

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Study Context

Although the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights reaffirmed the belief in the equal rights of men and women in 1948, the progress towards equality for men and women has been minimal, especially in South Asia (Gurung, 2004:11). The *Human Development Report* 1995 showed that about 1.3 billion people were living in poverty. Almost half of them were in South Asia and about 70 percent of the poor were female.

With a view to bringing about desired changes in the lives and living standards of women, various approaches to development have been adopted in the last few decades. Until the 1960s, women were merely seen as quiet recipients and passive beneficiaries of development. In the wake of the feminist movement in the First World in the 1970s, international development agencies were pressurised by the western feminists to make women visible as a category for research and policy. In 1975, UN declared the period between 1976-1985 as the International Decade for Women. This has come to be characterised as Women in Development (WID). The WID approach emphasizes participation and integration of women in development.

The Decade for Women was proved to be instrumental in policy reforms for women's overall development. The governments in the Third World allocated specific programmes for women's advancement. Despite such efforts, women continued to occupy a marginal place in development thought and policy. The main reason for this was that WID received merely symbolic recognition and was not fully supported by material resources and political commitment.

As a more recent approach (after 1980s), Gender and Development (GAD) was articulated by some groups of women in the Third World. The gender approach

highlights the socially constructed roles of both men and women and looks at women in the context of society. The GAD approach seeks to empower women through greater self-reliance and transform unequal relationship between men and women. The goal for GAD is equitable sustainable development where women and men share power and participate in the decision making process. As an equitable development approach, GAD seeks to identify and address both short and long-term needs determined by women and men to improve their socio-economic conditions. It focuses on "the current and the potential role and responsibilities of both men and women and their access to and control over resources within a particular system" (Kabeer, 1999:256).

Until now, four World Conferences on Women have been held to implement different objectives regarding women's issues. The first conference was organised in Mexico City in 1975. One of its main achievements was that the period between 1976 and 1985 was declared as the UN Decade for Women. Due focus was laid on equity, development and peace. Gender-based violence was given prominence.

In 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the historic Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In 1980, the second world conference on women held in Copenhagen City of Denmark to review and assess progress in the implementation of the first women's conference's objectives.

In 1985, the third conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya. The fourth conference, which was organised in Beijing in 1995, identified 12 areas of concern for women. Violence against women is one of them.

The situation of women in Nepal is not so encouraging. Despite some initiatives taken to improve their social, health, economic and legal status, they are still backward and underprivileged in many respects. Women, especially those living in the rural areas, have

been facing a variety of social problems. The age-old patriarchal social structure, illiteracy and gender-based discriminatory practices can be taken as the root causes behind the backwardness of women. They have very limited access to education, health, employment, income generation, and political and legal rights due to the existing sex-based discrimination. Only about 42.5 percent women in Nepal are literate, while male literacy rate stands at over 65.1 percent. The disparity begins from the time of enrollment at primary level. Although the government had introduced a free and compulsory education in the Ninth Plan, girls' education could not improve significantly. Data indicate that the net enrollment rate at primary level for boys is about 97 percent and for girls about 61 percent. Competition rate among girls is much lower than boys. About 42 percent girls complete primary level as against 65 percent among boys. Similarly, female adult literacy rate is only 34 percent, while male adult literacy rate is well over 74 percent. Almost 40 percent of primary schools across the country do not have female teachers. The dropout rate among girls at high school level is also high and women's participation in higher education is very low (FWLD, 2003: 27).

Women suffer from many health-related problems, since they have no easy access to healthcare services and facilities. It is a matter of sadness that maternal mortality and morbidity rates in Nepal are the highest in the entire South Asian region. About 539 out of 100,000 mothers giving live births lose their lives. Hemorrhage, sepsis, hypertension disorders, obstructed labor and anemia are some of the major causes of deaths. A large number of other women in the rural parts are compelled to face health problems and premature deaths due to lack of awareness and unavailability of trained health workers and health facilities.

Although many discriminatory legal provisions hindering women's social and economic rights have been abolished, women have been unable to exercise their rights. Some discriminatory provisions are in existence even today and they stand as a hurdle in women's equal rights. Women's participation in decision-making and bureaucracy is also very nominal (FWLD, 2003: 27). However, women's life expectancy has improved

significantly-- from 53.5 in 1991 to 61.5 in 2001-- surpassing the life expectancy of 60.5 for men (CBS, 2001). However, some efforts have been made for empowering women during the last couple of years. To achieve the targets of women's empowerment and gender streamlining, a number of policies and strategies, including the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment have been implemented. The successive governments have remained effortful for eliminating gender disparity in education by 2005 and achieving gender equality by 2015. The institutional development of the National Human Rights Commission, National Commission on Women and National Dalit Commission can be taken as an important step for protecting human rights and eliminating discriminations.

Women in Nepal have only limited access to and control over the resources. Of the total landholdings, females own only about 8.1% and the average size of their land is just two-thirds that of an average male holding. Only 4% of the households have female ownership of both house and land (Nepal HDR 2004).

Owing to such reasons, the Nepalese women are not free from various forms of violence, which are mainly based on social, economical and cultural aspects.

Violence against women is a global problem that occurs in both public and private domains, instilling fear and insecurity in many women's lives. It is pervasive, and yet it is often invisible. Though some types of violence against women, such as rape, have long been considered criminal acts, it is only recently that violence against women has been recognized as a violation of basic human rights. Violence against women is a major hurdle in attaining equality, development and peace (FWLD, 2003: 62).

"Violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993, No. 19).

Women belonging to the lower socio-economic strata are found tortured in the name of practicing the so-called witchcraft. Such women are physically and psychologically tortured, harassed and sometimes killed. This form of social violence is often found in rural areas of Nepal, especially in the Terai region. This witchcraft-related violence can be defined as cultural violence, which is based on superstitious beliefs. Trafficking in women and girls, assault and battery on women, dowry-related violence, rape, sexual harassment, and female foeticide are some other major forms of violence against women in Nepal. Apart from them, the practices of *Deuki* and *Jhuma* can also be defined as cultural and traditional types of violence.

## 1.2 Identification of the Problem

Violence against women in the name of witchcraft has been a severe problem among the traditional and illiterate communities of Nepal. The problem has been rampant in the Terai region. In 2002, a total of 32 cases related to witchcraft violence from 18 districts were published in the newspapers. Among them about 75 percent cases were recorded from eastern and central Terai region. Similarly, the number of cases reported in 2003 stood at 29 from 18 districts. About 76 percent (22 in numbers) cases were from 14 Terai districts. Various reports show that most of the women, who have become the victims of the violence, are from the poor, Dalit and backward ethnic communities.

