

**BLACK MAGIC PRACTICES IN HEALING: A STUDY ON  
INDIGENOUS PRACTICE OF MAYONG VILLAGE,  
ASSAM**

Dissertation submitted to the School of Arts and Language  
in fulfillment of the requirements or the Awards of the degree of  
Master of Arts in Sociology.

Submitted by,

**Himashree Saikia**

Reg. No: 11611631

Under the Guidance of

**Jaiffer Ali Arackal**

Assistant Professor



**Department of Sociology  
School of Arts and Languages  
Lovely Professional University  
Phagwara, Punjab (India)  
November 2017**

## **Declaration**

*It is to declare that the dissertation entitled “**Black Magic Practices in Healing: A Study on Indigenous Practice of Mayong Village, Assam**”, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in sociology is entirely my original work and all ideas and references have been duly acknowledged. It does not contain any work that has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of any university.*

Himashree Saikia

11611631

Date: 29/11/2017

## **Certificate**

*It is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Black Magic Practices in Healing: A Study on Indigenous Practice of Mayong Village, Assam**”, submitted by Miss. **Himashree Saikia**, as part of her Masters Degree in Sociology, from Lovely Professional University is prepared under my supervision.*

*For my best understanding and knowledge, it is result of her own genuine research work, and investigation. No part of this work has been to any university for any degree or any other purposes.*

Date: 29/11/2017

Jaiffer Ali Arackal

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## **Acknowledgements**

*First of all, I would like to offer sincere thanks to Almighty God for showering his blessing for successful completion of the project. All my success in the task can come only from Him, in Him I trust and unto Him I turn.*

*I would like to thank my mentor, Jaiffer Ali Arackal, Assistant Professor, Lovely Professional University, who has been always encouraging and supportive throughout my training period and has always given his valuable inputs. They showed me different ways to approach a research problem and the need to be persistent to accomplish any goal. I would consider myself lucky if I could imbibe even a fraction of their scientific excellence and extremely humane honest nature.*

*I would like to express my deepest sense of gratitude and indebtedness towards Harpal Saikia. His wide knowledge and his logical way of thinking have been of great value for me., I feel immense pleasure in expressing my sincere gratitude towards him.*

*I take this opportunity to express heartfelt gratitude towards Happylina Pathak for her inspiring guidance and constant encouragement.*

*I do not know whether I will be able to repay my parents blessing without whom it would not have been possible for me to face the difficult times and challenges that this project presented. I am forever indebted to my parents for their understanding, endless patience and encouragement when it was most required.*

*I present my heartfelt gratitude towards the member of Mayong village, who helped me during my field work as well as interviewed people for their co-operation and moral support. I would also like to thank my friends for helping and supporting me emotionally and morally*

*Lastly, I would like to thank all who helped me directly or indirectly during this project*

*Himashree Saikia*



## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

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The term magic stands for supernatural abilities and skills which a common person cannot perform. Magic is a combination of belief and practice by the people who possess (believed to be possessed) super-human power which enables (or convinces) human beings to do the impossible things using normal powers. Magic can be real, illusion and imagined. Magic is necessarily related to performance and doing thing in extreme perfect way. However, then performance it is related to perception and conviction by the bare eyes that something impossible has happened. Magic is interplay between reality, illusion, myths, belief, perception and social and psychological realities.

As a miracle, magic has got different religious, cultural and social meaning. Religion finds magic as blessing by the creature, where super-natural powers are engaged at some occasions, which enable selected people to perform 'divine' things- super human deeds with positive and negative results for the society. Magic is about divination, astrology, alchemy, sorcery, incantations, spirit, mediation, and necromancy.

Magic as a cultural and social performance, it is related to traditional and ritualistic values of some caste or communities, which they achieve by training and practice. Some religious texts allow selected communities and caste to perform such ritualistic magic. Some of such magical performance has become determined by the caste as a profession, just like serpent magic. Magic is a very popular word among people as an extraordinary activity by trained people managed through illusion. Training and tricks enable them to do magic.

#### **1.1 Magic: Meaning and Usages**

The term 'magic' derived from the ancient Persian '*magu*'. In Persian, the meaning of '*magu*' is 'magician'. The etymology of this particular Persian term is unclear. In Old Persian language, the term is used for referring the magician who is considered as wise man. However, it was used to denote some religious functionary, which is not always explained rationally using cause and effect. The term magic has different meaning ranging from spiritual forces to other worldly interposition, and other cosmic events that cannot be explained by science and rationality. Magic is a term, through which a magician can make the impossible thing to possible. It is the use of special technique to make things happen that would usually not possible.

Magic can be for negative as well as positive purpose. John F.M. Middleton, Robert Andrew Gilbert and Karen Louise Jolly explain that anthropologically, there are three types of instrumental magic. They are the productive, the protective, and the destructive:

Productive magic is employed to solicit a successful outcome from human labour or nature, such as bountiful hunt or harvest or good weather. Protective magic aims to defend an individual or community from the vagaries of nature and the evil of others. The use of amulets to ward off contagious diseases or the recitation of charms before a journey is examples of this protective function. Lastly, destructive magic, or sorcery, is intended to harm others, often is motivated by envy, and is socially disruptive. Consequently, the use of counter magic against sorcery may relieve some social tension within a community.<sup>1</sup>

Magic can be used positively and negatively. Healing, medicinal, entertainment, spiritual values and alternative knowledge are some positive aspects of magic. Harming others, feeling, social and political domination and economic exploitation are few negative aspects of magic. Tricks like, producing a pigeon from one hat, Illusion of lots of water coming from a small glass, rope tricks etc. are some examples. Simple magic performed for amusing audience. When magic use for harm someone, it is negative in its usage. Deciding negative, positive usage and misuses are very complicated since the entire are related to perception of people. However, from an understating of valuing each and every human being, and goodness of the everyone in the society, negativity and positivity is generated how it is used either for goodness of the people or worsening them. The concept of white and black is also related to the miss/use of magic.

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<sup>1</sup> John F.M. Middleton, Robert Andrew Gilbert, Karen Louise Jolly, "Magic Supernatural Phenomenon" (accessed on: 20/10/2017) URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/magic-supernatural-phenomenon>

## **1.2 Origin of magic:**

It is very hard to trace out the history and origin 'Black magic' in the earth. Having a Persian derivation (*magu*). All of the known civilization of the world is having some practices of magic either in the form of white or black magic.<sup>2</sup> Giving sprite to dead bodies (rebirth), healing patients who are disturbed by epidemics like leprosy etc. are some examples old Persian and Egyptians. For Egyptian and Persian civilisations, positive and negative magics were related religious (divine) and anti-religion (devils) powers.

## **1.3 Black magic in ancient India:**

While in contemporary society all the magic is considered as a clever art of trick, most people believe that in ancient times their existed real magic. It is said that at the ancient time, witches used to make the impossible happen. They would change water to blood or make frogs, elephants or snakes appear or disappear. It is said that the practitioner could talk to the dead or fly into the heavens simply by pronouncing some magical mantras.

If we see on the Vedic age, we get a clear picture of existence of the belief system of magic and extensive practice of the magic system in the Vedic period from the Veda's. Particularly the Atharvaveda. The four Vedas, the Rigveda, the Samaveda, the Yajurveda, and the Atharva-veda are regarded 'as the oldest literature, not merely in India but in any Aryan language, and ascribe them to the second millennium B.C.' (wheeler 1983:1434). There are so many examples of Magic or mantras in these four Vedas. But what attracts us most is the Atharvaveda, which we can say as the house of magical beliefs of the people of ancient India not only in the Vedic period as well as the earlier times.

If we see the manuscripts of payers, The Atharvaveda has the contents of payers in a ritual form, like that of the Rigveda can be regarded as magical charms. The Atharvaveda itself has offered a classification of these harms into categories such as:

1. Ayusya (charms for long life)
2. Abhicarlia (love charms)
3. Bhesajya (charms to cure sickness)

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<sup>2</sup> ibid



4. Abhicarka (charms to curse upon enemies)

So, after seeing all these, study can say that the practice of Magic or Black magic is not a new term, rather it was practicing from the ancient time. To say about the history or the origin of black magic, it is a darker phase of magic where it claimed life and blood of people and made causalities to many human beings. History of black magic shows that people wanted a way out of their lives, and so they looked to create dark magic to make their life better. But this dark magic is not always for the bad or evil practices

**1.4 Early practices of black magic in Mayong:**

Mayong is considered one of the sacred historical places, which dates back to the time of *Vedas*. Mayong is famous/notorious for magic which can be classified as white and black considering their usages/misuses. Magicians of Mayong use their skills for benefit of human society and harming others also. However, the name of Mayong is more attached with black magic considering the number practitioners and incidents of harming people is reported and spread throughout the state of Assam. Black magic- a term used for negative purposes of magic was very vibrant and widely used in the said area. Among people of Assam, this area has become a synonymous with the black magic. This perception is still persisted throughout the state, though the practice of black magic is less in number. Till the early modern period, human sacrifices were very commonly reported to carry out the worship of Shakti.

