

CHAPTER: 14

BRINGING SMILE ON THE BLUE FACES: A CASE OF WITCHCRAFT SURVIVORS FROM JHARKHAND

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ABSTRACT

Jharkhand, a state in India, was separated from Bihar in the year 2000 and is known for its greenery and natural beauty. But amidst this beauty lies a gruesome practice in remote villages popularly known as Witchcraft. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in Jharkhand, NCRB and other sources disclose data/reports stating that the total number of heinous murders in the name of witchcraft and the number of cases appearing is so high that it puts Jharkhand at one of the top positions among all other states in India. These data authenticate the prevalence of such malaise in the society of Jharkhand especially for women. This chapter deals with the status of witchcraft survivors in Jharkhand. It will analyse the problem in context with the status of the survivor, main accuser, basis of branding a person as a witch and types of violence faced by the survivor of witch-hunting. It will also make a study of the various witch prevention laws by the Government at the central as well as the state level.

Keywords: Witchcraft, Women, Problems, Support, Jharkhand

INTRODUCTION

A belief is a set of thoughts held by an individual regarding a particular thing. Strong beliefs of an individual are sometimes so powerful that they do not require any proof or evidence. Social evils are the outcome of such deep-rooted beliefs which prevent people from thinking sanely about the issue. Superstition is one of the most hazardous among all the strong beliefs as it depends on the confidence and

conviction of the people carried as legacy from generation to generation. Almost for centuries, there has been a struggle between science and superstition transformed into a long fight in a pursuit to surpass each other. Superstition can be explained as the strong irrational or mythological beliefs generated by belonging community and religion. This is a personal belief that differs for every individual because of their social background and religious practices.

There are a few superstitious beliefs such as while traveling a black cat crossing the road will be considered as an omen, 13 is an unfortunate number, and ladies are not allowed to enter the sacred places and kitchen or touch the pickles during their menstrual cycle. If a cow stop giving milk or dies, if water is scarce in the village, or if a child dies during its birth, then it is supposed to be the work of a witch. The family members may accuse the woman who has come from a different family of evil and is a symbol of bad luck. In rural areas, these superstitions become stronger as they have less exposure to scientific and critical thinking.

India is a land where a woman is considered as 'Goddess' and is worshipped on one hand and on the other hand they are killed, tortured for the sake of dowry, skin complexion, and considered the weaker person in society. Our country faces a lot of social issues such as sex disparity, caste system, dowry system, child marriage, superstitions and many more. Out of much violence against women, one of them is witchcraft.

ORIGIN

The term '*witch*' has been originated from the words '*wicca*' and '*wicce*'. It is believed to be the practice of occult powers to harm others through supernatural means by an individual. It will be the manipulation of substances and or words that are powerful using magic to cause either harm or good depending on the person's intent. It is a steady procedure where fundamentally a solitary individual brands her as a witch at that point and gradually the demarcation is strengthened with the assistance of *bhagmati* and *ojhas*. In witch-hunting, both men and women can be branded as a witch and sometimes the whole family of the demarked individual is murdered as they believe that superpowers can be passed on to the heirs of the family. The reasons for witch-hunting are superstition, obtaining property, sterile women, sexual harassment, family disputes and many more. The accusers of witch-hunting can be family members, relatives and villagers who might take revenge for disputes on land acquisition, for women for turning down sexual needs and many more. Women such as deserted wives, sterile women and widows are vulnerable targets of witch-hunting as they fear raising voices in the community without male support. The witches in India may be called by different regional names given to them such as *Chudail*, *Dayan*, *Tohni*, etc. She is considered to be an ill omen for the society, in which she lives in. In the name of witch-hunting, these ladies are gradually segregated from the different associations in the community activities. The accused women are subjected to public humiliation and inhuman torture both physical and mental such as people are killing these innocent women, raping them, trying to acquire their property disgracing the victim through constrained undressing, blackening of the face, tonsuring the hair, forcing them to consume dirty water and excreta. These women are haunted so much by the accusers that they are scared to move alone in

the village. In some cases, the claims and false confirmations are severe to the point that they prompt the killing of the victims known as witch killings.

