

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
ON CHARGE OF PRACTISING WITCHCRAFT IN NEPAL**
(A CASE STUDY OF SIMARDAHI VDC OF MAHOTTARI DISTRICT)

**A Thesis Submitted To
The Central Department of Rural Development
for the Partial Fulfillment of the requirements of
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**By,
Ms. Reema Dahal
Roll No.: 3289
T.U. Regd. No. :7-1-014-0849-96
Central Department of Rural Development,
University Campus, TU, Kirtipur
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Letter of Recommendation

This is certify that Ms. Reema Dahal has successfully completed her Thesis entitled “Violence Against Women in Nepal on Charge of Practising Witchcraft (A Case Study of Simardahi VDC of Mohattari District) under my supervision and guidance. Thus, the draft is forwarded for final approval.

Supervisor

.....
Lecturer Mr. Umesh Acharya

Central Department of Rural Development
Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

Approval Letter

This dissertation entitled *Violence against Women on Charge of Practising Witchcraft in Nepal a Case Study of Simardahi VDC of Mahottari District* prepared by Ms. Reema Dahal has been accepted as a partial fulfillment for the Master Degree of Arts in Rural Development.

Evaluation Committee

Head of Department

.....
Prof. Dr. Pradip Kumar Khadka
Central Department of Rural Development

Supervisor

.....
Lecturer Mr. Umesh Acharya
Central Department of Rural Development

External

.....
Lecturer Mr. Abdul Quaiyum
Central Department of Rural Development

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Ms. Reema Dahal

ABSTRACT

Violence against women (VAW) has been a serious problem in Nepal. Although no comprehensive study has, so far, been carried out regarding the magnitude of the problem, a large number of women, especially in the rural areas, are believed to have been the victims of one or the other form of VAW. Torturing and harassing women on charge of practicing the so-called witchcraft is one of the serious types of VAW. The problem is reported to be rampant in the rural settlements, where illiteracy and poverty prevail. Each year, hundreds of women from socially and economically backward communities of the Terai region are bound to be tortured physically and mentally. The victims of such a social evil are mainly helpless widows, physically deformed and the ones from the poor and so-called Dalit or untouchable communities. The age-old patriarchic social structure, traditional cultures and customs, illiteracy and poverty are considered the major factors contributing to this type of social evil. Despite the government's initiative to discourage such practices and the public awareness campaigns launched by some social organizations, the problem exists. It cannot be eliminated completely without raising the people's level of awareness. Lack of strong legal provisions and the society's attitude towards women as secondary class citizens are also equally contributing to this problem. The study area is one of the most affected parts of Nepal. Several women are found to be victimized on the false and unscientific charge of practicing witchcraft in this village. Sometimes they are fully boycotted socially and ostracized from homes. Even in the 21st century, the people are so brutal that they are reported to feed human excreta to the women on charge of practicing witchcraft.

Analyzing the causes of the problem and assessing its trend is the objective of the study. The study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. Primary data were collected through field survey. For this, observation, questionnaire and interviews with key respondents were applied or used. While the secondary data were collected through both published and unpublished materials. The sampling procedure included probability sampling on a

simple random basis. Purposive sampling was followed in the course of the study as required. The findings of the study are expected to be helpful for the policymakers both at national and local levels to address the problem.

The situation of violence against women on charge of practicing witch-craft is rampant and very serious. Majority of the respondents were charged of witch-craft due to their abject poverty and old age. In course of analyzing the sectors of income expenditure, majority of the respondents (37%) were find spending their income on food. When analysed the views of the respondents on their saving, an overwhelming number (83 percent) said it was impossible for them to save money. In due course of assessing the decision-making power of the respondents, about 77 percent of them said that husbands were the decision-makers in their families. While assessing the major causes of violence on charge of practicing witch-craft, about 23 percent of the respondents said that women became the victims of violence due to their deformed facial appearance, while 17 percent opined that poverty led them to victimization. About 20 percent said physical weaknesses were the main reasons for the victimization and the remaining 40 percent said that they had poor confidence level to argue against those who alleged them as witch.

Hence, it is recommended the government to formulate strict laws related to violence against women in all forms and implement them strictly. Similarly, awareness campaign is to be launched to bring awareness among the females. Similarly, the level of education for women should be increased through providing free education at all levels. Last but not the least, it is highly recommended to apply the system of reservation for women at local, regional and central level.

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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATION

CBS:	Central Bureau of Statistics
CEDAW:	Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
FWLD:	Forum for Women, Law and Development
GAD:	Gender and Development
HMG/N:	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
INGO:	International Non- Governmental Organization
NGO:	Non- Governmental Organization
NHDR:	Nepal Human Development Report
NNAGT:	National Network Against Girls Trafficking
SNV/Nepal:	Netherlands Development Organization Nepal
UN:	United Nations
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM:	United Nations Fund for Women
VAW & G:	Violence Against Women & Girls
VDC:	Village Development Committee
Vol:	Volume
WID:	Women In Development