

intakes of the same individual to be as high as 13 to 15 percent. Sukhatme thus brings out the fact that the current definition fails to explain the large variation observed in intake or balance.

His theory on the other hand explains the nature of this variation with the help of the concept of intra-individual variation. Just as the blood glucose concentration in a healthy active man in fasting condition varies between 60 mg and 120 mg per 100 ml of blood, there is evidence to show that a man can do a given amount of work on a range of intakes. Thus, intra-individual variation is the fundamental source of variation and therefore it is hard to obtain a one-to-one relationship in daily intakes and expenditure. Finally, it is worth mentioning here that intra-individual variation is related to short-term fluctuations such as observed over few weeks or months, but cannot be taken when considering long term periods (of several years or a life long period) as the author seems to consider. It would in fact be wrong to visualise this hypothesis in such a way and comment on long term adaptations and so on. Nutrition science has yet to go a long way to study the phenomenon of 'adaptation' which the author is speaking about.

The author seems to assume that undernutrition is the sole cause for the several facts mentioned such as more female deaths, high maternal mortality rates, low birth weight and so on. It is well known that a number of social and environmental factors also contribute to this and it is difficult to show a causal relationship between undernutrition and these facts. Just the same way, it has been shown that although low birth weight could be one of the factors responsible for high infant mortality rate, most infant deaths in developing countries are due to post neonatal causes and diarrhoea is observed to be one of the main causes, thus indicating the influence of poor environment.

Although her concern about women's health is well understood, isn't it a fact that the issue has its roots in the law status of women, both social and economical in our society. There is therefore, no dispute that every effort should be made for proper implementation of current health services to ensure that they reach needy women.

To summarise, the lack of sound methodology in obtaining estimates of intake and expenditure seriously questions the finding that women face greater nutritional deficit. Therefore, her suggestion for reducing energy expenditure or for energy saving are not appealing. Further, there is no reason to consider that physiological responses of the body for increased intake or reduced expenditure could be same. Today in developed countries individuals find ways to spend their energy by means of jogging, bicycling etc. in order to keep their muscles active and to maintain proper body stature. Therefore it is necessary to give a thought for the possible consequences, good or bad, of energy saving.

Finally, it is clear that energy saving in practice will not be achieved without enough technological and economic resources. This is not to deny the role of technology, but at the same time it is important that changes introduced for saving women's energy should fit in the culture of our rural life. For example, replacing traditional chulas by gas stoves to reduce health hazards may not be a wise step. But instead it is necessary to convince villagers that there should be a proper outlet for the smoke to go out and see that every house in fact, has one such outlet. It is our experience that in the past few years, bore-wells have been installed in almost every village but the fact is that women still go for fetching water to the old village well, without realising that that this water is unsafe for drinking. It is therefore a basic minimum education for the women for their own wellbeing that should precede such technological and other advances.

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Witch Hunting Among The Bhil Meenas of Rajasthan

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The problem of witch hunting as reported by Kashtakari Sanghata SHRI (1:2, 1984) is prevalent among all adivasi and primitive societies in varying forms. The problem as envisaged in the report has

no ready solution because the tradition is very old and deeply rooted within the culture. The practice of witchcraft evolved as a system of beliefs to face the unknown supernatural world and its adverse

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manifestations in day-to-day life. To find any resolution of this problem would require a greater insight into adivasi culture, environment, social and religious institutions.

Southern Rajasthan where we work, is mostly inhabited by Bhil Meena adivasis. Here the incidence of witch-hunting has decreased considerably in the past few decades. It is now present in a different and milder form. Among the Bhil Meenas, witchcraft forms a part of magical rites and can be performed by magicians who are called as "Zangars" in the local dialect. These zangars are not medicines and they are approached when all other measures of resolving the crisis have failed. The first agency in any sort of crisis is the bhopa who is a faith-healer, an adivasi with powers to call supernatural spirits into his body. At a sanctified place he goes into a trance when the spirit enters him. The problem is explained to this spirit and it suggests remedies. If all such remedies fail then the possibility of a witch is considered. A magician is approached to ascertain the involvement of a witch. (There are very few magicians in this area.) These magicians by performing magical rites through the night will confirm the presence of a witch and provide either the description of witch or her exact name or address. Through another set of magical rites the magician will invoke the witch and ask about her presence in the family facing crisis and what she requires to leave the diseased person or the family. She is never however offered any of the things she wants but tortured and forced to leave by magical charms. In some cases the woman who is believed to be a witch is brought to the magician and put in his control. There have been some instances when a woman identified as a witch was killed but not in an open trial. These women were killed secretly by the family members facing crisis. Generally witches are considered to be females in this area however there are also male witches. They are thought to be stronger than women witches.