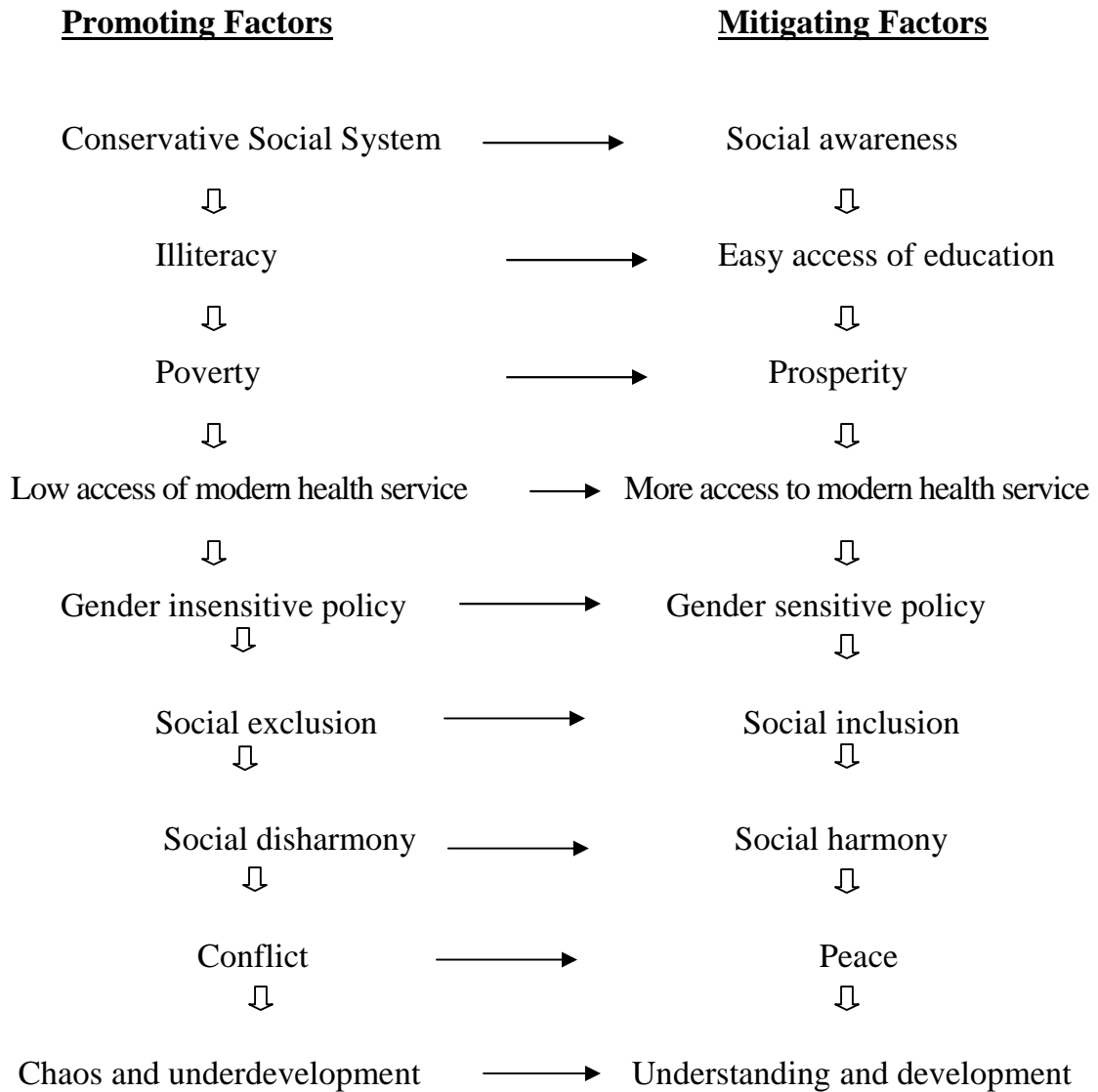
Simardahi is one of the backward VDCs of the Mahottari district of Janakpur Zone. Lying just five kilometres east of the district headquarters of Jaleswor, the total population of the VDC stands at 5,072. Of them, 2,637 are male and the remaining 2,435 female. The total literacy rate of the district is 34.7 percent (above six years). Of them, only 22.73 percent women are literate (Brief Profile of Mahottari District, 2060 B.S.: 35). The VDC is dominated by the Maithili speaking people. Mahottari has a high population density among others districts of the Terai of Central Development Region.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the present research was to assess the overall situation of violence against women on charge of practicing witchcraft at Simardahi VDC in Mahottari district in Nepal. The specific objectives of the study included:

- a) Analysing the gravity and magnitude of the problem;
- b) Analysing the trend of the problem;
- c) Identifying the main causes of this social evil;
- d) Seeking remedies for the problem

## 1.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study



## 1.5 Rationale of the Study

Violence Against Women (VAW) has been a serious problem globally. VAW occurs in different forms and degrees. Nepal is no exception to this. Violence not only harms women physically, but also leaves deep social and psychological impact on both the victims and their families. Many women have been harassed; tortured mentally and physically every year in different parts of the country in the allegation of being witches. This type of violence can be defined as cultural violence resulting from harmful traditional or customary practices and all forms of extremism, which implies both preventive action and rehabilitation of the victims.

Most of the past researches on women's issues were conducted only at macro level. Such studies were not fully able to address this form of violence. The studies were found failing to trace the major causes behind the problem and its serious socio-economic impact on the society, especially the victims and their families. As the problem of VAW taking place in the name of witchcraft has been very serious in the socially and economically backward communities, it requires micro level studies so as to help eliminate it from the society. The idea of developing all inclusive, equal and equitable society is possible only through women's overall empowerment.

Despite such a horrible situation, no comprehensive sample survey and study at micro level has been conducted, so far, in Mahottari district. The district is regarded as one of the most affected ones in Nepal with many cases being recorded every year. The Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) conducted a study in the district in 2002.

Therefore, the present study would be of great significance. The study has explored the gravity of the situation and forwarded some useful recommendations, which might be helpful for planners and policy-makers in formulating more effective plans and policies in the days to come.



