

The Magic Art of Witchcraft and Black Magic

Ms Happy Baglari

Postgraduate student, Department of Psychology

Abstract- The belief in and the practise of magic has been present since the earliest human cultures and continues to have an important religious and medicinal role in many cultures today. The present study investigated about social representation regarding societal beliefs of witchcraft and black magic in North Eastern state of India. The study was conducted with the following objectives-

(A) What are the social representation of North Eastern youth of India on Witchcraft and Black Magic.

(B) How the amalgamation of Witchcraft and Black Magic affect the traditional and cultural life of North Eastern India.

For comprehensive understanding a questionnaire consisting of 11 questions relating to the practises of Witchcraft and Black Magic was formulated and conducted on 20 North East college students (10 males and 10 females) with the age group of 20-30 years. The participants were required to give their ideas regarding various practices like Voodoo, Mayong and Exorcism etc. also their suggestions regarding the abolition or continuation of such practices. Thematic analysis has been employed in data analysis. Interesting findings were revealed from the current study and the result indicated that the participants had negative perspective towards such practices. The study has implication for social psychology, which plays a major role in representing one's old tradition of their ancestors and cultural life.

Index Terms- Black Magic, Social Psychology, Social Representation, Witchcraft

I. INTRODUCTION

Social Representation was introduced by Mascovici (1973) with a study on the entry and diffusion of psychoanalysis within the French public of 1950s. Theory of Social Representation is adopted from Durkhheim's notion of knowledge of representation as collective (or social) phenomena, from the Piaget the aspect of social construction of reality and meaning from Freud the process whereby external realities / either objects, concepts or theories used in a person's environment / internal world views.

The theory of Social Representation is not a psychology of cognition about social life, but rather a theory in which psychological activities are located in social life. For Social Representation, attitudes and attribution arise as consequences of participant in social life; their form, as it was the visible tip of an iceberg whose submerged portion comprises the various structure which enable the subject to construct meaningful attitudes and attribution.

Witchcraft and Black Magic in North-East India – an overview

The North-Eastern part of India comprising of eight states- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim harbour more than 130 major tribal communities out of a total 427 tribal communities found in India (Dutta and Dutta,2005; Ramakrishnan,1992). Tribal people are the ecosystem people who live in harmony with nature and maintain a close link between man and environment. Animism, symbolism, superstitious beliefs etc. plays an important part in a tribal culture. They have deep faith in their traditional method of healing which often involves superstitions.

These practices are considered as a part of culture, there are folktales on it since time immemorial. However with coming Christianity many of such practices, had been discontinued yet it's still prevalent, such practices of northeast states are; Therii usually practice in Nagaland, it's an old practice basically by womenfolk which can be inherited from mother to daughter. It is believed that the substance in powder form which is invisible to naked eye. It is spread through directly to indirectly such as physical contact or air respectively. The poison is lethal it can cause death if not removed in time. The victim of therii suffer severe headache, nausea and death in prolong cases, medical cure has been rare yet there are people who has the power to remove the poison through prayer. The culprit is not accepted by the society, send to exile or amputate their hand if caught.

Another practice is the divination whenever people in problematic situation need insight, they go the diviners who would perform certain rituals and gave insight, and they go to the diviners who would perform certain rituals and gave insight who would sought them.

Postam Jadoo, is one of the most common and oldest black magic practice in Manipur. This particular Witchcraft is performed by Maiba (males who perform good or bad rituals for the community / shaman) or Maibis (females who perform the same). They perform this practice when a person seeks for something which would benefit with their lives. Another practice is MingselKanglonYengba, here a Maibi uses a mirror and chants mantras in order to find a thief or someone has lost something / goods, and then she will inform them the place where the goods may be kept. ThaodaYenga is again a different practice performed by Miabis. They uses oil, chant mantras and during this she can describe physical features of the culprit and can also tell the thief / place where the things have been lost would be found.

In Meghalaya, there is myth of 'menshohnoh' (cut-throat's) who worshiped supernatural being UThlen (a huge serpent that one can propitiate with human sacrifice). This sacrifice is made in hopes of acquiring wealth. The myth is quite commonly retold in the Khasi-Jantia hills. Many tribe communities practices indigenous faiths, and resort to mythical beliefs and related rituals for treating ailments too.