Witch-hunting is becoming dangerous day by day, as in some cases it leads to the brutal murder of the victim. Such pathetic incidents occur due to the lack of laws, or the negligible implementation of existing laws which prohibit such evil practices. The condition of women has become worse due to continuous violence, in the form of harassment, and ill-treatment no matter which caste or tribe they belong to. There is an urgent need for intense research and investigation along with a proposed suggestion for a better course of action against witchcraft for prospects to improve in the future.

Superstition is an irrational belief of an individual who has a personal background or can be driven by the living community or society. It can be said that superstition is such a sign that predicts a positive or negative outcome of an event, or action, perform any act aimed at improving something or preventing something undesirable, or maybe enactment of something good for the sake of sacrificing anything else (Fedorova & Fattakhova, 2015).

Superstitions and superstitious beliefs are found all over the globe. Only the type and degree of the beliefs differ in different regions and cultures. However, they are beliefs that for many people provide a sense of control and positive satisfaction and reduce anxiety (Dagnall & Drinkwater, 2018). For example, when somebody is speaking about a good event or a recurring good happening in life then immediately after completion of the content the word “touchwood” is uttered to stop the negative energy to attack on the occurrence of the event. This is a positive superstition belief

But the negative comes when evil starts. The origin of the evil practice of Witch-Hunting trails way back to the past when atrocious witch-hunting attacks were common. In early Europe, the woman who was against the church was believed to be a witch, considered to be one who brought misery, and so to defend society, such women were burned. Later on, women were kept responsible for all the calamities, including droughts, floods, and infectious diseases that caused the death of livestock. The only response to this dismay was to destroy those who were responsible for it. It was also seen that events that could not be addressed were believed to be the act of women who had spiritual influence, and this was increasingly taking place in society, and which continues to have a significant impact on society. The practice was, for the very first time documented in England when a woman named Agnes Waterhouse became the first person to be executed in England for witchcraft in the famous trial of ‘The Chelmsford Witches’. The trial of ‘The Chelmsford Witches’ was followed by the trial of ‘The Pendle Witches in the early 1600s and the ‘Trier Witch Trials’, which were the largest witch trials in European history. Subsequently, Witch-hunting became prevalent in America as well. The Salem Witch Trials, which took place in the Massachusetts settlement of Salem in 1690, marked the start of this practice in the United States

WITCH HUNTING IN INDIA

A witch also known as Diani derived from the Indo-Aryan term dakini which means ‘mean goddess’ (Sarma, 2014). Witch hunting primarily targets women more as compared to men (Mehra & Agrawal, 2016). One of the reasons for this may be due to the patriarchal society of our country. Gender is

always taken as a common term whereas, on the other side, gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination (Sivakumar, 2008)

Social factors such as female feticide, illiteracy, early marriages, undercounting of women in the family, biases in terms of health facilities and economic factors such as women's less submissive participation in work and politics are the determinants that allow "males" to be considered the superior gender (Raju, 2014).

Apart from this, single -women are seen as vulnerable targets for discrimination. According to the 2011 Census, there is an increase of 39% in the number of single women in which women deserted by husbands, divorcees and widows are included (Mukhopadhyay, 2016). The life of a single woman is tougher than any other woman in our society. A major section of Indian society believes that a woman has an identity with a man who may be her father or husband. Single women such as widows and abandoned wives in rural India are not allowed to get involved in auspicious activities such as marriages, as they are considered ominous and sometimes can be labelled as witches (Bhandare, 2017). A woman who gets widowed has to go through a lot of difficult circumstances. A widow not having a son who can be the male successor of the property, is unable to inherit the rights on the property for herself as her brothers-in-law do not consider her identity and sometimes is abused by them too (Srivastava, 2015).

According to a case study of Western Gujarat widowed women who were sisters-in-law were blamed as witches by their remaining brothers-in-law for raising their voices against them as they defecated on the victims' share of lands (Yasmin, 2018). Therefore, people who torture women by labelling them as witches have a stringent mindset that has deep-rooted superstitions and follows the patriarchy to lay the blame on women.

WITCH HUNTING AMONG TRIBALS

In India, the earliest evidence of witch-hunts can be found in the Santhal witch trials in 1792 (Archer, 1979). The tribal-dominated states such as Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Assam are the worst affected by the practice of witch-hunting (Dey, 2017). Around 95.83% were female in the identified case studies of Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh (Mehra& Agrawal, 2016). In Assam, the witch-hunting deaths are not based on gender discrimination as among 116 deaths 60 were female and 56 were male during the last decade of 2011 (Nath, 2014).

