

EXONĀ

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*A Multi-lingual Compilation of Research Articles
(Commerce and Humanities)*

Chief Editor
Nilim Jyoti Senapati

Editor
Mayuri Sharma Baruah



Tinsukia College Publication

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Knowledge sharing and collaboration are a
key foundation of research and development.

- Jonthan Spira



Foreword



We live today in a world that is so very different from the one we grew up, the one we were educated in. The world today is changing at such an accelerated rate and we as educators need to pause and reflect on this entire system of education. Is our college well equipped to prepare our youngsters to face the challenges that the future holds?

Answer to it motivates us to go through a continuous process of reflection and hence we at Tinsukia College, Assam, work at implementing a well balanced curriculum to ensure that the students of our college will not just love their academic year but truly be prepared to face life's challenges.

It was Swami Vivekananda who said "We need to have three things; the heart to feel, the brain to conceive, the hand to work." We endeavour constantly to install these qualities in our students. We pride ourselves to help them grow and develop into sensitive and responsible citizens of the next generation.

In this regard, It gives me immense pleasure to dedicate to you a research based edited volume 'EXONĀ' published by Tinsukia College. This issue is a collection of research based articles in diverse fields in Commerce and Humanities which is a milestone that marks our academic growth. I have a strong intuition that you will receive immense joy reading the literary treat of researchers. I congratulate the entire editorial team for their tireless effort in bringing out this beautiful volume and present my gratitude to the authors for their efforts.

Dr. Surjya Chutia
Principal
Tinsukia College

Foreword

Achievements of our teachers in terms of publications of their scholarly works in journals and periodicals of both national and international repute is a regular feature of the Tinsukia college, one-of- the-oldest premier institutions of North East India.

In this multi-faculty college having three streams of arts, science and commerce and strength of about 70 faculty members with considerable expertise in their own areas, the works generally cover a broad spectrum, distributed over myriads of books and journals of different disciplines and thus make us concerned about accessibility of those quality works. Moreover, despite of regular releases, a sizeable proportion of research papers of our scholars remain unpublished for some reason or other.

So we are overwhelmed by the pronouncement of this laudable precedence on the part of Publication Board (Commerce and Humanities) to publish an ISBN edited book. Undoubtedly, 'EXONĀ' brings a plethora of academic research articles to diversify each person's learning. The readers will experience different tastes when penetrate into this volume. This anthology is an enormous source of inspiration to our next generation teachers. However, applause waits on success and success waits on reader's acknowledgement.

Rajen Saikia
Coordinator
Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)
Tinsukia College

Chief Editor's Note



'EXONĀ' is the outcome of an ambitious project launched by the IQAC, Tinsukia College with the objective of promoting and patronizing the academic / research activities of the faculties of the college. Under the project it has been decided to publish two separate volumes of collection of research articles for Science, Arts and Commerce.

The present volume is dedicated to the streams of Commerce and Humanities and our editorial board has tried its best to select and compile the articles on diverse topics so that it covers the different areas and branches of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Commerce of the widest range possible. However we cannot claim to be successful in our mission due to different reasons.

Though it had been decided initially to publish papers/articles by the faculties of the college only, later it has been decided to include a few papers from outside the college with a greater intent of encouraging the budding scholars around.

Now the book is in your hands. In spite of all the efforts on the part of the editorial board errors and omissions may be there in the book and that is highly regretted. Feedback and suggestions from our learned readers will be appreciated. We will be very happy if the readers find the book interesting and helpful.

Here I would like to record my gratitude to the principal and co-ordinator of IQAC, Tinsukia College for bestowing upon us the responsibility of publishing the book and their all round support through out the process. I must thank and congratulate the members of the editorial board for their sincere efforts, hard work from collection, compilation, editing to supervision of printing and production process to make the present book possible.

Dr. Nilim Jyoti Senapati

Editorial

EXONĀ – a compilation of 19 research articles/papers penned by teachers and researchers working on a wide variety of topics is the outcome of an academic effort initiated by IQAC, Tinsukia College. Encompassing both Commerce and Humanities, the book contains articles/papers focusing on different themes and issues which carry significant relevance for its readers. Apart from the in-house contributors, the editorial board has incorporated three papers from external contributors. Appreciating the spontaneous response of each contributor, the editorial board acknowledges with humility their support and co-operation in completing this project.

Ranging from issues like poverty and income inequality to employment and income generation in informal sector, to socio-economic development through broom stick cultivation; from performance of PMMY among weaker section to impact of strategic management on competitive advantage of micro, small and medium enterprises; from perception of students towards online education system to factors influencing participation of youth in community development activities - interesting and enriching writings are on the platter for readers from both academic and non-academic fields.

In the humanities section, on the one hand, we come across issues like attitude of Assamese intellectuals towards women's education in the nineteenth century and role of media in objectification of women on the other. Research articles on Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya's concept of Philosophy and the concept of Epistemology are exclusively based on philosophical subject matters. Another research article based on a recent social issue that finds space in this compilation is the one that makes an attempt to analyse the hijab controversy.

The reason of making this book a multi-lingual one comes from the idea of including papers from the different language and literature departments. As such, the English literary article is on the problematics of space that highlights the trauma of partition as portrayed in Siddhartha Deb's *The Point of Return* while the one in Assamese presents an overview of the Tangkhul Naga society as depicted in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's *Iyaruimgam*. The Bengali articles are on two different themes – one is a detailed review of Harendranath Borthakur's plays for children and the other one ventures to highlight the evolution of devotional trait in the literary creations of Rabindranath Tagore. In Hindi, themes such as growth and development of Assamese novel, status of women in Rahi Masoom Raja's *Aadha Gaon* and relevance of Dalit autobiography *Juthan* in the socio-cultural context have been addressed.

As a whole, the compilation makes a genuine effort to accommodate themes and concerns that deserve space and scope for discussion.

Despite our sincere effort the book cannot be claimed to be error-free. The editorial board apologises in advance for any kind of human error and hopes that the content of the book will surely overshadow the technical errors. EXONĀ being the maiden publication on Commerce and Humanities published by Tinsukia College Publication awaits feedback and valuable suggestions for future.

Lastly, on behalf of the entire editorial board, I extend my gratitude to our Principal Dr. Surjya Chutia and the Joint Coordinators of IQAC for their unconditional support throughout the journey. I am thankful to our chief editor and all the team members for their constant support in accomplishing the task of publishing EXONĀ – a collective dream comes true. Special thanks to Rajarshi Gogoi and the employees of The Assam Computers for their involvement in bringing out the final outcome in the shape of the book.

Mayuri Sharma Baruah

List of Contributors

- ❖ **Dr. Monika Das**
Associate Professor, Deptt. of Economics
Tinsukia College
Email: monikadas292001@gmail.com
- ❖ **Dr. Sakarsing Bodo**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Commerce
Tinsukia College
Email: sakarsingboro@gmail.com
- ❖ **Dwimu Basumatary**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Commerce
Tinsukia College
Email: dwimubasumatary2050@gmail.com
- ❖ **Lovin Kro**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Commerce
Tinsukia College
Email: lovienhanzang@gmail.com
- ❖ **Ankit Sen**
Lecturer, Centre for Management Education (CME)
Tinsukia College
Email: ankitjose@gmail.com
- ❖ **Nilakhi Baruah**
Junior Research Fellow,
Dibrugarh University
Email: nilakshib265@gmail.com
- ❖ **Nazreen Parveen Ali**
Senior Research Fellow,
Dibrugarh University
Email: nazreenparveen8@gmail.com
- ❖ **Rijumani Kalita**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Commerce
Tinsukia College
Email: kalitarijumani0526@gmail.com
- ❖ **Bhaskar Saikia**
Research Scholar, Deptt. of Commerce
Dibrugarh University
Email: saikia275@gmail.com
- ❖ **Dr. Partha Protim Borthakur**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Political Science
Dhakuakhana College
Email: parthapran2@gmail.com
- ❖ **Dr. Sanghamitra Sarma**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of History
Tinsukia College
Email: sanghamitra247@gmail.com
- ❖ **Rasmita Borkotoky**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Economics
Tinsukia College
Email: papori1973@gmail.com
- ❖ **Debananda Bhattacharyya**
Associate Professor, Deptt. of Philosophy
Tinsukia College
Email: bhattad2011@gmail.com
- ❖ **Ruma Payeng**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Philosophy
Tinsukia College
Email: ruma.payeng@gmail.com
- ❖ **Gaurab Sengupta**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of English
Duliajan College
Email: gaurabliterature@gmail.com

- ❖ **Tonkeswar Das**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Assamese
Tinsukia College
Email: tonkesward@gmail.com
- ❖ **Dr. Sushanta Kar**
Associate Professor, Deptt. of Bengali
Tinsukia College
Email: karsushanta40@gmail.com
- ❖ **Shelly Dutta**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Bengali
Tinsukia College
Email: dttamomi@gmail.com
- ❖ **Dr. Raghu Nath Yadav**
Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Hindi
Tinsukia College
Email: drraghunathyadav@gmail.com
- ❖ **Krishna Pandit**
Ph.D. Research Scholar, Deptt. of Hindi
Assam University, Diphu Campus
Email: krishnapandit709@gmail.com
- ❖ **Saroj Prasad**
Ph.D. Research Scholar, Deptt. of Hindi
Assam University, Diphu Campus
Email: sarojprasad37@gmail.com



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Poverty and Income Inequality among the Social Groups of Rural Assam

Dr. Monika Das

Abstract:

This paper aims at examining the level of poverty and income inequality among the social groups of rural Assam. To fulfil the objective, initially poverty levels were measured both in single income dimensions and in multiple dimensions. Using FGT index, income poverty was measured and for multidimensional poverty, Alkire and Foster Global Multidimensional Poverty Index methodology was used. Income inequality was measured by constructing Gini, Atkinson and Theil index (General Entropy). In order to know whether there is any relation between income inequality and poverty, a simple regression model was fitted. The result of the analysis shows that income poverty is high among MOBC and OBC groups of population and low among ST population. In multidimensional poverty, higher poverty ratio is found among OBC and TGL groups of population of rural Assam and lower among ST population. The analysis of income inequality shows higher income inequality among the General category and TGL group of population. The study found a positive relationship between multidimensional poverty and income inequality. Therefore, the study suggests focusing on pattern of income

distribution for poverty reduction in policy intervention in rural Assam.

Key Words:

Income Poverty, Multidimensional Poverty, FGT Index, AF methodology, Income Inequality, Regression

Introduction:

Poverty and income inequality between the classes of people is widely a challenge to economic development. Many hold the view that poverty and income inequalities are growing among different groups of people with the growing process of economic development. If this trend is unchecked, it would aggravate social unrest and endanger the country's stability. Hence, study of poverty and income inequality has attracted the attention in recent decades. Traditionally, poverty has been measured in single income dimensions. In accordance with this measure, government policies were increasingly judged by merely increase in economic growth on the belief that economic growth will trickle down and will automatically reach the poor. But in the existence of market imperfection, this perception of poverty measure found the poor out of the development process. Poverty has many dimensions which are interconnected. The evidence is the food crisis in 1980s and the Covid pandemic in 2020s. These crises teach us the lesson that only increase in income is not sufficient to eliminate poverty. What is important is enhancing the ability to convert this income to human capability. The GDP growth report as well as the human development reports of most countries also show the contrast evidence. India, when achieved the fifth rank in GDP nominal growth(IMF, report.2018) in recent era but remained the home of one-fourth of hungry people out of total one-sixth population of the globe. This indicates the gap that exists somewhere in the distribution space that kept the strategy unsuccessful as far as poverty reduction policy is concerned.

The pioneer work of kuznet on growth and income distribution in 1950s, explored that in the early stages of development market forces increase inequality and thus poverty. A.K. Sen's view on 'From Income Inequality to Economic Inequality'¹ during 1997, Kakwani's work on income inequality in 1995, Ravallion's view on relative importance of growth and inequality in poverty reduction in 2001, expose the important of distribution aspects in poverty reduction². Thus, inequality featured prominently in the mainstream of development policy agenda of World Bank's World Development Report 2000-01. In the literature, different scholars found working in this field to figure out the relation of poverty to income inequality. Karagiannaki(2017), in the working paper of Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, assessed the relationship between income poverty and income inequality in rich and middle income countries and the findings emerge strong positive cross country correlation between changes in level of poverty and income inequality over time³. Going more beyond of income poverty, Yang, Lin & Vizard Polly (2017), examined the association of multidimensional poverty and income inequality in EU and the analysis finds strong positive correlation between level of material deprivation and income inequality and multidimensional poverty and income inequality comparing across countries but statistically insignificant in changing over time⁴. Henmar and Nashcold(2000), in their paper, 'attaining the International Development Targets: will growth be enough?'⁵ too pointed that growth is not enough for poverty reduction, what matters is pattern of raising income and distribution in regional dimension of poverty reduction, Ali & Thorbecke(2000), explored raising income being more effective in rural areas while in urban, efficacy of poverty reduction policy depends on pattern of income distribution. Poverty and inequality is intrinsically linked and

therefore distribution should be the central in poverty reduction agenda⁶. The evidence of countries especially Sub-Saharan shows that inequality is the key determinant of poverty. In the executive summary of the World Inequality Report, 2018⁷, it is stated that income inequality has increased in recent decades nearly in all region of the world. The data on income inequality which is available from the India Human Development Survey shows income inequality in India in 2005-06 at 0.532 put India among the high income inequality countries (Himanshu, 2015, 2019)⁸. The gini of consumption expenditure measured by the NSS report a rise in consumption inequality from 0.32 in 1993-94 to 0.38 in 2011-12 for rural and 0.26 to 0.29 respectively in rural areas. According to Thomas Piketty and Lucas Chancel (2017)⁹, income inequality in India being highest since 1922. Niti Ayog's SDG Index, 2019 released on December, 27 says that in the last two years, more people of India have fallen into poverty, hunger and inequality. In the empirical literature of poverty, inequality and growth, the evidence shows ineffective growth oriented policy as far poverty reduction is concerned in the absence of focus on pattern of income distribution. This may be the reason that the recent report of the UN Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development (2020), shows 22 per cent (1.3 billion) people living in multidimensional poverty across 107 developing nations, of which 50 per cent are below the age of 18.¹⁰ About 84 per cent of multidimensionally poor live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In India still around 30 per cent people are multidimensionally poor and the ratio shows higher in rural areas compared to urban counterpart.

Background:

Assam, the home of 3.12 crore of population is one of the 35 states and union territories of India covering geographical area of 78,438 square kilometer (km²). It is primarily a rural

state with more than 98 per cent of its area falling under rural area consisting a rural population of 80 per cent of the state. The state accounts for about 2.4 per cent of the total geographical area and 2.6 per cent of total population of the country (Census, 2011)¹¹. With a mix of hills and plains Assam is a state of 27 districts of which 25 plain districts range from Barak and Brahmaputra valley. Despite being rich in oil, coal and tea plantation, the economy is primarily based on agriculture. Along with inadequate infrastructural development, the recurring of flood every year has been the major threat to the economy as it affects badly on land, life and livelihood of the people basically living in rural areas. Comprising 37 per cent of income poor and 30.10 per cent of multidimensionally poor, the state crosses the national average of both income and multidimensional poverty. Despite increase in Gross State Domestic Product from 4.9 per cent in 2013-14 to 8.3 per cent in 2015-16, the number of stunted child of below 5 years remains 36.4 percent (NFHS) in the state. To understand these contrast evidences of growth with poverty, a micro level intensive study on poverty and inequality is necessary. In this regards, though lots of empirical and theoretical literature is found such as Atkinson (1970) and Atkinson (1983), Bourguignon (1979), Kakwani (1980), Cowell (2008), Delton (1920), Sen (1973, 1976) etc, on theoretical and Ahmed (2001), kruijk(1987), Adam and He (1995) on empirical, a minimal micro level research on poverty and income inequality among the social groups of rural Assam has been carried out. Therefore, the significance of this paper lies in this ground.

Objectives:

The objective of this paper is to measure the extent of poverty and income inequality among the social groups of rural Assam and to examine whether the poverty levels of these groups of rural Assam is associated with income inequality.

Methodology:

Data source:

The present study (conducted during 2018-2019) is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire prepared for the purpose. Moreover some secondary data are also used from Poverty Report of the Planning Commission of India (2014) and Human Development Report of Assam (2016).

Study Design:

Six districts of Assam have been purposively selected as sample districts for the study, based on the rationality that in spite of holding the high rank in HDI, some of the districts are having higher poverty ratio compared to the other districts those holding lower HDI rank. Therefore six districts having high, medium and low rank in HDI have been selected such as Tinsukia (22nd), Jorhat (2nd), Nagaon (9th), Kamrup (4th), Dhemaji (21st) and Dhubri (23rd) districts of Assam. From each district one development block and from each block, one gram panchayat has been selected randomly as sample panchayat. From each gram panchayat, 25 percent villages have been selected randomly as sample villages and from each village, 25 percent households are selected randomly as sample households. Thus there are 15 sample villages consisting of 903 sample households in the study.

Analytical Strategy:

In the analytical part, firstly, on the basis of the poverty threshold recommended by Rangarajan Committee of MPCE of Rs. 1006.66 for rural poor, the income poverty is measured using FGT (Foster-Greer-Thorbecke) Index the expression of which is given below-

$$FGT_{\alpha} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^H \left(\frac{z - Y_i}{z} \right)^{\alpha} \dots \dots \dots (i)$$

And for measuring multidimensional poverty, Alkire and foster methodology¹ is used. Taking Global MPI indicators in three

dimensions - Education, Health and Standard of living, assigning same weight i.e 1/3 for the three dimensions, the deprivations score was counted giving 1 for deprived and 0 for non-deprived.

Table No.1
Dimensions, indicators, deprivation cutoff, and weights of the global MPI

Dimension	Indicator	Deprivation Cutoff	Weight
Education	Years of schooling	No household member has completed five years of schooling.	1/6
	Child enrolment	Any school age child in the household is not attending school up to class 8.	1/6
Health	Nutrition	If any adult or child in the household is undernourished.	1/6
	Mortality	Any child has passed away in the household in last five years	1/6
Standard of living	Floor	The household has a dirt, sand, or dung floor	1/18
	Sanitation	The household's sanitation facility is not improved.	1/18
	Cooking fuel	The household cooks with dung, wood, or charcoal	1/18
	Water	The household does not have access to safe drinking water.	1/18
	Electricity	The household has no electricity	1/18
	Assets	The household owns at most one of the following: radio, telephone, TV, bike, refrigerator, and does not own a car or truck.	1/18

Source: Alkire and Santos (2010, 2014), cf. Alkire, Roche, Santos, and Seth (2011) and Alkire, Conconi, and Roche (2013).

On the basis of the above Dimensions, Indicators, Weights, the multidimensional poverty was measured using the formula given below-

$$MPI = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^d w_j g_{ij}^0(k) \dots \dots \dots (iv)$$

Secondly, Inequality was measured initially by constructing Gini index. But as the value of Gini Index ignores the kind of inequality that may be attached with two sets of distribution, Atkinson and Theil inequality Index (using STATA DASP 2.3 Version) were constructed to fulfil the gap. A **simple regression model** was also fitted to study the relation between poverty and inequality. The indices that are followed to estimate the inequality are expressed in the following-

The **Gini** coefficient of inequality was estimated based on the expression as -

$$Gini = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^N (x_i - x_{i-1}) (y_i + y_{i-1}) \dots \dots v$$

The **Atkinson** Index was constructed on the basis of the equation expressed as -

$$A_a = 1 - \left[\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \left(\frac{y_i}{\bar{y}} \right)^{1-a} \right]^{1/1-a} \dots \dots \dots a \ll 1 \dots \dots \dots vi$$

$$A_a = 1 - \frac{\prod_{i=1}^N (y_i)^{\frac{1}{N}}}{\bar{y}} \dots \dots \dots a = 1 \dots \dots \dots vii$$

The **Theil's T** index on the other hand was estimated based on the equation expressed as -

$$E(a) = \frac{1}{n(\alpha^2 - \alpha)} \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{y_i}{\bar{y}} \right)^2 - 1 \dots \dots \dots (viii)$$

Expression (viii) defines a class because the index $E(a)$ assumes different forms depending on the value assigned to a . A positive a captures the sensitivity of the E index to a specific part of the income distribution. With positive and large a , the index E will be more sensitive to the upper tail of the income distribution, and with small a , more sensitive to the bottom

tail of the income distribution. Although parameter a , in principle ranges from minus infinity to infinity, from an operational point of view a is usually chosen to be non-negative. For inequality measurement, two particular cases of (viii) are of particular interest for inequality measurement, i.e $a = 0$ and $a = 1$. With $a = 0$, the expression (viii) becomes-

$$E(0) = -\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \ln \left(\frac{y_i}{\bar{y}} \right) \dots \dots \dots (ix)$$

This expression is called the mean logarithmic deviation.

With $a = 1$, the expression becomes -

$$E(1) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{y_i}{\bar{y}} \right) \ln \left(\frac{y_i}{\bar{y}} \right) \dots \dots \dots (x)$$

And the expression is the Theil index.

Results and Discussions:

Considering the household head as the unit of analysis, initially, the poverty index was constructed to measure the head count ratio, poverty gap ratio and severity of the poverty both in single income dimension as well as in multiple dimensions. After that income inequality index was constructed and at last in order to know whether there is association between income poverty, multidimensional poverty and income inequality, simple regression was used.

Income Poverty Within and Across the Social Groups of Rural Assam:

In Table.2, the measurement of head count ratio (p_0), of FGT index within and across the occupation groups shows higher among the MOBC (35 percent) followed by OBC (14.1 percent), TGL (12.8 percent), General (10.3 percent) and SC (10 percent). Lower income poverty ratio is found among the ST (7.2 percent) population of the sample districts. With head count ratio, the poverty gap ratio too is found high among the MOBC (8.8 percent) followed by OBC (3.5 percent), SC (3.3 percent), TGL (2.6 percent) and general (2.4 percent). In the analysis of poverty gap, it was noticed that though headcount ratio among the

General caste was found higher compared to SC but poverty gap is found high among the SC compared to General caste. In the analysis of severity of income poverty, higher ratio is found among the MOBC (2.4 percent) followed by SC (1.6 percent), OBC (1 percent), General (0.7 percent), and TGL (0.5 percent). Lower severity of income poverty is found among the ST (0.4 percent) population in rural Assam

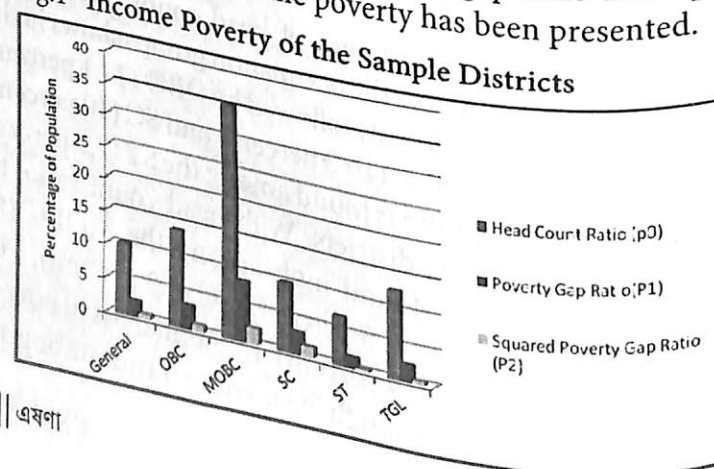
Table.2
Income Poverty within and across social groups (in percent)

Social Group	Head Count Ratio (p_0)	Poverty Gap Ratio (P_1)	Squared Poverty Gap Ratio (P_2)
General	10.3	2.4	0.7
OBC	14.1	3.5	1.0
MOBC	35.5	8.8	2.4
SC	10.0	3.3	1.6
ST	7.2	1.7	0.4
TGL	12.8	2.6	0.5
Total Population	11.7	3.0	0.9

Source: Primary Data, Author's Calculation. Using STATA

Compared to the aggregate head count ratio of rural Assam (11.7 percent), the higher ratio is found among MOBC, OBC and TGL and lower ratio is found among General, SC and ST. In Fig.1, the headcount ratio, poverty gap ratio and squared poverty gap ratio of income poverty has been presented.

Fig.1 Income Poverty of the Sample Districts



Multidimensional Poverty Within and Across the Social Group of Rural Assam:

In Table. No.3, results of the computation of multidimensional poverty within and across the six social groups have been presented.

Table.3.
Multidimensional Poverty Within and Across the Social Groups

Social Group	Headcount ratio(H)	Intensity(A)	Multidimensional Poverty Index(MPI)	Multidimensional poverty Gap	Multidimensional Squared Poverty Index (M_2)
General	0.575	0.454	0.261	0.102	0.224
OBC	0.677	0.467	0.316	0.131	0.098
MOBC	0.536	0.429	0.230	0.069	0.030
SC	0.595	0.455	0.271	0.103	0.079
ST	0.500	0.450	0.225	0.081	0.029
TGL	0.634	0.475	0.301	0.075	0.024
Total Population	0.595	0.452	0.269	0.226	0.342

Source: Primary Data, Author's Calculation,

Uncensored Head Count Ratio (H):

As per Table.3, the higher multidimensional headcount ratio (H) is found among the OBC (0.677) followed by TGL (0.634), SC (0.595), General (0.575) and MOBC (0.536). Lower head count ratio is found among the ST (0.500). Compared to Aggregate headcount ratio (0.595) of rural Assam, the higher head count ratio is found among OBC and TGL. The equal ratio of aggregate headcount ratio is found among SC. The lower multidimensional headcount ratio compared to total among General, MOBC and ST

Intensity of Multidimensional Poverty (A):

Intensity of multidimensional poverty is the average proportion of weighted indicators in which poor people are deprived. The intensity of multidimensional poverty (A) is found high among the TGL (0.475) followed by OBC (0.467), SC (0.455), General (0.454) and ST (0.450). Lower intensity is found among the MOBC (0.429). It has been noticed that though multidimensional headcount ratio is found high among the OBC but in intensity higher ratio is found among TGL. The corresponding head count ratio though found low among the ST, while in intensity lower ratio is found among MOBC.

Adjusted Multidimensional Poverty Index(MPI):

In the global MPI, a person is identified as multidimensionally poor if the person's weighted deprivation score is equal to or higher than the poverty cutoff of 33.33 per cent. Following the AF methodology, the MPI is calculated by multiplying the incidence of poverty (H) and the average intensity of poverty (A). More specifically, H is the proportion of the population that is multidimensionally poor and A is the average proportion of dimensions in which poor people are deprived. Therefore, $MPI = H \times A$, reflect both the share of people in poverty and the degree to which they are deprived. The Adjusted Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) value is found high among OBC (0.316)

and TGL (0.301) followed by SC (0.271), General (0.261), MOBC (0.230). Lower MPI value is found among the ST (0.225).

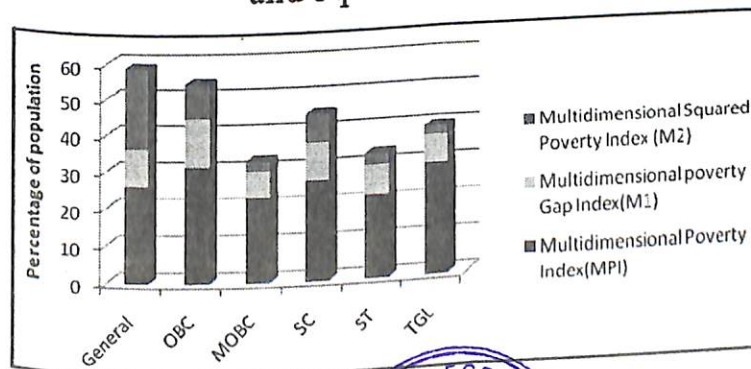
Adjusted Multidimensional Poverty Gap (M_1):

It is the average value of the normalized gap among all instances in which any poor person is deprived. This provides information on the average depth of deprivations across all poor and deprived states. In the analysis of multidimensional poverty gap (M_1), higher value is found among the OBC (0.131) followed by SC (0.103) and General (0.102). The corresponding value found among the ST and TGL is 0.081 and 0.075 respectively. Lower multidimensional poverty gap value is found among MOBC (0.069).

Adjusted Squared Poverty Gap (M_2):

It measures the severity of multidimensional poverty. In the severity of multidimensional poverty (M_2), higher severity value is found among General (0.224) and lower severity is found among TGL (0.024). The corresponding value found among OBC and MOBC is 0.098 and 0.030 respectively while among SC and ST, the value found is 0.079 and 0.029. Compared to aggregate squared poverty gap value of 0.342, the squared poverty gap value of all these six districts is found low. In Fig.2, the Multidimensional poverty, poverty gap and multidimensional squared poverty gap has been presented.

Fig.2 Multidimensional Poverty, Poverty Gap and Squared Poverty



Income Inequality Within and Across the Social Groups of Rural Assam:

The value of income inequality estimated by using the Gini, Atkinson and Theil Index has been presented in Table.4

Table.4
Income Inequality Within and Across the Occupations

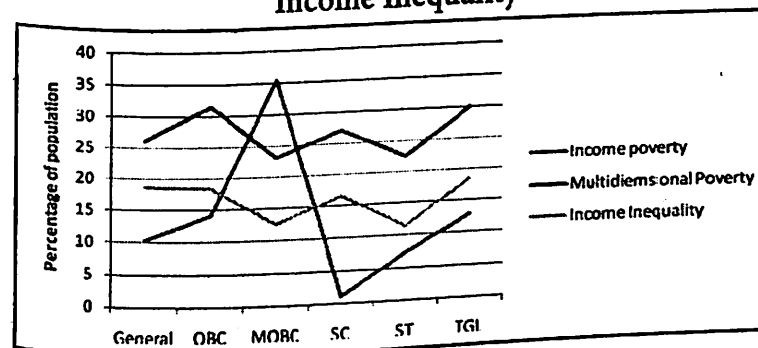
Social Group	Gini Index	Atkinson (1)	Atkinson (2)	Theil (0)	Theil (1)
General	0.330	0.213	0.427	0.239	0.186
OBC	0.332	0.177	0.320	0.195	0.183
MOBC	0.276	0.124	0.239	0.132	0.126
SC	0.316	0.187	0.389	0.207	0.165
ST	0.162	0.083	0.135	0.087	0.115
TGL	0.319	0.224	0.466	0.254	0.184
Total Population	0.363	0.225	0.427	0.256	0.213

Source: Primary Data, Author's Calculation. Using STATA

As per Table No.4, income inequality within and across the social groups of rural Assam shows high among OBC and low among ST category. The **Gini value** among the OBC is found 0.332 and 0.167 among ST group. The corresponding Gini value found among General category is 0.330 followed by TGL (0.319), SC (0.316) and MOBC (0.276). The computation made by **Atkinson Index** in parameter value 1(One) and 2(two), the higher income inequality is found among TGL (0.224) and (0.466) at parameter value 1 and 2. The corresponding income inequality value found among the General is 0.213 followed by SC (0.187), OBC (0.177) and MOBC (0.124). The lower inequality value is found among ST (0.083). According to the **Theil index** at parameter value 0 (zero), the higher inequality is found among the TGL (0.254) followed by General (0.239),

SC (0.207), OBC (0.195), MOBC (0.132). Lower Theil income Inequality value is found among the ST (0.087) group. At parameter value 2, the same higher income inequality is found among the TGL group and lower among the ST group of population. Over all, the analysis highlighted more of income inequality among the TGL and General caste and low among the ST population. The most likely reasons for high income inequality among the TGL and General caste of population is variability of earnings and diversity of economic activities. In Fig.3, the income and multidimensional poverty and income inequality based on Theil parameter value1 has been shown. (Based on data Table.2, Table 3 and Table.4)

Fig.3 Income, Multidimensional Poverty and Income Inequality



Relation of Poverty and Income Inequality among the Social Groups:

In order to know the interrelationship between multidimensional poverty and income inequality and income poverty and income inequality, simple linear regression model is used. Considering multidimensional poverty as dependent variable and Theil income inequality (used Theil value instead of other measures of inequality for convenient reason) as independent variable (Table.6) in model 1 and income poverty as dependent variable and income inequality as independent

variable in model 2 (Table.7) the regression models were fitted. The expression of the regression model is given as-

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots \text{viii}$$

Where Y is dependent variable, x is explanatory variable, β_0 is the intercept term, and β_1 is the slope parameter. ϵ is the stochastic error term. In the regression model of the present study multidimensional poverty is considered as y variable and income inequality is considered as explanatory variable x (model 1) and income poverty as y variable and income poverty as x variable in model 2. On the basis of the result of outcomes of multidimensional poverty, income poverty and income inequality presented in the Table.5, the regression model was fitted.

Table.5
Income poverty, Multidimensional poverty and Income Inequality among the Social Groups of Rural Assam

Social Group	Income poverty	Multidimensional Poverty	Income Inequality
General	0.103	0.261	0.186
OBC	0.141	0.316	0.183
MOBC	0.355	0.230	0.126
SC	0.010	0.271	0.165
ST	0.072	0.225	0.115
TGL	0.128	0.301	0.184
Total Population	0.117	0.269	0.213

Results of the regression (Model 1)

The estimates based on the data of the sample 903 household head engaged in six social groups of six districts of Assam are presented in the Table.6

Table.6
Multidimensional poverty and income inequality model statistics

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Durbin watson
	B	Std error							
Constant	.109	.049							
Inequality	.994	.302	.855	2.213	.091	0.730	0.663	10.838	2.365

Predictor: (constant), Inequality and Dependent variable, MPI; Degree of freedom 5
* implies 0.05 level of significant

Source: primary data, Author's Calculation using SPSS

The standardized correlation coefficient (Beta) value of the model shows 0.855 which implies a positive correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The t value (2.213) though not significant at 5 per cent level but F value (10.838) is statistically significant at 0.05 per cent level. The R^2 value of 0.730 implies strong correlation between multidimensional poverty and inequality in the study groups. About 73 per cent variation in the multidimensional poverty is explained by income inequality in rural Assam. In the model, the regression equation found is $MPI = 0.109 + 0.994 (\text{inequality})$ and statistically significant at 5 per cent level ($P < 0.05$). The unstandardized B value 0.994 implies that one (1) unit increase in income inequality increases the 0.994 unit multidimensional poverty in study groups.

Results of the regression (Model 2)

The estimates of the regression model based on the income poverty and income inequality data shows (Table. 7) no significant relation between income inequality and income poverty. Both the t value and F value is found to be not statistically significant at 5 per cent level.

Table.7
Income poverty and income inequality model statistics

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient Beta	t	Sig	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Durbin watson
	B	Std error							
Constant	.331	.285		1.161	.310	0.109	-.114	.490	2.111
Inequality	-1.230	1.757	-.330	-.700	.523				
Predictor: (constant), Inequality and Dependent variable, MPI; Degree of freedom 5									

Source: Primary data, Author's Calculation using SPSS

Summary:

The results of the analysis of income poverty, multidimensional poverty and income inequality among the social groups of rural Assam shows more of income poverty among MOBC and TGL. And more of multidimensional poverty among OBC and TGL groups. Lower income and multidimensional poverty is found among the ST population. In income inequality index, higher income inequality is found among the General caste and TGL, lower among the ST population. The most likely reason of high income inequality among the General caste and TGL are variability of earnings and expenditure and diversity of economic activities. The study also highlighted that caste-wise income poverty of rural Assam is not associated with income inequality; rather it is associated with multidimensional poverty. Thus, the study is consistent with the fact of inadequacy of income measure of poverty in reflecting wellbeing of the people. It is the analysis of Multidimensional poverty and Income inequality that displayed how poverty in rural Assam is correlated with income inequality. Therefore, focus on the distribution aspect of poverty among the social groups of rural Assam is of utter significance for better understanding of poverty as well as implementing of poverty reduction policy.

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A Study on the Performance of Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) Among Weaker Section

Dr. Sakarsing Boro

Abstract:

Savings and investment both are important tools for economic development. However, these are possible where there is an opportunity for earnings. For generating income, creation of employment opportunities through financial assistance and self employment is very necessary. Investment in micro units or small business/non corporate small business sectors (NCSBS) owned by weaker sections are also a major economic segment in our country and provide large employment after agriculture. In order to create employment among weaker communities including women entrepreneurs as well as small business/non corporate small business sectors and help them to boost their entrepreneurial activities to the society, the MUDRA loan Scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) was launched. Under MUDRA Scheme, loans are offered in three categories, namely – Shishu (For loan amount up to Rs. 50,000), Kishor (For loan amount from Rs. 50,001 to Rs 5 lakh) and Tarun (For loan amount more than 5 lakhs and up to Rs 10 lakh). The total sanction amount in the financial year 2020-21 in all three forms of loan is Rs. 321759.25 crore and disbursement

amount is Rs. 311754.47 Crore (Source: MUDRA Annual Report 2020-21). Present study is mainly based on secondary sources of data. This paper throws light on the opportunity and the performance of PMMY especially among weaker sections.

Keywords:

MUDRA, PMMY, Weaker Section, micro enterprises.

Introduction:

The Central Government of India always tries to uplift our economic condition by various means. Both public sector undertaking and private sector undertaking including big businesses and MNCs are playing an adequate role for growth of our economic conditions. Besides, investment in micro units or small business/non corporate small business sectors (NCSBS) owned by weaker sections are also a major economic segment in our country and provide large employment after agriculture. According to NSSO Survey (2013), there are 5.77 crore small business units, mostly individual proprietorship. Most of these 'Own Account Enterprises (OAE)' are owned by people belonging to Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe or Other Backward Classes. Non-Corporate Small Business Sector (NCSBS) comprises small manufacturing units, small industries, machine operators, food processors, shopkeepers, fruits/vegetable vendors, truck & taxi operators, food-service units, repair shops, artisans, street vendors and many others. Formal or institutional architecture has not been able to reach out to them to meet the financial requirements of this sector. The major constraints faced by the myriad of the micro enterprises along the length and breadth of the country include¹:

- Access to Finance
- Skill Development Gaps
- Knowledge Gaps

- Infrastructure Gaps
- Policy Advocacy Needs
- Information Asymmetry
- Lack of Growth Orientation
- Lack of Market Development / Market
- Making Entry Level Technologies

They are largely self financed or rely on non formal lenders, or friends and relatives. Addressing this need will give a big boost to the economy of our country otherwise this segment would remain unfunded and a portion of the productive labour force would remain unemployed. In order to create employment among these sections and help them to boost their entrepreneurial activities to the society, the MUDRA loan Scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 08 April, 2015 at a function held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency commonly known as MUDRA is an important refinancing scheme. The primary objective of MUDRA is to develop the micro enterprise sector or Non-Corporate Small Business Sector (NCSBS in the country by extending various supports including financial support and to achieve the goal of funding the unfunded.

