰ মাদলি নতুবা শিৱৰ চকুৰ পানীৰ পৰা সৃষ্টি হোৱা ৰুদ্রাক্ষৰ মালা, হাতত বান্ধি লও জাপ (Holly thread)। সপ্তাহৰ সাতটা দিনত প্রত্যেক দিনৰ অধিপতি গ্রহৰ প্রিয় ৰং মিলাই মিলাই কাপোৰ পিন্ধো। এই সকলোবোৰ কৰো একমাত্র সুখ-শান্তিৰ তাগিদাত। যিবোৰ নীতি-নিয়ম আঁৰত বৈজ্ঞানিক যুক্তি থাকে তেনেকুৱা নীতি-নিয়ম পালনে সমাজৰ ক্ষতি নকৰে বৰং কল্যাণহে হয়। কিন্তু যিবিলাক নিয়মৰ আঁৰত কোনো বৈজ্ঞানিক যুক্তি নাথাকে কিন্তু আবেগৰ বশবর্ত্তি হৈ মানুহে তাক অন্ধভাৱে অনুকৰণ কৰে তেনেকুৱা অন্ধবিশ্বাসে সমাজৰ বিস্তৃত ক্ষতিসাধন কৰে।

বিশ্বাসবোৰ এতিয়াৰ সৃষ্টি নহয়, পুৰণি কালৰেপৰা সমাজত ইয়াৰ প্রচলন হৈ আহিছে। কিন্তু সকলোবোৰ পুৰণিকলীয়া বিশ্বাসেই অন্ধবিশ্বাস নহয়। উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে জখলাৰ তলেৰে যাব নাপায় বুলি কোৱা হয়। ইয়াৰ আঁৰৰ যুক্তিটো হ'ল — জখলাৰ তলেৰে গ'লে জখলা ডাল বাগৰি পৰি মানুহজনৰ অনিষ্ট হ'ব পাৰে। এইটো পুৰণিকলীয়া বিশ্বাস কিন্তু ই অন্ধবিশ্বাস নহয়। আনহাতে, আমাৰ গাঁওবিলাকত প্রচলন আছে যে কেঁচুৱা এটা বাহিৰলৈ নিলে মাকে চোতালত থু পেলাই সেই থুখিনি ভৰিৰ বুঢ়া আঙুলিৰে ঘূৰণীয়াকৈ ঘূৰাই তাৰে কেঁচুৱাটোক কপালত ফোট দি বাহিৰলৈ নিলে নজৰ নালাগে, এইটো এটা সম্পূর্ণ অন্ধবিশ্বাস। কাৰণ থুত বহুত বীজাণু থাকে আৰু সেই থুৰ ফোটে ছালৰ ক্ষতি কৰিব পাৰে।

গতিকে সকলো পুৰণিকলীয়া বিশ্বাসেই অন্ধবিশ্বাস নহয়। আকৌ সকলোবোৰ অন্ধবিশ্বাসেই পুৰণি নহয়। কাৰণ নিজৰ স্বার্থ পুৰণৰ কাৰণে সমাজৰ এচাম প্রভাৱশালী আৰু চতুৰ ব্যক্তিয়ে কিছুমান এনেকুৱা উৰা বাতৰিৰ সৃষ্টি কৰে, যিবোৰ আবেগৰ বা ভয়ৰ বশবর্ত্তী হৈ মানুহে মানি লয়।

উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে আজি কিছুদিনৰ পৰা অসমৰ বিভিন্ন ঠাইত পিছল মানুহ, হানাঘোঁৰা, নাঙঠ মানুহ ইত্যাদি সম্বন্ধে এনেকুৱা ভুৱা বাতৰি প্ৰচাৰ হৈ আছে। পিছল মানুহৰ সন্দেহত উজনি অসমত বহু মানুহক হত্যা কৰা হ'ল। এইবোৰ সম্পূৰ্ণ ভিত্তিহীন উৰা বাতৰি আৰু অন্ধবিশ্বাস। ৰাতিৰ অন্ধকাৰ জগতখনত যাৰ পইচা ঘটাৰ সম্বন্ধ সেইসকল ব্যক্তিয়ে যাতে ৰাতি নিৰাপদে নিজৰ স্বাৰ্থ পূৰণ কৰিব পাৰে, তাৰ বাবে এনেকুৱা অপপ্ৰচাৰ বা ভুৱা প্ৰচাৰ চলাই সাজ গধূলিতে মানুহক ঘৰৰ ভিতৰত সোমাই থাকিবলৈ বাধ্য কৰায় আৰু কোনোবা ৰাতি ওলায় তেতিয়া হলে সিহঁতেই হত্যা কৰি মানুহ, হানাঘোঁৰা ইত্যাদিৰ ওপৰত দোষ জাপি দিয়ে।

ভাৰতবৰ্ষত ডাইনী হত্যাকাণ্ড সংঘটিত হোৱা অঞ্চলসমূহ মূলতঃ আদিবাসী প্ৰধান আৰু জনজাতীয় প্ৰধান হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। এইবোৰ অঞ্চলত মৌলিক আন্তঃগাঁথনিৰ অভাৱ, দৰিদ্ৰতা, জনসাধাৰণৰ ঠেক মানসিকতা, নিকৃষ্ট সামাজিক আচৰণ, শিক্ষানুষ্ঠান আৰু হাস্পাতালৰ অভাৱ, পুৰুষ প্ৰধান মানসিকতা, অসজাগতা, মানৱ অধিকাৰ সম্পৰ্কীয় জ্ঞানৰ অভাৱ, সামাজিক সুৰক্ষাৰ অভাৱ, দুৰ্বল যোগাযোগ ব্যৱস্থা, দুৰ্গম যাতায়ত ব্যৱস্থা আদিৰ বাবে উপযুক্ত দিহা পৰামৰ্শ আৰু সজাগতাৰ অভাৱত মানুহে বেমাৰ-আজাৰ বা বিপদ আপদৰ পৰা পৰিত্ৰাণ বিচাৰি ওজা, বেজ বা গাঁৱলীয়া ডাক্তৰ আদিৰ ওচৰত শৰণাপন্ন হয়। ফলস্বৰূপে মানুহে কলা যাদু, মোহিনীবান বা ভেক্লিবাজী, কুদৃষ্টিত পৰা আদি অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বশৱৰ্তী হৈ কাৰোবাৰ ওপৰত সন্দেহ জন্মিলে ডাইনী সজাই আসুৰিকভাৱে সমূহীয়াকৈ হত্যা কৰে।

