



A REVIEW OF BLACK MAGIC – A HINDRANCE FOR SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Black magic in simple terms refer to the various unspecified supernatural acts done to disorient human beings from its sanity. The employment of spells, the use of special curses, the burning of objects related to the purported victim and the use of pins with voodoo dolls are some of these objectionable acts practised in black magic. A brief account of its emergence and a significant discussion of its practice in different parts of the world will be a key feature of this report. The evolution of black magic in different parts of the world will give an insight of its origin and would therefore focus on its adverse effect on human life and economy.

Index Terms: Black magic, Socio Economic Development, Witchcraft, Supernatural Power, Superstition.

I. INTRODUCTION

Black magic can be defined as the use of those practices which involve use of supernatural powers or magic for their own selfish motives or purposes and thus deter human minds from its logical quotient. The changing world sometimes present with instances which instil in our minds the very existence of superstition. One of the classical outcome of such superstitious belief leads to the practise of black magic. The propagation of certain ideas of hatred or fear instilled among the people in the name of witch can be dated back to the days when human civilization was in a very primitive stage. People who do not have sound mental health involve themselves in absurd acts which logically sound people refrain from doing so thereby regard such illogical activities as an evil entry in the society. Different places have different situations which have resulted in the emergence of diverse concept of black magic. Some people used the advantage of the popularity of magic to indulge people and spread the ideas of devil or witches. They regard themselves as the ‘protector’ who has the capability to control the life of the people and therefore the very need to punish these so called protectors result in unification of the society to tackle black magic. Although different societies had different origins, however the end impacts of all these social evils are the destruction of human life and economy.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research in any field implies a thorough and vivid understanding of the subject under consideration with due importance to its conclusive outcome. So to attain an in depth knowledge about the subject it is very important to adhere to some standard procedure thereby assisting in completion of the research in a systematic way. The database used in this study falls under secondary database. In order to acquire secondary data various published literatures of earlier workers are studied which are in the form of book, research paper, research report etc.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The pre requisite to any scientific study on any topic or place is a thorough in depth knowledge about the topic or place of study. This can easily be done with the help of innumerable literature review of noted researchers on that particular subject. Literature review is mostly associated with secondary sources and helps the readers to draw a concrete notion about the information already present on a topic after analysing the strength and weakness present in the source of information. To arrive at a conclusive study on the topic “A review of black magic – a hindrance for socio economic development” various literatures are studied which are available in digital sources like J Store, Google Scholar, Wiley, Wikipedia etc.

IV. BLACK MAGIC IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD

a. BLACK MAGIC IN AFRICA

The social fabric of most parts of Africa show strong belief in superstition. It is considered to be a power that is real and distinct from hypnotism, conjuring tricks, obvious cheating, manipulation of hidden means of communication or the result of psychological conditions (Bernard GechikoNyabwari (MA), Dickson NkongeKagama (PhD) (2014). This mastering of occult forces hold tremendous significance socio culturally in Africa particularly south of Sahara and in western Africa. Most Africans whether peasants, businesspeople, politicians or even internationally renowned scientists and leaders of Christian churches, are convinced that witchcraft constitutes a real threat to society in Africa (Kohnert, Dirk (1996). The existence of magic and witchcraft are deeply rooted in these African societies which generation after generation continue to flourish in spite of efforts made scientifically to uproot these practises. Belief and practice of witchcraft as this paper discusses has negatively impacted the social, economic, political and spiritual development of the African population.

It is evident from studies that in contexts where beliefs regarding these religio-cultural expressions proliferate, people are unlikely to acknowledge the sheer brutality that emerge from the beliefs as violence but rather as inevitable actions that arises out of the need to protect the communities wellbeing (Bernard GechikoNyabwari (MA), Dickson NkongeKagama (PhD) (2014). Witchcraft according to African culture can be divided into three categories. The first type of witchcraft refers to the ability of some individuals to deploy objects in nature and use incantations, charms and spells to harm others. The second type of witchcraft is defined in a religious traditional context where a pact is taken with the Devil or Satan. The users of witchcraft are engaged in physical relationship with the Devil in exchange for supernatural powers which are deployed as per their whims and fancies. The third type of witchcraft is insightful of a community of evil. In this community, witches share common goals, assist each other in harming enemies and even combine forces to harm others. In accordance with the three categories outlined above, witches are believed to have the capacity to fly at night and shape shift to animals of their choice. Bodin, a French demonologist of the late 16th century, famous for his witch hunting guide said that witches promised Satan babies, drank human blood, and ate human flesh. Many African cultures and religions believe in supernatural forces including spells, imperceptible forces and ancestral spirits. Swartz (2002) says that the belief in supernatural entities emanating from religious or cultural texts and tradition folklore passed down

from one generation to another are transposed for a better living in place of illness and misfortune. Fortes (1953) contended that witchcraft is an ideology for daily living. The belief in witchcraft thus derives its existence from religious and cultural systems that allows for the larger belief in the influence from supernatural entities (Yaseen Ally (2015).