Priyanshi Lal mentioned in the 7<sup>th</sup> point of an article titled that, ‘Mayong mentioned in Mahabharata’.

You can easily find the names Mayong and Pragiyotishpura (the ancient name of Assam) in many mythological epics, including Mahabharata. It is said that Chief Ghatotkacha of Kachari Kingdom took part in the battle of Mahabharata after attaining magical powers from this place. It is also said that Mayong forest is still home for saints who want siddhi in black magic.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Priyanka Lal, (March 09, 2016), “Here's all you need to know about the official hub of black magic in India”, (accessed on:20/10/2017) URL: <https://www.speakingtree.in/allslides/heres-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-official-hub-of-black-magic-in-india>

Mentioning of Mayong in Mahabharata is a strong example of existence of Black magic from the earlier times, which is also attached with practices of magic, not always good for the welfare of the people. All these examples show Mayong is a land of magic and Black magic is also taught and used considering the land notorious for that. Black magic in Mayong is practiced for harming others as a revenge and enmity. Many people in the area did not consider it as negative and they engaged in such activities for money and material win. Black magic of this area can be understood as an art of practicing different events with connections to evil spirits. It is believed that evil spirits help people to obtain the power for achieving the given objectives. It is mostly practiced secretly by the people for different purposes.

As per available historical evidences, it was first practiced during the medieval period and gained its importance there itself slowly and steadily.<sup>4</sup> Mayong is a place which is called the land of Black magic. Though magic and science are considered as opposite to each other, still it is very much popular among people of Mayong. Faith and belief of people keeps this art vibrant and new mode of communication and technology increases the popularity of magic by spreading various successful stories of its effectiveness. Popularity of the black magic in this area is dating back to ancient time. Rumours and actual/imagined incidents about its effective kept black magic's popularity alive even today- at the age of science and rationality.

### **1.5 Relevance of Black Magic in contemporary Mayong**

Black magic is the term use of supernatural powers or magic for evil practices. This magic can be performed by some magician or who have the knowledge on black magic. From another aspect, it is our societal believe that Black magic is the negative use of energies and power by evil minded human; it is always use to harm people. If we divide the word "Black magic", magic is like a power through which we can control a person or things; we

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<sup>4</sup> Ramandeep Kaur, "A Magical Tourist Place in Assam – Mayong Village" (accessed on 21/10/2017)  
<https://www.mapsofindia.com/my-india/travel/a-magical-tourist-place-in-assam-mayong-village>

can do unexpected things which is imaginary. Magic can be positive as well as negative but when the word Black will add before magic, it sounds negative. In Indian society, Black is always a symbol of dark, sad, evil etc. So that people thinks about the concept of Black magic is always in a negative way. Every coin has two sides, one can be positive or the other can be negative. Like that, Black magic also can have some positive aspects for our society. People are attracted towards negative things easily.

The term “white magic” is accepted by the society as a positive term of magic, the term “Black magic” came. In a concept of racism White people thinks that the Black people are always bad for them, White Americans have always been discriminating Black Indians, like that only in our society all this concept is still going on that Black is the symbol of bad or evil things and so Black magic is negative or bad things. But, black magic is not about always being harmful we can see it in a positive manner also and also with a different prospective. It can also save someone’s life. It can also be a religious practice of some particular religion etc. There are so many magical stories or text books are still in our society. From these ancient texts, we can say that magic was practicing from the ancient period of time.

To say about the positive aspects of Black magic, we can say about how this Black magic can be helpful for the society. “Black magic can cure our disease”, this line is saying about the capital of Black magic ‘Mayong’, we can say the birth place of Black magic. In this village of Assam Black magic can cure the disease.

Mayong community have proved the power of black magic specially from the positive side, though at the time of past, black magic was used for the negative purposes mostly. Research revealed the most important term that Mayong is not actually famous for black magic rather it is the place of Tantra-Mantra, according to the people of Mayong community black magic is a term used by the outsiders but the term Black magic existence because of the use of Tantra -mantra.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study:**

“Black magic practices in healing”, in this 20<sup>th</sup> century this Black magic practice is still occupying their place. “Mayong”, the capital of black magic in Assam has always been

associated with the power of ‘Tantra-mantra’. The belief in and practice of Black magic in Mayong was quite prominent in the past was revealed in the writings of medieval writers.

At present, also Black magic plays an important role in the Mayong community of Assam. Though people are educated, they believe in science and technology but in another side, they also depend upon on Black magic. Black magic in the form of cure diseases, remove back pain, to catch thief, to transfer human into animal etc. are prevailed in Mayong community.

Few decades back, the Black magic was practiced mainly for negative purposes or for harm someone in Mayong. This practice is led to the growth of ‘manta’ literature. It said that any manuscripts of this black magic perished along with the death of the owner-practitioner of black magic because of the fear of wrong uses of these manuscripts, yet a large number of them, which is mainly for positive aspects are still available.

Some studies have been made, now and then, on black magic of Mayong community and have been published as articles or stories. Some of the beliefs and superstitions also have been recorded in various forms of tales. But the field of Mayong in Assam has not yet been systematically explored.

As Black magic practices in healing, a study on indigenous practice of Mayong community in Assam can be expected to provide the positivity of the concept of Black magic of the society, Moreover, black magic as an occupation and its influence on contemporary society.

The scope of the present work is to trace out the positivity of Black magic in Mayong community as well as the contemporary relevance of Black magic and the socio-cultural aspects of Black magic in Mayong. In Mayong community, power of ‘tantra-mantra’ can make the impossible thing into possible. Practice of Black magic was from the past and during time it is inherited from one to another generation. These ‘tantra-mantra was basically apart from the ‘Veda’ (Atharva-Veda). It is said that; the practice of magic is mentioned in the Atharva Veda. In Mayong community, each and every villager has the Manuscripts of Black magic, which proofs the existence of Black magic in this particular place. Black magics were practiced by the people in the earlier ages for negative purposes.

But latter said that these people who practiced it for negative purposes, died a very cruel death and they took promise from their family to burn those manuscripts with their dead body. This has resulted about the practice of Black magic for positive aspects as well as the status of Black magic in contemporary Mayong community.

### **1.7 Objectives of the study:**

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To trace out the origin of Black magic in Mayong village, Assam
2. To analyse the contemporary relevance of Black magic in Mayong
3. To examine the positivity about the concept of Black magic.
4. To study whether black magic is considering as an occupation in the village

### **1.8 Research questions:**

1. What are the main features and characteristics of black magic practiced in Mayong? How people differentiate between white and black magic
2. How does black magic practices get acceptance and popularity among people, and they are attracted to it as a legitimate practice of healing and panacea of various issues they face?
3. How black magic practice came into existence in Mayong community? and what are the changes got reported in the methods, approaches and acceptance of black magic practices?
4. Is black magic can be a part of employment among the practitioners? And what is the role played by different genders in black magic practices?

### **1.9 Research Methodology**

The study of black magic in Myong village has been uses multi methods in order to collect and analyse data. The study is qualitative and analytical understanding of black magic practices in the village of Mayong. Black magic- widely considered as irrational and non-scientific perception. However, phenomenological understanding of sociology helps to analyse the perception and acceptance of black magic. Phenomenological analytical and data collection styles accomplished with long intensive individual interviews.

The interviews were dedicated to describing and interpret the experiences of magicians, how do they narrate the history and practices of the magic, how they acquire trust and confidence of people. The interviews and data collection were not restricted to practitioners, it was also extended to to the clients. However, the interviews adopted multiple ways of interpreting the same experiences. Black magic and its experience is not restricted to the meaning of the experience of the one person, it also accompanied by critical question of their understanding and interpretation as well. Mind and interpretation constitutes reality of black magic and their practices. As a phenomenological study focused on the consciousness of experiences who engaged in the practice and accept it as effective method of healing.

The study adopted ethnographic methods in order to interpret and analyse consciousness of people. As an ethnographer (short-term) the researcher had spent two weeks in the setting. As an ethnographic study, I had tried to observe the practice. However, it was not allowed, since they wanted to hide the secrecy of the practice. Descriptive interviews were conducted based on semi-structured questionnaires. Questions related to understand the nature and the culture of black magic and its effectiveness were included. Ethnographic study was helpful to offer an in-depth description of black magic practices and it also helped to interpret cultural patterns and meanings the practice of Mayong, and it also analysed the cultural or social group who accept it. The main emphasis was given on groups of practitioners and their interpretation.

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data includes the texts available on black magic among practisers of the Mayong, (some of them are written on palm leaves) and date collected from the field. Secondary data includes books and articles published by various scholars. The YouTube videos on the performances were also watched to observe it is being practiced.

### **1.9.1 Field work:**

This work is a study of Indigenous practice of Black magic in Mayong village, Assam, a special reference has been made to the black magic capital 'Mayong', a place in the Morigaon district of Assam. The researcher tried to produce thick description of the Black magic practiced by the members of Mayong community. The materials collected through

field work were mostly collected by interviews with the practitioners of Black magic, the beneficiaries of the practice of magic and some common people. The interviews were semi-formal. The interviews were recorded in the form of audio- video which was of immense help later in analysing the data. Also, Non-participant observation method was adopted to understand the cultural determinant of black magic.