উত্তৰ পূৰ্বাঞ্চলত বহু শতিকা আগৰে পৰা বেজ-বেজালি, তন্ত্ৰ-মন্ত্ৰৰ প্ৰচলন থকাৰ উমান ইতিহাসত পোৱা যায়। মৰিগাঁও জিলাৰ মায়ংক ভাৰতৰ যাদুবিদ্যাৰ ৰাজধানী নামে জনা যায়, মায়ংৰ বাহিৰেও ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকাৰ বিভিন্ন সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ লোকৰ মাজত যাদুবিদ্যাৰ প্ৰচলন দেখা যায়। যিজন মানুহ এই ধৰণৰ তন্ত্ৰ-মন্ত্ৰৰ লগত জড়িত তেওঁক বেজ বা ওজা নামেৰে জনা যায়।

অসমত ডাইনী বাছি উলিওৱাৰ প্ৰচলিত উপায়বোৰ হ'ল —

ক) স্থানীয় বেজ বা ওজাই ডাইনীৰ নাম ব্যক্ত কৰে।

খ) যিজন মানুহৰ বেমাৰ হয় তেওঁক মাছ মৰা জালেৰে বন্দী কৰি কাইটেৰে বিন্ধোৱা হয় আৰু জোঙা বস্তুৰে মৰিওৱা হয়। এই সময়ত বেমাৰীয়ে

শাৰীৰিক নির্যাতনত অতিষ্ঠ হৈ কোনোবা এজনী মহিলা বা পুৰুষৰ নাম ব্যক্ত কৰে আৰু তেতিয়া গাঁওবাসীয়ে সেই মানুহজনী ডাইনী বুলি নিশ্চিত কৰে।

গ) কেতিয়াবা ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ আৱর্তত থকা তিৰোতাজনীক মাছ মৰা জালেৰে বন্দী কৰি নাইবা গছত বান্ধি বনৰীয়া গাহৰিৰ দাতেৰে বিন্ধাই শাৰীৰিক নির্যাতন চলায়, মানুহৰ বিষ্ঠা খাবলৈ দিয়া হয়, চুলিত ধৰি চোচৰাই নিয়া হয় ইত্যাদি। এটা সময়ত নির্যাতন সহ্য কৰিব নোৱাৰি মানসিক ভাৰসাম্য হেৰুৱাই নিজকে ডাইনী বুলি স্বীকাৰ কৰিবলৈ বাধ্য হয়।

কিছুমান অঞ্চলত ডাইনী সন্দেহত হত্যা কৰা ব্যক্তিজনক সাধাৰণতে টুকুৰা টুকুৰাকৈ কাটি বেলেগ বেলেগ ঠাইত পেলোৱা হয়। বিশ্বাস আছে যে একেলগে গোটেই মৃতদেহটো অক্ষত অৱস্থাত থাকিলে পুনৰ জনম ধৰি আকৌ ডাইনী হ'ব পাৰে।

অসমত জনজাতীয় বা অজনজাতীয় দুয়ো শ্রেণীৰ লোকৰ মাজত বীৰা, ঘোৰাপাক বা বাক, কুবেৰ, মৰকুচিয়া, প্রেত, বুঢ়াডাঙৰীয়া, প্রসূতা, যখ-যখিনী, ডাইনী আদি বিভিন্ন অপদেৱতাৰ ওপৰত বিশ্বাস পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। বীৰাই ধৰিলে মানুহে অস্বাভাৱিক আচৰণ কৰে, বাক বা ঘোৰাপাৰে মাছমৰীয়াক আক্রমণ কৰি মাৰি পেলায়, কুবেৰে ধৰিলে গাৰ বিষ হয়, মৰকুচিয়া লাগিলে শিশু শুকাই খিনাই যায় আৰু কেতিয়াবা মৃত্যুও হয়, বুঢ়াডাঙৰীয়াই ধৰিলে মূৰৰ বিষ আৰু গাৰ বিষ হয়, প্রসূতা লাগিলে প্রসূতী নাৰীৰ বেমাৰ হয়, ভৰ্তপ্রেতে ধৰিলে খুজৰতী, টেমুনা, জ্বৰ আদি হয়, যখ-যখিনীয়ে শিশু আৰু মহিলা উভয়কে আক্রমণ কৰে। এইবোৰ অপদেৱতাই ধৰিলে সাধাৰণতে মানুহে ডাক্তৰৰ পৰিবর্তে গাঁৱলীয়া ওজাৰ কাষ চাপে আৰু তাতে আৰম্ভ হয় বেজ নামধাৰি গাঁৱলীয়া কবিৰাজৰ বেজালি আৰু কু-মন্ত্র।

ডাইনী হত্যাৰ লগত সপোনৰ ফলাফলৰ এক গভীৰ সম্বন্ধ আছে। সাধাৰণতে যিজন মানুহৰ হানি বা বেমাৰ হয় তেওঁ যদি সপোনত কাৰোবাক ডাইনীৰ ৰূপত দেখে তেন্তে গাঁওবাসীয়ে বিনা বিচাৰে সেইজনী মানুহক ডাইনী বুলি ধৰি লয়। মনসা, শীতলা, কামাখ্যা, দুর্গা, কেচাইখাইতী, ঘৰ কালী, শ্যাম কালী, শ্মশান কালী ইত্যাদি ৰক্তপিপাষু দেৱীসকলৰ প্রতি অগাধ বিশ্বাসে মানুহৰ হিতাহিত জ্ঞানশূন্য কৰি নৰবলিৰ দৰে ঘটনা সংঘটিত কৰিবলৈ উদ্ৱাউল

কৰে। তেওঁলোকৰ মতে সপোনত কালী মা আহি সেই বিশেষ ব্যক্তি ৰক্তপান কৰিবলৈ ইচ্ছা কৰাৰ কথা ব্যক্ত কৰা দেখা যায়।

অসমৰ জনজাতীয় আৰু আদিবাসী লোকসকলে আনৰ অনিষ্ট সাধনৰ উদ্দেশ্যে বিভিন্ন ধৰণৰ কু-মন্ত্র যেনে — বাণ মৰা (Throw charmed arrow), ভূত বা বীৰা জপোৱা, কিছুমান গছৰ শিপা, জন্তুৰ নখ, হাড় ইত্যাদিৰে তৈয়াৰী মন্ত্রপুত বস্তু ঘৰৰ চাৰিসীমাৰ ভিতৰত পুতি থৈ যায়। কেতিয়াবা অনিষ্ট কৰিব বিচৰা মানুহজনক চল চাতুৰি কৰি মন্ত্র-পুত ঔষধো খুৱায়।

