

1.1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION ABOUT THE BODOS

The Bodo people generally known to us as “Kacharis” constitute a large group among all other tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam state of India. The Bodo tribe is most influential tribal group in compared to other tribes of Assam. They are certainly not a tall or handsome race and in general appearance shorter and stouter than the people of North West India, though well fitted to bear up against physical fatigue and hardship. In face and figure they show a distinct approximation to what is known as the Mongolian type, they have square set faces, projecting cheek bones, with almond shaped eyes and scanty beard and moustache. In this way they are well fitted for all forms of outdoor (field and factory) labour that require strength rather than skill and may very reasonably be regarded as the “navvies” of Assam.

In mental and intellectual power they are undoubtedly far below their Hindu neighbours; for they possess neither the quickness of apprehension nor the astonishing power of memory and characteristics of the higher castes among the Hindus. On the other hand what they do succeed in mastering often with much toil and painful effort, they digest and retain with much tenacity.¹

Most of the British officials and missionaries called the Bodos ‘animist’. The natives of Himalayan region including Bodos and other tribes belonging to pagan faith and their religious belief consist in the worship of two divine beings: one is the author of good and the other the author of evil. As usual among nearly all hill tribes, their religious rites consist chiefly of the propitiation of evil spirit by means of sacrifice of fowls. The Kocharis have not scruple on the matter of diet, they eat any animal food and are particularly partial to pork.

Originally the propitiation and worship of *Bathou* is made by sacrifices of food, pigs, gods and offering ‘*Jou*’ or rice beer. Although now a day practice of propitiation has been discarded by some of them replacing these by flowers fruits etc. Still most of them follow the primitive system of worship. Naturalism and animism are part of cultural life, belief and practice of the tribes in India. Every object of the nature, plants, animals, trees, rivers, ponds, lakes, stones and mountains are considered all sacred by them. This

¹. Endle, Rev. Sidney (2007), *The Kacharis*, Santiranjan Dey, Guwahati, Assam, pp.1-5.

nature worship is a form of belief and still tribals love to live in their natural abodes, comprising hills, river bank and forest shores and practices their traditional culture, rituals and norms.

Tribal society has its own body of norms, customs, taboos, tradition, values and moral standards which regulate relationship among the individuals and society.²

1.1.1 ORIGIN OF BODO OR KACHARI

The origin of the Bodo or Kachari race is very closely to the Mongolian type; and this would seem to point to Tibet and China as the original home of the race. They came to Assam in 2000 B.C.³ It is indeed not at all unlikely that the people known to us as Kacharis and to themselves as *Bada* were in earlier days the dominant race in Assam; and as such they would seem to have left traces of this domination in the nomenclature of some of the physical features of the country.

The *Bada* race is undoubtedly found well outside the limits of modern Assam, i.e., in North East, Koch Behar of Bengal and also in Hill Tippera (present in Tripura) where the language of the people gives decisive evidence that they are of the *Bada* stock. But apart from these outlying members of the race there are within the limits of Assam itself has many more who belong to the Kachari race; though many of the number have of late years become more or less Hinduised and have lost the use of their mother tongue.⁴

The Kacharis or Bodo may perhaps be described as the aborigines or earliest known as inhabitant of the Brahmaputra valley. They are identical with the people called *Mech* in Goalpara and North Bengal. These are the names given to them by outsiders. In the Brahmaputra valley the Kacharis call themselves *Bodo fisa* (sons of the Bodo). In the North Kachar hills of Assam they call themselves *Dimasa*, it means “sons of the great river.”⁵

². Brahma, Nirjay Kumar (2008), *Socio-Political Institutions in Bodo Society*, Ph.D Thesis, submitted to Gauhati University, pp.7-13.

³. History of Bodo Community, retrieved from <http://www.iitg.ernet.in/rcilts/bodo.html> on June 2, 2017.

⁴. Roy, Ajay (1995), *The Boro Imbroglia*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, Assam, pp.7-13.

⁵. Gait, Sir Edward (2008), *A History of Assam*, Eastern Book House, Guwahati, Assam, p.299.

The Bodos belong to Mongoloids group of people and linguistically Sino Tibetan speech family and sub group of Tibeto Burmese. The race of the Mongolian people's who are described as the inhabitants of a country lying to the north of the Himalayas and in the western belt of China. According to the collection regarding Bodo race by Dr. Kameswar Brahma (educationist and Historian of Bodo Culture), the Bodo's kingdom was known as *Bod*. The word *Bod* is supposed to mean a homeland.⁶

1.1.2 THE BODO OR KOCHARI DYNASTY

The history of the Ahoms (Ahoms are descendants of ethnic Tai community who ruled Assam about six hundred years, 1228-1826 A.D. Now they are the one of the major social groups of Assam) contains some information about the past history of the Kacharis from the 13th century. The territory of Assam surrounded by Dikhu and Kallang rivers and large areas lying south of the Brahmaputra were ruled by the Kacharis. They also controlled the present day Dhansiri valley and the north Kachar sub division. Dimapur later known as Hidimbapur was the capital of the Kacharis.

In 1490 AD the Kacharis had to fight a battle against the Ahoms led by their king Suhenpha. The Ahoms were beaten and compelled to sue for peace. The Kacharis were able to recover the territory east of the river Namdang, a tributary of Dikhu River (presently in Sibsagar district of Assam). But inspite of their victory in this battle, the Kacharis could not resist the increasing pressure of the Ahoms. In the next thirty years the Kacharis lost many territories to the Ahoms.⁷

Govinda Chandra known as Raja Iragdao in Bodo language was the last Bodo king of Cachar (present in Assam) who ruled in the period of 1813 to 1830. The British annexation policy "Doctrine of Lapse" (if the ruler die without issue) annexed the throne of Cachar after the assassination of King Govinda Chandra.⁸

⁶. Brahma, Dr. Kameswar (1998), *A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Boros*, Chiranjib Brahma, Gossaigaon, Assam, pp.1-2.

⁷. Mondal, Satyendra Nath (2006), *History & Culture of the Bodos*, Narzary, Bonny, Sailee Manicktola road, Kolkata, pp.91-92, 48.

⁸. Barpujari, H. K (2003), *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol II, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, pp.375-382.

At present Bodos are widely scattered in the entire Brahma Putra valley, Barrak valley and NC Hills (Assam), Tripura, Chittagong Hill tracks (Bangladesh), North Bank of West Bengal, Nepal and scattered in the border of Nagaland. They are having their distinct language and culture and religions, customs and traditions, faith and beliefs, folk tales and folk literatures and beautiful handicrafts.

1.2 HISTORY AND LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION OF BODO

The Bodo speaking areas of Assam at present are stretching from Dhubri in the west to Sadiya in the east. The Bodo language of Assam has at least four clear-cut dialect-areas with a sufficient number of dialectical variations, these may be called North Eastern, South Western, North Central and Southern dialect-areas with phonological, morphological and glossarial differences. The Boro literature consists of the vast amount of oral literature including folksongs, folktales, ballads and proverbs and of considerable amount of written and published literature in Assamese and Roman scripts.⁹

However, the Bodo language has been recognized under eight schedule of Indian constitution in 22nd December, 2003.

1.3 PRESENT POLITICAL STATUS OF BODOS

Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) is an area located in the north bank of Brahmaputra valley of Assam state of India. As a result of autonomous movement since 1967, Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) was accorded in 1993 to preserve the culture, identity and overall development of Bodo community. But unfortunately, the BAC could not meet the aspirations of Bodo people. So, Bodo movement restarted rigorously and as a result Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was signed in 2003. The Bodoland Territorial Council includes four districts as Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri administered by local government. At present, the Bodoland Territorial Council has self local government and Kokrajhar serves as the capital of Bodoland.

⁹. Brahma, Dr. Kameswar (1998), op. cit., pp.3-4.

1.4 BACKGROUND OF THE BODOLAND MOVEMENT

The Bodo people had their own kingdoms. Before the advent of British, Bodo kings could control vast area of present Assam and eastern Bengal. In brief, before the British rule, Bodo included a vast area extending far and beyond the Assam. History suggests that Dimapur (present in Nagaland) was the capital of Bodo kingdom. The colonial rulers of East India Company effectively applied divide and rule policy for over 300 years. The British under the policy of “Doctrine of Lapse” (annexation policy in case of native king without any issue) occupied the Bodo Kingdom ruled by Raja Iragdao (last Bodo king) during 1830 A.D.¹⁰ So the Bodo lost their own Kingdom and began to remain under the foreign rule. After the Independence of India from British the Bodo people had to continue to exist under the rule of other mainstream. It is likely that Bodo were lagging far behind of other fellow Indians in terms of education and employability. As a result, the Bodo people could not be developed in socio-political and economic direction in compared to other non tribal communities of Assam.

Bodo's demand for community rights dates back to 1929 when several memorandums were submitted to the British Statutory Commission on constitutional reforms, known as the Simon Commission that visited Assam. A convention of Plains Tribal held in 1933 gave birth of the All Assam Tribal League (AATL) and it registered striking success in the 1937 elections.