### **1.10 Limitations of the Study**

Although there is much remains to be done, our work gathering important findings in the field of “Black magic practices among Mayong community. Being an Assamese, it was easy to get access to the field. There was no communication restriction between both researcher and interviewed people from Mayong.

At the same time, there were limitations, like being away from the field. As, my home town is not the same district. There was a problem of staying in an unknown place far away from my home town. (Sivasagar). But people were very much cooperative in Mayong, so that I could manage to collect my field information kindly.

Again, At the time of field work, though it was aimed to captured some video of performing black magic but the practitioner was refused to perform at that particular time as they have different time for different black magic practices.

Practitioner as well as village people were busy at the time of field work as they were organising some functions, so the time or busy schedule limited the field work as well.

### **1.11 Organisation of the Dissertation:**

The dissertation is organised into four chapters. Chapter one describes the background of this work, operational definition of the term magic and its relevance in the contemporary context. Here, Chapter I describes about the introduction of this work, it includes the etymology of the word magic, meaning of magic, concept of black magic and its origin, different meanings of black magic, practice of magic in ancient India. It is also concluded about the practicing of black magic in so called black magic capital Mayong. In this

chapter, the researcher mentions about the reason of choosing this topic as a 'scope of the work' and also mentions the research objectives.

In Chapter II, a brief background of the work has been described including review of literature of the topic 'Black Magic'. In Chapter III a brief discussion about the research methodology and field work is mentioned. It also includes about the area of study of Mayong. In the area of study, researcher describe about the origin of the main Mayong and about the Mayong village and its people, forest as Pobitora Wildlife and Mayong museum. Expected outcome of the research is also included in chapter III.

Part II includes Chapter IV and Chapter V. In Chapter IV researcher describes about the field experience or analysis of the entire work. Here we can know about the origin or uses of Black Magic in particular place Mayong, about the prospective of 'bej or bejali', socio cultural status of black magic in Mayong, some stories regarding Black Magic included magic in tiger hunting, meeting with Indra Devata and so on. Socio cultural status of Mayong also includes the earning status of Black Magic, changes in the black magic performances, status of equality, witchcraft and the decline in the influence of black magic in so called Mayong community.

Lastly, the Chapter V, conclude the whole Black magic practices in Mayong.

Black magic practices in hailing in Mayong community were from the time of immemorial. The practices of Black magic in Mayong is a part of their culture and traditions, having manuscripts in each and every people of Mayong proved it as a part of their tradition. As Mayong is known as the capital of black magic in Assam and now it is spreading over the world.

research can conclude that the 'black magic practices in healing', specially it is start from the black magic capital Mayong and still we can see the positivity of Black magic in this so called Mayong as a welfare of the society, though it was used for negative purposes at the earlier time.



Education, science and technology and the modern minded society change the earlier negative practices of black magic into positive practices. Though the societal believe of black magic is for negative purposes but the research from Mayong made it for welfare of the society.

## Chapter-II

### SCHOLARLY DEBATES ON BLACK MAGIC

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Abir Gupta (2016), “India’s Black magic capital: The little knows of the Mayong village in Assam”. From this article, we came to know that because of black magic and witchcraft, Mayong is becoming popular day by day, where this black magic is accepted as their part of culture and also celebrated among them. This is a unique festival called Mayong Pobitora. (Pobitora is known as well-known forest near to Mayong) which described about magic and wildlife. This article says that village people do not know the actual story about how this magic take place in Mayong. Still there are so many mythical stories are there regarding this practice. There are so many true stories that through black magic people turning to birds and animals. There is a museum called Mayong Central Museums, where so many old things are kept related to black magic, which can say about this place as a land of black magic, also so many scriptures with mantras, but till now no one has been able to recite it. This is also a place where people used to come to learn black magic. This practice is still practicing but Mayong is a backward place where resources are less and people are also poor, so because of these people are forced to go the farm work. From this thing, we can also recognize that they are taking these black magic as a source of their livelihood, but now a day’s people are educated and in today’s scientific society people choose science instead of black magic. They have a particular name for that people who practicing black magic, it’s called BEZ or OJAA, these people are scared, they keep ghosts for the help of

black magic. Though people think that black magic, the word itself is a negative word but in this village people have also knowledge about traditional treatment. Curing back pain is very much famous in Mayong village. For curing back pain, they use copper plate on our back and also chanting some magic mantras. So, Mayong can say about some good effects of black magic. Almost all the people of Mayong village knows little bit of magic.

Happy Baglari (2015), “The magic art of Witchcraft and Black Magic”. This research paper was conducted in North-eastern state to know about their views on the beliefs of witchcraft and black magic. Research says that people have negative believe on black magic and witchcraft practicing. In the all eight states of north east, most of are tribal society. They have deep faith in their culture and traditional method which involves superstitions. In Nagaland Therii is practicing, by womenfolk which can inherited from mother to daughter in a powder form and we can't see it and it's a kind of poison. The victim of *Therii* have to suffer headache, nausea etc. and in some cases, it may lead to death. For getting cured, people go for some of the people who have some power to remove it despite of medical cure. In Manipur, also they are practicing Postom jado, where some of the male and female members are practicing this practice to save the life of some sick people and also, they are practicing some magic to catch thief. Also in Meghalaya, Assam they are practicing some kind of black magic. In Assamese dictionary Bez is called as a traditional doctor, who can give treatment to every disease and problem. Here, research says about so many traditional practices is healing in north-eastern society. Though people are practicing this as a part of their culture but after the emergence of Christianity along with the development of science and technology, it is reducing. Now people are more educated, so they want to adopt science rather than these old practices.

Sally Painter (2015), “Black magic: Possibly true stories around the world”. Black magic is considered as one of the most dangerous magic practices which are mostly performed by people for their self-satisfaction. It is the opposite of white magic or light magic. It exists in many places around the world and are practiced by many for their self-use. One such story unfolds the evil of the black magic practices where a family had to suffer some ill behaviors in their house which later was being found out to be done by some evil spells being cast on their house by someone. Another evidence of such an incident was found in

Karachi, Pakistan. After moving in to their new house, the mother of a little girl who got pregnant was possessed by evil spirits and started to behave abnormally. A small girl who could hear some strange sounds were not believed initially, was proved right. There are many such cases which have taken place and have been instrumental in providing an insight to the world of black magic. Practices of black magic still persists and these incidences are nothing full proves that it exists in this world. In the other part author also shared another story. One of the most bizarre stories of the black magic practice in India was in a family where they were being attacked with stone by some unknown yet mysterious forces. After calling the cops, the cops were frightened too with the showers of stone that came towards them. Mother of the household occult the spirits and connected with them to find out three small teens created to do that particular job. She banished them in order to save her family.

Rukma Sing, (2015) “Mayong: A place in Assam where magic cures diseases and help catch thieves”. The stories of Mayong are the main factors that encourage the mysticism associated with it. It is also a tourist spot. There are several stories narrated by the natives of Mayong. The place is the capital of magic and witchcraft of India. If anyone visits Mayong, he/she can witness some unnatural ticks like sea shells, palmistry, etc. which will shock the person. There are many magic tricks for curing illness, most famous is of curing back pain by using copper dish. There are also tricks for finding stolen items. In present state people consider magic as superstition. They hardly believe in that, but when they see it then they start believing. These days when someone is ill, “people go to doctor but there are still people who comes to us for cure”, said by a famous magic practitioner, S.B. Nath from Mayong. People from different states come to Mayong for learning magic.

International Seminar (2014), “Black Magic, Witchcraft and Occultism: Secret Cultural Practices in North East India”, *Assam University, Silchar*. According to this seminar paper published by the department of History, Assam which was previously known as pragjyotishpur has its roots in the tantric practices and black magic. People would believe that they could be converted to sheep when they came back. The kalika purana and charya Padas provides most of the evidences of the existence of the yogic and tantric practices in the state. Ratikhowas are the prominent people who practice these practices generally in the night time. With the advancement in agricultural practices, the practices are facing a limited

expansion as they are performed mostly by tribal people. People believe that these practices are still being practiced. Though they are rare in number, but the present status in the state and recognized by the government are playing some role in taking these practices to an organized level.

Today, most of these practices are seen in a place called Mayong. Mayong has many interesting stories about it. Maya, as its name suggests, dates back to the days of Mahabharata where the chief ghatotkacha took part in the battle with magical powers. It is still believed that these evil practices are mostly used to heal any disease or an affected person who is believed to be caught by an evil spirit. These practices are sometimes used to cause death to fellowmen as well. All we can say is, these indigenous practices are beautifully dangerous.

Ramandeep Kaur (2013), "A Magical Tourist Place in Assam, Mayong village", According to this article people love to visit different places for enjoying natural beauty, weather or can be historical significance etc. But a place which is becoming tourist place because of its art of magic, 'MAYONG', the land of black magic in Assam.