ডাইনী হত্যাত অন্ধবিশ্বাসেই একমাত্র কাৰণ নহয় ঃ-

বর্তমান ভাৰতত ক্ষমতাকেন্দ্রীক আৰু অর্থকেন্দ্রিক সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বাবে অন্ধবিশ্বাসকেই একমাত্র কাৰণ হিচাপে জগৰীয়া কৰিব নোৱাৰি। বিভিন্ন ধৰণৰ আর্থসামাজিক কাৰক, যেনে - কাৰোবাৰ মাটি দখল উদ্দেশ্যে থাকিলে, আত্মীয়ৰ মাজত সম্পত্তিৰ ভাগ বটোৱাৰ লৈ কাজিয়া হলে, কাৰোবাৰ লগত ব্যক্তিগত আখেজ থাকিলে, সেই অঞ্চলৰ কোনো প্রভাৱশালী পুৰুষৰ লগত শাৰীৰিক সম্পর্ক স্থাপন কৰিবলৈ কোনো সুন্দৰী মহিলাই অস্বীকাৰ কৰিলে ইত্যাদিয়ে ডাইনী হত্যাত বর্তমান সময়ত বিশেষ ভূমিকা পালন কৰা পৰিলক্ষিত হয়।

ভাৰতবর্ষৰ যিবোৰ ৰাজ্যত জাতিভিত্তিক ৰাজনীতি (Caste based politics) বিৰাজমান সেইবোৰ ঠাইত সাধাৰণতে ডাইনীৰ নামত সংখ্যালঘু শ্রেণীৰ লোকক অত্যাচাৰ কৰা হয়। উদাহৰণস্বৰূপে, ঝাৰখণ্ডত ডাইনী হত্যা এক জাতিভিত্তিক অত্যাচাৰ বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। কাৰণ ইয়াত আদিবাসীসকলক স্থানীয় বেজ বা ওজাৰ নির্দেশ মতে ডাইনী সজাই হত্যা কৰা হয়। ঝাৰখণ্ডত অশিক্ষিত আদিবাসীসকলে ভূত-প্রেত, প্রেতাত্মা, ডাইনী আদিক গভীৰ বিশ্বাস কৰে। পুলিচ ৰেকর্ডমতে, ১৯৯১-২০০৮ চনৰ ভিতৰত ঝাৰখণ্ডত উনেশ খন জিলাত মুঠ ৯৮৪ জনে মহিলাক ডাইনী সন্দেহত হত্যা কৰা হৈছিল। এইটো চৰকাৰী তথ্যহে। বেচৰকাৰীভাৱে হয়তো ইয়াৰ সংখ্যা অধিক হব পাৰে।

আকৌ অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশৰ তেলেঙ্গানাত নক্সালবাদী আন্দোলন তীব্রগতিত চলি থকাৰ সময়ত যাদুবিদ্যাৰ নামত যথেষ্ট উৎপীড়ন সংঘটিত হৈ আছে। বেছিভাগ ডাইনী হত্যাকাণ্ড সমভূমি অঞ্চলত সংঘটিত হয়। অন্ধ্রপ্রদেশত ডাইনী (বনমথী/চিলাঙ্গী) সন্দেহত যিবোৰ

মহিলাক হত্যা কৰা হয় তাৰ নব্বৈ শতাংশই দলিত বহুজনৰ। বনমথীৰ নামত দলিত হত্যাকাণ্ড একপ্ৰকাৰ জাতিভিত্তিক উৎপীড়ন। অন্ধ্ৰপ্ৰদেশত যদিহে কোনো অকলশৰীয়া বিধৱা তিৰোতা আৰু অকলশৰীয়া বৃদ্ধ দম্পতি থাকে তেতিয়া নিজৰ আত্মীয়ই সম্পত্তি বাজেয়াপ্ত কৰাৰ লক্ষ্যৰে ডাইনী বুলি প্ৰচাৰ চলাই হত্যা কৰে নতুবা গাঁৱৰ পৰা খেদি পঠিয়াই। কেতিয়াবা দলিত সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ পৰিয়ালৰ ঘৰৰ মুৰব্বীজনকে ডাইনী সজাই হত্যা কৰে, কাৰণ তেওঁ নিৰ্দিষ্ট ৰাজনৈতিক দলক ভোট দিবলৈ অনিচ্ছা প্ৰকাশ কৰে। তেলেংগানাত শিক্ষিত বা অশিক্ষিত সকলোৱে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বশৱৰ্তী হৈ বা উদ্দেশ্যে প্ৰনোদিত ভাৱে নিজ ইচ্ছামতে কাৰোবাক ডাইনী বা বনমথী সজাই লয়। অন্যহাতে যিবোৰ ঠাইত কোলাম, গোণ্ড, খোণ্ড, কোয়া আদি জনজাতীয় লোক বাস কৰে সেইবোৰ অঞ্চলত যাদুবিদ্যাক সন্মানীয় আৰু মৰ্য্যাদা পূৰ্ণ গন্য কৰা হয়।

এনেদৰে ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ বাকী ডাইনী অধ্যুষিথ অঞ্চলবোৰতো বৰ্তমান সময়ত অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ আলম লৈ বিভিন্ন ব্যক্তিগত স্বাৰ্থ পূৰণ কৰিবলৈ ডাইনী হত্যা কৰা দেখা যায়। সম্পত্তি বাজেয়াপ্ত কৰাটো বৰ্তমান ডাইনী হত্যাৰ অন্যতম কাৰণ। সেয়েহে Witch hunting ক আজি কালি এচাম সমালোচক Property hunting আৰু Beauty hunting বুলি ক'ব খোজে।

পৰামৰ্শ ঃ-

ডাইনী অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চলসমূহত চৰকাৰে নিজাবৰীয়াকৈ বা বিভিন্ন বেচৰকাৰী সংগঠন (N. G. O)ৰ জৰিয়তে কিছুমান ব্যৱস্থা গ্ৰহণ কৰি এনে নাৰকীয় কাণ্ডৰ উপশম ঘটাব পাৰে। তলত এই সম্পৰ্কে কেইটামান পৰামৰ্শ সন্নিৱিষ্ট কৰা হ'ল ঃ-