The leaders of the organization lent crucial support to the Congress Party and its leader Gopinath Bordoloi (first Chief Minister of Assam, 1946-1950) at a time when he latter needed it the most to save the integrity of Assam on the eve of partition. However, Bordoloi disappointed the AATL by not paying due recognition to the demands of the plains tribal. Further the choice of Assamese as the official language of the state put all tribal language speakers in a severely disadvantageous position. The movement for the assertion of Bodo ethnic and cultural identity began as early as 1967 when the two main organisations, namely, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) and the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) were formed.¹¹

¹⁰. Barpujari, H.K (2003), op. cit., p.382.

¹¹. Goswami, Sandhya, Ethnic Conflict in Assam, in *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, (March 2001), pp.133-134, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42753657> on July 1, 2015.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In India particularly tribal religious beliefs have been witnessing the use of *mantra* in different socio-religious observation since time immemorial. Thus *mantra* has been occupying successfully to a great extent in various socio-religious activities or observing rituals. It cannot be denied that many tribals of India have faith on magic or sorcery which can influence upon the targeted person. In Bodo society also the chanting of *mantras* are seen in various socio-religious rituals or festivals. But it is observed that chanting of *mantra* is used for both good and evil objectives. The evil person learns the evil *mantra* and becomes witch (*Daina/Dainy* in Bodo language). The older persons both male and female are seen larger in number of practicing as witchcraft. The chanting of *mantra* by religious priest by offering flowers, sacrifice of chicken, four footed animals etc. are done in the divination rituals. But the practice of witchcraft is not recognized; rather it is serious punishable offence in Bodo society since early period. Moreover, the hunting of witch is also not recognized in this ethnic society. The evil practice is done in secret by witches to take retaliation against enemies or hatred persons.

The age old practice and the escalating of hunting of witch are undoubtedly very serious and perplexing problem in Bodo society. The traditional practice of witchcraft has been creating acute fear psychosis in the minds of many illiterate villagers. The witches always try to create panic waves in society to get illiterate villagers feared and remained under them. The illiterate villagers unknowingly remain in fear of exorcists or sorcerers. The free living atmosphere is obstructed by the practice of witchcraft. Although there is development of scientific knowledge and progress society, the evil practice which is based on superstition is not disappeared. The ethos of brotherhood and peace among the same villagers is disrupted by this malicious practice. Also the unprecedented hunting of witch has been affecting the society adversely causing lost of many lives. Many innocent exorcists and traditional healers are maimed and killed on suspicion.

The vested people try to exploit their self interest out of gullible illiterates of interior villages. The disadvantageous women, widow are easily targeted as prey of witch hunting gamut which forms gender discrimination and violation of right to equality, respect and dignity.

The massive hunting like without proper trial has been leading to gross violation of human rights. In contemporary society the witch hunting is constructive and secret tactics to hide socio-political murder. The suspected person is killed in cold blood by the enraged group of villagers. This problem is common and tangible to all Bodo people which must be addressed properly and eliminated from the society.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research work is based on following research questions:

- I. What is popular's concept of witchcraft in Bodo perspective?
- II. What are actual causes behind the hunting of witch in old period and in contemporary period particularly in Bodo society?
- III. Whether hunting of accused witch is as right punishment for black magic practice?
- IV. How the witch hunting causes gross violation of human rights?

1.7 AREA OF STUDY

The Bodo community and some areas of Kokrajhar district of Assam is selected for research work which is supported by following points of justification:

- I. Bodo community is the largest tribal group in Assam.
- II. Bodo people are largely concentrated in Kokrajhar district of Assam.
- III. Kokrajhar is the centre of social, political and cultural activities of Bodo society.

1.8 BRIEF PROFILE OF THE DISTRICT

The Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) which comprises four Districts as Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and Udalguri of Assam. Kokrajhar is recognized as the gateway to the northeastern region of India is one of the major districts of Assam. Kokrajhar was originally a part of undivided Goalpara district of Assam. Till 1956, it was merely a small village with a railway station that connected it to the rest of the India.

In 1957, when Bimala Prasad Chaliha was the Chief Minister of Assam, a new Civil Sub-division was created after carving out the northern part of Dhubri Sub-division and

some parts of Goalpara Sub-division. On the 1st of July, 1983 the Kokrajhar Sub-division was upgraded into Kokrajhar district with the head quarter at Kokrajhar town. After upgradation of Kokrajhar into full fledged district, it started about development.

There are 3032 villages in this Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) which is a territorial privilege under the Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution and established according to the Memorandum of Settlement of February 10, 2003. Around three million people have been living in BTAD. The Bodo people are larger in number in this BTAD region. As the community groups may be mentioned such as Santhali, Nepali, Assamese, Rabha, Garos, Rajbongshi, Muslim, Bengalis and other Hindi speaking groups are found in Bodoland Territorial Area District. Besides for the research the other remaining districts and states of India are given due importance for the study. The Kokrajhar district has become source as a main area for study on the topic. The district is considered as Bodo concentrated area.¹²

¹². Census of India 2011, Assam, Series-19 Part XII-B *District Census Hand Book Kokrajhar*, p.9, retrieved from <http://www.censusindia.gov.in> on October 8, 2015.

Population in Kokrajhar district (Assam) including number of villages and literacy percentage.

Table: 1.1

District	Male	Female	Total Population	Urban	Rural	Total S.T population	Total Village	Literacy rate
Kokrajhar	452905	434237	887142	54941	832201	278665	1068	66.63 %

Source: Statistical Handbook of Bodoland Territorial Council, 2013

Total Scheduled Tribes (S.T) population in BTAD area as per 2011, Census.

Table: 1.2

District	Total S.T population	Rural	Urban	Male	Female
Kokrajhar	278665	266717	11948	133788	132929
Chirang	178688	176423	2265	88167	88256
Baksa	331007	329894	1113	165084	164810
Udalguri	267372	262985	4387	131381	131604

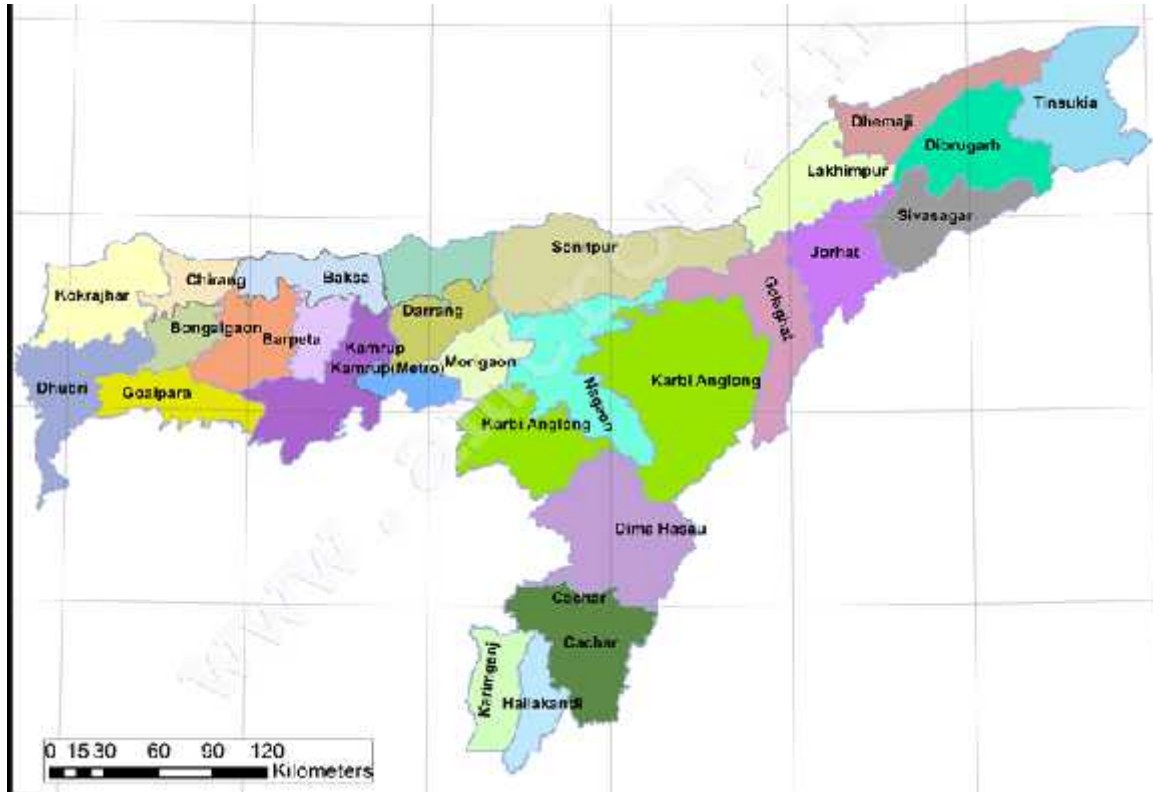
Source: Statistical Handbook of Bodoland Territorial Council, 2013