However in contradictory, various literatures study showed that witchcraft was not tolerated in African society. Persons convicted of witchcraft faced grave consequences. Some communities speared them to death, others shot them with poisoned arrows, killed them by stoning them, beating them to death or strangling them, burning them alive, or banishment (Bernard GechikoNyabwari (MA), Dickson NkongeKagama (PhD) (2014). Generally speaking, secret societies on the village level were in charge of detection and retribution of witches. In 1950, interestingly there was emergence of many witch doctors (doctors who could cure witches/ snatch them of their powers) that started to pursue their art professionally. Dating back to 1970 there are reports from Nupe land (Northern Nigeria) where witch-doctors flaunted their so called 'diplomas' and proudly displayed in their office the photographs of confessed or condemned witches which were discovered by them. In Zaire these new entrepreneurs (witch doctors) are even in possession of official credentials issued by the provincial administration. At times local chief probably convinced by higher administrative authorities, eventually collaborating with the sorcerers are obliged to "purify" their villages from witches. Between 1960 and 2000, about 40,000 people alleged of practicing witchcraft were murdered in Tanzania alone. While there are no laws against witchcraft as such in Tanzanian law, village tribunals often decide that certain individuals should be killed in the greater interest of the society. The murder of Akua Denteh a 90-year-old in Ghana's East Gonja District has once again highlighted the deep-seated prejudices against women accused of practicing witchcraft in Ghana, many of whom are elderly (Maxwell Suuk , Isaac Kaledzi, Deutsche Welle (August 10, 2020). Recent reports by UNICEF, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Save the Children and Human Rights Watch have also highlighted the violence and abuse towards children accused of witchcraft in Africa. In recent years due to the impact of severe economic recession, children have become more and more the victims of witchcraft accusations, especially orphans. Other factors of the rise of accusations include the rise of charismatic preachers, generational social conflicts and the deterioration of education systems. Religiously inspired films also legitimize beliefs about children witches. Child victims of witchcraft accusations are more vulnerable than adult victims as they cannot defend themselves and they are confronted with physical and psychological abuse from their family and community. Children accused of witchcraft may be subjected to violent exorcism rituals by African Pentecostal-Charismatic pastors who mix Christianity with African witchcraft beliefs. Such exorcism may include incarceration, starvation, being made to drink hazardous substances or even being set on fire with gasoline. In other cases accused children are expelled and end up living on the streets, are trafficked and in some instances they are killed. According to Ethnologist Felix Riedel, the sheer scale and intenseness of the recent witch-hunts targeting children classifies as unprecedented in written history.

b. BLACK MAGIC IN EUROPE

Between 1450 to 1700 AD belief in magic and sorcery was very evident in Europe which eventually paved the way for King James I of Scotland to rule its kingdom amidst fear of witchcraft and panic among its people. This led to inhuman torture and deaths of thousands of its people. Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Scandinavia all endured outbreaks of witch panics during this time. Even though the church attempted to discredit magical practice, there was a substantial gap between official doctrine and belief practiced by the general population. When Europe got divided into Catholics and Protestants after reformation, both the sides hunted witches. They mercilessly went on to kill large scale of people depicting them as witches in order to show the unholy and evil as the source of unrest and disorder. The prosecution and punishment of witches were increasingly being commercialized as compared to indulgence practices of the Catholic Church in 16th century Europe (Kohnert, Dirk (1996). Drought, famine, disease, malnutrition, high infant mortality rates and countless other hardships plagued the European population during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. With little scientific or medical knowledge, their world was generally explained and understood through superstitious, religious, and magical means. In 1532 'Constitutio Criminalis Carolina'

by Emperor Charles V declared that harmful witchcraft should be punished to death by fire whereas witchcraft that resulted in no harm should be punished otherwise. While the Catholic Church encouraged witch hunts in Europe from the 15th to the 18th century, presently it is trying to shed light into this dark practice and in the fight for justice for the women and children accused of witchcraft. Historian Wolfgang Behringer, who works as a professor specializing in the early modern age at Saarland University firmly believes that in the 20th century alone, more people accused of witchcraft were inhumanly murdered than during the three centuries when witch hunts were practiced in Europe. Many historians consider this period, especially the years 1610–1630 as the one with the largest number of witchcraft activities. Finally in 1542, English law made witchcraft a secular crime with the Witchcraft Act. Thereafter Germany joined the revolution along with King Louis XIV of France prohibiting further witchcraft trials in that country (Julian Goodare, 17 Oct 2019). An interesting witch trial which continues to beguile the population after more than 300 years is the Salem witch trials. These trials occurred in colonial Massachusetts between 1692 to 1693 where more than 200 people were accused of practising witchcraft and 20 of them were executed. However later on these trials were found to be baseless and the convicted families were compensated (Jess Blumberg, SMITHSONIANMAG.COM OCTOBER 23, 2007).