ক) মানুহৰ মাজত শিক্ষাৰ মাধ্যমেৰে অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সজাগতা সৃষ্টি কৰা।
খ) ডাইনী সম্বন্ধীয় দৃশ্য-শ্ৰাব্য তথ্যচিত্ৰ প্ৰদৰ্শনৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰা।
গ) ডাইনী হত্যাৰ কাৰণ বিচাৰি উলিয়াব পৰা অভিযান সৃষ্টি কৰা।
ঘ) পোষ্টাৰৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰা।
ঙ) মানুহৰ মানসিক সুস্থিৰতা আনিবলৈ মদ, ভাং, বিড়ি আদি ৰাগিয়াল বস্তুৰ প্ৰচলন বন্ধ কৰা।

চ) গাঁৱলীয়া অঞ্চলবোৰত অত্যাধুনিক যন্ত্রপাতিৰে সজ্জিত বিচনাযুক্ত হস্পিতাল স্থাপন কৰা আৰু সেইবোৰ অঞ্চলত বাধ্যতামূলকভাৱে ডাক্তৰ নিযুক্তি দিয়া।

ছ) SHG, মহিলা সমিতি, মহিলা সংঘ, গাঁও পঞ্চায়ত আৰু ব্লক পর্য্যায়ত মহিলাৰ ৰাজনৈতিক আৰু সামাজিক অংশগ্রহণ ব্যৱস্থা কৰা।

জ) মানুহৰ অন্তৰত মানৱীয় মূল্যবোধ জগাই তোলা।

সামৰণি ঃ-

ড° বি. আৰ আম্বেদকাৰে কৈছিল যে — আমাৰ দেশৰ গাঁওবিলাক অশিক্ষিত, মূর্খ আৰু প্রতিবাদীকাৰীৰে ভৰপূৰ। এচাম চতুৰ মানুহে ভূত-প্রেত, তন্ত্র-মন্ত্র আদিৰ নামত সমাজৰ দুর্বল মানসিকতাৰ মানুহক শোষণ চলাই আছে। তেওঁৰ মতে, ঈশ্বৰৰ প্রতি বিশ্বাসো অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ অন্য এটা ৰূপ। গতিকে আমি প্রথমতে এই ধৰণৰ বিশ্বাসৰ শিপা উভালিব লাগিব, তাৰ পাছতহে অন্ধবিশ্বাস আঁতৰ হ'ব।

অতি প্রাকৃতিক শক্তিৰ ওপৰত বিশ্বাস থকালৈকে অন্ধবিশ্বাসো থাকিব। সকলো অন্ধবিশ্বাসেই ক্ষতিকাৰক বা বিপজ্জনক নহ'বও পাৰে। কিন্তু অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ পৰিণতিত সামাজিক উচ্ছৃংখলতা হিংসা-ৰক্তপাতেৰে আকংক সৃষ্টি হোৱাটো নিশ্চয় কাৰো কাম্য নহয়। ভাৰতবর্ষত আজি নিতৌ অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বলি হৈ প্রাণ হেৰুৱাব লগা হৈছে অনেকজনে। বিশেষকৈ ভূত-প্রেত লম্ভা বা ডাইনী বৃত্তি অললম্বন কৰাৰ সন্দেহত কুটুমৰ তেজেৰে হাত ৰঙা কৰিছে কুটুমে।

প্রসংগ টোকা ঃ-

১। অসমীয়া প্রতিদিন — ২৩ ছেপ্তেম্বৰ, ২০১৩
২। অসমীয়া লোক সংস্কৃতিৰ আভাস ঃ- ড° নবীন চন্দ্র শর্মা
৩। Newbell N. Puekett : Folkbeliefs of Southerm Negro, chapeill Hill, 1926. P.571
৪। Alan Dundes, Op-Cit, p. 90
৫। W.W.W.NDTV.Com.
৬। W.W.W.Assam mahilasamakhya.Org

অসমত ডাইনী হত্যা আৰু নাৰী সৱলীকৰণত স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংগঠনৰ ভূমিকা

উৎপলা দাস

আৰম্ভণি

ডাইনী হত্যা হ'ল নাৰীৰ এক প্রণালীবদ্ধ নির্যাতন কার্য, যাৰ দ্বাৰা সমগ্র জনগোষ্ঠাটোৱে ব্যক্তিগৰাকীক ডাইনীৰ ৰূপত কু-কার্যৰ বাবে শাস্তিৰ নির্দেশনা দিয়ে (চক্রৱর্তী আৰু বৰা, ২০১৩) অক্সফ'র্ড ডিক্সনেৰীৰ মতে - 'Witch Hunt as a campaign directed against a person or group holding views considered unorthodox or threat to society'. ডাইনী হত্যা নিম্ন সামাজকি স্তৰৰ নাৰীক কু-প্রচাৰৰ এক ব্যৱস্থাও বুলিব পাৰি য'ত নাৰীগৰাকীক ডাইনী সজাই তেওঁৰ বিৰুদ্ধে পুৰুষে প্রভাৱ দেখুৱায় আৰু নির্যাতনৰ বাবে উদ্যত হয় (চৌধুৰী, ২০১২)।

স্থানীয় বার্তালাপত ডাইনী বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা নাৰীয়ে মানুহৰ ৰোগ সৃষ্টি কৰা, শস্যৰ বিনষ্ট কৰা আৰু ঘৰচীয়া পশুৰ অনিষ্ট সাধন কৰে বুলি প্রচলিত। তাইক (ডাইনী) সাধাৰণতে এজন ওজা, বেজ বা দেওধানী আদিয়ে চিনাক্তকৰণ কৰে আৰু সমাজৰ পৰা বহিস্কৃত নতুবা মৃত্যুদণ্ড বিহে (চক্রৱর্তী আৰু বৰা, ২০১৩)। ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বাবে জগৰীয়া কাৰকসমূহৰ ভিতৰত প্রধান হ'ল - সম্পত্তিৰ ওপৰত নিয়ন্ত্রণ, জনগোষ্ঠীৰ কোনো সদস্যৰ সৈতে ব্যক্তিগত শত্রুতা আৰু গভীৰ অন্ধবিশ্বাসেই প্রধান (দাস, ২০১২)। সমাজৰ দুর্বল শ্রেণীৰ লোকসকলক সাধাৰণতে ডাইনী সজোৱা হয় আৰু

