



Making of Boksi and Bearing its Pain by Tamang Women of Kavrepalanchok

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Abstract

This study examines the sociological dimensions of witchcraft, prevalent in the Tamang community of Kavrepalanchok District, aiming to understand who the witches are in the village and why they are labeled as such. Within the supernatural belief system of the Tamang, witchcraft is deeply embedded in cultural practices and is often associated with internal family feuds, which can involve land disputes, inheritance issues, and complex community tensions. These conflicts frequently lead to the physical and psychological abuse of women in the community. The role of the Bombo, who sanctions and perpetuates these accusations, is central to understanding the social dynamics at play. Based on fourteen months of intermittent fieldwork, this study empirically demonstrates the social suffering that Tamang women endure when they are accused of being Boksi by their fellow Tamang members, whether family, community members, or faithhealers. The paper argues that the imagery of witchcraft is deeply entrenched in the Tamang community and that the concept of Boksi represents something that exists within individuals rather than externally. It adeptly illustrates the interplay between accuser and witchcraft, which is deeply rooted in family and societal conflict, envy, insecurity, and competition.

Keywords: Boksi, Bombo, faithhealer, social sufferings, Tamang, witchcraft.

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Introduction

Belief in the existence of Boksi¹ is deeply ingrained in the social and cultural realms of the Tamang community.² The beinghood of Boksi is heavily embedded in the supernatural belief system of the Tamang people and manifests itself as an intentional infliction. As a figment of their imagination, both men and women from the household and neighborhood act as “accusers” and a specific woman as the “accusee.” By marking out Boks and their actions, including the bad omen, the community's beliefs are controlled and regulated by the stance taken by the local faithhealer, known as Bombo.³ As Pritchard (1937) argues, witchcraft accusations do not only involve spells, incantations, charms, or potions but also a close consultation with the oracles or healers. As such, the woman, stained as a Boksi, is forced to endure “social suffering” (Kleinman et al., 1997),⁴ both within the household and neighborhood.

This paper sociologically examines the practice of witchcraft among the Tamangs residing within the villages of the Kavrepalanchok district of Bagmati province and elaborates on the social sufferings experienced by the women members. It points out the paradoxes that arise, when a woman is stigmatized for a variety of personal reasons by members of her own family, relatives, and neighborhood, leading to her being shunned both at home and in the community. All the women who were supposed to be Boksi were held responsible for material loss, sickness of cattle and humans, misfortunes, and other problems, and were then subjected to physical and psychological torture.

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- 1 In the Nepali context, a woman is called a Boksi if she is thought by many to possess evil power and cause trouble and misfortunes. As used in everyday life, I prefer to use the Nepali household word Boksi, which is not the same as the English term witch, because the form and nature of Boksi differ from a witch in our context. Yet, I may also be using the term ‘witchcraft’ while referring to ascriptive aspects of this belief system that lead to harm and infliction.
 - 2 The data used in this paper are from my PhD dissertation, which I submitted in March 2024 to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University. This study is primarily based on the 14 months of fieldwork (between September 2017 and October 2018) in 13 villages of Kavrepalanchok (namely Timal, Dadagaun, Kharelthok, Dolalghat, Panauti, Panchakhal, Gokule, Raviopi, Kashikhanda, Birtadeurali, Sano Banthali, Devitar, Foksingtar). Based on the field visits, media reports, and police case registration (2011/2012-2015/2016), this study employs the information from the interviews taken with the Tamang community members including accusees, accusers, and the local faithhealers (Bombo).
 - 3 Bombo is a shaman or religious practitioner, who plays an influential role in shaping Tamang’s cultural practices. Bombo detects the witch and takes on the role of performing faithhealing and exorcizing.
 - 4 It refers to human suffering caused, worsened, or in some cases alleviated by social forces that is, political, economic, and/or institutional power. The social condition of the family accused of being witches is very miserable leading to being socially ostracized, psychologically and emotionally disturbed and even being killed.