Though the environment is like a peaceful village but its feel like something scary. Man turns into thin air, humans being turned into animals etc. are the part of MAYONG's magic but it is not that much strong that it can fight against the odds of nature, this practiced is not that much extent. This practice teaches to the children in a particular age by Kobiraj (teacher). Magic spells are mostly taught by the word of mouth or very few in written form. This magic can also cure many diseases. This is practicing from the Mughal period, so many historical stories are there related to MAYONG. Till now so many texts are there which can inform about magic. Village families also practicing these texts from their ancestors but some of them destroyed because of fear that these might fall in to wrong person and maybe they can use it in a wrong way or it can be that the people of Mayong don't want anyone else to know about the technique of their magic. They want to keep it secret or keep the identity of Mayong.

Kishore Hazarika (2013), "Mayong The Land of Thousand Spells". The article describes Mayong as the land of mysteries. The author starts with the introduction of bej and is closed

associations with it. He goes on describing his close relationships with differently about a bej and the place where the art of *bej* is learned, i.e. Mayong.

The author tries to find out the ways through which she can find her answers to the curiosity. According to the childhood conception of the author and her imagination that described Mayong as a place full of secrets was not true to the fullest. After visiting the place by herself, she found out that all the talks about the practices which include solving quarrels. Finding lost cows, solving problems about the oppressive nature of in laws etc. After the authors visit to Mayong, she could understand the fact that the practices of the bej of Mayong was mainly dependent upon archived and tantra shastra. Atharava-Veda mainly deals with the problems of a normal ordinary problem of the people. Whereas the trantra Shastra deals with other practices of little great difficulties.

But according to the author, today the whole scenario of Mayong has gained a different dimension. Yes, those practices of the bej to cure diseases are still prevailing but Hs been lower as compared to the old time. Today even google describes Mayong as a city of wildlife which has gained a full cycle.

Manimugdha S Sharma, (2012), “Spellbound: Occult a way of life in Assam’s Mayong”. In this article, author discussing about the time of Mughal period. When Mughal general was ordered by Aurangzeb to take an army to Assam, he picked up he assignment with fear. He was fear with the land of black magic capital Mayong in Assam as the deemed capital of occult. Mughal general took along ninth Sikh guru to ward off evil. Sikh guru Teg Bahadur accidentally introduced the Sikh faith in Assam but could not save Mughal from defeat. Here, author describing about the power of black magic in Mayong. One of the Award-winning film critic Utpal Borpujari says the myth of Mayong needs to be seen from a scientific point of view, while describing about the power of a bej (witch doctor) how he casts a spell and a bell-metal dish stick to the back of a man sitting upright, this power is defining about the law of gravity. In Mayong the practice of Mayong is a way of life. Each of the family of Mayong knows little bit about black magic. Almost every family has inherited texts on magic from their ancestors, which they have either preserved or destroyed out of fear of these falling into wrong people. People do not want to revealed their power to strangers.

Winstanley, (2008). "The Witchcraft Codex of Black Magic Practices Spells". According to this book, Black magic is a source of destroy other, or for personal gain. For exercise evil, the conscious use of black magic rituals is needed. Black magician is a person who needs power for himself and a magician may call the devil and remain a white magician, as long as the purpose for calling the devil is positive or generous. Black magicians are generally made a part with the devil. They beg diabolic and infernal power by black magic rituals and spells.

Anwaar Mohyuddin and Iqra Rahman (1950), "Impact of Black magic and witchcraft in a Muslim Community". This research paper discusses the impact of black magic and witchcraft among Muslim communities in Pakistan. Since the ancient time people had practiced black magic like a positive knowledge. Today, black magic had got different meaning and it shows negative aspects towards society. Now it has been used for misleading innocent people through black magic and make people depended on these things. Though witchcraft is acknowledging among Hindu religion, here a non-Muslim community in Pakistan is also addicted to black magic. We can say that this is not about only religion, this is a human nature or influenced from the ancient time. Basically, women are the most victim and also some of them using religion and earning a lot. Those people who are practicing black magic they don't have believe in Allah. We can say they things themselves as God. That they can solve people's problem. Many people, especially many women give their properties and all to these evil people to fulfil their wishes and these people always use this black magic for unnecessary advantage of people around them. Voodoo dolls, owl blood, hypnotizing, evil spirits are some of the methods. Black Magic is always use to take revenge, due to jealousy, greed, selfishness and negativity it is increasing day by day in every society.it can be done from one place to another, like it is also possible from far distance. there is also grey magic, white magic, green magic and folk magic.

Today's society is mostly influenced by black magic because of lack awareness, frustrations and also poverty. Because this is also one of the way of earning money. For the magician, they said they are doing it for welfare of society but it's always gives negative effect to every individual, it's a hidden crime.

Stansbury Hagar (1896), “Micmac Magic and Medicine”. This is a beautiful article where the legends are told and also three magical ways to actually attain the magical powers. One of the three ways is to collaborate with the little men. During the collaboration, we undergo a lot of magic occurrences and the magical change both from inner and outer side without a notice, throughout the article all the things that we can do with magic have been described well. The importance of magic sells attached to metal has been illustrated and also proved that it turns men into more irresistible as lovers. Usages of charmed six coloured plants have also been described. Nothing in this article is based on reality. Everything has a story and a tale to describe it but the very existence of it is still questioned.

Lewblank, ‘Mayong -the land of black magic’, this article discusses about the scary place Mayong in Assam. Article says that Mayong has been India’s centre for witchcraft since before many centuries. Early days people used to fly through using mantra or black magic. The scenery of Mayong is as dark as before but now so many visitors passing through Mayong and people of Mayong offer palm reading to these visitors and claim to be able to say about their future with the help of broken glass and seashells. Also, they used to remove pain through the use of copper plate. Again, if someone loses something, magician places a flower in a metal bowl and after that bowl will move towards searching the lost thing. Though the magicians of Mayong can do so many magic but till now they don’t have the power to change the weather.

Priyanka Roy Das, “The Black Magic Capital of India, Where People Can Tame Wild Beasts And Cure Every Disease”. This article talks about a man in Mayong, the land of black magic, who practices black magic and chants his way to defy science. Author is saying about Mayong, how in this place people could turn leaves into insects, tame impossible beasts, win over anyone, catch thieves, manipulate people to no end, cure disease etc. according to the village people the origin of the name of Mayong is from Ma-or-ongo, which means it is a part of goddess. About the power of black magic is absolutely true said by village people, they explained about how the bez (village doctor), would chant some mantras to stop wild beasts to enter their farms. Curing back pain is one of the famous in Mayong village by bez. Again, cured snake bites, fought ghosts is another example of black magic practice by bej(practitioner). Whatever doctor cannot cure, the mayong bej

can cured it, said by one of the practitioner. Here, author mentioned that practitioner cannot ask money for curing any person, not even they drink water from their house and if someone give as a gift they donate it in the temple. They said that there are some rules for getting power and curing snack bites is a dharma. They do not sacrifice any animal, rather they use some tribal medicine, mantras for doing black magic. according to Mayong people, they use black magic for positive side only.

After going through the articles, books, research paper etc., we can assume a border prospective about Black magic in our society. Going towards the review, in each and every society have influenced the power of Black magic. Most of are talking about the negativity of the power of Black magic. But after going through the articles on Myong's Black magic, it shows about the positive aspects of black magic in our society.



### **Chapter-III**

#### **MAYONG- THE CAPITAL OF BLACK MAGIC**

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Assam is the second largest state of North East which is covered with seven sisters and one brother: Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and newly added Sikkim as a brother state. It has a geographical area of 78,529 square kilometres and total population of Assam around 25 million. Assam is famous for its wild life reserves (specially one horned Rhino), tea garden, natural beauty, temples, monuments and mighty Brahmaputra river. The beauty and culture of Assam is really different. Dispur is the capital of Assam and Guwahati is the biggest city of Assam.

The mystical, magic land of Mayong is situated 40km from the biggest city of Assam, Guwahati, where most people are dependent on science or are well developed. It is hard to believe that in today's society also people are depending on Black magic in spite of science but yes still people have faith on black magic, Mayong village is big example of it. People of Mayong is really a big example of positive aspect of Black magic. Therefore, any study of any of the aspects of Black magic of Mayong community without the backdrop of the broader practices of black magic will incomplete. It will be in the fitness of things to make a survey of the practice of black magic in our society from the earliest days, before making the survey on indigenous practice of black magic in Mayong community.

### **3.1 Mayong- Village of Black Magic**

Mayong, the land of Black magic is located in the west of the Morigaon district, Assam. It is only 40 kilometres away from Guwahati, the capital city of Assam. It is a famous tourist place mostly because of its historical background of Black magic.

One of other attraction of Mayong is Pobitora wildlife sanctuary, which is having world's highest density of one horned Rhinoceros. It is also a home for wild bores, wild Buffalos etc. Tourist can enjoy their beauty by elephant and jeep safari.

The river Brahmaputra flowing towards the west side of the village is shows another natural beauty of the village. Mayong is also known for its archaeological ruins and monuments. There is a big stone inscription, dating back several hundred years located at a hilly village Burha Mayong. The inscription is 3.85 Meters. long and it has been regarded as the longest stone – inscription found in Asia. Mayong is covered by hills, hillocks, river, natural water bodies etc., which creates wonderful natural beauty of Mayong. The recent introduction of solar rickshaw and aero motors in Mayong has added new dimensions to the Tourists attractions.