ইয়াৰ জৰিয়তে সমাজত তেওঁলোকক কঠোৰ নিন্দা কৰি সম্পত্তি কাঢ়ি লোৱা হয়।

এনেবোৰ কাৰণত স্পৰ্শকাত জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ উত্তৰণ নিশ্চিত কৰিবৰ বাবে তেওঁলোকৰ মাজত বৈজ্ঞানিক চিন্তাধাৰণা সৃষ্টি অতিকৈ জৰুৰী বুলি বিবেচিত হৈছে। সৱলীকৰণে এইক্ষেত্ৰৰ দুৰ্বল লোকসমূহৰ বা গোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ ক্ষমতা বঢ়োৱাৰ লগতে ইতিমধ্যে বাহাল থকা ক্ষমতাকেন্দ্ৰিক সম্পৰ্কক অধিক টনকিয়াল কৰে যিবোৰ তেওঁলোকৰ অৰ্থনৈতিক, সামাজিক আৰু ৰাজনৈতিক অৱস্থাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটায় (আগৰৱালা, ১৯৯৫)। বৰ্তমানৰ পত্ৰখনত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বিভিন্ন ঘটনাৰ পৰ্য্যালোচনা কৰাৰ লগতে নাৰীক সৱলীকৰণৰ দিশত স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংগঠনৰ ভূমিকা সম্বন্ধেও এক আলোচনা কৰিবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে।

অধ্যয়নৰ উদ্দেশ্য ঃ

ক) উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলত বিশেষকৈ অসমত সংঘটিত নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক অপৰাধ, প্ৰধানতঃ ডাইনী হত্যা ঘটনাৱলীৰ আলোকপাত।

খ) উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ বিভিন্ন ৰাজ্যত স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংগঠনসমূহৰ নাৰী সৱলীকৰণ সম্পৰ্কীয় কাৰ্যকলাপৰ বিশ্লেষণ।

গ) নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক অপৰাধ বিশেষকৈ সমাজৰ দুৰ্বল শ্ৰেণীৰ লোকৰ বিৰুদ্ধে অপৰাধ প্ৰৱণতা আঁতৰোৱাৰ বাবে ল'বলগীয়াপদক্ষেপৰ সমিধান দিয়া।

অধ্যয়নৰ প্ৰণালী

সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন সামাজিক কু-প্ৰথাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে মহিলাসকলৰ মাজত সজাগতা সৃষ্টি কৰাটো অতিকৈ প্ৰয়োজনীয় বুলি বিবেচিত হৈছে। নাৰীৰ মৰ্যাদাৰ উন্নীতকৰণৰ বাবে চৰকাৰৰ লগতে স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংগঠনসমূহেও সুৰক্ষা প্ৰদানৰ জৰিয়তে বা শান্তিপূৰ্ণ পৰিবেশ ৰক্ষাৰ দ্বাৰা নাৰীৰ সপক্ষে কিছুমান স্পষ্ট আৰু কঠোৰ পদক্ষেপ গ্ৰহণ কৰাটো উচিত। অসমৰ বিভিন্ন অংশত সংঘটিত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বিভিন্ন তথ্যসমূহ স্থানীয় আৰু ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় বাতৰি কাকত, আলোচনী, দূৰদৰ্শন আদিৰপৰা সংগ্ৰহীত। স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংগঠনৰ গাঁঠনি তথা ইয়াৰ বিভিন্ন কাৰ্য্যাৱলী, সংগঠনৰ নিজা ৱেব্চাইট আৰু ৰিপৰ্টসমূহৰপৰা সংগ্ৰহ কৰা হৈছে।

উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ ডাইনী হত্যা

ভাৰতৰ উত্তৰ-পূব অঞ্চল বিশেষকৈ অসমত, আদিবাসী তথা জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকে বাস কৰে, ইয়াত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ প্ৰথা বিশেষভাৱে পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। ২০০৯-২০১২ চনৰ ভিতৰত কেৱল মাত্ৰ অসমৰ পৰা ৬৫ টা ডাইনী হত্যা ঘটনাৰ খবৰ আছে। ইয়াত প্ৰধানতঃ আদহীয়া বয়সৰ আৰু বয়সীয়াল, অকলশৰীয়া জনজাতীয় মহিলা তথা অজনজাতীয় লোকসকলক ডাইনী হিচাপে নিৰ্যাতন কৰা হয়। ফলত তেওঁলোক সামাজিক, অৰ্থনৈতিক আৰু শাৰীৰিকভাৱেও অপদস্ত হয়, আনকি মৃত্যুদণ্ডও বিহা হয়।

নেচনেল ক্ৰাইম বিউৰ'ৰ ভাৰতৰ অপৰাধ ২০১২ সমীক্ষা অনুযায়ী প্ৰস্তুত কৰা মানচিত্ৰত ৰাজ্যসমূহৰ নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক অপৰাধৰ হাৰ স্পষ্ট ৰূপত দেখুওৱা হৈছে। এই পৰিসংখ্যা অনুযায়ী মহিলাৰ বাবে সুৰক্ষিত ৰাজ্য হিচাপে চিহ্নিত হৈছে নাগালেণ্ড(8.90%)। একে সময়তে সীমামূৰীয়া ৰাজ্য অসম হৈছে অতিকৈ অসুৰক্ষিত ৰাজ্য (89.54%)

অসমত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ কিছু তথ্য

আচৰ্য্যকৰ বিষয় এয়ে যে ৰাজ্যত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ঘটনা দৈনন্দিন বৃদ্ধি পাই আহিছে আৰু ইতিমধ্যে এনেধৰণৰ ডাইনী সন্দেহৰ বশৱৰ্তী হৈ চাৰি বছৰতকৈয়ো কম সময়ত পঞ্চাশ জন নিৰীহ লোকে প্ৰাণ হেৰুৱাইছে। ই অসমৰ আদিবাসীৰ বাহিৰেও ৰাভা, হাজং, মিচিং, বড়ো আদি জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজত বহুলভাৱে প্ৰচলিত হৈ আছে। ৰাজ্যিক আৰক্ষী সূত্ৰৰ মতে সমগ্ৰ অসমত ২০০৬ চনত মুঠ ২১ টা গোচৰ পঞ্জীয়ন হোৱাৰ বিপৰীতে ২০০৭ চনত ৯টা, ২০০৮ চনত ১০টা, ২০০৯ চনত ৪টা, ২০১১ চনত ২৯টা আৰু ২০১২ চনত ১৪টা গোচৰ পঞ্জীয়ন হৈছে। (http//bd news24.com)।

