

Unveiling the Dark Legacy of Witch Hunts: Exploring Causes, Consequences, and Mental Health Impacts

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Abstract

“India ‘witch hunters’ kill mother and four children” - read a news article from BBC on the 30th of January, 2019. In today’s modern world of metaverses and crypto currencies, a dark reality thrives – a reality often ignored in its entirety, a reality to which people shrug shoulders in disbelief. For there are some phenomena which make the *Homo sapien sapiens* too uncomfortable to even fathom at dinner table conversations, since they are not subjects that can be brought up by intellectuals at a party with beverages in their hands – such is the taboo associated with them. For such phenomena have been around for decades, if not millennia. Such an instance is the phenomenon of witchcraft, black magic, *voodoo/hoodoo, tantra*, whatever one may call it. In the sordid underbellies of vibrant neo noir cityscapes, the living breathing evil of such (often) misplaced beliefs draw breath and with each breath they draw, another’s comes to an end. This doctrinal research document shall provide an overview and summarize the practices of witch-hunting and the criminality thereof still prevalent today and shall delve into the matter of mental illness(es) associated with such unpleasanties and rituals which might be a factor influencing the same or which are but end products or byproducts.

Keywords: *Witchcraft, Criminality, Criminal Law, Mental Illness, Witch Hunters, India.*

Introduction

A few objectionable practices/customs/traditions have continued in India since the days of old, inclusive of but not limited to - *sati pratha*, settlement framework and so on. Even the with the advancements of both the efficient and instructive practices of today, however, it is true that we have had the option to destroy a considerable lot of such malicious performances. Notwithstanding the act of a search for witches, as yet predominant in varying landscapes, all across the nation, inferable from the conventional/orthodox mannerisms and mentalities of individuals. Numerous individuals in the past have been tormented and executed owing to the confidence of the citizens in the noxious phenomena, such as black magic. As surprising, heinous and atrocious as it is, the incomparable Joan of Arc, who drove France towards triumph in contradiction of the British, was scorched alive, while being merely 19 years old, on being blamed for black magic (Behringer, 2004). The intelligences

of the Indian National Crime Bureau 2015 stated that 2290 women were marked as sorceresses and persecuted across India between 2001 and 2014.

There is a problem in society in our country represented by the practice of black magic, which is fueled by harsh convictions and persecutions. It is not unheard of in certain parts of India for people who are acting strangely or showing signs of mental illness to be taken not to a psychiatric hospital or therapist but to a Tantric Baba or Witch Doctor who is said to be skilled in the occult arts and black magic.

In today's age, psychology and related disciplines have advanced to incredible extents. Specialists, researchers, and the legal system all have a vested interest in how the public understands the concepts of mental health and mental illness. In the world of today – as liberal as it purportedly is, individuals who could get mental assistance from specialists, therapists, and others, are not treated yet, but are given in to fake and Healers of the Dark Arts professing options to perform expulsions of a supernatural nature in order to cure the illness(es).

Meaning of Witchcraft and Witch Hunting

The concept of 'black magic' or simply 'magick' is comprised of two lyrics '*wicce*' meaning 'create'. '*Wicce*' has rooted from '*wicca*' which translates to 'witch' and '*craeft*' alluding to 'expertise or capacity'. Black magic is the exercise of supernatural capabilities, while the person who engages in the practice of black magic is known as a witch or a wizard. Previously, maternity specialists were blamed for black magic and were made to face persecution and social conviction through exposure to torment. Due to the stigmatizing connotation of the term, people who are (supposedly) involved in black magic are looked down upon and ostracized by society. However, witch hunting is a malicious practice in which women who have been confirmed to have caused negative effects are marked as witches by Ojhas (occult/supernatural specialists/tantriks) or other significant local individuals (Briggs, 2002). These women are then pursued, expelled, lashed, assaulted, strutted, stripped, and marched through the town. They may also be forced to eat human excrement, lose their hair, and be whipped, and so on. Different titles, such as *dayan*, *tonahi*, *beta khauki* (child eater), *adam khauki* (alpha predator), *bhaikhauki* (brother eater), *maradmuhi*, *kheldi* (characterless), *bisahn* (poisonous), *bhootni*, *dakan*, and so on, are given to the women who are suspected of being witches. Thus, both direct physical violence and indirect forms of violence constitute elements of witch hunts.