1.1: Map of Kokrajhar District (Assam)



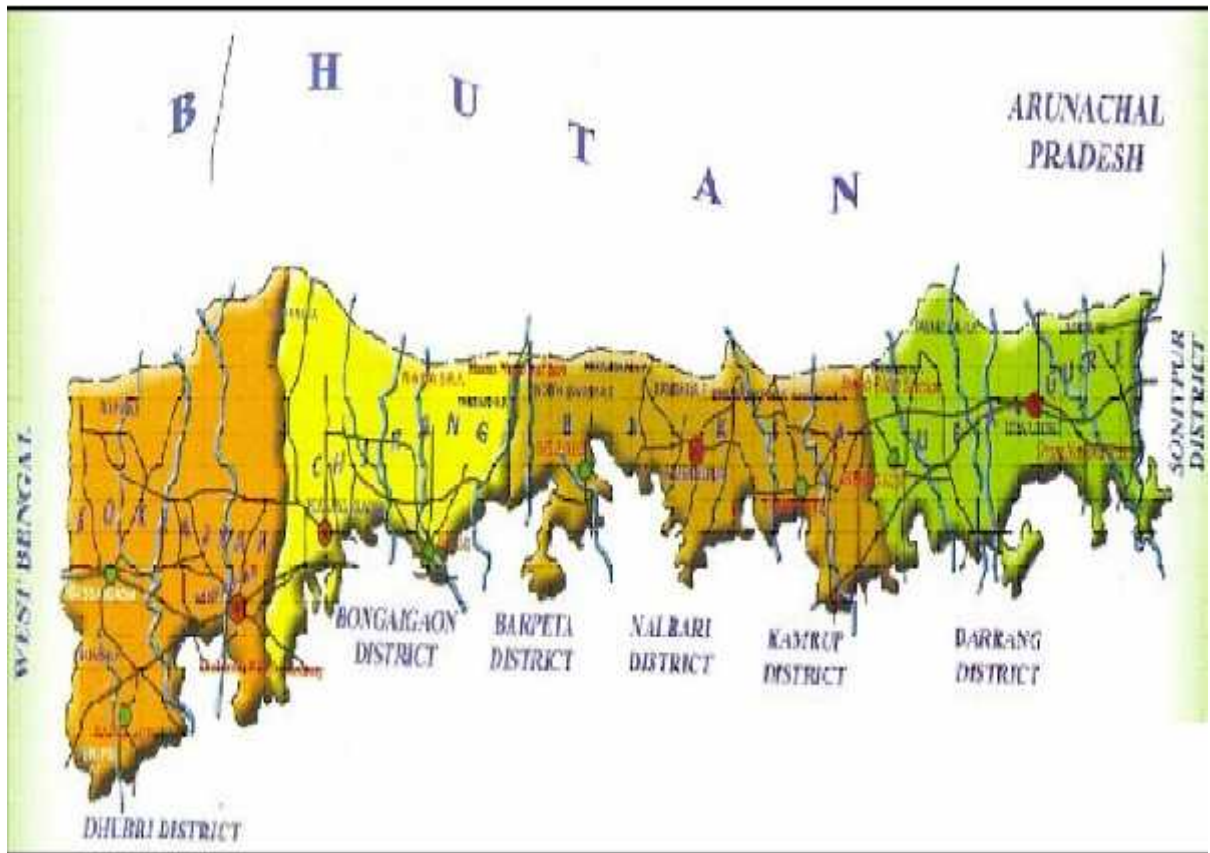
Source: <http://www.indmaps.com/state-map/assam/district-map/kokrajhar.html>

1. 2: Map of Assam (India)



Source: <http://online.assam.gov.in/maps/District>

1. 3: Map of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (Assam)



Source:

http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/39977/12/12_chapter%203.pdf

1.9 OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

- I. To make broader study on the people's concept about the witchcraft.
- II. To focus the actual motives and causes for witch hunting in old and modern society of Bodo community.
- III. To assess and highlight the negative impacts due to the murdering of accused witch practitioner.
- IV. To provide suggestion to the concerned authorities to formulate possible policy and laws to mitigate this menace.

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The incident of witch hunting is being taken place frequently in Kokrajhar district. The witch hunting has become order of the day. Many innocent persons have been killed in the name of witchcraft. In scientific context, the beliefs on witchcraft are regarded as superstitious. So, the study focuses on the actual causes of large scale witch hunting in the state. But despite scientific development in every society, the belief on superstitious is not disappeared.

The systematic and elaborate study on witchcraft related incident is very important in this period. The burning problem should be addressed properly to thwart the incidents of extreme violence. The actual reasons behind the murder of witch should be discovered. The multi impacts due to witch hunting should be brought into light. The general public should be given awareness regarding the witchcraft as superstitious belief. The witch hunting has been leading gross violation of human rights.

In early period the witchcraft issue was confined to only socio-economic dimensions. But after 1990s period this issue has got spread to political dimension also in Bodo society. The witch hunting has been used as a ploy to hide socio-economic and political crimes.

However, the innocent who are people of helpless class in the society are highest as victims of witch related incidents. The women, widows are charged with allegation of witchcraft, if there is outbreak of diseases, serial death and infant death in the village.

So, the witch hunting is designed by advantageous class to exploit over others disadvantageous people of society. So, the witch hunting has been to a great extent manipulated by vested people.

The witchcraft is a pan global phenomenon. Belief upon witchcraft follows witch persecution in every culture and society. In India Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Odhisa, Assam etc. have the rampant in witchcraft. The concerned state governments of those states have initiated and passed anti witchcraft acts to tackle the burning issue.

Bodo tribe of Assam has been facing acute social tension due to witch hunting since long years. Social peace is disturbed in Bodo society due to macabre of witchcraft. So, the in depth study on frequent witch hunting upholds much significance in Bodo tribal society.

1.11 HYPOTHESES

- a. The faith on witch practice and hunting in contemporary Bodo society are result of both superstitious belief and socio-economic and political conspiracies.
- b. Witch hunting in Bodo society is injustice and certainly leads to gross violation of human rights.

1.12 CHAPTER PLAN

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF WITCH PRACTICE AND HUNTING

Chapter 3: SUPERSTITIONS, WITCHCRAFT AND WITCH HUNTING

Chapter 4: WITCH PRACTICE AND HUNTING IN KOKRAJHAR DISTRICT

Chapter 5: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPACT OF WITCH HUNTING

Chapter 6: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

1.13 METHODOLOGY

This research is analytical type of research. The research work is based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This research followed and applied various methods or tools to accomplish the research task. The historical analysis, field study method, questionnaire method, observation method, case study method etc. are adopted. The features of application of these methods are stated as follows:

1. Historical Analysis Method: Through historical method, data collection was made regarding the nature of early existence of Bodo society, the origin of various faiths and practice of black magic. The informations about practice of witch are also collected through this method.

2. Field Study Method: Through this method, visits in some selected places were made to collect data meant for accomplishment of research work. For field study some areas have been visited as: Saraibil, Kuchugaon, Gosaigaon, Serfanguri, Ramfalbill, Patgaon, Tengaigaon, Titaguri, Balazan Tinali, Simbargaon, Banargaon, Belguri, Puthimari, Dotma of Kokrajhar district (Assam) to collect informations about the witch practice and hunting incidents.

3. Questionnaire Method: Through this method some selected dignitaries, victims, villagers were met and took interview with them based on structured and unstructured questionnaires and collected informations. The set of questionnaires is divided into level of victims, intellectual and civil society, backward and urban residents.

4. Observation method: Through this method, visits in some selected places were done and observed the events and collected informations of entire episode of events to facilitate the research work. Some witch hunting incidents that took place at certain areas of Bishmuri, Jharbari, Kuchugaon, Saraibill, Serfanguri, Gossaigaon, Patgaon, Tengaigaon, Belguri, Dotma, Banargaon, Salakati of Kokrajhar district are observed to fulfill the purpose of research.

5. Case study method: Through this method selection of some cases of incidents of witch hunting was done and gathered the informations to accomplish research work.

Some selected witchcraft related incidents of some areas of Kokrajhar district are taken for case study.