c. BLACK MAGIC IN INDIA

India is a country where diverse cult and cultures exist and the practise of superstitious activities including black magic is very common. When all efforts fail to keep hopes and aspirations alive, then a large number of people in India still take help of black magic and superstitious practices for remedy and relief. The so-called curators known as ‘Tantric’ or ‘Baba’ who are occult and black magic practitioners claim to resolve issues of marital discord, health and financial problems. For long ago magical practices were performed and permitted in higher classes only. But in India because of social disparity, black magic is prevalent and practised by the lower castes. Of the four Vedas (holy books of the Hindus), the Atharva Veda is said to contain the secrets related to magic and alchemy. The basic means of exorcism are the mantra and the yajna used in both Vedic and Tantric traditions (SURESH CHELLAPPAN, DR. M R RAGHAVA VARRIER, MAY 2016). In many states of India there are instances of black magic practise with evidences. Peringottukara village of Kerala is one of the centres of black magic. In Odisha there is still the influence of shamans and quacks who try to cure ailments through rituals and “black magic”. Most of these faith healers are found to flourish in tribal pockets of the state like Keonjhar, Rayagada and Malkangiri. The Nimtala Ghat in Kolkata where the last rites of the deceased Hindus are performed has been in news for suspicious dark magic activities. The Aghoris visit the place at night and perform Black Magic in secret and eat the remaining flesh of the pyre. Similarly Varanasi being one of the most sacred cities of India still has the evil practices of Black Magic.

d. MAYONG: THE LAND OF BLACK MAGIC

Mayong is a small village on the bank of the Brahmaputra River in the Morigaon district of Assam, India. It is termed as the land of ‘Bez/ Oja’ who are witch doctors and practise wizardry. Over a hundred wizards and witch doctors reside in Mayong village whose magical skills are passed on to the next generations. They are believed to alleviate pain, discomfort, misfortune, illness or even neutralise occult forces which haunt families and their relatives. Literatures of folklore and tales of Mayong are popular in the state. Making a man disappear, turning one into a beast, or whip up an animal out of thin air are some of the extra ordinary activities performed by the witch doctors which are narrated by the locals during various field studies conducted by different agencies. Their craft sometimes involve gruesome or gore-filled acts like human or animal sacrifices. But many ailments are believed to be cured through chanting of ‘Mantras’. The practise of the witch doctors and their magical acts are facing tough challenges in the present scientific world as more and more people are accepting pragmatism and turning away from the superstitious beliefs. This has resulted in many of them taking up more socially-accepted professions (Sahana Iyer January 19, 2020)

V. EFFECT OF BLACK MAGIC ON SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The development of a nation dwells on its human resource and the socio economic status of the citizens is the most important aspect for achieving this goal. The functional factor of economy depends, to a great extent, on the employment of people. Good health is imperative for the endowment of regular supply of labour. Black Magic affects human being's both mental and physical health indirectly and it creates imperceptible health problems. The promotion and protection of the health of the people are essential to sustain economic and social development. Gerrie ter Haar, a professor of religion, human rights and social change, writing in "Imagining Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa," notes: - "Witchcraft, as an ideology and as a practice, is a development issue in the sense that it hampers economic progress as people, afraid of being accused of practicing witchcraft, refrain from any activity that may make them appear more successful in life than others". Fear of witchcraft often inhibits people from undertaking any productive activity in areas where it demands. As a result, ambitious young people will move away and refrain from being entrepreneur. In South Africa witchcraft accusations are often made against those who initiate development projects or otherwise try to improve their conditions of life. For many Africans magic is routinely used for personal and financial gain. Belief in magic at times seems harmless but it can have serious consequences ranging from witch hunting to murders. A new large-scale economic study explores 'witchcraft' as the use of the supernatural powers to harm others or acquire wealth and its role in the erosion of social capital such as trust. Economist Professor Boris Gershman examined survey data from 19 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and found "a robust negative association between the prevalence of witchcraft beliefs and multiple measures of trust." Trust is an essential ingredient in interpersonal relationships and in economic development; for example, a business owner is unlikely to enter into contracts with others if he or she doesn't trust those partners to fulfill their obligations (Radford, Ben. n.d., 2021). The socio economic wellbeing of the people is therefore an integral part of development and the acceptance of black magic in the society is a deterrent and must be eliminated.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper identified witchcraft beliefs within the perspective of different people around the world. Throughout the world witchcraft beliefs are indicative of significant dimension in the participants' lives and that witches are believed to have the capacity to cause an array of socio-psychological misfortunes. Witchcraft as an ideology and as a practice is a developmental hindrance in the sense that it hampers economic progress as people afraid of being accused of practicing witchcraft refrain from any activity that may make them appear more successful in life than others. Fear of witchcraft often inhibits people from undertaking any productive activity in areas where this is often most needed. Thus, witchcraft affects the socio-economic development of a region hampering the normal progression of life.

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