### **3.2 Etymology of the Name- Mayong:**

The root of the word Mayong is keen out to various sources by various writers. We cannot claim any of the sources to be the only definite source from which the name has been consequent.

According to the manuscript the geneology of the kings of Mayong, the Kingdom of Mayong was established by a Kachari king, who had come from Maibong. So that the kingdom came to be known as Mayong after Maibong. In the year of 1624 A.D., the Kingdom was established and the name of the first king of Mayong was Sunyat Singha.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dilip Kumar Kalita,(May,2010), "Study of the magical beliefs and practices in Assam with special references to the magical lore of Mayong" (Accessed on 22/10/2017) URL: [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/115253/11/11\\_chapter%206.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/115253/11/11_chapter%206.pdf)

But this was not the first time that the name Mayong was used. Mayong was created to be existence earlier to this also.

According to another version the name Mayong is came from Ma-anga, ‘ma’ means mother and ‘anga’ means bodily parts, specifically the female organ. “The cult of yoni worship is the basis of this derivation. In the yogini Tantra reference is made to Bhadrpith as a part of Kampith, the northern boundary of Bhadrpith as a part of Kampith, the northern boundary of Bhadrpith was the Brahmaputra, Kachari and Jyanta Kingdoms were on the south. Its eastern boundary was Kampur and Silghat. Kampur was its western boundary. The Geographical boundary of Bhadrpith corresponds to that of Mayong area. Now Bhadra is another name of the mother Goddess Kamakhya. “Ma” of “ma-anga” refers to Bhedra as Kamakhya whose shrine is said to have been situated in the area according to the manuscript of the family tree.”<sup>2</sup>

Another version stated that the name Mayong originated from the Sanskrit word “Maya”, which means “illusion” or “magic”. Another view says that the word derived from the Dimasa word. ‘Miyong’ means elephant. Again, in this connection to one circumstances the term ‘Mayong’, is dominant in the Meitel language, this language is from the neighbouring state Manipur. In the Meital language ‘Mayong’ means people other than Meities.

In Mayong area, it is divided into two localities named Raja Mayong and Burha Mayong. Proper Mayong is called Raja Mayong. In this locality, the king lives. Possibly this is the reason of the locality is known as Raja Mayong.

### **3.3 The village and the people:**

Mayong is a village in Morigaon district, Assam, which is a well-known tourist place for the Pobitora wild life and the capital of black magic. Mayong is known as Raja Mayong also. As a village, Mayong village have everything that one finds in a remote Assamese

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<sup>2</sup> Rukma Singh (April, 2015) “Mayong: A place in Assam where magic ‘cures’ diseases and helps catch thieves”, (Accessed on 22/10/1017), URL: <https://www.newsgram.com/mayong-assam-the-land-of-myth-and-magic>

village. Mayong village have a Anchalik collage, named “Mayong Anchalik collage”, one high school, police post, few offices, a dispensary and a Newly formed Mausam, where we can find the historical manuscripts of black magic and also related tools. Mayong Village is shows the culture of Assam.

A person of the Mayong community is very helpful and innocent. People helped a lot during field study. Majority of people from Hindu religion in Mayong. They speak their regional language Assamese as majority of them Assamese people. According to the census data, we can assume about the total population of Mayong and also sex ratio. 2011 census of India says that:

Mayong Circle of Morigaon district has total population of 242,718 as per the Census 2011. Out of which 123,979 are males while 118,739 are females. In 2011 there were total 46,453 families residing in Mayong Circle. The Average Sex Ratio of Mayong Circle is 958..... As per Census 2011 out of total population, 11.2% people lives in Urban areas while 88.8% lives in the Rural areas. The average literacy rate in urban areas is 85.7% while that in the rural areas is 65.6%. Also, the Sex Ratio of Urban areas in Mayong Circle is 933 while that of Rural areas is 961”. Censusindia.co.in “The total literacy rate of Mayong Circle is 67.99%. The male literacy rate is 60.41% and the female literacy rate is 52.88% in Mayong Circle”.<sup>3</sup>

After going through the census of 2011, it can be assumed that the rural population is high in this particular place Mayong. People are also educated both the rural and urban area. It shows the one reason of decreasing the black magic practices of Mayong: ‘education.’

### **3.4 Pobitora wildlife:**

The Pobitora wildlife sanctuary is situated near Mayong village, Morigaon. In 1971 Pobitora was declared a reserve forest and in 1987 as a wildlife sanctuary. Pobitora is mainly famous for one horned rhinoceros. Again, it is also famous or home for migratory birds. Pabitora is one of the attractions towards Mayong village and it makes Mayong as a well-known tourist place in Assam.

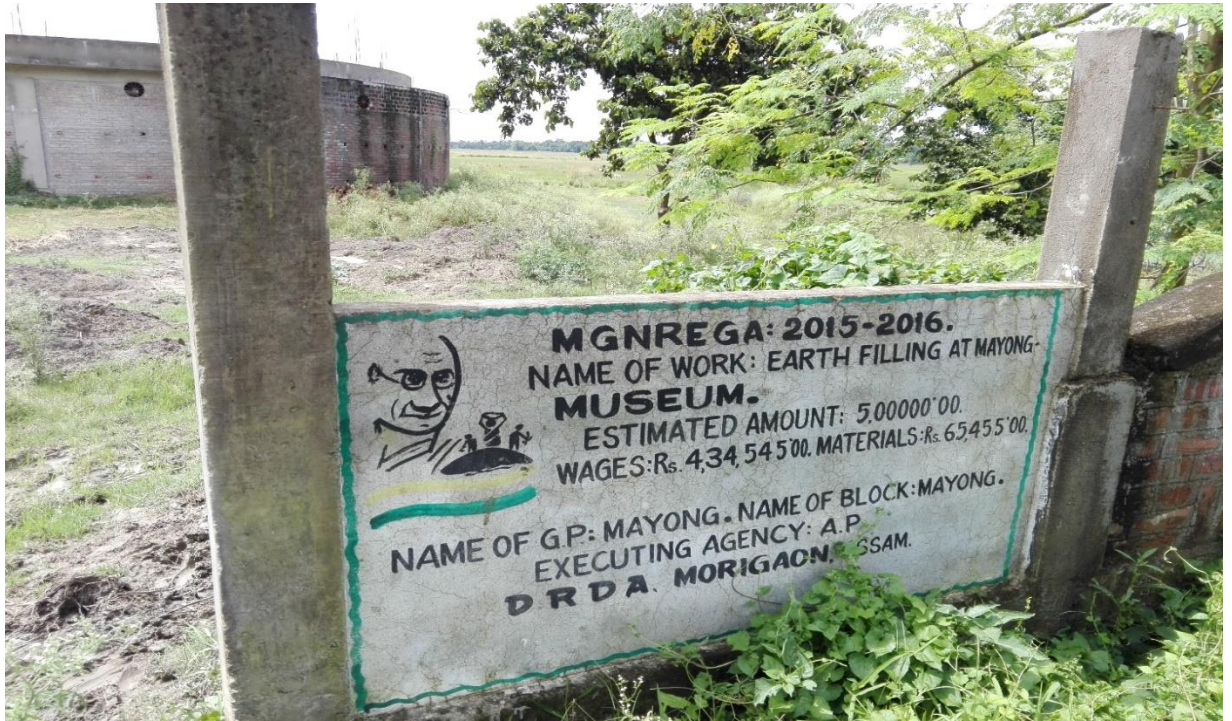
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<sup>3</sup> Census and Registrar General of India (2013) “Mayong Circle Population, Caste, Religion Data - Morigaon district, Assam” in *Census of India 2011*, (Assessed on: 21/10/2017), URL: <https://www.censusindia.co.in/subdistrict/Mayong-circle-morigaon-assam-2026>



*Figure 1: Entry gate of Pobitora wildlife sanctuary from Mayong village, Captured by: author on 10th July 2017*

### 3.5 Black Magic Museum of Mayong:



*Figure 2 Entry gate of the Museum in Mayong, captured by: Author on 10th July 2017*

In Mayong village a Museum is constructed which collects the historical black magic equipment used by the earlier black magic practitioner, such as a net and bullets, which were used to kill tigers by trantics or bej, manuscripts of mantras etc.

## Chapter-IV

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE FILED: PRESENT STATE OF BLACK MAGIC IN MAYONG

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### 4.1 Perspectives of villagers on the Origin of the Magics:

It is a cluster of villages located on the banks of Brahmaputra in Marigaon district. The stories of Mayong are the main factors that encourage the mysticism associated with it. This is a place where Black magic is always in the hands of the Mayongs' people. There are several stories narrated by the natives of Mayong. There was a time when all the northeast state came under Assam, it is said that Manipuri's from the Maiibong clan use to stay here, the name Maiibong became Myhong. In Manipuri language elephant is known as Miyong. Many believed that Miyong became Mayong that time. Another story says about a legend, Mayong came from the parts of goddess that is MAA-R-ONGO.

