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Trends. Vampire Watch: Security in Malawi

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Abstract: This trends article discusses the idea of a security index, or how comfortable people are with themselves in their daily lives, and peoples' willingness to believe in the bizarre, the alien, and the fantastic as the security index reflects ever more insecurity. The author notes that all people, being world citizens, are subject to such beliefs as the conditions of our lives deteriorate.

A common feature in journalistic writing is the description of social events with the intent of fostering a sense of the bizarre, the alien, and the fantastic. These senses, in turn, may be intended to offer entertainment and even an additional sense of the reader's superiority. This last can occur when the bizarre, alien, and fantastic elicit a sense of the comedic.

IBPP has occasionally provided analyses of such stories, such as that of India's monkey-man who can scratch people with poisoned claws and, then, vanish into thin air. A more recent story is that of vampires in Malawi who remove blood from their victims with syringes. Both stories and others may be viewed as a security index among the stories' believers.

A few examples of what a security index might reflect include the degree of comfort one has for one's self, the satisfaction one has for one's station in life, the compatibility of elements of one's daily life with one's preferred life style, the disparity between one's own lot and those of others, and the threat from local, regional, and even less proximal adversaries. As the security index reflects ever more insecurity, some people might become more anxious, some more depressed, some more angry, and some look for monkey men and vampires.

Whether there are or are not monkey men and vampires on the loose in some consensual sense of reality misses the point. Instead, one might conclude that such figurative and/or literal characters can populate the minds of us all. In this sense, whether from India, Malawi, or any other earthly location, we are all world citizens. (See Mzembe, D. (January 10, 2003). 15 arrested for pelting UDF governor. *The Nation (Malawi)*, <http://www.nationmalawi.com>; Swarns, R.L. (January 14, 2003). Not your usual vampires, but scary nonetheless. *The New York Times*, p. A4; Rumor, social contagion and truth: Not so strange political bedfellows. (June 1, 2001). *IBPP*, 10(19).) (Keywords: Journalism, Malawi, Security Index, Vampires.)