Witch-Hunts, occult practices are old-aged traditional practices of Assam. Black Magic Practitioners are called Bez or Ojha, still hold sway in white swatches of tribe-dominated areas in the states. The Assamese dictionary define Bez as faith healer (chikitsok) who heals by incantation and medicine. There is also a place in Assam, a prominent place is known as Mayong, a land of black magic.

WITCHCRAFT, Witchcraft (also called Witchery or Spell Craft) is the use of magical faculties, the art or practices of a witch, sorcery, magic. Most commonly for religious, divinatory or medicinal purposes. This may take many forms depending on cultural context. The belief in and the practice of magic has been present since the earliest cultures and continues to have an important religious and medicinal role in many cultures today. In the practice of Witchcraft, ordinary consciousness is suspended, and the witch experiences rapture, trance or ecstasy. The more spectacular variants of these states, such as wild dances and hypnotic chanting, have become predominant in popular perception, and exaggerated tales of naked rituals, orgies and licentiousness abound. Yet your average witch is far more likely to prefer quieter sorts of trance.

“Magic is central not only in ‘primitive’ societies but in ‘high cultural’ societies as well...”

BLACK MAGIC, has traditionally referred to the use of supernatural power or magic for evil and selfish purposes. With respect to the left hand path and right-hand path dichotomy, black magic is the malicious counterpart of benevolent white magic. Like its counterpart white magic, the origins of black magic can be traced to the primitive, ritualistic worship of spirits (Robert M. place 2009 book, Magic and Alchemy). Black Magic was designed to invoke spirits to produce beneficial outcomes for the practitioners. Place also provides a broad modern definition of both black and white magic, preferring instead to refer to them as high magic (white) and low magic (based) primarily on intentions of the practitioner employing them. During Renaissance, many magical practices and rituals were considered evil or irreligious and by extension, ‘Black Magic’ in the broad sense.

In particular though, the term was most commonly reserved for those accused of invoking demons and other evil spirit, those hexing or cursing their neighbours, those using magic to destroy crops and those capable of leaving their earthly bodies and travelling great distances.

SATANISM AND DEVIL-WORSHIP, the influence of popular culture has allowed other practices to be drawn in under the broad banner of “Black Magic” including the concept of Satanism. While the invocation of demons or spirits is an accepted part of black magic, this practice is distinct from the worship or deification of such spiritual beings.

White magic is supposedly utilized only for good or unselfish purposes, and black magic, we are told, is used only for selfish or “evil” reasons. Satanism draws no such dividing line. Magic is magic, be it used to help or hinder. The Satanist, being the magician, should have the ability to decide what is just, and then apply the powers of magic to attain his goals. Satanism is not a white light religion; it is a religion of the flesh, the mundane, and the carnal of which are ruled by Satan, the personification of the Left hand Path.

VOODOO, Voodoo too, has been associated with modern “Black Magic”; drawn together in popular culture and fiction. However, while hexing or cursing may be accepted black magic practices, Voodoo has its own distinct history and tradition that have little to do with the traditions of modern witchcraft that has developed with European practitioners like Gerald Gardner and Aleister Crowley. In fact, Voodoo tradition makes its own distinction between black and white magic, which sorcerers like the Bokor known for using magic and rituals of both. But their penchant for magic associated with curses, poisons and zombies, and Voodoo in general, are regularly associated with black magic in particular.

Social Representation, are “a system of values, ideas and practices”, that serve (a) to establish a social order that enables individuals to orientate themselves and master the material and social world they live in, and (b) to enable communication among members of a community through a shared code for social exchange and for naming and classifying various aspects of the social world including their individual and group history (Moscovici ,1972).Witchcraft and black magic is seen that it can be used both betterment and for revenge purpose. With the emergence of Christianity along with the development of science and technology, it uses have been reduced which are discussed extensively in the latter sections.

This paper is organised in four parts. The introductory part introduces the study problem and presents the objectives of the study. The second part describes the data source and methodology of the study. While results and discussion are presented in the third part, conclusion is presented in the final part.