There are so many stories about the name of Mayong but today Black magic is the only one reason to know this mysterious place. Curing back pain is one of the positive aspects for our society through Black magic. There are so many stories about the curing of disease; back pain is one of them. The people who do this Black magic or who have the knowledge about Black magic is called Bej(teacher), in Assamese language. Stories says that for curing back pain they use cooper plate in the place of pain and recite some mantras and they believe that when that cooper plate will fall down then also the pain will be gone with it. So, it is a kind of traditional medicine. Catching thief is also one of the positive works through Black magic in Mayong. They can catch the thief or if something is lost then they can also have that power to say that where and who take this. These are really a good thing for all of us. This is like what technology cannot do but some beliefs or we can say some positive power can do such type of magic.

Now a day we can see that these are going towards business in some extent, because if they can cure disease, if they can catch a thief then obviously people will be happy with it and though they say no for money or something but a human being will definitely give something as a fee or as a gift. So, it is also can be a work for some lazy people in our



society. Every people needs job but it is also difficult to get a good job and doing Black magic is an easy way to earn money who have the knowledge of Black magic.

On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017, we went to the so-called capital of black magic, i.e., Mayong. I took interview of some of the renowned black magic practitioner as well as the village people and some of the victims who used to go for black magic curation. They were keen to know the objective of research why we wanted to know about the black magic practice of Mayong village and what we want to collect about Black magic and what will be its results/consequences. After telling about the motive of my research and when I specifically mentioned that this research will be focusing more on the positive consequences about black magic in Mayong, I was able to attain the confidence of black magic practitioner as well as the village people of Mayong and they revelled about the stories on black magic in Mayong. Informal and semi structured interview was used to gather maximum information about the origin of black magic practice, on the ways of practicing black magic, changes in the practicing and socio-economic mobility of the community, gender and caste or prohibition of learning or practicing black magic and so on.

I tried to convince them that the interest and focused of the study is on Black magic in Mayong community; how this practice came into existing in Mayong village? Why this practice got the name black magic? What is the main motive of practicing this black magic? It creates negative or positive impact towards our society? What type of magic used to call black magic in Mayong and what about the tools using in black magic? How this is different from others? In Mayong community every people practicing it or some selected person? There is any restriction on learning this practice? There is any gender or cast discrimination? In contemporary society people still believe on this practice? Is new generation coming up and ready to be involved in the performance? Doing black magic is kind a job? Practitioner are earning on it? What about the role of women on it? Their general observation is that new generation hardly comes on it as in contemporary society people more believe on science and technology and day by day this practice of black magic is lost their value and declining.



After listening to their tales and beliefs about the practice of black magic in Mayong district of Assam, I came across some of the astonishing facts about this dangerous yet to some extent this supernatural act.

#### **4.2 Uses of black magic: Perspectives of practitioners:**

In my interview with the practitioner I was trying to know about the origin of black magic practice. The people whom we interviewed agree that it is very hard to trace out the time of origin of black magic. At the same time, all of them agree that the origin can be traced back from goddess kamakhya. They said Mayong is not famous for black magic rather it is a land of ‘tantra mantra’.<sup>1</sup> Concluded these they used to control the structure. Practicing black magic is like a genetic system, they said it hail from their forefathers and like that it is transmuting. The practice of black magic not only depends of memorizing the holy “*mantras*” but also pronouncing them to exactly how they should be pronounced. The letter also goes on to add that a person has to be specially trained by their master of that respective art. According to him, the mantras were scripted in a language known as “kaitheli”.<sup>2</sup> But after that there were so many books were translated in another language for made them understand. After knowing about the translation of books, researcher has critically concluded that research moved towards another tale about that through transforming this mantra they may made this practice famous by publishing this script of mantras or may be a mind for earning profit out of that. From this transmission, we can also assume and they also revealed that there are not any religious boundaries on people who perform this and the ones who are treated through this. So, this eradicated the myth that ‘black magics are generally practiced by Muslim section of the people’, said by one of the black magic practitioner.

#### **4.3 Concept of ‘bej and bejali, from a practitioner prospective:**

In Mayong community, the practitioner is called as ‘bej’ among the common people. The work of the bej is devoted to as bejali by common people. But during study from the field, it was revealed that most of the practitioner did not like their art to be called to as bejali and also, they did not reveal themselves as bej. While asking the question to Tilak Hazarika

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<sup>1</sup> Tilak Hazarika, personal interview (black magic practitioner), Mayong ,11<sup>th</sup> July, 2017

<sup>2</sup> ibid

that in Mayong is practitioner is called as ‘bej’, then he replied that actually they are not bej, they have their own work as he was a retired teacher and they do black magic as a welfare of the society<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.4 Socio-cultural status of Black magic:**

It is a societal believe that black is a symbol of darkness. So, when the word black comes before magic, it sounds negative. But the place Mayong proved it wrong. According to the practitioner these practices are not for negative impact of the society but are for their good. In Mayong Black never stands for bad things. They do black magic for positive aspects, especially in current situation. According to them it is like a social service. Curing back pain is one of the most famous examples of black magic. None of the practitioner was ready to tell about negative impact of black magic practicing. They mentioned, these practices are gradually decreasing and are not being performed by the people of Mayong much nowadays. But many people from outside from Mayong village or some of are out of Assam are interested to learn black magic and they used to come there to learn or do research on it. Here they mentioned about some stories from Kolkata as well as Kolkata is also one of the place for these tantra mantra.

Research analysis revealed another form of story about the reason of practicing black magic by some few people from Mayong community, which is one of the reasons of decreasing the so called black magic practice. This analysis made after interviewing with the Principle of Mayong collage. This interview gave some very new tales to the stories we had been hearing about Mayongs black magic practices. According to him, black magics were practiced by the people in the earlier ages for negative purposes. To kill or harm someone whom people don’t like, or have a quarrel with by letting the practitioners rule their soul or let the soul of deads to hurt and harm them. But the latter said that these people who performed these for ill fates, died a very cruel death. So, they made their sons and daughters swear not to practice them again. And this lead to the decrease in practice of black magic for negative purposes.<sup>4</sup>Today, these are used for some of the positive aspects of human life, like treatment of snake bite, back pain, and tribal medicines etc.

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<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Principle of Mayong Anchalik collage, personal interview, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017

#### **4.5 Narration:**

This section of this chapter deals with the narrations made by various experts and villagers of Mayong. As part of my field work, I have been to Mayong three times and had met various people. Questions regarding mythological origin of the magic practices and its acceptance among people were asked. Various responses that I received from the field is compiled below.

##### **4.5.1 Magic in tiger hunting:** (said by one of the village member, who is also the caretaker of the Museum)

The tales narrated by the museum caretaker made us mesmerized. He explained about each and everything in the Museum. That caretaker is also from the Mayong community. While explaining about a net (which was used to kill the tigers), he took us back to the 60s when there was a story of controlling or kill the tigers by using black magic. The idea was that tantric would wait at the centre of the forest and villagers would chase the tiger with sticks and bring it near the tantric, then the tantric would make the tiger suffer by reading some mantras. It would be very painful for tiger as he would be in control of tantric. The name of this famous tantric was Muhidhar, but people called him Sura bej.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Personal communication with the care taker of the Museum, Mayong, 11<sup>th</sup> july,2017



*Figure 3A net, which was used to killed tiger by the black magic practitioners. Captured by: Author from the Museum*



*Figure 4A picture of Sura bej and how he could control the tiger through reciting mantras or using black magic. captured from the Museum of Mayong.*

**4.5.2 Meeting with Indra Devata:** (narrated by one of the village member while coming back from Museum)<sup>1</sup>

Another story was narrated by one the village member of Mayong is that there was a family in Mayong village. They were two brothers and both of them practiced tantra-mantra (black magic) very deeply. People said that the family visits to Indra devata to impress him, so that their power of Tantra-mantra should remain for life time. According to the narrator, he got a sword in their house and it said that with that sword they used to cut some red khagori (a tree) to make a Rath. With this Rath, both brothers go to visit Indra devata at a very dark night for three days. Before going to visit Indra devata, they mention that at the time of going and at the time of coming back after visiting Indra devata, no people should in their roads. For that they give a particular time and also a particular area. At that particular area, no one should visible. If at that time they saw someone then they will cut their neck by that sword and will eat blood. If they cannot find anyone then they will cut the banana tree and drink the water from there. Though it is water from banana tree, actually it is blood of banana tree. It is said that after drinking the blood only they change to human being. It cannot be done by normal human being. It is a power of tantra-mantra (black magic).

The Tantric could also fly with magic. The supposedly last tantric of Mayong, Lakhi Nath, was famous for being unseen. This simply means that they could do things faster than normal. Story was like earlier people used to go to the city Guwahati by foot but the tantric used to flew. Also, they used magic at the time of boat races to sail faster.