MUDRA loans under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) can be availed from the nearby branch office of Commercial Banks, RRBs, NBFC, MFIs, etc. Beneficiaries can also now file online applications for MUDRA loans on the Udyamimitra portal (www.udyamimitra.in).

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) being a flagship programme of the prime minister always aims at funding the unfunded micro-enterprises and small businesses among weaker section of the society from the beginning of its establishment. The scheme already completed 6 years of its operations extending

a cumulative amount of Rs. 15.52 lakh crore to 29.55 lakh crore loan accounts primarily benefiting the borrowers of SC, ST, Other Backward Classes and women entrepreneurs (Source: MUDRA Annual Report 2020-21). The present study tries to throw light on the performance and achievement of PMMY towards MUDRA loan among weaker section.

MUDRA Offerings:

- a. *MUDRA loan*: Loans are offered in three categories under MUDRA scheme, namely-
 - Shishu - For loan amount up to Rs. 50,000
 - Kishor - For loan amount from Rs. 50,001 to Rs 5 lakh
 - Tarun - For loan amount more than Rs. 5 lakh and up to Rs 10 lakh

- b. *MUDRA Card*: A MUDRA Card, Rupay debit card, is provided to MUDRA Loan against working capital limits issued under PMMY. About 5.17 lakh cards for Rs. 1,477 crore were issued during the first year 2015-16 (Source: MUDRA Annual Report 2015-16).

- c. *MUDRA Credit Guarantee scheme*: National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC), a subsidiary of SIDBI is the implementing agency of MUDRA Credit Guarantee scheme. The scheme was constituted to enhance the flow of credit to micro units at ground level. The coverage of the fund is on the basis of portfolio and not individual unit specific.

- d. *Overdraft against Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana account*: Overdraft facilities against PMJDY accounts are provided as financial assistance under PMMY. A total number of 24.17 lakh borrowers used overdraft facilities against their PMJDY accounts under PMMY in the first financial year of PMMY launched (Source: MUDRA Annual Report 2015-16).

Areas/Activities of MUDRA Loan

MUDRA loan under PMMY is provided to income generating micro/small business entities engaged in:

- Trading
- Manufacturing
- Service sector
- Activities allied to agriculture, like- pisciculture, poultry farming, bee-keeping, etc.

Nature of assistance as MUDRA loan

- Term Loan
- Overdraft limit
- Working Capital
- Composite loan for acquiring capital assets

Banks/Financial Institutions/Agencies offering MUDRA loan²:

- State Bank of India and Associate
- Public Sector Commercial Banks (excluding SBI)
- Private Sector Commercial Banks
- State co-Operative Banks
- Regional Rural Banks
- Micro Finance Institutions
- NBFC Micro Finance Institutions
- Non Banking Financial Companies
- Small Finance Banks

Operational Concepts:

The term weaker section for the present study is the same as defined under MUDRA i.e. the social group of three communities- Schedule Tribe (ST), Schedule Caste (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC). Observations and analyses will be made on these three social categories and the performance of PMMY will be studied in this section.

Literature Review:

Shahid M. and Irshad M. (2016) study descriptive analysis of PMMY. They analyze the product offerings and performance of the MUDRA scheme.

Kavitha P., Kumar B.P (2017) studies banks' efficiency in implementing a government scheme that promotes entrepreneurship. By examining the relative technical and scale efficiency of 42 Indian banks, including a comparative efficiency between private and public sector banks in providing loans under MUDRA Scheme, they find that Indian banks have been less efficient in implementing the PMMY. Public sector banks were more efficient in providing loans under the scheme and providing loans to start ups under the scheme than the private sector banks.

Vijai C (2018) studies performance of PMMY in the state of Tamilnadu. His study finds that the loan sanctioned as well as disbursed amount in the state is satisfactory in all three forms i.e. Shishu, Kishor and Tarun.

Biswas B. (2019) studies comparative performance of PMMY in West Bengal and other select states in India. His analysis shows that people are getting encouraged to develop entrepreneurship by taking initiative to start their own work. He further mentioned that the performance of MUDRA yojana is successful under Kishor and Tarun categories whereas Shishu category has fallen.

Mahajan Y (2019), studies the performance of MUDRA in the state of Maharashtra. He states that the MUDRA scheme has been fairly successful in the state of Maharashtra. He suggested that more needs to be done for financial inclusion of all categories of people.

Sahu T.N, Agarwala V. and Maity S. (2021) state that the microcredit scheme viz. MUDRA helps in creating employment and transforming livelihood status of tribal women entrepreneurs in particular. By applying Ordered logistic regression, Wilcoxon

Sign test, Effect Size test, it is found that loan amount significantly influences employability as well as improved the livelihood of women as regards to economic, psychological and social empowerment. They suggest that the government and the financial sector may improve the existing policies and take initiatives to enhance the accessibility of the scheme and create a supporting environment to assist borrowers during the initial stage of the venture through different training programmes.

Objectives of the study:

1. To highlight the performance of PMMY among weaker sections.
2. To analyze the comparative performance of PMMY between weaker sections and others.

Research Queries :

1. Whether PMMY is performing satisfactorily among weaker sections.
2. Whether there is no difference between weaker sections and others towards the activities performed by the PMMY.

Methodology of the study:

Present study is mainly based on secondary sources of data. The researcher collects required data from the official website of MUDRA which include Annual Reports of MUDRA from 2015-16 to 2020-21. Additional data are gathered from journals, articles, books, and magazines.

Limitations of the study:

- Observations are not made state wise i.e. analyses are made as a whole in the country.
- The study has primarily focused on weaker sections.

Data Analysis:

The assistance provided to weaker sections under PMMY covers more than half of the total assistance as witnessed from

annual reports of various financial years. As addressed under PMMY during the financial year 2020-21 the credit needs of weaker sections with 51% of the loan accounts belonging to SC/ST/OBC.

Table - 1
Shishu MUDRA Loan Sanctions under PMMY

Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Social Category	(Rs. in Crore)	(Rs. in Crore)	(Rs. in Crore)	(Rs. in Crore)	(Rs. in Crore)
General	35,163.69 (41.32)	47,171.25 (44.50)	74,816.03 (52.56)	86,660 (52.98)	52,164 (47.44)
SC	15,976.20 (18.77)	19,462.62 (18.36)	23,253.35 (16.34)	27,326 (16.71)	19,714 (17.93)
ST	3831.23 (4.50)	5,616.06 (5.30)	7,697.71 (5.41)	10,087 (6.17)	7,218 (6.57)
OBC	30,129.63 (35.41)	33,751.67 (31.84)	36,578.17 (25.69)	39,486 (24.14)	30,857 (28.06)
Total	85,100.75 (100)	106,001.60 (100)	142,345.26 (100)	163,559 (100)	109,953 (100)

Source: MUDRA Annual Reports of the respective Financial Years

Note: The figures in the parentheses represent the share of the percentage to the total.

Table I shows the Shishu Mudra loan availed under PMMY by different social categories. It shows that only 41.32 percent covers the loan sanction against the General category just after establishment of one year in 2016-17. Remaining 58.68 percent comprising 18.77%, 4.5% and 35.41% for SC, ST and OBC respectively, covers the loan sanction against weaker sections. The performance in 2017-18 is also almost the same as that of the 2016-17. In 2018-19 and 2019-20, the performance of the General category has slightly increased i.e. 52.56% and 52.98% respectively. In 2020-21, again the performance on weaker section has been increased i.e. upto 52.56%. It can be stated here that the Government tries to develop the weaker section by providing financial assistance for expanding their existing business or to start up their new business. It can also be concluded here that the people belonging to weaker section are also very much interested in showing their entrepreneurial ideas and business habits which in turn can add to the financial inclusion of the country.

Table - 2
Kishore MUDRA Loan Sanctions under PMMY

Year Social Category	2016-17 (Rs. in Crore)	2017-18 (Rs. in Crore)	2018-19 (Rs. in Crore)	2019-20 (Rs. in Crore)	2020-21 (Rs. in Crore)
General	40,820.62 (76.24)	66,477.31 (76.65)	78,947.67 (75.63)	67,332 (70.45)	94,426 (71.26)
SC	2,170.84 (4.05)	3,976.79 (4.59)	5,291.86 (5.07)	6,064 (6.35)	9,430 (7.12)
ST	1,030.01 (1.92)	1,794.64 (2.07)	2,352.70 (2.25)	2,828 (2.96)	4,344 (3.29)
OBC	9,523.67 (17.79)	14,483.42 (16.70)	17,794.45 (17.05)	19,354 (20.25)	24,317 (18.35)
Total	53,545.14 (100)	86,732.16 (100)	104,386.68 (100)	95,578 (100)	132,516 (100)

Source: MUDRA Annual Reports of the respective Financial Years

Note: The figures in the parentheses represent the share of the percentage to the total.

Table 2 shows Kishore MUDRA loan sanction among different sections. The table indicates that 76.24% loan was sanctioned for the General Category i.e. remaining 23.76% loan was sanctioned for weaker section in 2016-17. Among weaker sections, ST (1.92%) is the least performer followed by SC (4.05) in the same year. Again, the performance is the same in all the financial years. However, the table also shows that the performance has been increasing every year for SC (i.e. from 4.05% in 2016-17 to 7.12% in 2020-21) and ST (i.e. from 1.92% in 2016-17 to 3.29% in 2020-21). It can be stated here that the existing business run by SC and ST have been expanding resulting in the need for a higher amount of funds.

Table - III:

Tarun MUDRA Loan Sanctions under PMMY

Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Social Category	(Rs. in Crore)	(Rs. in Crore)	(Rs. in Crore)	(Rs. in Crore)	(Rs. in Crore)
General	36,600.85 (87.39)	53,976.53 (88.57)	66,365.45 (88.50)	69,620 (88.85)	69,353 (87.47)
SC	750.79 (1.79)	939 (1.54)	1,412.16 (1.88)	1,272 (1.62)	1,680 (2.12)
ST	411.50 (0.98)	589.71 (0.97)	1,003.14 (1.34)	879 (1.12)	1,168 (1.47)
OBC	4119.52 (9.84)	5,438.10 (8.92)	6,210.12 (8.28)	6,588 (8.41)	7,089 (8.94)
Total	41,882.66 (100)	60,943.34 (100)	74,990.86 (100)	78,359 (100)	79,290 (100)

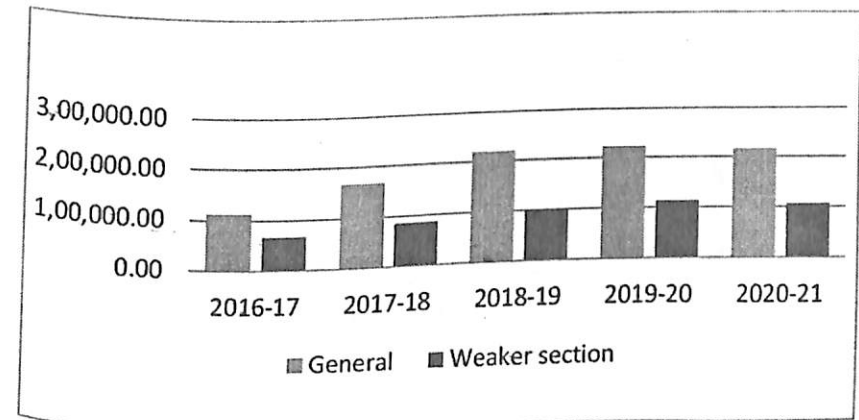
Source: MUDRA Annual Reports of the respective Financial Years

Note: The figures in the parentheses represent the share of the percentage to the total.

Table III shows Tarun MUDRA loan sanction being the highest amount of loan provided among different sections where the limit of assistance is more than Rs. 5 lakh and up to Rs 10 lakh. It shows that the assistance provided under PMMY towards Tarun MUDRA loan among weaker sections is very much least i.e. only 12% (approx) in all the years. So it can be concluded here that the weaker sections do less business whose capital requirement is within 5 lakh to 10 lakh.

Figure -1 shows the comparison of overall performance of PMMY towards the MUDRA loan sanctions between general and weaker sections. From the figure it is clear that the performance on weaker sections is comparatively less than the general category in all the years. The reason includes that the weaker section i.e. SC, ST and OBC are less interested in availing Kishor and Tarun Loan as already shown in Table II and Table III. This is the result for downward sloping of the overall graph.

Figure-1:
Comparison of MUDRA Loan Sanctions between General and Weaker Section



Source: MUDRA Annual Reports of the respective Financial Years

Table - 4

Trend percentage analysis of MUDRA loan Sanctions; taking 2016-17 as base year

Year Loan Category	2016-17 (Rs. in Crore)	2017-18 (Rs. in Crore)	2018-19 (Rs. in Crore)	2019-20 (Rs. in Crore)	2020-21 (Rs. in Crore)
Shishu	85,100.75 (100)	106,001.60 (124.56)	142,345.26 (167.27)	163,559 (192.19)	109,953 (129.20)
Kishor	53,545.14 (100)	86,732.16 (161.98)	104,386.68 (194.95)	95,578 (178.50)	132,516 (247.48)
Tarun	41,882.66 (100)	60,943.34 (145.51)	74,990.86 (179.05)	78,359 (187.09)	79,290 (189.31)
Total	1,80,528.55 (100)	253,677.10 (140.52)	321,722.80 (178.21)	337,496 (186.95)	321,759 (178.23)

Source: MUDRA Annual Reports of the respective Financial Years

Note: The figures in the parentheses represent the trend percentage by taking 2016-17 as base year

Table 4 shows trend percentage analysis of all categories of MUDRA loan sanction i.e. Shishu, Kishor and Tarun during different financial years. From the table it is clear that Kishor loan has been increasing rapidly. In 2020-21, it has become more than double the base period. The performance of Tarun and Shishu is also satisfactory as the trends of these two loans have also increased.

Figure-2:

Trend percentage analysis of MUDRA loan Sanctions

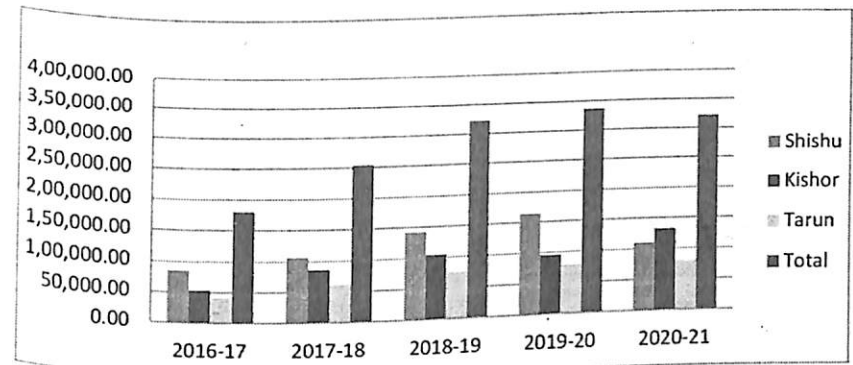


Table - 5
Category wise loan disbursed and weaker section beneficiaries under PMMY

CATEGORY	YEARLY AMOUNT DISBURSED IN CRORE (RS.)				
	2016-17 (Rs. in Crore)	2017-18 (Rs. in Crore)	2018-19 (Rs. in Crore)	2019-20 (Rs. in Crore)	2020-21 (Rs. in Crore)
Shishu	83,891.88 (47.85%)	104,228.05 (42.29%)	139,651.55 (45%)	162,813 (49%)	108,637 (35%)
Kishor	51,063.12 (29.13%)	83,197.09 (33.76%)	99,868 (32%)	91,427 (28%)	127,240 (41%)
Tarun	40,357.13 (23.02%)	59,012.25 (23.95%)	72,291.84 (23%)	75,475 (23%)	75,877 (24%)
Total	175,312.13 (100%)	246,437.39 (100%)	3,11,811.39 (100%)	3,29,715 (100%)	3,11,754 (100%)
Out of the Total, share of SC/ST/OBC	66,279.80 (37.81%)	83,686.97 (33.96%)	98,023.68 (31%)	1,12,029 (34%)	1,03,448 (33%)

Source: MUDRA Annual Reports of the respective Financial Years

Note: The figures in the parentheses represent the share of the percentage to the total.

Table 5 shows that 37.81% of the total amount of loan disbursed was made against weaker sections in 2016-17. Likewise 33.96%, 31%, 34% and 33% for 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively of the total loan disbursed were for weaker sections.

Findings:

It is found that 58.68%, 23.76% and 12.61% covers the loan sanction under Shishu, Kishor and Tarun respectively against the weaker section under PMMY in 2016-17.

It is also found that the trend of loan sanction has been increasing every year in all the categories of loans. By taking the year 2016-17 as base year it is seen in the case of Shishu loan that the trend has been upward to 192.19 in 2019-20. In 2020-21, the trend has further downfall to 129.2 but this is also higher than the base year. In the case of Kishor, it has been increasing continuously every year and in 2020-21 it goes to more than double the base year i.e. 247.48. In case of Tarun also it shows that the loan sanction has been going an upward upto 189.31 in 2020-21.

It is also found that Rs. 66,279.80 crore, Rs. 83,686.97 crore, Rs. 98,023.68 crore, Rs. 1,12,029 crore and Rs. 1,03,448 crore have been disbursed among weaker communities in 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively which is 37.81%, 33.96%, 31%, 34% and 33% of the respective year's total loan disbursed.

Conclusion:

Growth of the Non-Corporate Small Business Sector (NCSBS) will contribute to the rise of GDP in the country. The MUDRA scheme under PMMY has transformed the unfunded into funded, informal lending into formal lending and also created social as well as financial awareness among sections of societies. Further, PMMY contributes to the well being of the individuals engaged in the Non-Corporate Small Business

Sector which helps in the progress of our economy as a whole. The ways or measures under MUDRA have greatly increased the confidence of different young educated and skilled workers who are able to run the start up business and existing small businesses are able to expand their activities. Weaker sections have also been playing an important role in availing small amounts of funds under the Shishu loan scheme. As discussed above, it is seen that weaker sections are less interested or their performance is very much less in availing financial assistance of large amount i.e. Tarun and Kishor loan under PMMY. So it can be concluded here that such weaker sections particularly SC and ST should be made aware regarding management of large business and should be taught towards the mechanism of borrowing and application of these loans. The whole process will definitely add to the growth of financial inclusion of the country.

Footnotes:

- ¹ <https://www.MUDRA.org.in/AboutUs/Genesis>
- ² PMMY- Bank Wise performance, 2020-21

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Employment and Income Generation in informal Sector: An analytical study from Tinsukia Town, Assam

Dwimu Basumatary

Abstract:

Informal sector is important for earning income and poverty alleviation for some people in India. This helps in providing employment and income generation for the rural poor in the urban areas. Informal sector workers help in increasing large number of work force in the developing countries which is also helping in boosting economic development of a country. Informal sector or grey economy gave an opportunity to survive the unemployed people in different ways as the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat is gradually evolving in our country. The main motto of the Atmanirbhar Bharat is to make 'selfreliant India'. Global trends have shown that in order to achieve development, growth and expansion of economic contributions from each sector workers is needed. Out of total population in Tinsukia district of Assam 9.52% people reside in metropolitan regions (as per Census 2011). The mobility of human resource present in this area will contribute to socio-economic development of area. This study tries to find

out the practicality of employment and income generation by informal sector workers available in Tinsukia town.

Keywords:

Income and employment, informal sector, hawkers, artisans, daily labourer, street vendors, economic and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Introduction

Source of income is very essential for daily livelihood. It means that to survive we must earn something for daily expenses whether the sources of income are from formal or informal sector. The informal sector represents a part of the economy and the labour market in many countries, especially in developing countries, plays a major role in employment creation, production and income generation. The informal sector means that production and distribution of goods and service by the operating unit of households, which is different from the formal sector in terms of technology, economics of scale, use of intensive process and virtual absence of well- maintained account. In terms of employment share the unorganized sector employs 83% of the work force and 17% in the organized sector. There are 92.4% informal workers with no written contract, paid leave and other benefits in the economy. The informal sector represents a portion of economic activity especially in developing and transition countries.

In informal sector economic activities like daily labour, street vending, hawkers and artisans are one of the most important parts. In cities, towns, villages throughout the world, crores of people earn their living wholly or partly by selling different goods and services. The study focuses on the home base workers which form an important part of the informal sector in India. A survey was conducted to gather data for identifying the employment and income generation of informal sector workers in Tinsukia town.

Review of Literature:

Unni and Rani (2000) provided evidence of the growing informalisation of the labour force in South Asian countries.

Kapunda and Mmolawa (2007) prepared a research on "The Role of Informal Sector and Self-employment in Poverty Alleviation in Botswana" with the main objectives of finding the contribution of the informal sector in income generation and employment.

Heinonen (2008) analysed the hidden role of informal economy in Phnom Penh's development. Study found that the informal economy acts as a crucial part of the economy for development, providing employment and income.

Dipak Bahadur Adhikari (2011) states that, the informal activities like street vendors gives a helping hand on economic development and can be brought under the legality, and if the taxes can be collected it will groom as one of the best forms of entrepreneurship that make sizeable contribution of the economy.

Research Methodology:

The study was carried out as a descriptive one. Both primary and secondary data, a convenient sampling method was followed. Primary data are collected from a sample of 100 respondents belonging to different informal sector workers working in Tinsukia town. Secondary data which are used for the purpose of analysis are taken from various published sources of books, journals, newspapers, various websites and other related publications.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out whether the informal sector works act as a source of income to the residents of Tinsukia town.
2. Access the average income that informal sectors provide to the unemployed people of Tinsukia town.
3. Investigate problems faced by the informal workers at Tinsukia town.

4. To know satisfaction level of informal workers with the work.

Scope of the study

This study explores employment status of the people working in different informal sector works and satisfactions and problems faced by them and whether they can fulfil their basic things in life with this work. The targeted people are working in different informal sectors like street vendors, hawkers, artisans and daily labour working in Tinsukia town.

Significance of the study:

Despite India boasting economic growth rates higher than most developed countries in recent years, a majority of the country's population is still unemployed or dependent on the informal sector works. Global trends have shown that in order to develop and grow, all round performance by each individual is of utmost importance. Empirical evidence shows that all round performance is needed for better development of the country. To have an inclusive growth we need to bring the under developed region of the country with the developed region. So, participation of individuals is a must in different activities for all round development, which creates opportunity to the people and raises standard of living. The present study is useful to find out the people engaged in different informal sector works and whether informal sector works avail to create source of income in Tinsukia town.

Limitations of the study:

The study undertaken by the researcher suffers the following limitations:

1. The study has been conducted during a very short span of time.
2. The results may vary according to the opinion expressed by the respondents.

The study is restricted to Tinsukia town area only.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Table 1: Respondent's nature of work involved in

Nature of work	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Street vendor	35	35
Daily labourer	40	40
Hawker	10	10
Artisan	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: *Primary data*

The above table 1 shows that (35%) respondents are street vendors, (40%) are daily labour, (10%) are hawkers and (15%) are artisans.

Table 2: Locality area of respondents

Locality	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	67	67
No	33	33
Total	100	100

Source: *Primary Data*

It is clear from the table 2 that majority of the respondents (67%) are from locality areas and other remaining (33%) are from different places.

Table 3: Respondents working year

Working Year	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 year	20	20
Up to 5 years	15	15
Up to 10 years	25	25
More than 10 years	40	40
Total	100	100

Source: *Primary Data*

From the above table 3 it is found that (20%) respondents have been working from less than 1 year, (15%) respondents working from the last 5 years, (25%) respondents have been working from last 10 years and remaining (40%) respondents have been working from the more than 10 years and more.

Table 4: Daily wages of respondents

Daily Wages(In Rs)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Less than Rs 300	17	17
Rs 300	28	28
More than Rs 300	55	55
Total	100	100

Source: *Primary Data*

Note: Rs 300 has set as a standard rate for daily wages.

From the above table 4 it is clear that (17%) respondents are earning less than Rs 300 in a day and (28%) respondents are getting around Rs 300 in a day and other (55%) respondents are getting more than Rs 300 in a day.

Table 5: Respondents any other sources

Other source of Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	3	3
No	97	97
Total	100	100

Source: *Primary Data*

From the above table 5 it is found that only (3%) respondents have other sources of income other than what he/she working and rest (97%) respondents are dependent only on their work.

Table 6: Respondents satisfaction with work

Work satisfaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Okay with it	52	52
Full satisfaction	10	10
Not at all	38	38
Total	100	100

Source: *Primary Data*

From the above table 6 it is found that (52%) respondents are okay with their work, (10%) respondents are fully satisfied and other remaining (38%) are not satisfied at all.

Table 7: Respondents choosing for work

Reason for work	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Family Tradition	7	7
It gives better income/ higher profit than other product or services	5	5
More stable return than other product and services	3	3
Financial problems	85	85
Total	100	100

Source: *Primary Data*

From the above table 7 it is found that (85%) respondents have chosen work due to financial crisis. Others remaining are due to various reasons.

Table 8: Respondents satisfaction with income

Satisfaction with Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	40	40
No	60	60
Total	100	100

Source: *Primary Data*

From the above table 8 it is found that (40%) respondents are satisfied with the income and (60%) respondents are not satisfied with the income.

Table 9: Problems/difficulties faced by respondents

Difficulties	Yes	No	Total/ Percentage
Raw materials	15(25)	45(75)	60(100)
Lack of customer	45(75)	15(25)	60(100)
Sale of products	47(78.3)	13(21.7)	60(100)
Financial difficulties	37(61.7)	23(38.3)	60(100)
Organisation difficulties	20(33.3)	40(66.7)	60(100)

Source: *Primary Data*

Note: This data is only for street vendors and hawkers and artisans. The figures in the parentheses represent the share of the percentage to the total.

From the above table 9 it is found that (25%) respondents are facing problem in supply of raw materials. (75%) Respondents are facing problem for lack of buyers, (78.3%) respondents are facing keen competition and (61.7) respondents are facing financial problem and (33.3) respondents are facing problem with the management committee.

Table 10: Problems/difficulties faced by respondents

Problems or difficulties	Yes	No	Total/ Percentage
Getting work regularly	25(62.5)	15(37.5)	40(100)
Getting payment regularly	15(37.5)	25(62.5)	40(100)
Excess or available labour	30(75)	10(25)	40(100)
Lack of skill	10(25)	30(75)	40(100)
Other	3(7.5)	37(92.5)	40(100)

Source: *Primary Data*

Note: This data is only for daily labourers. The figures in the parentheses represent the share of the percentage to the total.

From the above table 10 it is found that (62.5%) respondents are facing problems in getting regular work, (37.5%) respondents are on regular payment, (75%) respondents are for excess labour and (25%) respondents are due to lack of skills and (3%) respondents are due to other reasons.

Findings:

1. This study reveals that informal sector work does act as income and employment generation in Tinsukia town.
2. Study found that majority of the respondents (85%) enters to the informal work due to financial crisis.
3. Through the analysis it is found that (40%) respondents are satisfied with the income and other (60%) respondents are not satisfied with the income.
4. The analysis found that (52%) respondents are okay with their work. Only (10%) respondents are satisfied with their work and other remaining (38%) are not satisfied at all.
5. From the analysis it is found that (40%) respondents have been working from last 10 years and more. And

other remaining respondents are also following the same.

6. From the analysis it is found that (35%) respondents are ready to leave the work and (65%) respondents are not sure due to family wholly dependent on them.
7. From the analysis it is found that informal sector workers are facing various problems in their respective workplace. For example street vendors are facing keen competitions, daily labourers are facing problem in getting regular payment and work etc.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

Employment and income generation is a fundamental cornerstone of economic and social development. There are many people who are not in formal sector work. It is observed that informal sector works help the people to earn some money for daily livelihood. The informal sector workers must have to be brought under the purview of Government and Committees for informal sector for the uplift of these people. If every person in the society is engaged in some work than only society can become economically strong and independent. A financially independent society can be possible only if every section of the society is engaged in some work and the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat will become true. From the above study, it is concluded that, yes informal sector does act as an employment and income generation in the Tinsukia town or among the society and this can be more enhanced by giving more importance to them.

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Socio-Economic Development Through Broom Stick Cultivation: A Study Among Farmers in Amri and Chinthong Blocks of West Karbi Anglong District of Assam

Lovin Kro

Abstract

Socio-economic development is the process of development in human society with regard to the society and economic aspects. There exists an inter-relationship between the two which cannot be discarded. Development in a society is impossible until and unless there is an economic independence in the society. Until recent years, broom stick has been mistakenly taken as a landscape plant. Understanding its economic benefits in the past few years broom has attracted many farmers to undertake the farming on a commercial basis. This study therefore, aims to understand and study the socio-economic development of the broom farmers in Amri and Chinthong blocks of West Karbi Anglong District in Assam.

Keywords:

Socio-economic development, society, economic, broom cultivation, farmers

Introduction

The term socio-economic development is derived from two inevitable components of development process, i.e. 'Social' and 'Economic'. Socio-economic development is a key concept to any problem of change in the socio-economic sphere (Chojnicki, 2010)¹. Socio economic development concept generally incorporates those changes in the society which are of economic in nature. Study of economic phenomena and process is inevitable without taking social aspects into consideration. This interconnection is not new. In principle, the concept of development rests on that of change. Change, whereby is the process of transition from one phase to another. Based on this principle, development can be defined as a series of changes characterised by properties such as irreversibility, spontaneity and a monotonic character (Krajewski, 1977:26). According to Fritz (2004)², socio-economic development emphasizes the progress in terms of economic and social factors within a geographic unit, wherein he further defines economic development as the process of raising the level of prosperity through increased production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Social development on the other hand, refers to the complexity of social dynamics and focus on 1) social concerns of the people as objectives of development and 2) people centred participatory approach to development. Social development therefore, is an inclusive concept and indicates the income, poverty, employment, employment security, education, health, crime and civic participation of the society. Richard Estes (2010)³ noted environment as one of the indicators of social development. Based on extensive literature research social scientists define socio-economic development as "a process of quantitative, qualitative and structural changes that are a result of actions of subjects within social (economic) practice. These changes influence life conditions in the following fields: material

conditions (possibility to satisfy needs associated with consumption of goods and services; it is related with the phenomena of economic growth), economic structure and entrepreneurship, access to public goods and services (that results in changes of educational level, way of taking care of someone's health etc.), relation within social system (integration between individuals, trust, security, social conflicts), environment condition and life satisfaction (Stemplowski, 1987; Chojnicki, 2010; UNDP, 2012, Bellu, 2011).

Broom grass (*Thysanolaena Maxima*) or Tiger grass is a unique gift of nature, an eco friendly product which every home uses every day. It has been mistakenly taken as a landscape plant until recent years when few farmers started its cultivation on a large scale commercially. It is an eco friendly product because the shrubs or the stems of the brooms are used as fuel and fodder after the harvest. The magic about this plant is that it can even sustain in a nutrient deficient soil in hill slopes. Therefore broom grass plantation can be carried out in degraded forests in order to cope with soil erosion and to sustain land management. It is one of such crops which gives maximum revenue with minimum cost. Apart from producing domestic soft brooms, the use of broom grass is extensive.

Table No.1
Uses of Broom Grass (Thysanoleana Maxima)

Authors	Usage
Rai, 2003	Medicine-roots used in bronchitis, skin boils
Mahato & Chaudhury, 2005	Athelmintic, anti- microbial
Jana & Chauhan, 2000	Flatulence
Maity et al., 2000	Flowers in rheumatic pain and skin swelling
Khisa et al., 1999	Weed suppressor
Bhuchar, 2008	Support stake for trailing crops, reedpens
Ramm Botanicals, 2009	Land scape and ornamental purposes
Bisht & Ahlawat, 1998	Mulching and roofing materials
Srijumpa, 2002	Wrapper for steamed foods; substrate for cultivation of oyster mushroom
Fetalvero et al., 2011	Dyed pinnacles in carnival costumes and decorative extenders

Kaushik & Kumar, 2014: Broom Grass- The wonder plant at glance; MANJARI, Oct, 2014

Broom grass can cope with almost all types of soil and prefer full sunlight even though they tolerate shade. The plantation process starts with clearing off the jungles adopting slash and burnt method generally during the month of January. Plantation is done by seeds or by propagating the rhizomes. Plantation is usually carried out during rainy season preferably during the month of April and May. Farmers generally adopt multiple farming during the first year of its cultivation. This helps the broom grow more efficiently. On its maturity, broom

grass produce a purple flower resembling a tassels or corn. It hardly requires a month for the flower to get mature and thereafter can be harvested. According to the farmers, the quality of the broom stick depends upon the period of plucking and so is the price. Too much matured broom flowers are of the least quality and do not fetch much price. Farmers generally segregate their produce accordingly and sell them.

Table No.2
Different Quality of Brooms, its harvesting period and price fetched

Quality	Plucking/ Harvesting Period	Price Fetched (on Average Per KG)
1 st Grade	Within January	Above Rs 60
2 nd Grade	Last week January- 2 nd week February	Rs. 30- 40
3 rd Grade	After 2 nd week of February	Below Rs. 20

Source: Field Interview

Production of brooms even though less, starts during the first year of plantation itself. Major production starts from the 2nd year of plantation and remains almost stable for 3-4 years and will start to decline. During this period the matured stems are to be cleared so as to enable the new buds come up. Bisht and Ahlawat (1998)⁴ has made a study on the yield of broom grass and found that maximum production takes place during the 3-4 year of plantation as follows.

	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year
No. of culms per tussock	13-25	54-78	213-275	170-205
Av. Height of tussock (m)	1.56	2.38	3.26	3.10
Av. Inflorescence of length (m)	0.95	1.13	1.23	1.15
Av. Dry matter production tons/ha	5.41	8.9	10.4	9.2

Review of Literature

There exists a substantial amount of literature on the concept of socio-economic development. A few literatures relevant to this study have been reviewed and presented below.

James Midgley (1994) noted that the inter-relationship between social interventions and economic activities is not new. Midgley has cited various examples in support of his comment. For instance, in late 1800s volunteer workers of the Charity Organisation Society in England helped impoverished clients find employment or start small business. Likewise, US President Franklin Roosevelt's massive recovery programme (the New Deal of 1930s) adopted John Maynard Keynes' idea to intervene to promote economic growth and development.

Sztompka (2002) identified two additional properties that differentiate developmental process from other target oriented process. They are: a) the direction of the process is positive, i.e, with time there is an increase in the level of variables or a set of variables in terms of which we consider the process and b) a directional sequence of social changes is set in motion, driven by intra-social mechanism.

Chojnicki & Czyz (2004) conclude that, socio-economic development is made up of processes caused by exo and endogenous factors which determines the course and direction of the development. They have also noted that socio-economic processes do not work in isolation from other processes and that usually they are preceded by or are consequences of other processes.

Pointek, (2010) observes that despite the presence of number of literature and approaches in defining the term development, there is no consensus on this issue. Development is a multi-dimensional process of change.

Tiwari, B.K., et al. (2012) have carried out a study on the growth pattern, production and marketing of *Thysanolaena maxima* (Roxb.) Kuntze, in the state of Meghalaya. Their study

highlighted the ever increasing demand of broom grass and therefore, the cultivation, processing and marketing of the broom grass are economically viable in the state of Meghalaya. The study further observes that broom grass farming is a possible means for rural development because broom grass cultivation requires minimum inputs and labour but in turn generates very attractive economic returns.

The impact of broom grass cultivation on the socio economic aspects on the people of Arunachal Pradesh has been carried out by Bhuyan (2014). The study reported that broom grass cultivation has reduced the dependence of people on forest in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Lapasam & Tiwari's (2015) study on "Effect of Plant Density on Economic Return from *Thysanolaena maxima* (Roxb) Kuntze (Broom Grass) Plantation in Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya, India" suggest that plantation raised at the density of 3333 plants/ha gave the highest net present value of Rs. 126199.8 ha per year. The study recommended the density of 3333 plants/ha (1.5x2.0m spacing) for optimum economic return.

Survey on the relevant literature reveals that no study has so far been carried out in order to study the socio-economic development of broom stick farmers in Amri and Chinthong blocks of West Karbi Anglong district of Assam. This study will therefore shed light on this particular area of knowledge and bridge the gap that exists in the present literature.

Significance of study

Broom grass has emerged as one of the most widely cultivated cash crops in the hill district of Karbi Anglong. Locally known as "Arphek" (in local Karbi dialect) and commonly known as "phool jharu" is grown in the jhum fallow by the Karbi, Tiwa and Khasi communities as mixed crop for its inflorescences that are used for making brooms. Brooms are required in each and every household every day. Therefore the

demand for brooms is obviously high. The plantation process is quite easy and requires considerably less financial inputs. In the current scenario, where unemployment is booming everywhere, coupled with degrading land form broom stick can be one of the avenues for generating income especially in a backward and hilly district like West Karbi Anglong. The erstwhile undivided Karbi Anglong happens to be the largest producer of brooms in India⁵ catering to billions of household nationally and internationally. Brooms produced in West Karbi Anglong are exported even to African countries by Mumbai based Silpa Export with the support from Kolkata based middlemen after procuring from the farmers here⁶. Broom grass farming therefore, has the potential to generate local employment and can be used to enhance rural economy. In Amri and Chinthong blocks, broom farming is being done extensively and constitutes major source of income for many households. Only a handful of people work as government servants and majority of the people depend for their livelihood on agriculture. Moreover, majority of the land comprises of hilly terrains, there exists very less land meant for paddy cultivation which forces the people there to be dependent on forest. Hence, most of the people in recent years have taken up broom cultivation as their source of livelihood. Most of the produce is sold in the neighbouring state Meghalaya.