II. DATA SOURCE & METHODOLOGY

Participants- 20 participants (Northeast college students) were selected and asked to fill a questionnaire. The number of male participants was 10and female was also 10, the age range of 20-30 years. Out of 10 male participants, 5 were from Mizoram and 5 were from Nagaland. Out of 10 female 5 were from Manipur and 5 were from Assam. All the participants are college students having middle socio-economic background.

Research Design & Procedure- We have used a questionnaire comprising of 11 open-ended questions. Finally after compiling all the information, thematic analysis of the data was carried out along with the interpretation and reduction. The data analysis involves understanding the raw data and then breaking them into units of practical meaning that led to emergence of themes. Further interview was conducted on selected participants then transcriptions, field notes were thoroughly studied and work with the narratives.

Ethical Consideration- Since it is a sensitive topic the participants were informed about the conduction beforehand and were asked to come forward without any selection process. It was also confirmed that the information provided by them will be used for study purpose and will be kept confidential in order to avoid negative impact on their lives.

Limitation- The study does not represent the situation of the entire population which consist of more diverse and complex groups of people. Also the participants could not be pressurized

to answer all the questions and also they don't know or are not clear about old tradition and the customs.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the comprehensive study of the data, the data was read and analysed. When asked what comes to mind about Witchcraft and Black Magic, both males and females participants responded with negative connotations. From the **Table 1**, as stated earlier, from the raw data we have derived, Major broad Themes were formed from the dimensions. Most of the participants associated with *Witchcraft and Black Magic* with something evil, scary, mysterious, superstitious, which was existed since time immemorial, aiming to harm other people. Most male thought of it as stupidity, harmful, very uncomfortable and nothing good at all. Few related with it *Satanism* which inflict wounds to the innocent people. Some participant cited reasons of thinking badly due religious prohibition. When asked their thoughts on Satanism and Devil worship, most of the participant believed in the

existence of such practices and thought it to be a cult practice which is unethical, silly, bad influence, stupid, an influence of western culture, a form of temporary happiness. Most female participants associated it with evil sacrifice, self-harming, dangerous and bluffing and something which is a total wastage of time. Most male participants associated it as a form of hindrance, something illogical, bringing bad luck, bad dream, destroying one's career. Few thought of it as anti-Christian behaviour, faithless in God and hunger or thirst for power.

The participants belonging to difference states gave various names of *folk-Magic* which are prevalent in that area. Most female participants related it with folk-tales. Manipuri participants mentioned that folk magic are performed by "Shaman (Maiba)" for good of an individual when misfortunes hits. There is also "Laiwa" performed to make someone fall in love. Another participant mentioned "SanamahiSanaba" which is related to a powerful local

TABLE 1, DATA ANALYSIS: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE DATA ARE ASFOLLOWS

DIMENSIONS	MAJOR THEMES REPRESENTED
Witchcraft & Black Magic	Evil, scary, mysterious, harmful, comfortable
Satanism	Inflicting wounds, unethical, silly bad influence
Folk Magic	Laiwa, potsam jadoo, Mayong, Ban, Seki-buhchhuak, Zawlaid, Divination, Evil eye, Healing Spell
Cure by Black Magic	Few were curious, some don't believe it
Exorcism	Casting out evil spirit, dangerous, possession
Mayong	A land of black magic
Love charm	Bogus unethical, & illusion
Voodoo	Weird and brutal

Changes regarding the practices	Reduced
Relation with science	Contrary view, illusion
Comments on abolishment of the practices	Mostly agreed, some want to respect the old tradition