Those cases of witchcraft are as follows:

1. Case of witchcraft (2001) of West Tengaigaon of Dotma Block about 26 km from Kokrajhar under Serfanguri Police Station.
2. Case of witchcraft (2011) of West Tengaigaon of Dotma Block about 27 km from Kokrajhar under Serfanguri Police Station.
3. Case of witchcraft (October, 2002) of East Tengaigaon of Dotma Block 25 km from Kokrajhar under Serfanguri Police Station.
4. Case of witchcraft (April, 2011) of Hatigarh village of Kuchugaon Block about 50 km from Kokrajhar under Kuchugaon Police Station.
5. Case of witchcraft (April, 2011) of Boshabil village of Kuchugaon Block about 55 km from Kokrajhar under Gossaigaon Police Station.
6. Case of witchcraft (1990-91) of certain village of Patgaon about 18 km from Kokrajhar under Serfanguri Police Station.
7. Case of witchcraft (1996) of Chekadani of Kuchugaon Block about 20 km from Kokrajhar under Kuchugaon Police Station.
8. Case of witchcraft (1990) of Barlimari of Kuchugaon Block about 28 km from Kokrajhar under Serfanguri Police Station.
9. Case of witchcraft (April, 2011) of Shymtaibari village about 10 km away from Kokrajhar Police Station.
10. Case of witchcraft (1997) of Turibari of Dotma Block about 18 km from Kokrajhar under Serfanguri Police Station.
11. Case of witchcraft (2011) of Kadamtola of Kokrajhar district under Kokrajhar Police Station.
12. Case of witchcraft (May, 2000) of Taigirguri of Kuchugaon Block about 45 km from Kokrajhar under Kuchugaon Police Station.
13. Case of witchcraft (Feb, 2005) of Kalaigaon of Titaguri Block about 18 km from Kokrajhar under Serfanguri Police Station.

14. Case of witchcraft (April, 2011) of Belguri village of Dotma Block about 42 km from Kokrajhar under Serfanguri Police Station.

6. Analytical method:

Through this method, dwelling on some selected places of witch related incidents, analysis upon the causes of witch hunting, nature of attack, views of victim and public, impact of witch hunting in contemporary Bodo society were done.

1.14 SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION

The data regarding the incidents of witch related are collected through the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are based on observation method, interview method, questionnaire, field study, case study method etc. The secondary sources are based on journals, books, magazines, newspapers, government document, report, website etc.

SAMPLING SIZE: Sampling of this research work is based on non-probability. The main methods followed in this research work are:

- I. Convenience Sampling and
- II. Purposive Sampling

This research has a target to cover total responses 500 from 500 households of Kokrajhar district. The questionnaires are classified into four levels of categories to suit respondents. These questionnaire level for: i. Victim's family or survive victim, ii. Backward villagers, iii. Urban or near urban residents, iv. Intellectual/ Civil society. The sample size is not based on random. Certain factors are being considered before taking the sample size. The first factor is that every village does not experience the witch related incidents. Secondly only few selected people are capable of giving response to questionnaire. Further the division of questionnaire is based on not equal number. Because, the numbers of villagers are more than other levels of people. So, highest numbers of responses are collected from remote villagers who are somewhat close to witch related incidents.

1.15 INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research topic titled as “Witch Hunting in Bodo Society of Kokrajhar District, Assam: A Socio-Political Study”.

The witchcraft is a pan global issue. Although there is progress of scientific knowledge everywhere in the world, the unscientific practice is not disappeared. The witch hunting which is based on inhuman treatment is directly related with human rights violation.

The issue of witch hunting could draw attention of international civil societies and United Nations Human Rights Council.¹³

The Bodo tribe of Assam state of India is not exception of burning issue of witch hunting. To find out the actual reasons and factors for large scale witch hunting in Bodo society is the major research problem. What are the impacts of superstitious beliefs and structural situations for extreme form of violence on suspected witch? How the frequent witch hunting violates human rights in Bodo society? Why the helpless classes as women, widow, poor are soft target for witch allegation.

Therefore, the research work is undertaken for analytical study for finding out the dimension and reasons for large scale hunting of witch in Bodo society. The socio-political reasons entangled behind the hunting of witch are studied in this research. Apart from these the ways for sustainable solution of witch practice and hunting are suggested in this research work. The judicious study is being given whether only the superstitious belief alone leads to hunting of witch or socio-political conspiracies are also responsible for witch hunting.

In India many tribal religious beliefs have been witnessing the use of *mantra* in different socio-religious rituals since earliest period. Thus *mantra* has been occupying successfully to a great extent in various socio-religious activities or observing rituals. It is believed that faith on magic or sorcery which can influence upon the targeted person.

¹³. Muffled Voices: Victims of Witch Hunting in India, retrieved from http://www.aic.gov.au/media_library/conference/2015-wsv/wsv-2015_presentation/Agarwal.pdf on April 26, 2017.

In Bodo society also the chanting of *mantra* are seen in various socio-religious rituals or festivals. But it is observed that chanting of *mantra* is used for both good and evil objectives. The evil wisher learns the malicious *mantra* and becomes witchcraft. The older persons both male and female are believed to be larger in number as practicing witchcraft. But the practice of witchcraft is not recognized; rather it is serious punishable offence in Bodo society. Moreover, the hunting of witch is the extreme form of persecution of witch. The evil practice is done in secret by witches to take retaliation against enemies or hatred persons.

The age old practice and hunting of witch are undoubtedly very serious and perplexing issues in Bodo society. The practice of witchcraft has been creating acute fear psychosis in the minds of many illiterate villagers and being satigmatized. The illiterate villagers naturally remain in fear of exorcists or traditional healers which obstructs the free living atmosphere.

Also the unprecedented hunting of witch has been affecting the society adversely causing lost of many lives of innocents. The cold blooded murder without fair trial has been leading to gross violation of human rights. In contemporary society the witch hunting is additional secret tactics to hide socio-political murder. This problem is common to all Bodo people which must be addressed and eliminated from the society.

1.16 BRIEF MEANING OF WITCH PRACTICE

Witchcraft has been associated with evil, darkness, illness, misfortune and death in almost all those societies where witchcraft is prevalent.¹⁴ Witchcraft can be defined as the power of a person to do harm or influence nature through sorcery. The sorcery is believed to be based on supernatural or magical powers. The meaning of witchcraft in Bodo society refers casting (*Rainai*) of black magic or sorcery to influence the targeted enemy. The practitioner of black magic releases his/her *mantra* nourished by evil spirit. The *mantra* prepared with evil spirit attacks the targeted person. It is believed that persons having weak zodiac sign (*Rashi*) are easily subject to victims. The witch applies some methods as a weapon to fulfill his/her plan.

¹⁴. Daimari, Anjali (2012), The Idea of 'Evil' among the Bodos, in *Construction of Evil in North East India*, ed: Prasenjit Biswas and C.Joshua Thomas, Sage publications India, New Delhi, pp.100-113.

In another connotation the practice of witchcraft is casting a spell (sorcery) on enemy whom he/she hates with the help of *mantra* inviting the evil spirit. The evil or demonic spirit attacks the targeted person. The witch plays a black magic to influence upon the targeted person time and again. But the witch does not attack the targeted person physically nor does rebuke severely. He/she does not challenge with muscle power or arguments. But he/she is silent victor. He/she takes the challenge against enemy whom he/she dislikes secretly. The witch then prepares some process (best known to him/her) with *mantra* and releases his prepared *mantra* to influence the targeted person. It is learnt that the attacked person firstly sees horrible nightmares about the evil or demonic activities in the night. The horrible nightmare creates traumatic disease to many persons. That he fears seriously about the activities of demon falls easily into the onslaught of witch's attack. The purpose of the weapon of witchcraft is to firstly frighten the targeted person through horrible dreams and nightmare. The frightened person is easily subjected to fall into various kinds of psychological problems or sufferings. During this stage the evil spirit vigorously attacks the victim grasping the mind. The horrified victims see the witch who attacks him/her in night dreams. It is found that some of the victims see the image of witch during the day also. The image of the witch appears in front of the victims and continues to remain until it achieves its destination. It is clear that witchcraft was in some ways conceived of as a form of power which runs between the body of the witch and her victim and thus notions about witchcraft in this period were connected with ideas about the body.¹⁵

1.17 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical base of this research is based on firstly, Marxist view on class theory of power and feminism and secondly, universal concept of human rights.

1.17.1 CLASS THEORY OF POWER: Marxism presents the class theory of power. It regards a class more than a group of organised people. For the Marxists, class is, in itself a power. The Marxists hold the view that power is a class concept; that it arose with the development of antagonistic classes in the society; that it is a

¹⁵. Narzi, Bhaben (2010), *Boro Kocharini Samaj Arw Harimu*, Chirang Publication Board, Kajolgaon, pp. 208-214.

phenomenon of a class society; that it has been the monopoly of an economically dominated class in the class society; that the workers, in the capitalist society, would organise themselves and capture power so to abolish it altogether by establishing the classless society; that power would, ultimately, cease to function in the classless society. The Marxist theory of class as power can be summed up as under:

I. Individual is no abstract being; he is not what he is as such, but is what he does; he is not an isolated being, but is one who exists in interaction with and in relation to others; he is not the first, but is one who is the product of what is there all around; he is thus, the product of history, though he makes history as well; individuals live not individually, but they live in relations to one another; the key to understand individuals and their nature and relations lies in class structure.

II. As individual is the product of history, so is the class. Classes had not existed in all ages and would not, therefore, exist in all future. They emerged at a particular stage of material development. A class is not only a historical category, it is economic as well. This is not to say that there are no classes other than the economic.