স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংস্থাৰ ভূমিকা

ক্ৰমাগতভাৱে বৃদ্ধি পাই অহা ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ঘটনা সমাধান কৰাটো কেৱল এটা পক্ষৰ বাবে কোনোপধ্যে সম্ভৱপৰ নহয়। ইয়াৰ বাবে চৰকাৰী বিষয়া, বেচৰকাৰী সংস্থা (NGO) আৰু সচেতন নাগৰিকৰ সমূহীয়া প্ৰচেষ্টাৰ আৱশ্যক। সাধাৰণ লোকৰ অত্যাৱশকীয় চাহিদা পূৰণত চৰকাৰৰ নিঃসন্দেহে

প্ৰয়োজনীয় কিন্তু স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংস্থাসমূহেও একে সমানে অন্ধবিশ্বাস দূৰীকৰণত বিশেষভাৱে অৱদান আগবঢ়োৱাৰ প্ৰতি দায়বদ্ধ হ'ব লাগিব।

অসম মহিলা সমতা ছ'চাইটি (AMSS) (www.assammahilasamakhya.org)

AMSS হ'ল ছ'চাইটি পঞ্জীয়ন আইন, ১৮৬০ অধীনত ১৯৯৬ চনত পঞ্জীভূত হোৱা এটা স্বতন্ত্ৰ সংস্থা। অসমত এই সংস্থাই ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় 'মহিলা সমাখ্যা (MS) আঁচনিৰ সফল ৰূপায়ন ঘটায়। এই আঁচনিৰ প্ৰধান উদ্দেশ্যে হ'ল নাৰীৰ সৱলীকৰণৰ বাবে সাহস প্ৰদান কৰা, বিভিন্ন দিশত সহযোগিতা আগবঢ়োৱা, সমূহীয়া আলোচনাৰে সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণত অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰা আৰু সামাজিক পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ বাবে শিক্ষা ক্ষেত্ৰত সমানে অংশগ্ৰহণৰ বাবে অনুপ্ৰেৰণা যোগোৱা ইত্যাদি।

গ্ৰাম্যঞ্চলৰ মহিলাৰ সৱলীকৰণৰ বাবে প্ৰাৰম্ভিকভাৱে শিক্ষাৰ প্ৰসাৰৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হৈছে যাৰ ফলত মহিলাৰ সঞ্চিত জ্ঞান, অভিজ্ঞতা আৰু বুদ্ধিৰ উপযুক্ত দিশত সফল প্ৰয়োগৰ চেষ্টা কৰা হয়। ইয়াৰ তত্ত্ব হ'ল সৱলীকৰণৰ দিশত গ্ৰাম্যঞ্চলৰ মহিলাৰ সমূহীয়া কাৰ্য্যক গতিশীলতা প্ৰদান কৰা। মহিলা সংঘ গঠনৰ জৰিয়তে নিৰক্ষৰ নাৰীক সৱলীকৰণৰ ভেটি দৃঢ় কৰা হয়। যদিও সংঘসমূহ সৰু সৰু ভিন্ন গঠনৰ তেওঁলোকে নিজৰ স্থানীয় সমস্যাসমূহ সমাধানৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত অতিকৈ দায়বদ্ধ। যেতিয়াই সংঘসমূহ সুন্দৰভাৱে বৃদ্ধি পায় তেওঁলোকে ফেডাৰেচন গঠনৰ দ্বাৰা সৱলীকৰণ প্ৰক্ৰিয়া গ্ৰাম্যঞ্চলৰ পৰা গাঁও পঞ্চায়ত, চক্ৰ তথা জিলা পৰ্য্যয়লৈ আগবঢ়াই নিয়ে। AMSS ৰ গোৱালপাৰা জিলা ৰূপায়ন গোটে অসম আৰু ইয়াৰ দাঁতি কাষৰীয়া অঞ্চলত সংগঠিত মুঠ ৩৮টা ডাইনী হত্যাৰ ঘটনা পোহৰলৈ আনে। তেওঁলোকৰ প্ৰস্তাৱিত বিষয়সমূহ হ'ল —

ক) অনুসন্ধানৰ স্থান চিনাক্তকৰণ।
খ) ডাইনী হত্যা ৰোধ কৰা।
গ) সংশিষ্ট পক্ষৰ সমতা বৃদ্ধি।
ঘ) ডাইনী হত্যা ৰোধত মহিলাৰ অংশগ্ৰহণ।
ঙ) ডাইনী হত্যাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে ৰাজ্যিক আইন ইত্যাদি।

তালিকা ঃ ১ ডাইনীৰ ৰূপত নির্যাতিত পুৰুষ আৰু মহিলা, জিলা ৰূপায়ণ গোট, ... গোৱালপাৰা

ক্রমিক নং	নির্যাতিত পুৰুষ /মহিলাৰ নাম	ৰাজ্য	জিলা	ব্লক	পঞ্চায়ত	গাঁও
১	চিৰনী ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	নিহালীভিটা
২	অনিতা ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	ৰংচাই
৩	খেদাইৱালা ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	চটাবাৰী
৪	জোনালী ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	বৰঝাৰ ধাপাৰভিটা
৫	জোগাইৱালা ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	ঠাকুৰভিটা
৬	মনোমায়া ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	গালচিৰা
৭	ভুলেশ্বৰী ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	বাইদা
৮	চিপতী ৰাভা	মেঘালয়	পশ্চিম গাৰো	লক্ষীপুৰ	টিকৰীকিলা	বৰবটাপাৰা
৯	হিনাৰাজী হাজং	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	ধামাৰ	মেধিপাৰা
১০	ৰাতিলা ৰাভা	মেঘালয়	গাৰো পাহাৰ	লক্ষীপুৰ	টিকৰীকিলা	চামাগুৰি
১১	জোতাহনা চাংমা	মেঘালয়	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	ৰংচাই
১২	বিভা হাটো	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	কোচধোৱালেলা		ৰংচাই কুকুৰকটা
১৩	লালচান্দ ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	ৰংজুলি	ধনুভাঙা	দাউধাইভিটা
১৪	সাবিত্রী হাজোৱাৰী	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	ৰংজুলি	ধনুভাঙা	ফকিৰমাৰা
১৫	শান্তি খাকলাৰী	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	ৰংজুলি	ৰংজুলি	ৰংজুলি চালাপাৰা
১৬	নন্দা হাজোৱাৰী	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	ৰংজুলি	ৰংজুলি	ৰংজুলি
১৭	যমুনা দৈমাৰী	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লেলা	লেলা	মণ্ডলগ্রাম
১৮	পুতুলা ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লেলা	লেলা	মণ্ডলগ্রাম
১৯	ৰমিলা ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	দদন	দদন	বাইদা
২০	সূর্যবালা	অসম	কামৰূপ	বকো	বকো	বকো
২১	চিন্তে ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লেলা	লেলা	টোপোলা বেলোৱা
২২	চম্পাই ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	বদহপুৰ	বদহপুৰ	মেঘাদুম
২৩	সৰস্বতী ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	দদন	দদন	হাতিখিলা ভেপোৱা
২৪	পুৰটনি ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	দদন	দদন	বাওৰকোনা