History of Witch Hunting

At the turn of the thirteenth century in Europe, Germany in 1587, and in early modern era America, 1450–1750, the heinous practice of witch hunts was widespread and generally accepted as normal.

- **Britain:** There were three major organised demonstrations in England against witches during Queen Elizabeth's reign. Agnes Waterhouse, a woman, was the principal object of persecution

and eventual execution in England for black magic. In the well-known case of "The Chelmsford Witches," King James I of England encouraged the execution of witches, which in turn spurred the case of "The Pendle Witches" in the middle of the 1600s. Lord James I of England was the monarch at the time.

- **Europe:** Even highly respected locals like professors, judges, and so on were not spared the difficulties and atrocities of "Trier Witch Trials," which took place between 1581 and 1593 and were the major sorceress persecution/execution in European history.
- **America:** In 1690, in the town of Salem, Massachusetts, there was a series of events known as "The Salem Witch Trials." Many people were put to death through this time.

The Beginnings of the Hunting of Witches in India

No one knows for sure when witch hunts in India first started. Those who are at least somewhat proficient in black magic call the Morigaon district of Assam as home, and legend has it that they spread the technique there decades ago (Briggs, 2002). The purported study is a standard one in India and is predominant in rustic secluded regions particularly among the ancestral populace. In the states of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, witch hunts are particularly common.

And Who Exactly are the Victims?

The most common casualties of searching for witch are older ladies, widows who are marked as sorceresses in view of their actual bodily deformities or flaws which are observable, such as, hunchbacks, abnormal hair or skin tones. In a couple of instances even men have been blamed for possessing extraordinary abilities and are made to endure the fallouts. The family(ies) and offspring(s) of the ones, who are marked as witch(es), have to endure such treatments as they are generally communally outcaste and are expelled from the village or city or in more awful instances even killed.

Various Forms of Witch-Hunting Attacks

1. **Attacks Conceived in Advance:** These are the predetermined/preempted assaults intended towards fulfilling some specific aim, including unlawfully snatching property, lewd behavior and even at times for extracting payback.
2. **Surprise Attacks:** These assaults occur with next to no earlier struggle or warnings and the casualty has almost no information as to the allegation preceding these assaults. Shock assaults are rougher than the determined ones.

The Problem: Explained

No exact and affirmed information can be introduced or deduced for depicting the obliviousness of individuals in Villages with respect to Mental Health. It is important to keep in mind that this does not fall under the purview of any one religion (Legal Services India, 2022). This is something that transcends religious boundaries. Every single religion, including Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, in addition to other surrounding convictions, encourages such blatant disregard for the mental health and/or common liberties of others. Because of ignorance and nonappearance of reachable clinical offices, the situation has become increasingly dire, and an increasing number of people are turning to con artists, witch hunters, and quack physicians for assistance.

Countries Where the Practice of Pursuing Witches is Still Common

The nations where these practices are as of yet predominant include Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Gambia, Nepal, India, Papua New Guinea, Uganda, Mexico, South Africa, Chile, and West Indies. (IPleaders, 2020)

The victims of witch-hunting

- There were 400 victims of witch hunts in Tanzania in 2016.
- 2097 people were killed between 2000 and 2012 in India.
- In 2001, Jharkhand established a law intended to prevent the practice of witch-hunting. In 2015, however, five women were killed after being chased by a mob on suspicion of black magic.
- There were 99 documented cases of witch hunts in Orissa in 2017, up from 83 in 2016 and 58 in 2015.
- There were 202 documented examples of people being designated as witches and then slain in Assam between 2001 and 2017. This included 114 women and 79 males.

A 30-year-old Jharkhandi woman was recently murdered on suspicion of witchcraft. Jharkhand is a state that often engages in witch hunts. More fatality due to expulsion has been reported from Telangana. This time it involved a 24-year-old woman who was whipped by an offender from her own family for three days, before she was taken to the hospital and eventually died there.

The Orissa High Court has just been made aware of a case involving the murder of a woman who was the subject of an effort to exorcise a "bad soul" from her body. The Orissa High Court denied the perpetrator's bail motion; however the victim's brother or sister was given a hearing and granted immunity. The judge observed the lawyer dressing up as a witch doctor and exorcising people who were claimed to be possessed.