The basic reason for branding a woman as a witch is strong superstitious beliefs. According to a case study, a witch is described as a devil in humans who survives on blood and flesh and has the power to burn anyone just by looking at them (Chaudhuri, 2017). Women who are unsupported either because they are single or are widows who have property become the primary targets (Masoodi, 2014). The women who are branded as witches are physically and mentally abused. According to a few case studies of Jharkhand, the victim was beaten up, dragged out of the home by pulling her hair and was axed down before the tamarind tree because death was considered to be the ultimate punishment for *dains* (Singh, 2016)

METHODOLOGY

So, to analyse the problem in context with the status of the survivor, the main accuser, the basis of branding a person as a witch and the types of violence faced by the survivor of witch-hunting. and to study the various witch prevention laws by the Government this study has been designed.

The universe constituted 22 identified cases of 9 villages of the Kalebira block of Simdega district. A Census survey of the research methodology is used for collecting data from the study area as the universe of the study was small. It is the first-hand data collected by the interviewer directly from the respondents in the context of the present status of the victim which comprises her personal and social status. The interview schedule has been used as a tool used to collect primary data. It has a pre-defined set of questions to which the answers were collected from respondents through the way of conversation. The interview schedule consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions. It was used to get in-depth information from the respondents which can cover the different aspects of the study. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) has also been done with 8-10 persons with similar backgrounds to discuss the social well-being of the survivors. Participant observation was used as a way of observing the behavior of family members towards the survivor during the process of personal interaction with the respondent and family and also for villagers. It helped to see the similarities or differences in behavior towards a normal person and the survivor. However, in this research study, the websites, journals, case studies of the survivors, and newspapers were used as secondary data. This information has been used for studying the background of the research to be conducted. Also, it gave full insight into the interventions of government at the state level.

The research study was conducted in nine villages of Kalebira Block which are Sarangapani, Bhanwarpahar, Barwadih, Nawatoli, Sarai pani, Sardhatoli, Tutikel, Jhapla, Pogoloya. The majority population of these belonged to Scheduled Tribes. Kalebira is one developed block of Simdega district of Jharkhand State.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

To analyze the problem, it is important to do the status analysis of the survivor, study the main accuser and the different basis for branding a person as a witch. It is also important to look for the types of violence faced by the survivors of witch-hunting. This status has been observed in context with the social as well as the economic status of the survivor.

a. Social status

Females are vulnerable and easy targets as they do not raise their voices against any such taboos immediately. They are assumed to be the weaker section of society which will not react to wrong actions taken against them and hence are suppressed and dominated. Gender-based categorization of survivors reveals that out of 22, there was only 1 male survivor and 21 female survivors which means 5% were male and 95% were female. This data interprets that females are the vulnerable targets as compared to males.

The age of a person is a very important factor in social taboos like witch-hunting. In our society, it is supposed that older people especially women are more vulnerable targets. These people feel less strong due

to old age and sometimes have no family support too. Also, young women are targeted for second marriages and sexual assault.

Table 14.1: Age-wise categorization of survivors (when branded)

AGE	No. of cases	AGE	No. of cases
10-20	0	40-50	9
20-30	4	50-60	1
30-40	5	60-70	3

Table 14.1 gives the categorization of survivors based on their age when they were branded. The age of the survivors has been divided into 6 class groups which are 10-20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60 and 60-70. As it can be seen there are 0 cases in the age group of 10-20, 4 cases in the age group of 20-30, 5 cases in the age group of 30-40, 9 cases in the age group of 40-50, 1 case in the age-group of 50-60, 3 cases in the age-group of 60-70. It can be observed that the most common age group targeted for witch-hunting is 40-50. It holds 41% of the total cases. The majority of the victims lie between the age group of 20- 50. So, as we can see age plays an important factor in witch-hunting.

Caste is also one of the important determinants that provokes the accusers to brand individuals belonging to a particular caste. In this study area, out of the total population Schedule Tribe (ST) were 62.6% of all the available castes. Among the survivors of the total cases, 50% are STs, 41% are SCs and 9% are OBCs and the General is 0. This data interprets that the cases majorly belong to the ST and SC.

The marital status has been classified into 3 categories: Unmarried, Married and Widow. Around 91% of the cases are married and 9% are widows. This data interprets that the majority of survivors are married and it is a myth that widows are the major targets of witch hunting and does not fit this study area.