This study therefore is an attempt to understand as to what extent broom farming has contributed towards the socio-economic development of its farmers. This study will help prospective farmers to know more about broom grass farming and its economic importance and encourage them to take up broom grass farming as a source of livelihood especially in the rural areas.

Objectives of the study

The study has been done by keeping the following objectives in mind:

1. To study about the broom farming in Amri and Chinthong blocks of West Karbi Anglong District
2. To study about the socio-economic development of farmers engaged in broom stick farming.

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive and quantitative in nature. The two selected blocks i.e. Amri and Chinthong development blocks are considered to be the least developed blocks in West Karbi Anglong District. To fulfil the objectives of the study, primary data have been used. A sample of 60 farmers whose cultivation area is more than 1 hectare is selected by adopting convenience sampling method. A well structured schedule has been prepared and an interview has been conducted with each farmer.

Findings and Discussion

There are various driving forces which make farmers to take up broom grass cultivation as their occupation. Keeping this in view Table No.1 below shows the different reasons why farmers take up this occupation. As evident from the table the main reason for undertaking broom farming is to enhance their earning. All of the farmers (100%) responded to this. Following enhancement of income, unemployment happens to be the driving force in undertaking this occupation. At total of 40 respondents i.e. 66.66% responded to this. Another 35 respondents (58.33%) do not have paddy for cultivation of crops and are dependent on broom farming for their livelihood. 15 respondents (25%) have taken up this occupation as they have surplus farm land.

Table No.1
Reasons for adopting Broom farming

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Non availability of paddy fields	35	58.33
To enhance income	60	100
Surplus farm land	15	25
Unemployment	40	66.66

Table No.2
Type of Farming

Type of farming	Frequency	Percentage
Household Activity	60	100
Under SHG/NGO	0	0
Under Government Project	0	0

Table No. 2 provides the type of farming undertaken by the farmers. As seen from the table all the farming i.e. 100% is undertaken by respective household of the farmers. None of the cultivation has been undertaken under any SHGs/NGOs nor there any government project in the study area. So the cultivation in the study area is a household enterprise.

In order to know the type of land ownership by the broom stick cultivators, a question has been incorporated in the questionnaire and as evident from the table no. 3 below, majority of the farmers i.e. 95% cultivates on their own land. None of the land is under joint ownership or under lease. 3 of the respondents i.e. 5% of them do the cultivation in government forest.

Table No.3
Type of land ownership

Type of land ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Own	57	95
Joint ownership	0	0
Lease	0	0
Government forest	03	5

Broom farmers generally do mix farming in the initial years of plantation. Mixed farming is done in order to control the weed which would otherwise hamper the growth of the tender broom sticks. Farmers discontinue mixed farming from the following years. Keeping this in mind, questions have been asked

to the farmers as to what farming do they do along with the broom during the first year of cultivation. The responses are shown in table no. 4 below. As evident from the table majority of the farmers i.e. 56.66%, prefer to cultivate paddy along with broom. 15% of the respondents say that they exclusively cultivate broom, another 13.33 % responded that along with broom they cultivate black sesame and similarly another 8 respondents i.e. 13.33% of them cultivate ginger along with broom, whereas 1 respondent cultivates turmeric as a mixed plantation.

Table No.4
Types of mixed farming undertaken during first year of plantation

Types of mixed farming undertaken	Frequency	Percentage
Only Broom	09	15
Broom and Paddy	34	56.66
Broom and Black sesame	08	13.33
Broom and turmeric	01	1.66
Broom and ginger	08	13.33

To study the economic benefits derived from broom farming various questions have been asked to the respondents. Accordingly, the responses are depicted in Table No. 5 below. Majority of the respondents i.e. 54 respondents (90%) could buy household assets like furniture, utensil, TV, fridge, etc. 40 respondents, i.e. 66.66% of them could send their children to good schools, college and even universities. Another 32 respondents, i.e. 53.33% have built own house out of the proceeds from broom farming. Another 15 farmers, i.e. 25% could buy vehicles and 21 farmers, i.e. 35% of the farmers say that they have invested on their health care. From the table and discussion it is evident that, broom farming has made the farmers economically stronger and has a positive impact on the society.

Table No.5
Major Benefits derived from broom farming

Benefits derived	Frequency	Percentage
Build House	32	53.33
Buy household assets (Furnitures, utensils, TV, Fridges, etc.)	54	90
Buy Vehicles	15	25
Investment on healthcare	21	35
Children education	40	66.66

Table No.6 shows the number and percentage of farmers who save money that they get from broom stick sales. As evident, majority of the farmers, 40 all together, i.e. 66.67% do keep their money as savings for future. However, 20 farmers, i.e. 33.33% do not keep their savings.

Table No.6
Whether farmers make any savings and investment from the sale proceeds

Whether savings made or not	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	66.67
No	20	33.33
Total	60	100

Scope of further study

As evident from the findings and discussion of the study, farmers have derived huge economic benefits from broom farming. As Midgley (1994) noted the significant inter-connection between social development and economic activities, the same has been established in this study. This study limits itself to the extent of socio-economic development of broom stick farmers. Further study can be carried out to know the actual change in the socio-economic aspects of the farmers considering

the past and present economic conditions. Understanding their problems in production and marketing challenges faced by the farmers can be other avenues where further research can be carried out. There is a further need to evaluate the impact of large scale cultivation of broom grass on environment, ground level water depletion and soil conservation so as to maintain a balance without having a negative impact.

Conclusion

A society cannot develop until and unless there is an economic independence and this phenomenon is universal and not new. Midgley (1994) has observed this and noted the relationship between social development and economic activities. This study observes and concludes that broom farming has brought tremendous change in the socio-economic aspects of the farmers in Amri and Chinthong Blocks of West Karbi Anglong District. Broom farmers could build house for themselves, buy vehicles, invest on their health care and children education and they could save some surplus amount in case of a few farmers. This indicates that, the standard of living of the broom stick farmers has also been raised.

Footnotes:

- ¹ Chojnicki, Z., 2010: Socio Economic Development and Its Anxiological Aspects, Quaestiones Geographicae 29 (2), Adam Mickiewicz University Press, Poznan, 2010, pp. 7-17. ISBN 978-83-232-2168-5. ISSN 0137-477X. DOI 10.2478/v10117-010-0010-9.
- ² Fritz, J. (2004): Socio-economic developmental social work. In UNESCO Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems, A project on sustainable world development. Oxford: UNESCO-EOLSS.
- ³ Hongkong Social Report, 2010
- ⁴ Bisht, N.S, & Ahlawat, S.P. (1998), Broom Grass, SFRI Technical Bulletin No.6. State Forest Research Institute, Itanagar
- ⁵ Konwar, R.R, 2013: The Hindu; Sweeping the Hillside.

<https://www.thehindu.com/features/magazine/sweeping-the-hill-side/article4840601.ece>

⁶ <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/hamren-broom-sweeps-away-all-competition/cid/1429099>

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Impact of Strategic Management on Competitive Advantage of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises With Special Reference to Tinsukia District of Assam

Ankit Sen

Abstract:

The ability to predict future demand is a need that businesses work towards irrespective of their size. Creating a favourable competitive stance for firm's output is also a crucial goal of businesses. These two goals are of particular importance for enterprises operating in an environment characterized by rapid changes, shortened lead-times, and exponential innovative activities. Building upon previous research into competitive advantage, this paper reports the findings of a qualitative study that investigated how competitive advantage is assessed, created and maintained in small enterprises. The research work has been carried out by taking samples in Tinsukia District, Assam. This study is undertaken which helps to underline the importance of various determinants which may help the MSME units to improve competitiveness by implementing effective competitive strategies. This study is a result of extended research on competitiveness and provides an instrument to measure firm

ability to be competitive. CEOs, managers and policy makers from industries as well as government will be able to use this to evaluate their competitive positioning and identify key problem areas which require improvements. To carry out this study, the researchers decided to take the sample size as 90. This was done by keeping the confidence level at 85%, with a margin of error of 4%. The samples have been selected on the basis of simple random technique of probability sampling. Majority of the firms evaluate specific elements at their firm for customer satisfaction and profitability.

Keywords:

Competitive advantage, strategic management, core competencies, micro small and medium enterprises.

Introduction:

Competitive advantages are conditions that allow a company or country to produce a good or service of equal value at a lower price or in a more desirable fashion. These conditions allow the productive entity to generate more sales or superior margins compared to its market rivals. Competitive advantages are attributed to a variety of factors including cost structure, branding, the quality of product offerings, the distribution network, intellectual property and customer service. Competitive advantage is a set of unique features of a company and its products that are perceived by the target market as significant and superior to the competition. It is the reason behind brand loyalty, and why one prefers one product or service over another. There are three different types of competitive advantages that companies can actually use. They are cost, product/service differentiation, and niche strategies. The sources of the advantage are known as core competencies.

Core competencies imply that the organization has an advantage that is distinct and unique to that particular firm. The organization usually has a brand or patent which separates

it from the competition. For example, Pepsi is a known brand and recognized as one of the top cola companies. Through media and conversation, society has participated in the ongoing battle between Coca Cola and Pepsi. There are certain attributes for each product, which is why each product has developed a loyal customer base.

Michael Porter, a graduate of Harvard University, wrote a book in 1985 which identified three strategies that businesses can use to tackle competition. This book was named the ninth most influential management book of the 20th century. These approaches can be applied to all businesses whether they are product-based or service-based. He called these approaches generic strategies. They include cost leadership, differentiation, and focus. These strategies have been created to improve and gain a competitive advantage over competitors. These strategies can also be recognized as the comparative advantage and the differential advantage.

Core competencies are part of the corporate identity; they form the foundation of corporate competitiveness. The competitiveness of a company is based on the ability to develop core competencies. A core competency is, for example, a specialized knowledge, technique, or skill. To sustain leadership in a chosen core competency area, companies should seek to maximize their competency factors in the core products like being important in positioning its values, distinctive (differentiated), superior, communicable (visibility), unique, affordable, and profitable. When a company achieves this goal, it allows it to shape the evolution of an end market. Prahalad and Hamel (1990).

The operational model for managing corporate reputation and image of Gray and Balmer (1998) proposes that corporate identity, communication, image, and reputation the fundamental components of the process of creating competitive advantage. Corporate identity through corporate

communication creates corporate image and reputation, with an end result of competitive advantage. Corporate identity is the reality of an organization. It refers to the distinct characteristics or core competencies of the organization. It is the mental picture of the company held by its audiences. Corporate communication refers to all the official and informal communication sources, through a variety of media, by which the company outsources its identity to its audiences or stakeholders. Corporate communication is the bridge between corporate identity and corporate image or reputation.

The business environment and scenario has changed considerably with the opening out of the economies. Development of business activities, competition and markets on worldwide basis is generally referred to as globalization. In economic terms, globalization is referred to as the increasing interdependence between national economies and markets (Stonehouse et al, 2004). Globalization brings both opportunities and challenges; it liberates and constrains; it creates the largest markets ever known and allows the potential players to be smaller than ever (Kourdi, 2003).

In any multi-product manufacturing scenario, profitability on a long-term basis is a function of product mix. Moreover, existing demand and/or capacity do not always coincide with or guarantee maximum profitability. Comprehensive analysis of current as well as foreseeable business scenarios, balanced against capacity, capability, plus investment, can help manufacturers optimize their product mix, prioritize their sales / marketing efforts to minimize risk and maximize profitability on a long-term basis. The strategy of the firm has to be so designed that there is a proper fit between external opportunities and internal strengths, while working around external threats as well as internal weaknesses. A competitive advantage exists when a firm has a product or service that is perceived by its target market customers as better than that of its competitors (Dess et al, 2005).

The magnitude of a firm's competitive advantage is the difference between the perceived value created and the costs to produce the good or service compared to its direct competitors. If the economic value created is greater than that of its competitors, the firm has a competitive advantage; if it is equal to the competitors, the firms are said to have competitive parity; and if it lower than its rival firms, the firm has a competitive disadvantage (Rothaermel, 2008).

The essence of strategy is choosing to perform activities differently than rivals do. Strategic competition can be thought of as the process of perceiving new positions that woo customers from established positions or draw new customers into the market. Strategic positions can be based on customers' needs, customers' accessibility, or the varieties of a company's products or services. A firm's probability of success depends whether its business strengths not only match the key success requirements for operating in the target market, but also exceed those of its competitors (Dash & Das, 2010).

The role of limitability of competitive advantages for long-term growth prospects of businesses. The adoption of strong brand image and technological innovation in various business processes for the sources of competitive advantage, because of higher levels of sustainability of such sources of competitive advantage due to their difficulty being imitated by competitors. (Boone and Kurtz, 2013).

The change in customer needs and emergence of new customer needs as potential sources of competitive advantage. Although, this idea seems appropriate in theoretical level, do not justify this opinion by mentioning relevant examples from real-life business world. (Loudon et al., 2010). Changes in government regulations are mentioned by as an opportunity to gain competitive advantage by certain private entities. Specifically, introduction of tariffs for the import of certain products in order to support local manufacturers, thus providing

cost advantages to local manufacturers to compete with foreign multinational corporations. (Ginter, 2013). The growth of MSME's was increased from year by year with an average number of registered units in MSME sector. They identified small scale sector problems as relating to man power, lack of credit assistance, organized marketing, inadequate infrastructure, competition, poor planning, managerial skills, transportation facilities, lack of power, lack of warehousing facilities, lack of information etc (Sangita G. Patil & P.T. Chaudhari, 2014). The suggestion that firms must implement dynamic and innovative strategies does not take into account whether the firm has the ability to enhance its activities in pursuit of more complex and advantageous strategies. Hence, even small and medium manufacturing industries must respond by adopting more innovation to establish or sustain competitive advantage in the marketplace (Abd Aziz and Samad, 2016).

Theoretical Framework - Resource-Based Theory

The theory upon which this study hinges upon is the resource-based theory of the firm which combines concepts from organizational economics and strategic management (Barney, 1991). In this theory, the competitive advantage and superior performance of an organization is explained by the distinctiveness of its capabilities (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 2008). The resource-based view (RBV) as a basis for the competitive advantage of a firm lies primarily in the application of a bundle of valuable tangible or intangible resources at the firm's disposal (Wernerfelt, 1984; Rumelt, 1984; Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1995). To transform a short-run competitive advantage into a sustained competitive advantage requires that these resources are heterogeneous in nature and not perfectly mobile. Effectively, this translates into valuable resources that are neither perfectly imitable nor substitutable without great effort (Barney, 1991). A resource-based view of a

firm explains its ability to deliver sustainable competitive advantage when resources are managed such that their outcomes cannot be imitated by competitors, which ultimately creates a competitive barrier (Mahoney and Pandian 1992). RBV explains that a firm's sustainable competitive advantage is reached by virtue of unique resources being rare, valuable, inimitable, non-tradable, and non-substitutable, as well as firm specific. (Barney 1999)

Literature Review

Ansoff (1984) states that strategic management is "a systematic approach to a major and increasingly important responsibility of general management to position and relate the firm to its environment in a way that will assure its continued success and make it secure from surprises". In this definition the emphasis is on the environment-organisation relationship for the purpose of achieving the objective of continued success and remaining protected from environmental surprises through the adoption of a systematic approach to general management.

Sharplin (1985) defines strategic management as "the formulation and implementation of plans and carrying out of activities relating to the matters which are of vital, pervasive or continuing importance to the total organisation". This is an all-encompassing view of strategic management and considers all plans and activities which are important for an organisation.

Harrison and St. John (1998) define strategic management as "the process through which organisations analyze and learn from their internal and external environments, establish strategic direction, create strategies that are intended to help achieve established goals, and execute these strategies, all in an effort to satisfy key organizational stakeholders".

Loudon et al. (2010) propose changes in customer needs and emergence of new customer needs as potential sources of competitive advantage. Although, this idea seems appropriate in theoretical level, Loudon et al. (2010) do not justify this opinion by mentioning relevant examples from real-life business world.

Boone and Kurtz (2013) discuss the role of limitability of competitive advantages for long-term growth prospects of businesses. Boone and Kurtz (2013) propose that low-order competitive advantages such as cost advantage can be imitated by competitors with access to cheaper resources. Boone and Kurtz (2013) recommend the adoption of strong brand image and technological innovation in various business processes for the sources of competitive advantage, because of higher levels of sustainability of such sources of competitive advantage due to their difficulty being imitated by competitors.

Changes in government regulations are mentioned by Ginter (2013) as opportunity to gain competitive advantage by certain private entities. Specifically, Ginter (2013) refers to introduction of tariffs for the import of certain products in order to support local manufacturers, thus providing cost advantages to local manufacturers to compete with foreign multinational corporations.

Sangita G. Patil & P. T. Chaudhari (2014) say that growth of MSMEs was increased from year by year with an average number of registered units in MSME sector. They identified small scale sector problems as relating to man power, lack of credit assistance, organized marketing, inadequate infrastructure, competition, poor planning, managerial skills, transportation facilities, lack of power, lack of warehousing facilities, lack of information etc

Gisha P. Mathai (2015) say that problems faced by SMEs are SMEs in India are facing problems relating to lack of credit facilities from banks, infrastructure problems, unavailability of raw materials, lack of technology, lack of training, lack of skills both managerial and technical, lack of laws pertaining to labour, competition from large companies etc. They had given some suggestions in their article relating to challenges as implementing training and development awareness programs, research and development facilities, meeting consultants etc.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted in one of the urban areas of North-East India viz. Tinsukia, Assam. The study is empirical in nature and it has been conducted in order to know how far the entrepreneurs are able to produce good quality products and face intense competition in the market keeping in view the competitive environment. For this, the objectives of the Research Work are as follows:

1. To develop a conceptual framework for systematic measurement of firm's competitiveness in the said area of the study.
2. To analyze the overall surface areas of firms operating in various micro, small and medium enterprises.

Methodology of the study

Research design, study area and sampling

This study is based on descriptive research design to analyse various determinants which may help the MSME units to improve competitiveness by implementing effective competitive strategies. To carry out this study, the researchers decided to take the sample size as 90. This was done by keeping the confidence level at 85%, with a margin of error of 4%. The samples have been selected on the basis of simple random sampling technique of probability sampling. Simple random sampling is defined as a sampling technique where every item in the population has an even chance and likelihood of being selected in the sample. Here the selection of items entirely depends on luck or probability, and therefore this sampling technique is also sometimes known as a method of chances. The materials required for the study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Keeping in mind all the constraints, data from each and every person of Tinsukia District would have made the process of analysis and interpretation quite a complex task. As such for the study the

sample size of 90 individuals was approached on the basis of simple random sampling technique and relevant information was gathered from them. The individuals are the entrepreneurs who are having their own retail outlet or enterprises in the said area of the study.

Research instruments, data collection and analysis

This study is based on the primary method of data collection where qualitative data are analysed. The researchers took to the use of a schedule in order to collect primary data directly related to the concerned area of the study. They have also made use of secondary sources of data collection such as e-books, e-journals and various websites to fulfil the requirements of this research work. The study depends mainly on the primary data collected through a structured interview schedule. The secondary data are collected from journals, magazines, publications, reports, books, websites, research papers, periodicals, articles, etc. The data are analyzed with the help of tables and interpreted as to the data trends and implicated to existing studies.

Results and Discussion

The primary data collected from the consumers are analysed to obtain the results concerning the objectives of the study. Appropriate tables and graphs are used to depict the said objectives in a proper manner. To carry out the research, the researcher has selected Tinsukia District as the said area. For the purpose of the study entrepreneurs from Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises of Tinsukia District have been selected. Since the size of the sample for the study is taken as 90 so, the data analysis and interpretation has been done taking into account the selected sample size. Capabilities represent abilities that enable firms to build competitive advantage and as a consequence transform strategy from theory into practice (Barney, 2001). Scholars have examined different strategic orientations and how they relate to competitive advantage and

eventually firm performance (Muathe, 2002). Salavou and Halikias (2009) observed that it is not the strategies that firms pursue that directly lead to superior performance but the resultant competitive advantage that arises from such strategies. Previous studies have focused on the entire set of new or modified products and processes adopted by a firm and its competitors. An argument may be made of an even stronger relationship between innovations that are industry firsts (true innovations) and the emergence of performance (Spring et al., 2017).

Table 1. Generic business strategy

Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Standardized products	40	44
Specific market-niches	15	17
Broad market area	10	11
Differentiated products	25	28
Total	90	100

Table 1 showcases that most of the entrepreneurs are dealing with standardised products in their enterprise to strategise and capture a huge share in the market. However, differentiated products along with specific market niches are one of the reasons of generic business strategy. Also, in order to survive in this competitive environment capturing a broad market area is too a business strategy.

Table 2. Responsiveness to customer's complaints

Choices	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Moderate	11	12
High	24	27
Very High	55	61
Total	90	100

Based on the Table 2 above, it shows that 61% have a very high response to customer's complaints, 27% have a high response to complaints, and 12% have a moderate response to customer's complaints. Being quick and responsive to customer is a good factor to increase competitive advantage. Customer's complaints must be immediately addressed.

Table 3. Critical threats to the business

Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Bureaucratic rules and regulations	27	30
Inconsistent raw material quality	14	16
Political and economic uncertainties	33	37
Infrastructure costs	08	9
Technical qualification	08	9
Total	90	100

Table 3 highlights that 37% of the respondents finds political and economic uncertainties as the major critical threat to the firm which tends to be matter of concern in today's environment. 30% of them considers bureaucratic rules and regulations another threat for their business, 16% considers inconsistent raw material quality as a critical threat and remaining considered as infrastructure costs and technical qualification.

Table 4. Improving ability about information system

Choices	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Fair	20	22
High	60	67
Very High	10	11
Total	90	100

From the above table it can be interpreted that there is an improved ability on information system. There are 60 or 67% perceived its ability highly improved. There were 20 or 22% of the respondents' ability fairly improved and 10 or 11% of the respondents' ability improved so high. The existence of technology brought forth a good information system. Optimum usage and improved ability in information system will lead to a positive impact to MSME's performance.

Table 5. Evaluating specific elements at the firm

Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Customer satisfaction	45	50
Return on Investment	10	11
Profitability	20	22
Revenue growth	10	11
Cost reduction	5	6
Total	90	100

From the above table it can be interpreted that out of the 90 respondents 45 evaluate elements at their firm based on customer satisfaction to a greatest extent possible. Also, 20 of them evaluate elements as profitability, 10 of them on return on investment and the remaining 5 on cost reduction. In the present day competitive environment customer satisfaction is given utmost importance to earn profitability in long run.

Table 6. Employees Motivation in their Work

Choices	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Fair	18	20
High	49	54
Very High	23	26
Total	90	100

Table 6 shows that employees are motivated in their work. 23 or 26% of the respondents give a very high motivation to their employees. 49 or 54% of the respondents highly motivate their employees, and the remaining 18 or 20 % of the respondents fairly motivate their employees. A motivated employee will work hard to help the company in increasing profitability; thus, will have an impact to MSME's performance to the greatest extent possible.

Limitations of The Study

This study was limited to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Tinsukia District and the samples were only 90 where it does not fully represent all the population in Tinsukia. The respondents might have been confused about the options provided to them. Hence, there may be biases on their part. The sample size does not ensure conclusive findings. It is recommended to expand more on samples and scope of research for accuracy and quality of data.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study sought to gain an understanding of how competitive advantage is assessed, created and maintained in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. While competitive advantage has been debated extensively in the literature, most theories and models have been derived from the experiences of large firms. As such, they are not wholly appropriate for smaller firms and an understanding of the decisions that owner-managers of MSMEs make in relation to competitive advantage was sought. In order to achieve this, previous research into competitive advantage was reviewed and synthesized into a conceptual model. The conceptual model indicated four key components pertaining to competitive advantage: the competitor identification process, sources of advantage, and positions of advantage and performance outcomes. However, the findings regarding the owner-managers' perceptions of the sources, positions and outcomes of competitive

advantage represent a divergence from the conceptual framework. The empirical insights were incorporated into the original model in order to provide a descriptive model. Specially the findings indicate that the owner-managers of the bakery shops tend to regard only a few firms as true competitors and this identification process is based mainly upon their own perceptions of these firms (supply-based approach) as opposed to customer perceptions of these firms (demand-based approach). Thus, the influence and driving force of owner-managers is apparent in this 'world view'. The findings regarding competitor identification largely support the conceptual framework. This study reveals that Team work, Work culture, Leadership and compensation impact the engagement level of employees. Employee engagement invokes passion for their work among the employees and drives them to meet and even exceed their expectations. Engaging employees is necessary to make them fall in line with the mission, goals and values of the organization and also to facilitate in settling issues and concerns between the employer and the employee. Our future work will examine the probable relationships between Innovation dimensions and MSMEs performance and how it affects its performance. Our findings have implications for owners and managers involved in the manufacturing sector, in line with results reported in the literature. The most important result of our study is the significant positive effect of strategic innovation on SMEs' competitive advantage, in line with a series of high profile studies (Lilly and Juma, 2014; Lynn and Kalay, 2015). This result shows that if manufacturing SMEs invest in obtaining innovation technologies they can achieve better performance and a competitive position in the market. This finding is in line with those of Yang (2014) and AlQershi, Abas and Mokhtar (2019b), who argued that companies that seek to be proactive in acquiring innovation tools and human skills will gain market share, profit margins and competitive advantages.

The organizational structure must be able to withstand the risk of imitation, which make the internal resources highly valuable for an organization. The entrepreneurs should be able to differentiate the offerings with the goal of creating tremendous value for the users they serve. The infrastructure costs should be reduced to minimum so as to avoid threats which may likely hamper the business activities of the firm.

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Factors influencing participation of Youth in Community Development Activities

Nilakhi Baruah
Nazreen Parveen Ali

Abstract

The youth is the dynamic and robust element for development and transformation in a modern society. Community development literatures recognize the role of youth in implementing necessary improvements in the existing scenario of a community in a dynamic environment through their revolutionary attitude and skilful knowledge. Further, leadership and management skills along with potential employability of youth gets brushed up in the process of active participation in community development activities. The present study is an effort to identify the factors influencing participation of generation Y in community based development activities. The study is based on primary data collected from youths born in 80s and 90s through structured questionnaires following snowball sampling technique. Pearson's Chi Square test and simple arithmetical average techniques have been employed for analysis using SPSS. Participation in activities of NGOs, individual efforts to help others and emotional nature, family, friends and peer groups of individual plays a paramount role in their degree of participation in community development

activities. Also, age of individual and their level of education have their role to play in this regard. However lack of adequate knowledge on community development activities as well as limited time at disposal are some major hindrances to participation of youth in developmental activities.

Keywords:

Community Development, Youth, NGOs, leadership, management

Introduction

Community Development is a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems (United Nations). Community development is a continuous process demanding superior leadership and planning efforts in all spheres. Community development efforts seek to improve capacity building, brushing up skills and knowledge of individuals and community as a whole. The youth is the dynamic and robust element for development and transformation in a modern society. There is a need for planners of community development activities to understand the role of youth and the factors influencing them to come forward for voluntary participation in community development activities. Community development activities may be an indispensable responsibility of the government but at the same time voluntary not for profit organizations, Non government organizations and even educational institutions are playing an active part in this regard. In fact such development activities have become integral components of the education system.

The key elements or ingredients for successful community development are:

- 1.1. An existing dissatisfaction that things in the present scenario are not up to the mark. The community calls for changes with the dynamic ever-changing social, economical, political and technological environment.

There is always need to adapt to changes and hence a continuous scope of improvement.

- 1.2. An enthusiasm and conviction to do something to improve the existing scenerio with collective collaboration with the members of the community.
- 1.3. Creative exercises, brainstorming activities, rethinking efforts, expert consultancy and advices to solve the problems in the path of improvement.
- 1.4. The acceptance of collective decision making efforts and willingness to participate and accept the best suggested innovative ideas and skills in an unbiased manner under a decentralized and informal democratic environment.
- 1.5. A shared leadership and collective management efforts with the willingness to accept criticisms and suggestions along with appreciation.
- 1.6. Willingness to accept risk to reap benefits of opportunities
- 1.7. Continuous effort to seek collaboration of external supporters such as government, NGOs.

Statement of the problem

Thus it can be observed that both the youth and community can benefit each other from active participation of youth in developmental activities of community. While community development activities demand a revolutionary attitude and dynamic knowledge and skills present in the youth to make necessary improvements in the existing scenario of a community that could have been better. On the other hand, young people can be empowered more with better decision making skills, management and leadership qualities, problem solving attitude etc which not only help in their personality development but shall also contribute to superior development efforts for the community in future. Thus participation in

community development activities is an essential element for holistic development of both the youth and the community. To inspire the youth for same and ensure their maximum voluntary participation, it becomes essential to identify the factors influencing participation of youth in community development activities.

Review of Literature

Youth development cannot be separated from community change¹. (Foley, 2005).

Personal characteristics of youth such as age, gender, marital status and educational level; sensitization and advocacy; economic factors such as unemployment and socio-cultural factors such as leisure, gender related duties and peer pressure have an impact on their participation in community development projects². (Ogot, 2010)

Youth of society are the important elements of community development as they provide selfless services and dynamic leadership. However lack of knowledge about community development activities hinder their enthusiasm for participation in such activities³. (Iyuchukwu et al, 2015)

Active participation of youth in community development shall be an integral principle of designing such developmental programmes as youth bring in the position to guide necessary modifications in plans with changing community demands⁴. (Yusuf & Mechanic, 2014)

Sustainable development of today's youth demands their active participation in decision making and implementation of community development activities⁵. (Lawrence et al, 2013)

Skills acquisition, personal growth, opportunities for personality development is some benefits imparted to youth through participation in community development activities. Education institutions, community councils and development organizations shall extend their efforts towards taking initiative

for youth participation in community development activities⁶. (Matsela, 2015)

Youth participation in community can impart those experiences and skills and thus pave a way for gainful employment⁷ (The African Youth Report, 2011)

Sharing of ideas and opinions among youth is itself responsible in influencing each other as potential leaders and community development activities is a scope for youth to interact⁸ (Christens and Dolan, 2010)

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess how demographic characteristics of youth influence their desire to participate in community development activities
2. To assess how demographic characteristics of youth influence their actual participation in community development activities
3. To establish how compassionate factors of individuals influence their participation in community development activities.
4. To identify other factors responsible for youth participation in community development activities.

Hypothesis of the Study

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant association between demographic variables of youth and their participation in community development activities

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant association between demographic variables of youth and their desire to participate in community development activities

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant association between compassionate factors and participation in Community Developmental activities

Methodology of Research

1. Sample

The study is based on primary data collected through structured questionnaires designed over Google forms which were mailed to nearly 2000 respondents residing over the campus of two Central Universities of Assam namely Tezpur University and Assam University. Responses were received from 1570 respondents but out of these only 1500 respondents could be incorporated in the study owing to incomplete responses by the discarded ones.

2. Sampling Technique

The sample consists of only young people within the state. To have a better definition of youth, data was collected from respondents born in 80s and 90s only. Further keeping in mind to meet the criteria of our research, data was collected from only those who have at least completed their Higher Secondary (with a chosen stream of education). Snowball sampling technique is used for selecting the respondents.

3. Structure of the questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed by incorporating questions starting with demographic profile of the respondents, education, occupation, association with social activities, their feelings and attitude towards societal development etc

4. Tools and Techniques for analysis

Pearson's Chi Square test has been employed to test the three hypotheses as stated above. The Hypotheses were further singled out into numerous sub hypotheses to test the association of the respective variables with participation of youth in community development activities. Simple frequency and percentage charts are also used to study the other factors inspiring or restricting youth participation in community development activities.

Analysis of Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant association between demographic variables of youth and their participation in community development activities

Table 7.1. Table showing results of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Chi square		Result
		Value	Df	
H ₀₁	There is no significant association between gender of the respondents and their participation in community development activities	.891	1	Accepted
H ₀₂	There is no significant association between age of the respondents and their participation in community development activities	13.950	3	Rejected
H ₀₃	There is no significant association between marital status of the respondents and their participation in community development activities	1.286	1	Accepted
H ₀₄	There is no significant association between stream of education of the respondents and their participation in community development activities	0.922	2	Accepted
H ₀₅	There is no significant association between level of education of the respondents and their participation in community development activities	13.873	3	Rejected
H ₀₆	There is no significant association between employment status of the respondents and their participation in community development activities	2.578	1	Accepted

Source: Primary Data

The hypothesis testing for examining the association of youth participation in community development activities with their demographic characteristics is done using the chi square test for each demographic characteristic (gender, age, marital status, level and stream of education and employment status) separately as sub hypotheses. It is observed from table 7.1. That

age of the respondents and their level of education are seen to be significantly associated with the degree of participation indicating the paramount role played by these variables in youth participation in community development activities

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant association between demographic variables of youth and their desire to participate in community development activities

Table 7.2. Table showing results of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Chi square		Result
		Value	Df	
H ₀₁	There is no significant association between gender of the respondents and desire to participate in community development activities	4.924	2	Accepted
H ₀₂	There is no significant association between age of the respondents and their desire to participate in community development activities	3.946	6	Accepted
H ₀₃	There is no significant association between marital status of the respondents and their desire to participate in community development activities	1.735	2	Accepted
H ₀₄	There is no significant association between stream of education of the respondents and their desire to participate in community development activities	11.305	4	Rejected
H ₀₅	There is no significant association between level of education of the respondents and their desire to participate in community development activities	68.950	6	Rejected
H ₀₆	There is no significant association between gender of the respondents and their desire to participate in community development activities	4.094	2	Accepted

Source: Primary data

The hypothesis testing for examining the association of desire of the youth to participate in community development activities with their demographic characteristics is done using the chi square test for each demographic characteristic (gender, age, marital status, level and stream of education and employment status) separately as sub hypotheses. It is observed in table 7.2. that stream of education and their level of education are significantly associated with their desire to participate in community development activities indicating the significant role played by the level and stream of education in inspiring the youth to participate in community development activities

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant association between compassionate factors and participation in Community Developmental activities

Table 7.3. Table showing results of Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Chi square		Result
		Value	Df Significance	
H ₀₁	There is no significant association between desire to help people and participation in community development activities	6.218	2	.045 Rejected
H ₀₂	There is no significant association between participation in NGO activities and participation in community development activities	16.381	1	.000 Rejected
H ₀₃	There is no significant association between individual efforts of respondents to help people and their participation in community development activities	7.017	1	0.008 Rejected
H ₀₄	There is no significant association between emotional nature of respondents their participation in community development activities	9.342	4	0.05 Rejected
H ₀₅	There is no significant association between the desire for rural upliftment and their participation in community development activities	2.631	3	.452 Accepted

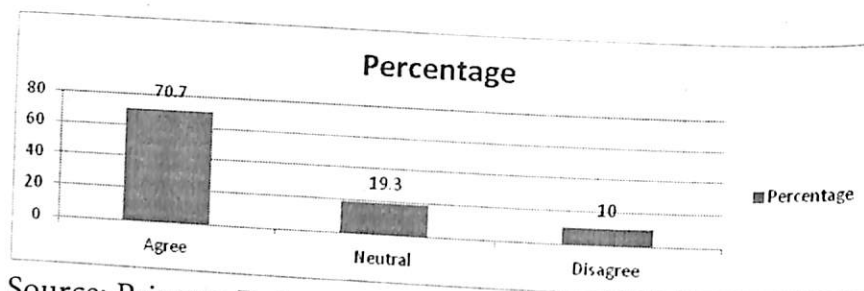
Source: Primary Data

The hypothesis testing for examining the association of compassionate factors in youth individuals with participation in community development activities is done using the chi square test for each compassionate factor (desire to help, participation in NGOs, individual efforts to help, emotional

nature and desire for social upliftment) separately as sub hypotheses. It is observed in table 7.3. That desire to help people, participation in NGOs, individual efforts to help others and emotional nature significantly associated with their degree of participation in community development activities.

7.4. Role of parents and family members in participation of Community development activities

Figure 7.4- Showing percentage of Role of parents and family members in participation of Community development activities.

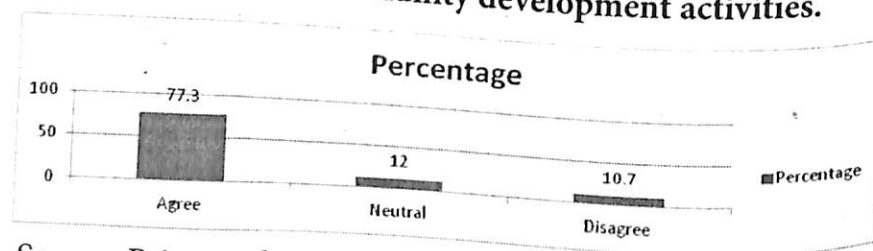


Source: Primary Data

Fig 7.4 shows that about 70 % of respondents agreed that parents and family play an influential role in their participation in community development activities. Only 10% of respondents denied this.

7.5. Role of friends and peers in participation of Community development activities

Figure 7.5- Showing percentage of Role of friends and peers in participation of Community development activities.

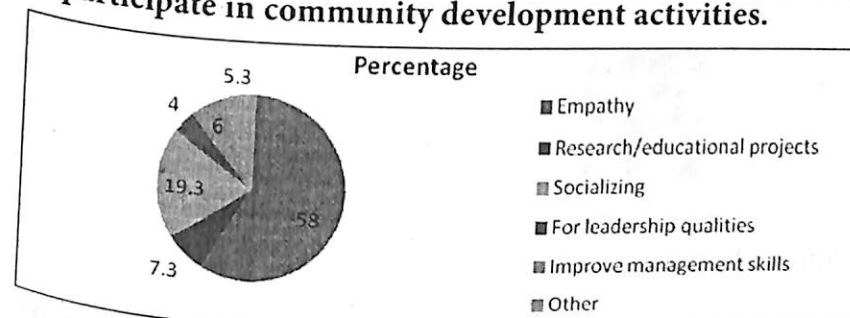


Source: Primary data

Fig, 7.5 shows that 77% % of respondents agreed that friends and peers play an influential role in their participation in community development activities. Only about 11% of respondents denied this.

