

## **Human Rights Violation: A Case Study on Witch Hunting Practice among Mising Tribes with Special Reference to Jorhat District, Assam**

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**Abstract:** Human Right is a one of the most important concept in Present day context. Human Rights are those rights to which an individual is entitled by virtue of his status as human being. Witch Hunting is a social evil and the social menace as an intentional behaviour to demean, dehumanize, harms, destroy or kill innocent people. In the name of practicing witch hunting, people are violate human rights to a great extent, where victim are treated as inhuman. The victims are suspected as witch along with his/her family members through which the basic human rights are being violated by the villagers. They lose their basic rights such as right to life, freedom of speech, property right etc. Witch hunting is a superstitious practice that leads to the persecution and killed hundreds of men and women in Assam last ten year. This practice is prevalent in different parts of the Assam and mostly in the Mising Society women, widows, weaker section, uneducated people become targets. The Mising Tribes is a major ethnic group of Assam who are bearing the second largest population among the ethnic group. Witch Hunting practices are the people, in cases where there are issues of illness, suddenly death of the people and domestic animals of particular locality. Existing laws in Indian and the Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015 have failed to solve the issue. The Communities organisations, NGOs have played roles for need of curbing this social evil.

**Key words:** Human Rights violations, Jorhat district, Mising Tribe, scientific Resolution, superstitious, Witch Hunting,

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### **I. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are-

- i. To examine the incidents associated with witches and witch-hunting among the Mising community.
- ii. To analyse the causes, nature and forms of violence faced by the victims.
- iii. To study the human rights violation of the victims.
- iv. To analysis the role of the Non-Governmental organizations.

### **II. METHODOLOGY**

**Primary sources:**

The primary data are collected from the respondents of the study area. The respondents will be from the select villages.

**Secondary sources:**

The secondary sources will be included books, related articles, journals, magazines, newspapers, police records and government publications.

**Nature of the Study:** The nature of the study is exploratory and analytical.

**Field of the Study:**

The area of the study is Jorhat District of Assam where the Mising community is more influential. The Mising tribes dominated areas are situated on bank of the Bramahaputra river from 15 km to 20 km distance from Jorhat town. Those areas are mainly backwards and poor communication.

### **III. INTRODUCTION**

Human Right is a one of the most important concept in Present day context. Human Rights are those rights to which a person is entitled by virtue of his status as human being. The civil, political, and socio-

economic rights are dependent on an individual's status as citizen of a particular state. Witch Hunting is a social evil and unintentional behaviour to demean, dehumanize, harm, destroy or kill innocent people. In the name of practicing witch hunting, people are violate human rights to a great extent, where victim are treated as inhuman. The victims are branded as witch or "Daini" (Assamese vocabulary term) along with his/her family members through which the basic human rights are being violated by the villagers. They lose their basic rights such as right to life, freedom of speech, property right etc. Witch hunting is a superstitious practice that leads to the persecution and death of hundreds of women and men in India every year. It is an irrational or non-existent scientific belief in the existence of certain powers operant in the world. This practice is prevalent in different parts of the Assam and mostly in the Mising Society women, widows, weaker section, uneducated people become targets. This paper is try to explore the injustice faced by the victims of the cruel witch hunting practices among the Mising Tribes with special reference to Jorhat district of Assam. It is analysing the factors responsible for the practice of this form of violence. The victims are severely punished or thrown out of the villages. Their properties are occupied by villagers. A survey is conducted in some select villages of Jorhat district in Assam dominated by the Mising People. This paper try to analyse the major reasons behind with the witch hunting practice existence in the Mising Tribes and also the people are not concern about the human rights. It is one kind of mental harassment that whole family members are faced problems. The victims people are become homeless and they are separated from society as well as villages. This paper is try to analysis the victims based on their genders in the perspective of human rights violations. It is also expore the scientific value and resolution against their beliefs and practices.