From the cases built on the experiences undergone by the affected women, I would like to explore the following essential questions: Who are Boksi in the village? Why these women are called Boksi, and by whom? How can the practice of witchcraft among the Tamangs of Kavrepalanchok be sociologically explained? These concerns raised in the paper not only unfold Tamang's witchcraft phantasm, but also reveal its intricate economic, status-oriented, and contentious psychological dynamics at play. Thus, I argue that the imagery of witchcraft is deeply entrenched among the Tamangs and the Boksi itself is something that lives and dwells within, rather than, elsewhere. Agreeing with Harris (1974), I believe that the causes of the witch accusations should be examined in their earthly contexts rather than their heavenly intentions. After all, the conflict between the families and neighbors in the Tamang community stems from land disputes, property-related issues, individual success and failure, and the transition to the market economy.

Through in-depth interviews and direct observation, this research explores the social factors that promote the occurrence of witch accusations within close relationships in Tamangs. Most of my interviewees were accusees, accusers, and Bombos representing Tamang communities in different parts of the Kavrepalanchok district. Altogether, this paper is divided into four sections. An illustration of the family dispute and division that led to certain household women members, and in the neighborhood, being vilified as Boksi, is given in the first and second sections. The third section depicts the feud and variances existing among the relatives induced by a variety of tension-bound issues and circumstances. The cases illustrated demonstrate that a female household member, slandered to be a Boksi within the family, is created by none other than her fellow female kin members and relatives. Rising tensions between member groups often end up in the targeting of female members. The final section, before the conclusion, engages with the available literature on witchcraft.

Boksi amongst the Kin

Kinship and neighborhood⁵ are profoundly intertwined, forming the bedrock of social systems and the fabric of daily life. These concepts hold immense significance in the fields of sociology and anthropology, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of social interactions and structures. In the Tamang community of Kavreplanchok, the practice of witchcraft, as enmeshed by the interlacing of kith and kin, reveals a complex tapestry of social belief and rituals. Much like other cultural groups, Tamang society frequently directs accusations of witchcraft toward its female members, believing that witches are embedded within families

5 In general sociological usage, kinship is a social and cultural construct that defines and organizes family relationships, including blood, marriage, and adoption. It goes beyond biological ties, thereby defining a complex system of social relationships. Similarly, a neighborhood is a collection of individual coexisting in a specific area and is open to interacting with each other.

and among the community members. This integration of supernatural beliefs with social relations underscores the profound impact of kinship and community on the perceptions of witchcraft in this society.

My research reveals that family members are frequently at the heart of most disputes. Accusations often arise within kinship circles, particularly concerning ancestral property, land division, and other personal grievances. Under current law, parents are allowed to retain a portion of ancestral property and bequeath it to a caregiver living with them. Consequently, the son staying with his parents receives nearly twice the property of his other kin members, causing outrage among his other siblings. This unequal distribution of property serves as a major source of conflict, not only between the brothers but also among extended relatives. Furthermore, these tensions can sometimes escalate to the point where female family members become targets of witchcraft accusations. Below is the case from Panauti, which demonstrates the situation, in which a widowed mother is living with her younger son, whose wife was accused of being a Boksi by his Bhauju (elder brother's wife). As narrated to me, it was related with the property issue. The survivor's husband recounts:

After my father's death, I got married, and my brother asked for his part of the property with the mother. She divided the property into three parts and kept one part for herself while living with my family. Later, she gave it to me, and my brother was so angry with my family. Then a rift arose between us, and two families stopped talking. Then, when I was abroad, my Bhauju started to argue with my wife without any reason, and finally, she blamed my wife of being a Boksi.

In the village, the joint families typically spanning two generations, are more prone to conflicts among members living together and sharing a kitchen. In these family structures, the actions or decisions of one individual often fail to satisfy the others, leading to frequent quarrels. As brothers and their primary kin grow apart, particularly after marriage, their relationships can become strained, with minor issues escalating into significant animosities. Within such joint families, achieving consensus on various matters, particularly over financial issues, proves to be a formidable challenge.

In the same vein, another instance from Patichaur, a village in Panauti of Kavreplanchok, depicts a case, where a woman is accused by her family members. Dhawa Lamini, a 46-year-old woman living with her husband and two daughters, was accused of being a Boksi by her Jethani (husband's elder brother's wife). The accusation took place, when Dhawa's husband, a trekking guide, was away from his home. As narrated by the accusee, her Jethani's family abused and bullied her. Due to such behaviors from the side of her Jethani, her husband's previous two wives had already left home, and she was the third one. The first one stayed at home for a year, and they forced the second one to leave within a month. Her Jethani's family abused and scolded Dhawa like the previous two wives. But

Dhawa endured whatever abuse and grief her Jethani's family inflicted upon her. Dhawa describes the abuses she went through:

My Jethani does not give me food and often fights with me. She blames me that I do not work at home. She talks badly with her husband about me, and he again shares that with the villagers. Even my in-laws listen to her and speak softly with her, but they scold me. Once, when my son was inside my womb (of three months), my Jethani told me not to stay in the house and scolded me to leave the place. Jethani said that she came before me in this house, and I am not eligible to share the property. Then we had a fight and she accused me of being a Boksi.