7.6 Reasons for wanting to participate in community development activities

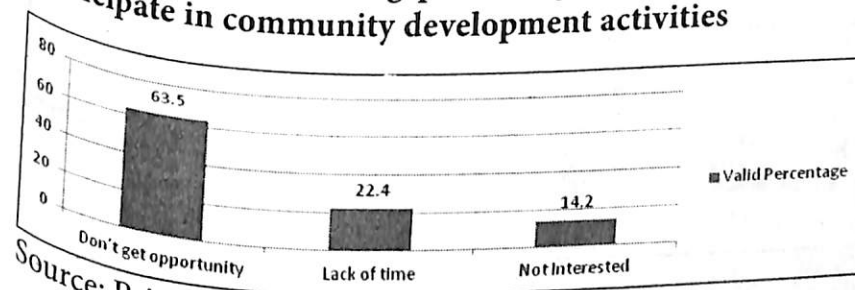
Figure 7.6- Showing percentage of Reason for wanting to participate in community development activities.



The above (Fig 7.6.) shows that empathetic nature is a primary and dominant reason for inspiring the youth to participate in community development activities (58%). Followed by this the need for socialization (19.3%), research/educational projects (7.3%), desire to improve management skills (6%) and practice leadership traits (4%) also played their role as reasons behind the youth to participate in community development activities

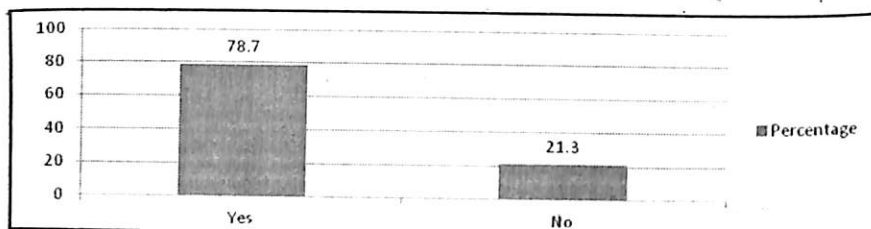
7.7. Reasons for not to participate in community development activities

Figure 7.7- Showing percentage reasons for not to participate in community development activities



Source: Primary data

Fig. 7.7. Shows that lack of adequate opportunities in hand is a major drawback which hinders youth participation in community development activities (63.5%). Further lack of time (22.4%) also limits participation of youth. However only 14.2% youth respondents are observed not at all to be interested in community development activities.



Source: Primary data

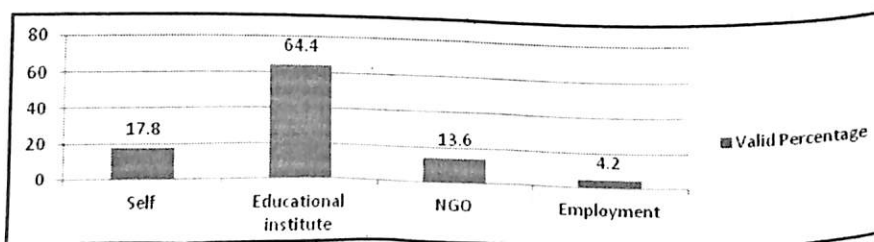
7.8. No. of Respondents ever participating in community development activities

Figure 7.8.- Showing percentage No. of Respondents ever participating in community development activities

Majority of the youth respondents (78.7%), more than three fourths agreed to have taken part in community development activities. (Fig. 7.8)

7.9. Participation under whose Initiative

Figure 7.9.- Showing percentage participation under whose Initiative



Source: Primary data

Most of the respondents (64.4%) near about 65% have participated in community development activities under the initiative of their educational institute. 17.8% respondents reported to have participated under self initiative whereas 13.6% participated under initiative of NGOs. Only 5% respondents participated under the initiative of their employment institute. (table 7.9)

Findings and discussion

1. A major portion of youth population (nearly 80 percent of youth respondents) takes part in community development activities.
2. Education institutions play the most dominant role in providing the right exposure to youth to participate in community development activities. This is through the various course, assignments and research projects including assessment activities in youth's curriculum. 17.8% respondents reported to have participated under self initiative whereas 13.6% participated under initiative of NGOs. Only 5% respondents participated under the initiative of their employment institute.
3. Age of the youth individuals and the level of education they have completed play a significant role in their actual participation in community development activities.
4. Further the level of education completed including the area or stream of education also plays a significant role in the desire of youths to participate in community development activities
5. Sympathetic and compassionate factors such as participation in activities of NGOs, individual efforts to help others and emotional nature of individual play a paramount role in their degree of participation in community development activities. However the desire

to work for rural upliftment does not necessarily inspire the youth to participate in community development activities.

6. Parents, family, friends and peer groups influence and inspire youth to a great extent to participate in community development activities
7. Empathetic nature is a primary and dominant reason for inspiring the youth to participate in community development activities Followed by this the need for socialization, desire to meet people of similar domain (nature), research/educational projects also encourage youth members to go for community development activities.
7. Lack of adequate opportunities or non awareness about the various community development projects seeking the participation from young generation is a major drawback which hinders youth participation in community development activities. Further lack of time with the busy youth engrossed in their education, jobs or other activities also limit participation of youth in developmental activities. Only a few less than 15% of youth are observed not at all to be interested in community development activities.

Conclusion

The youth in a dynamic environment is an indispensable element of development activities in any sphere. Also active participation of youth in development activities ensures their personality development through continuous interaction with each other. The present study is an effort to identify the factors influencing participation of generation Y in community based development activities. Participation in activities of NGOs, individual efforts to help others and emotional nature of individual play a paramount role in their degree of participation in community development activities. Further parents, family,

friends and peer groups also influence and inspire youth. Also, age of individual and their level of education have their role to play in this regard. However lack of adequate knowledge on community development activities as well as limited time at disposal are some major hindrances to participation of youth in developmental activities.

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Perception of Students Towards Online Education System: A Study on Tinsukia District

Rijumani Kalita
Bhaskar Saikia

Abstract

E-learning has become massively in recent years as technology has been integrated into education and training. The use of computers and the internet form a major component of e-learning. With the rapid progress in technological advancement in learning systems, it is now embraced by the masses. During the COVID-19 pandemic situation all over the world, academic institutions are promptly shifting all educational activities to e-learning format as this the only way left. This paper attempts to analyse the students' perception of the online mode of education in Tinsukia district of Assam. For the purpose of carrying out the study, both primary and secondary data have been used. The study projects that the students of Tinsukia district are using the various platform for online classes and they found the system is much flexible and cost effective.

Keywords:

E-learning, Technological advancement, internet, education

Introduction

Education is the method of facilitating learning or the acquisition of data, knowledge, skills and values. Educational strategies embrace storytelling, discussion, teaching, coaching and direct analysis. Education takes place both in formal or informal context. The teaching methodology is named as pedagogy.

With the development of the Internet, many colleges and universities have provided online guides as a feasible alternative to standard face-to-face instruction. However, great concerns and issues have evolved, especially because it pertains to the excellence of online schooling. Online schooling, in step with Harasim (1989)¹, is a brand new area of learning that mixes distance training with the exercise of face-to-face guidance utilising laptop-mediated verbal exchange.

Online training is a kind of instructional practice that is delivered through the internet to students through the usage of their home computer systems. During the last decade, online degrees and courses have emerged as a famous opportunity for an extensive variety of non-conventional students. Most of the time, online degree packages and guides are presented through the host school. Although there are diffused dissimilarities, the main difference between online and conventional education system is that the online training liberates the people from the same old trappings of on-campus degree programs, with planning the schedule around instructions. In spite of e-learning continuing to grow very quickly, it is still in the early stage of development. Consequently, developers and deliverers of online learning need more understanding of how students perceive and react to elements of e-learning (since student perception and attitude is critical to motivation and learning) along with how to apply these approaches most effectively to enhance learning (Koohang & Durante, 2003)².

In this context, an attempt has been made to examine the perceptions of the students of Tinsukia District regarding the

online education system, then identify the frequently used mode of online education and finally to identify the constraints faced by the students.

Review of Literature

The following literature regarding online education system is reviewed for the study:

- Reddy et. al. (2001) conducted a study on students' experience with the virtual campus. The objective of this survey study was to analyze the attitude of the learners towards resource-based learning and to critically examine the utilization of the resources provided by the university. They had suggested measures for improving the effectiveness of resource-based learning. The questionnaire was structured with both close and open-ended questions. It was sent to the students of various centers. The majority (68%) of them felt that they could construct their own individual knowledge base; 60% of them liked the flexibility in study routes; 46% improved their study skills; 29% could think more; 28 % found it interesting and stimulating; 42% enjoyed the independence, and 29% liked the choice of reading. However, 25% of the respondents answered in the negative. They did want more guidance on what to do and how to do it. The students also expressed that pursuing courses through virtual campus is tiresome and time-consuming.
- Jamlan (2004)³ has conducted a study on "Faculty Opinions towards Introducing e-Learning at the University of Bahrain". The faculty opinions on e-learning were assessed. A questionnaire was sent to 30 faculty members of the University's College of Education to determine their perception of e-learning. The study also analyses how they might choose to integrate it into

their everyday teaching activities. The data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study indicates that faculty generally perceive e-learning as a positive force that helps the students' to achieve their learning objectives.

- Smart, K.L. and Cappel, J.J. (2006)⁴ conducted a study on the perception of students on the online education system. Several studies had suggested that online education and the blended instruction of online and traditional approaches can be as effective as traditional classroom models. This study studies the students' perceptions of integrating online components in two undergraduate business courses. The results indicate that participants in an online course rated the online modules significantly better than those in a required course. Overall participants in the elective course rated the online modules marginally positive while those in the required course rated them marginally negative. The outcomes suggest that the instructors should be selective in integrating the online units into traditional, classroom-delivered courses. This integration should be carefully planned based on learner characteristics, course content, and the learning context. The largest dissatisfaction factor reported among the participants was the time required to complete the online modules.
- Cetinkaya, L. (Nov 2017)⁵ studies the effects of the use of WhatsApp for education. This study explores the opinions of students towards the process of using Whatsapp as a medium of education. The study indicated that both learning environments have different effects on the success of students. The traditional environment of using WhatsApp is found to be more effective for the increase in success. The students developed positive opinions towards the use of WhatsApp in their courses.

The study found that learning also takes place unconsciously and the messages with images were more effective for the learning process. The researchers suggest that the use of WhatsApp in the education process should be used as a supportive technology. Necessary precautions should be taken to minimize the drawbacks expressed by the students.

Need of the Study:

Online mode of teaching is very necessary in recent times. It has seen a rapid instance in the education domain especially from the time of COVID-19 pandemic situation in the world. Students now have access to all the available courses from all over the world at any time. Now a days, a number of educational institutions are offering various online education. Thus, the perception of the students is to be studied before offering the most effective online education course to the students.

Scope of Study:

Among all the districts of Assam, Tinsukia district has been selected for the purpose of the study. The study is based on a self-structured questionnaire to find out the students' perception towards the online education system.

Objectives of the Study:

The study has been undertaken in respect of the following objectives:

- i) To study the perception of the students regarding the effectiveness of the online education system;
- ii) To identify the different platform accessed by the students; and
- iii) To study the constraints faced by the students during the online education system.

Research Methodology

The following methodologies have been adopted to achieve the research objectives:

- **Nature of Data:** The study by its nature has been considered as descriptive.
- **Sampling technique:** The respondents are selected by adopting a method of convenient sampling. The analysis of the data has been made on the basis of responses collected from the students with the help of a structured questionnaire. 120 students were approached out of which 84 responded. For the fundamental analysis, simple mathematical tools have been used.
- **Method of collection of data:** The study has been conducted with the help of both primary and secondary data. The primary data have been collected from the students of various age groups of different colleges of Tinsukia district through a self-designed questionnaire consisting of 5 point Likert Scale. The secondary data have been collected from various books, literature, e-journals, articles, websites and the internet as well.
- **Methods of Analysis:** The collected data have been tabulated and then analysed with the help of applying simple mathematical tools like pie-chart, percentage, table and the weighted average method to find out the perception level of the students regarding the advantages and the constraints of the online education system. The Garret Ranking technique has been used to find out the topmost problems faced by the respondents as well as to determine the advantages or benefits. The respondents are asked to give ranks for the given reasons. So, the order of reasons provided by the sample respondents was transformed into ranks with the help of the following formula:

$$\text{Percent position} = 100 (R_{ij} - 0.5) / N_j$$

Where,
 R_{ij} = Rank given for the i^{th} factor by the j^{th} respondent
 N_j = Number of factors ranked by j^{th} respondent.

Analysis and Interpretation

The responses of the students are analysed using various methods like a simple mathematical formula like percentage, pie-charts, figures, table and Weighted Average and Garrett Ranking Method. The perception of the students regarding the advantages and the constraints of the online education system has been analysed using the Garrett Ranking Method. The responses are analysed chronologically based on the objectives of the study.

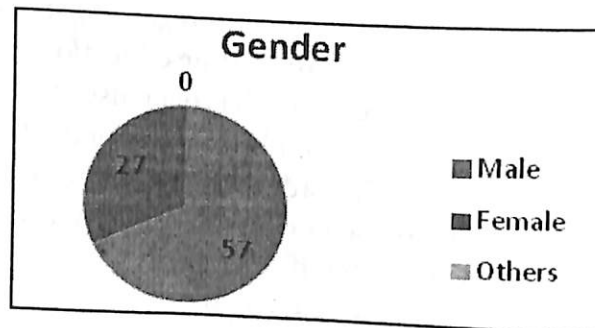
- Assessment of the demographic factor of the respondents

Table 1: Table showing the distribution of respondents gender-wise

Gender	No of Respondents	Percentage
Male	57	67.85
Female	27	32.15
Others	0	0
Total	84	100

Source: Field Survey

Figure 1: Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents gender-wise



Source: Field Survey

In the table-1, it has been found that 57 respondents are male whereas only 27 are female respondents. But, there are no respondents under the column "others".

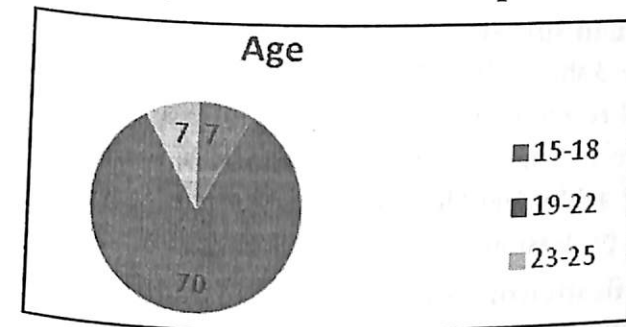
Table 2: Table showing the distribution of respondents age-wise

Age	No of Respondents	Percentage
15-18	7	8.33
19-22	70	83.34
23-25	7	8.33
Total	84	100

Source: Field Survey

Figure 2:

Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents age-wise



Source: Field Survey

In the table-2, it has been found that 70 respondents are of the age-group 19-22 whereas only 7 respondents are from the other age-groups i.e. 15-18 and 13-25.

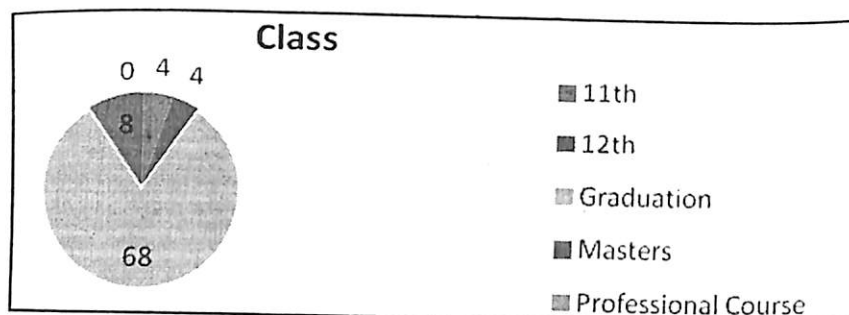
Table 3:

Table showing the distribution of respondents class-wise

Class	No of Respondents	Percentage
11	4	4.76
12	4	4.76
Graduates	68	80.95
Masters	8	9.53
Professional Course	0	0
Total	84	100

Source: Field Survey

Figure 3: Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents class-wise

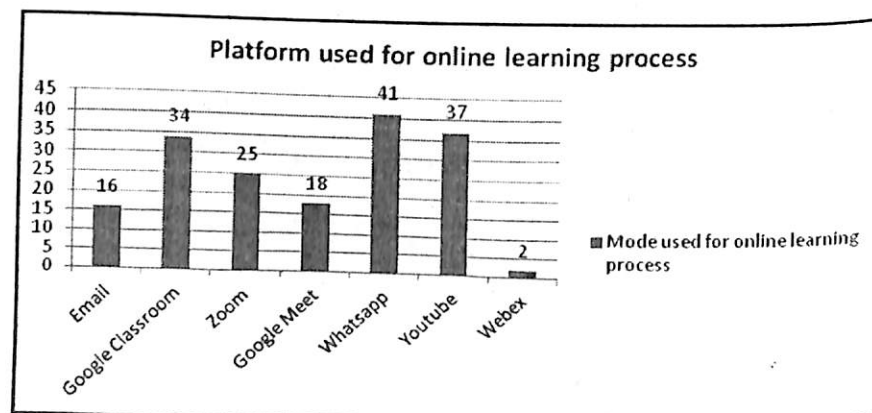


Source: Field Survey

Table-3 shows that 68 respondents are pursuing graduation whereas 4 respondents are from the group of class 11th and 12th respectively. Among the 64 respondents, 8 respondents are pursuing a Master's degree. And there are no respondents pursuing professional courses.

• **Identification of the frequently used platform of the online education system**

Table 4: Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents based on the platform they had used for the online education system



Source: Field Survey

In the above table, the various platforms for the online education system are shown. Generally, these mentioned seven (7) platforms are used by the respondents. The most used platform is found to be Whatsapp. The second most used platform is Youtube. The least used platform is Webex.

• **Assessment of the perception of the respondents regarding the online education system**

Table 5: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on perception regarding the online education system

Statements	Scale of Perception					Weighted Average
	SD(1)	D(2)	N(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	
It is a convenient mode of learning	12	13	23	25	10	17.13
Online teaching is an interesting medium	16	11	28	21	7	16.06
It involves more interaction	15	23	28	15	2	14.33
It helps to gain knowledge in the real sense	17	21	27	13	5	14.47
The content is easy to understand in-online mode	16	18	19	21	9	15.87
The content is easy to remember	16	15	21	21	10	16.2
The course gets completed on time	10	18	24	20	11	16.87
It serves the educational needs	12	11	30	23	7	16.73
The communication between the teacher and the student is effective	17	19	26	15	6	14.87
The communication among the students is effective	17	23	23	16	4	14.40
The flexibility of the online mode is beneficial	15	11	32	19	6	15.93
The online method of teaching and learning is cost-effective	13	14	23	21	12	16.93
The online method can be tailored to cater to different needs	8	20	31	18	6	16.2
The learning outcomes achieved is effective	12	10	36	22	3	16.2
Total Average Score						222.2

Source: Computed Data

From Table 5, it is observed that the least perceptual value about the statement 'It involves more interaction' is 14.33 and the highest perceptual value about the statement 'It is a convenient mode of learning' is codified as 17.13. Thus, it can be described that the students have the perception that the online education system is a convenient mode of learning. They are ready to adopt the online platform for the learning process. On the other hand, the students have the perceptual value for the fact that the online education system provides more interactive sessions among the students and also between the teachers and the students.

• **Assessment of the perception of the respondents regarding the constraints in the online education system**

Table 6:

Table showing the distribution of respondents based on the perception of the students regarding the constraints faced

Statements	Scale of Perception					Weighted Average
	SD(1)	D(2)	N(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	
The online teaching mode is of low quality	17	16	33	13	4	14.67
It involves little or no face to face interaction	13	20	18	23	9	16.27
The intense requirement for self-discipline.	11	16	20	28	8	17
The method has more time management skill	12	15	19	32	5	16.8
The teaching activity is a solo act	10	13	30	28	2	16.53
It involves too much time in front of the computer screen	11	14	18	27	13	17.78
It involves a possible lack of control	8	11	27	26	11	18
Total Average Score						117.05

Source: Field Survey

Table 6 shows that the lowest and the highest values of the responses responded by the students are 14.67 and 18 in respect to the statements codified as in B₄ and B₃ representing the statements 'the online teaching mode is of low quality' and 'It involves possible lack of control' respectively. It can be inferred that the students don't support the statement that the quality of education provided through the online platform has low quality compared to the offline mode of education. Instead, the students are using the online platform more often to have a clear understanding of any topic. On the other hand, the respondents think that the online mode lacks control.

• **Ranking of the advantages of using an online education system**

The ranking for the preferred factor is done to know the top advantages where the students feel online mode of education is helpful and convenient.

Table 7: Ranking given by the sample respondents

Sl. No.	Factors	Ranks are given by Respondents						
		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
1	Flexibility in Schedule	21	23	12	21	9	5	7
2	Low total cost	28	18	21	8	6	1	1
3	More comfortable learning	15	17	10	27	12	3	2
4	Geographic Flexibility	22	25	12	16	2	1	5
5	Updated technical Skills	17	10	19	8	17	4	8
6	More Group communication	17	14	10	15	15	2	10
7	Availability of efficient instructor	20	22	11	8	9	2	11

Table 8: Percent position and Garrett Value			
Rank	$100(R_{ij}-0.5)/N_j$	Percent Position	Garrett Value
1	$100(1-0.5)/7$	7.14	78
2	$100(2-0.5)/7$	21.43	66
3	$100(3-0.5)/7$	35.71	57
4	$100(4-0.5)/7$	50	50
5	$100(5-0.5)/7$	64.29	43
6	$100(6-0.5)/7$	78.57	34
7	$100-(7-0.5)/7$	92.86	22

Table 9: Table showing the Calculation of Garret Value and Ranking

Sl No	Factors	Ranks are given by Respondents						Total	Average Score	Rank
		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th		
1	Flexibility in Schedule	1638	1518	684	1050	387	170	154	5601	67.48
2	Low total cost	2184	1188	1197	400	258	34	22	5283	63.65
3	More comfortable learning	1170	1122	570	1350	516	102	44	4874	58.72
4	Geographic Flexibility	1716	1650	684	800	86	34	110	5080	61.20
5	Updated technical Skills	1326	660	1083	400	731	136	176	4512	54.36
6	More Group communication	1326	924	570	750	645	68	220	4503	54.25
7	Availability of efficient instructor	1560	1452	627	400	387	68	242	4826	58.14

Source: Computed data

From Table 9, it was found that flexibility in schedule has been ranked as first with a mean score of 67.48. The respondents reported that flexibility in the schedule of the correspondent course or subject is the topmost advantage of the online mode of education. The low total cost has been ranked as second with a mean score of 63.65 by the respondents whereas more group communication stood at last with a mean score of 54.25.

• Ranking of the problems that are faced by the respondents during the online education system

An attempt has been made to know the problems faced by the students during the online mode of classes.

Table 10: Ranking given by the sample respondents

SlNo	Factors	Ranks are given by Respondents				
		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
1	Adaptability struggle	20	17	22	18	6
2	Technical issues	44	23	8	5	3
3	Time management	18	23	18	20	4
4	Distraction	27	24	16	4	12
5	Communication	19	20	29	10	5

Source: Field Survey

Table 11: Table showing the Percent position and Garrett Value

Rank	$100(R_{ij}-0.5)/N_j$	Percent position	Garrett Value
1	$100(1-0.5)/5$	10	75
2	$100(2-0.5)/5$	30	60
3	$100(3-0.5)/5$	50	50
4	$100(4-0.5)/5$	70	40
5	$100(5-0.5)/5$	90	25

Table 12: Table showing the calculation of Garret Value and Ranking

SlNo	Factors	Ranks are given by Respondents					Total	Average Score	Rank
		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th			
1	Adaptability struggle	1500	1020	1100	720	150	4490	54.10	5
2	Technical issues	3300	1380	400	200	75	5355	64.52	1
3	Time management	1350	1380	900	800	100	4530	54.58	4
4	Distraction	2025	1440	800	160	300	4725	56.93	2
5	Communication	1425	1200	1450	400	125	4600	55.42	3

From Table 12, it was found that technical issues have been ranked as first with a mean score of 64.52. The respondents reported that technical issues and internet related problems are the main constraints faced by them during online classes. Distraction has been ranked as second with a mean score of 56.93 by the respondents whereas adaptability struggle stood at last with a mean score of 54.10.

Findings of the Study

According to the objectives set for the study, major findings are presented based on the analysis and interpretation of the collected data drawn from the study through a process of assessment and measurement.

1. It was found that the most used platform is Whatsapp. The second most used platform is Youtube. The least used platform is Webex.
2. It is observed that the least perceptual value about the statement 'It involves more interaction' is 14.33 and the highest perceptual value about the statement 'It is a convenient mode of learning' is 17.13.
3. The lowest and the highest values of the responses responded by the students are 14.67 and 18 in respect to the statements representing the statements 'the online teaching mode is of low quality' and 'It involves possible lack of control' respectively.
4. It was found that flexibility in schedule has been ranked as first with a mean score of 67.48. The respondents reported that flexibility in the schedule of the correspondent course or subject is the topmost advantage of the online mode of education. The low total cost has been ranked as second with a mean score of 63.65 by the respondents whereas more group communication stood at last with a mean score of 54.25.

5. It was found that technical issues have been ranked as first with a mean score of 64.52. The respondents reported that technical issues and internet related problems are the main constraints faced by them during online classes. Distraction has been ranked as second with a mean score of 56.93 by the respondents whereas adaptability struggle stood at last with a mean score of 54.10.

Suggestions

The following suggestions can be made to change the perception of the students of Tinsukia District regarding the online education system.

1. The images and other multimedia elements such as audio, video, animation, etc. should be used in the online education module. The various applications like WhatsApp, telegram is to be incorporated into the education module. Their impacts are to be evaluated and then updated as required.
2. Individual attention must be given to students with poor performance.
3. The feedback is to be designed and distributed among the teachers, the students and the parents to strengthen the course design and course delivery.
4. The uncovered concrete issues that are important to our students are to be analyzed and developed.
5. More online activities, class activities, assignments, online discussions, online quizzes and tests are to be incorporated into the online module.

Conclusion

Education is the method of providing facilities of learning or acquiring knowledge, skills and values. With the development of the Internet, many educational institutions have provided online guides as a feasible alternative to standard face-to-face

instruction. However, great concerns and issues have evolved, especially because it pertains to the excellence of online schooling. The developers and deliverers of online learning should have more understanding about the students' perception and then to develop the approaches more effectively keeping in mind about the wants of both the students as well as the parents.

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The Hijab Controversy: An Analysis

Dr. Partha Protim Borthakur

Abstract:

In recent years, the wearing of the female Islamic dress (generally referred to as the hijab), or any feature of this dress such as the headscarf (khimar), face-veil (niqab) and the head-to-toe all enveloping garment (jilbab) has raised complex human rights issues particularly in the context of women's rights to freedom of religion and its manifestation, equality and non discrimination, education and work. This article focuses on the status of the hijab in Islam and selected recent cases concerning the wearing of the Islamic dress in educational institutions. On the basis of these, two conclusions are made. Firstly, to prevent a person from making a choice to wear religious clothing (like the hijab) in public or private schools or institutions, in the absence of justification compatible with human rights law, may impair the individual's freedom to have or adopt a religion. Secondly, the general exclusion of women from schools or work on account of the Islamic dress might lead to further discrimination against girls and women in education and employment. A human rights perspective to the Islamic dress should involve as a starting point respecting choices of individual

Muslim women to wear or not to wear the hijab.

Introduction:

Public debate and dialogue about issues on Hijab as religious accommodation, integration and social engagement have accelerated and intensified in Canada and elsewhere in the aftermath of 9/11. However, India's post-colonial politics was premised upon articulation of social and cultural differences for representation. Articulating differences produced contingent social coalitions, falsely dubbed as 'secular', which in effect kept social groups separate and contradictions unresolved. The first major consequence of such politics is the **Shah Bano and Ram Janmabhoomi** cases.¹ While social differences remained, it was papered over by a permanent bureaucracy, Patronage State and power intermediaries that kept the system afloat. Old fault lines are being re-articulated with changing internal dynamics. Hindu society underwent two fundamental shifts in the postcolonial period—regulating Hindu personal codes and the Mandal revolution. The Muslim society rarely underwent either of these changes, at least none that could be traced. It is not surprising therefore that 'politicisation of caste' as Rajni Kothari called it, led to the decline of the Congress.²

History tells us that over and over that uncritical political reliance on superficial categories of 'tolerance' and 'empathy' without resolving inherent contradictions is going to prove detrimental in the long run. German-American philosopher **Herbert Marcuse** makes a point about how liberal reliance on choice reinforces the logic of power, both social and culture, thus invisibilising repressive hierarchies.³ The narrative of choice weakens space for resistance by legitimising existing forms of social power. It is precisely this decadent alliance between the Left and Liberals that has fructified Hindutva politics. It is interesting to see the Left harping on the rhetoric of choice to legitimise structures of subordination within the Muslim community.

In December, 2021, Udupi's Kundapur PU College issued circular banning students from wearing hijabs in classrooms, claiming it was to ensure uniformity in classrooms.⁴ This decision led to uproar, with some students not being allowed to enter classrooms by college staff and fellow students. Similarly, students were stopped from attending college for wearing head-scarves instead of full-length hijabs. Escalating the matter further, students from the other community started wearing saffron scarves to college in protest against the hijab-wearing Muslim students. Women-only protests were held in several locations across the state, including Bengaluru, Mysuru, Hassan, Kolar, Shahapur, Shivamogga and Udupi.

The row has also taken a political colour as the ruling BJP stood strongly in support of uniform-related rules being enforced by educational institutions, calling the headscarf, a religious symbol, while the opposition Congress has come out in support of Muslim girls. The Government of Karnataka passed an order stating that students of pre-university colleges will have to mandatorily wear the uniform prescribed by the college administrative board. In the absence of any prescription, **"clothes which disturb equality, integrity and public law and order" couldn't be worn.**⁵ Muslim women held protest events at different locations in Karnataka demanding the protection of their constitutional rights, including religious freedom. After a violent clash between police and students in Bengaluru, the Government imposed section 144 in select districts. Several Opposition parties, including Congress, Trinamool Congress, Left parties, RJD, NCP and the BSP, recently came forward supporting the Muslim female students' demand.⁶

While fault lines within Hindu society have been more or less transformed, Muslim society remains under the impasse of strong traditional authority, rigid family obligations and a distanced cultural elite. Rather than formulating the plight of Muslim women solely as a symptom of the Hindutva onslaught,

it needs to be formulated as a state of deprivation and social immobility that has kept the Muslim community educationally backward. If the reason for Muslim girls not being able to attend schools without hijab is the social obligations enforced by the religious authority and the family, it is the moral responsibility to expand the scope of choice of Muslim girls and not to further embed them in traditional norms.

The High Court Order:

The Karnataka High Court on 15th March, 2022, ordered that students should not wear hijab, saffron shawls (bhagwa) or use any religious flags while attending classes in Karnataka colleges which have a prescribed uniform, till the Court decides the case relating to ban on hijab in certain government colleges.⁷ The interim order was passed by a Bench of Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi and Justices Krishna S Dixit and JM Khazi in a batch of petitions filed by Muslim girl students in the State claiming that they were not being allowed to enter colleges on account of the government order which effectively bans the wearing of hijab (headscarves).

How the Controversy Started?

On February 5, 2022, the Karnataka Government passed an order exercising its powers under Section 133(2) of the **Karnataka Education Act, 1983** which grants the state to issue directives for government educational institutions to follow.⁸ In 2013, under this provision, the State had issued a directive making uniforms compulsory for education institutions. Referring to the 2013 directive, the latest directive specifies that a headscarf is not part of the uniform. It states that wearing a headscarf is not an essential religious practice for Muslims that can be protected under the Constitution. The order takes refuge in three cases decided by different High Courts to hold that banning the headscarf is not violative of fundamental rights, particularly freedom of religion.⁹ The petitioners, however, have

argued that the facts and circumstances of the three cases are different and cannot be applied to the Karnataka case. This means that the High Court will have to first decide whether wearing a hijab is an essential religious practice. The educational institution cited the government's order requiring a prescribed uniform to be worn by all students and hijab is not a part of the uniform. One student Resham, approached the Karnataka High Court to seek redress, three more students also joined in the matter known as, *Resham v State of Karnataka and Ors.*¹⁰

The controversy over headscarves was boiling for quite a number of days and took a violent turn, forcing policemen to fire tear gas shells to disperse a crowd gathered at a government college. Schools of neighbouring cities also had substantial police presence. Students at a government-run high school were told not to wear hijabs last month. Other educational institutions soon followed it. Non-Muslim students are blaming Muslim students for interrupting education by not conforming to government orders. Muslim students are also suffering as they consider the ban on hijab, disruptive of their freedom of religion. Main thrust of the petitioners' submissions being that wearing a hijab is an essential religious practice of the petitioners and that the government had no jurisdiction to impose orders in restricting the use of hijab.¹¹ They also asserted that when they sought admission, they were wearing hijab and it was not pointed out that they will have to do away with the hijab on being admitted.

In dealing with the question of freedom of religious practices, the Courts have dwelled on to find such practices essential to maintain the identity of a person to profess his/her faith in the religion he or she practices and if not allowed, whether it would result in the wrath of the injunctions of the religious doctrine he or she professes. One of the salient features of the religious tenets is the moral obligations that one has to carry in formulating his or her conduct, in obedience to the

command of the superior power in like manner his or her conduct has to be conducive to become obedient to the legal obligation or legal duty under the temporal law. This moral obligation cannot be allowed to be interpolated by outside ethos. If the religious tenets do not allow a woman to become a priest, the State cannot import secular ethos of gender equality to allow a woman to be appointed as a priest. If it is allowed, the constitutional protection will become void and hollow. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Commissioner of Police and others v. Acharya Jagadishwarananda Avadhuta* and another held as follows:

"What is meant by an essential part or practices of a religion is now the matter for elucidation. Essential part of a religion means the core beliefs upon which a religion is founded" wearing of hijab is one such belief.¹² Essential practice means those practices that are fundamental to following of a religious belief. It is upon the cornerstone of essential parts or practices the superstructure of religion is built, without which, a religion will be no religion. Test to determine whether a part or practice is essential to the religion is - to find out whether the nature of religion will be changed without that part or practice. If the taking away of that part or practice could result in a fundamental change in the character of that religion or in its behalf, then such part could be treated as an essential or integral part. There cannot be additions or subtractions to such part. Because it is the very essence of what religion and alterations will change its fundamental character. It is such permanent essential part is what is protected by the Constitution.¹³ Nobody can say that essential part or practice of one's religion has changed from a particular date or by an event. Such alterable parts or practices are definitely not the 'core' of religion where the belief is based and religion is founded upon. It could only be treated as mere embellishments to the non-essential part of the religious practices."

In *Amna Bint Basheer v Central Board of Secondary Education* (2016), the Kerala High Court held that the practice of wearing a hijab constitutes an essential religious practice but did not quash the dress code prescribed by CBSE. In that matter, the High Court opined:

"Thus the religious practice cannot be tested on the secular thoughts or any other consideration outside the religious authority. The personal law is not law within the meaning of expression "law" under article 13(1) of the Constitution. Thus, it is immune from the challenge based on constitutional parameters (the *State of Bombay v Narasu Appa Mai* [A.I.R (39) 1952 Bombay 84]).¹⁴

The enabling power of the State is limited to the areas referred under Article 25(2) (a) & (b) of the constitution, guaranteeing religious freedom.¹⁵ However, nothing prevents the States or the Courts from examining the true nature of the essential religious practice as was held in *W.P.(C).No.6813/2016* that it is open for the State to regulate or make laws consistent with the essential practice of a religion. However, while making a regulation or a law, the true import of the essential practice shall not be supplanted by the state.

The Article 25(1) couches a negative liberty ensuring "free from interference or obstacle" in practising the essential part of a religion, except in situations as referred in the said Article.

According to the political scientist, Thomas Hobbes "A freeman is he, that in those things, which by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindered to do what he has the will to do" (*Leviathan* Chapter 21 of the liberty of subjects) Isaiah Berlin says in his 1958 lecture, "Two Concepts of Liberty" refers to negative liberty as follows: "Liberty in the negative sense involves an answer to the question: 'What is the area within which the subject, a person should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons.'"¹⁶

Grounds on which the Karnataka Government order has been challenged?

Wearing a hijab is an expression protected under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution which guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression. Constitutionally, a right under Article 19(1) (a) can only be limited on the "reasonable restrictions" mentioned in Article 19(2). This includes sovereignty and integrity of India, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of courts, defamation or incitement to an offence.¹⁷ Student silently wearing a hijab /headscarf and attending class cannot in any manner be said to be a practice that disturbs "public order" and is only a profession of their faith. Ban on headscarves violates the fundamental right to equality since other religious markers, such as a turban worn by a Sikh, are not explicitly prohibited. Senior advocate Sanjay Hedge, appearing for the petitioners, also argued that the rules prescribed wearing of a dupatta for women and the state cannot dictate the manner of wearing that dupatta if a student wishes to cover her head with it.

The Principle of Essential Religious Practice and why it is Problematic.

The Supreme Court has developed the doctrine of 'essential religious practice' over time in religious disputes and stated that it is up to the Court to define what constitutes an essential religious practice.¹⁸ This in itself is questionable. Arguably, when there are several religions with different practices and values in a democracy and there is a conflict over how individuals should practice their religion, a neutral institution is needed to perform the task of adjudicating on this. It is, however, open to debate whether the Supreme Court is actually neutral and qualified in such a case. Interestingly, in *Ahmedabad St. Xaviers College Society v. State of Gujarat* the Supreme Court observed that it could not itself make coherent statements or interpret

what freedom of religion meant, which is perhaps one of the more explicit expressions of the Court in its scepticism about addressing the issue of religion.¹⁹

The Advocate General who argued on behalf of the State in the High Court of Karnataka (in favour of the ban) said that the Hijab was not an essential religious practice, which justified the ban.²⁰ This argument is problematic coming from a male lawyer without quoting reliable sources and without engaging with the opinions of feminist Muslim women on the issue. Several Muslim women have spoken up and commented that wearing the Hijab is an integral part of their faith. The Supreme Court, when developing the doctrine of essential religious practice, has also stated that 'in order for the practices in question to be treated as a part of religion they must be regarded by the said religion as its essential and integral part'. This implies the right of the religious community to determine what constitutes an essential religious practice, again raising the question of whether the Court or a legal argument by a lawyer can override that practice.