Who is this witch? Why did such a concept and practice evolve? Some of the explorations and causes mentioned in the report in SHR seem logical but only in the present-day context. However, we need more definitive knowledge. Adivasis are a brave and courageous people. At the same time they have a carefree attitude towards life and believe in enjoying it. Therefore, poverty has a very marginal effect on them. It is only recently that they have turned

agrarian and have started taking up jobs outside their homeland. The concept of storing things for the future is also very new to them. Hence any sort of condition leading to material hardship, lowered resistance to disease cannot be a sufficient reason for the continuing practice of witch hunting, which has become institutionalised in this society for centuries. Similarly, inaccessibility to health care facilities, disruption of communications and shortage of money are very new occurrences which are not even well perceived by adivasis and cannot be the cause of frustration leading to witch hunting.

To the Bhil Meena adivasis, death is an integral part of life and is not seen as something ghastly. Death even in action (hunting, war, or of snake bite) does not inspire awe or horror. It is also believed among them that the soul, the divine force in the living body, after death goes to the land of dead to rest with ancestors who are believed to have influenced their every day affairs, when alive. According to them this soul may also take the form of an evil spirit and return to this earth to finish its unsatisfied desires. This evil spirit on earth makes its home in the body of a human being, (mostly woman) as it is the woman who can beget. Such a woman will change into a witch. There are lots of descriptions of witches which vary from place to place.

One more possible reason for the practice of witch hunting among adivasis could be their cultural configuration which is close to nature and the core of their own cult practices. Although primitive, it is representative of their beliefs and religion. During the course of their day-to-day life they have to encounter the wildness of this configuration. Wildness provokes wildness, and it is this animistic behaviour of adivasis which finds its expression in the form of witch hunting. The reason for diminished incidence of witch hunting in this area can also be attributed to the influence on adivasis of Hindu religion. Adivasis in this area have made many adjustments to fit in with this new influence and it is always considered superior. This constant interaction with new patterns of culture has resulted in a diversity of cultural practices and traits which are less animistic.

A practice like this is barbarous and should stop, but the people who practice it, do it within a set of concepts and unless these concepts are changed, it is very difficult for people to get away from it.

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"First, we have the working class, which because of the principle of population is always too numerous relatively to the means of subsistence allotted to it — ie. overpopulation due to underproduction. Second, we have the capitalist class, which as a consequence of the same principle of population is always able to sell back their own product to the workers at such a price that they get back only just as much of it as is necessary to keep body and soul together. And third, we have an immense section of society which consists of parasites and self-indulgent drones, in part masters and in part servants, who appropriate gratuitously a considerable quantity of wealth — partly under the name of rent and partly under political titles — from the capitalist class, paying for the commodities produced by the latter above their value with the money they have taken from the capitalists themselves. The capitalist class is spurred on in production by the impulse towards accumulation; the unproductive classes, from the economic point of view, represent merely the impulse towards consumption and prodigality. And this is the only means of escape from overproduction, which exists alongside overpopulation relatively to production. Overconsumption by the classes standing outside production is (recommended) as the best remedy for both overproduction and overpopulation. The disproportion between the working population and production is neutralized by means of the consumption of a portion of the product by those who do not produce, by idlers. The disproportion represented by the overproduction of the capitalists (is cancelled out) by the overconsumption of the extravagant rich."

—Karl Marx

(From Marx's *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol. 3
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Ramparts Press, Inc., California).