Three women were killed because they were accused of being Witches in the case State of West Bengal v. Kali Singh and others. For performing black magic rituals, roughly 50 people showed up to the residence in question and demanded 60,000 rupees as a fine. The three women were taken to the river where they were executed and dumped under the water. Depending on mitigating circumstances, such as whether or not the accused were confused by arbitrary persecution and whether or not they belonged to restricted zones, one of the Hon'ble Judges has ruled that punishments ranging from death to life in prison are appropriate.

Why is Witch Hunting Actually Flourishing?

- Those with an eccentric worldview believe that witches possess supernatural powers that they employ to harm others (by killing people, destroying crops, or harming animals), influence their bodies and minds, and seek out knowledge outside the realm of science.
- When people in rural areas with few or no educational opportunities or the elderly, unskilled residents of urban centres are unable to understand the context around a tragic event, they are quick to blame others.
- Not having money, being broke, and refusing to have sexual relations.
- Witch hunts can have many different causes, including a naive and moderate culture, patriarchy, economic worries, personal and social battles, envy, property debates, a dearth of clinical offices, and oblivion.

The Repercussions

Victims were subjected to mental anguish in addition to their physical suffering, as a Result of Such Witch Specialists or Attempts at Public Lynching by Irritated Assemblies (Witch Hunting), as well as Fraud and the Extraction of Wealth from the Victim and the Family or Associates of the Victim for the Sake of Confidence.

There are practitioners of witchcraft who are able to rid individuals who are said to be possessed by evil spirits through the use of exorcism. A fresh investigation has revealed that the risky procedure of executing expulsions was directly responsible for the deaths of two young children, ages 4 and 6 respectively.

State governments have passed legislation to combat the evil that is Witch Hunting, with an emphasis on denouncing the harrowing and demonic displays that have been presented against women, children, and occasionally men (Federici, 2004). Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Assam, and Jharkhand are just few of the states whose governments have enacted laws to counteract such rigidity and mitigate its negative effects.

However, these regulations are pointed toward providing cures in individual cases, the authorities & the governance don't intend to destroy the evil in the general public overall. Furthermore, there is a lack of uniformity in the punishment meted out to those responsible for wrongdoing. Karnataka's approved resolution carries a sentence of more than a year and up to seven years in prison, while Bihar's regulations impose sentences of as little as half that amount for specific offences. Aside from that, different issues with the state regulations incorporate the absence of uniform acknowledgment of the meaning of such regulations by extension going about as certain demonstrations are culpable in certain states and some in another, absence of uniform allure in regards to mindfulness, mission or plan, in addition to other things causes a downward surge in the deterrence levels.

These resolutions likewise need appropriate inclusion & elaboration. The resolutions should catch this terrible practice post occurrence, & also at the beginning of the actual issue by offering a solution for the person in question. This is the juncture where the element of emotional wellness becomes significant.

Regulations on Witch Hunting

Instances of "witch hunting" are illegal under a number of federal and state statutes and ordinances.

Multilateral Agreements and Other International Instruments

- Human Rights Articles 1, 3, 5, 12, 13, 17, 2, and 19 of the Universal Declaration.
- Articles 6.1), 7.9(1), 10.17, and 18(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Articles 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 11 of the Declaration for the Protection of All People against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- According to Articles 2(e), 2(f), 3, 5(a), 14(f), and 15(4), and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Instruments at the national level

1. Articles 14, 15(3&4), 15, 21, & 51(A) (h) of the Indian Constitution.
2. Drugs and Magic Remedies (objectionable advertisements) Act, 1954.
3. The Human Rights Act of 1993 (the "Protection" Act).
4. Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, Section 4.
5. Articles 302 (murder), 299 (culpable homicide), 354 (assault or criminal force to a woman with the purpose to insult her modesty), and 375 (sexual harassment) of the Indian Penal Code are all listed as number five (Rape).

Instruments at the State Level

- "The Bihar Act for the Prevention of Witchcraft and Daain Practices, 1999".
- The Jharkhand Act for the Suppression of Witchcraft and Daemon Worship (2001).
- The 2005 Chhattisgarh Tonahi Pratadna Nivaran Act.
- In 2013, Odisha passed a law to stop the practice of witch hunting.
- An Act to prevent and eliminate human sacrifice and other inhuman, evil, and Aghori rituals and black magic in the State of Maharashtra.
- There is a new law in Karnataka aimed at preventing and eliminating "inhuman evil activities" and "black magic."
- This includes the 2015 Rajasthan Act for the Prevention of Witch Hunts.
- This Act may be cited as the Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention, and Protection) Act of 2015.