But all these magic practices are no longer in practice, at least not built up. According to village people tantrics did not pass this type of tricks of black magic to the next generation because of the fear that the people might make falls use of these practices. Village people of Mayong community have been working towards the sustained of Mayong culture or status as Black magic in Mayong. Principal of

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<sup>1</sup> Personal Communication with village member, Mayong, 11<sup>th</sup> july 2017

Mayong collage, Dr. Utpal Nath and their colleagues have collected over 50 manuscripts of black magic from door to door and put it on display at the museum they have built.

Interview with Tilak Hazarika made researcher to analyse knowledge about black magic of Mayong. He is one of the well-known black magic practitioner for removing back pain or those who have bitten by snakes. He mentioned that he never failed in curing a snake bite since last 40 years of his magical journey. In any part of Mayong and even from nearby cities if anyone was bitten by a snake would consult him, he would rush to the patient no matter what. While talking with this person researcher found him very much confidence towards his works. According to him when doctor cannot cure disease, people come across them. According to him they never ask money for curing. It is like a social service. As he mentioned he is a retired employ, so practicing black magic is an art for him, not for any business. It is a free service for society. Using the power of mantras, they can attract people through making some powder and if we apply it on our forehead, we can impress everyone towards us said by Hazarika.

Again, research can assume that most of the practitioner as well as village people are educated and they have their own job. So, because of science and technology though people believe on this practice but people prefer more science. Mayong community also want to maintain this practice to maintain the name of Mayong village, because only black magic made mayong famous. Practicing black magic is also another need of existing in our society, if its towards the positive impact and also it is a traditional form of practice.

#### **4.5.3 Earnings from the performance:**

After interacting with black magic practitioner as well as some village people of Mayong, research can conclude that the practice of black magic is an art for the practitioner. According to the practitioner doing black magic is not for business profit. It is for welfare of the people. No one from the practitioner was not ready to reveal about the earnings from black magic performance, though they mentioned that people (patient) used to give something as a gift for curing or solving their

problems. Critically explained, though they were not ready to except it as earnings, it is also a part of their extra savings.

After talking about it with the village people as well as some patients, they mentioned that though black magic practitioner not demanding directly as a fee but for curing some disease or problem they need some tools, like tabis (loket for protection), things for doing some rituals etc., then they used to ask money for buying these things. So, if we are going to analyse about it critically then it can be mentioned that it is a side or indirect source for earning money though their main motive is for social service.

Some of the villagers mentioned that there are different demands for different black magic performances. It can be start from very low amount to high amount. If very serious issue then they can ask like, rupees three thousand to five/six thousand, if something not so serious than rupees five hundred to one thousand etc. In some of the cases practitioner will ask the client to give something as their wish, where client can give rupees from one hundred to three/four hundred. As there is different time for different black magic performances, like that there is different demand from the client; it is based on the work for the performances. As, for curing some disease, practitioner needs some things; which is difficult to get and they have to hire from other practitioner or from other places, then they ask the money as it was a difficult task for them. This conception was gathered from the villagers from Mayong community as well as outsiders or clients.

Apart from that, research can conclude that, practitioner can ask money after seeing the status of the client. If the client is rich then they will ask more money as client will not refused to give any amount for curing or doing something good. Again, if someone wants to solve any disease or any problem, they will be ready to pay for it, though they are poor or rich. So, research says that, black magic is another source of earning money.

#### **4.5.3 Changes in the performance:**

“Black magic practices are healing”, still in the contemporary society the black magic capital Mayong maintaining its status of black magic. Since the earlier time



the practices of black magic was performed by the black magic practitioner. The main source of practicing black magic is the ‘mantra scripts.’

Mantras or spells were practiced for different purposes. They were used to scare away devils and evil spirits who were supposed to be the cause of human ailments, to cure snakebite, to remove the bad effect of dreams, to secure release from misfortune, to protect the fields from the evil eye, for the prosperity of the home and the harvest, and for a hundred and one other purposes. Significant among these mantra-puthis are the following: Sapardharani mantra (Snake-catching charm), Karati-mantra, Sarvadhak-mantra, Kamaratna-mantra, Bhutar-mantra, Khetra-mantra; -the list might easily be extended.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier time black magic was mainly practiced for evil practices. Bad things were more in the earlier black magic performances. Keeping bira and daini is one of the evil practices of Mayong. Again, using some mantras practitioners can attract someone. It is called ‘Muhini ban’, muhini means ‘attractive’ and ban means ‘tie together.’ This is specially for love purposes. If someone not ready to accept the love from opposition, then using this mantra practitioner can make that person to accept the love from opposition. In earlier times, these practices were used in a large scale, even in the contemporary society it is still going on in some extent.

Again, stories were like, when someone sits in the Pira (stool, chair) and when he or she want to get up then the Pira will also come with that person. This is because of the power of mantras and black magi in Mayong.

Again, saying about the practicing bira or daini, practitioner used to do magic for harming or destroying someone’s house. Particularly this black magic practices were used to do at the earlier time for taking revenge. Also, it is being heard that people used mantras for travelling. As Guwahati is the nearest city in Mayong, so in the earlier time people used to go to Guwahati by flying. This story was hard one of the village people from Mayong.

But, today in the contemporary time, these practices have lost their value. By the time practices of black magic in earlier times are decreasing. Though the black magic practices are still in the Mayong community but in some extent, research can

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<sup>2</sup> Mr. Utpal Saikia (July-December 2015 ), “The Shrines of Mayang: A Study Based on the Archaeological Remains and Mantraputhis”, *Intellection: A bi-annual interdisciplinary research journal* 3(2), p.7.

assume the changes in the black magic performances. Black magic performances have been lost its purity.

In the contemporary time, practitioner cannot get the tools easily for performing it. According to them earlier they used to get every related tool by their hand and it was pure. One of the practitioner mentioned about making some powder for attracting people, where practitioner have to buy a fish from puhari (women from SC cast used to sell fish in a kind of bowl carrying on her head) on Tuesday along with they also need another important tool which is not available in the contemporary society. So, because of the unavailability of the tool, the performance of black magic has lost its pure nature.

Also because of the large number of educated people, they do not want to learn these practices rather they want to focus on their carrier. Most of the Practitioner have their own job, so they also cannot give the proper time for performing black magic.

Apart from that, going towards the business minded magic, now black magic is again practices for earning money, though practitioner were not ready to say anything on it. People from Mayong community and clients were revealed about earnings prospective.

Mayong community is really misplaced its purity of black magic, especially because of the unavailability of the required sources for black magic, education system, time management, science and technology and so on.

#### **4.5.4 Status of equality:**

Going towards gender equality among the Mayong village, can be concluded that this community maintain an equal balance among men and women, as “there is no any restrictions between men and women to learn Black magic, it is free for every

individual”, said by one of the practitioner. But once the researcher asked the question about the number of female practitioner, the researcher has moved towards another new tale. Though there are no any restrictions for women to learn black magic still for woman it is quite difficult to practice because of some rule books. Here, rule books emphasis about the naked culture at the time of practicing some customs of learning black magic. It is said that in some of the customs practitioner have to go to some area (area of ghost) at mid night and they are not allowed to wear any cloth while doing customs. So most of the women are itself do not want to involve in it.<sup>3</sup> Again, the recycle system of women one of the restriction for it, because it is a believer in Assamese culture that at the time of puberty women is not pure, she cannot be a part of any rituals. SO, this can be another reason for women to not performing black magic, as at the time of performing practitioner have to be part of rituals, holly books or mantras etc., also added that to attain the powers of mantra, a person has to be residing with its guru and it might raise some questions on the women’s character which might be harmful for her.

Again, if we emphasis about the naked culture for practicing some black magic, men also cannot be naked. There is not any culture where anyone can be naked. So according to the researcher, women may part of it but our society make them uncomfortable to do so. But, there was a story about one transgender, who used to practice black magic in some extend. It was inherited from her father. After the death of her father, she is practicing it. After knowing about her, research analysis says that transgender is accepted by the people of Mayong.

Research also analysed that there is no any caste or class division for learning black magic practice. Anyone can learn this practice in terms of caste and class. As almost majority of people from Hindu religion in Mayong, so there is also less chance to practicing or learning black magic from any other religion or caste.

#### **4.5.5 Witchcraft:**

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<sup>3</sup> Tilak Hazarika, personal interview (black magic practitioner), Mayong ,11<sup>th</sup> July, 2017

Practicing witchcraft and witch-hunting is a popular term in northeast, including Assam. Mayong is a pointed place for practicing black magic as well as witch-hunting. In so many newspaper, tv etc, have mentioned about the witchcraft practicing in various places of Assam, including Mayong.

However, witchcraft was not limited to Mayong in Assam; it was and unfortunately is, prevalent amidst several communities and tribes across the Brahmaputra valley. People who practice these dark acts are referred to as **Bez** or **Ojaa**, some of them even believed to keep *domestic ghost-servants* called **Beera** or **Beera Bhoot**. In fact, a few years ago, suspicious activity carried out by **Beera** ghosts at the heart of city Guwahati made headlines in newspapers as well as TV channels!<sup>4</sup>

Apart from black magic practices, Mayong is also occupying the place of witchcraft or witch-hunting. In Mayong so many stories were hard about witch-hunting. Stories were like, village people would think that because of a particular woman the entire village had been destroyed and they would have killed those particular women.