Arguments, disagreements, and disputes are a commonplace in the Tamang families. When the grievances gradually grow and personal grudges extend further, it irreversibly impairs the family ties. Furthermore, persons accused of witchcraft undergo excruciating societal misery. It is like an awful sin for Dhawa to be accused of being a witch. Once accused of witchcraft, she cannot escape from it for the rest of her life. This incident is also related to the property issue. Dhawa's Jethani's idea was to kick Dhawa out of the house before she became a mother and took all the property belonging to her in-laws. The easiest way for her Jethani was to accuse Dhawa of being a Boksi.

When women belonging to the Tamang community encounter verbal disputes over the petty matters, the strong members of the community begin to accuse the weak members of being a Boksi.⁶ Those Tamang women, who have strong physical, financial, and social networks often, use this term to vent their anger without paying heed to the social impacts of accusing someone as Boksi. Property disputes and family conflicts are interwoven in a way, leading to witchcraft allegations in kin ties, which isolate the accused person from the family. Sufferers often face traumatic mental difficulties, leading to maliciousness, aggression, and violence due to perceived inferiority or flaws by family, neighbors, and others.

In the joint family, the actions or decisions made by one person will not satisfy the other, and conflict persists. The distance between the brothers widens, particularly after marriage, and their animosity and hostility are exacerbated by various small issues. In such a joint family, it is difficult to satisfy everyone. The nature of the conflict in the family is instigated by everyday affairs including children's quarrels, wrangles between in-laws, financial issues, etc. To chart a case from Devitar, a joint family was broken into nuclear one after the younger brother's marriage. The elder brother's wife began quarreling with her Buhari (sister-in-law) over trivial matters and finally accused her of being a Boksi. This is what the survivor says about the incident:

6 In Tamang language the term for Boksi is Mohong and Mangoshya.

Before I came to this house, my Jethaju (husband's elder brother) and his wife were harassing my mother-in-law a lot. And later, in my presence, they could not do this, and they tried to separate me from the family, and they acted accordingly. My mother-in-law preferred to stay with me for her peace and security. Then Jethani started getting angry and jealous of me. At first, they started calling my mother-in-law a witch and I stood against it, but later, they called me a witch for no reason. In fact, after the death of the father-in-law, the mother-in-law used to give some small loans to the villagers, and on her behalf, Jethani would collect the loan money from the villagers. I stood as a wall to her plans and she was angry with me.

The aforementioned cases reveal that the key reason for the accusations of witchcraft among the kinship is the division of the property belonging to the in-laws. Due to the presence of anger, jealousy, and quarrels among the families in the Tamang community regarding the inheritance of property, land, and wealth, there has been a shift from a joint family to a nuclear family. Thus, when living in a nuclear family, no one has any kind of conflict with anyone and the incidents of making accusations have also decreased to a great extent. The influence of the market economy has made a direct impact not only on land or on the accumulation of wealth but also on the everyday family structure and world views of the household members. It has stimulated in breaking down of the structure of joint family, enabling its members to be self-reliant and a part of the newly ongoing socio-political structure. However, unlike the issue of parental property inheritance triggering the conflicts inside the family leading to the witchcraft accusations, the cases in the neighborhood are not free from the influence of the existing socio-economic and political realities shaping the disputes caused by land and social status in the Tamang communities of Kavrepalanchok.

Boksi in the Neighborhood

Sociologically speaking, a neighborhood has a specific socio-cultural geographical area characterized by a high degree of social interaction wrought by religion, language, and lifestyle. Taking advantage of the same social interaction, the stronger neighbor takes no less time to accuse the weaker as Boksi. In the Tamang community, when a neighbor's family member falls sick or faces any misfortune, it is believed to have been caused by witchcraft.