III. Men do not choose their society; they are born in it, for society and its mode of production already exist. History produces individuals in a particular setting, though in the course of development, they change the setting itself. Individuals, when born, find themselves in a group which has a particular status in social production. Some may find themselves as owners of the means of production while others, without them; some may find themselves as managers of the social labour while others, as labour wagers; some may find themselves as masters who take away all profit while others, as workers who take merely wages to subsist themselves. That is how antagonistic classes arose and would remain as long as there are class societies.

IV. Those who own means of production in a particular stage of material development possess both the society and power.

V. Class antagonism is characteristic of a class society and therefore, all hitherto recorded history, Marx and Engels declared is the history of class struggle: struggle between the masters and the slaves; the feudal lords and the serfs etc.¹⁶

VI. In Marxian literature, the class struggle is said to be natural because of the clear cut and sharp division, resulting from the opposing class consciousness. The forms of class struggle, in a capitalist society, for example, are described economic, political and ideological. The economic struggle is an effort of the proletariat to improve their material and working condition.

VII. Power, as a result of class society, remains the monopoly of the possessive class in every class society. The economically dominant class wields power in the real sense of the term, state acting only as an agency of oppression for the owners of the means of production. To put an end to the class antagonism and, therefore, class divisions, power would have to be used. And for this, power would have to be captured by a revolutionary class which is none else but the working class in the capitalist society. Power has, thus, to be used to abolish all power- power that coerces, power that punishes and the power that compels.

1.17.2 THEORY OF FEMINISM: Feminism is a revolt against patriarchy. It is a protest against male domination. It is a reaction against the idea that women are men's delight. It is committed to women's emancipation, seeking equality between men and women in all aspects of life, be its personal, private, familial or public. Feminism refers to a theory which sees the relationship between the sexes as one of inequality, subordination and oppression and which sees this as a problem of political power than a fact of nature. What it means is that the distinction between men and women is not merely biological, but is also made sociological and thereafter political. Men and women are biologically different, but they are seen, regarded and structured socially as different gender. The masculine gender, being physically strong and having made himself as the in charge of the external or what may be called 'public' exploits woman by considering her as an inferior being a slave and a commodity.

¹⁶. Arora, N. D and Awasthy, S.S (2004), *Political Theory*, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, pp.77-82.

The Marxist feminists deplore the fact that women, like most men in any class society, are oppressed and would continue being oppressed by the capitalist system of production, only communism would relieve them, like the exploited men as well of their exploitation. The Marxian theory of class described as in economic terms does not regard women as a class worth considering in any system of production. To say as the Marxists do that women would be emancipated once there develops a classless society is to say not much. They do not see or understand any non economic sources of oppression and that is why they regard women like most men as exploited by the possessing classes. In the Marxian frame, the whole issue of women's exploitation in different types of society has not been explored fully.¹⁷

To Seema Jayachandran (2014) of Northwestern University, Chicago (USA) Poor countries by no means have a monopoly on gender inequality. Men earn more than women in essentially all societies. However, disparities in health, education, and bargaining power within marriage tend to be larger in countries with low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita.

In education, financial investment is more in case of male to female by their parents. Turning to health, in general women have a longer life expectancy than men, but this female advantage is somewhat smaller in poor countries. Women have higher age adjusted mortality relative to men in poor countries than in rich ones.

Women in developing countries have less control over their lives than those in developed countries. There is particularly little freedom of choice for women in India.

Women in developing countries fare worse relative to men compared to women in some developed countries on a variety of measures ranging from college enrollment to control over one's life.

Many cultures practice patrilocality whereby a married couple lives near or with the husband's parents. When a woman gets married, she essentially ceases to be a member of her birth family and joins her husband's family. Under this system, parents

¹⁷. Ibid., pp.77-82.

potentially reap more of the returns to investments in a son's health and education because he will remain a part of their family, whereas a daughter will physically and financially leave the household upon marriage.

In India widows traditionally do not inherit their husbands' ancestral property, they rely on their sons as their conduit for holding onto the family property and maintaining their standard of living in widowhood.¹⁸

The witch allegation and hunting involves the innocent wife along with the suspected husband for hunts. The hunters of witch do not leave the woman whether she is innocent or guilty. In addition to this the single woman or widow is very soft victim of witch hunts. So the women have to face very adverse impact due to witch allegation and hunting.

Feminists hold that women generally become helpless victims of patriarchy. The witch hunts are targeted on woman folk. Most of the judges, ministers, priests, constables, jailors, jurors, executors are male persons. So witch hunting can be regarded as feminecide or gendercide. The whole social system is committed to persecute the female sex. Feminists claim that especially widows are targeted in order to grab their land and property. They are blamed for any misfortune and bad luck. If a woman does not marry or is widowed and entitled to her father's or husband's property, in an attempt to get hold of her property, jealous relatives or villagers seek illegal methods like witchcraft. Again women who turn down sexual advances are branded as witch. In such matters an *Ojha* comes forward and takes the upper hand to brand such a woman as a witch. Feminists say that low caste women are more prone to be such victims. Feminists abhor witchcraft because they think that it is a hidden war on women. It takes advantage of the vulnerability of women to witchcraft accusations. They say that the term 'witch' should be abolished from vocabulary.¹⁹

¹⁸. The Roots of Gender Inequality in Developing Countries, retrieved from http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~sjv340/roots_of_gender_inequality.pdf on May 14, 2017.

¹⁹. Baruah, Dr. Girish (2015), Witchcraft and Witch Hunting, in *Uprooting Witchcraft*, Dr. Minuara Begum (ed.) Dr. Jyoti Kamal Hazarika, Assam pp. 6-7.

1.17.3 HUMAN RIGHTS THEORY: There were some landmarks for development of human rights in universal context. Such as Magna Carta in England (1215), the American Declaration of Independence (1776), the French Declaration on the Rights of Man (1789) has made important contribution for development of concept of human rights.

The United Nations Centre for Human Rights defines Human Rights “as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings”. Human Rights have also been defined as moral rights of the higher order stemming from ‘socially shared moral conceptions of the nature of the human person and the condition necessary for a life of dignity’.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) sets out 30 articles. Article 1 and 2 of the declaration state that “all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights and are entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the declaration” without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Some important rights are:

- I. The right to life, liberty and security of person,
- II. Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,
- III. The right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law, the right to an effective judicial remedy,
- IV. The right to social security,
- V. The right to a standard of living adequate for health and well being,
- VI. The right to education,
- VII. The right to participate in the cultural life of the community.²⁰

India is a signatory to the international agreement-the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This is the first strong attempt taken up by UN in 1976 to ensure the rights of women around the world. CEDAW prescribes strict action against those, breaching the right of a woman and directs passing

²⁰. Yasin, Adil-ul & Upadhaya, Archana, (2006), *Human Rights*, Akansa Publishing House, New Delhi, pp.1,3,45,46.

of Act to stop this discrimination. It also recognises witch hunting as a violation of human rights. It says that the nation should provide shelter to the accused women and create awareness among the community.

People involved in witch hunting should get adequate punishment according to convention.²¹

1.18 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numbers of published books, edited books, articles in journals, magazines, Ph.D thesis, report, articles in the website etc. are gone through in connection with this research work for the pursuance of research accomplishment.

Rev. Sidney Endle in his book “*The Kocharis*” (2007) has highlighted about folk lore, traditions and superstitions in Bodo society.

The Kachari (Bodo) no doubt can not be regarded as superstitious race, but when they got suffering from a serious outbreak of Cholera, *Kala azar* (black fever in epidemic), or other like public calamity, they used to give offerings to their deities for recovery. It describes about the rich folk tales which implies the ardent respect to nature. As for example: there is folk tale about the birth of rivers, birth of thunder and lightning.

The religion of the Kachari race is distinctly of the type commonly known as “animistic”. They believe of “*Modai*” (deity) all possessing powers and faculties far greater than those of man and almost invariably inclined to use these powers for malignant and malevolent rather than benevolent purposes. They used to say as *Modai homdwng*, (an evil spirit has got hold of people, when the people suffer from unusual diseases. The popular Kachari deities fall into two classes, i.e., house hold gods and village gods.²²

Bhaben Narzi, in his book “*Boro Kocharini Samaj Arw Harimu*” (2010) has discussed about the existence of *mantra* in the universe. The people use various *mantras* in

²¹. Baruah, Chitralekha (2015), Witch Hunting- A Violation of Human Rights, in *Uprooting Witchcraft*, Dr. Minuara Begum (ed), Dr. Jyoti Kamal Hazarika, Assam p. 45.