The Necessity for Government Oversight (S)

- Beforehand the order of the government level regulations in anticipation of searching for witch, there were no stringent regulations regarding the matter, and those who were blamed were prosecuted under Indian Penal Code Sections 323, 354, and 509, and the ruthless demonstrations of pitting and shaving were treated as straightforward hurt.
- In 2015, a film titled "Kala Sacch," which was inspired by a real-life event in the Indian state of Jharkhand, was released. Seeta Devi was suspected of being a sorceress and was pierced with spikes and had her better half fashioned handi-covered as punishment; nevertheless, those guilty were not punished for the crime. Ultimately, the film's goal was to get the federal government to approve standardised rules on the issue.
- Furthermore, the regulations currently in force are inadequate as they center around disciplinary instruments, while not answering the need of killing the silly and abhorrent convictions. The approaches to announcing cases are likewise restricted and the rising necessities of the people in question and survivors are not inclined to. As a result of the fact that the assaults are typically portrayed as the result of mob ferocity, the accused, who are typically major members of the village or society, are frequently not held accountable for their actions.
- The people in question or others as a rule don't approach to report it because of dread or their acknowledgment of the practices. The perpetrators of the crime are absolved when there is insufficient evidence (Goodare, 2016). The practice of hunting witches shows a disregard for the social equality that is guaranteed by international agreements and the Constitution. There are a

variety of fundamental liberties that fall under this category, such as the right to live free from fear and to go about one's daily activities without being subjected to prejudice.

- In 2016, Shri Raghav Lakhanpal introduced a bill to the Lok Sabha titled "Prevention of Witch Hunting." However, the bill did not pass the legislature very often. The current legislation do not provide a realistic component to aid the victims in recovering from the effects of witch hunts, which may include restricted relocation, deportation from the community, social and financial blacklisting, and other such consequences. Therefore, there is an essential need for a law at the public level in order to eradicate this sneakiness across the board.

The Component of Psychological Well-Being

It is important to emphasize that, according to the Right to Health and the Right to Life are inseparable in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. In the case of *State of Punjab v. M.C. Chawla*, the Apex Court of India ruled on this issue and enunciated its reasoning. The people who have been wrongfully accused of practicing witchcraft or black magic have a right not only to their physical health, but also to their mental health. The Right to Access Mental Healthcare is provided by Section 18 of the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017, which was passed in 2017. The right to be safeguarded against any form of physical, verbal, or sexual abuse is provided in additional detail under Section 20.

In the case of *Mrs. Sashiprava Bindhani vs. Unknown*, the Orissa High Court stated that a law is required for the State to combat the social malady, while also recognising a report on the practise of Banamathi. This ruling was made after the court read a report on the practice of Banamathi (Kannada for Witch). According to the research, the afflictions of the Banamathi victims fit into well-known patterns of mental and physical diseases (Hutton, 2017). Hysterical neurosis, a prevalent type of psychiatric disturbance that is marked by bouts of abnormal conduct, was recognized as one of the psychological diseases that can be discovered in victims of such crimes. These can be directly attributed to strong socio-cultural attitudes, difficulties within the family and the individual's life, and other factors such as poverty.

Bio psychosocial Factors in Mental Illness in Relation to Witchcraft

Personal experiences and/or professional training, along with broader cultural factors, influence people's opinions about the reasons of psychological ailment, attitudes about the associations of mentally ill individuals, and attitudes about the suitable communal roles of people with psychological ailment, all of which are often characterised by some degree of stigma.

Disparities in the sociocultural meaning(s)/definition(s) of psychological ailment and connected views and approaches from the society affect help-seeking behaviour, treatment choices, service usage, and, ultimately, the value of life for those with psychological ailment and their loved ones (Karlsen, 1998). Even social distancing & seclusion is often observed as an after effect of stigma – which can be

albeit a strong hindrance in employment, independent living, & achievement of goals. In fact, it would not be far-fetched to say that social attitudes towards people with illnesses bordering on the negative can be debilitating & devastating to individuals even more so than the illness itself. Mental health stigma can be broken down into three distinct categories:

- a. A Common Attribution (negative beliefs with respect to a particular group);
- b. Intolerance (agreement with the beliefs);
- c. Discriminatory Practices (reaction in behaviour to prejudice, such as omission, ignorance, separation, isolation, discrimination, etc.).