deity, usually practiced by witches. In Assam “Mayong” is a place famous for the practice of black magic. However participants have only vague idea about it. Naidal community of Assam have a practice called “Ban” which acts as lungs, chest of the victims and cause instant death. Ban is send through air. Most of the participants reported about a practice where boiled-eggs are used as a means to stop someone admire a person. Mizo participants reported “Seki-buh-chhuak” which has the capability to produce anything you like. Some male and female participant also reported that by taking someone’s property and belongingness, like a strand of hair which when burnt with a magic portion while chanting mantras could make the victim sick and even be fatal. “Zawlaidi” is popular in folktales among Mizos which is used to make people fall in love. A practice names “Divination” is a common among Naga, which is used to find out inside of a problem. For such purposes people go to the, ‘diviners’. “Evil-Eye” is also a Black art used in Manipur. Certain people possess this power that causes severe stomach-ache, falling of teeth and even destruction of properties. Mizo participants also mentioned about the “healing spell”. They said that people mostly used for sacrificing evil taking revenge, hurting / destroying someone. When people suffer from ailments, they will consult the witch to perform some rituals to help by connecting with the spirit. When asked about the relationship between science and black magic, most of the participants gave contrary views between the two. As some of the participants are from science background, they believe in logic, facts and the nature of science. They believed that the practioners used chemicals during the rituals. Other participants think it is an illusion or delusional belief which disturbs the balance of nature.

Almost all the participants were against getting *cure with the help of black magic*, mainly because they do not believe in supernatural powers. Some preferred to go for religious healing. Others relied on the medicinal help. Few were curious to try new things; therefore, these participants were not against seeking cure from such practices.

In continuation with the analysis, when asked what they think about exorcism, few participants think that it exists while others did not believe in its existence. Participants reported that *exorcism* is a method of removal of evil from the body which is often performed by a priest. Some believed that it could be dangerous if not done properly while one participant reported that it is in a sense a good way to communicate with the spirit which suffered sudden death and murdered. One of the male Naga Christian participant stated that it was difficult to define

weather a person is really possessed or not. A person could have got seizure not long ago which could not see as a possession. However, if a person is truly possessed, exorcism could be helpful. He also mentioned that Catholic has special norm for performing exorcism. But they said “I’ll settle from doctor because they are well trained professional who have studied for many years relating to human health issues. The solution would not be complete cure but will pave a way from preventing occurrence of the some disease to other people.”

Most of the participants, when asked about “Mayong”, had not heard of this place or this practice. Few participants from Assam who reported of having heard of it described of it as prominent place in Assam, also known as “the Land of Black Magic”, which is used for the practice for black magic and witchcraft where some even have the power to turn human beings into animals.

Love-charm was the most familiar practice among the participants, where available personal case studies were found while interviewing. One such interview consists of a boy who tried but was left with a disappointing result which ended up in the boy losing trust in such practices. Most of the participants had a negative view toward the use of love charms to lure someone they admire. They considered such practices as bogus and unethical which gives mere psychological relieve but no real effect. Participants also mentioned that they would rather use their own ability rather than seeking such practices. While some participants, out of curiosity, would not mind trying out this practice.

While trying to check the prevalence of some specific practices like *Voodoo*, some participants reported having heard of it while some have not heard about it. Even among those who have heard, they did not want to use it as a method of revenge. One female **from Manipur** reported that properly that “Voodoo is done using doll, a needle and a spell. When the needle is pinned to the doll, it will directly affect to the person in the different places where the doll was pinned”. Few found it too evil to carry out this practice. They also found it weird and brutal. “Exorcism in one sense is a good way to communicate with the spirit, which are of sudden death or was murdered. But such kinds of practices can be dangerous if they are not done properly and may cause injury to the person which are intermediary”. Most of the male participants reported it as being seen movies. Some wanted to experiment but still think that it is evil. Many Christian participants did not want to take revenge, instead they believe in prayers.

And while asked participants about the *changes which has taken place regarding witchcraft and magic practices* has been reduced. Participants from Assam considered it unfortunate for having so many believers and followers of such practices. Another participant from Assam has also reported that changes has taken place though there has been many cases while reported about the witch hunting. Participant who is from Assam specially mentioned that if we are female, then we are more prone to becoming a victim of the spirit world compared to men. When woman go through their monthly cycles their auric shield weakens, if during that time period she goes near the graveyard or a river or lake or under trees, uses perfumes, drinks alcohol or take drugs, keep herself dirty, allow negative or sexual thoughts, she is inviting trouble as spirits are everywhere and can take charge of the female body anytime the circumstances are right. Some believed that changes have been brought since the *emergence and development of science*. With the advent of modernity all those practices have gradually decrease. Besides, Christianity has also played a vital role by stilling the love of god. Also people are more aware of these superstitious beliefs that they are guided by evidences.