The State also argued that the Hijab does not fall under religious freedom but under freedom of expression, which is subject to institutional restraints. The reason given was that because wearing a Hijab is an 'option', it is not obligatory and therefore not 'essential', which takes it out of the area of 'essential religious practice'. Regardless of whether this wordplay was intended to make a legal point (which it fails to do), it makes an assumption by interpreting the tenets of Islam in a very specific manner for the sake of the argument. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the question is not just of whether the Hijab is an essential religious practice but why it is being subject to so much moral and legal scrutiny, in effect restricting the participation of many Muslim women in educational institutions.

Different reasons for Wearing a Hijab:

For many other women, the headscarf has become a means of resistance to standards of feminine beauty that demand more

exposure. Proponents of this view argue that removing clothing for the benefit of the male gaze does not equal liberation. According to researchers, women in hijabs note that employers must interact with them based on their qualifications rather than their appearance and that, therefore, the hijab levels the playing field. In Western countries, however, women find that wearing a head covering makes it harder to get hired.

Finally, for some women, the headscarf is a convenience. It can reduce comments from others about women being out in public and lessen incidents of harassment on the street and at work. Despite the multiple, complicated reasons behind wearing a hijab, there are those who routinely assert that women who wear a headscarf are necessarily oppressed. Examples of hijab-wearing women in the government, such as newly elected Congress women Ilhan Omar or athletes such as Olympian fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, may help dispel these stereotypes.²¹

The hijab garment has different legal and cultural connotation in various countries. In the province of Aceh in Indonesia, Muslim women are required to wear the hijab and all women are required to do so in Iran and Afghanistan.

France banned overt religious symbols, including many religious head coverings in 2005, in public schools and government buildings. In 2009 Kosovo, Azerbaijan in 2010, Tunisia partially lifted in 1981, and Turkey has been gradually lifting since all the countries who have banned the burqa in public schools and universities or government buildings, in spite of being Muslim majority countries. Syria and Egypt banned face veils in universities from July 2010 and 2015 respectively.²² In Lebanon, Morocco Tunisia, there are complaints of restriction or discrimination against women who wear hijab. Hijab in these countries, infested with unsettled political regimes and infested with terrorism, hijab is seen as a symbol of fundamentalism or sign of political Islam, when the

government there claims to be secular. It can't be denied that various head dresses worn by Muslim women are a symbol of identity and presence of Islam in European countries. At many places, adherence to hijab has been a cause for controversy and consideration for legal ban. Laws have been passed in France and Belgium to ban face-covering clothing, popularly described as the "burqa ban", although it does not only apply to the Afghan-model kind of Burqa. Reintroducing a controversial measure from Afghanistan's 1995-2001 Taliban rule, the interim Taliban regime has issued a decree barring women from leaving their homes without wearing the burqa, a garment that covers them from head to toe.²³

Most Muslims in Western Europe are immigrants and the issue of Islamic dress is linked with issues of immigration and recognition of Islam in Western Europe. There are currently 16 countries, out of 195 that have banned the burqa: Tunisia, Austria, Denmark, France, Belgium, Tajakistan, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chod, Congo- Brazzaville, Gabon, Netherlands, China (in Xinjiang region), Morocco, Shri Lanka and Switzerland.²⁴

In the case of India, we are having rich history of cultural and religious diversity and we believe in unity in diversity. Our constitution also recognizes diversity. It is a huge country and every region has its own food, language, clothing, cultural and religious practices. No other country can match the unimaginable wide compass of its unity in diversity. We have to preserve it. Ours is a unique country and this marvel of diversity is our wealth, a social capital. We all are duty bound to protect it. It is now that the western world is tasting diversity due to immigrant population, which they grant permission to come for humanitarian considerations or to overcome their guilt of having exploited their natural resources during their occupation before the Second World War. Some countries need manual labour, which their own population is reluctant to

perform and immigrants are willing to do it to survive after having escaped from their oppressive regimes. Immigrant population is expected to assimilate and integrate with the cultural ethos and values of the host countries. This has taken a toll on some immigrants in hijab wearing.

Various politicians are making comments both for and against the the hijab. The education of the students is being harmed. Due to COVID, they have already lost two years of their educational life. One hopes and prays for an early solution. Someone suggested that if these students insist on wearing the hijab, they should go to the Madrasas. That is no solution. Education is a fundamental right of every citizen of this country and to receive it at a place of his or her choice, as long as they fulfil the eligibility criteria. Not wearing hijab was not the criteria at the time of admission to the institution.

Court Judgements in Related Cases:

In 2015, at least two petitions were filed before the Kerala High Court challenging the prescription of dress code for All India Pre-Medical Entrance which prescribed wearing "light clothes with half sleeves not having big buttons, brooch/badge, flower, etc. with Salwar/Trouser" and "slippers and not shoes". Admitting the argument of the Central Board of School Education (CBSE) that the rule was only to ensure that candidates would not use unfair methods by concealing objects within clothes, the **Kerala HC directed the CBSE to put in place additional measures for checking students** who "intend to wear a dress according to their religious custom, but contrary to the dress code".²⁵

In **Amna Bint Basheer v Central Board of Secondary Education (2016)**, the Kerala HC examined the issue more closely. The Court held that the practice of wearing a hijab constitutes an **essential religious practice** but did not quash the CBSE rule. The court once again allowed for the "additional measures" and safeguards put in place in 2015.²⁶

However, on the issue of a uniform prescribed by a school, another Bench ruled differently in **Fathima Tasneem v State of Kerala (2018)**. A single Bench of the Kerala HC held that **collective rights of an institution would be given primacy over individual rights** of the petitioner.²⁷

Conclusion: What is the Way Forward?

Religious sentiments should not prevail while taking decisions on such matters but it should be based on the combination of rationality and modern views. Educational institutions should avoid the violation of the rights of individual students in the name of their right to administer a school or college. Our daily lives require us to live together with people who look different from us, wear different clothing, and eat different food, why should those differences be shut out from educational spaces in particular.

The task of political parties is to occupy this hitherto unnoticed space and re-articulate social, economic and political conditions of Muslim community to forge secular opposition. Opposition groups must speak about spatial segregation as an epidemic to the secular cause. They must speak of uplifting Muslim society from the repressive hold of the traditional maulvis whose diktats are often sacrosanct. To speak of Muslim women's rights to attend schools or colleges without hijab is not to alienate Muslims but to open up spaces for dissolution of religious differences. Therefore, taking recourse to legal-constitutional methods of resolution is futile to my mind. So long as the Opposition relies on the logic of old order, it will remain dormant. It will fail to erode Hindu social consent for Muslim marginalisation. The task for it is to narrow inter-communal friction by integrating the discourse of secularism with gender justice across social groups. This will create a window for reinvention of the Opposition.

Our Constitution guarantees to everyone an inviolate "**zone of freedom**" in personal matters, as long as the effect of this

freedom does not cause harm, or discrimination, at a broader social level. In the case of the hijab, there is no such harm or discrimination. However, an **Essential Religious Practices Test** is required for Hijab as it was done for keeping a beard. The Supreme Court in 2006 held that keeping a beard was not an essential part of Islamic practices.²⁸ Wearing of hijab should not hurt anyone else. May be the colour of the hijab can match with the colour of the uniform. It is a choice the person concerned if she feels comfortable and confident. It is a Muslim religious practice born out of usage of the mandate for centuries. The state needs to make investment of educational resources to make them understand its policies and values if different. To force students to do what they feel strongly about being a part of their religious practice is a violation of their right to life and to live with the dignity defined by them. Let their dignity not be compromised and education not interrupted.

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Attitude of Assamese Intellectuals towards Women's Education in the Nineteenth Century

Dr. Sanghamitra Sarma

Abstract:

The period of nineteenth century witnessed introduction of western education in Assam. However the idea of women's education was neglected. It was with the coming of the Christian missionaries the need of women's education become realised in an organised manner. The Christian missionaries established various schools and also tried to enhance social position of women. However there were some people who opposed this. Therefore two distinct groups of people emerged. One group had pro-women sentiment and they supported women's education. On the other hand, the other group had anti-women sentiment and they opposed women's education. The present research paper aims at studying the attitude of Assamese intellectuals towards women's education in Assam especially in the nineteenth century. The present research paper will help one to understand the condition of women's education in Assam in the nineteenth century.

Keywords:

Western education, Assamese intellectuals, social position

Introduction:

The colonization of Assam by the British in 1826 led to a drastic change in Assam. The six hundred years old Ahom monarchy was replaced by the modern form of bureaucracy. The history of Assam in the nineteenth century witnessed socio-political, economic and administrative transformations. To continue the modern bureaucracy the British government required people having new skills and knowledge. At the initial stage the British Government was not interested to impart English education to the people of Assam. Consequently they fulfilled their requirement by importing 'Bengali Babus' from West Bengal. The Bengalis were already educated by the English education as they were colonized by the British Government previously. Therefore the British Government recruited those people to fulfil their administrative needs. Gradually the so-called 'Bengali Babus' created their monopoly in almost all the departments (Barpujari 349). The British realised the fact that the indigenous people of Assam may create resentment for depriving them from the employment in the bureaucracy. Consequently Francis Jenkins, the then commissioner of Assam (1834-61) tried to win the confidence of indigenous Assamese youths by imparting English education. Jenkins strongly urged the government to introduce English Education under supervision of local authorities at Sadar Stations like Goalpara, Guwahati, Nagaon, Darrang and Biswanath (Barpujari 349). However the education for women in Assam was still neglected. In fact there was no such demand for the introduction of education for women. Only daughters and wives of some well-to-do families got the opportunity to have some kind of education. These women only received knowledge of reading and writing within their home itself. The education for common women was considered as dangerous and the common people have the fear that nobody will marry a girl if she could read and write (Barpujari, vol v

201). Haliram Dhekial Phukan who supported the women's education wanted to make people conscious and therefore wrote number of letters to Bengali newspapers. At this moment the American Baptist Missionaries played the role of saviour for the Assamese women. They took some concrete steps and set up a few elementary schools for girls. Though steps were taken for the introduction of women education some Assamese intellectuals were not in a mood to welcome education for women. The period witnessed two distinct groups in relation to introduction of women education. The first group led by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Hemchandra Barua and others were supporters of women's education while the second group led by Balinarayan Bora and others were against women's education. The members from both groups expressed their ideas through their writings in the periodicals of that time.

Objectives:

The objectives of the paper are-

- i) To highlight the introduction of education in colonial Assam
- ii) To highlight the attitude of Assamese intellectuals towards women's education in Assam
- iii) To highlight the status of women especially in nineteenth century

Methodology:

In the present research paper a proper scientific research methodology has been employed. Data found from the primary and secondary sources have been used in the 'Discussion' section of the paper. To collect the data, various books, journals and research papers have been used. Data has been analysed to arrive at the 'Conclusion'. In this research paper primarily analytical method has been used. However comparative method has also been used whenever necessary.

Scope of the paper:

The present research paper will discuss the attitude of the Assamese intellectuals towards women education. The study will include the Brahmaputra valley while discussing the issue. The period for the study will cover the nineteenth century. To discuss the main issue some selected articles from the Assamese periodicals of this period has been taken.

Discussion:

The American Baptist missionaries founded their mouthpiece *Orunodoi*, the first Assamese newspaper, in 1846. The newspaper played the role of harbinger for the Assamese society. By using western perspectives the newspaper began the process of transformation of the Assamese society. Before the publication of this newspaper the missionaries had set up number of elementary schools especially for girls. The first school of this type was founded by Mrs Cutter at Sadiya in 1837. It was followed by Mrs Brown who established a school at Sibsagar (1840), Bronson at Nagaon (1843) and Mrs Barkar at Guwahati (1850). The missionaries at the initial stage also tried to establish schools for girls in hills. With this vision they moved from village to village but they were not encouraged by the local people. As stated by Burdette, "the people were cordial and friendly, but when the school was mentioned, they were silent" (Barpujari, vol v 201). She further stated that, 'the girls were anxious to go but their friends opposed them' (Barpujari, vol v 201). Thus the female American Baptist missionaries played a significant role to educate the girls of Assam. In these schools curriculum was not restricted to only reading and writing. They tried to impart basic life skills to the girls by introducing sewing, knitting, weaving and other domestic works.

However the common people were not enthusiastic for the propagation of women's education. This point can be proved by the fact that towards the last part of the nineteenth century

the number of private institutions for boys was ninety one whereas institutions for girls was nil (Barpujari, vol v 202). Even a section of people who supported women's education did not like the idea of girls becoming doctors and lawyers. They only advocated that girls should have taken knowledge of reading and writing and a minimum knowledge of history and geography (Barpujari, vol v 202). This clearly points out that the supporters of women's education were also not free from their age-old traditional and patriarchal mindset. They advocated female education but were not interested to face the females as equal with the male counterparts.

In the early nineteenth century, the wave of Bengal renaissance swept over the Assamese society and influenced the educated youth of that time to a large extent. According to Amalendu Guha, the wave of Bengal renaissance motivated them to borrow new ideas of the west (Guha 206-218). The two most important Assamese personalities of that time were Haliram Dhekial Phukan and his brother Jajyaram. Haliram Dhekial Phukan was the father of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Jajyaram was his uncle. Both these two personalities were the devoted supporters of women's education. Haliram Dhekial Phukan wrote a letter to *Samachar Darpan* of Bengal in support of women's education in the first half of nineteenth century (Guha 208). On the other hand, Jajyaram went to Calcutta to learn English education. In Calcutta he joined as an associate of Raja Rammohan Ray in his reform movement (Barua: 18). Influenced by the thoughts of his father and Uncle Anandaram Dhekial Phukan also went to Calcutta to have English education in 1841. After coming back from Calcutta with new ideas and thoughts Anandaram Dhekian Phukan expressed his thoughts in *Orunodoi*. He took initiatives to educate the Assamese women and girls. He himself set an example by educating his wife and daughter Padmavati. But at that time also institutional education for females was not so

common therefore Anandaram taught modern education to his wife and daughter in his home. Anandaram's daughter Padmavati proved herself as a writer who wrote *Sudharmar Upakhyan* (1884), an early novella in Assamese, and *Hita Sadhika* (1885). Her writings also got published in Assamese periodicals like *Assam Bandhu*, *Jonaki* and *Banhi* (Dhekial Phukan 16).

The next important personality who followed the path of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was Hemchandra Barua. Hemchandra Barua in his article 'Stri-Shiksha' published in *Orunodoi* 1861 supported the need of education for Assamese women. He stated that education only can make the Assamese women free. According to him, women can be a good life partner for a man if she got sufficient education. Here, he emphasised on the mental equality of women with their male counterparts. This concept of mental equality with husband came from Bengal renaissance, which was a new concept for the traditional Assamese society. Before that the traditional Assamese society considered women as instruments of giving birth to children and doing household duties. In the same article Barua emphasised that education for women would benefit the society. He stated "Jetialoike tirota bilakok bidya sikai muktavastha dia nejai, tetialoike desor mangal hoar sambhavana nai" ["There is no possibility of welfare of the country, till when women are not given freedom by providing them education"; (Hemchandra Barua *Rachanawali* 459)]. The article clearly pointed out that Hemchandra Barua not only supported women's education but also emphasised on the independence of women. This point shows the modern and liberal outlook of Hemchandra Barua who by his writings tried to emphasise that women are equal with their male counterparts.

Intellectuals like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Hemchandra Barua had pro-women sentiment and they advocated their views in relation to women's education in

various Assamese periodicals. Thus they played the role of torch bearers in nineteenth century for the spread of women's education in Assam. They raised their voice in support of institutional women's education in Assam. However there was an anti-women group who did not support institutional education for women. This group was not in favour of giving equal right to the women with the male member of the society. In the monthly paper *Mou* in 1886, Balinarayan Bora contributed an article entitled "Tirutar Ban ki" ("what are women's duties?"). This article clearly expressed the anti-women ideology of Balinarayan Bora. According to him, women should not be given the opportunity to have modern institutional education like the male members of the society (Bora 2). He stated that education for women could be even more dangerous for Assam than the Burmese invasions (Barpujari, vol vi 202). He further stated that "the Bhati Sabhyata" ("western education") gradually entered into Bengal and created a group of women who engaged themselves in reading cheap popular novels. The subject matter of these novels is mostly centred round in love stories like western popular fiction. Balinarayan Bora wanted to control "The Bhati Sabhyata" which penetrated into Assam very slowly. For this he advised specific work structure to both men and women and prevented women from doing manly professions like doctors and advocates (Bora 2). He advocated that household works like child birth, child pampering, discipline, hosting guest and weaving should be the prime works for Assamese women. He further stated that weaving can make Assamese women economically independent and will increase their patience (Bora 3). According to Balinarayan Bora, after having the basic knowledge of language and arithmetic women need not have to study. They should concentrate in household duties (Bora 4). Thus the article clearly pointed out the biased and patriarchal mindset on the part of Balinarayan Bora. Such a patriarchal attitude of

Balinarayan Bora is quite unexpected as he was a civil engineer from London in 1877. Further, the monthly magazine, *Assam Bandhu* (1885-1886) also reflected similar attitude towards women's education. In an article "Ghainir Kartabya Aru Stree Shikshya" ("works of wife and women's education") by Ratneswar Mahanta also emphasised that Assamese women should follow the ideals of Dharmasastras and should ignore the new western learning. He again advocated that daughters-in-law without having formal education were much suited to family life than those with formal education (Phukan 87-88).

Conclusion:

The discussion made above shows that the nineteenth century witnessed a social revolution especially related to women's issues like education, equality and freedom. This revolution was the result of the foundation of the first Assamese periodical entitled *Orunodoi* in 1846. Two groups of Assamese intellectuals played the dominant role while discussing the issues related with women especially the women's education. The first group dominated by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Hemchandra Barua, were in favour of women's education, equality and freedom. While the other group led by Balinarayan Bora and Ratneswar Mahanta were opposed to such issues. The writings of anti-women's education group reflect the middle class view regarding women's education and gender relations. This kind of attitude clearly reflects the narrow conservative mindset of their social circle. However the time was favourable for a positive change in matters related to women. The new century witnessed several new thoughts. The pro-women movement become stronger than the anti-women movement. In this social and intellectual environment the first Assamese women's Magazine *Ghar Jeuti* emerged in 1925 which provided a new platform to express the thoughts to start the second phase of movement for women's rights and equality.

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Role of Media in Objectification of Women (Special Reference to TV, Music Videos and Movies)

Rasmita Borkotoky

Introduction:

Human Rights are those conditions of life that allow us to fully develop and use our human qualities of intelligence and conscience and to satisfy our spiritual needs. They are fundamental to our nature without which we cannot live as human being. According to Kim, "Human rights represents claim and demands essential to the projection of human life and the enhancement of human dignity and should therefore, enjoy full social and political sanctions". However, it is important to analyse such rights from a women's perspective as women are depicted in our society as belonging to an inferior status, 'non-political', 'non productive' private and emotional. Women's rights have been violated since the beginning of human civilisation. They have been violated not because women are physically and mentally weak but because of the fact that social structures framed by men and because of their attitude towards women: Roy (2006).

The United Nations Centre for Human Rights defines Human Rights "as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human being".

Some opinions of famous philosophers about women are – from Rousseau, “Women’s sharply distinct position and functions are those that are natural to her own sex”. JS Mill pointed out that “The great occupation of women should be beautified life”. Thus, it is found that women in our society are dominated, exploited and disadvantaged. Although, women play a vital role in every sphere of social life, yet, their participation is not recognised. In this regard, media specially cable and satellite television, can play a vital role to create a positive environment in our society. Because, amongst all the popular means of communication, TV has the greatest mass appeal and acceptance. TV has fascinated all the sections of the society irrespective of sex, age, caste, etc. Hence, it is called in the west as the “Chewing gum of eyes, millions of people of all ages and belonging to different ethnic groups’ glue to it”. Sharman (2009).

But in reality, it has been noticed that media particularly Television constantly degrades a woman’s value by projecting negative images through serials, advertisements, etc. Women are becoming objectified.

Objectives

Keeping in mind, the role of media with special reference to TV, movies, web series and music videos this paper attempts to showcase the negative effect of the discriminating projection of woman via the same and thus creating gender biasness and adversely affecting the human rights of women and also to show concern about objectification of women and the misogynistic portrayal of women under the male gaze.

Methodology:

The methodology is based on the secondary data.

Films and Videos:

Movies across the world, especially Indian movies (Bollywood and Tollywood) tend to portray the female lead

under the influence of male gaze. Female lead characters are often objectified and stereotyped. Most of the times you can easily replace the female lead with a sexy lamp-post. The women portrayed in these movies were almost four times more likely to be sexually objectified than men for example, “the camera focused on their body parts in slow motion” Examples of such movies are Pushpa, Dhoom series, Housefull series, Student of the Year etc. Other times sexist and misogynist actions of the hero is glorified. Examples of movies are Kabir Singh, Raanjhana, Dabang series. Indian movies also tend to spiral around a “male saviour” theme. A common scene in many films include women being molested and a superhuman hero coming to her rescue. If the woman was the heroine, she would be saved. Otherwise, she would be killed brutally and the whole movie would revolve around revenge. These films fail to humanize women victims as they tend to pity and sympathise them rather than providing them with empathy. Example of such movies are the holy trinity of the movie Pink, Dear Comrade etc. These portrayals are tied to a lack of women working as directors, writers and producers, and in other behind the camera roles in the film industry. It is rightly said that “These films show a world which is run by men, for men.”

Advertisement and Women:

From sexist phrases like “men will be men” to over sexualising a girl eating a piece of chocolate the advertisement industry has also failed to represent women in an empowering manner. How appalling it is to say, women continue to be sexualized and misinterpreted in advertisements, even in 2022. From oversexualising a perfume ad (axe) and a mango drink (slice) advertisers can’t look at a woman selling beyond stereotypes and sex. Advertisement establishes an unrealistic image of a “perfect girl” into their audiences’ brain, which includes young girls and boys. Young girls are conditioned to

believe that an ideal woman is supposed to have flawless skin, a zero-size figure and is excited about marriage. Even sanitary pads deny to show the ugly side of menstruation and prefer to show "blue blood". On the other hand young boys and men are conditioned to believe that women are flawless, and are mere objects meant to be sexualised.

We can conclude by saying that "the process of commodification in advertising brings out the paradoxical nature of the women's role as a consumer". She is the subject of a transaction in which her own commodification is ultimately the object.

Music, Video and Women:

Music videos especially those in Bollywood tend to be extremely sexist and thrive on objectification of women. These songs feed of male gaze and set a sexist mindset amongst its many viewers. The majority of Bollywood movies include songs that are categorised as 'item songs'. These songs have women as central figures around whom the songs are choreographed. While these songs have nothing to do with the plot, they are mass entertainers. These women are shown wearing skimpy clothes with camera angles focusing on specific body parts, thus objectifying them. There are also many songs which encourage rape culture, sexual harassment, stalking and non-consensual relationships. It glorifies toxic masculinity and fuels the toxic male ego. To sum up women are seen as promotional vehicles and their bodies and sexuality is used to draw people's attention and sell music videos. Examples of such songs are Genda Phool, Main tere agal bagal hu, Gandhi Baat, munni badnam, nah goriye, etc.

Soap Operas and Women:

Soap operas are an integral part of Indian society. They are watched by majority of the contemporary masses. However even in 2022 soap operas tend to be filled with patriarchal stereotypes. Female characters in soap operas are often

portrayed in a misogynistic society where they are behind the kitchen doors and rarely pulling the economic strings from upfront. Slut shaming and patriarchal dress coding of women is quite evident in many such soaps. The need of a male saviour is also a recurrent theme in most of the Indian soaps. These soaps enforce the belief that women need to be dressed in a certain way to uphold their character, that women are weaker than their male counterparts and need their presence to get them out of any trouble. It also enforces misogynistic ideals of a good women. A good women i.e a Sati-Savitri according to these patriarchal ideals is non confronting, submissive, timid and is completely un-opinionated. Examples of such soap operas include Kumkum Bhagya, Bhabiji Ghar pe hain, Is Pyaar ko kya naam du, etc.

Cartoon and Women

Even the Indian cartoon channels and networks fail to provide a good and unbiased representation of women. Barbie- a famous cartoon character, has fair skin, a slim figure, and feminine features and personality. This creates an unreal beauty standard among young girls. Cartoons like Chota Bheem, again showcase the need of a male survivor. Japanese cartoons like Doraemon, Ninja Hatori etc also show a very objective and sexist representation of young girls, when we see characters like Nobita and Kenichi who are young boys, trying to peek into girls bathrooms, which has a negative impact on the upbringing of young boys. If U/A shows are having this kind of explicit and sexist content, the future of feminism and healthy and non-biased representation of women in the media world is in a very questionable state.

Conclusion

Thus, it is clear that television, movies and music videos represent a very stereotypical, sexist and misogynistic image of women. Since its images mostly reflect traditional patriarchal

notion of gender, it constantly degrades women and send negative messages about the ways in which women should be treated thereby destroying human rights of women. However, as the eye, ear and limbs of the society, media particularly TV can play a crucial role to upgrade the society's views towards women. In this regard, we can give special commendation to certain movies like 'The great Indian Kitchen' 'Piku' 'Chak De India' 'Queen', etc for standing up for feminism and presenting the calibre of women. Further, serials like "Jhansi Ki Rani" 'Udaan' 'Main kuch bhi kar sakti hu' should be given in the prime time to show the other side of an Indian woman. So, this media should present serials, stories, images, programmes and advertisements that promote healthy attitude towards women, masculinity, relationship and sexuality. Media should provide fair and full coverage of women in politics, sports, business, health and education. Media should act as a pressure group against these injustices. Thus question arises:

"When will media and entertainment sector give justice to feminism?"

"When will this misogynistic and patriarchal representation of women stop?"

"What is the future of feminism in the media sector?"

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Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya's Concept of Philosophy

Debananda Bhattacharyya

Abstract:

Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya 1875-1949 (henceforth KCB) was one of the prominent contemporary philosophers of 20th century philosophy who rebuilt the classical Indian philosophy in the light of western philosophy to an extent. KCB often claimed to be the most creative academic philosopher writing in English during Indian colonial times. It is said that he confronted the so called classical concept of philosophy, so thus pioneered his own neo philosophical thoughts. In the books like "The Concept of Philosophy (1936)", "The Subject as Freedom (1923)" and "Studies of Philosophy", he contributed to the field of philosophy in general and also enlightened the fields of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetic and politics and culture. KCB in the philosophical arena addressed the problem of knowledge of the self, consciousness, subjectivity and freedom of will of human beings and the very concept of the Absolute in modern Indian philosophy. He held that philosophy does not study facts or attributes of external objects, which are knowable. Thus, for him, the contents of philosophy are not literally thinkable.

According to him, philosophical thoughts are symbolic, it is the expression of theoretic consciousness or thoughts. Anyway, this paper humbly aims to analyze KCB's concept of philosophy and its relation to different philosophical concepts and his method of rethinking of philosophy and philosophizing.

Key Words :

20th century philosophy, colonial times, epistemology, self, subjectivity, Absolute, theoretic consciousness, philosophizing.

Introduction :

Krishna Chandra Bhattacharyya 1875-1949 (henceforth KCB) was one of the prominent contemporary philosophers of 20th century philosophy who rebuilt the classical Indian philosophy in the light of western philosophy to an extent. KCB often claimed to be the most creative academic philosopher writing in English during Indian colonial times. KCB's philosophy originated in the ancient Indian philosophy — particularly of the Advaita vedanta, Samkhya, Yoga and Jaina philosophy. He was also influenced by the German philosophy — specially of Kant. It is said that he confronted the so called classical concept of philosophy, so thus pioneered his own neo philosophical thoughts. In the books like "The Concept of Philosophy (1936), "The Subject as Freedom (1923) and "Studies of Philosophy" (Published posthumously in 1983) he contributed to the field of philosophy in general and also enlightened he fields of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetic and politics and culture. KCB in the philosophical arena addressed the problem of knowledge of the self, consciousness, subjectivity and freedom of will of human beings and the very concept of Absolute in modern Indian philosophy. He held that philosophy does not study facts or attributes of external objects, which are knowable. Thus, for him, the contents of philosophy are not literally thinkable. According to him, philosophical thoughts are symbolic, it is the expression of theoretic consciousness or thoughts. One

can see two aspects in KCB's philosophy— one as of 'interpretation' and secondly 'construction.' However, it is difficult to give an account of his philosophy in terms of any accepted philosophical model. To some extent his philosophy can be defined as transcendental Idealism. But it is not idealism in the sense of "idea-ism". It is idealism in the sense of "ideal-ism". His philosophy can be called transcendental in the sense that the nature of the ultimate is not describable in terms of any accepted philosophical statement or quality. KCB related everything to experience and reality is conceived as the ultimate presupposition of experience. His reality is beyond subjective and objective ideas. It is somewhat like abstract entity.

Methodology:

While preparing the paper both analytic and descriptive methods are used by using secondary data in the form of books and articles. Help from internet is also being taken.

Aims and Objectives of the paper :

The basic aim of this paper is to analyse the concept of philosophy of KCB and its relation to the world process. This paper also tries to put some light on KCB's philosophical concepts with classical Indian philosophy as well in comparative manner.

Broad study:

KCB felt that Philosophy as well as logic and epistemology is not actual knowledge over a literal thought, but to some extent gives the knowledge of the reality behind the worldly process. He said that philosophy presents beliefs that are speakable. Theoretic consciousness constitutes the understanding of what can be spoken, and this understanding involves belief in something "as known or to be known". He called theoretic consciousness to be thought which is classified into four as (1) empirical, (2) pure objective thought, (3) spiritual and (4) transcendental thought. The contents of these four types

of thoughts are fact, self- subsistent, reality and truth. According to KCB, science deals with fact, but only philosophy deals with the other three. The distinction between the province of science and metaphysics is fundamental in KCB's thoughts, and it has some similarity to logical positivism.

KCB described the grades of thought to be grades of speaking; speakability to be the necessary character of philosophic thought. Philosophy is such self-evident elaboration of the self-evident which is spoken but not spoken of. In the objective self-evident which is spoken, the objective attitude is retained; in the subjective self-evident which is spoken as "I am" means something that is subjectively enjoyed and transcendental self-evident is spoken as the "the Absolute self".

According to KCB, science deals with object or fact. What is perceivable or has necessary reference to the perceivable, is speakable in the form of a literal judgment. Fact is always a fact related to facts. He said that knowledge of fact must be expressible and produce information. But in actuality, philosophy, as KCB believed, is not concerned with facts. When philosophy blunders into the domain of science, investigates facts, fails to produce good philosophy, nor good science, but only imaginative literature. KCB held that philosophy is not the sum total of scientific knowledge. The scientific knowledge cannot be accepted as philosophical knowledge in proper sense of the term. He thus advised not to confuse philosophy with science, and science with philosophy.

KCB held that Philosophy must be dislodged from the sphere of fact or object. According to him, philosophy deals with the contents of pure thought, in the objective, in subjective and transcendental attitude. These contents – the self-subsistent pure object, the individual enjoyed self, the absolute that transcends both – are not distinguishable from the thought of them. The concept of object is got in contrast with the subject as the self-evident content of spiritual

consciousness. The object is thus understood as self-subsistent before fact is understood as object. We can understand empirical facts or objects existing apart the experience of them. But the contents of pure thought (pure consciousness) are not intelligible apart from such thought. The pure contents of thought are not therefore assertable as fact. They are supposed to be self-evident, and being self-evident a pure content reveals itself without any reference to other content — KCB observed. He held it as non-related and as it so, it cannot be expressed in the form of judgment.

That is why KCB held that philosophy cannot be said to yield any knowledge of facts or any synthetic judgment. Philosophy is concerned with analytic thought. Self-evident contents of pure thought are simply analysed and formulated by philosophy, and their inner meanings systematically elaborated. These elaborations are expressed like judgments with no factual information. On the other hand, philosophical judgments cannot be called judgments in the literal sense, and they are metaphorically symbolic judgments.

It is said that corresponding to the three contents of pure thought there can be three broad divisions of philosophy. KCB gave a very brief synopsis of these three in his statement in contemporary Indian philosophy as philosophy of object, philosophy of spirit and philosophy of truth which are already mentioned above. He discussed these contents elaborately in the subject as freedom.

KCB discussed the concept of the Absolute as a theoretic consciousness in the form "I am nought". This has an apparent similarity of Advaitic Vedanta concept of 'Neti Neti' for the reference of Brahman or Absolute reality. The Absolute can't be expressed in a positive form. The Absolute unspeakable, truth yet untruth, but being and reality devoid of any positive quality. KCB accepted the Absolute as conceived in Vedanta, in Baudha as well as in Hegelian form. The Absolute is

conceived rigorously as truth in Advaita Vedanta, what is loosely called nihilistic Buddhism apparently understand the Absolute as freedom. Again, the Hegelian Absolute can be taken to represent the indeterminate of truth and freedom, i.e., value. To KCB, Absolute is not a unitary something, but an unifiable triplicity of knowing, feeling and willing of the all pervasive supreme consciousness/mind.

Besides metaphysical teaching / metaphysics, logic and epistemology also play an important role in KCB's philosophy. For him both logic and epistemology consist of accomplished meaning. Logic basically deals with truth and falsity, epistemology on the other is the study of knowing objects or functions. He was basically interested in knowledge. Knowledge for him is the awareness of reality. He focused on different types of other judgments vis-à-vis knowledge. However, knowledge can be true. KCB observed that there are two types of introspections namely psychological and epistemological, which are responsible for perception and cognition respectively. In his epistemology belief also finds a place. Regarding illusion he said that it may be regarded as having some kind of abstract being or as contradiction. He also discussed non-illusory. He described dreams as perceptions without sensation. In ideas and dreams, there is a felt abruptness of the impression. However, he accepted, dreams to be illusory but mostly self-conscious. The self seems to be free from body in dream.

In the philosophy of KCB there is a meagre distinction between the subject and object. He supposed subject as freedom. The subject is self-conscious. The self-consciousness of the speaker is not only expressed by, but also designated by 'I'. However, he held that the concept of an object is inseparably connected with that of the subject. The object is that which the subject feels or knows to be distinct from itself, that from which the self withdraws itself; the object as to the subject as

shadow is to light. The object is the symbol of the spirit, the spirit of the Absolute. Philosophy which deals with these is therefore also symbolic thinking. Speech is both the basis and vehicle of such thought. The basis structure of philosophical thought is created by speech.

Conclusion

Generally Philosophy is supposed to be the study and investigation of the world-order. Unlike western philosophy, Indian philosophy has a practical utility and it serves a practical as well as religious purpose. It aims at man's liberation. The path of liberation consists in knowledge of the absolute reality and its realization in this very life or after. This knowledge is the knowledge of reality itself. Philosophy teaches man to make a differentiation between the real and unreal. But, KCB did not agree with this theme of philosophy. In this respect he rather took the side of Kant, or the logical positivist. Like Kant and the logical positivists, he believed that the aim of philosophy is not to construct a synthetic world-view. He felt that the judgment of philosophy are not factual. Instead of it he described philosophy as symbolic thinking. To him, philosophy is a systematic symbolism having alternatives. As philosophy in general varies in accordance with the self-revealed nature of the absolute, the philosophy of religion also varies in accordance with different types of religious experiences.

KCB had taken into consideration the different modes of experience involving object, self – subsistent, pure subjective experience and the transcendental which is neither subjective nor objective in his analysis of Absolute. Again the three fold classification of consciousness on his part, had made him to conclude that Absolute is demanded free definite. He argued that the what is significant for known content, may be insignificant in case of Absolute. KCB felt that the western philosophy committed fault by trying to describe the Absolute

in terms of attributes. But for him Absolute cannot even be described as reality. It is pure indefinite, thus transcending the subject and object and is free from the realm of both... KCB may be questioned regarding his comment on the Absolute as indeterminate. If the Absolute is indefinite, unknown — beyond real and unreal, and if it is not even expressible in positive way, then it is meaningless— even logically inconsistent to try to describe the triple forms of the Absolute. KCB, who considered knowledge, feeling and willing as three bases of his formation of the Absolute, could not establish the existence of the knower or subject in real sense. One can also question KCB's stand regarding the capability of alternating of the Absolute. At the same time Absolute cannot be finite and infinite.

In his "Subject as Freedom" KCB considered one's body as subject for perceiving objects. He also dealt with psychic and spiritual subjectivity with its feeling and introspection. Finally he concluded that introspective subject is free from objectivity and is freedom itself and expressed by the word 'I'. But this may not be true. The analysis of subjectivity in KCB's philosophy turns to be complex.

KCB had discussed only the epistemological process involved in understanding the concept of value. He neither gave the definition of value nor the criterion. Eventually there is a possibility of arriving at good or bad as value as per KCB's conception. Anyway KCB's philosophy is dominated by psychological and epistemological interpretations. Analysis in real sense may show the limitations and unsatisfactoriness of such apprehension. The emphasis on transcendence of the subject-object duality may be termed as the influence of Advaita Vedanta in KCB's philosophy.

In the above paragraphs we have tried to summarize KCB's concept of philosophy which is compact to allow further condensation and requires more elaboration and explanation.