Witch-hunts have become an instrument of those socio-economic sections intending to subjugate the less fortunate sections of society. Neighbors often engage in personal disputes, leading to conflicts that escalate into witchcraft accusations, often resulting from past disputes between the accuser and the accused. The reasons for accusing neighbors of witchcraft differ from those of kin relatives. Although these relations intersect with each other, they are not the same in practical life. Those women, who have a poor social network along with the absence of a male member in the family, and are characterized by a relatively low social position in society, are the prime suspects for being witches. Infertile

women are also largely suspected of being witches in the neighborhood and are also accused of misusing their supernatural forces to cause miscarriages in pregnant women.

The subsequent case from Kharelthok will provide additional evidence on the allegations leveled against the neighbors in the community. In an incident from Kharelthok, the accusation was made owing to the disputes over the land boundaries between the two close neighbors. The quarrel ensued between the two neighbors after the accuser accused the neighbor of killing chickens and goats and causing illness in the family due to her witch spells. The survivor of this incident is a 64-year old Lasang Tamang, whose house is built just opposite to the accuser and separated by an alley. According to Lasang:

We are two very close neighbors. She often argued with me that the water from the roof of my house fell on her land. Similarly, whenever my chickens and goats enter into her yard, she starts cursing me. So far, it was fine, but she started naming me a witch.

In another incident in Patharchok, the accusation was laid because of disputes over the land. Dolma, who was accused of being a witch, bought a piece of land that her neighbor was also looking to buy. After she purchased this land, her neighbors got infuriated with her and started cutting down the trees belonging to her land. Dolma was not allowed to collect the grass from her own land. In wrath and fury, the neighbor accused her of being a witch. At the same time, the neighbor's wife got sick and the cow was not giving milk, which offered the neighbor an ill-intended pretext to manufacture and spread the suspicions against Dolma. While his spiteful intense couldn't get him the land he wanted to buy, he decided to visit Bombo to share this matter. Since then Dolma was accused of Boksi. Among the Tamangs, if anyone gets sick or has some misfortune, they have the tradition of visiting and relying on Bombo. Thus, Bombo is the abode of primary treatment for Tamangs. To them, Bombo is an influential social leader and is also responsible for the treatment of sickness and misfortunes. After visiting Bombo, the accuser not only accused Dolma a Boksi but also attempted to kill her. She retells her painful experience:

I was working at my home, and it was almost evening, and suddenly, a group of people, including that neighbor, came with a Khukuri (traditional Nepali knife) and frightened me. He blamed me, saying that I was a Boksi, and I spelled it on his wife, making her sick. I was alone and scared and tried to run out, but they chased me.

Not only are disputes and allegations mostly centered over land. They also revolve around political affiliations. In an incident from Darimbot, a survivor was elected as a female representative of the ward on behalf of the communist party. This post was also expected by the survivor's closest neighbor, who belongs to her opponent party, the Nepali Congress. After this, her neighbor started looking for her fault so that it would disgrace her in society. One day, her neighbor's

son started trembling after drinking the water she gave him. On this pretext, her neighbors beat her up and accused her of being a Boksi. In this incident, the survivor's husband, who was old and weak, was also thrashed because the accuser had harbored grudges against her husband. Rumors said that her husband had hurt the accuser's family long ago.

Generally, it seems that the closer a person is, the less likely they are to harbor misunderstandings and quarrels, but that is not the case. The closer the relationships are, the faster the chances of those relationships being ruined. It's where Bombo intervenes. Although treatment by Bombo is not always successful and whenever he cannot cure any patient, he has to resort directly or indirectly to blaming the patient's close relatives or neighbors. It has nevertheless kept the trust and faith of the Tamang people in Bombo intact.

In this way, when the relationship gets closer, the tendency to despise each other also increases. Those close neighbors, with whom people were in everyday contact represented the most threatening source of harm and the most obvious targets of the witch accusations. It is normal to have misunderstandings and minor quarrels between neighbors, which may however calm down after sometime. As there are everyday interactions and transactions between the neighbors, this situation may not last for long. But when a neighbor falls sick or faces any misfortune, he first goes to Bombo for treatment. When the treatment done by Bombo yields no success, he gives some signs to the patient, according to which the patient suspects the neighbors around him. He finally accuses them of witchcraft when he gets clues about the people whom he can easily accuse as Boksi and the community members get blindfolded and consider what Bombo says as true. Thus, such a relationship is manufactured by plentiful circumstances and existential conditions linked to the neighbor's proximity that might cause friction and eventually harbor accusations of witchcraft.

