

## Odisha Man Murdered Over Witchcraft Suspicion, 14 Detained



In a brutal act of violence rooted in superstition, a 35-year-old man was killed, his body mutilated, and then dumped in a reservoir in Odisha's Gajapati district. The police reported on Sunday that a group of villagers allegedly committed the crime on suspicion that the man, identified as Gopal, was practicing witchcraft. The incident occurred on Saturday night in Malasapadar village under the Mohana police station limits.

According to authorities, the villagers believed that Gopal was responsible for the recent death of a middle-aged woman in the community, attributing it to "black magic." Fearing for his safety, Gopal had reportedly left the village and was staying with his family at his father-in-law's house in the neighboring Ganjam district. He returned to Malasapadar on Saturday to collect his cattle and goats, which he had left in the care of his sister-in-law. It was during this return that he was allegedly abducted and killed.

The body was recovered from the nearby Harabhangi Dam on Sunday morning by the police, who have since sent it for post-mortem examination. In a swift response, police have detained 14 villagers for interrogation in connection with the gruesome crime. The Sub-divisional police officer of G Udayagiri, Suresh Chandra Tripathy, stated that the investigation is ongoing.

This tragic event shows the persistent issue of witch-hunting in certain parts of India, particularly in remote and tribal areas where a lack of education and healthcare can lead to the practice of sorcery being blamed for illnesses and deaths. While the Odisha Prevention of Witch-hunting Act was passed in 2013 to combat this, the continued occurrence of such violent acts indicates

the need for more concerted efforts to change deep-seated beliefs and ensure the law is effectively implemented.