The philosophy of the indefinite has a dialect of its own. To understand this philosophy properly one needs to look at the external world with negative attention to get aware of the indefinite. This kind of negative attention are also advocated by some Indian systems. But to KCB's lies credit of conceiving an entire scheme of logic, metaphysics, philosophy of religion, subjectivity and the Absolute in the light of indefinite, and assigning a place to each of the apparently conflicting systems of logic, metaphysics and philosophy justifying its claim to truth in the light of his conception of truth as manifold, i.e., as the possible alternative revelations of the indefinite absolute. Lastly, it may be concluded that KCB exhibited a western style of philosophizing. His inclination for Kant was clear. Unlike the Classical Indian Philosophers of past, he never spoke for and from Indian standpoint. He was neither materialist like the Carvaka nor a realist like Nyaya-Vaisesika. It is sometimes said that KCB was influenced by Vedanta (there is no doubt regarding KCB being an Idealist) philosophy. His concept of subject becoming free seemed to resemble Sankara's attributeless and unqualified Brahman. Of course, he did not reject the empirical world like Sankara. However, the world was not asserted by KCB as Samkhya did.

But despite these all, we cannot overlook that KCB's philosophical thoughts rooted deeply in Indian classical philosophy. The entire transcendental philosophy and psychology of KCB seemed to presuppose the concept of Moksha or liberation, which is the summum bonum of human life in Indian philosophy. The goal of his philosophy was freedom as such, the possibility of which is never envisaged by the existentialist phenomenologist's of the west.

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Concept of Epistemology: A Study with Reference to Carvaka Philosophy

Ruma Payeng

Abstract

Carvaka Philosophy is one of the heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy. It is called materialism in Indian thought. According to Carvaka Philosophy, Perception (Pratyaksa) is the only source of valid knowledge. Carvakas say that knowledge means whatever we can perceive through our sense organs, and that is the only right knowledge. There are two kinds of perception such as (a) External Perception and (b) Internal Perception. External Perception means the contact between five sense organs and the external objects. Internal Perception means the mind (manas) which is the internal organ comes into contact with the psychical states and processes like cognition, affection, conation, desire, pain, pleasure etc. But they don't admit the mind as an independent sense organ, so they don't admit internal perception through mind. The Carvakas don't admit Inference (Anumana) and Testimony (Sabda) as a means of valid knowledge.

Keywords:

Carvaka, perception, inference, epistemology.

Introduction:

Regarding the founder and main text book of Carvaka Philosophy, no clear and definite view is found. Brihaspati is usually referred to as the founder of Carvaka or Lokayata Philosophy. According to another view, Carvaka is the name of the founder of this school. The word Carvaka comes from the Sanskrit word caru "agreeable" and vak "speech". The etymology of Carvaka is to mean "agreeable speech" or pejoratively, "sweet-tongued" for which this doctrine is superficially attractive. According to another view, the word carvaka derives from the root 'charv' meaning 'to eat' possibly alluding to the philosophy's hedonistic precepts of "eat, drink, and be marry", or it signifies a person who eats up his own words, all who eats up all moral and ethical considerations.

This Philosophy is also called Lokayata because it was prevalent (ayatah) among the people (lokesu), and meant the world-outlook of the people. Lokayata means a commoner and therefore, by implication, a man of low and unrefined taste. Carvaka holds direct perception and experience, as proper sources of knowledge. They reject inference and testimony as a source of valid knowledge.

Objectives of the Study:

The main aim of this paper is –

1. To study about Perception (Pratyaksa) as source of valid knowledge accepted by Carvaka Philosophy.
2. To analyse the issues of the denial of the validity of the Inference (Anumana) and Testimony (Sabda).

Methodology:

The methodology of this paper is both analytical and descriptive. And the source of collection is primary as well as secondary.

Epistemology:

The word 'Epistemology' is derived from two Greek words 'Episteme' and 'Logos'. The word 'Episteme' means Knowledge

and 'Logos' means science. Hence, 'Epistemology' means the science of knowledge. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy which acquires into the nature, origin, source, conditions and limits of knowledge. It deals with the questions – what is knowledge? What is the origin and source of knowledge? Is knowledge of the ultimate reality possible? What are the conditions of validity of knowledge? What is the range and limit of knowledge? The ultimate goal of philosophy is realisation of true knowledge. In Indian Philosophy true cognition is known as 'Prama'. Prama means the valid knowledge which is free from all doubt. False cognition is known as Aprama.

Pramana is the means by which true cognition or valid knowledge is achieved. Generally, Indian Philosophy recognizes Six Pramanas, such as (1) Pratyaksa or Perception, (2) Anumana or Inference, (3) Sabda or Verbal testimony, (4) Upamana or comparison, (5) Arthapatti or apprehension and (6) Anupalabधि or no-perception. However, Indian Philosophical schools present divergent opinions regarding the nature and validity of different pramanas. Among six Pramanas, Carvaka accepts only Perception or Pratyaksa as source of valid knowledge.

Perception or Pratyaksa as source of valid knowledge:
The Carvakas recognize perception as the only means of valid knowledge. They reject inference and testimony as means of valid knowledge. They say that knowledge means whatever we can perceive through our sense organs, and that is the only right knowledge. Perception is either external or internal. External perception is due to the intercourse of the five sense organs with their objects. Internal perception depends upon external perception. The manas can work upon the material supplied by external perception. It is not independent of the external sense-organs. The perceptible world is the only reality. The things perceived by the five sense-organs only are real.

The other things beyond the reach of perception are not real. Heaven and hell are not real, because they are not perceived. The five sense- organs are (a) Tactual, (b) Gustatory, (c) Olfactory, (d) Visual and (e) Auditory. The tactual organ perceives softness, hardness, heat, cold, roughness, smoothness and the like. The gustatory organ perceives sweet, sour, pungent, astringent and other tastes. The olfactory organ perceives agreeable and disagreeable odours. The visual organ perceives walls, jars, posts, men, beasts, earth, mountains and the like. The auditory organ perceives various kinds of sounds. The perceptible world is real. It is an aggregate of perceptible things and qualities. They regard Perception or Pratyaksa is the only true source of knowledge.

The Denial of Inference:

The Carvakas don't admit the inference as a means of valid knowledge. They argue that if inference is to be regarded as a means of valid knowledge, it must presuppose knowledge about which we can have no doubt and which must be true to reality. But inference cannot fulfil these conditions, because when we infer, for example, the existence of fire on a mountain from the perception of smoke, we take a leap in the dark, from the perceived smoke to the unperceived fire. A logician perhaps will point out that such a leap is justified by our previous knowledge of the invariable relation between smoke and fire, and that the inference stated more clearly would be: all cases of smoke are cases of fire, but the Carvakas refuse it and argue that this contention would be acceptable only if the major premise stating the invariable relation between the middle term "smoke" and the major term "fire" are beyond doubt. But this invariable relation can be established only if we have a knowledge of all cases of smoke in the presence of fire. However, this is not possible because we cannot perceive even all the cases of smoke and fire existing in different places all

over the world now, to say nothing of those which existed in the past or will exist in the future. So no invariable universal relation can be established by inference. Neither can it be based on another inference, because it will involve a fallacy, since in the case of this inference we should also require another inference to establish it, and so on, and hence would arise the fallacy of an infinitum.

Also invariable relation cannot be based on testimony of reliable person who states that all cases of smoke are case of fire. For the validity of testimony itself requires to be proved by inference. They argue that "we cannot infer by testimony, since we may allege in reply, in accordance with the Vaisesika doctrine of Kanada, that this is included in the topic of inference; or else we may hold that this fresh proof of testimony is unable to leap over the old barrier that stop the progress of inference, since it depends, itself, on the recognition of a sign in the form of the language used in the child's presence by the old man, and moreover, there is no more reason for our believing another's word that smoke and fire are invariably related, than for our receiving the ipse dixit of Manu etc., which, of course, we Carvaka reject. And again, if testimony are to be accepted as the only means of the knowledge of the universal proposition, then in the case of a man to whom the fact of the invariable relation between the middle and the major terms had not been pointed out by another person, there could be no inference of one thing as fire on seeing another thing as smoke; hence, on your own showing, the whole topic of inference for oneself would have to end in mere idle words.

The Carvaka don't admit any constant class characters like 'smokeness' and 'fireness' which must be invariably present in all instances of smoke and fire respectively. They insist that even if we grant a perception of a relation between smokeness and fireness, we cannot know there from any invariable relation between all individual cases of smoke and fire. If it is possible

to infer a particular fire, we must know that it is inseparably related to the particular smoke. In fact, it is not possible even to know by perception what "smokeness" or the class characters universally present in all particular instances of smoke are, because we do not perceive all cases of smoke that are found to be universally present in the perceived cases of smoke, but may not be present in the unperceived ones. Moreover they insist on another counter argument that due to the inherent nature of things that they possess particular characters such as fire is hot and water is cool. No supernatural principle need to be supposed to account for the properties of experienced objects in nature. There is neither any guarantee that uniformity perceived in the past would continue in future. We cannot base our knowledge of the invariable relation between smoke and fire on a causal relation between them. Because a causal relation being only a kind of invariable relation, cannot be established by perception owing to the same difficulties.

They point out that a causal or any other invariable relation cannot be established merely by repeated perception of two things occurring together. For one must be certain that there is no other unperceived condition on which this relation depends. If a man perceives a number of times fire accompanied by smoke, and on another occasion he infers the existence of smoke on the perception of fire, he would be liable to error, because he failed to notice a condition, namely, wetness of fuel, on the presence of which alone fire is attended with smoke. So long as the relation between two phenomena is not proved to be unconditional, it is an uncertain ground for inference and absence of conditions cannot be established beyond doubt by perception, as some conditions may always remain hidden and escape notice.

It is true that in our life we very often act unsuspectingly on inference. But only shows that we act uncritically on the wrong belief that our inference is true. It is a fact that

sometimes our inference happens to be true and leads to successful results. But it is also a fact that sometimes inference leads to error. Truth is not then an unfailing character of all inferences, it is only an accident, and a separable one, that we find only in some case. Inference cannot be regarded, therefore, as a valid source of knowledge.

The Denial of testimony:

The Carvakas also denied Testimony (Sabda) as a source of valid knowledge. They stated that testimony consist of words. So far as words are heard through our ears, they are perceived. Knowledge of words is, therefore, knowledge through perception and is quite valid. But insofar as these words mean things not within our perception, and aim at giving us knowledge of those unperceived objects, they are not free from error and doubt. Very often we are misled by so-called authority. The authority of the Vedas, for example, is held in high esteem by many. But in reality the Vedas are the works of some cunning priests who earned their living by duping the ignorant and the credulous. With false hopes and promises the Vedas persuade men to perform Vedic rites, the only tangible benefit of which goes to the priests who officiate and enjoy the emoluments.

According to Carvakas, we depend on any authority, because we think it to be reliable, the knowledge obtained is really based on inference; because our belief is generated by a mental process like this: this authority should be accepted because it is reliable, and all reliable authority should be accepted. Being based on inference, knowledge derived from verbal testimony or authority is as precarious as inference, and as in the case of inference, so here we often act on knowledge derived from authority on the wrong belief that it is reliable. Sometimes this belief accidentally leads to successful results, sometimes it does not. Therefore, authority or testimony cannot be regarded as a valid source of knowledge.

The Carvakas Say that as neither inference nor testimony can be proved reliable, perception must be regarded as the only source of valid knowledge.

Conclusion:

The epistemological doctrine of the Carvaka School is that perception (pratyaksa) is the only means of valid knowledge. They don't admit inference and testimony as source of valid knowledge. The crude Carvaka position has been vehemently criticized by all systems of Indian Philosophy all of which have maintained the validity of at least perception and inference. To refuse the validity of inference from the empirical standpoint is to refuse to think and discuss. All thoughts, all discussions, all doctrines, all affirmations and denials, all proofs and disproofs are made possible by inference. The Carvaka view that perception is valid and inference is invalid is itself a result of inference. The Carvaka can understand others only through inference and make others understand him only through inference. Thoughts and ideas, not being material objects, cannot be perceived; they can only be inferred. Hence the self-refuted Carvaka position is called sheer nonsense and no system of Philosophy. Perception itself which is regarded as valid by the Carvaka is often found untrue. We perceive the earth as flat but it is almost round. We perceive the earth as static but it is moving round the sun. We perceive the disc of the sun as of a small size, but it is much bigger than the size of the earth. Such perceptual knowledge is contradicted by inference. Moreover, pure perception in the sense of mere sensation cannot be regarded as a means of knowledge unless conception or thought has arranged into order has given meaning and significance to the loose threads of sense -data. The Carvaka cannot support his views without giving reasons which presuppose the validity of inference.

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The Problematics of Space: Understanding the Trauma of Partition in Siddhartha Deb's *The Point of Return*

Gaurab Sengupta

Abstract:

Known as the 'Seven-Sister' states of India, the North-Eastern region is a home to various tribes sharing the land and space since times immemorial. However, from geopolitical perspective, the region has faced various issues. Conflicts ranging from the issues related to sharing the land with other tribes to gaining superior autonomy and independence, India's North-East is considered to be a region full of conflicts which one can locate historically as well as in the present day scenario as well. Since the region shares its boundaries with international countries as well, the issue of migrancy, immigration and infiltration in the land becomes a rampant issue. The main objective of this paper is to explore the theme of trauma and its after effects in the lives of the migrants living in North-East India with special reference to Siddhartha Deb's *The Point of Return* (2002). Using the new critical close study of the text and trauma theory, this paper looks into the literary expression of trauma in the novel mentioned.

Keywords:

literature, migration, north-east, partition, trauma.

I

Located in the South-Eastern part of the Asian continent, North-East India occupies an integral part in the entire Indian sub-continent, both geographically and historically. Geographically, India's North-East is rich in bio-diversity which hosts a large number of flora and fauna in the heart of the territory, which is a home to numerous species of plants and animals in the lap of nature. Known as the 'Seven-Sister' states of India, the region is also a home to various tribes sharing the land and space since times immemorial. However, historically, the region has faced various issues from time to time. Conflicts ranging from the issues related to sharing the land with other tribes to gaining superior autonomy and independence, India's North-East is considered to be a region full of conflicts which one can locate historically as well as in the present day scenario as well. Since the region shares its boundaries with international countries as well, the issue of migrancy, immigration and infiltration of the so called 'foreign people' in the land becomes a rampant issue in the region. The need for the local population to maintain the 'purity' of the land and its people and the notion of the outsiders 'polluting' this purity serves as a yardstick for the ongoing debates of 'insider-outsider' question.

The Partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 has led to the massive movement of population from both sides of the border. Regions like Punjab on the Western part of the country and West-Bengal and North-East on the Eastern part of the country were two major regions which saw major upheavals, the issues of which are yet to be pacified. The pangs of Partition are real and still an ongoing phenomenon. Added to the general ongoing trauma of Partition, Pakistan underwent the second wave of partition again in 1971 when the part of Bangladesh which was then known as East-Pakistan declared Independence after the war with West Pakistan. This war also led to the mass migration from Bangladesh to India. In the initial stage, India

sought to give shelter to the Hindu-migrants filtering from the other side of the border, the masses generally known to be as 'refugees'. However, the initial wave of migrancy gave way to a continuous influx of refugees from across the border basically in the state of Assam and then to other parts of North-East. While some left behind their ancestral homelands and settled down in the newly provided land and survived with whatever basic amenities provided, others have been finding illegal means to find a way to mainstream India. Insurgency and violence has always been a part of this land. And since the region is geographically far away from the center, the problems people face in this part of the land is not always highlighted and is often neglected. Conflicts in North-Eastern India have not received the same level of attention as conflicts elsewhere in the country. Writers from the North-East have dealt with this idea of conflict in various writings that are being produced by native voices from the states of North-East India.

II

Trauma has been described by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as having the following three aspects:

- Exposure to harmful and/or overwhelming events or circumstances.
- The experience of such events, which will vary from person to person, and
- The effects, which may be adverse and long-lasting.

The concept of trauma is wide ranging. It may spread from individual to that of the community level. Sigmund Freud has put forward two basic theories while dealing with the idea of trauma and ideas related to life and death principles which are termed as '*The Pleasure Principle*' (1911) and '*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*' (1920). Human life is governed by one basic principle that is the principle of pleasure and it is because

of this pleasure principle life on earth flourishes. The pleasure principle is the life sustaining philosophy which Freud has propounded. However, after the First World War, Freud realized that there were people undergoing terrible sufferings in life and their life was governed not by any pleasure principle or Eros but by a desire which is opposed to that of the life principle and that Freud terms it as Thanos or the death instinct. This idea, he explores it in his text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. This is where Freud mentions how stressors received from the external world shatters the harmony of the self which in turn leads to rise of trauma within an individual. Freud has mentioned in his third part of '*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*' that these uncanny, bleak and dark incidents repeat themselves all throughout which push the individual beyond the pleasure principle.

III

'Trauma continuum' is the state in which trauma becomes a part of a group of people or community facing a crisis since times immemorial which creates an impact on the individual and his existence and hampers community as well. Trauma continuum is intergenerational. Siddhartha Deb in his *The Point of Return* (2002) deals with the issues of migrancy, displacement and confrontation of the migrant characters in Meghalaya and Assam. Set in the hills of Meghalaya *The Point of Return* voices out the agitation both of the local residents and the outsiders while trying to accommodate into a new space, together, after Partition.

With the issues of migration, displacement, uprooting and re-rooting comes the question of Citizenship which further contributes towards cultural confrontations. The Citizenship Act of 1955 and Article 5-11 of the Indian Constitution proper, describes the grounds on which a person can become the Citizen of India. Article 6 of the Indian Constitution highlights specifically the grounds for providing Citizenship to migrants

coming from erstwhile Pakistan. However, the issue of Bangladeshi migrants is not charted out. This issue finds a voice in *The Point of Return* where Dr. Dam and his family are in a state of absolute dilemma because they are 'outsiders' in the country. Though their family moved inside the Indian Territory in 1947, in Silchar first and then in Shillong, yet because of the hostile attitude of the 'indigenous people', the family failed to locate a 'home'. The narrator describes events from 1986, long after Partition and Meghalaya was carved out as a separate state yet the indigenous people refusing to accept the Dam family as a part of their homeland, as a part of their system.

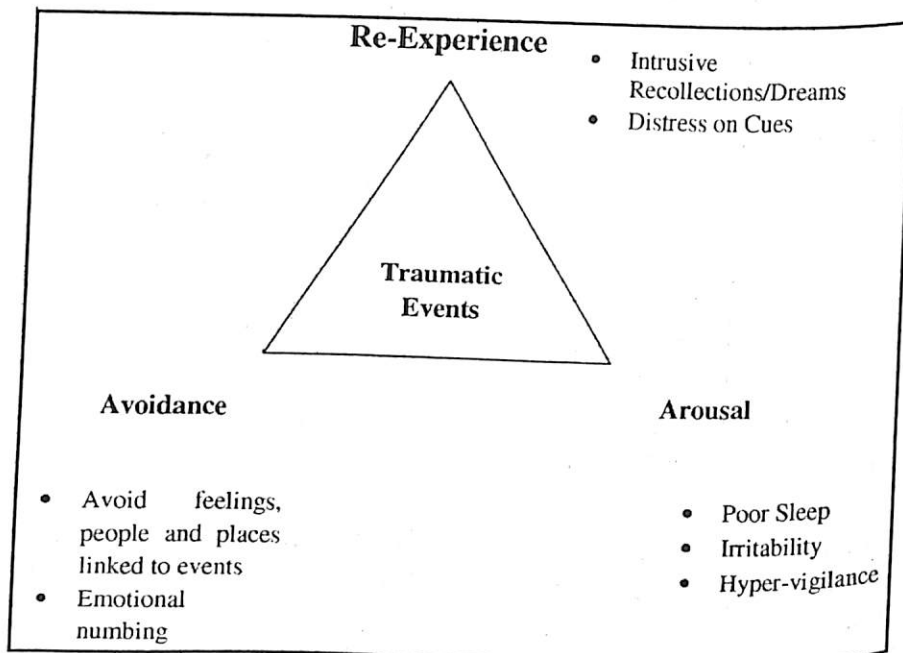


Fig. 1: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms. Zohar J.

The above figure portrays how traumatic events arise and continue to be a part of life, thus hampering the existence. History has record of events wherein because of the actions of the outsiders in native land, the peace of a nation is disrupted. Deb highlights

how trauma has been creating an effect in the existence of the Dam family through certain episodes throughout the text. This highlights the nature of trauma which can occur in parts and create a bigger impact in the lives of the bearers. Dr. Dam experiences and re-experiences events (fig. 1) from time to time which arouses traumatic events (fig. 1) in his life.

This attitude of the local inhabitant projects the hatred directly towards the Dam family. Deb projects how the outsiders were often an easy target for the locals inhabiting in the space. Once, both Dr. Dam and Babu had been an easy target of the physical violence exerted by the Students' Union and their campaign against the outsiders. The tribal/non-tribal conflict is a reality that still continues to exist in the North-Eastern part of India. Deb highlights what it takes to accommodate into a space which is not one's real homeland. Deb narrates the plight of the migrant-refugees how after the partition of the country Dr. Dam along with his family settled down in Assam and its neighbouring places in the later years. With a view of finding a shelter and comfort on the wake of riots and upheavals, the entire Dam family shifted to Silchar on the wake of Partition. The narrator constructs the past for the readers with the information he collected from the family members regarding a time that was turbulent in the history of the country. The trauma of leaving the original homeland behind and looking for a shelter in a land which is alien, foreign and unfamiliar is projected directly. Deb portrays the psychology of the first generation diasporas who are uprooted from their personal space, thrown into a new space. Promod K. Nayar in *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction* (2008) speaks about the idea of 'home' and how it can be equated with a figment of imagination only. Nayar states, "Home is a product of speculation and imagination. It can be retrieved, reached, or returned to only in memory" (Nayar 192) Partition had uprooted the family members to an alien land where they had to struggle to accommodate and negotiate with the locals

inhabiting the space. In the entire novel, this sense of alienation in a new land and the search for a home while trying to accommodate with the strangers who does not in turn want to accommodate outsiders and shows aggressive behaviour of direct violence is traumatic for the migrant-refugees. This finds a voice and expression through narration by various characters. Dr. Dam had to struggle to look for a place for the family and in order to reduce the state of flux and figure out a root, he found a piece of land in Silchar which was being sold off by a Muslim at a much cheaper price by the Muslim peasant who had decided to migrate to East Pakistan in search of his roots. While Dr. Dam had to move in and out of the newly found home to complete his studies and find a stable career as a veterinary surgeon, his other siblings moved out to Calcutta while his only sister followed her son to Guwahati. Only Dam's brother Biren stayed back in the newly created home-space with his wife in Silchar. It was in the later years of his life that Dr. Dam settled down in Shillong as a Veterinary Officer serving the Government. Being rootless, Dr. Dam and the entire family had to struggle all throughout in the new spaces. "Dr. Dam had only known temporary places of various kinds, ever since he had left the village and the mud hut he had been born in." (38)

The search for a new land continued till Dr. Dam figured out a space in the suburbs of Guwahati near Narangi Oil Refinery to build his house during the 1970s, long after Partition had taken place. The newly formed laws in Meghalaya did not allow a space to the outsiders to buy a piece of land and settle for themselves. This in turn limited the scope for Dr. Dam to continue living in Shillong after his retirement from the post. There were constant "signs of dissent among the hill people" (39) to allow the foreigners a space for building a home. Moreover, compared to Shillong, Guwahati provided an ease of access to land and settlement. There were no guerrilla groups, no masked men marching into the office out of nowhere and the land was cheap,

the air clean and crisp. However, Dr. Dam's dream of getting his personal space in Guwahati also yielded no fruit. All his dreams shattered when one day he saw a government bulldozer crushing down the Narangi house to rubbles because the road was being expanded.

When he approached his land that he saw the government bulldozers standing on what supposedly belonged to him, surrounded by vats of black pitch bubbling and trickling onto the road being expanded, creating a smooth, flat surface over the rubble of his desires. (43)

This entire act of bringing down the physical home space takes a heavy toll of Dam's psyche. It was too late for Dr. Dam to even think of getting a new space in Shillong and build up another house even if he had the minimal resources to do so. Unlike his neighbours in Shillong like Mukherjee, Kar and Dutta who had laid a solid claim to the town space to build their houses in it, Dr. Dam could not shake off his fear of being an outsider and the possible attacks he might be facing in the near future because people viewed the outsiders neither Bengalis nor Muslims nor Hindus.

No matter how alienated Dr. Dam had been with people and the place he was a part of, he never failed to serve the government and the job he was a part of. Dr. Dam always showed utmost respect for his work and carried it out with full devotion and admiration. While thinking about the development of the livestock in the state, he had been putting his thoughts for the well being of the people in his home land as well. The Chapter entitled 'The Minister's Chambers' highlights this aspect of Dr. Dam thinking about the people of his hometown and their well-being selflessly. Dr. Dam devised a town milk supply scheme which would reduce the adulteration of milk and alongside provide employment opportunities to the local people. However, the minister Leapingstone and his cousin denounced the scheme and condemned it vehemently. Not only

did they condemn the scheme and closed down all the milk booths those were opened up in the nearby areas, but also threatened Dr. Dam to death using their gun. This created a traumatic impact in Dr. Dam's psyche because he finally knew, no matter how deeply he longed to be a part of the system, how deeply he wanted to serve the people being a government official, the system will never be inclusive. It provided no scope for the outsiders being a part of the internal matters of the state. According to the ministers inside the chamber, foreigners and outsiders should do what they are asked to do by the state and should never interfere in any matters related to the ongoing state of affairs. The minister ordered, "An outsider. A foreigner. Should have some respect." (96) This statement of the minister boils down and complicates the issue of the migrant population to nothingness and their value as a citizen inside the country even after serving the people and the space is worthless.

The Point of Return gives examples of people who try to evade this conflict and settle elsewhere leaving behind the past, the place of belongingness and the original homeland, the idea of avoidance portrayed in fig. 1. Babu serves as an example to this matter. By the time both Dr. and Mrs. Dam had left for heavenly abode, Babu leaves his homeland and travels to cosmopolitan cities which do not discriminate people on the basis of their point of origin. But it is not easy to leave behind the memories of the past. With people, travels culture and memory of his past and there is again a constant search for belongingness in the new space. The chapters 'Memories', 'Travelers' and 'Dreams' bring into focus the role of the human mind and its ability to construct the past using various means. A Freudian touch on the narration takes place as the past- with all its glory people and place slips into the present through dreams.

IV

Deb in *The Point of Return* speaks about the aftermath of Partition and the problems that cropped in after the British

had left the country. Independence came in but with a price which had to be paid. Like Fanon observes in *The Wretched of the Earth*, every country post-independence undergoes a chain of crisis. In case of the Indian sub-continent as well, the dilemma of existence because of the redrawing of the map is highlighted by Siddhartha Deb in his work which finds a voice through characters such as Dr. Dam and Babu, representing the first generation and second generation migrants.

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বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ ইয়াকইঙ্গম উপন্যাসত প্ৰতিফলিত টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ এটি চমু অৱলোকন

টংকেশ্বৰ দাস

সংক্ষিপ্ত সাৰ :

যুদ্ধোত্তৰ যুগৰ অসমীয়া সাহিত্যিক কলাত্মক গুণেৰে সমৃদ্ধ কৰি যোৱা কলাকাৰসকলৰ ভিতৰত বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্য আছিল অন্যতম। কবিতা, চুটিগল্প, নাটক, উপন্যাস, অনুবাদ সাহিত্য, প্ৰবন্ধ আদি সাহিত্যৰ আটাইকেইটা সংৰূপৰ চৰ্চাৰে প্ৰসিদ্ধি লাভ কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হোৱা বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ সাহিত্য প্ৰতিভা মূলতঃ চিৰজ্যোতিষ্মান হৈ উঠিছিল উপন্যাসসমূহৰ যোগেদিয়ে। ১৯৫৫ চনত প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ পোৱা 'ৰাজপথে ৰিঙিয়াই'ৰ যোগেদি উপন্যাস সৃষ্টিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰখনত খোজ পেলাই তেওঁ ভালেকেইখন বহু সমাদৃত উপন্যাস ৰচনা কৰি থৈ গৈছে। সমসাময়িক সমাজৰ সামাজিক অৱস্থা, ৰাজনৈতিক পৰিস্থিতি, অৰ্থনৈতিক ব্যৱস্থা তথা ৰীতি-নীতিৰ আধাৰত কাহিনীৰ মাজেৰে মানুহৰ জীৱনৰ কথা কৈ যোৱা বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ আন উপন্যাসসমূহৰ ভিতৰত ১৯৬০ চনত প্ৰকাশ পোৱা সাহিত্য অকাডেমী বঁটা প্ৰাপক উপন্যাস 'ইয়াকইঙ্গম' আছিল অন্যতম। অসমৰ চুবুৰীয়া ৰাজ্য নগালেণ্ডৰ বিভিন্ন জনজাতিসমূহৰ ভিতৰত মণিপুৰৰ সীমান্তৱৰ্তী এলেকাত বসতি কৰা এটা অন্যতম জনজাতি হৈছে 'টাংখুল' নগাসকল। দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধৰ অশান্ত জৰ্জৰ পৰিস্থিতিয়ে এই 'টাংখুল' নগাসকলৰ সমাজলৈ অনাকাঙ্ক্ষিত ভাৱে নমাই অনা সামাজিক, অৰ্থনৈতিক তথা ৰাজনৈতিক পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ পটভূমিত ইয়াকইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনৰ বিষয়বস্তু সজাই

তোলা হৈছে। এফালে মহাযুদ্ধৰ ধ্বংসাত্মক বাতাৱৰণে তচনচ কৰি পেলোৱা স্বাভিমানে টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ জাতীয় চেতনা ৰক্ষাৰ সংগ্ৰাম আৰু আনফালে সেই যুদ্ধই আনি দিয়া পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ অকপট স্বীকৃতি, এই দুই দ্বন্দ্বাত্মক সংঘাতৰ সাৱলীল বিশ্লেষণেৰে ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই 'ইয়াকইঙ্গম' উপন্যাসখনৰ কাহিনীভাগ উপস্থাপন কৰিছে। আমাৰ এই আলোচনা পত্ৰখনত 'ইয়াকইঙ্গম' উপন্যাসখনত প্ৰতিফলিত হোৱা টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সমাজ জীৱনৰ বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰিবলৈ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হ'ব।

প্ৰস্তাৱনা :

অসমীয়া উপন্যাস সাহিত্য চৰ্চাৰে প্ৰসিদ্ধি লাভ কৰা ঔপন্যাসিকসকলৰ ভিতৰত বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্য আছিল অন্যতম। ঊনবিংশ শতিকাৰ শেষৰ দশকত পদ্মনাথ গোহাঞিবৰুৱাৰ হাতত জন্মলাভ কৰা অসমীয়া উপন্যাসৰ ভেঁটিটো আটিলকৈ বান্ধিছিল ৰজনীকান্ত বৰদলৈয়ে। বৰদলৈৰ 'মিৰিজীৱী' উপন্যাসেৰে আৰম্ভ হোৱা অসমীয়া সামাজিক উপন্যাসৰ ধাৰাটোক পৰৱৰ্তী কালত যি কেইজন ঔপন্যাসিকে গতিময় ৰূপ প্ৰদান কৰিছিল তাৰ ভিতৰত বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ অৰিহণাও আছিল যথেষ্ট। বিংশ শতিকাৰ দ্বিতীয় অৰ্ধত ভালেকেইখন মনো: উপন্যাস ৰচনা কৰি কাললৈ খ্যাতি ৰাখিবলৈ সক্ষম হোৱা বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশিত উপন্যাস হৈছে 'ৰাজপথে ৰিঙিয়াই' (১৯৫৫)। ইয়াৰ পিছত তেওঁ ক্ৰমে 'আই' (১৯৬০), 'ইয়াকইঙ্গম' (১৯৬০), 'কালৰ হুমুনিয়াহ' (১৯৬২), 'শতদ্বী' (১৯৬৫), 'নষ্ট চন্দ্ৰ' (১৯৬৮), 'প্ৰতিপদ' (১৯৭০), 'মৃত্যুঞ্জয়' (১৯৭০), 'বল্লৰী' (১৯৭৩), 'সুঁতি' (১৯৭১), 'ডাইনী' (১৯৭১), 'কবৰ আৰু ফুল' (১৯৭২), 'বল্লৰী' (১৯৭৩), 'মুনিচুনি পোহৰ' (১৯৭৬), 'ৰঙামেঘ' (১৯৭৬) আদি উপন্যাসৰ লগতে 'ভাৰতী' আৰু 'এটি নিশা' নামৰ দুখন উপন্যাসিকাৰ একত্ৰ সংকলন 'চতুৰঙ্গ' (১৯৮৭) ৰচনা কৰি অসমীয়া উপন্যাসৰ ঊৰালটো টনকিয়াল কৰি থৈ গৈছে। অসমৰ সমাজজীৱনৰ বিভিন্ন স্তৰৰ বাস্তৱ ঘটনাৰ পটভূমিত বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্য তেওঁৰ উপন্যাসৰ বিষয়বস্তু সজাই তুলিছিল। বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্য উপন্যাসসমূহত পোৱা যায় তেওঁৰ অভিজ্ঞতা লব্ধ সমাজৰ চিত্ৰ, ৰাজনৈতিক বাতাৱৰণ, অৰ্থনৈতিক অৱস্থা বিশেষৰ বিৱৰণ, তথা মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণ আদিৰ সুস্পষ্ট একোখন ছবি। মনোগ্ৰাহী বিষয়বস্তু, সাৱলীল প্ৰকাশভংগী, চিত্ৰাকৰ্ষক

ভাষা তথা বাস্তৱিক চৰিত্ৰ সৃষ্টিত সিদ্ধহস্ত বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ উপন্যাসসমূহ স্বাভাৱিক ভাবেই উচ্চ মানবিশিষ্ট কলা।

অধ্যয়নৰ পৰিসৰ :

ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ উপন্যাসৰ বিষয়বস্তুৰ ওপৰত চকু ফুৰালে দেখা যায় যে তেওঁ উপন্যাস নিৰ্মাণৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত মূলতঃ ৰাজনৈতিক পৰিস্থিতি, সামাজিক মূল্যবোধ তথা মানৱতাবাদী দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীক আধাৰ কৰি লৈছিল। তেনে বিষয়বস্তু আধাৰিত এখন উপন্যাস হৈছে 'ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম'। 'ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম' উপন্যাসখনত যিদৰে এফালে ৰাজনৈতিক উপন্যাসৰ বিশেষত্বসমূহ ৰক্ষিত হৈছে, ঠিক সেইদৰে জাতীয়তাবাদ, দেশপ্ৰেম তথা গণতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজবাদৰ স্বৰূপো প্ৰতিধ্বনিত হৈ আছে। আনহাতে জনজাতীয় জীৱন ভিত্তিক উপন্যাস হিচাপেও 'ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম'ৰ বুকুত খোদিত হৈ আছে ভাৰতৰ উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ অন্যতম এটা জনজাতি টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সমাজ জীৱনৰ ছবি। দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধৰ অশান্ত বাতাবৰণৰ আধাৰত ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই এটা ৰাজনৈতিক বিষয়বস্তুক উপন্যাসখনত যথাযথ ৰূপত উপস্থাপন কৰাৰ সমান্তৰাল ভাৱে তদানীন্তন টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ ছবি এখনো সাৱলীল ভাৱে অংকন কৰাত সফল হৈছে। আমাৰ আলোচ্য বিষয়টোত উপন্যাসখনৰ মাজত পৰিস্ফুট টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ সামগ্ৰিক ছবিখন পোহৰলৈ অনাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হ'ব। এই ক্ষেত্ৰত উপন্যাসখনক মুখ্য সমল হিচাপে লৈ বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ উপন্যাস সম্পৰ্কীয় প্ৰাসংগিক গ্ৰন্থ তথা আলোচনাসমূহৰ সহায় লোৱা হৈছে।

অধ্যয়নৰ উদ্দেশ্য :

'ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম' উপন্যাসখন মূলতঃ এটা ৰাজনৈতিক ঘটনাৰ পটভূমিত ৰচিত যদিও উপন্যাসখনৰ সফলতাৰ আঁৰত থকা টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনক অস্বীকাৰ কৰিব নোৱাৰি। ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ শক্তিশালী কলমৰ আগৰে নিগৰি ওলোৱা শ্ৰুতিমধুৰ বৰ্ণনাই উপন্যাসখনত টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ নিৰ্ভাজ ছবিখন জীপাল কৰি তুলিছে। গতিকে 'সাহিত্য অকাডেমী'ৰ দৰে সন্মানীয় বঁটাৰে ধন্য উপন্যাসখনৰ সফলতাৰ অন্যতম এটা দিশ টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনে কিদৰে উপন্যাসখনত ভূমুকি মাৰিছে তাক বিশ্লেষণ কৰি চোৱাটোৱেই হৈছে এই গৱেষণা পত্ৰখনৰ মূল উদ্দেশ্য।

অধ্যয়নৰ পদ্ধতি :

আলোচনা পত্ৰখন প্ৰস্তুত কৰোঁতে মূলতঃ বৰ্ণনাত্মক আৰু বিশ্লেষণাত্মক পদ্ধতি প্ৰয়োগ কৰা হৈছে।

বিষয়বস্তুৰ বিশ্লেষণ :

বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ সাহিত্য অকাডেমী বঁটাপ্ৰাপ্ত উপন্যাস 'ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম' অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ এক অমূল্য সম্পদ। উপন্যাসখনত বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই চল্লিশৰ দশকৰ যুদ্ধ বিধ্বস্ত নগা পাহাৰৰ আৰ্থ-সামাজিক তথা ৰাজনৈতিক জীৱনৰ চিত্ৰ অতি মনোগ্ৰাহীকৈ বৰ্ণনা কৰিছে। ৰাজনৈতিক পটভূমিত ৰচিত হ'লেও উপন্যাসখনৰ কাহিনীৰ অগ্ৰগতিত বিশেষ ভূমিকা পালন কৰিছে মণিপুৰ সীমান্তৱৰ্তী নগালেণ্ডৰ এখন জনজাতীয় সমাজে। সাহিত্য হৈছে সমাজৰ দাপোণ স্বৰূপ। সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন পৰিস্থিতিক নিজৰ বাস্তৱ অভিজ্ঞতাৰ বোলেৰে বুলাই চিত্ৰাকৰ্ষক ৰূপত পাঠকৰ মাজলৈ আগবঢ়াই দিব পৰাতোই সাহিত্যিকৰ সফলতা নিৰূপিত হয়। বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ 'ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম' উপন্যাসখনৰ পটভূমিও আছিল বাস্তৱ অভিজ্ঞতা আধাৰিত।