Erving Goffman's basic idea of social dishonor is that of an attribute that deals and discredits extensively, transforming a person "from a whole and typical person to a contaminated, rejected one," and leading to the person's mental confinement as "an undesirable." Stigmatization, as was later added and understood, takes place when an individual "possesses (or is considered to possess) a quality or characteristic that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context." This trait shows, or could show, that a person is distinct from the societal norms; this could lead to devaluation; and this could ultimately link an individual to negative features or stereotypes (Levack, 2013). The manifestations of social stigma can vary from basis to basis including but not limited to sociocultural setting(s), reflective aspects of a culture or community, etc.

It is generally agreed that there are two main schools of thought when it comes to pinpointing the origins of mental illness: Many believe the "conventional" method is stigmatizing because it implies moral or religious transgression, character flaws, a wicked disposition, or the presence of evil spirits or curses (Midelfort, 1972). The biomedical and biopsychosocial approaches, on the other hand, place emphasis on the role played by a number of factors that are thought to be relatively less stigmatizing than one another, including genetic, biological, psychological, toxic, traumatic, or developmental processes (Stefanovics et al., 2016). On the other hand, it is commonly believed that the traditional points of view are incompatible with the more "natural" biopsychosocial opinion and that the previous, rather than the latter, is better connected with societal distance; these expectations need to be challenged, to the level that it is probable, by making use of actual data. It has been stated that in non-Western cultures, people who attribute their mental illness to supernatural origins, such as wizardry or control by evil spirits, are stigmatized and treated as social outcasts (Monter, 2006, p. 1221). Among a sizable community sample of Nigerians, 31% blamed bad spirits for their mental disorder(es), and 96% viewed those with mental illness as hazardous. It's important to remember that there isn't a single culture on Earth that doesn't believe in anything supernatural. Some people still believe in the supernatural even in today's advanced nations. There is no culture that wholly discredits natural explanations for illness, and even in extremely traditional groups, there are believers in such explanations (es). Supernatural explanations and biopsychosocial accounts coexist to varying

degrees in various civilizations (Monter, 2006, p. 1221). Nevertheless, the question of whether or not multiple points of view may coexist in the same people, and particularly in health professionals, is an essential one for the field of research. In reality, research shows that 11.8 percent of New Delhi's medical professionals think that fasting and faith healing can help treat mental illness (es) (Zika, 2007). Both medicinal pupils and the general people in Oman, according to a study comparing their knowledge and perspectives on mental disease, believe that evil spirits, rather than heredity, are to blame for mental health problems. One study found substantial differences between the attitudes of health experts in five countries (Brazil, Nigeria, China, and Ghana) toward people with mental illness(es), with U.S. professionals favoring the bio psychosocial view(s) of psychological ailment and Nigerian professionals favoring supernatural explanations (Stefanovics et al., 2016). Although studies of the attitudes of psychological wellbeing experts are less common than studies of the attitudes of the general public, one such study found substantial differences between the attitudes of health experts in five countries (Brazil, Nigeria, China, and Ghana).

The first section of the survey questionnaire asked participants to report their demographic information (such as their age and sex); another section was an updated type of three formerly developed attitude measures (Community Attitudes to Mental Illness (CAMI) scale, the Fear and Behavioral Intentions Towards the Mentally Ill (FABI) questionnaire, and an adapted form of a survey from the Program to Reduce Stigma and Discrimination about Mental Illness (PRSD) were all used). It has 43 items, each of which has a positive and negative dichotomous statement and a series of follow-up questions.

Theories on what triggers mental illness

Biological variables, brain illness, heredity, poverty, ownership by a sinful soul, traumatic event, substance misuse, stress, physical abuse, etc., God's penalty, wizardry, and curse were all named as possible reasons of mental disease in a series of 12 yes/no questions organized into social, personal, supernatural, and biological categories (Purkiss, 1996). Some of the statements and questions used to determine the extent to which people hold stigmatizing views toward those with mental illness were variations on the themes, "I am afraid of people with mental illness" and "Anyone with mental illness should not be given responsibility" and "As soon as a person shows signs of mental disturbance, he should be hospitalized."