Boksi within the Relatives

In the Tamang community of Kavrepalanchok, people rely on human faithhealers' practices of healing and exorcism, which has a controlling effect on the daily lives of the community members. The subsequent case displays Bombo's preeminence revealing how his incantation exposed the existence of a witch-hunt in the relatives.

While explaining the discovery of the witch, Bombo says that they need to have a special skill. They mostly use grains like lentils or rice and divide them into many groups. Then they move grains from one group to another in their own way, which is difficult for common people to comprehend. In such a peculiar manner, Bombos finally declare the cause of the specific disease or misfortunes. In another way, beating a Dhyangro (drum made of deerskin) is one of the most important rituals, during the process of exorcism. By beating and shaking their bodies, Bombos enter into a state of trance, where they seemingly generate a belief among the visitors that they can communicate with the spirits, and find the cure or answer

to the visitors' problem. Incense is an important part of every shamanic ritual. Most interestingly, in the course of their work, Bombo also consumes alcoholic beverages without being intoxicated. His activities make a lasting impact on the visitors and persuade them that he is a devotee of lord Shiva and he can heal and cure. According to visitors, all this is lord Shiva's wish. But, the treatment for the patient does not always guarantee a cure. Thus, Bombo, in such cases, blames others for what he cannot do.

Lingsha Tamang was accused of being a witch by her daughter-in-law in the village of Dolalghat in Kavrepalanchok. The accuser is the survivor's maternal uncle's daughter-in-law. The economic situation of both the families in the village was poor. They had a good relationship before the incident. Seeing Lingsha's grief, her father helped her build a small house near the market, and she started a hotel there. Once she started earning money, her relationship with the accuser gradually faded away. Lingsha's children also grew up and assisted in her work. But the accuser's children were young, and she could not improve her financial situation like that of Lingsha. Seeing the situation of the accuser, Lingsha supported her in various ways, but her standard of living could not be raised.

Meanwhile, the accuser fell ill, and Lingsha took her to different places for her regular treatment. But, because of the accuser's habit of drinking alcohol, they could not cure her illness. Even after trying so hard, her health did not improve, and she went to Bombo, where she was told that 'the spell of a witch, who has a small white dog ruined her life'. Upon hearing this, the accuser suspected Lingsha of being a witch because her dog was also white. In the Tamang community, no one can refuse or deny Bombo's sayings as he is considered one of the societal leaders, whose major responsibility is to cure the patient. As Bombo also belongs to the same place and the village, he knows both sides well, and he decides what to inflict to produce suspicion among the visitors. After Bombo confirmed Lingsha as a witch, Lingsha suffered at the hands of her accuser, who started spitting on Lingsha, whenever they came across. After facing the offense several times, Lingsha also got angry, and one day a quarrel aroused between them. Finally, the relationship broke down.

Lingsha's case shows how the causes of these conflicts were usually simple at first and gradually started to grow. As the practice of accusing witchcraft is prevalent within close relationships, people suspect someone from the list of relatives of being a witch. As a result, the accusee is ostracized socially. The villagers stop involving the accusee in social activities and monitor her daily activities. They start to spread belief that such a person spoils the food and prescribe that no one eats the food she offers. Consequently, the practice of witchcraft is institutionalized structurally. Along with this, the traditional faith prevails among the people and also plays a big role, where they can inflict harm either to family members or neighbors by bewitching. This fear forced them to retain one aloof from those who have been accused.

Similarly, another case is from Panauti, where Palmo Tamang is accused of Boksi by her relatives. Palmo often lives in her house and does not like to socialize with her relatives and neighbors. When the villagers and relatives knew that this was her second marriage, they treated her differently, due to which she kept herself isolated from the community. She excluded herself from other kinds of social activities. I heard from a villager that because of her reticent behavior, her son also left home and went to Bhaktapur for work. Her husband tends to leave home whenever they get into petty quarrels. Infrequently, he remains absent and gets back home only after a long interval. But she is comfortable with her daughters, who come to meet her frequently. Her neighbors and relatives closely monitor Palmo's behavior. After a while, her neighbors and relatives started casting doubt on her. One day, when a couple of her relatives started to shudder their bodies, people thronged and decided to summon her in front of them. She recalled her encounter as:

I was sleeping with my younger daughter, and my husband was sleeping outside of the house. Around 9 PM, suddenly one of my Buharis was knocking at my door and asking me to come out to see the neighbors, who were shaking their bodies. I was exhausted that day and was unwilling to go, but my daughter encouraged me, and we went there. When I reached there, the villagers pushed me into the same room where a couple of my neighbors were seen shuddering. As soon as they saw me, they first confirmed whether I was Palmo. And the two of them pronounced themselves as 'White Tiger' and 'Mata.' They started biting me. Mata told the tiger that I was a witch and ordered him to kill me. Everyone in the village was watching the scene from the window, but no one came to rescue me.

According to the survivor, her neighbors (the accusers) lived together in the same house for a long time. The accusers are survivor's Devar's son and Buhari. They were living together after the earthquake destroyed the accuser's house. When they lived together, they had a good relationship, and there was no quarrel. But after the accuser made his home and moved there, they were noticed shuddering time to time. They took various medicines and treatments but were not cured. Finally, accusers suspected that this was because of the accusee's witchcraft spells, as per the accusations made by Bombo.

Interlacing the Cases

The practice of witchcraft accusations, in a close social vicinity composed of kin, neighbors, and relatives, manifests the fate of those who are accused and their sufferings. While earlier studies have explored the accusation of witchcraft, they have not primarily captured the compelling factors within the members, who are close to each other, be they the family, relatives, or neighbors. Importantly, in a study like this, the life story of the individual matters. On the one hand, the accusation of Boksi is rooted in the prevailing social structure and the other

hand, the aforementioned cases demonstrate that the accusation and the stigma labeled on the individuals jeopardize community sentiments and familial harmony. Within this collective co-existence the faith and belief of the particular individuals shape and influence the everyday socio-cultural interactions. In every Tamang community, there is a presence of Bombo, who is considered one of the societal leaders, and whose main responsibility is to cure the patient and their misfortunes. Once these Bombos, aware of the tensions prevailing in the close relationships, fails to diagnose the patient's real cause of sickness, they instead signal the visitors by passing the imagery of Boksi on someone's head. Thus, when there is a Bombo, there is a Boksi.

In his study of the Zande of South Sudan, E. E. Evans Pritchard (1937) suggests that people living at a distance from one another have insufficient social contacts to produce mutual hatred, whereas there is an ample opportunity for friction among those whose homesteads and cultivations are close. Thus, witchcraft is selective and takes a toll on people between whom social bonds already exist. This study's findings also suggest that the closer the proximity is, the higher the chances of the witch accusations. Similar to Pritchard's idea of an oracle, Bombo in the Tamang community also practices healing and spelling against the Boksis. They perform rites and rituals with grains by moving them from one cluster to the other and through this act, Bombo declares the Boksi.

Hutton (2006), however, examines the concept of shamanism and redefines existing interpretations of shamanism. To him, a witch does harm to neighbors or kin, rather than strangers, and represents a threat to individuals and the community. Witchcraft is the dark side of kinship within Tamangs, where a group of people share intimate ties. That intimacy paradoxically bears the power and potentiality that dangerously hold against each other. The cause of this danger is distrust and when the distrust compounds within them, the witchcraft surfaces. Similarly, in my study as well, the lack of mutual trust and prevalence of jealousy, along with social, economic, and political differences among the kins and neighbors, resulted in the accusation of Boksi, where the strong Tamangs inflict and torture their weak counterparts.

Likewise, Marwick (1969) in his study critically makes a reassessment of the previous studies on witchcraft. In doing, so he sees witchcraft practices grounded in social realities rather than reckoning it as supernatural and psychological. While examining the social context, Marwick finds misfortunes provoking someone undergoing a problematic relationship to accuse the other as a witch. In the Tamang community, anger, quarrels and jealousy are not uncommon and when a strong person faces any misfortunes or falls ill, it provides a pretext for that person to accuse the weak and helpless of being a witch. However, such accusations are not laid out instantly. Instead, they wait for a suitable time to accuse the weak as Boksi. In the same line, Macfarlane (1970) argues that witchcraft accusations have to be understood in the context of social tensions and conflicts. Examining

witchcraft as an instrument for social control, he believes that such accusations are mostly made between the people, who not only belong to the same village but from the same part of the village, and know each other very well. As such, accusations arise in the realm of close relationships between the individuals. Above all, there is a good mutual acquaintance between the accuser and the accused prior to the accusation. In the Tamang community, Bombo functions as the instrument of social control and the continuity of the status quo of the community norms. In the same context, witchcraft accusations take place as a response to the personal conflict in the family and relatives, and other forms of tensions and contradictions that arise in the neighborhood.