North Eastern people have had a deeply rooted superstitious belief in their culture, which can be seen from their folktales. When enquired about the *abolishment or continuation of the practices of black magic and witchcraft*, most of the participants agreed to the abolishment of such practices. Even though they believed such practices caused hindrance to the society; they still wanted to respect the old tradition of their ancestors. Some participants wanted to abolish and save people from being tricked of money for evil games, believing these are the practices of evil-mind and would never bring improvement to the society. Also says that in this 21st century, practices such Black Magic and witchcraft are ignored by these modern society as they are mainly focussed on science. So, these practices are considered too be done on ancient medieval period and it is being told in folktales. But! In some places it is still done and passes to generation after generation.

Also from the review of literature mentioned above Vandana Goswami also found the Mayong prevalent in Assam and in her research she found some history books vaguely mentioning kamrupi and mystery. And in the other review of literature mentioned "Ethno medical Practice in Manipur: A case of Evil Eye by Loitongbam Sunita Devi" it is quite evident about various witchcraft practices in different modes. From the case study extracted through the interview two participants discloses few cases of love charm being used by others to their family members. And also they reported witnessing exorcism.

IV. CONCLUSION

Overall, after the conduction and analysing the study it found that both male and female participants hold negative view about Witchcraft and Black Magic.as reported by the participants, from the time immemorial, there has been numerous folk magic across different north Eastern states of India. However with the immergence of Christianity along with the development of science and technology, it has reduced. People has opted science rather than those old practices to get their work done. When enquired about the abolishment of such practices,

most of the participants inclined with the thought of abolishing them as it has caused hindrance to the people who does not believe / use it while still some wants to respect their old traditions of their ancestors. It is also seen that people continue to opt for and seek help from doctors who are professionally trained in various human health issues as they would know it better. If there is sickness there is always a way to cure / heal it without causing harm mentally and physically.

APPENDIX

Demographic status

NAME:
AGE:
GENDER:
STATE:
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATON:

Instructions

Please write your views on the following questions as it comes to your mind. Do not skip any questions. There is no right or wrong answers.

Questions

1. What exactly is Black Magic and witchcraft? Why is it done?
2. Can someone become a victim of spirit world without one doing any magic on the individual?
3. What kind of harm can be done to one using Black Magic or what kind of harm is inflicted on innocent people using the services of these Black Magician?
4. Can you mention any such practices that are performed in your area?
5. How do you relate it with science? Is it different or goes parallel with science?
6. If you are not well, you will prefer to go to doctor or you seek such practices for your cure?
7. Have you heard of exorcism?
8. Can you describe Mayong? And also about Voodoo?
9. Will you used "Love Charm" as an option to lure person you love?
10. What kind of changes has taken place in society regarding these practices?
11. Does these practices need to be continued or its abolishment is necessary?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wish to extend warm thanks and gratitude to the participants who opened up about their experience and knowledge about such practices, and without their cooperation it wasn't possible to carry out the study.

REFERENCES

- [1] Duveen.G & Llyod (1990), Social Representation and Development of Knowledge, New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge., pp. 45-48
- [2] Enigma of Mayong, available at: <http://northeastreview.com/2013/10/05>
- [3] Flick.U (1998), The Psychology of Social, Cambridge University Press., pp. 4-1
- [4] Rout.J & Sajem A (2009), Some Superstitious Botanical Folklore of Different Tribes of North Cachar Hills, Assam (North East India), Assam University, available at: http://www.aus.ac.in/Annual Report_2009_2010pdf
- [5] Social_Representation, available at: <http://www.ecademia.edu/2906122/>
- [6] Sunita L. (2003), Ethno medical Practices in Manipur: A Case of Evil Eye. University of Delhi, available at: http://www.krepublishers.com/...L.../Anth_05_1_025_040_2003

AUTHORS

First Author – Happy Baglari, M.A, Psychology, Previous Year, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007, India, <happy.baglari@gmail.com>