### **The Mising Tribes:**

The North East India, particularly Assam there are various ethnic groups which have distinct characteristics of ethnic identity. The Assam is covered by colourful ethnic culture and language. The Mising Tribe is a second largest population tribes of Assam. There are living on bank of the river mainly the Subansiri and the Brahmaputra. The Mising Tribe who love to live near the river areas, their have very much rich in their own language and culture. Original a hill tribes from the North East China, the Tibet and the Mongoloid, the Mising Tribe one of the Assam aboriginal communities travelled from the Manasa Sarobar. They are one of the colourful mongoloid tribes of the North East India. They have been living in the North East India particularly in Assam since eleventh centuries ago. Presently, the Mising Tribes are found mainly on the bank of the river the Brahmaputra and also in the river side areas with Sang Ghor (like tree house) in the districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, Shivasagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia of Assam state. According to the latest census report 2011, their population have increased up to 5,87,224. This paper has about witch hunting practices among the Mising Tribes special reference to Jorhat district of Assam. Jorhat is an administrative district of the Indian state of Assam situated in the central part of the Brahmaputra valley. The district is bounded by the Majuli island on north, Nagaland state on the south, Charaideo district on the east and Golaghat district the west. On the north of the district, the river Brahmaputra forms the largest riverine island of the world. The administrative seat is at Jorhat town. Last ten years many witch hunting practices cases are found in the Jorhat district of Assam where the Mising community is more influential. The Mising tribes dominated areas are situated on bank of the Brahmaputra river from 15 km to 20 km distance from Jorhat town. Those areas are mainly backwards and poor communication.

### **Witch Hunting and superstitious beliefs in the Mising community:**

Witch is credited with usually malignant supernatural powers especially a woman practicing usually black witchcraft often with the aid of a devil or familiar. "witch" means any person who has been supposedly identified, called, stigmatized, defamed or accused Assamese term as Daini, Dakini, Bhootuni, or any other such name by person or persons under the grip of unrealistic and unfounded impression that such person has the power to harm anyone or society at large, in any manner. In the view of the Mising Tribe, Witch (Mooru or Bhoot Ooneyin Mising terms) mean who to worship the goat, hen, pigeon in night the name of God and cutting his or her finger to drop the blood for worship name of the God at full moon night in jungle, bank of the river and own home. Those people are ugly, challengers, introversion, not communicate other persons freely, not share own feelings, he or she never attends in public meetings and never interest with mass communication etc. Some times those persons are offered medicine to illness people whom is called witch doctor. The Mooru (Witch) is those persons who causes for suddenly death of people that locality areas and death of domestic animal namely goat, hen, pig, buffalo etc.

Witch hunting means the identifying, stigmatising, signify any person as witch by any other person by words, or by indications or in any manner, thereby causing or abetting physical and or mental harm or execution of a witch which may involve mass hysteria, lynching or any other activities. Witch Hunting is a social evil which is an intentionally behaviour to demean, dehumanize, harm, destroy, or kill innocent people. It is one of the most dangerous superstitions prevailing all over the world. Every year there are instances of witch

hunting cases across all regions. Superstitious beliefs are the tendency to direct one's behaviour with irrational and mysterious fear or to gain privilege from the supernatural power. It is an irrational or non-scientific belief in the existence of certain powers operant in the world, with positive or ill effects. Superstitions generally refer to having belief that certain things and incidences have positive or negative implications. Witch hunting is a superstitious practice that leads to the persecution and death of hundreds of people in India every year. This practice is prevalent in different parts of the Assam significantly tribal dominated areas and tea community estate where mostly uneducated person, poor families, least blood relationship families, single women, widows and weaker section become targets of this least talked about violence on men and women. In the Mising community not only targeted on women but also have maximum male persons. Today, the Science and technology age the Mising Society is the most significantly practice the witch hunting. It is notable the Mising People are living in different backwards part of Assam. The communication systems are very poor condition. They are economically poor, illiterate and unhealthy people and also they are living in the unhealthy environment. This Mising People are practiced this dangerous witch hunting due to some conditions. When suddenly any person expired, death of domestic animals, the dogs are barking repeatedly at night and the domestic animals are suddenly fear and run away from their staying areas. Then the villagers are felt somethings happens in the village. The villagers are branded as witch those persons who are migrated from one village to other villages due to exclusions from own village as witch, who to worship the goat, hen, pigeon at night the name of God and cutting his or her finger to drop the blood and to worship the own blood the name of the God on day of full moon at night in jungle, bank of the river and own home. Those people are ugly, challengers, introversion, not communicate other persons freely, not share own feelings and he or she never attend in public meetings etc. It is a blind faith. This superstitious and irrational belief creates dangerous situation to the particular areas where a innocent people is killed name of the Witch Hunting.