Prospective Medical Interventions

People were also questioned if they thought that community-based services should be the primary delivery mechanism for mental health care, as well as whether or not they thought that hospitalization was necessary for the treatment of mental illness (Roper, 2004). Concerns were raised over the potential adverse effects on local communities if mental wellbeing amenities were situated in inhabited areas. The Taylor & Dear CAMI, created in 1981, served as the basis for these inquiries.

Social Remoteness

Questions like "would you be terrified of people with mental illness?" were used to assess social disengagement. "Would you mind if someone with mental illness moved in next door?" alternatively "would you strike up a conversation with a neighbor who had suffered from mental illness?" These questions developed after administration of the FBI survey.

Social Reception

We assessed social tolerance and disgrace by asking respondents whether they would be comfortable sharing a bedroom or getting married to someone with a mental illness; whether they would be upset or disturbed by sharing a workplace with someone who has a mental illness; and whether they would be embarrassed to be related to a previous psychiatric patient (Rushton, 2007, p. 283). Furthermore, participants were asked if they thought psychological illness was the same as physical disease.

Analyses

Americans and Chinese were the oldest and youngest participants, respectively. The Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Brazilian were all older than the average. Cronbach's alphas for the four factors are as follows: U.S. = 0.73, China = 0.81, Ghana = 0.68, Nigeria = 0.72, and Brazil = 0.70 on Factor 1 (socializing); U.S. and China = 0.86 on Factor 2 (normalizing); Ghana = 0.62, Nigeria = 0.63, and Brazil = 0.66 on Factor 3. The United States has a factor 3 (lack of faith in supernatural causes of mental illness) value of 0.93, China has a value of 0.75, Ghana has a value of 0.77, Nigeria has a value of 0.82, and Brazil has a value of 0.69; whereas the United Kingdom has a value of 0.61, Ghana has a value of 0.66, Nigeria has a value of 0.77, and Brazil has a value of 0.77.

No significant correlation (negative or positive) was found between the belief in paranormal cause of psychological ailment and the trust in bio-psychosocial causation across the entire sample or within any individual country, thereby disproving the report's core hypothesis. Finally, similar to the country-by-country analysis, we found a weak positive connection between the bio-psychosocial component and both socializing and normalizing attitude in the combined sample (Stefanovics, He, Cavalcanti, Neto, & Rosenheck, 2016). However, it should be noted that the discovered correlations were all quite weak (falling short of the significance threshold of 0.30). Many, if not all, civilizations and faiths around the world hold the belief that mental illness is caused by demonic spirits or the hand of God. It was expected that there would be an inverse relationship between the presence of supernatural components in the data and a focus on the scientific study of mind and behavior. However, this was not authorized, either when all five countries' data were combined or when each country's data was examined separately. Thus, the data strongly suggests that individuals may hold both biological and supernatural perspectives on mental illnesses, and that they may also hold various and sometimes contradictory perspectives on other topics (Thurston, 2001). Overall, the findings of the study showed that there was little disagreement between outdated views and contemporary bio-psychosocial

perspectives. This has given rise to optimism that, at least among medicinal experts, old-style beliefs do not need to stand in the way of promoting modern methods of mental health care. One such method is the "recovery approach," in which psychological wellbeing experts are urged to prioritize patients' own coping tactics even if they are not grounded in scientific evidence.

Conclusion(S) and Recommendation(S)

It is pertinent to note that stigmatization as a phenomenon is not only prevalent in the Indian sub-continent but all over the world. Rather than antagonize the country, it would be more useful to spread awareness & endeavor towards a stringent legal regime which conforms to international instruments & which is uniform. There's great need for the people in religious high circles to speak up about the social evil & malice that acts of witch hunting have become. It is high time that political parties set aside their vote-bank agendas & focus upon alleviating the society of such evils at large. Educational requirements are also there for purposes of the spreading of awareness as well as for ensuring that the future does away with evil superstitions & prejudices.

Thus, the recommendations are:

1. A joint Parliamentary Committee to decide –
 - a. A nationalized legal framework for witch hunts as well as the practice of witchcraft to be governed by.
 - b. The Penal Code now contains tougher and more comprehensive laws against witch hunting and the use of witchcraft.
2. Awareness programmes and Campaigns in sub-urban areas – to spread awareness against superstitions.
3. Changes in educational curricula of all schools to include the causes and effects of social evils such as witch hunting

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