## 1.6 Organization of the Study

Chapter one presents a brief introduction of the study, including the study context, identification of the problem, objectives of the study, conceptual framework, rationale of the study and organization of the study. Similarly, chapter two presents the literature review of the study. It has been organized into conceptualizing theories of violence, violence against women, forms of violence against women, domestic violence, definition of domestic violence, witch and witchcraft and some case studies. Chapter three deals briefly with the research method applied by the researcher, including the rationale for the selection of the site, research design, nature and sources of data, sampling procedure, sample size, variables and their operationalization, data collection techniques and instruments, method of data analysis, limitation of the study. Likewise, chapter four speaks of tabulation, analysis and interpretation of data and findings obtained through the field survey. Similarly, the final chapter is about findings and conclusion of the study and some recommendations for further improvements in the days to come.

## **Chapter Two**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2. Literature Review**

Literature review is an integral part of any research work, as it helps enrich the researcher's knowledge. An attempt has been made to review various relevant literatures.

#### **2.1 Theories of Violence**

According to K.E. Moyer (1987:19), violence is a form of human aggression that involves inflicting physical damage on persons or property. Violent behavior is frequently intense uncontrolled, excessive, furious, sudden and, at times seemingly purposeless.

According to Buzawa, (1990), theories of causation of domestic violence can be loosely classified into three general categories.

- a) Individually focused theories
- b) Those that examine family structure, and
- c) Those critically reviewing the legal, religious and economic basis of how violence is structurally based in society.

#### **a) Individually Oriented Theories**

Theories focusing upon the individual assailant examine characteristics of the offender and, to a lesser extent the victim that increases the likelihood of domestic violence. These typically focused upon the individual stresses created by poverty and/or unemployment; deep seated associations between love and violence caused by physical punishment from infancy (Straus, 1980).

## **b) Family –Oriented Theories**

Family-oriented research uses many of the "individual" variables to explain why a particular family unit explodes into violent behavior. However, the primary focus is upon the determination of characteristics of the family structure that lead to high-level domestic violence. The family is therefore viewed as a unique social grouping with a high potential for frustration and violence (Farrington, 1980; Straus & Hotline, 1980)

## **c) The Feminist Perspective on Violence**

A third approach to examining the causation of family violence uses a macro-level analysis to emphasize the 'structural violence' considered endemic against women in Western society. -- Violence against women has been persistent since ancient times. Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism, and other patriarchal religions have been said to affirm a male-dominated family structure. Women in this model have historically been seen as cattle, unable to manage their own affairs without the strong leadership of an authoritarian family patriarch.

## **2.2 Violence against Women**

Since human history, women have been the victims of discrimination and violence. This practice has existed even today. This fact is reflected from different religious books or other books. Therefore, violence against women is as old as human civilization.

As defined by UN convention, VAW is 'any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has effective of purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment and exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status on the basis of equality of men and women of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the

political, economic, social, cultural, civil and any other field, in terms of the violence against women.'

"...Any act of gender based violence that results or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life....."(UN Commission on Status of Women Declaration, Article 1, UN Conference on Women's Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, paragraph 114)

The definition of VAW & G Inter-American Convention on Women and Violence (1991) states that:

"VAW includes any act, omission or conduct by means of which physical, sexual or mental suffering is inflicted directly through deceit, seduction or threat, harassment, coercion or any other means on any women with the purpose or effect of intimidating, punishing or humiliating her or of maintaining her in sex stereotyped roles or of denying her of human dignity, sexual self determination, physical mental and moral integrity or of undermining the security of her person, her self-respect or her personality or of diminishing her physical or mental capacities."

The violence to which women are subjected includes overt physical acts such as murder, rape, battery, incest, and sexual abuses; psychological abuses such as harassment, intimidation, threats, belittling, and other verbal assaults; and institutional and social violence such as genital mutilation, wife burning, female infanticide, discrimination and neglect (<http://www.idtonline.org/.modules/vaw-brit/vaw.htm>).

According to Hindu mythology, Manu, who looks half man and half God, is considered as a founder of social norms and moral order. According to Hindu code 'Manu Smriti' both men and women had been originated from God. Men had come out one half of his being and women and other half. However, a lot of discrimination had been made

between men and women at that period. Women must worship her husband as God (Manu Smriti).

### **2.2.1 Forms of Violence Against Women**

Generally, three kinds of violence are found. They are Physical Violence; Psychological Violence and Traditional Violence.

According to UNICEF (2000), there exist six kinds of violence against women and girls in South Asia. They include sexual abuse, incest and rape by family members and other; recruitment by family members into prostitution; neglect by family members, even to the point of death; foeticide and infanticide; dowry demands and abuse of wife.

As per the Nepal Human Development Report 2004, violence and exploitation against women vary with religion, caste, class and geographical location. Various forms of VAW exist in Nepal. They are mentioned below:

- ) Traditional Violence (*deuki, jhuma, badi, chhoupadi*);
- ) Violence based on superstition, such as torture for alleged witchcraft;
- ) Sexual violence (trafficking and sexual harassment);
- ) Family violence (domestic violence, polygamy, child marriage); and
- ) Dowry-related violence (torture, both mental and physical).

Some common forms of VAW & G are domestic violence, sexual slavery, prostitution and international trafficking of women, incest, reproductive rights violation, rape, sexual harassment, sex discrimination, medical abuse, abuse of women with physical and mental disabilities, culture bound practices harmful to women, ritual abuse within religious cults; marital rape; pornography and abuse of women in media; abuse of women in refugee or

relocation camps; custodial abuse; female foeticide; dowry related violence and murder (SAATHI, 1997:5).

## 2.3 Domestic Violence

### 2.3.1 Definition

The origins of domestic violence are in social, legal and cultural norms, some historical and some current, including acceptance of violent behavior by men as the heads of households.

According to Commission on Domestic Violence Fatalities (October, 1997), Domestic Violence is defined as a pattern of behaviors involving physical, sexual, economic and emotional abuse, alone or in combination, by an intimate partner often for the purpose of establishing and maintaining power and control over the other partner.

Domestic violence includes murder, negligent homicide, justifiable homicide, kidnapping, rape, forcible sodomy, sexual assault with an object, forcible fondling, robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault or intimidation, where the victim to offender relationship is based on marriage, family ties, a romantic relationship or a former marriage ([www.sccommunityprofiles.org/glossary.asp](http://www.sccommunityprofiles.org/glossary.asp)).

*Domestic violence, by barest definition, is violence within a home. Beyond the term has a range of definitions, some more and some less formal, which are frequently used with little awareness that a range of definitions exists.* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic\\_violence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_violence)).