#### **Human Rights violations:**

Witch Hunting is a one the burning issue talked about human rights violence on men and women in Assam. It is practiced in different parts of the Assam but mostly concentrated in the areas of Baksa, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Jorhat, Golaghat, Lakhimpur, Darrang, Sonitpur, Tinsukia, and Dhemaji etc. districts mostly tribal influence areas and tea community estate. The tribal dominated areas are popularly practiced the dangerous witch hunting. There is still the sense that an allegation of witchcraft is like passing a death sentence, and that these individuals become automatically unqualified for human rights protection. In the name of practices witch hunting people are highly violated human rights with victims. The victims who is identified as witch is used as inhuman, force to eat human excrement, to number of torture beating, burns etc. through the villagers. Sometimes even raped the women victims and also victim's family others members daughters, wife, sisters etc. The victims are several punished or thrown out from village, separated from societies and sometimes killed them. Their properties are occupied by the perpetrators and burn the homes. They become homeless and lost their properties. Alleged witches often suffer physical violence, defamation of character, loss of reputation and mental distress. Some of the branded as witch are killed some of them are way of cutting hair, stoning, beatings or firearms as punishment by the perpetrators. Numbers of the victims are killed because of a purification ritual they were forced to undergo during a trial by ordeal, which may have consisted of torture, or ironically. How can such violations of human rights go by largely undetected by the Assam legislative act and the Indian law as well as international community? Human Rights violations are protected by many national and international laws. The State Human Rights Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and United Nation Human Rights Commission are looked after any kind of human rights violations of a victims.

#### **The major causes behind branded as witch in the Mising community:**

The major reasons behind with the witch hunting practice existence in the Mising Tribes are mentioned as following points:

- i. In the particular area when suddenly death of men and the domestic animals people suspect the existing of witch in the areas. The people and domestic animals do not appear any kind of illness and fevers but it has died in during sleeping time at night or suddenly any moment.
- ii. The people who has migrated from one village to other villages due to exclusion from own village he or she is branded as witch.
- iii. The person who to offer articles of worship the goat, hen, pigeon at night and cutting his or her finger to drops the blood to worship name of the monster at full moon night in jungle, bank of the river and own home he or she is suspected as witch.
- iv. The dog is barked naturally any moment. The people believe when the dogs is barked in whole at night and special the full moon night repeatedly then they feel it is existence of witch.

- v. In the Mising community, the being awitch is popularly publicity by local appearances of God as Krishna, Shiva, Kali, Durga, Aai, etc. They are motivated the villagers that there have existed a person being a witch in your locality.
- vi. It has found that there is a third party involvement in branding witches, which initiated the people in order to occupy the victims properties. It is only for jealousy and family rivalry cases.
- vii. A person who are introversion, never communicate with the others persons, lives own ideology, never share own feelings with other persons and never attend in public meetings etc. Suspected as witch practices person.
- viii. The most of village people are illiterate. They are still believe in traditional norms and customs which is misleded the society that become to be brutish.

### **The Practice of Witch-Hunting in Jorhat district of Assam — Lolitimukh Village is a Case in Point.**

As the sources reveal, witch hunting is prevalent in the remote Mishing tribe village called Lolitimukh Gaon of Jorhat districts of Assam. Lolitimukh Gaon is situated near bank of the Brahmaputra river in North West direction on 20 km far away from Jorhat town. It is totally the Mising Tribes dominated areas. The people are cultivator. Their life is depend on agricultural sector. Total population of the villager is 914. In this village three incident of such heinous practice which shook the collective conscience of the country are the some of the illustrious cases on witch hunting in Jorhat district.