নগাসকলৰ বিভিন্ন খুলৰ ভিতৰত টাংখুল নগাসকল অন্যতম। এই টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সমাজত প্ৰচলিত বিভিন্ন ৰীতি-নীতি, পৰম্পৰা আৰু ৰাজনৈতিক অৱস্থাৰ পটভূমিত ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই 'ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম' উপন্যাসখনৰ কাহিনীটো সজাই তুলিছে। উপন্যাসখনৰ দুই প্ৰধান চৰিত্ৰ বিশাং আৰু ভিডেশ্যেলীৰ বিপৰীতমুখী আদৰ্শৰ সংঘাতক উপজীব্য হিচাপে লৈ ঔপন্যাসিকে সমসাময়িক নগা সমাজখনৰ বৈচিত্ৰ্যময় ৰূপৰ বৰ্ণনা কৰিছে।

ভাৰতৰ উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চল মূলতঃ জনজাতি অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চল। এই জনজাতীয় লোকসকলৰ সমাজ সংগঠনৰ এটা অতি গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ অংগ হৈছে 'ডেকা চাং' আৰু 'গাভৰু চাং'। ইয়াতেই গাঁৱৰ অবিবাহিত ডেকা-গাভৰুসকলে একে লগে থাকি এটা সুশৃংখলিত শান্তিপূৰ্ণ জীৱন কটায়। উপন্যাসখনত উপলব্ধি সম্বন্ধে আলোচনা কৰিবলৈ গ'লে দেখা যায় যে নগা পাহাৰৰ টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সমাজতো এই 'ডেকা চাং' আৰু 'গাভৰু চাং' নামৰ অনুষ্ঠান দুটা আছে। ডেকা চাং আৰু গাভৰু চাঙৰ পৰিৱৰ্তা অক্ষুন্ন ৰখাৰ স্বার্থত নিৰ্ধাৰিত নীতি-নিয়ম মানি ডেকা চাঙলৈ গাভৰু আৰু গাভৰু চাঙলৈ ডেকাসকল অহা-যোৱা কৰিব পাৰিছিল। 'ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম' উপন্যাসখনত বিশাং, জীৱন, খাটিঙহঁত গাভৰু

চাঙলৈ অহা-যোৱা কৰিছে যদিও তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজখনে বান্ধি দিয়া সীমাবদ্ধতাৰ আভাস ইয়াত সুস্পষ্ট। গাভৰু চাং তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজখনৰ শান্তি আৰু পৱিত্ৰতাৰ প্ৰতীক। গাভৰু চাঙত থকা সময়ত চাৰেংলাৰ মনত উদ্ভৱ হোৱা অনুভৱে গাভৰু চাঙৰ পৱিত্ৰতাৰ দিশটো উন্মোচিত কৰে। চাৰেংলাই যেতিয়া নিজৰ ইচ্ছাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে গৈ জাপানী সৈন্যৰ ৰোষত পৰি পতিতাৰ শাৰীলৈ অৱনমিত হৈ এটা দুৰ্বিসহ জীৱন কটাবলগীয়া হৈছে তেতিয়া বিশ্বাণ্ডে তাইক গাঁওবুঢ়াৰ অনুমতি সাপেক্ষে গাভৰু চাঙত থকাৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰি দিছে। কিন্তু গাভৰু চাঙত থকা সময়ত চাৰেংলাই অনুভৱ কৰিছে —

“এই অধৰ্ষিতা, নিষ্কলঙ্ক আৰু নিচিন্ত মনেৰে শুই থকা গাভৰুবিলাকৰ মাজত তায়েই একমাত্ৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম”।

ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনত দেখা পোৱা টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ আন এটা দিশ হৈছে তেওঁলোকৰ পৰম্পৰাগত সাজ-সজ্জা। সাজপাৰ হৈছে এটা জাতিৰ সংস্কৃতিক অলংকৃত কৰা ভূষণ স্বৰূপ। সাজ-পোচাকৰ যোগেদি জাতি এটাৰ ৰুচিবোধৰ পৰিচয় উন্মোচিত হোৱাৰ লগতে সেই জাতিটোৰ সামাজিক পৰিবেশৰ বৈচিত্ৰ্যময় ৰূপো প্ৰকট হৈ উঠে। টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সমাজত প্ৰচলিত তেনে এক বৈচিত্ৰ্যপূৰ্ণ ৰূপৰ বৰ্ণনা ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই অতি সৰস ৰূপত ডাঙি ধৰিছে —

“চুলিকোচা সাইলাখ টাংখুলৰ ধৰণে কটা। পিচফালৰ টিকনিডাল পৰা, কাণৰ ওপৰলৈ ভালেমান ঠাই চুলি চাটি থোৱা আছে। কাণৰ বিন্ধাৰ পৰা দুটা ডাঙৰ পিতলৰ আঙঠি ওলমি পৰিছে। চুলিবোৰ ডাঠ চুটি আৰু ওখ। ডিঙিত এধাৰ মুণ্ডমালা”।

আন এক বৰ্ণনাত তেওঁ কৈছে —

“গাত দীঘে ৰঙা বাণিয়ে বগা পাৰি দিয়া টাংখুল বৰ কাপোৰখন। মুখত ধপাত লগোৱা দীঘল বাঁহৰ পাইপ। কাণ দুখনত অলংকাৰ পিন্ধা দুটা বহল বিন্ধা। ডিঙিত এধাৰি নীলা আৰু ৰঙা মণিৰ মালা”।

এনেদৰে টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ পাৰম্পৰিক সাজ-পোছাকৰ সজীৱ ছবি এখন বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনৰ বুকুত খোদিত কৰিছে।

উত্তৰ-পূৰ্বাঞ্চলৰ জনজাতীয় লোকসকলৰ অৰ্থনৈতিক বুনিয়াদৰ মূল ভিত্তি হৈছে কৃষি। কৃষিজীৱি জনজাতীয় লোকসমাজৰ নাৰীসকলে ঘৰুৱা কাম-কাজৰ

লগতে পুৰুষৰ সমানে সমানে খেতি পথাৰত আত্মনিয়োগ কৰি জীৱন সংগ্ৰামত সক্ৰিয় অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰাত বিশেষভাৱে আগৰণুৱা। টাংখুল নগাসকলো ইয়াৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম নহয়। ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনত তেওঁলোকৰ এই কঠোৰ জীৱন সংগ্ৰামৰ আধাৰ কৃষি-কৰ্মৰ বৰ্ণনা ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ পৈণত হাতৰ পৰশত প্ৰাণ পাই উঠিছে। তেনে এগৰাকী কঠোৰ পৰিশ্ৰমী নাৰীৰ প্ৰতিনিধি ইয়েংমাচৰ ঘৈণীয়েক আটিবৰ জৰিয়তে উপন্যাসখনত বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সংগ্ৰামী জীৱনৰ সৰল ছবি এখন অংকন কৰিছে।

“পথাৰত অকলে বুঢ়ী ঘৈণীয়েকজনীয়ে কোৰ মাৰি থকা দৃশ্য চাই সি সিহঁতৰ পৰিয়ালৰ জীৱন সংগ্ৰামৰ স্বৰূপটো গভীৰ ভাবে উপলব্ধি কৰিলে। আটিবে কোৰ মাৰি মাটি উলিওৱাৰ মাজত অকল হাড় ভগা শ্ৰমেই নাই, আছে প্ৰতিদানৰ আকাংক্ষাবিহীন, নীৰৱ মৰম”।

কঠোৰ পৰিশ্ৰমেৰে কপালৰ ঘাম মাটিত পেলাই খেতি কৰি তেওঁলোকে জীৱন যুঁজত আগবাঢ়ে। খেতি মাটিৰ প্ৰতি তেওঁলোকৰ আছে অপৰিসীম ভালপোৱা। খেতি পথাৰতেই যেন লুকাই আছে জীৱনৰ সঁচা মাদকতা। খাটিংৰ অনুভৱেৰে ঔপন্যাসিকে কৈছে —

“গাঁৱৰ ছোৱালীবোৰৰ গীত শুনি হঠাতে সেইবাবে তাৰ মন গল পথাৰলৈ যাবলৈ। তাৰ মনত হল যেন জীৱন আচলতে পথাৰৰ সেই খেতি কৰি থকা মানুহবোৰৰ মাজতে লুকাই আছে”। খেতি মাটিৰ সতে থকা অবিচ্ছিন্ন আত্মীয়তাৰ সাক্ষী ফাৰ্ণিটফাঙৰ মাকেও বোকা খচি খচি ভুই ৰোৱে, খেতি কৰে; যুদ্ধ তেৱোঁ ভাল নাপায়। যুদ্ধই শান্তিপ্ৰিয় নগাজীৱনলৈ অসম্ভৱ আৰু অমঙ্গল আনিছে। চাৰেংলাই কৈছে —

“সেউজীয়া ভুই হাতত তুলি বোকাত লেও লৈ থকা এই খেতিয়কবোৰেই যেন পৃথিৱীৰ প্ৰাণ আৰু আনন্দৰ উৎস, এইখন পৃথিৱী পাহৰি মানুহে যুদ্ধ কৰে কোন সতে?”

কৃষিক সাৰথি কৰি জীৱন অতিবাহিত কৰা জনজাতীয় সমাজ-জীৱনত মঙহ আৰু চাউলৰ পৰা প্ৰস্তুত কৰা মদৰ প্ৰচলন তেওঁলোকৰ পৰম্পৰাগত খাদ্যাভাসৰ অবিচ্ছেদ্য অংগ। দৈনন্দিন জীৱনৰ প্ৰয়োজনত তেওঁলোকে মদ খোৱাৰ বাহিৰেও জন্মৰ পৰা মৃত্যুলৈকে পালন কৰা বিভিন্ন উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠানত তেওঁলোকে মদ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰাতো অপৰিহাৰ্য। টাংখুল নগাসমাজখনতো ঘৰুৱা

ভাবে চাউলৰ পৰা প্ৰস্তুত কৰা 'যু' নামৰ এবিধ মদৰ প্ৰচলন আছে। 'যু' তেওঁলোকৰ জীৱনৰ সঞ্জীৱনি সুধা স্বৰূপ। 'যু' অবিহনে তেওঁলোকৰ জীৱন যেন আধৰুৱা। তেনে এক খাদ্যাভাসৰ বৰ্ণনা ইয়াকইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনত বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই সৰস ৰূপত ডাঙি ধৰিছে — “তাৰপিছত যুৰ টেকেলিটো সোহা চুঙা এডালেৰে সৈতে আগবঢ়াই দিলে। নাজেকে তাৰ শকত গাটো বৰ চালপীৰাখন জুৰি বহিল আৰু ঠাঠিঙুখুইকো যু পিবলৈ মাতিলে”।

আন এক বৰ্ণনাত তেওঁ কৈছে —

“জুহালৰ চাংৰ ওপৰতে লাও টেকেলিত বহুদিনীয়া পুৰণি চোকা যু গোকত মলমলাই আছিল। তাই এটা মগ লৈ লাও টেকেলিৰ পৰা এক মগ যু বাকি তাৰ ওঁঠৰ ওচৰত ধৰি ক'লে ‘খা’।”

আনহাতে পৰম্পৰা অনুসৰি টাংখুল সমাজত মৃতকৰ বাবে মঙহ আৰু যু আগবঢ়োৱা হয়। বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই তেনে বৰ্ণনাও উপন্যাসখনত ডাঙি ধৰিছে —

“অলপ দূৰতে মৃতকৰ বাবে থোৱা মঙহ আৰু যু পৰি আছে”।

উপন্যাসখনত এনেদৰে মঙহ, যু আদিৰ ব্যৱহাৰ প্ৰসঙ্গৰে ঔপন্যাসিকে টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ পৰম্পৰাগত ৰীতি-নীতিৰ এক সম্যক আভাস দি গৈছে।

টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সমাজত প্ৰচলিত মৃত্যু আৰু শৱ সৎকাৰ সম্পৰ্কীয় কিছুমান ৰীতি-নীতি আৰু বিশ্বাসৰ কথাও ইয়াকইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনত দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই উপন্যাসখনত মৃত্যু সম্পৰ্কীয় এই বিশ্বাসৰ নিৰ্মোহ বিশ্লেষণ কৰি গৈছে। নাজেকৰ মৃত্যুত পালন কৰা নিয়ম-নীতি বিলাকৰ যোগেদি ঔপন্যাসিকে টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সমাজত প্ৰচলিত মৃত্যু সম্পৰ্কীয় বিভিন্ন বিশ্বাসৰ ছবি অতি সুন্দৰ ভাবে তুলি ধৰিছে। টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ বিশ্বাস অনুসৰি মানুহ মৰিলে ছিৰহিফৰ বা ছিৰই পৰ্বতৰ নামনিয়েদি মৃতকৰ ভূতটো গৈ কাজাইৰাম পায় আৰু তাতে তেওঁলোকৰ শ্ৰেণী বিভাগ কৰা হয়। তেওঁলোকৰ বিশ্বাস আত্মাটো দেহৰপৰা পথিলা বা মৌমাখিৰ ৰূপত ওলাই যায়। ইয়াৰ পিছত তেওঁলোকে বিভিন্ন প্ৰকাৰৰ সামগ্ৰী আৰু খোৱা বস্তু লগত দি শ-সৎকাৰ কৰে। মৃত্যুৰ আগে আগে টাংখুল নগাসকলে মৃতকৰ এজন থিলাকাপো বা আধ্যাত্মিক উত্তৰাধিকাৰী নিৰ্বাচিত কৰে। এই উত্তৰাধিকাৰীয়ে মৃত্যুৰ পিছৰ পূজা-পাতলসমূহত মৃতকৰ প্ৰতিনিধি

হিচাপে মৃতকৰ স্বৰ্গ-মুক্তিৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰে বুলিও তেওঁলোকৰ বিশ্বাস। কাথি কাচাম অৰ্থাৎ বৰভোজ নোহোৱা পৰ্যন্ত মৃতকৰ ভূতটো গাঁৱতে থাকে বুলি তেওঁলোকে বিশ্বাস কৰে। খেতি চপোৱাৰ পিছত পৰম্পৰাগত নিয়ম অনুসৰি কাথি কাচাম অৰ্থাৎ বৰভোজ পাতি ভূতটোক কাজাইৰামলৈ খেদোৱা হয়। মৃত্যু শয্যাত পৰি থকা নাজেকৰ চকুৰ আগত ভাহি উঠিছে মৃত্যুৰ পাছত গাঁৱৰ মানুহে কাথি কাচামৰ শেষত তাক গাঁৱৰ মূৰত থৈ অহা, কামিঅ' পূজা পাতিলে কাজাইৰামৰ অধিপতি ককটো দেৱৰাজক লগ পোৱা আদি কথা। সেয়েহে পৰম্পৰা অনুসৰি মৃত্যুৰ পাছত তাক সৎকাৰ কৰিবলৈ ঠাঠিঙুখুইতক অনুৰোধ জনাইছে—

“দেহ সৎকাৰৰ দিন ধৰি জানুৱাৰী মাহৰ কাথি কাচাম ভোজলৈকে কামিঅ' দেৱতাৰ পূজা কৰিবৰ বাবে সি বাৰে বাৰে ঠাঠিঙুখুইতক অনুৰোধ জনালে আৰু ক'লে কাথি কাচাম ভোজৰ দিনলৈকে মই তহঁতৰ লগত থাকিম। সেইদিনালৈকে তহঁতে যেন মোক কোনো ধৰণৰ অশান্তি নিদিয়”। এনেবোৰ বৰ্ণনাৰ মাজেৰে ঔপন্যাসিকে পাঠকক টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সামাজিক পৰম্পৰাৰ লগত পৰিচয় কৰাই দিয়াত সফলতা অৰ্জন কৰিছে। নাজেকৰ মৃত্যুৰ পাছত গাঁৱৰ মানুহে কৰা আলোচনা-বিলোচনাৰ মাজতো তেওঁলোকৰ পৰম্পৰাগত বিশ্বাসৰ ছবি এখন ফুটি উঠিছে।

“হঠাতে ক'বাবৰ পৰা অহা মৌমাখিয়ে গুণ গুণাই নাজেকৰ মৃতদেহৰ ওপৰত ছালত চটফটাই ঘূৰিবলৈ ধৰিলে। ঠাঠিঙুখুই ফুচফুচাই ক'লে — সেইটো নাজেকৰ আত্মা, দেখিছনে নাই”। আকৌ

“কালি ৰাতি হ'লে ভূত আহিছিল। ফুটছাইৰ ওপৰত খোজ সকলোৱে দেখিছে।”

ৰোগীৰ আৰোগ্যৰ বাবে কামিঅ' পূজা কৰা, গাঁৱৰ উৎসৱ-পাৰ্বণ, মহামাৰী আদিত গেনা পালন কৰা, ভূত-প্ৰেত আদিয়ে মৃত্যুৰ আগজাননী দিয়া, মৃতকৰ শ্ৰাদ্ধত ম'হ বলি দিয়া আদি বিভিন্ন ধৰ্মীয় বিশ্বাসৰ চিত্ৰও ইয়াকইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনত সুন্দৰভাৱে বৰ্ণনা কৰা হৈছে।

নগা সমাজত এসময়ত প্ৰচলিত মূৰ কটা প্ৰথাৰ আভাস দাঙি ধৰি বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই উপন্যাসখনত বৰ্ণনা কৰিছে—

“সি লাহে লাহে মন কৰিলে, কাষৰ নাজেকৰ ঘৰটোৰ মুখৰ বেৰখনত কিছুমান মৰা মানুহৰ মূৰ জিলিকি আছে। মনে মনে মূৰ কেইটা গণি সি মুখেৰে

অস্ফুট ভাৱে ক'লে, 'বাইশটা'।"

আকৌ কৈছে —

"আপুনি তেনেহলে মূৰ কটা নগাৰ বংশধৰ' — আতঙ্কত শ্যামলীয়ে সুধিলে।

বিশ্বাঙৰ খং উঠিল, 'ভয় নাই, তোমালোকৰ নেকাটো।'

... শ্যামলীয়ে ক'লে, 'আমাৰ মাজত এটা ভুল ধাৰণা আছে যে নগা মাত্ৰেই মূৰ কটাত অভ্যস্ত।"

ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনৰ মূল পটভূমি হৈছে দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধই আনি দিয়া অস্থিৰ ৰাজনৈতিক অৱস্থা। তেনে অচল্যৱস্থাৰ প্ৰেক্ষাপটত উপন্যাসখনত টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ উৎসৱ-পাৰ্বণৰ বিস্তৃত বিৱৰণক উপেক্ষা কৰিলেও বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই প্ৰসংগক্ৰমে তেওঁলোকৰ উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠান সম্পৰ্কে ইঙ্গিত দিবলৈ পাহৰা নাই। ইয়েংমাচৰ যোগেদি স্মৃতি ৰোমন্থন কৰাই ঔপন্যাসিকে টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠানৰ বিষয়ে উপন্যাসখনত এটি আভাস দিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰিছে —

"তাৰ মনটোৱে এতিয়াও আটবক লগত লৈ হাবিলৈ গৈ নুনিপকা পাৰিবলৈ, ছিটিকা পাতি চৰাই ধৰিবলৈ, 'মংলা থা' উৎসৱত নাচিবলৈ আৰু গাভৰু চাঙত গৈ চুপতি মাৰিবলৈ লকলকাই থাকে।"

নৃত্য-গীত আৰু বতাহত ভাহি অহা বাঁহীৰ সুৰৰ মাজত ফানিটফাঙেও অনুভৱ কৰিছে খেতি চপোৱা উৎসৱৰ আগমনৰ বতৰ।

যুদ্ধৰ গহীনা লৈ আগ্ৰাসী ৰূপ লোৱা খৃষ্টান ধৰ্মৰ উত্থানে টাংখুল নগা সকলৰ পৰম্পৰাগত প্ৰাচীন-ধৰ্মীয় ধ্যান-ধাৰণাক আঁতৰাই কিদৰে নতুন দৃষ্টিভংগীৰ আগমন ঘটাইছে তাৰ বৰ্ণনাও ইয়াৰুইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনত পোৱা যায়। ইয়েংমাচৰ অনুভৱেৰে সেই কথা ব্যক্ত কৰি ঔপন্যাসিকে কৈছে—

"বহুত দিন হ'ল ইয়েংমাচই নচা নাই, গীত গোৱা নাই, 'মু' খাই পাগল হোৱা নাই। পথাৰলৈ যাওঁতে গাভৰুক জোকোৱা নাই, হাতত ধৰি গীতো গোৱা নাই-খ্ৰীষ্টান হ'বৰে পৰা প্ৰকৃতিৰ গীতৰ, নৃত্যৰ এই মন প্ৰাণ হৰি নিয়া নিমন্ত্ৰণ সি গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ এৰি দিছে।"

গতিশীল সময়ৰ লগত খোজ মিলাই যাওঁতে মানুহৰ জীৱনৰ ওপৰত পৰা পৰিবৰ্তনৰ প্ৰভাৱৰ ফলত সামাজিক ৰীতি-নীতিৰো পৰিবৰ্তন হয়। সামাজিক

পৰম্পৰাৰ এটা অবিচ্ছেদ্য অংগ হৈছে বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠান। সময়ৰ সোঁতত টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ বিভিন্ন দিশৰ লগতে বৈবাহিক ৰীতি-নীতিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতো পৰিবৰ্তনৰ জোৱাৰ নামিছে। উপন্যাসখনত তেনে আভাস সুস্পষ্ট। খৃষ্টান ধৰ্মৰ প্ৰসাৰৰ পৰিপ্ৰেক্ষিতত টাংখুল সমাজৰ পৰা গা-ধন লোৱা প্ৰথাৰ অৱসান ঘটিবলৈ লৈছে। অন্যান্য জনজাতীয় লোকৰ দৰেই নগা সমাজে ল'ৰা ছোৱালীৰ পচন্দক অগ্ৰাধিকাৰ দিয়ে যদিহে তেওঁলোক একে ফৈদৰ নহয়। আনহাতে বিধবা বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সামাজিক নিষেধাজ্ঞা নাই যদিও পতিতাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত কঠোৰ নীতি মানি চলা হয়। সেয়েহে অবাঞ্ছিতভাৱে জাপানী সৈন্যৰ হাতত সতীত্ব হেৰুৱাই ৰক্ষিতা হ'বলগীয়া হোৱা চাৰেংলা সমাজৰ চকুত পতিতাৰ শাৰীলৈ অৱনমিত হোৱাত বিশ্বাঙৰ দৰে উচ্চ ভাবাদৰ্শৰ শিক্ষিত যুৱকেও পত্নীৰ মৰ্যাদা দিবলৈ অপাৰগতা প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে—

"চাৰেংলাক বিচৰা মানে সিহঁতৰ সমাজক অপমান কৰা। অকল সেয়ে নহয়, চাৰেংলাক বিচৰাৰ আন এটা নাম হৈছে পাপ।"

টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ সামাজিক আচাৰ ৰীতিৰ বিস্তৃত তথ্যৰ ভাণ্ডাৰ হিচাপে ঔপন্যাসিকে নাজেক চৰিত্ৰটো সৃষ্টি কৰিছে। নগা সমাজৰ আপোচহীন মনোভাৱৰ উপযুক্ত প্ৰতিনিধি নাজেক।

"পৰ্বতৰ শিলৰ দৰে তাৰ মনটো টান, কিন্তু হৃদয়খন নিজৰাৰ দৰে কোমল। যিটো কথাত লাগে সেই কথা সি প্ৰাণান্তেও নেৰে।" একমাত্ৰ নগা পৰিচয়েৰে জীয়াই থাকিব বিচৰা নাজেক সকলো শেষ হৈ গ'লেও আপোচ কৰিব নোখোজা মানুহ। নগা বৈশিষ্ট্য অটুট ৰাখি সাহসেৰে নিজৰ স্বকীয়তা প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিব খোজা নাজেকে নিজৰ আদৰ্শৰে গঢ়িব নোৱাৰা পুতেক খাটিঙক ত্যাগ কৰি কোনো সম্পৰ্ক নথকা আংগামী গোষ্ঠীৰ খৃষ্টান যুৱক ভিডেশ্যেলীক মৃত্যুৰ আগমুহূৰ্তত নিজৰ 'থিলাকাপো' অৰ্থাৎ আধ্যাত্মিক উত্তৰাধিকাৰী পাতি থৈ গৈছে। ভিডেশ্যেলী যে খৃষ্টান সেই কথা ঠাঠিঙখুয়ে কোৱাৰ পিছত নাজেকে কৈছে—

"ভিডেশ্যেলীক তঁহতে নাজান। সি হাড়ে হিমজুৰে নগা। প্ৰকৃত নগাকহে মই থিলাকাপো কৰিব খোজো।"

নগা হিচাপে থকা স্বাভিমানৰ কাৰণেই একমাত্ৰ পুত্ৰ খাটিঙে খ্ৰীষ্টান ধৰ্ম লৈ খাহীয়া ছোৱালী বিয়া পতাৰ বাবে পুতেকৰ লগত সকলো সম্পৰ্ক শেষ কৰিছে। নগা পৰম্পৰাক খামুচি থাকিব খোজা নাজেকে কোনো নতুন ৰীতিকে

মানি ল'ব পৰা নাই। গীৰ্জা সাজিবৰ বাবে ঠাঠিঙখুয়ে মাটি দান কৰাত ক্ষুন্ন হৈ নাজেকে গালি পাৰিছে —

“বিধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ বাবে মাটি বিলাবলৈ নগা হৈ তোৰ লাজ নেলাগে।”

টাংখুল নগা সকলে জ্বৰ, আই আদি ৰোগৰ চিকিৎসাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত তেওঁলোকৰ সমাজত প্ৰচলিত পৰম্পৰাগত পদ্ধতিৰে “মেইবা”ৰ হতুৱাই জ্বৰা ফুকা কৰোৱাইছিল। কিন্তু সময়ৰ লগে লগে আধুনিক চিকিৎসাৰ প্ৰচলন হোৱাত মেইবাৰ স্থান অধিকাৰ কৰিলে ডাঃ ব্ৰুকে। প্ৰাচীন পৰম্পৰাক এৰিব নোখোজা নাজেকে ডাঃ ব্ৰুকৰ আধুনিক চিকিৎসা পদ্ধতিক গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ কোনোপধ্যে মান্তি হোৱা নাই। বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই নাজেকৰ এই পৰম্পৰাবাদী দৃষ্টিভংগীৰ আভাস ডাঙি ধৰিছে এইদৰে—

“পুৰণি ৰীতি নীতি অথবা চিকিৎসাত শ্ৰদ্ধা কৰা মানুহ গাঁওখনত নাইকিয়া হ'ল।”

নিজৰ বৰ আই ওলোৱাৰ পিছতো ডাঃ ব্ৰুকৰ ওচৰত চিকিৎসা নলৈ নাজেকে মেইবাৰ ওচৰত চিকিৎসা গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। পৰম্পৰা অনুসৰি মেইবাই কুকুৰা কাটি লাই উলিয়াই কামিঅ' দেৱতাক পূজা দিছে। নাজেকক বিছনাৰ তলত তৰা পাত পাৰি শুবলৈ দিছে। গৰম বস্ত্ৰ খাবলৈ মানা কৰিছে। কিন্তু সেই চিকিৎসাই নাজেকক বচাব নোৱাৰিলে। মৃত্যু শয্যাতে পৰিও শেষ মুহূৰ্তলৈকে নাজেকে পৰম্পৰা এৰি দিয়া নাই।

দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধৰ ৰাজনৈতিক পটভূমিত ৰচিত ইয়াকইঙ্গম উপন্যাসখনত বিশ্বাঙৰ শান্তিকামী মানৱতাবাদী দৰ্শনৰ বিপৰীতে ভিডেশ্যেলীৰ আপোচহীন নগা সাম্ৰাজ্য প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ যুঁজত টাংখুল নগাসকলৰ সামাজিক জীৱন স্তিমিত হ'লেও ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই তদানীন্তন নগা সমাজৰ তথ্যপূৰ্ণ বিৱৰণ দাঙি ধৰাত সফল হৈছে।

উপসংহাৰ :

আমাৰ এই আলোচনাৰ পৰা দেখা গ'ল যে উপন্যাসখনত যুদ্ধই জুৰুলা কৰা ৰাজনৈতিক অস্থিৰতাৰ পৃষ্ঠভূমিত ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই মণিপুৰ সীমান্তৱৰ্তী নগা পাহাৰৰ টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ এখন সজীৱ ছবি ডাঙি ধৰিবলৈ যৎপৰোনাস্তি চেষ্টা কৰিছে। জাতীয়তাবাদ, দেশপ্ৰেম তথা যুদ্ধৰ উন্মাদনাৰে পুষ্ট এই ৰাজনৈতিক বাতাবৰণে টাংখুল নগা সমাজখনৰ সামগ্ৰিক

স্বৰূপ প্ৰকাশত বাধাৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিলেও ঔপন্যাসিক বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যই নিপুণতাৰে উপন্যাসখনত তদানীন্তন নগা পাহাৰৰ তথ্যসমৃদ্ধ ছবি এখন অংকন কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে।

গ্ৰন্থপঞ্জী:

মুখ্য সমল :

ভট্টাচাৰ্য, বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ : ইয়াকইঙ্গম

প্ৰকাশক: বিচিত্ৰ নাৰায়ণ দত্তবৰুৱা

লয়াৰ্ছ বুক ষ্টল, গুৱাহাটী-ৱ

দ্বিতীয় প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৬২

গৌণ সমল :

কটকী, প্ৰফুল্ল : স্বৰাজোত্তৰ অসমীয়া উপন্যাস সমীক্ষা

প্ৰকাশক: বীণা লাইব্ৰেৰী, গুৱাহাটী, ১৯৭৯

নেওগ, মহেশ্বৰ : অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ ৰূপৰেখা

প্ৰকাশক:-শ্ৰী ৰাজেন্দ্ৰ মোহন শৰ্মা

চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, পানবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটী

অষ্টম তাঙৰণ চেপ্তেম্বৰ ১৯৯৫

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প্ৰকাশক:- শ্ৰী অনন্ত হাজৰিকা

বনলতা, পানবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটী ১

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প্ৰকাশিকা: প্ৰতিমা দেৱী

বিহাবাৰী, গুৱাহাটী ৮

সপ্তম সংস্কৰণ ১৯৯৬

শৰ্মা, হেমন্ত কুমাৰ (সম্পাদিত) : বীৰেন্দ্ৰ কুমাৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ সাহিত্য কৃতি

প্ৰকাশক : ৰাজেন্দ্ৰ মোহন শৰ্মা

চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, টিহু, ১৯৮৩

হরেন্দ্ৰনাথ বৰঠাকুৰ এবং তাঁৰ শিশুনাটক

সুশান্ত কৰ

“আমাৰ নাটকগুলো সত্যি নাটক হয়েছে কি হয় নি, সে নিয়ে আমার নিজেরই সন্দেহ আছে। প্রত্যেকটি নাটকই তাগাদাতে লেখা। অভাব আর চাহিদা পূরাতে লেখা। লেখে উঠে, বা মঞ্চায়ন দেখে আমি সবসময় ভীষণ একটা অসন্তুষ্টিতে ভুগি। জানি না কিসের তাড়নাতে নাট্যপীঠ বা প্রশান্ত শর্মা আমার নাটকগুলো এতো যত্ন করে রেখেছেন— যে কাজগুলো কিনা আমি নিজেও করবার দরকার মনে করি নি। কেনই বা তিনি এই সংকলন এতো কষ্টে আর শ্রমে প্রকাশ করতে গেলেন, সে আমার কাছে একটি উত্তর বিহীন প্রশ্ন হয়েই আছে। আমার এই সমস্ত শ্রম এবং আন্তরিকতা সুধী সমাজের বিচারে শেষঅধি একমুঠো নষ্ট ফসলে না পরিণত হয়। সেরকম হলেও আমার দিক থেকে যেন করবার কিছু থাকবে না। সে আমার অজ্ঞতা, বৌদ্ধিক সীমাবদ্ধ এবং অপরিপক্বতা বলে দ্বিধাহীনভাবে মেনে নেব।” কথাগুলো আমরা অনুবাদ করে নিয়েছি। লিখেছিলেন হরেন্দ্ৰনাথ বৰঠাকুৰ তিন বছর আগে তাঁৰ শিশুনাট সমগ্ৰে। তিনি আরো লিখেছিলেন, “নাট্যকাৰ হবার ধৃষ্টতা আমার কোনোদিনই ছিল না, এখনো নেই। ছাত্রবেলা এবং যৌবনবেলাতে লেখা বহু নাটক আমি নিজেই নষ্ট করে ফেলেছি...” — এই সব উচ্চারণ যার তিনি এবারে ২০১৭তে অসমীয়া শিশু সাহিত্যে, তথা নাটকে জীবনজোড়া অবদানের জন্যে সাহিত্য আকাদেমি পুরস্কারে সম্মানিত হয়েছেন। আর কথা গুলো লিখেছিলেন তিনবছর আগে প্রকাশিত তাঁৰ নাট্য সমগ্ৰে। শিবসাগরের ‘নাট্যপীঠে’র হয়ে বইটি সম্পাদনা করেছিলেন

নাট্যপরিচালক, প্রশিক্ষক, অভিনেতা প্রশান্ত শর্মা। আপনাদের মনে হতে পারে আকাদেমি পুরস্কার বুঝিবা নিজের সীমাবদ্ধতা সম্পর্কে তাঁৰ ধারণাকে প্রথমবারের জন্যে ভ্রান্ত প্রমাণ করে দিল। এমন ভ্রান্তি আমাদের অনেকরই হয়ে থাকে। বুঝিবা স্বীকৃতি একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান নিলেই দেয়া হলো। আসলে ততদিনে তাঁৰ নাটক সারা অসমেই বহুবার অভিনীত হয়ে গেছেই। অধিকাংশেরই উদ্যোক্তা এই নাট্যপীঠ এবং পরিচালক প্রশান্ত শর্মা। কিন্তু নাটক করেছিল উত্তরলখিমপুৰের ‘নাবিক’ নাট্যগোষ্ঠী। তাদের দরকারে তাঁরা নাটক চেয়ে গেছেন, আর হরেন্দ্ৰনাথ বৰঠাকুৰ লিখে গেছেন। ১৯৯৬ র ১লা জানুয়ারিতে আরেক প্রখ্যাত নাট্যকাৰ সফদৰ হাসমিৰ মৃত্যুদিনে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল নাট্যপীঠ। সেই থেকে তাঁদের অধিকাংশ নাটকই লিখেছেন হরেন্দ্ৰনাথ বৰঠাকুৰ। কেবল ‘ৰজাৰ দেউল’ এই একটি নাটকই বিশেষ বেশিবার অভিনীত হয়েছে। বাকিগুলো মিলিয়ে কবার অভিনীত হয়েছিল আমরা একটা অনুমান করে নিতে পারি। দৰ্শক সমালোচকেরা যদি ইতিমধ্যে নাটকগুলোর সমাদর না করতেন, তবে তাঁৰ লেখা নাটকগুলোর থেকে দশখানা নাটক এখান ওখান থেকে সংগ্রহ করে নিজে উদ্যোগী হয়ে প্রকাশ করতে উৎসাহী হতেন না প্রশান্ত শর্মা। তিনি ভেতরে কী কষ্ট করেছিলেন আমরা শুনেছি, দেখিনি। কিন্তু বাইরে আমরা দেখেছি কত শুভানুধ্যায়ীর থেকে পাই পাই করে অর্থ সংগ্রহ করে ব্যয়ভার সংগ্রহ করেছেন। এবং প্রকাশ করেছিলেন ২০১৪র ফেব্রুয়ারিৰ এক বিকেলে তিনসুকিয়া মহাবিদ্যালয়ে এক গুণীজন সমাবেশে। তাঁৰ পরেও যখন নিজের এই সব অসন্তুষ্টিৰ কথা তিনি ‘নাট্যকাৰ’ আমাদেৰ জানন, শিল্পীকে নিছক ‘বিনয়া’ বললে তাঁৰ অসম্মান করা হয়। তিনি অন্তৰ থেকে জানেন, শিল্পীকে যখন নিজের কাজে সন্তুষ্টি আর দস্তে পেয়ে বসে তখনই তাঁৰ “যবনিকা পতন” হয়। নিজের ‘সীমাবদ্ধতাটি’ জেনে একটি অসন্তুষ্টি তাঁৰ মনে কাজ করে বলেই তিনি মহৎ নাট্যকাৰ, মহৎ শিল্পী। এটা যে কোনো নবীন শিল্পীৰ কাছে শেখাৰ জিনিস। তবে এখানে জানিয়ে নিই, যে বইটির কথা আমরা উল্লেখ করলাম এটিই তাঁৰ নাটক নিয়ে জীবন জোড়া কাজ নয়। জনপ্রিয় প্রকাশনা সংস্থাগুলো আজঅদি তাঁৰ দিকে যে খুব একটি নজর দিয়েছে, সেরকম আমরা দেখিনি। কিন্তু নিতান্তই আত্মীয় বন্ধু বা নিজের প্রয়াসে প্রকাশিত তাঁৰ রচনাৰ সংখ্যা নিতান্ত কম নয়। আটটি পথ নাটক, বেশ কিছু একাঙ্কিকা, দুটি পূর্ণাঙ্গ নাটক লেখা ছাড়াও শিশুনাটক নিয়ে তাঁৰ সুগভীৰ তাত্ত্বিক অধ্যয়নের খতিয়ান রয়েছে ‘প্রসঙ্গ অসমীয়া শিশু-নাট্য’ নামে একটি প্রবন্ধ সংকলনে, যেটি অসম সাহিত্য