²². Endle, Rev. Sidney (2007), op., cit., pp.33-40, 55-70.

various purposes. The Bodo people worship *Kherai* religious festival and the *mantras* are very essential in this worship. The people worship the powerful deities for obtaining grace and magical power in their life. The *mantras* can be classified mainly into two heads, as for good and evil purposes. The Bodo people used to wear amulet, *Indi Pitwb* (cocoon pack) for curing of disease and welfare. It was seen that the people used to wear animal teeth, skin, bone etc. in their ring or amulet. The different kinds of *Muhini* (spells) were used in Bodo society. There are some *Banns* (*mantras*) for harming other enemy.

There are some secret art or *mantras* which is characterised by evil consequences. Who learns this *mantra* and apply to harm others, they are known as witch. The witch has been believed to have supernatural powers to curse badly. The powerful witch may causes great harm to targeted enemy. Such popular belief has been continuing since earliest period of Bodo society. He also discussed about the ways to get rid of influence of attacks by witches.²³

Dr. Kameswar Brahma, in his book titled “*An introduction to the Myths and Legends of the Bodos*” (2004) discussed about the myths and legends of the Bodos. First of all the Bodo race is belongs to Mongolian origin. He elaborated about the creation of birds, ghosts, insects and the earth. It also described about the origin of Gods and human beings. It explains about the origin of the thunder and lightning. The author has explained about the beliefs and rites in their social life.

There are some social offences (*Bad*) for violation of social norms. The guilty persons are tried through the social custom and law and they have to undergo the penance system (*Udrainai*).

They have to knell down before the *Bwrai Bathou* (God of *Bathou* religion) for forgiveness and purity. The *mantras* are chanted in this process.²⁴

²³. Narzi, Bhaben (2010), op., cit., pp.188-212.

²⁴. Brahma, Dr. Kameswar (2004), *An Introduction to the Myths and Legends of the Bodos*, Pradip Kr. Bhowmick, Kokrajhar, pp. 1-7, 64-73.

Dr. Kameswar Brahma, *A Study in Cultural Heritage of the Boros* (1998) in his book we find the explanation about the *Kherai* religious festival and role of *Ojhas*. The *Dhouthini* is the central figure in the *Kherai* festival. She performs some supernatural powers in the festival. She used to foretell the fortune of the people, the good and bad of the village, success and failure of cultivation in the villagers and sinful activities of any villagers. He described the names of God and Goddesses of the Bodo society.²⁵

Dr. Kameswar Brahma, in his book a study of “*A Study of Socio religious beliefs practices and ceremonies of the Bodos*”, (1992) has highlighted about the Bodos belief on magical potency with clear classification.

The Bodos believe in magical potency. They use magical power in many ways. They extensively believe in and practise both white magic and black magic. The *Ojhas* are the persons who practise magic in the Bodo society. The *mantra* or the chant is the principal source of their magic. In Bodo *Mantra* is called *Mwnthwr*.

The Bodos believe in the existence of spirits, ghosts, witchcraft etc. and they also believe that these supernatural elements cause diseases and sufferings to the human beings. The magical *mantras* are classified into black and white purposes. Along with the practices of sorcery are still prevalent among the Bodos. They have beliefs of supernatural power also. According to them many diseases are occur due to the influence of the witchcrafts.²⁶

Wolfgang Behringer in his book “*Witches and Witch-Hunts*” (2008) has described about the belief on witchcraft and persecution of witch in Europe till 19th and early 20th century. In the last week of July 1990 a South African village was shaken by several deaths. Six young men died in car crashes, an elderly man committed suicide and a woman’s corpse was found outside her home with stab wounds. By December, 1990 thirty four people had been accused of being witches. People in many civilizations believe that certain individuals are able to cause harm by means of occult, mystical

²⁵. Brahma, Dr. Kameswar (1998), op. cit., pp. 100- 116.

²⁶. Brahma, Kameswar (1992), *A Study of Socio-Religious Beliefs, Practices and Ceremonies of the Bodos*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, pp.144-157.

powers, although there are usually differences about the truth. In South Africa, or in Papua New Guinea, some people may believe firmly in the dangers of witchcraft.

In America notions of witchcraft can be found among Native Americans (Indians), as well as among immigrants from Europe, Africa and Asia. In West Greenland witches were thought capable of causing illness, death, sterility and poor hunting, i.e. capable of destroying the fundamental values of life for others.

The South African Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1895, amended in 1957 and again in 1970, seemed completely off the point from an African perspective. Instead of persecuting the evildoers, it stopped the chiefs from handling cases of witchcraft properly, thus damaging their authority. Traditional healers, diviners or witchdoctors who could detect the witches were outlawed, and the witches protected instead. As a consequence, people took the law into their own hands, and started to kill, either secretly or in mob lynchings, those whom they suspected of having harmed their children or livestock. The persecution of witches is a consequence of witchcraft beliefs. However, beliefs as a necessary pre condition do not automatically generate persecutions.

Harmful magic was a punishable crime in Ancient Rome. The first major persecution in Europe is recorded in a printed pamphlet of 1563, the True and Horrifying Deeds of 63 Witches, who were caught, tried, convicted and burned. The English witchcraft Bill of 1563 fits neatly into the general picture of a rising vigilance concerning witchcraft. In later part, in Italy, Austria and Germany lawyers and politicians had struggled against witch hunting. During the ages of the Industrial Revolution and of imperialism and colonial rule, the ruling and intellectual elites of Europe and of its daughter civilizations in America and Australia, lost their interest in witchcraft. The European rejection of belief in witchcraft was exported in a prolonged period of European expansion, not least through ideologies such as Marxism, Functionalism and Modernization theory. The Soviet rulers of Russia and China tried to crush beliefs in witchcraft.

In Hindu mythology, in *Bali* evil witch *Rangda* (demon queen in *Bali* of ancient India), who is believed to devour children and to induce misfortune, illness and death.

She was widow and had human disciples, who learn the art of witchcraft.²⁷

Robin Briggs in his “*Witches and Neighbors*” (2006) has described about myths of witch, supernatural power, magical remedies and witch finders and witch cures of European countries.

Witches have haunted the human imagination with remarkable persistence. The witch is an incarnation of the other a human being who has betrayed his or her natural allegiances to become an agent of evil. The obvious exceptions are the industrialized societies of the modern western world, in which belief in witchcraft is generally stigmatized as a sign of primitivism.

Witchcraft cannot, however, be explained in purely social terms. There is also a cultural context, albeit of a very broad kind. Here too it is worth thinking about the reasons for the decline of belief in witchcraft. Witchcraft is therefore culturally constructed in a specific sense, for it depends on certain views about the natural world and the ways it operates.²⁸

Robert Muchembled in his a “*History of the Devil*” (2003) has explained about the power of Satan and his entry, magical body of Satan, the demon within nineteenth and twentieth centuries in European countries.

Every human society poses the problem of evil, and attempts to resolve it. Satan became a power to be reckoned with at a relatively late date in Western culture. The disparate elements of his image had long been in existence, but it was only in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries that they acquired real significance in representations and practices. The devil was an unobtrusive presence during the first Christian millenium. Personifications of evil existed, but in a variety of forms that corresponded to the fundamental polytheism of the mass of the population. The devil was not suddenly banished from the Western imagination in the mid seventeenth century, though a real

²⁷. Behringer, Wolfgang (2008), *Witches and Witch Hunts*, Polity Press, U.K, pp. 10-163.

²⁸. Brigs, Robin (2006), *Witches & Neighbours*, Black Well Publishing, USA, pp. 12-50.

intellectual rupture is visible at this point between the rationalist and the traditionalist thinkers.²⁹

In edited volume of “*Construction of Evil in North East India*” by ed: Prasenjit Biswas and C. Joshua Thomas (2012), the following author has described about the idea of evil practice, superstition, magical powers, sorcery, witch belief and hunting particularly among the backward tribes in North East India.

Anjali Daimari (2012), in her “The Idea of Evil among the Bodos: Text and context”, has described about the evil practice as witch practice and hunting with some cases among Bodos. It has exposed about the growing trends of false suspect and allegation for witch hunting in Bodo society after the autonomy movement.

From ancient times, Assam has been popularly known as a ‘land of magic and sorcery’. Even today, belief in evil spirits, magic, taboos and other supernatural agencies is quite widespread in Assam, particularly among the indigenous people. Witchcraft has been associated with evil, darkness, illness, misfortune and death in almost all those societies where witchcraft is prevalent. The earliest reference to a *dayna* occurs in the legend of *Sando Baodiya*. However, in the legend itself, *Sando Baodiya* is not a *dayna* (witch), and he is rather seen as someone who does good for the community. It is believed now by the Bodo intelligentsia that though witchcraft practice has been existent among the Bodos, the trends in extensive witch hunt and witch killing among the Bodos are more recent.³⁰

Sipra Sen, in her book “Tribes and Castes of Assam” (2009) has explained about the religion, superstitions, magic, and belief etc. of Assam. She tells that most of the people of Assam both tribals and non tribals are superstitious. At one time, belief in the spirit world was universal. The role of the exorciser *Bej (Ojha)* is considered important among the common people. They have some faith in *Banns*. They believe in wearing amulets. It was said that whoever entered Assam were overcome by the charms and never came out of the state. The outsiders used to call the inhabitants of Assam

²⁹. Muchembeld, Robert (2003), *A History of the Devil*, Polity Press, UK, pp. 9-34, 69-107.