The family type has been categorized under 2 subheads: nuclear and joint. The categorization of families into nuclear and joint is done based on number of kitchens in a house (the traditional way of division of families in villages). Out of 22 cases, 77% belonged to a nuclear family while 23% belonged to a joint family. This shows that individuals who didn't have many family members were more vulnerable to being branded as witches.

In our village society, a major section of the society believes that a woman with a male child is more secure as the child will be stronger support in any kind of dispute. It is said that women having no male child or single supportive male child are more vulnerable but the data says that out of 22 cases, 23% have no male child, 36% of the survivors have only 1 male child, 23% of the survivors have 2 male children, and there are 18% of the cases who has more than 3 male children. This broke the myth.

Literate means when a person can read and write. The level of literacy plays an important role as illiteracy gives a place for superstition to be born both for accusers as well as victims. Illiteracy makes the person more vulnerable to being victimized in witch-hunting. Due to a lack of knowledge about legalities, they are unable to defend themselves. Also, they are not able to logically put their point of view and convince society in their favour. This is the result of a lack of education due to which they don't know what is to be done when they are blamed or how they can protect themselves. In this case, the literacy status of 22

survivors shows that 64%(14) of the identified cases are illiterate while 14%(3) are up to 5th standard and 23%(5) have qualification up to 9th standard, no one is literate above 9th standard, here we believe that literacy is important to be imparted

b. Economic status

Land holdings are one of the major assets which the villagers possess. The majority of the survivors have land holdings that are used as residences and for subsistence farming. In some cases, where the area of landholdings is more, it can become a reason for jealousy for relatives of the survivor or other villagers. So, forced land acquisition is also one of the reasons for witch-hunting. Land holdings of the survivors can be observed that 32 % of the survivors have less than 1 acre land, 18 % have 1 acre land, 23% have 1–2-acre land, and 18% have more than 2-acre land. Only 9% (2 cases) are landless. This data interprets that the majority of the survivors have land holdings so land acquisition could be one of the reasons for witch-hunting as a witch could be easily removed in the name of good deeds. Through FGD it has been observed that in the respective area of study, there were 3 major sources of livelihood of the survivors, they are farming, non-agricultural labour and self-employment. Farming included subsistence farming or a little surplus which can be sold for little earnings. The non-agricultural labour that goes to the nearby town in search of daily jobs or does seasonal migration. Self-employment includes selling timber and non-timber forest products. The self-employed like are engaged in selling wild fruits, tendu leaves, etc.

c. Main accuser

An accuser is a person or a group of persons who puts any kind of allegation on any individual or accuses someone who may be hurtful. Study shows that the major accusers of witch-hunting are family members, relatives like a brother-in-law, sister-in-law, etc., and villagers/ neighbours. Initially, it starts with the neighbours and then it spreads to the whole village. This is so because in villages people are very superstitious and reasons such as illness or death of any person in the neighbourhood, death of livestock, etc. give the villagers a chance to accuse the victims. A villager can accuse easily in comparison to a family member or relative because firstly the particular accuser (villager) cannot be traced as they are words of different mouths and secondly, he/she is not directly answerable to the victim. FGD conducted reflects that the cases of overlapping are very common. Observing the behaviour of family members towards the survivor during the process of personal interaction for status analysis with the respondent, family and for villagers. It helped to see the similarity or differences in behaviour towards a normal person and the survivor. Multiple accusers are seen in many cases.

d. Basis of branding a person as a witch

It can be observed and discussed that the most common reason to allege a witch is the illness of any person in the village. The next ascending reason is death in the family. Jealousy due to better income status or happy family among people is also used as a weapon to allege. Sexual harassment is also one of the reasons for witch-hunting. There are other reasons that hold importance are allegations such as family disputes, death of livestock, allegations by drunkards, misunderstandings due to superstition, etc.