## 2.4 Witch and Witchcraft

The origins of the term "witch" are highly disputed. The term "witch" is applied almost exclusively to women although in earlier English the term was applied to men, too (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/witchcraft>).

Each culture has its own particular body of concepts dealing with magic religion benevolent and harmful spirits and ritual and these ideas do not find obvious equivalents in other cultures.

In Nepal, the word *Boksi* is used for witch. According to Tamang's traditional beliefs, the first *Jhankri* (shaman) is Lord Shiva and the witch Goddess Parvati. According to Oxford Dictionary, witch is a woman, who is believed to have magic power especially to do evil things. Similarly, witchcraft means the use of magic powers, especially evil ones. Sometimes witchcraft is used to refer broadly to the practice of magic and has a connotation similar to sorcery. Depending on the values of the community, witchcraft in this sense may be regarded with ambivalence, being neither intrinsically good nor evil. Members of some religious groups have applied the term witchcraft in a negative sense to refer to all magical or ritual practices other than those sanctioned by their own doctrines. All forms of magic are labeled witchcraft. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/witchcraft>).

Witchcraft is also used to refer, narrowly, to the practice of magic in an exclusively inimical sense.

Practices to which the witchcraft labels have been historically applied are those which influence another person's body or property against his or her will or which are believed by the person doing the labeling to undermine the social or religious order.

Practices which typically considered to be witch are:

- ) Influencing another person's body or property
- ) Conjuring the dead
- ) Spell casting

Some other practices associated with witchcraft include:

Meditation, talking to plants, manipulation of energy, seeing auras , Conducting séances, using ouija board, Chanting mantras, Healing, Divination -by tarot, runes, Astrology, reading of horoscopes, use of poppet, Invoking spirit, Necromancy etc.

## 2.5 Case Studies

Some of the relevant case studies, which have been taken from various newspapers and online news services, are presented below:

### Woman fed excreta for 'practicing witchcraft'

**BY SHIVA PURI**

**RAUTAHAT, Dec 6:** A woman in Tikuliya Tole of Gaur Municipality, Rautahat district was made to eat human faeces Saturday (Dec. 5) by neighbors who accused her of practicing witchcraft. Surprisingly, local Maoist cadres, after intervening in the incident, only told the victim to cough up Rs 1,000 as "fine".

The incident was revealed only on Monday after local journalists approached the victim.

"Yogendra Paswan of ward-5 and his wife stopped me while I was returning home from the fields in the evening, and forcibly fed me human excreta, accusing me of exercising black magic on local children," said victim Sharada Devi, 65.

"They thrashed me and forcibly daubed the filth on my mouth even after it spilled on the ground from a mud pot in which they were carrying it," she said.

According to Ram Kishan Patel, the victim's husband, the Paswans have been accusing his wife of casting some black magic spell after their newborn died at Gaur Hospital a few months ago.



Patel caught hold of Paswan in the ensuing scuffle but a group of Maoist cadre later came and freed him "to settle the matter".

"When we refused to pay the sum, they (Maoists) made us sign an affidavit not to file complaints anywhere," said Patel.

Police claimed that they had let both the sides go after settling the issue. "We let Paswan go on condition that he would not repeat such inhuman acts," said police inspector Ganesh Bastola.

However, the victim said even the police did not provide justice.

Meanwhile, vice-chairman of Inter-party Women's Network in the district Devaki Nepal has demanded a thorough investigation into the incident and action against culprits.

The locals are also of the opinion that stringent action should be taken against the perpetrators of such an inhuman act.

([www.kantipuronline.com](http://www.kantipuronline.com), Dec. 6, 2006)

### Woman killed in fight on witchcraft

**Sindhuli, Dec. 1:** A woman was killed in a fight between two neighbours. The conflict between the two families erupted after one of the families was charged of practising witchcraft. Twenty-five-year-old Ms. Kami Singh Pakhrin was killed in an attack by her neighbour. Actually, the neighbour had attacked on her father Damai Singh, who has now sustained injuries. He is now undergoing medical treatment at a local health post. According to police inspector working at the district police office, Sindhuli, Mr. Thaman Basnet, the alleged criminal involved in the attack, has not been identified.

(*Gorkhapatra daily*, Dec. 12, 2006, page 4 )

### Witchcraft feud leads to murder

Tulasi Chamar murdered his neighbour 55-year-old Mrs. Jaradevi Harijan by using a sharp weapon on January 11, 2007. According to the police, Mrs. Harijan had charged the Chamar's wife of practising witchcraft.

The victim Mrs. Harijan was the resident of Kudiya Village Development Committee of Nawalparasi district.

"Harijan had been blaming Chamar's wife for practising witchcraft and the two women fought each other. And Chamar killed her," said Kumarji Shrestha, police inspector of district police office, Nawalparasi.

Police arrested Chamar. An unidentified woman was also involved in the murder. The woman has been absconding.

*(Gorkhapatra daily, January 12, 2007, page 12)*

### Tortured woman at police office

Inaruwa, Aug. 3: A women, who has been tortured by her neighbours on charge of practising witchcraft for the last one decade, has filed a lawsuit at the Sunsari District Police Office.

Fifty-five-year-old Mrs. Batul Khatun, who hails from Narasingha VDC Ward No. 7, has been in search of justice. She was beaten up severely by Taiyak Ansari, Umar Hussein, Faruk Ansari and Yasir Ansari.

She was charged of killing an embryo of Faruk's wife. Now her hands and legs have been swollen.

Ten years ago, one of her neighbours was suffering from paralysis and a witch-doctor from India said that the illness was caused by a witch. Then, Mrs. Khatun was charged of practising witchcraft. Since then, the locals have been blaming her as a witch.

According to Police Inspector Mr. Manoj Yadav, her case has been forwarded to Laukahi police post for necessary action.

*(Kantipur daily, August 3, 2006, page 3)*

### Witchcraft Scam Due to Superstition

On Srawan 30, 2058 B.S., an unforgettable incident occurred in Simardahi Village Development Committee (VDC) of the Mahottari district. The unfortunate incident, which was associated with violence against women on charge of practicing witchcraft, can hardly be forgotten. On that day, a group of individuals led by the then VDC Chairman intimidated hundreds of local women, including Marani Devi.

After the national newspapers highlighted the incident and some NGOs pleaded for the victims, the government also took its interest in it. Then, victims, including Marani Devi, were able to receive some compensation. The VDC Chairman was brought to Justice.