Conclusion

Several reports, including that of the Nepal Police, reveal that witchcraft is more pervasive in the Kavrepalanchok district and among the Tamang community than in any other ethnic and caste groups. Bombos' dualistic roles as the priest and community leader primarily share the blame coupled with Tamangs' unceasing reliance on Bombos.

I developed case-based details, based on my observations made in the field, using the account of the sufferers, accusers, and a faithhealer, Bombo, whose presence plays a significant effect on the villagers' long-held belief in Boksi. Based on these collected cases, I pointed out the specifics of the situation prevailing in the context of a market-driven economy, the individuals' progress, political party-based divisions, and disagreements and disputes, both within the family and community members.

Sociologically speaking, the ongoing practice of witchcraft among the Tamangs arises as an imposition of intra-ethnic feuds and rivalries that result in animosity amongst allied member groups, who interact regularly. It is within these social relationships that member groups get intimately acquainted with one another's strengths and weaknesses. The making of a Boksi is a manifestation of a varied nature of community conflicts and the rising nature of complexities, individual disputes, envy, insecurity, and illusionary misimpressions among the household kin, relatives, and neighborhood.

This led to a rise and perpetuation of Boksi, where susceptible women were targeted in this abuse and forced to suffer terribly, both inside and outside the household. As the contention among the individuals or member groups protracts, then within these circumstances, a certain woman is chosen and charged as a Boksi. Especially, prone to such charges are, elderly women, widows, unmarried or childless women, women with gullibility, and women members belonging to the discordant groups.

Conflict in the household is sparked by a variety of behavioral factors, including, land disputes, longstanding family feuds, parental property division, joint family structure, polygamous dilemmas, and a host of other personal issues. As the

disputes were not resolved and intensified, the weaker spouses or household women were dishonored and abused as Boksi. This suggests that the imposition and sufferings the women endure inside the household are perpetuated by gender roles and dynamics, wherein a woman is seen as a provocateur for another woman and eventually paired up by other male and female members. The same applies to relatives connected by fictive ties, who are usually subjected to the lending and borrowing of money, and also to a woman, who is in an extra marital affair or who marries twice, and is dealing with a variety of other personal problems. Male members of the family going abroad for foreign employment have also made the women vulnerable to witchcraft accusations.

Lastly, in a neighborhood, witchcraft is common on two levels: personal and societal. The former is linked to tensed neighborly relations fueled by land and other conflicts, including party-based political divergences. The latter is linked with the stigma faced by the women, who are childless, widows, shamed by many, and jinxed by a Bombo. In the neighborhood, Bombo and influential villagers prevail over in shaping the community members' collective imagination and continuity of the witchcraft.

The cases demonstrated here reveal that, inside the household, a woman is accused of Boksi by none other than another woman. Likewise, all the members, relatives, and the neighborhood accept and abuse the woman, who has been bedeviled as a witch. A faithhealer, Bombo, serves as a Holy Joe in authorizing and sanctifying the community's belief and securing the continuation of the practice. Moreover, in this process, I also discovered that the uncontrolled market-led economy and the present vote-based political party system have latent influence and consequences on the rise of witchcraft cases.

This way, Tamang has used witchcraft as a weapon by scarring those, who are weak against the powerful, those who were deprived of family property and inherited it, those who are progressing, and those who are regressing, those who are clever, and those who are credulous, those who are socially devout and those who are heretical, those exerting the tricks of market economy and those who do not, and between the members and non-members of the ruling political camps.

The rising cases of reported incidents of witchcraft, together with other external factors causing discrepancy among the member groups have weakened the community's collective cohesiveness. The woman who is subjected to witchcraft is publicly humiliated, ridiculed, threatened, tortured, restricted, and evicted from her home, causing several losses and enduring social suffering. While the internal grudges among the villagers and families continue to fester, Boksi keeps showing up as part of the community's beliefs and practices.

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