³⁰. Daimari, Anjali (2012), op., cit., pp.100-113.

sorcerers and magicians. Assam was known as a land of magic and incantation. This is perhaps due to the *Tantrik* (holder of *mantra*) forms of Hinduism originating there.³¹

Harendra Nath Sarma, in his book “*Bishashor (of believe) Pora (from) Bigyanloi (to science)*” (1996) has explained about the religious belief and its reformation in the context of India. He also discussed about the faith on ghost. The author described that the magic of primitive people was tradition of larger society. The purpose of magic is to win the nature and religion is to satisfy the God for love. In popular belief, the God can be classified into two kinds. One kind is to do welfare of believer and other is to harmful activities. But the various forms of God may get angry when the worshiper is not able to satisfy them. On other hand, there is also belief on spirit and ghost. To author, the spirit and ghost are creation of misconception of conscience.³²

Manoranjan Lahary, in his novel “*Dainee*” (2009) has narrated the gruesome murder of suspected of practising witch in the Bodo society. This story reflects the Bodo’s belief upon the existence of ghost, spirit etc. One night a man named *Bilasu* was coming back home in the midnight but unfortunately a ghost was following him in the bike. That ghost was following him in guise of one woman named *Durmao* from nearby village. Few years ago *Durmao* lost her husband who was a traditional physician. After death of her husband she was in trouble to run her two children. But fortunately, she learned the knowledge of preparing herbal medicine for the curing of diseases.

Unfortunately, in the village there were occurring of some untoward incidents of people death. The villagers began to suspect that the evil incidents are because of handiwork of witchcraft in the village. Ultimately, the villagers assembled and tried the suspect on *Durmao*, who was suspected to be witch. Finally, she was found guilty and brutally murdered.³³

A.A. Macdonell, in his book “*Vedic Mythology*” (1974) has explained about the religion, mythology and various Gods in Vedic age. The mythology was connected with spirits and with witchcraft. It mentions about various magical rites in worshiping the

³¹. Sen, Sipra (2009), *Tribes and Castes of Assam*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, pp.59-61.

³². Sarma, Harendra Nath (1996), *Bishashor Pora Bigyanloi*, Lokayat Prakashan, Dispur, pp.36-150.

³³. Lahary, Manoranjan (2009), *Dainy*, Prodeep Kr. Bhowmick, Kokrajhar, pp. 1-90.

powerful deities. The people had belief upon the supernatural powers from the Goddess and deities. They also believed upon the harmful acts of demon in the form of dogs, vultures, owls and other birds. The evil spirit and sorcery were also prevailing in that period.³⁴

Guneswar Mushahary, in his short story book “*Daina*” (2008) has explained about the belief on ghost and traditional faith on black magic among the Bodo society. The Bodo tradition has oral belief on existence of ghost. Many kinds of spells and *Mantras* for attracting others are mentionworthy in the society. Since the Bodo backward village does not have medical facilities, the villagers have to depend upon the *Ojhas* for treatment. So, the people believe upon the supernatural power of witch. But when the unusual incidents take place in the village, they began to suspect of witchcraft. They used to unearth the secret of witchcraft for certain evil incidents.³⁵

Surat Narzary, in his book, “*Sandw Baodia*” (2014) has narrated about the story of a youth named *Sandw Baodia* who was well versed in playing violin (local *Serja*) and through his playing of music the power of nature could be felt.

“*Daina*” (male witch) was the first documentary film in the Bodo language, which was released on 9 September 1983. Amar Hazarika was director and Bhupen Hazarika was the music director of it. The Bodo Film Society of Kokrajhar produced it. The film was made based on the existence of beliefs on witchcraft in Bodo society. It reflects the socio-cultural significance with the social life of Bodo society.³⁶

The Bodos believe in the Absolute God, and they are not animists as some scholars intend to interpret. They believe in incarnation and they have a clear idea of Divine and the discrete. *Aham* is God in Sound Existent ever in Existence and He is the Divine eternal in that form. *Sandw Baodia* a repulsive man in the wordly affairs, was too concentric to the instrumental music, to which he always delves into the deep bottom. Later on, he used to live in a particular spot of the *Baokhungri* hill which was filled with rarefied atmosphere. He lived there for about eleven years without the touch of the

³⁴. Macdonell, A.A. (1974), *Vedic Mythology*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, pp. 1-86.

³⁵. Mushahary, Guneswar (2008), *Daina*, Prodeep Kr. Bhowmick, Kokrajhar, pp.1-90.

³⁶. Narzary, Bidysagar (2012), *Bodoland Quiz*, Good Books Distributors Publication, Kokata, P.50.

society from the moment he met his goddess *Shantikhaina* (God of river) whom all of the villagers thought to be mere make belief or an evil spirit. He was the only man to give in and give out that power magic. *Sandw Baodia* undermined the authority and the traditions of the society. Eventually, he was declared a *Daina* or Witch, in the accepted sense of the society.³⁷

Dr. Phanindra Nath Narzary, in his book “*Kwmsi Pwtainai Arw Daina*”, (2016) has discussed about the old blind faith and witch hunting in the Bodo society. He has told that there are many practices of blind faith in the Bodo society since earliest period. Belief on witch power is one of the blind faiths. The clever *Ojha* may conspire to kill his enemy in the name of witch. It is mentionworthy that in old period there was no medical facility in the Bodo villages. So, when unusual disease outbreaks in the village, they began to suspect of having witch in the village. The social enmity and hatredness among the villagers has been playing an active role in blaming of witch practitioner.³⁸

In Phanidhar Pathak, “*Daini*” (2013), writers have discussed about the faith on witchcraft and the alarming trends of witch hunting which has been leading violation of human rights in the society. Even in times of scientific and high technology age, blind faith upon the superstition has been getting a scope in human minds. Still there are many backward areas that are far from development and education. But some educated clever people dominate and lead gullible public for any work to fulfill his nasty gain.

In Assam, there is no particular law to deal with witch hunting. Due to lack of witness for witch murder, the victimized people do not get justice. There is also inadequate of awareness in the remote areas. The tribal and tea tribe community are the most affected of witch related incidents of Assam.³⁹

In edited book “Uprooting Witchcraft” by Dr. Minuara Begum, (2015), the authors have explained about the meaning of witchcraft, magic, origin, existence, and nature, bad

³⁷. Narzay, Surat (2014), *Sandw Baodia*, Amit Adhikary, Kokrajhar, pp.3-29.

³⁸. Narzary, Phanindra (2016), *Kwmsi Pwtainai Arw Daina*, Pranchis Narzaree, Kokrajhar, pp.1-12, 24-37.

³⁹. Pathak, Phanidhar (2013), *Daini*, Rajendra Mohan Sarma & Dr. Rabindra Mohan Sarma, Assam, pp. 1-9, 55-61.

effects of witchcraft and hunting of suspected witch on women and society particularly in Assam etc.

Kula Saikia (2015), in “*Witchcraft and Witch hunting*”, has explained about the belief on witchcraft is like virus and it affects the innocent people in the society.

The social superstitions and the prejudices that have been affecting our life and living in this modern era too. When the individual superstitions take the form of a community prejudice like false belief in black magic or some “super natural creature” that would have been responsible in bringing in drought or the devastating tremor or any social misfortunes, it breeds hatred and animosity amongst community members, it gives birth to the menace of witch hunting like offences. The superstitious belief of witches has been a perennial problem leading to severe form of violation of human rights in a number of states in the country.⁴⁰

Dr. Natyabir Das (2015), “*Kak Kio Daini Sojoa Hoi, Birubala Rabha Aru Samadhanor Chinta*”, has explained about the prevalence of practice of sorcery in society. The title implies why and who is charged of witchcraft? He has highlighted about the contribution given by Birubala Rabha for the elimination of witch hunting.⁴¹

Pratibha Brahma, Preetam Brahma and Raju Kr. Narzary, “Witch Hunt: Crisis, Concern & Way Forward” in the “*Bibungthi-the opinion*” November, 2011 have explained about the great crisis due to the killing of suspected witches in Bodo society.

Superstitious belief in existence of witchcraft is not confined to the illiterates of remote villages. It exists irrespective of educational, social, economic, cultural, religious backgrounds. It is observed that in many tribal dominated villages, the social belief system is dominated by the presence of witchcraft, looming large over their head and whenever some villagers dies of unknown diseases, it makes their belief more firm. The blind superstitious beliefs provokes the ignorant villagers to such a extent that they get

⁴⁰. Saikia, Kula (2015), Superstitions and Witch hunting, in *Uprooting Witchcraft*, ed., Dr. Minuara Begum, Dr. Jyoti Kamal Hazarika, Assam etc. pp.66-68.