*(Nepal Samacharpatra daily, 2062/3/9)*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter deals briefly with the research method applied by the researcher. The academic research is based on social science.

#### **3.1 Rationale for the Selection of Study Site**

The study area has been selected on the following grounds:

- a) It is a very backward community/ area and highly affected by the superstitious beliefs like witchcraft.
- b) Until recently, no micro level study was conducted in this area.
- c) Being a permanent resident of the neighbouring Dhanusha district, the researcher has been quite familiar with geographical, economic, social and cultural aspects of the area.
- d) Since women have been the victims of various forms of violence in the area, the researcher decided to conduct the study there to help address the problem.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

- i) The nature of the study has been descriptive and exploratory;
- ii) The study has been descriptive based on detailed investigation;
- iii) It has been exploratory, as the study has analyzed the various cause of practicing witchcraft in the society.

### 3.3 Nature and Sources of Data

- i) Primary data will be based on the survey, observation, questionnaire and interviews with respondents;
- ii) Both published and unpublished materials related to the subject matter will also be referred as a source of secondary data.

### 3.4 Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure has included probability sampling on simple random basis. Moreover, purposive sampling has also been followed in the course of study as required.

### 3.5 Sample Size

Of the total population of women of the area, only 35 victimized women were selected randomly as the respondents of this study. While selecting the respondents, the researcher has given due emphasis on the age of the respondents.

### 3.6 Variables and their Operationalization

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Operationalizations</b>
1) Educational status	literate, illiterate (if literate, level) Correlation of education with violence
2) Occupation	major occupation, secondary occupation, earning, correlation of occupation and violence, status past and the present
3) Economic Status	available of income or not, if available amount and source identification, sector of utilizing the income, correlation of income and violence, status past and the present
4) Causes of violence	social, economic, cultural, superstitious (more serious among them) and the perspective of the society upon those causes and the necessary steps to correct them
5) Security	social, economic, cultural (more serious among them), major initiatives yet taken by the government (both at national and local level) or not, status past and the present
6) Impact	social, physical, mental, emotional, educational, economic, etc.
7) Justice	advice, report, support, help, etc. effective or not, system (police, justice) helpful or not,

### 3.7 Data Collection Techniques & Instruments

A semi-structured questionnaire was used for collecting primary data. PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) technique was adopted for acquiring reliable information from the study area. Apart from this, techniques such as interview with key informants, observation, social impression and rapport building were used followed for data collection.

### 3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The collected data have been coded, edited, classified and tabulated for their organization. The quantitative data have been presented in table as required. The qualitative data were interpreted and analyzed in a descriptive way based on their numerical characteristics.

### 3.9 Limitation of the Study

The research has dealt only with violence against women in the name of witchcraft in the Simardahi VDC of the Mahottari district. The study has been completed within the period of one year. As the sample size is small, it may not represent the forms of violence against women of other places. Moreover, the present research descriptive in nature. Moreover, this is a social science research, not the scientific research. Similarly, the research was carried-out on the victims of Maithili women who were charged of practicing witchcraft.

## Chapter Four

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Demographic Variables

Demographic variables are an important part of any social science research. They mainly include marital status of the respondents, their family size and level of education.

##### 4.1.1 Marital Status

The table below shows the marital status of the respondents.

Table: 1: Marital Status Of The Respondents

S.N.	Marital Status	No.	%
1.	Unmarried	11	32
2.	Married	18	51
3.	Single women	06	17
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

While analysing the marital status of the total respondents, 32 % were found to be unmarried and 51% married. The remaining 17% were single women. It was found that married women were charged of witch craft at max.



### 4.1.2 Family Size

The table below indicates the family size of the respondents.

Table: 2: Family Size of The Respondents

S.N.	Family Size	No.	%
1.	1-10	12	34
2.	11-20	11	31
3.	21-30	08	23
4.	31 and above	04	12
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

About 34 percent of the total respondents were found to have a family size of between 1-10. Similarly, 31 percent of the families included 11-20 members, while 23 percent ranged between 21-30 members. Only 12 percent families incorporated more than 30 members. It was found that the respondents having the family size 1-10 were charged of witch craft maximally.

### 4.1.3 Age of the Respondents

The table underneath depicts the age structure of the respondents.

Table: 3: Age Structure of The Respondents

S.N.	Age of the Respondents	No.	%
1.	18-23	11	31
2.	24-29	12	34
3.	30-35	7	20
4.	36 and above	5	15
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

While analysing the age structure of the respondents, about 31 percent were found to be between 18-23 years. The number of respondents with the age group of 24-29 was 34 percent. Likewise, about 20 percent of the respondents were found to have been between 30-35 years and the remaining 15 percent were 36 years and above.

## 4.2 Education Status

The table below shows the education status of the respondents.

Table: 4: Education Status Of The Respondents

S.N.	Level of Education	No.	%
1.	Primary Level	9	26
2.	Lower Secondary	8	23
3.	Secondary	7	20
4.	Higher Secondary and above	0	0
5.	Uneducated	11	31
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

About 26 percent of the respondents were found to have acquired just primary education, while 23 percent completed lower secondary level and 20 percent finished secondary level education. None of the respondents was found to have studied higher secondary level and above. About 31 percent of the respondents were seen uneducated.

### 4.3 Relationship of Education with Witchcraft

The table below portrays the relationship between education and witchcraft.

Table: 5: Relationship between Education and Witchcraft

S.N.	Relationship	No.	%
1.	Discourages Witchcraft	16	46
2.	Promotes confidence/ willpower against witchcraft	13	37
3.	Empowers women against witchcraft	06	17
4.	No relation at all	0	0
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

When asked about the relationship between education and witchcraft, about 46 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that the educated people do not believe in witchcraft. So, education discourages people, who are guided by superstitious thoughts such as witchcraft. Similarly, about 37 percent said that education would help promote confidence and willpower among the people against superstition. About 17 percent viewed that education would help empower women and enable them to fight against witchcraft.

### 4.4 Economic Status

The researcher has attempted to assess the economic status of the respondents.

#### 4.4.1 Major Sources of Income:

The table below shows major sources of income of the respondents.

Table: 6: Income Of The Respondents

S.N.	Major Sources Of Income	No.	%
1.	Agriculture	14	40
2.	Livestock	09	26
3.	Public service	02	6
4.	Labour	07	20
5.	Small business	03	08
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

About 40 percent of the respondents were found to be depended for their livelihood on agriculture, while 26 percent were involved in livestock farming. Only 6 percent of the respondents were with public service. About 20 percent of them were seen making their living by working as labourers and 8 percent were running small scales businesses.