Village people as well as people outside from Mayong mentioned about witch-hunting, that this is also related to black magic. In the earlier time stories, the black magic practitioner, who used black magic for evil practices used to apply magic for harming someone. It was heard that some of the land mafias also involving in such practice. They want to occupy some land and for that they used to take the help of black magic and harm that particular village and then they blamed that because of some women, the whole village is destroying. Also, these people influence villagers to get out of that particular women from the village, so that the village will get peace, actual reason is to occupy their land but indirectly they will blame that particular women, after that with the all village people they used to kill that particular women as a daini(witch).

But, while asked about this particular practice, practitioner as well as village people of Mayong mentioned that there is no any such type of practice in Mayong

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<sup>4</sup> Sujata Das ( August 30, 2011), “Witch Hunting in Assam – Capital of Black magic to national shame”, Accessed on: 25/10/2017) <https://www.timesofassam.com/headlines/witch-hunting-in-assam-capital-of-black-magic-to-national-shame/>

community. Before they were also hard about such practices, but today there is no such practice of with-hunting.

#### **4.5.6 Decline in the influence of magic:**

As we all know that Mayong is famous for its practice of black magic. This practice of black magic was from the immoral time. It is difficult to say about its existence in Mayong. But if we focus on the current status of Mayong, then the practice of Black magic is decline in some extent. From the field experiences researcher can assume that there are reasons behind the decline of the status of black magic in Mayong:

##### **4.5.6.1 Spread of education:**

Education is one of the reason of not practicing black magic, specially by new generation. People of Mayong now want to focus more in their education rather than black magic. Majority of people from Mayong community are educated and most of the practitioner, who interviewed also were government employee. It shows that they focus more in education rather practicing black magic.

According to *2011 census*, mentioned in the above, study can assume that in rural area 65.6% literacy rate and 85.7% in urban are of Morigaon district, Mayong. So, in Mayong community people prefer education rather than the tradition of black magic.

When people are educated, though black magic practices are prevailing in the society, it is hard to believe on it. Education always shows the path to move forward. Education teaches us the science and technology. At the time of technology people loved to be stay with science rather than super natural power, which do not have any assurance. No one wants to risk their life at the hand of black magic. So, education is one of the source or reason of decline black magic practices in Mayong community.

##### **4.5.6.2 Time management:**

As after field experience researcher came into a conclusion that in Mayong community, most of the people were educated as well as they have their own work. Practitioners were also having their own work. So, they could not manage their time for practicing black magic as they have to engage in other works and to practicing black magic also, they have to follow different time for different practices.

As, mentioned by the practitioners that, for evil practices mostly they have to engage at the night time and for peaceful practices, it is always in the morning time. Again, for some of the work evening and afternoon time is the perfect time. But, in the contemporary time, practitioners cannot manage their time accordingly. Personal life is affecting the traditional practice of Black magic.

#### **4.5.6.3 Lack of availability of tools for practicing black magic:**

As interviewed with Tilak Hazarika mentioned that, today it is very difficult to get the actual tools (e.g.: things to prepare any medicine for curing diseases) for practicing black magic. So, the real black magic practicing is declining day by day. Now though Mayong is still famous as a black magic capital, but the actual black magic status of Mayong is no more.

After these, I turned to some village individuals to know about their interpretations on black magic. According to them though black magic practices are still in the village but day by day it is diminishing. Before people were scared of the word Mayong. Outcasts people did not want to enter this village but now a day nothing like that happening because of reducing its value. Now people are educated, so they do not want to learn it as their profession. But they too want to sustain their culture of black magic, so they captured some historical memorials in the museum. Now Mayong is becoming a tourist place as they have Pobitora wildlife sanctuary which is having world's highest density of one horned Rhinoceros. It is also a home for wild bores, wild Buffalos etc. Tourist can enjoy their beauty by elephant and jeep safari.

Apart from that, research analyse that though the science and technology had changed the culture of Black magic in some extent in Mayong but still this Mayong community is occupying his place as a black magi capital. Now this Mayong community is famous for its positive black magic practices as curing back pain, unpension snake bite and so on.

## CONCLUSION

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A black magic practice in healing in Mayong community was from the time of immemorial. The practice of Black magic in Mayong is a part of their culture and traditions, having manuscripts in each and every people of Mayong proved it as a part of their tradition. As Mayong is known as the capital of black magic in Assam and now it is spreading over the world. It is also famous as a tourist place for Pobitora wild-life forest situated in Mayong.

Practicing of the black magic in Mayong is from the historical time and the origin of black magic in this so called Mayong community is still difficult to trace out. But assumption is that the origin of black magic is from the Goddess Kamakhya.

In earlier time, the black magic was used mainly for negative purposes. Earlier time Mayong was a very scary place, where people even did not want to go towards Mayong. But it is said that people who performed black magic for ill fates, died a very cruel death. So, they made their sons and daughters swear not to practice them again. And this lead to the decrease in practice of black magic for negative purposes. Now in Mayong, black magic is practicing for good purposes only as curing deses, back pain, unpoison snack bite etc.

Actually, Mayong is a place for ‘Tanta-mantra’, rather black magic, as black magic done by reciting mantras. Using the power of ‘mantra’, a bej(practitioner) can do the impossible to possible. Now, Mayong bej do black magic for positive purposes. Practicing black magic is a form of welfare of the society in Mayong.

Mayong’s black magic also attracts people from outside India. Outsider people come to Mayong to learn or to research on Black magic. Also, there examples of people who visits Mayong to cure back pain, which is one of the famous cured by bej(practitioner) through using black magic. The black magic practices and beliefs are gradually decreasing. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people have more believe in science and technology, the spread of education, modern medical facilities etc are the reasons of decreasing of black magic practices in Mayong.



In spite of a decreasing trend a lot of people still have believe on black magic. A lot of practitioners are still practicing black magic and also so many clients take resources to the services of the practitioners. Mayong practitioners have still believed in their power of black magic. According to them they can cure disease which doctor cannot. It shows the practicing of black magic still exists in so called Mayong village.

Apart from it, new generation is not so much interested to continue the practice of black magic in Mayong. Though they want Mayong as a black magic capital but there is less interest in practicing black magic as a profession among new generation. It shows the decline of black magic. To maintain the status of black magic, people created a museum, where so many related tools or things are captured as maintain their culture of black magic.

Again, if we go through the decline of Black magic practices in Mayong, a new tale is coming out that it is not only because of the education, science and technology or modern society, rather because of the cruel death of black magic practitioner in earlier times, who did black magic for harm someone or for negative purposes, so they told to their family not to practice these black magic in future and told them to burn it with them at the time of their death, so this is a very innovative cause coming out from this study of black magic in Mayong. This can be also a reason for practicing Black magic in Mayong only for positive purposes, rather the practitioners do not have the mantras scrips for evil practices or for the fear of a cruel death.

In current situation, it can be assumed that practicing black magic is going towards a kind of media attractions. Going towards the analysis of the performance of black magic in current situation of Mayong says that now, black magic performing is decreasing day by day.

From a business minded concept, performing black magic can also be a source of earning money. In Mayong though the practitioner did not reveal anything about the earning from the black magic but from the village people and clients, research can conclude that black magic is also a source of earning. For curing disease and

all practitioners used to give some *tabis* and for that the clients used to pay the amount. Here, research can say that it is an indirect source of earning money through black magic.

Apart from that the education system, science and technology etc are decreasing this type of practice in Mayong. From a positive side practicing black magic and earning from it can reduce the unemployment problem from the society. Current situation of employment in the society is like, though people are educated they are not getting any job, so if they learn black magic for welfare of the society it can reduce the unemployment and also do something for the society.

The negative prospective of black magic tell us that some people can mis/use the power of black magic and without having any proper knowledge of doing and practicing black magic. It has been observed from the field that such black magicians offer false promises and make the people fool. It is also noted that because of these kinds of experiences the popularity of black magic is negatively affected in some occasion.

Filed experience also testifies that number of performances and its acceptance as legitimate way of treatment is getting decreased. In the other end, popularity and fame of the region- Mayong is spreading all over the world. Mayong is widely accredited as a capital of Black Magic. Social media- facebook, google, youtube and various other news media gives wide ranage of coverage to the place. Black Magicians also spread their own stories in order to accelerate their name and fame. Such practices help them to attract many people towards them as researchers and curious viewers. Now the people of Mayong are that their place is known to the whole world through the black magic culture. It enables some of the inhabitants of Mayong to assert their identity and to be proud of their culture. Many of the young generation neither want to practice nor find it as source of livelihood. However, all of them feel proud to have their culture of Black magic.

Contemporary experience of status of black magic in Mayong, shows that practice is still alive with its zealous. Black magic does not connote negative usages against the spirit of the goodness of the society in the region. These days, black magic is

mainly used for the purpose healing and treatment. However, isolated incidents of negative usages are very hardly reported, or it is revealed, as it shared by some of the villagers. Education, science and technology and the modern minded society change the earlier negative practices of black magic into positive practices. Though the societal believe of black magic is for negative purposes but the research from Mayong made it for welfare of the society.

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