#### **1. Surjya Doley:**

In 2014, Surjya Doley had been attacked by the villagers, who is identified as witch and accused his to mislead young boy named Ananta Doley through black magic. In view of Ananta Doley, Surjya Doley offer him some black magic through the worship with red hen cutting in bank of the river and dancing nakedly. After the activities Ananta Doley become fear and mentally disturbance. The village people had gathered for judgement about the matter in village adalot by headed of Gaon Burah where the suspected person is identified as witch. In this case, some individuals from the village had planned to exclusion him from village and some of them had torture, punished, beating, force to eat human excrement, and burn the victim. The victims house is burnt by the villagers and his family is thrown out from the village. His properties land, domestic animals are occupied by his brothers.

#### **2. Yumri Pegu:**

In 2000, Yumri PEGU a 25 years old lady was expelled from her village for allegations of being a witch. Her mother was also thrown out 10 years before in the witch practices manner from the village. She was a introversion women that never share own feelings with other persons and also least communicate with the others persons. She stays alone with her own will. Yumri Pegu was torture, beating, cutting her hair and punished by villagers. She was expelled from the village and forced to take shelter in a Char-Chapori (small river island where no people live in the areas) near the Brahmaputra river alone from 15 km village, LolitiMukhGaon. She was informed to the Mising community organisations namely the Mising Students Union, The Mising Woman Organisation of Jorhat Anchalik Samiti. When the members of the organisations wanted to communicate the matter with villagers, they denied. As a result, Yumri Pegu was lived at the Chapori alone for ten years after she was expired.

#### **3. Sildar Patir:**

In 2001, Sildar Patir was aged 54 years old men thrown out from the village LolitiMukhGaon due to brand as witch. Sildar Patir is a man of introversion who is never attend in public meetings and communicate with the other persons. He had migrated from Borbali Gaon in Majuli island. He was expelled from the village due to being as witch ten years ago. His family was a economically very poor. They had depended upon with fishing activities their livelihood. One day a village person has witnessed that Sildar Patir had done some activities to offer articles of worship with red hen cutting the head and some other ornament. After few days, the witness person publicity the matter among the villagers and called a public meeting for judgement about the matter in the community court headed by Gam (head of the village, Gaonbura). In this community court, Sildar Patir had branded as witch and the perpetrators beating, punished, force to eat human excrement him. His wife and daughter had molested by the perpetrators. In the result the victim family have thrown out from the village. He had filed a case

It is remarkable that some of the others cases have found in the Jorhat specially in the Mising people dominated areas. These are mentioned in following :-

#### **Yakashi Pegu:**

Yakashi Pegu was an inhabitant of Borchapori Gaon who is a clear case of community sponsored violence against helpless and single woman to make an impression on her land after her husband's death. When some

villagers perceived that the widow has branded as witch then the perpetrators are expelled the widow with three children beating, punished in water that bonding the victim hand thrown down to water. The relative of the victims conspired to take hold of her property. They accused her of misleading a young woman through black magic and branding her a witch drove her. They have been taken shelter at father place still today. There have also faced social problems. However, the villagers have snapped all relations with the family and are living the life of socially boycotted.

### **Laskhi Kanta Doley**

On July 2015, Laskhi Kanta Doley aged 48 year-old was thrown out from the village Bheklimukh Gaon when a woman in the village fell ill and a 15 years old boy was suddenly expired. His wife was death in 10 years ago who had left with four children. He had arranged re-marriage after five years. Laskhi Kanta sometime reads some books at night which is seen by a neighbour person. While the books are read at the time whole dogs are barked and the domestic animals are run away from staying place. There were many unnecessary books found in the box of his home. As the result he was branded as witch and a mob of villagers attacked him. He ran for somehow his life and took shelter in a village Malowpatharat near Jorhat town.

### **Scientific temperament against their beliefs:**

It is notable that through the cross examination the basic causes behind being as witch and accused witch hunting practices, it explores to be scientific suggestions as follows :-

1. The villagers believed that sudden expired of a person is caused of being as witch. It is remarkable that the sudden death of person may caused of health problems. It is caused of high blood pressure can lead to stroke. In young adults and individuals above the aged of 30 the most significant causes of sudden cardiac death is a heart attack caused by a blood clot that obstructs the blood and oxygen following to a part of the heart. The damage this causes can induce potentially fatal cardiac arrhythmias.
2. The people have believed that repeatedly barking of the dogs is the prediction and symptom of existing of the witch. This is a unscientific beliefs that dogs barked naturally at night and also the full moon night repeatedly barked due to reflect of the moon light.
3. The survey people are living in the unhealthy, poor environment conditions. The modern education, medical facilities and communication system are unable to touch the particular areas. The villages are situated in the bank of the river the Brahmaputra where every year go under in flood. After flood it is naturally break out the various types of the epidemic. They are unaware of the modern ways of health and hygiene, various diseases which break out easily among them. It is the caused for die of the human and domestic animals.
4. It is the another most important cause that the third party has involved in branding a witch. Man always want to become powerful than others. The third party in generally target to poor and weak people for occupied their properties.