#### 4.4.2 Level of Sufficiency

The researcher also made an attempt to assess whether the income generated was sufficient or not. The data gathered from the field survey have been presented in the table below:

Table: 7: Level of Sufficiency

S.N.	Options	No.	%
1.	Fully sufficient	6	17
2.	Moderate	15	43
3.	Insufficient	14	40
	Total	35	100

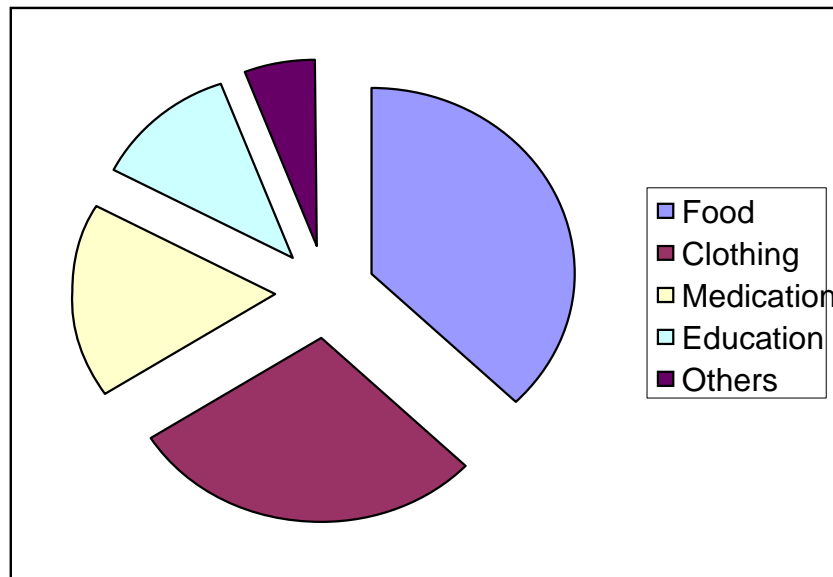
Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

About 17 percent of the respondents opined that the incomes they were making were fully sufficient and enough for their families, while 43 percent said the incomes were moderate. The remaining 40 percent said the incomes were insufficient for them. This clearly indicates that poverty is rampant in the study area.

#### 4.5 Sectors of Expenditure

The table below depicts the various sectors of expenditure on the part of the respondents.

Chart 1: Sectors of Expenditure



*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

While assessing the sectors of expenditure of the income of the respondents, it was found that about 37% of the respondents spend their income on food followed by 28% (clothing), 17% (medication), 12% (education) and the remaining 6% (others). Hence, it is found that the income gained by the respondents is not yet saved due to their low level of income. It is also analyzed that expenditure in the field of education is also very low.

#### 4.6 Level of Saving

The table below indicates the situation of saving on the part of the respondents.

Table: 8: Level of Saving

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
1.	Yes	6	17
2.	No	29	83
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

When analysed the views of the respondents on their saving, about 17 percent said they were able to save certain chunk of their incomes, while an overwhelming majority (83 percent) said it was impossible for them to save money.

This also shows that income poverty exists among the respondents.

#### 4.7 Decision-making level

The table below shows who makes decision (husband or wife) regarding household expenditure.

Table:9: Decision – making level

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Decision-makers</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
1.	Myself	0	0
2.	Husband	27	77
3.	All the Family Members	3	9
4.	Husband and Wife	5	14
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

None of the respondents were found to have been making any decision regarding the expenditure of the family incomes. About 77 percent of them said that husbands were the decision-makers in their families, while 9 percent said all the family members made such decisions. The remaining 14 percent viewed that both husband and wife took the decision about spending their incomes.

This is something that illustrates high domination of men in the decision making process in the families.

#### 4.8 Process of Victimization

The table below points out the reasons why women in the study area become victims of violence in the name of witchcraft.

Table: 10: Process of Victimization

S.N.	Reasons	No.	%
1.	Ugliness	8	23
2.	Poverty	6	17
3.	Physical Weakness	7	20
4.	Poor Confidence	14	40
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

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.

#### 4.9 Recalling the Days of Sufferings

It was made an attempt to assess the psychology of the respondents through recalling their days of sufferings. The data collected from the field survey on the question is presented in the table below:

Table: 11: Recalling the Days of Sufferings

S.N.	Options	No.	%
1.	Despair	9	26
2.	Frustration	7	20
3.	Anger	10	29
4.	Exclusion	5	14
5.	Depression	4	11
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

While analysed the sufferings that the respondents faced, 26 percent of them said they were despaired, as they were victimised on charge of practising witchcraft. About 20 percent were frustrated followed by anger (29 percent), exclusion (14 percent) and depression (11 percent).

The analysis indicates that the false charges have given rise to social conflict in the study area.

#### 4.10 Need for Assistant

It was thought necessary to find out the helper of the victims when they were put false allegations of practising witchcraft. From the field surveys, following data were collected:



Table: 12: Need for Assistant

S.N.	Assistance	No.	%
1.	Family Members	07	20
2.	Neighbours	11	31
3.	Police	08	23
4.	NGOs/INGOs	03	9
5.	Health Officials	04	11
6.	Others	02	6
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

In the course of assessing the first agents of assistance while they were victimized, it was revealed that about 20% were helped by their family members followed by neighbours (31%), police (23%), NGOs & INGOs (9%), health officials (11%), and others (6%). Hence, it can be analyzed that the role played by the NGOs & INGOs in region on violence against women in charge of practicing witch-craft is not satisfactory.

#### 4.11 Superstitious Beliefs

It was also thought necessary to inquire the respondents whether they believe in witchcraft practicing or not. The data obtained from the field survey is presented in the table below:

Table:13: Beliefs In Witchcraft

S.N.	Options	No.	%
1.	Yes	0	0
2.	No	35	100
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

While assessing the belief of the respondents on witchcraft practice, none of the respondents were found to believe in witch-craft practice. So, this result suggests that the respondents are well aware of the ill practice but they have been alleged of witch due to their physical weakness, poverty, etc.

#### 4.12 Gender Discrimination

The researcher has also analyzed the situation of gender discrimination; following data were obtained from the field survey.

Table: 14: Gender Discrimination

S.N.	Options	No.	%
1.	No	0	0
2.	Yes	30	86
3.	Don't Know	5	14
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

While analyzing the situation of gender discrimination in the area, it was found that about 86% of the respondents revealed that there was gender discrimination and about 14% said that they could not know anything about it. Hence, it can be judged that the women in the area are dominated by males.