e. Types of violence faced by the survivor of witch-hunting

Witch-hunting is an allegation that begins with mere recognition as a witch, a person supposed to have magical powers that can be used for harmful practices. These allegations then turn into oral abuse which includes personal and public humiliation. It turns worse to physical abuse which includes beating and torturing and then finally into threats of death. It may also happen that the victim is mentally and physically harassed which forces them to leave the village. In this study, the survivors faced different levels of violence such as abuse, humiliation, grave physical violence, chased to murder and sometimes the harassment level was so high that they had to leave the village. Almost in every case, the survivors are abused but 32% of the cases are only abused. In 36% of the cases, they have suffered from public humiliation and are threatened too. Moreover, 14% of the cases after being abused and humiliated have gone through worse conditions inhuman physical tortures which include naked parade, beating from heated iron rods, severe wounds from attackers, etc. In 3 cases, the survivors were chased to murder by the accusers. There is 1 case who has suffered no violence

f. Entitled linkage

- The underprivileged population of rural areas is highly dependent on facilities provided by the central and state governments. The government helps them to access the benefits of these facilities through entitled schemes. 95% of the cases have a Bank account, but still, 5% of the cases have not yet applied for their bank account.
- A Voter ID card is a photo identity card issued by the Election Commission of India to all the individuals in the country who are eligible to vote. It is an important document for an individual as it gives the power to choose the right person as their representative. 86 % of the survivors have their voter ID card in the village and are aware of their voting rights while 14% of the cases don't have their voter ID card and are still in the process to apply for it.
- The Aadhaar card is the unique identification number given to all the residents of India by The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). This is a unique identity card which is enough to eliminate duplicate and fake identities. Also, the Aadhar card is accepted nationwide and can be accessed or updated from anywhere in the country through online service. 100% of cases have an Aadhar card which interprets that every survivor has at least one identity proof.
- A job card is a document that records workers' entitlements under the scheme of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). This document serves as identity proof which promises 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members are willing to work for unskilled jobs for which they will get paid. 77% of the survivors have job cards and 23 % do not have job cards. However, this 77% is not satisfied just with the mere availability of job cards as they complain that there is no availability of sufficient jobs
- Ration cards are an official document issued by the state governments of India to families or households who are below the poverty line to purchase food grains at a subsidized rate through the Public Distribution System. These families who have the BPL ration card receive 35 kilograms of food grains. 95% of the survivors have ration cards in their name. 5% does not have the ration card in their name as the other members of their family already have it. They are still in the process to apply for it.

g. Support to provide facilities

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna is a scheme to protect the health of women from the smoke of fuelwood used in the kitchen. This scheme was launched by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to provide LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) connections to women who fulfill the eligibility criteria for being in BPL households. 63% of the survivor already has availed of the gas connection, and 23% of the survivor has applied for the gas connection. Still, 14% have not even applied for it as they don't know how to use the appliance or they don't know the process for application
- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna is a scheme launched by the government of India to provide a pucca house to those living in kutcha houses. The scheme assists Rs. 1,20,000 in plain areas to the households who are eligible for the scheme. 45% have not yet availed of the scheme of PMAY and 23% of the survivors have applied for it. It can be observed that only 18% of the survivor have availed of the scheme and has got a house made under the scheme. In rest 14% of the cases the houses are under construction. It can be interpreted that a large section of the survivors is unaware of the benefits as they have still not registered themselves under the scheme.
- The Swachh Bharat Mission was launched to create a clean India through the elimination of open defecation through the construction of community toilets and waste management. The motive of the scheme was to bring behavioral change in the people to use toilets and accept healthy sanitation practices. 59% of the survivor has toilet facilities. Toilets are under construction in 18% of cases but still 23% of the survivors are struggling to get the benefit of the scheme. The best part of the scheme is that those survivors who have availed it, are also using the toilets and there is a reduction in open defecation.
- The Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojna is an insurance policy for accidental death. Any person between the age group of 18 to 70 years having a bank account linked with an Aadhaar number can avail of this scheme. A premium of Rs. 12 per annum will be automatically debited directly from the beneficiary's bank account. The risk coverage of death is Rs. 2 lakhs. 36 % of the survivors have already registered their bima, 9% have applied for the bima yojana and the rest 55% of the survivors have not yet availed of the scheme as the survivors are either not in SHG or are not active members in the group so they are not aware of the program and in some case, the scheme is yet to avail in the village.
- The Old Age Pension Scheme provides social assistance for old age people between the age group of 60 years to 79 years belonging to the household below the poverty line. The government assists with a pension of Rs. 200 per month. 67% of the survivors" i.e., 4 cases are getting the benefit of Old Age Pension. 33% are not getting the benefit as their applications getting rejected due to some reason. Also, most of the survivors are illiterate so they don't know the process of application.
- There are 2 cases of widow survivors out of which both of them have not availed the scheme as one was not applicable for it and the other had availed of old age pension
- There was no case of a disabled person in the identified cases so no one was eligible for a Dibyang pension.