২৫	খাৰদ সিং মাৰাক	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	ৰাজাপাৰা	ৰাজাপাৰা	গোসাইধোৱা
২৬	খিতিচ ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	দৱংগিৰি	দৱংগিৰি	দোৰামাৰি
২৭	জয়ন্তী ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	দৱংগিৰি	দৱংগিৰি	দোৰামাৰি
২৮	সাৰথি ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দৱংগিৰি	চটশিঙৰি
২৯	ৰেণুকা ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	বালিজানা	দৱংগিৰি	বৰজুলি
৩০	ৰিনা ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দৱংগিৰি	দিপকাই উৰণীপাৰা
৩১	লক্ষ্মী ৰাভা	অসম	পশ্চিম গাৰো পাহাৰ	লক্ষীপুৰ	দৱংগিৰি	জুৰিগাঁও
৩২	অঞ্জনা ৰাভা	অসম	পশ্চিম গাৰো পাহাৰ	লক্ষীপুৰ	দৱংগিৰি	জুৰিগাঁও
৩৩	ৰাণীশ্ৱৰী ৰাভা	মেঘালয়	পশ্চিম গাৰো পাহাৰ	লক্ষীপুৰ	নাগাৰাপাৰা	২নং নাগাৰাপাৰা
৩৪	চানাবালা ৰাভা	মেঘালয়	পশ্চিম গাৰো পাহাৰ	লক্ষীপুৰ	টিকৰীকিলা	টিকৰীকিলা
৩৫	যমুনাবালা ৰাভা	মেঘালয়	পশ্চিম গাৰো পাহাৰ	লক্ষীপুৰ	টিকৰীকিলা	টিকৰীকিলা
৩৬	ফুলজং ৰাভা	মেঘালয়	পূব গাৰোপাহাৰ	লক্ষীপুৰ	জেৰদুৰা	জেৰদুৰা
৩৭	পার্থি ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	পুৰণিভিটা	কমাৰগুৰি
৩৮	সুগুণি ৰাভা	অসম	গোৱালপাৰা	লক্ষীপুৰ	দদন	চটাবাৰী

নর্থ ইষ্ট নেটৰ্ৱৰ্ক (NEN)

NEN হ'ল এটা নাৰী সংস্থা যিটো ১৯৯৫ চনত বেইজিং আলোচনা চক্ৰৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা হৈছিল। আৰম্ভণিৰে পৰা সংস্থাটোৱে উত্তৰ পূব উন্নয়ণ তথা ৰাজনৈতিক পৰিধিৰ মাপত নাৰীৰ অধিকাৰ বিষয়ত কাম কৰি আহিছে। সংস্থাটোৱে উত্তৰ-পূব ভাৰতৰ নাৰীৰ বিশেষ আৱশ্যকসমূহ যেনে লিংগ ভিত্তিক বাজেট অনুমোদন, সংঘৰ্ষত আক্ৰান্ত মহিলাৰ বাবে সু�ৰক্ষা আঁচনি শক্তিশালী কৰা আৰু সংঘৰ্ষ জৰ্জৰিত অঞ্চলত মহিলাৰ সু�ৰক্ষাৰ বাবে চৰকাৰৰ লগত আলোচনা কৰি সমাধানৰ চেষ্টা কৰি আহিছে। বৰ্তমানৰ সময়ত NEN ৰ কার্য্যাৱলীত অসমৰ ডাইনী হত্যাকাণ্ডৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সজাগতা সৃষ্টিৰ বাবেও কার্য্যপন্থা লোৱা হৈছে।

পূৰ্ব ভাৰতী ইদুকেছনেল ত্ৰাষ্ট (PBET)

১৯৯৫ চনত অসমৰ যোৰহাট জিলাত কিছু সংখ্যক অৱসৰপ্ৰাপ্ত চিন্তাবিদ তথা শিক্ষাবিদৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাত গ্ৰাম্য অঞ্চলত ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীক কৰ্মমুখী শিক্ষা প্ৰদানৰ উদ্দেশ্যে PBET য়ে জন্মলাভ কৰিছিল। ভাৰতীয় ত্ৰাষ্ট আইন, ১৮৯৯ অধীনত ভৱিষ্যত উন্নয়নৰ বাবে শিক্ষাৰ ভেটি সুদৃঢ় কৰিবলৈ ১৯৯৮ চনত PBET পঞ্জীয়ন কৰা হয়। ২০০৭ চনত PBET য়ে উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলত তেওঁলোকৰ মুলনীতিৰ ভিত্তিত উন্নয়নৰ বিষয়সমূহ দাঙি ধৰে। PBET ৰ নাৰী নিৰ্যাতনক প্ৰধান উদ্দেশ্য হিচাপে লৈ অসমৰ বিভিন্ন সমস্যা সক্ৰিয়ভাৱে দাঙি ধৰিছিল।

অল ইণ্ডিয়া ডেমক্ৰেমিটক অমেন এছ'চিয়েচন (AIDWA)

AIDWA হ'ল এটা স্বাধীন নাৰী সংস্থা, যি সাৰ্বভৌম, সমতা আৰু নাৰী মুক্তিৰ বাবে দায়বদ্ধ। AIDWA ৰ সদস্যসকল জাতি-বৰ্ণ গোষ্ঠী নিৰ্বিশেষে সমাজৰ সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ পৰা অহা। AIDWA য়ে বিশ্বাস কৰে যে নাৰীমুক্তিৰ বাবে ভাৰতত প্ৰাথমিক আন্তঃগাঁঠনিক পৰিবৰ্তনৰ প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা আছে। ই ধৰ্মনিৰপেক্ষতা মূল্যক সমৰ্থন কৰে তথা নাৰীৰ মৰ্য্যাদা হানিকাৰক যিকোনো প্ৰথাৰ বিৰোধিতী কৰাৰ লগতে প্ৰত্যাহ্বানো জনায়।