#### 4.13 Age Factor

During the course of preparing the thesis, the researcher also thought to make clear whether the age factor was a cause of victimization on charge of witch-craft or not. The following data were obtained from the field survey:

Table: 15: Age Factor of the Respondents

S.N.	Age Limits	No.	%
1.	Teenagers	0	0
2.	Middle "	10	29
3.	Old "	25	71
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

While analyzing the age factor for the cause of victimization of women in charge of witch-craft practice, it was found that no teenagers were alleged of witch-craft while about 29% middle-agers and about 71% elderly were charged of practising witchcraft. Hence, the table shows that more the women get older, more the cases of witch craft.

#### 4.13 Results of Victimization

It was also thought necessary to find out the outcomes of victimization. The obtained data from the field survey have been presented in the table below:

Table: 16: Results of Victimization

S.N.	Result	No.	%
1.	Madness	2	6
2.	Suicide	4	11
3.	Depression	12	34
4.	Loss of will Power	8	23
5.	Frustration	9	26
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

When assessing the results of victimization, it was found that about 6% of the victims turned to mad after being victimized. Similarly, about 11% committed suicide, about 34%

had the problem of depression, followed by loss of will power (23%) and frustration (26%).

#### 4.14 Major Challenges

The researcher has also made an attempt to find out the major challenges related to the victimization of women on charge of witchcraft. The depicted challenges are given in the box below:

Table: 17: Major Challenges Causes of Victimization

S.N.	Challenges	No.	%
1.	Lack of Education	14	40
2.	Physical Weakness	5	14
3.	Poverty	12	35
4.	Lack of Awareness	4	11
	Total	35	100

*Source: Field Survey, August, 2006*

The major challenges of the eradicating victimization of women on charge of witch craft are lack of education (40%) followed by physical weakness (14%), poverty (35%) and lack of awareness (11%). Hence, it is expected that if the aforementioned challenges are addressed in time, the region would progress in time.

#### 4.15 Legal Action

It was also thought necessary to ask the respondents whether the legal action to the law breakers or brokers were necessary or not? The data obtained from the field survey have been presented in the table below:

Table: 18: Legal Action

S.N.	Legal Action	No.	%
1.	Sufficient	0	0
2.	Insufficient	30	86
3.	Don't Know	5	14
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

When asked to the respondents whether the legal actions were sufficient or not? It was found that none of the respondents responded that the legal action was sufficient. About 86% revealed that the legal action was not sufficient and about 14% said that they knew nothing about it. Hence, the findings show that the legal action related to law breakers or the broker should be punished in time and effectively. For this, the legal action should be strengthened.

#### 4.16 Durable Solution

It was also thought necessary to ask what should be done to seek durable for the issue. The data obtained from the field survey have been presented in the table below:

Table: 19: Durable Solution

S.N.	Durable Solution	No.	%
1.	Strict Formulation and implementation of rules & regulation	11	31
2.	Improvement of economy	9	26
3.	Improvement in Social Awareness	8	23
4.	Decrease in gender discrimination	7	20
	Total	35	100

Source: Field Survey, August, 2006

The tips for the durable solution of the issue are strict formulation and implementation of rules and regulation (31%), improvement of economy (26%), improvement in social awareness (23%) and decrease in gender discrimination (20%).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Findings**

The research has analyzed the violence against women on charge of practicing witchcraft at Simardahi VDC in Mahottari district in Nepal. In addition, the research has also expected to influence in policy making both at micro and macro level. Furthermore, the research has compared and contrasted the violence against women in Mahottari district of Nepal in particular and the violence against women on charge of practicing witchcraft in Nepal in general.

While assessing the size of the family of the respondents, it was found that about 34 percent of the total respondents were found to have a family size of between 1-10. Similarly, 31 percent of the families included 11-20 members, while 23 percent ranged between 21-30 members. Only 12 percent families incorporated more than 30 members. Similarly, while analysing the age structure of the respondents, about 31 percent were found to between 18-23 years. The number of respondents with the age group of 24-29 was 34 percent. Likewise, about 20 percent of the respondents were found to have between 30-35 years and the remaining 15 percent were 36 years and above.

In due course of examining the marital status of the total respondents, 32 % were found to be unmarried and 51% married. The remaining 17% were single women. It was found that married women were charged of witch craft at max. About 26 percent of the respondents were found to have acquired just primary education, while 23 percent completed lower secondary level and 20 percent finished secondary level education. None of the respondents was found to have studied higher secondary level and above. About 31 percent of the respondents were seen uneducated.

When asked about the relationship between education and witchcraft, about 46 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that the educated people do not believe in witchcraft. So, education discourages people, who are guided by superstitious thoughts such as witchcraft. Similarly, about 37 percent said that education would help promote confidence and willpower among the people against superstition. About 17 percent viewed that education would help empower women and enable them to fight against witchcraft.

While assessing the sources of economy, about 40 percent of the respondents were found to be depended for their livelihood on agriculture, while 26 percent were involved in livestock farming. Only 6 percent of the respondents were with public service. About 20 percent of them were seen making their living by working as labourers and 8 percent were running small scales businesses.

It was also asked whether the income generated was sufficient or not? About 17 percent of the respondents opined that the incomes they were making were fully sufficient and enough for their families, while 43 percent said the incomes were moderate. The remaining 40 percent said the incomes were insufficient for them.

In course of assessing the sectors of expenditure of the income of the respondents it was found that about 37% of the respondents spent their income on food followed by 28% (clothing), 17% (medication), 12% (education) and the remaining 6% (others). When analysed the views of the respondents on their saving, about 17 percent said they were able to save certain chunk of their incomes, while an overwhelming majority (83 percent) said it was impossible for them to save money. While analyzing the level of decision-making regarding the expenditure of the family incomes, about 77 percent of them said that husbands were the decision-makers in their families, while 9 percent said all the family members made such decisions. The remaining 14 percent viewed that both husband and wife took the decision about spending their incomes.



The researcher has also made attempts to assess 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.

While analysed the sufferings that the respondents faced, 26 percent of them said they were despaired, as they were victimized on charge of practicing witchcraft. About 20 percent were frustrated followed by anger (29 percent), exclusion (14 percent) and depression (11 percent).