h. Legal support

In India, however, there are no legal provisions at the national level that can be used for penalising the crime of witch-hunting. Hence the provisions under the Indian Penal Code 1860 can be used for

different sections invoked in such cases are Sec.302 which charges murder, Sec.307 attempt for murder, Sec.323 wounded, Sec.376 which penalises for rape and Sec.354 deals with outraging a woman's modesty (Vaishnavi, 2015).

Bihar and Jharkhand had special law dealing with "witchcraft" and 'witch' which is 'The Prevention of Witch (*Daain*) Practices Act 1999' which was enacted in Bihar and adopted subsequently by Jharkhand as "The Prevention of Witch-hunting (*Daain Pratha*) Act 2001". The State of Bihar, although being a backward state in many respects, was the first state in India to frame laws against witch-hunting known as 'The Prevention of Witch (*Daain*) Practices Act, 1999'. Under this, the Supreme Court had directed the Bihar Government to form special cells to deal with witch-hunting, since it was felt that widows who own properties within the State such women are particularly vulnerable to being branded as witches (Masoodi, 2014). The Act prescribes a jail term in the range of three months to one year and a fine in the range of rupees one thousand to two thousand under different sections. Jharkhand was the second state in India to pass another demonstration, two years after Bihar. "The Prevention of Witch-Hunting Practices Act, 2001" was signified, "to provide for effective measures to prevent the witch practices and the identification of a woman as a witch and their oppression, mostly prevalent in tribal areas and elsewhere in Jharkhand, and to eliminate the women's torture, humiliation and killing by the society". Section 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Act talks about the punishment which will be granted if anyone identifies someone as a witch, tries to cure the witch and any damages caused to them, whereas Section 7 states the procedure for trial. (Efforts of governmental and non-governmental agencies, n.d.).

i. Observations

Due to lack of education rural people practise witchcraft. Sometimes people are bound to follow and consult witchcraft as a part of their tradition. Accusers are seen as close to one of the victims. The awareness so made should be followed by action. Rural people are unaware of their laws and rights. There can be camps where public and police interaction can be done.

As done by the states of Assam, Odisha and more. The "Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Act, 2015 Act 21 of 2018" and "The Odisha Prevention of Witch-Hunting Act, 2013", have undertaken IEC activities for creating social and legal awareness against witch-hunting with the help of Anganwadi workers, self-help groups, Panchayati raj institutions, etc. While the laws against witch-hunting and killings need implementation, this can happen only when the police and local panchayat bodies are sensitised, education and healthcare facilities are provided to all

The SHG members should discuss social issues for public awareness. The pamphlets containing laws regarding witch practices and other social problems can be kept in every SHG, VO, CLF, BLF, and Gram Panchayat. It will spread awareness about the legal rights of the victim and action that can be taken against the accuser.

Scrutinising the activities of the local healers (*ojhas*) is also important. Alternative employment opportunities must be created for *ojhas* such as the development of herbal parks where they can practice herbal medicine. These witch doctors, who enjoy the patronage of local politicians and leaders of the

traditional tribal self-rule system, must be held accountable for such incidents. Villages can have a village chowkidar. And the entitlement status of survivors is good and their linkage with government programme is also appreciated.

CONCLUSION

Rural India still lives in the doom of social evils. The practice of witch-hunting is still prevailing in the notion of people. Changing one's belief system from witch-hunting is a challenging job because in general major accusers of witch-hunting are family members, relatives and close ones. The victims of witch-hunting are humiliated, publicly lynched, physically tortured and in worst cases brutally murdered. The statistics of this social issue are continuously growing which needs immediate checks to eradicate this issue from the society. At the country level, we need to frame an act specifically for witchcraft as IPC does not share special acts about these victims but at the state level, Bihar followed by Jharkhand has constituted acts. But framing needs to be followed by the execution, which is the need of the hour. The remedies include identifying initial signs of people being socially boycotted for allegedly practicing witchcraft with the help of a village chowkidar and nipping the problem in its bud by taking appropriate actions which will be decided after collecting the number of incidents.

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