নেচনেল ফ'ৰাম ফৰ পিপল ৰাইট্চ (NEPR)

NEPR মানৰ অধিকাৰ উন্নতিকৰণ আৰু সুৰক্ষা চ'ছাইটি হ'ল এটা পঞ্জীভূত বেচৰকাৰী সংস্থা (NGO) যিয়ে ২০০৫ চনৰ পৰা ভাৰতত মানৰ অধিকাৰ সুৰক্ষা, সকলোৰে বাবে ন্যায়, অৰ্থনৈতিক উন্নয়ন, শিক্ষা, শান্তি আৰু ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় তথা আন্তৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় যোগ্যতা ৰক্ষাৰ বাবে কাম কৰি আহিছে। এই ফ'ৰামৰ বৰ্তমানৰ এক প্ৰচেষ্টা হ'ল তথ্য জনাৰ অধিকাৰ আইনৰ সম্প্ৰসাৰণ। অধিকাৰ আৰু কৰ্তব্যৰ প্ৰতি সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি তথা শিক্ষিতকৰণৰ বাবে প্ৰচেষ্টা গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে।

উপৰোক্ত সংস্থা সমূহৰ বাহিৰেও আন সংস্থা সমূহ যেনে — 'সদৌ অসম নাৰী সংঘ', সদৌ অসম প্ৰগতিশীল মহিলা সংস্থা (AAPA), Foundation for Social Transformation (FST), 'অল বড়ো অমেনচ্ ৰেলফেয়াৰ ফেডাৰেচন', 'বড়ো অমেন জাচটিছ ফ'ৰাম', 'আঞ্চলিক মহিলা সমিতি' আদিয়েও মহিলাৰ সৱলীকৰণ তথা উন্নতিৰ বাবে অসমত সক্ৰিয়ভাৱে কাম কৰি আছে।

পৰামৰ্শ

১। সমাজৰ পৰা ডাইনী হত্যা প্ৰথা নিৰ্মূলৰ বাবে নাৰীৰ সৱলীকৰণ আৰু সমাজৰ সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ লোকৰ মাজত বৈজ্ঞানিক চিন্তাধাৰাৰ প্ৰচলন।

২। স্বেচ্ছাসেৱী সংস্থাসমূহে প্ৰাথমিক স্তৰত জনগোষ্ঠীসমূহৰ মাজত সজাগতা আৰু আন্তঃগাঠনি সুদৃঢ় কৰাৰ বাবে মহিলাসকলক একত্ৰিত কৰি আঁচনি তৈয়াৰ কৰা উচিত।

৩। মহিলাসকলৰ মাজত সামাজিক তথা ৰাজনৈতিক সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধিৰ বাবে সজাগতা সৃষ্টি অতিকৈ প্ৰয়োজন।

৪। মহিলাসকলৰ মাজত মহিলা গোট, আত্মসহায়ক গোট, NGO, আদি গঠনৰ বাবে উৎসাহিত কৰিব লাগে।

৫। কিছুমান নাৰী সংস্থাই সামাজিক আৰু ৰাজনৈতিক কাৰ্য্যকলাপত নাৰীক অংশগ্ৰহণৰ বাবে উৎসাহিত কৰিব পাৰে।

৬। ৰাজনৈতিক অংশগ্ৰহণেৰে নাৰীক শক্তিশালী কৰি অৰ্থনৈতিক কাৰ্যৰ বাবে দক্ষতা বৃদ্ধি আদিয়েও নাৰীৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সংগঠিত হোৱা অপৰাধসমূহক ৰোধ কৰিব পাৰে।

৭। সহজে উপলব্ধ আঁচনি তথা সেৱাসমূহৰ বিষয়ে মহিলাসকলক অৱগত কৰোঁৱা আৰু নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক অপৰাধ ৰোধত এইবোৰৰ উপযোগিতা সম্বন্ধে ব্যক্ত কৰা।

৮। নাৰীৰ স্থিতিৰ ওপৰত বহুতো গৱেষণাৰ প্ৰয়োজন আছে যিবোৰে সমাজত লিংগ সমতা স্থাপন কৰাত সহায় কৰিব।

৯। নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰিক ঘটনা নিয়ন্ত্ৰণত সামাজিক দায়বদ্ধতা সৃষ্টি কৰাত মূলত পুৰুষৰ অংশগ্ৰহণ নিতান্তই জৰুৰী।

১০। বেচৰকাৰী সংস্থাৰ লগতে নাৰী সংস্থা সমূহেও সমাজত প্ৰচলিত অসমতা দূৰীকৰণত মূখ্য ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰি নাৰীক শক্তিশালী কৰাত সবল ভূমিকা ল'ব পাৰে।

সামৰণি

একৈশ শতিকাৰ বিশ্বত নাৰীয়ে ৰাজনৈতিক, অৰ্থনৈতিক, সামাজিক, সাংস্কৃতিক, শৈক্ষিক আদি বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্ৰত উচ্চ শিখৰত আৰোহন কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। সেয়া যিয়ে নহওঁক, ডাইনী হত্যা প্ৰথা কেৱল মাত্ৰ মহিলাৰ

বাবেই নহয় আধুনিক সভ্য সমাজৰ বাবেও এক প্রত্যাহ্বান হিচাপে থিয় দিছে। বিশ্ব্যায়নৰ এই সময়ত আমি বর্তমানেও পৰম্পৰাগত প্রথাবোৰক বিভিন্ন ধৰণে গ্রহণ কৰি আছো। এইক্ষেত্রত মুখ্যত ভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠীয় মহিলাসকল এই জঘন্য প্রথাবোৰৰ বলি হৈ আহিছে। সেয়েহে এক বিশেষ আন্দোলনৰ জৰিয়তে বা জনজাগৰণৰ দ্বাৰা নাৰীজাতিৰ সৱলীকৰণ নিতান্তই জৰুৰী। ইয়াৰ বাবে প্রয়োজন হ'ব মহিলা সকলৰ মাজত সজাগতা সৃষ্টি, যুৱ টামক শিক্ষিতকৰণ, মহিলাৰ সুৰক্ষাৰ বাবে বিশেষ আইন প্রণয়ন ইত্যাদি পদক্ষেপৰ।

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