### **Witch hunting and Role of the Mising community organisations:**

Today, in globalize age the Mising Society is the most significantly practice the witch hunting the irrational, illogical and unscientific tradition religious beliefs. It is notable the Mising People are living in different backwards part of Assam significantly bank of the the rivers, far away from the urban areas. The area are situated in very poor and remote location. The communication systems are very poor condition and unable to influence with social media and mass media. The people are maximum basically belonging to economically poor, illiterate, unhealthy people because of living in the unhealthy environment. The police protection force are unable to communicate due to remote location. In this situation the Mising community organisations must played some important role against the practices of this social evil the witch hunting. The Mising community organisations are namely Mising Student Union (Takam Mising Porin Kebang), Mising Sayhitya Sabha (Mising Agom Kebang), The Mising Cultural organisation (Mising Dirbi Kebang) etc. those organizations should motivated the perpetrators that there have nothing any kind of witch in the world. It is just a blind faith and superstitious. In the Mising community areas which are remote and rural, have a low rate of illiteracy; people are guided by blind faith and superstitious beliefs. Therefore they must become educated and awareness about it unscientific faith. It must remove from their society such irrational and illogical beliefs. Those particular community organisations must campaign against the practices of the social evil witch hunting. They are playing a vital role in creating awareness among the people and have organised awareness camp, public meetings and health camp also. They arrange the talks shows, seminars, workshops about the matter of witch hunting. They are given importance on rehabilitation of victims of the witch hunting, force to punish the perpetrators of witch hunting and the government to bring strong law for stopping the menace of the social evil.

#### IV. Conclusion

In the 21 century as the science and information technology- communication age some of the people are faith and belief about traditional unrealistic superstitious religious norms. In Jorhat district of Assam mostly the Mising People influential areas, witch-hunting is still meaningful in their views, which are far away from receiving the blessings of modern education, science and technology. Indeed, vulnerable are those areas, where the community pitifully lacks the awareness of modern infrastructural facilities in healing their ailments in particular and in meeting their basic needs in general. In the above analyse the major reasons behind with the witch hunting existence in the Mising Tribes is only traditional blind faith and unrealistic conditions. Again, village people's immense faith on immediate expired a person are caused of Dainionly a blind faith. It happens due to the lack of adequate medical facilities in the vicinity. Human rights are important part every person where nobody can live a civilised life with out human rights. In name of the practices witch hunting the people are violated highly violated human rights. In above discussion, it is analysed about the human rights violations of the victims, nature, causes, effect of being a witchcraft and witch hunting. And also the scientific value and resolution is suggested against witch hunting practices. The people are not concern about the human rights human rights violations. Witch Hunting is one of the worst forms of human rights violations. It is one kind of mental harassment that whole family members are faced problems. The victims people are become homeless and they are separated from society as well as villages. They must aware about the government act and punishment for violating human rights the name of practicing witch hunting. This obviously points to the necessity of urgent uplift of socio-economic and education status of the community and the installation of a rational mindset. It would be a wise step to train our local healer in the light of improved skills so he can provide the village community at least with a rational explanation of their ailments. We can create mass awareness through awareness programmes and public meetings among the people so they are not easily manipulated by any illogical force and encouraging them for pursuing formal education, health education and legal education. In Assam, the Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015 (Assam Act No. XXI of 2018) had received the assent of the president of Indian on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2018. This act will be strongly enforced in Assam time ahead. Witch Hunting is a one of social evil and the social menace, there is need for special law to stop it. The government administrative, NGO's and community organisations are must play a vital role in creating awareness among the people.

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