⁴¹. Das, Dr. Natyabir (2015), *Kak Kio Daini Sojoa Hoi*, in *Uprooting Witchcraft*, ed., Dr. Minuara Begum, Dr. Jyoti Kamal Hazarika, Assam etc. pp.210-221.

restless to identify the person responsible by all possible means to avert the future threats of illness and death by eliminating the witch.

One theory often talked about is property dispute leading to accusation of opponent party being a witch. Some section of intellectuals attributes the reasons to gender. They are of the opinion that in most of the cases women and mostly the widow are targeted. They opine that when some powerful person in the village fails to exploit the women sexually, the women is accused of witch craft to eliminate future threat of being accused by women for sexual violence.

One group of people is of the opinion that it's a traditional practice of killing witch. But the phenomenon of rampant killing of witch craft at least in Bodoland region dates back to only two decades. Prior to the maximum punishment of a suspected witch used to be out casting the person from the village.⁴²

P. K. Padmanabhan and Laverne Sorrels Source, Witchcraft in India, "*Western Folklore*", (July, 1958) has explained about the witchcraft belief and murder of suspected exorcist in India. The witch related case of sensational Bombay trial of six old women charged with witchcraft murder reflects the widespread belief in sorcery that still persists in rural India. It was learnt that the two teenage aborigine girls of a village named Umbargaon near Bombay of India were the principal witnesses in the trial. They related a gruesome story of killing their father and eating his flesh in the company of the accused women who were initiating them into witchcraft.⁴³

Edward Miguel, Poverty and Witch Killing, in "*The Review of Economic Studies*", (Oct., 2005), has elucidated about the poverty and hunting of witchcraft in European countries. It explains that poverty and violence go hand in hand. There is a strong negative relationship between economic growth and crime across countries, as well as across districts in India, and a link between low income and the occurrence of civil war. It tells that economic conditions are a driving force behind witch murders is bolstered by the fact that most witch killing in Tanzania takes place in poor rural areas largely

⁴². Brahma, Pratibha, et.al, "Witch Hunt: Crisis, Concern & Way Forward" in the "*Bibungthi-the opinion*" November, 2011, ed, Pratibha Brahma, Burlungbuthur Publication Board, Kokrajhar, pp.18-23.

⁴³. Padmanabhan, P.K. and Sorrels, Laverene, Witchcraft in India, in *Western Folklore*, dated July, 1958, pp.213-214, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1496054> on July 1, 2015.

dependent on rain fed agriculture, and that most victims of sample are from poor household.

Witchcraft beliefs are widely held throughout Sub Saharan Africa, serve a variety of social purposes, and have shown no tendency to lose salience during the post colonial period. In particular, African witches who may be female or male are widely thought to use their occult powers to inflict harm on other community members. Witchcraft accusations in Africa are not restricted to elderly women. In the face of economic crisis in Congo (1960s), young children have become common culprits and many have been kicked out of their homes or killed by family members following household calamities and negative income shocks.⁴⁴

Daya Varma, Witch-Hunt among Santhals, in “*Economic and Political Weekly*”, (Jun. 9-15, 2007), has explained about the witch hunts among Santhals community in Assam. It describe that the witchcraft as a primitive human endeavour to deal with adversity is perhaps as ancient as humanity.

The witch hunt came later and became a mania in 16th century in Europe. The innocent practice of witchcraft came in direct opposition to the superstitions of both the old and the New Testament. The first trial of a witch, recorded with any degree of certainty, took place in 1324 in Coventry, United Kingdom. All over the world, including Chhatisgarh, witches were mostly poor working class women, old and widowed.⁴⁵

Ajanta Brahma, (2010), in her thesis *The Kocharis of Assam in the Indian National Movement: 1900-1947* submitted to Department of History, Gauhati University has mentioned about the Bodo’s custom and materials used in worship and cultural life. Bodo community has belief upon deities who may cause misfortune, illness, famine and natural calamities. Domestic animals like fowl, pigeon, pigs etc. are used to propitiate the gods.⁴⁶

⁴⁴. Miguel, Edward, Poverty and Witch Killing, in *The Review of Economic Studies*, dated Oct., 2005, pp.1153-1170, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3700704> on July 1, 2015.

⁴⁵. Varma, Daya, Witch Hunt among Santhals, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, dated June, 2007, p.2130, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419670> on July 1, 2015.

⁴⁶. Brahma, Ajanta (2010), *The Kocharis of Assam in the Indian National Movement: 1900-1947*, Deptt. of History, Gauhati University, pp.20-21.

Nirjay Kumar Brahma, 2008, in his thesis '*Socio-Political Institutions in Bodo Society*' submitted to Department of Political Science, Gauhati University has highlighted about the Bodos.

Most of the British officials and missionaries called the Bodos 'animist'. Rev. S. Endle termed them as animist. It is mentioned that the natives of Himalayan region including Bodos and other tribes belonging to pagan faith and their religious belief consists in the worship of two divine beings: one is the author of good and the other the author of evil. As usual among nearly all hill tribes, their religious rites consist chiefly of the propitiation of evil spirit by means of sacrifice of fowls. The Kocharis have not scruple on the matter of diet, they eat any animal food and are particularly partial to fork.

Originally the propitiation and worship of *Bathou* is made by sacrifices of food, pigs, gods and offering '*Jou*' or rice beer. Although now a day, practice of propitiation has been discarded by some of them replacing these by flowers fruits etc. Still most of them follow the primitive system of worship. Naturalism and animism are part of cultural life, belief and practice of the tribes in India. Every object of the nature, plants, animals, trees, rivers, ponds, lakes, stones and mountains are considered all sacred by them. This nature worship is a form of belief and still tribals love to live in their natural abodes, comprising hills, river bank and forest shores and practices their traditional culture, rituals and norms.

Tribal society has its own body of norms, customs, taboos, tradition, values and moral standards which regulate relationship among the individuals and society.⁴⁷

Shyamal Prasad Saikia (2017), Indian Police Service (IPS), Superintendent of Police, Bureau of Investigation (Economic Offences), Govt. of Assam, has done research work on "Witch-craft, Witch-trials and Witch-hunting perspectives- A review with special reference to the Rabha community of Assam."⁴⁸

Witch hunting in Assam: Individual, Structural and Legal Dimension (2016), a study done by collaborative effort of three organizations of Partners for Law in Development

⁴⁷. Brahma, Nirjay (2008), op., cit., pp.7-13.

⁴⁸. *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, dated May 8, 2017, p.2.

(PLD), Assam Mahila Samata Society (AMSS) and the North East Network (NEN) reveals that the witch is an individual who possesses evil potential to inflict harm to others in the eyes of folks. Rituals practices like worshipping big stones or trees are the means for acquiring magical powers. Witch practice is most rampant in the Bodo, Rabha and Adivasi communities of Assam.

Women are soft target to be charged with allegation of black magic practitioner. The activities of *Ojha* or traditional healer of village in many cases play as an instigator. Multiple factors play for the witch hunting. Conflict, jealousy, tension with the instigator may lead witch hunting. Socio-economic and political structural factors may lead murder in the name of witch hunting. Lack of medical facilities also leads misinterpretation of illness, deaths and tragedies. The illiterate villagers believe upon the power of witch which leads illness, sudden deaths and misfortune in the village. The victimized people continued to experience the humiliation, ostracization, fear, social boycott, insecurity of life and economy.⁴⁹

Witch hunting in Assam: A Report (2015), sponsored by Project *Prahari*, Assam Police, was done by Omeo Kumar Das institute of social change and development of Guwahati, Assam, reveals that the acute economic backwardness is one of the prime causes for superstitious belief and witch hunting. The superstitious beliefs have embedded in the hearts of backwards people since ancient period. The fake healers and *Bej* (exorcist) are the sole responsible for extreme violence which must be punished. The study was conducted in Majuli, Goalpara and Golaghat of Assam state of India.⁵⁰

From the above references this research has found that the practice and hunting of witch are age old which is found in all the countries and civilizations. It is found that the faith on magical powers, casting of spell and practice of witchcraft etc. are more or less common present in all the societies of people of universe. The faith and practice on magical powers whether scientific or unscientific it is deeply embedded in Bodo society since long years of Bodo civilization. The study has found the gap that the above

⁴⁹. Witch hunting in Assam: Individual, Structural and Legal Dimensions (2016), retrieved from http://www.northeastnetwork.org/wp_content/uploads/2016/09/witch_Hunting_in_Assam_Individual_Struct.pdf, on April 24, 2017.

⁵⁰. Witch-Hunting in Assam: A Report (2015), retrieved from <http://www.okd.in/downloads/newsletter-september-december-2015.pdf>, April 24, 2017.

references have not explained about the witchcraft belief and hunting in Bodo society. In this research work the prime purpose is to focus that the nature, ploy and motives of witch hunting in contemporary and early period of Bodo society. Thus the research work emphasizes on broader concept and all dimensions of witchcraft and actual witch hunt and its adverse impacts among the Bodo society.