Similarly, while assessing the first agents of assistance while they were victimized, it was revealed that about 20% were helped by their family members followed by neighbours (31%), police (23%), NGOs & INGOs (9%), health officials (11%), and others (6%). Hence, it can be analyzed that the role played by the NGOs & INGOs in region on violence against women in charge of practicing witch-craft is not satisfactory.

While analyzing the situation of gender discrimination in the area, it was found that about 86% of the respondents revealed that there was gender discrimination and about 14% said that they could not know anything about it. Hence, it can be judged that the women in the area are dominated by males.

In due course of assessing the results of victimization, it was found that about 6% of the victims turned to mad after being victimized. Similarly, about 11% committed suicide; about 34% had the problem of depression, followed by loss of will power (23%) and frustration (26%).

In nutshell, the researcher has made some efforts to depict the major challenges of eradicating victimization of women on charge of witch craft are lack of education (40%)

followed by physical weakness (14%), poverty (35%) and lack of awareness (11%). Hence, it is expected that if the aforementioned challenges are addressed in time, the region would progress in time.

Similarly, when asked to the respondents whether the legal actions were sufficient or not? It was found that none of the respondents responded that the legal action was sufficient. About 86% revealed that the legal action was not sufficient and about 14% said that they knew nothing about it. Hence, the findings show that the legal action related to law breakers or the broker should be punished in time and effectively. For this, the legal action should be strengthened.

## 5.2 Conclusion

While concluding the research, the researcher has come to the point to pass the judgment that the suppression of women on charge of practising witchcraft is a very serious matter. A majority of the respondents was tortured on such a false charge. Those who were poor, helpless and aged were found to be tortured labelling this charge. Similarly, about 40% of the respondents depended on agriculture. In course of analyzing the sectors of income expenditure, majority of the respondents (37%) spent their income on food.

When analysed the views of the respondents on their saving, an overwhelming majority (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 said that husbands were the decision-makers in their families.

While assessing the major causes of violence on charge of practicing witchcraft, about 23 percent of the respondents said that women became the victims of violence due to their deformed facial and/or physical 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.

While analyzing the sufferings of the respondents, about 26 percent of them said they were despaired, as they were victimized on charge of practicing witchcraft. About 20 percent were frustrated followed by anger (29 percent), exclusion (14 percent) and depression (11 percent).

The situation of gender discrimination in the area is at max. While analyzing the situation of gender discrimination in the area, it was found that about 86% of the respondents revealed that there was gender discrimination. The legal action system in the area is also not satisfactory. Majority of the respondents (about 86%) revealed that the legal action

was not sufficient. In nutshell, it is concluded that the situation of violence against women on charge of practicing witch-craft is very severe in the region.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Having analyzed the findings of the study, the following points are recommended to minimise the level of violence against women on charge of practising witch-craft in the study site:

1. The education level of women should be improved in the area by introducing free female education at all levels.
2. Women's participation in decision-making process should be increased so as to reduce gender gap in the study area.
3. The traditional social and cultural practice of giving more preference to sons should be discouraged through massive public awareness and education campaigns, as the problem of discrimination is highly associated with social and cultural values.
4. Superstitious beliefs like witchcraft should be rooted out from the minds of the people through awareness campaigns. Street dramas and mass media (radio and television) programmes could play a vital role in this regard.
5. Poverty is also one of the prime causes behind such a situation of violence against women in the study area. Hence, programmes related to women's economic empowerment should be launched. This could be possible if NGOs, local bodies and the government agencies make concerted efforts with due focus on women.
6. The system of reservation should be implemented strictly from the local level itself.
7. Stronger laws should be formulated and implemented strictly so as to bring the perpetrators to justice.

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**Annex 1**  
**Questionnaire**

Name of the respondent:		
Sex:		
VDC:	Ward No:	Occupation:
Educational Level:		
Total no. of family members:	(a) Male:	(b) Female:
School going children:	(a) Boys:	(b) Girls:
Religion:		
Total area of land:		

1. What is your marital status?
  - a) Married
  - b) Unmarried
  - c) Single
  
2. What is the size of your family?
  - a) 1-10 members
  - b) 11-20 members

- c) 21-30members
  - d) 31 and above
3. In which category does your age fall?
- a) 18-23
  - b) 24-29
  - c) 30-35
  - d) 36 and above
4. What is the relationship between education and witch-craft?
- a) Discourages witch-craft
  - b) Promotes confidence
  - c) Empowers women against witch-craft.
  - d) No relation at all
5. What is your major occupation?
- a) Agriculture
  - b) Livestock
  - c) Public service
  - d) Labor
  - e) Small business
6. Is the income generated from your occupation sufficient for you?
- a) Fully sufficient
  - b) Moderate
  - c) Insufficient
7. What are the sectors of the expenditure of the income generated?
- a) Food
  - b) Clothing



- c) Medication
  - d) Education of children
  - e) Others
8. Do you save your income?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
9. Who plays the dominant role while making decision in your home?
- a) Myself
  - b) Husband
  - c) All the family members
  - d) Husband and wife
10. What are the major causes of victimization on charge of practicing witch craft?
- a) Ugliness
  - b) Poverty
  - c) Physical weakness
  - d) Poor confidence level
11. How do you feel recalling the day/days of being victimized?
- a) Despair
  - b) Frustration
  - c) Anger
  - d) Exclusion
  - e) Depression
12. Who came for the first time to provide assistance to you while you were victimized?

- a) Family members
- b) Neighbours
- c) Police officials
- d) NGOs/ INGOs
- e) Health Officials
- f) Others

13. Do you believe that there is witch-craft?

- a) Yes
- b) No

14. Is there gender discrimination in your family?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Don't know

15. Which age group is more vulnerable to violence against women on charge of practicing witch-craft?

- a) Teenagerrrs
- b) Middle agers
- c) Old agers

16. What are the major results of victimization in this region?

- a) Madness
- b) Suicide
- c) Depression
- d) Loss of will power
- e) Frustration

17. What are the major challenges of eradicating the violence against women on charge of practicing witch-craft in this area?
- a) Lack of education
  - b) Physical weakness
  - c) Poverty
  - d) Lack of awareness
18. Do you think the incumbent legal system is sufficient or not to punish the culprits?
- a) Sufficient
  - b) Insufficient
  - c) Don't know
19. What would be the durable solution of violence against women on charge of practicing witch-craft in Nepal?
- a) Strict formulation and implementation of rules and regulation
  - b) Improvement of economic level of the general public
  - c) Improvement in social awareness
  - d) Decrease in gender discrimination