সভার তিনসুকিয়া শাখা প্রকাশ করেছিল ২০০৫ এ। ‘খরিয়ে মেলিলে বাট’, ‘কণ পরয়ার বিলৈ’ সহ বেশ কিছু শিশু উপন্যাস, বেশ কিছু কবিতাও তিনি লিখেছেন— যদিও সেগুলো বই আকারে বেরিয়েছে বলে কোনো সংবাদ আমাদের কাছে নেই। তাঁর লেখা বহু প্রবন্ধপাতি অসমিয়া-বাংলা ছোটকাগজে, স্মরণিকাতে ছড়িয়ে ছিটিয়ে রয়েছে। বহু অনুবাদও তিনি করেছেন। ভগৎ সিংহের সুবিখ্যাত বই তাঁর অনুবাদে ‘মই কিয় নাস্তিক হ’লো’ নামে দশকখানিক আগে প্রকাশিত হয়েছিল। এখন তিনি ব্যস্ত রয়েছেন সুকান্ত আচার্যের শিশুরচনাগুলোর অনুবাদে। এই সব কাজের জন্যে ইতিমধ্যে বেশকিছু পুরস্কারেও সম্মানিত হয়েছে। তবে শেষ প্রকাশনা অবশ্যই ‘হরেন্দ্রনাথ বরঠাকুর শিশু নাট সমগ্র’। এবং এই বইটি থেকেই তাঁর দিকে আকাদেমির নজর পড়ে। তাই আমরা সেটি নিয়ে কিছু কথা বলতে চাই, যাতে তাঁর কাজের সম্পর্কে কিছু ধারণা মেলে।

দশখানা নাটক। তার প্রথমটি ‘প্লেটফর্ম’ এবং ‘একলব্যর বিচার’ ছাড়া বাকি প্রত্যেকটিই বলতে পারি স্পষ্টতই রূপক নাটক। কারণ সেগুলোতে জীব-জন্তু গাছপালা সবাই চরিত্র এবং তারা নিজেদের মধ্যে এবং শিশুদের সঙ্গে কথাও বলে, কাজও করে। এমন কি একটি নাটকে ‘পলরীয়া প্রতিধানি’তে ‘প্রতিধ্বনি’ও কথা বলে। প্রতীকের রূপকথা উপকথার আদল রয়েছে প্রায় সবকটিতে। কিন্তু এর একটিও অবাস্তবও নয়, নয় পৌরাণিকও।

‘প্লেটফর্ম’ নাটকটিকে আপাতদৃষ্টিতে একটি ‘বাস্তববাদী’ নাটক বলা যেতে পারে। নয়টি দৃশ্যে রেলস্টেশনের প্লেটফর্মের ভবঘুরে দরিদ্র শিশুদের গল্প। তাদের কেউ স্টেশনেই গান করে হাত পেতে পয়সা রোজগার করে, কেউ বুট পালিশ করে, কেউ সামান্য টাকার বিনিময়ে সিনেমার পোস্টার সাঁটে শহরের দেয়ালে দেয়ালে। এদের রোজগার যত্রতত্র, কিন্তু মাথা গুঁজবার ঠাই এই স্টেশন প্লেটফর্ম। তাদের জাতধর্মের কোনো ঠিকানা নেই। ‘রানি’ বলে মেয়েটিকে দলনেত্রী বানিয়েছে। রোজগারের টাকা সবাই এসে ওকে দেয়, সে হিসেব করে এদের ‘সংসার’ সামাল দেয়। আর পি এফ, স্টেশন মাস্টার, বাইরের দুনিয়ার বাবুদের উপেক্ষা, অবজ্ঞা অত্যাচারে জীবন কাটে। সম্ভ্রাসী আক্রমণে রেলবন্ধ হলে এরা বিপন্ন হয়, যাত্রী নেই। ফলে রোজগার জোটে না। জোটে না খাবার। বাইরের শহরে সাম্প্রদায়িক হাঙ্গামা হলেও যেমন জীবন যাপন করা কঠিন হয়, তার উপরে প্রশ্ন উঠে এদের কার ধর্ম বা কী? সাংবাদিক যতীন এদের বন্ধু হয়, দলের সদস্য হয়। তাদের লিখতে পড়তে শেখায়, গাইতে শেখায় নতুন গান। এবং

শেষে প্রতিবাদ করতে। এবং নাটকের শেষে এদের টিকিট কেটে রেল চড়িয়ে পাঠায় অন্যান্য প্লেটফর্মে গিয়ে তাদের মতো যেখানে যত পথশিশু রয়েছে তাদের সংগঠিত করতে। এমন করে পথশিশুদের সংগঠিত করা সম্ভব কি না, যখন না স্টেশন কর্তৃপক্ষই এদের স্টেশন থেকে তাড়াতে চাইছে, তখন মধ্যবিত্ত যতীন মামার এই পদক্ষেপ অসচেতনভাবে হলেও কর্তৃপক্ষের কাজটি সহজ করে দিল কি না খুব কটুর বাস্তববাদী তথা যৌক্তিক অবস্থান থেকে এই প্রশ্ন উঠতেই পারে। কিন্তু যদি প্রশ্ন করি, একটি সুন্দর জীবনের স্বপ্ন দেখা এবং দেখানোর এই ভিন্ন নাট্যকারের সামনে কী পথই বা খোলা ছিল, তখন এইটুকুন খামতি বাস্তবতার দিক থেকে আমাদের মনে নিতে বেগ পেতে হয় না।

বাকি নাটকগুলোতে সেই সমস্যা নেই। প্রতীকী নাটক দুরকমের হয়ে থাকে। এই যেমন রবীন্দ্রনাথের ‘রক্তকরবী’ আদি হচ্ছে সাক্ষাতিক নাটক। সেখানে রাজা-নন্দিনী-রঞ্জন ইত্যাদি চরিত্রগুলোর মর্ম দর্শকের বোঝা কঠিন হয়ে পড়ে নাট্যকারের ভাবনার সঙ্গে আলাপ না থাকলে। যদিও নাট্যকার ক্রমেই কিছু স্পষ্ট করেও থাকেন, কিছুটা দর্শকের বোধের উপরে ছেড়ে দেন। হরেন্দ্রনাথ বরঠাকুরের নাটকগুলো সেই অর্থে সাক্ষাতিক নাটক নয়। এগুলোতে মানবের প্রাণী, জড় পদার্থ এমন কি প্রাকৃতিক ঘটনাতেও মানবিক চরিত্র আরোপ করেছেন তিনি। সেই অর্থে এই সব উপস্থাপনাকে অবাস্তব বলে মনে হতে পারে, কিন্তু নিজেদের অন্তর্বস্তু নিয়ে চরিত্রগুলো এমন কি কল্পিত কাহিনিও অনেক বেশি বাস্তব হয়ে উঠে। এই ব্যক্তি-বস্তু বা ভাবের বিশেষ কোনো মর্ম এমনিতে স্বাভাবিক অবস্থাতে আমাদের কাছে স্পষ্ট ধরা নাও দিতে পারে, নাট্যকার তাই স্পষ্ট-রূপময় এবং বাস্তব করে তুলেন। হরেন্দ্রনাথ বরঠাকুরের বাকি সব নাটক এই গোত্রের অর্থাৎ যাকে বশে রূপক নাটক। অবশ্য শিশুনাটকে এই রূপক আশ্রয়ের একটি অন্যতর ব্যাখ্যা হরেন্দ্রনাথ বরঠাকুরের রয়েছে, যার সঙ্গে আমাদের বিদ্যায়তনিক পরিচয় সাধারণত কম হয়। সেসব তিনি লিখেছেন ঐ ‘প্রসঙ্গ অসমীয়া শিশু-নাট্য’ বইতে। সেখানে তিনি ১৮ বছর অধি শিশুদের বয়স ভেদে মানসিক অবস্থা নিয়ে বিস্তৃত আলোচনা করেছেন। এবং লিখেছেন, তিন থেকে পাঁচ বা ছয় বছর বয়স অধি শিশুরা বিমূর্ত ধারণা করতে পারে না। অর্থাৎ মানুষে পশু পাখিতে তফাৎ সেরকম করতে পারে না। পশুপাখির কথা বলা তার কাছে খুবই স্বাভাবিক বলে মনে হয়। মানুষের পিঠে পাখা জুড়ে দিয়ে পরি বানিয়ে ফেলা শিশু তাকে অবাস্তব বলে মনে করে না। ফলে শিশুর দিক থেকে

নাটকগুলো রূপক নাহয়ে হয়ে পড়ে বাস্তব। এই বয়সের শিশুর মধ্যে 'অনুকরণপ্রিয়তা' প্রবল থাকে। ফলে সে বড়দের আচরণ অনুকরণ করে। পুতুল নিয়ে রান্নাবাটি খেলে, পুতুলকে খাইয়ে দেয় ঘুম পাড়িয়ে দেয় ইত্যাদি। হরেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের নাটকে সেভাবে পুতুল খেলা দেখব না। কিন্তু এই অনুকরণপ্রিয়তার কথাই মনে হয় তিনি ভেবেছেন যখন বেশ কিছু নাটকে আমরা দেখব শিশুরা আদালত বসিয়ে নিয়েছে, প্রতিবাদী বা শোক সভা করছে। সাত থেকে চৌদ্দ-পনেরো বছরের শিশুদের প্রবণতা হচ্ছে সমবয়সীদের মধ্যে দল গঠন, দলের প্রতি আনুগত্য। ফলে বহু নাটকেই দেখব শিশুরা দল বেঁধে করছে যা করবার, প্লেটফর্মে সবাই দলনেত্রী রানির আনুগত্য মেনে নিয়েছে। যাই হোক, আমরা তাঁর নাটকে চলে যাই।

দ্বিতীয় নাটক 'বালিমাহীর কথা' নাটকটি তৈরি হয়েছে গল্পের ভেতরে রয়েছে গল্প নিয়ে। মূল গল্পটির শুরু একটি বাস্তব গল্প দিয়ে যেখানে পপী-পিস্কুমনি মাইনারা একটা খোলা জায়গাতে খেলছিল। কিন্তু কী খেলা হবে সেই নিয়ে ওদের মধ্যে তর্ক বাঁধল, জায়গাটি খেলার জন্যে উপযুক্ত বিবেচিত হলো না। ফলে তারা শিশুসুলক ঠাট্টা তামাসা করে নিজেরাই রেল হয়ে 'ঝক-ঝক রেলগাড়ি চলে রেলগাড়ি, গান গেয়ে 'কণখুড়ার' বাগিচাতে গিয়ে উপস্থিত হয়। সেখানে গিয়ে বাগিচার বিপর্যস্ত অবস্থা দেখে এরা বড় মর্মাহত হয়। গাছগাছালি কেটে ফেলা হয়েছে। ভাঙ্গা পাখির বাসা ইত্যাদি দেখে এরা বেশ মর্মাহত হয়। ফলে তারা কি কিছুই খেলল না? অবশ্যই খেলল। মৃতগাছগাছালির জন্যে একটি শোকসভা বসালো, সেই সভা পরিণত হল প্রতিবাদী সভাতে। এবং সিদ্ধান্ত হল বাগিচাটিকে জনতার বাগিচা ঘোষণা করে এখানে আবারও বাগিচা সাজিয়ে তুলতে হবে। তারা বাগিচা সাজাচ্ছে, দিন যাচ্ছে। পপীর কিন্তু ভাবনা যে পাখিটির বাসা ভেঙেছিল, সে আবার ফিরে আসবে কি না। একরাতে যে স্বপ্নে দেখতে পেল সেই পাখিটি একটি 'বালিমাহী' অর্থাৎ খঞ্জনা। সবাই জানতে চাইল স্বপ্নে সে কী দেখেছে? সর্বত্র বাসা বাঁধবার জায়গা খুঁজে পাখিটি হয়রান, পাচ্ছে না কোথাও। এবারে সেই স্বপ্নের কথাটিকে নিয়ে পপী এবং বন্ধুরা তৈরি করে একটি নাটকের ভেতরে নাটক, যেটি বিশুদ্ধ এক রূপকাংশ। খঞ্জনা গাছের কাছে যায়, ঘরের কাছে যায়, ঝর্ণার কাছে যায়, পর্বতের কাছে যায়। তার ডিম পাড়বার সময় হয়েছে, বাসা বাঁধবার জায়গা চাই। অথচ, সর্বত্র দৃশ্যে সবাই বিপন্ন, কেউ তাকে নিরাপদ ঠাই দেবার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিতে পারল না। স্বপ্নের কথা

ওখানেই শেষ। কিন্তু স্বপ্নে-বাস্তবে এক হয়ে যায়, যখন শেষে ক্লান্ত খঞ্জনাটি সত্যি এসে পপী-পিস্কুদের সামনে অচেতন হয়ে পড়ে যায়। তারা তাকে সেই নির্মীয়মাণ বাগিচাতে আশ্রয় দেয়, শুশ্রূষা করে সুস্থ করে তুলে এবং শপথ নেয় এক দৃষণমুক্ত পৃথিবীর গড়বার।

তৃতীয় নাটক 'জোনমণির স্বর্গযাত্রা'তেও সেরকম নাটকের ভেতরে নাটক রয়েছে। গল্পটি তিনি নিয়েছেন পোল্যান্ডের লেখক আইজাক বাসেভিচ সিঙ্গারের একটি গল্প 'মূর্খের স্বর্গ' থেকে। জোনমণি অলকা ভাইবোন। প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক স্কুলশিক্ষাতে জোনমণির কোনো আগ্রহ নেই। তার বোন অলকা ঠিক বিপরীত। জোনমণি ছবি এঁকে প্রজাপতি ধরে, খেলাধুলো করে ভালো পায়। পড়াশোনা করে নয়। ওদিকে বাড়িতে খুব চাপ। তার মন খারাপ হতে থাকে এই বন্দি দশাতে। সে গল্পছলে ঠাকমার থেকে জানতে পায় যে স্বর্গেই একমাত্র সুখ, কিন্তু সেখানে লোকে না মরে যেতে পারে না। সুতরাং সে মরবে বলে স্থির করে ফেলল, খাওয়া দাওয়া ছেড়ে দিল। কেউ এই অসুখের কোনো কারণ জানে না। প্রতিবেশী এক দাদু রহস্যটি ভেদ করলেন। তিনি স্বর্গ নিয়ে একটি নাটক তৈরি করেন। জোনমণির ঘরটিকে স্বর্গের মতো সাজিয়ে তুলেন। অলকার জনাকয় বান্ধবীদের সাজানো হলো পরি। সেই নাটকে তার এই বোধ হলো যে যত সুখ এই মাটির পৃথিবীতেই। সরাসরি প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষার বিরুদ্ধে কোনো কথা নেই, বটে। কিন্তু প্রতিবেশী দাদুটি যেভাবে নেচে গেয়ে নাটক করে তাঁকে জীবনে শিক্ষাটি দিলেন — তাতে বিকল্প শিক্ষার একটি ভাবনার বীজ তো বপন করেই এই নাটক।

চতুর্থ নাটক 'বেলি ওলোয়া সাধু' সেরকম কেশব মহন্তের একটি ঘোষক বা একটি গল্পের নাট্যরূপ। এর একটি প্রস্তাবনা দৃশ্য রয়েছে, যেখানে মেয়েকে সূত্রধার কেশব মহন্তের ভূমিকাতে অবতীর্ণ হন, এবং একদল ছেলে মেয়েকে ঘুমিয়ে পড়া সূর্যের ঘুম ভাঙবার গল্প বলতে শুরু করেন। এই গল্পই ক্রমে নাটকে পরিণত হয়। সেই নাটকে অলঙ্কৃত আফ্রিদি ইত্যাদি কচিকাঁচার বড় চিত্তিত হয়ে পড়ে কী করে সূর্যের ঘুম ভাঙানো যায়, এতো দূর সূর্যের কাছে যায় বা কে আর কীভাবে? চিলকে ডাকা হলো। চিল গিয়ে বাকি পাখিদের কাছে সমস্যাটি তুলে ধরল। তারপরে পাখিদের মধ্যে নানান তর্ক বিতর্ক দ্বিধাদ্বন্দ্বের ছবি যেভাবে নাটকে উপস্থাপিত হয় — সে আমাদের সংগঠন করবার, মহৎ উদ্দেশ্যে ত্যাগ করবার না করবার, ঈর্ষা-বিদ্বেষ, মিথ্যাচারের শিকার হবার অভিজ্ঞতার গল্প। দুঃসাহসিক অভিযানে টিয়া যেমন ফাঁকি দেয়, কোকিল তেমনি প্রাণ দেয়। ময়ূর

চেষ্টা করেও ব্যর্থ হয়। প্রতি যাত্রাতেই জোনাকি ওদের পথ দেখিয়ে নিয়ে যায়। শেষে গিয়ে মোরগ সফল হয়। এটি রূপকথারই গল্প। কিন্তু হরেন্দ্রনাথ বরঠাকুরের কলমে যেন অন্ধকার থেকে আলোর বিশ্বে যাত্রার মানুষের সংগ্রামের গল্পে পরিণত হয়েছে।

পঞ্চম নাটক 'পলরীয়ার প্রতিধ্বনি'র গল্প অনেকটা সেই 'বালিমাহীর কথা'র মতোই। সেখানে যদি দৃশ্যে তবে এখানে নগরায়ণে শিশুদের খেলবার ঠাই নেই হয়ে যাবার সংকটের গল্প। গল্পটি জার্মান লেখক ফ্রেডরিখ ফ্রেডের শিশু উপন্যাসের ডব্লিউ কে হোমসের কথা ইংরেজি অনুবাদ 'রানওয়ে ইকো'র অসমীয়া নাট্যরূপান্তর। ত্রিকূট পর্বতের আকর্ষণ হল সেখানে গিয়ে কিছু বললেই সে কথার তিনবার প্রতিধ্বনি হয়। ফলে সারা দুনিয়ার বহু লোক সেই পর্বতে ভ্রমণ করতে যায়। কমলা ললিতা পপী পিক্সিরা সনিয়ারাও পরিবারের সঙ্গে একদিন সেখানে গিয়ে হাজির হল, সঙ্গে গাইড মিঃ হক। কিন্তু আশ্চর্য। সেদিন কোনো প্রতিধ্বনি শোনা গেল না। ক্লান্ত প্রতিধ্বনি ঠিক করেছে সে আর মানুষের বিনোদন করবে না। তার চেয়ে মানুষের দুনিয়াতে নিজেই কিছুদিন ঘুরে আসবে। এর পরে যা সব কীর্তি সে করে তা হাস্যরসের বর্ণা বইয়ে দেয় নাটকে। সে সনিয়াদের স্কুলে গিয়ে প্রধান শিক্ষিকার ভূগোল ক্লাসে প্রশ্নের জবাব দেয়, তাও ভুল জবাব। ছাত্ররা বিদ্রোহ করছে ভেবে প্রথমে যদিও তিনি চটেন, পরে রহস্য না ধরতে পেরে খানিক আতঙ্কিত হন। সনিয়াদের খেলবার জায়গা নেই, রাজপথের পাশে খেলে। সেখানেও সে গিয়ে সনিয়ার মায়ের ভূমিকাতে নামে, মায়ের ডাক ভেবে পথ পেরোতে গিয়ে সনিয়া দুর্ঘটনাতে পড়ে। একটি ট্রাকের নিচে পড়তে পড়তে সে বেঁচে যায়। ড্রাইভার আর সনিয়ার মায়ের সংলাপে প্রতিধ্বনি জানতে পায় পাশেই নিঃসন্তান প্রতাপশালী মানুষ অরবিন্দ চৌধুরীর দেয়াল ঘেরা একটি বাগিচা এমনি পড়ে আছে, যেটি সে খুলে দিলেই শিশুরা বেশ খেলতে পারে। এইবারে সে অরবিন্দ চৌধুরীর পেছনে পড়ে যাতে বাগিচাটি খুলে দেয়। অরবিন্দ চৌধুরী রহস্য ভেদ করতে পুলিশ পৌরসভা সবার শরণাপন্ন হয়। কিন্তু কিছুতেই বাগিচা খুলে দেবে না। এদিকে অদেখা প্রতিধ্বনির জ্বলায় তার আহাৰ নিদ্রা সবই বিপন্ন। শেষে সে বাগিচা খুলে দিতে রাজি হলে প্রতিধ্বনি সনিয়ার থেকে বিদায় নিয়ে আবার সেই পর্বতে ফিরে যায়। মানুষের নগর তার কাছে মোটেও আমোদজনক মনে হলো না, বরং মিঃ হকের মতো মানুষ বেকার হয়ে যাওয়ার বেদনা সে অনুভব করে। হক হঠাৎ আবিষ্কার করেন প্রতিধ্বনি ফিরে এসেছে।

কচিকাঁচার আবার সেই পাহাড়ে যায়, প্রতিধ্বনি জানায় সে তাদের ভালোবাসে, গান ভালোবাসে। নাটক এখানেই শেষ হয় শিশুদের একটি গানে। সেই গানের আহবানটি এরকম: আমাদের মনের কথা পৃথিবীকে শোনাতে তুমি পথ দেখাও প্রতিধ্বনি, মেঘে মেঘে ঢেউ তুলে প্রতিধ্বনিত হোক সেই কথা।

'একলব্যের বিচার' নাটকটি নামে মনে হয় একালেও কোনো গুরু বুঝিবা শিষ্যের বুড়ো আঙুল না হলেও সেরকম কোনো দক্ষিণা দাবি করবেন। না শেষ অঙ্গি সেরকম কিছু হয় না। এই নাটকের গুরু দ্রোণাচার্যের বিপরীত, সুবিবেচক এবং সুবিচারকও। কিন্তু ঘটনা সেই একই, দরিদ্র ছেলে মোহনের ইচ্ছে সে ছবি আঁকা শেখে। কিন্তু উপায় নেই। তাকে এই বয়সেই রোজগার করে খেতে হয়। সুতরাং সে কাজ নিল এক চারুকলা বিদ্যালয়ে। আঁকিয়ে ছাত্র ছাত্রীদের ব্রাশটা, তুলিটা, ক্যানভাসটা গুছিয়ে রেখে, চা এনে দেয়, বাসনপত্র ধুয়ে দেয়, বিদ্যালয় সাফাই করে। সে বিদ্যালয় থেকে প্রায়ই রং তুমি হারিয়ে যেতে শুরু করলে কৈফিয়ত দেবার দায়টাও ওর উপরেই পড়ে। যদিও কেউ সেরকম অত্যাচার বা গালিগালাজ তাকে করে নি। একদিকে নাটকের রহস্য আর দিকে দারিদ্র্য এবং সততাকে ঘনীভূত করতে তার মতো আরো দু'চারজন বস্তির ছেলেকেও মাঝে মধ্যে নাটকে নিয়ে আসেন নাট্যকার। তারা মাটিকে আঁকিবুকি করে, রং নেই ব্রাশ নেই। স্টুডিওর এটা ওটা কৌতূহল বশে ধরলে মোহন তাদের ধরতে নিয়ে যাবার করে। আর ছাত্রী গায়ত্রী এসে ওদের কিছু চাইলে চুরি না করে বলে নিয়ে যাবার মধ্যবিত্তসুলভ উপদেশ দিয়ে কিছু রং তুলি দিতে চাইলে, ওদের আত্মমর্যাদাতে বাধে। ওরা না নিয়ে চলে যায়। তা হলে, হারাচ্ছে কী করে? সুতরাং শিক্ষক রবিন চৌধুরী এক অভিনব অনুসন্ধান প্রক্রিয়া শুরু করলেন, রাতেও সে স্টুডিওতে সেই সবার মধ্যে মোহনও রয়েছে। তার উপরে দায়িত্ব পড়ল, রাতেও সে একটি ছাত্রের থাকবে আর নজর রাখবে কে রং তুলি সরাসরি। দেবজিৎ বলে একটি ছাত্রের আধো আঁকা একটি ক্যানভাস এক সকালে আবিষ্কৃত হল সম্পূর্ণ হয়ে গেছে এবং ছবি দেখে সবাই মুগ্ধ হয়ে গেল। ছাত্রেরা মনে করে এই কাজ শিক্ষক ছাড়া আর কারো নয়, কিন্তু তিনি দাবি করেন এমন ভালো ছবি তিনিও আঁকতে পারবেন না। সুতরাং সন্দেহ সেই বস্তির ছেলের কিংবা মোহনের উপরে ঘনীভূত হল। বস্তির ছেলেরাও ঘটনাচক্রে সন্দেহের বাইরে চলে গেলে, এক রাতে রবিন চৌধুরী এসে মোহনকে হাতে নাতে ধরে ফেলেন। সে তখন ছবি আঁকছিল। তার ভয় হলো, এবারে তার চাকরিখানা যাবে। কিন্তু সেরকম কিছু হলো না।

পুলিশেও দেয়া হলো না। বিদ্যালয়েই একটি নকল আদালত বসল, এবং জানা গেল যে মোহন প্রখ্যাত শিল্পী চন্দ্রকান্ত দাসের ছেলে। যাকে সমাজ তথা বর্তমান শিল্পীরাও স্মরণে রাখে নি। সুতরাং বিচারের রায়ে স্থির হলো, মোহন এবং তাঁর মায়ের দায়িত্ব এখন থেকে বিদ্যালয় নেবে, সে স্বাধীন ভাবে এই বিদ্যালয়ে থেকেই শিল্প চর্চা করবে। এভাবে প্রতিভার প্রতি সামাজিক দায়বদ্ধতার নাটক হয়ে উঠে ‘একলব্যর বিচার’। এই সংকলনে এটি দ্বিতীয় বাস্তববাদী নাটক। এইখানে একটি কথা উল্লেখ করা ভালো, তিনি মনে করেন শিশু যেহেতু সমাজের উৎপাদন ব্যবস্থার সঙ্গে প্রত্যক্ষভাবে যুক্ত নয় বা নীতিগতভাবে যুক্ত থাকার কথা নয় ফলে তাদের কোনো শ্রেণি চরিত্র থাকবার কথা ছিল না। কিন্তু শিশু যে পরিবারে বড় হয়ে উঠে সেই পরিবারের শ্রেণিচরিত্র তাকে শৈশব থেকেই পেয়ে বসে। কথাগুলো তাঁর সেই ২০০৫ এর প্রবন্ধ বইতে তিনি লিখেছেন। এবং এই নাটকে শিশুদের মধ্যকার সেই শ্রেণি-দ্বন্দ্বকেও তিনি সুকৌশলে চিত্রিত করেছেন।

একটি জনপ্রিয় ছড়াগান — অসমিয়াতে যাকে বলে ওমলা গীত — ‘অ’ ফুল, অ’ ফুল নুফুল কিয়’র নাট্যরূপান্তর ‘নুফুলা ফুলর মালিতা’। ছড়াটি সরাসরি নাটকে নেই। মাঝে মাঝে বিভিন্ন চরিত্রের সংলাপে ছড়িয়ে আছে। ছোট ছড়া। আমরা অন্য সূত্র থেকে তুলে দিচ্ছি, তাতে ধারণা একটি করে নেয়া সহজ হবে। একই ছড়া লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবর্মার ‘এজনী মালিনী আর এজোপা ফুল’ রচনাতে খানিক অন্যরকমও রয়েছে...

- অ’ ফুল অ’ ফুল। নুফুল কিয়?
 — গরুর যে আগ খাই মইনো ফুলিম কিয়!
 অ’ গরু অ’ গরু! আগ খার কিয়?
 — গরখীয়াই যে মোক নবখে মইনো নাখাম কিয়!
 অ’ গরখীয়া অ’ গরখীয়া। গরু নবখ কিয়?
 — বান্ধনিয় যে ভাত নিদিয় মইনো বখিম কিয়!
 অ’ বান্ধনি অ’ বান্ধনি ভাত নিদিয় / নাঝান কিয়?
 — খরিকটীয়াই যে খরি নিদিয় মইনো বান্ধিম কিয়!
 অ’ খরিকটীয়া অ’ খরিকটীয়া খরি নিদিয় কিয়?
 — বরগছ যে কাটি থৈছো নুশুকাইনো কিয়!
 অ’ বরগছ অ’ বরগছ নুশুকার কিয়?
 — মেঘে যে বরষুণ দিয়ে মইনো শুকাম কিয়!

- অ’ মেঘ আ’ মেঘ! বরষুণ দিয় কিয়?
 — ভেকুলীয়ে যে টোবটোবাই মইনো নিদিম কিয়!
 অ’ ভেকুলী অ’ ভেতুলী। টোবটোবার কিয়?
 — মই কবো টোব টোব
 মেঘে কবে গুৰ গুৰ
 বরষুণ দিয়ে হুৰ হুৰ

বোপা ককাৰ সহজতো মইনো এৰিম কিয়!

জোনমণি সেউতী শেওয়ালিরা এক সকালে আবিষ্কার করে তাদের প্রিয় সুন্দর বাগিচার ফুলগুলো কেউ খেয়ে গেছে। এরা তদন্ত শুরু করে ফুলকে জিজ্ঞেস করে জানে গরুরতে খেয়ে গেছে। কাজলি রাঙলি গরুদের জিজ্ঞেস করে জানে রাখাল কর্তব্যে অবহেলা করাতে খাবার না পেয়ে এরা যা পেয়েছে তাই খেয়েছে... এই ভাবে নাটকের গল্প এগোয়। শেষে একটি বিচার সভা বসে। এবারে এতোগুলো চরিত্রের কাকে আসামী করা যাবে আর কাকে নয় তার বিচারও বেশ চিত্তাকর্ষক ভাবে করিয়েছেন নাট্যকার। দেখা গেল কাউকেই শাস্তি দেয়া যাচ্ছে না, দিলে নিতে হয় ‘অন্যের উপরে দায় চাপিয়ে দেবার মানবিক স্বভাবটিকে’। আর ‘ভেকুলি’ তথা বেঙ যে বলছে, ‘বোপা-ককার’ রীতি সে ছাড়বে কেন একেই বলে ‘কৃপমণ্ডুকতা’। হাজার বছরের অভ্যাসকে সে কোনো প্রশ্ন না করে পালন করে আসছে। তার শাস্তি হলো না, কারণ সরাসরি সে কোনো অন্যায় করে নি। কিন্তু শিক্ষার ব্যবস্থা হলো। স্থির হলো ওকে কুয়ো থেকে বের করে সাগরে ছেড়ে দেয়া আসবে, যাতে দুনিয়াটাকে ভালো জানতে চিনতে পায়। শুনেই বেঙ দিল লাফ, ছেলেমেয়েরা পিছু নিল একে ধরবে বলে — এমন এক হাস্যরসের দৃশ্যে নাট্যকার নাটকটিকে শেষ করে কেবল যে নাটকটিকে রসসিক্ত করলেন তাই নয়, আমাদের হাজারো কুসংস্কার এবং পারম্পরিক অভ্যাসকে নিয়ে নিজেও যেন খানিকটা হেসে নিলেন। সম্পাদক জানিয়েছেন নাটকটি ইতিমধ্যে জয়ারানি রায় গোয়ালপাড়িয়া ভাষাতে অনুবাদ করেছেন, আর সেখানকার ‘মাটিয়া’ সংস্থা ২০১৩র অক্টোবরে সেটির অভিনয় করে।

‘জোন-তারার সাধু’ অষ্টম নাটক। না চাঁদ বা তারার গল্প নয়। জোন, তরা নামে দুই খরগোশের গল্প। নাটকের শেষের দিকে কাকের সংলাপে যদিও রয়েছে ‘জাকেই পরম বল’ অর্থাৎ ‘একতাই বল’ — আমাদের মনে হয়েছে — এটি সত্য। কিন্তু তারও থেকে সত্য সেই বাংলা প্রবাদ ‘সৎ সঙ্গে স্বর্গবাস, অসৎ সঙ্গে

সর্বনাশ। হরিণার সংলাপেও সেই আভাস স্পষ্ট। ‘বেলি ওলোরা সাধু’র মতোই এই নাটকেও ঠাকুরদার গল্প বলার আদল দেয়া হয়েছে। জোন তরা ভালুক জাম্ববন্তের আশ্রয়ে ছিল ভালোই। ধূর্ত শেয়ালে সন্মানে ছিল করে এদের ধরে খায়। একদিন ভালুক গেল ভাগ্নের বিয়ে খেতে। একহাড়ি মধু রেখে গেল জোন তারার দায়িত্বে। সেই সুযোগে শেয়াল এসে ওদের আস্থাভাজন হলো কৌশলে। এবং মধুগুলো খেয়ে নিল। ভালুক ফিরে এলে সব দায় চাপিয়ে দিন জোন ভরার উপরে। দুজনে মিলে এদের আক্রমণ করল। কাকের দল ওদের বাঁচিয়ে দিল। কাক এসে নিয়ে গেল ওদের কাছের এক বনে নিয়ে গেল। সেখানে বর্ণা আছে, হরিণের মতো তৃণভোজী প্রাণী আছে। আছে ফুল ফল। সবচাইতে বড় কথা ‘জাকত থাকি হাবিলেও / পাওঁ আমি সুখ, / আটায়ে ভগাই লওঁ/ হাবি যোরাব দুখ/ মবিলেও জাকেই হাঁও মরণব ভাগী।’

‘রজার দেউল’ সেই ‘বালিমাহীর কথা’ বা ‘নুফুলা ফুলের মালিতা’র মতোই অনেকটা। সেই বিপন্ন প্রকৃতি, বিপন্ন শৈশবের গল্প। নাটকগুলো ক্রমাগত পড়ে গেলে একটি ধারণা গড়ে উঠতে থাকে যে শিশুদের তিনি সামাজিক কম, বেশি প্রাকৃতিক জীব হিসেবে উপস্থিত করেছেন। অথবা শৈশবের আড়ালে আসলে প্রকৃতি বিচ্ছিন্ন আমাদের সামাজিকতার প্রতি নাট্যকারের বিক্ষোভ যেন প্রায় প্রতিটি নাটকে ছড়িয়ে আছে। এই নাটকে সেটি বিদ্রোহের রূপ ধরে। নাটকের নামটি নিয়েছেন, তিনি একটি বিখ্যাত শিশুখেলার ছড়া থেকে। সেই ছড়ার খানিকটা আমরা দিচ্ছি এরকম: এইটো কাব দৌল?/ বজার দৌল / ভাঙিম নে নেভাঙিম?/ নাভাঙিবা / ক’লী-ব’গীক মাতিম নে নেমাতিম?/ নামাতিবা।...”

জোন সোন মালতিদের কাছে রোদ আসে দেশবিদেশের রং নিয়ে বিক্রি করবে বলে। বিক্রি আর করে কই? বিলিয়ে দিয়ে যায়। সে যেতেই ওদের হাতের রংও চলে যায়। এবারে রং পায় কই? অনেক ভেবে এরা নগরের সবচাইতে বড় বাগিচাতে গেল ফুলের থেকে রং নেবে বলে। গিয়ে দেখে সব ফুল অযত্নে নুইয়ে পড়েছে। এরা সেই বাগিচাকে যত্ন করে আবার সজীব করে তুলে। তখনই শুরু হয় রাজ-পুরোহিতের উপদ্রব। রাজার গড়া মন্দিরের জন্যে সব ফুল নিয়ে যাবে। নিয়ে যাওয়া মানে একরকম বাগিচা ধ্বংস করাই। প্রতিবাদ করতে মালিকে বন্দি করে নিয়ে যায়। আবার ‘বেলি’ তথা রোদ আসে। কচিকাঁচার আবার আশার আলো দেখে। রোদ ওদের প্ররোচিত করে এই রাজার মন্দির ভাঙতে হবে। সে তাদের সেই দেউল ভাঙার মন্ত্র শেখায়। সেই মন্ত্র সেভাবেই এরা উচ্চারণ

করে যেভাবে আবহমান কাল থেকে শিশু সমাজে খেলাটি প্রচলিত। কিন্তু শেষে নাট্যকারের সংযোজন... একটি গানে, “ভাঙো নে নাভাঙো লাগে কিন্তু সুধিব / রজার দল ভাবির হ’ল...” তাদের গানের শেষে দেউল ভেঙেই পড়ে। এই নাটকটি নিয়ে সদ্যপ্রয়াত নন্দকিশোর মহেশ্বরী একটি ছায়াছবি করার প্রস্তুতি নিচ্ছিলেন। কিন্তু শেষমেষ হয়ে উঠেনি। হরেন্দ্রনাথ বরঠাকুরের সঙ্গে ব্যক্তিগত আলোচনা জানলাম সেন্সরবোর্ড রাজার দেউল ভাঙবার দৃশ্যে ছাড়পত্র দেয় নি বলে হয় নি। পরিচালক নাট্যকারকে জিজ্ঞাস করলে তিনিও সেই অংশ বাদ দিয়ে এগোতে রাজি হন নি। অসমের বিশেষ করে ব্রহ্মপুত্র উপত্যকার বাংলানাটকে কিন্তু এরকম সাহসী নাটক এখনো দুর্লভ।

শেষ নাটক ‘অমাতর মাত’। ‘জোন-তারার সাধু’র মতো এও হিংস্র জন্তুর বিরুদ্ধে অহিংস প্রাণীদের বিদ্রোহের নাটক। কিন্তু সেখানে আধুনিক রাষ্ট্রের ‘অভয়ারণ্য’ ঘোষণার রাজনীতির প্রসঙ্গটিও নিয়ে এসেছেন। অভয়ারণ্যে জীবজন্তু হত্যা আইনত নিষিদ্ধ হল তো বটে। কিন্তু আইনের ফাঁকে না হিংস প্রাণীর হত্যা বন্ধ হল, না হলো মানুষের হাতে নিরীহ জন্তুর বিপন্নতার কোনো শেষ। বাধ্য হয়ে তৃণভোজী প্রাণীগুলো জোটবদ্ধ হল। সেই বিদ্রোহে মৌমাছি, বোলতা ইত্যাদি সব চাইতে ক্ষুদ্র প্রাণীগুলোর ঐক্য সাহস এবং কর্মদক্ষতা খুব কাজে এলো। ক্ষুদ্র বলে এদের উপেক্ষা না করবার ফলে তৃণভোজী প্রাণীদের সাহস এবং দক্ষতা এতোটাই বৃদ্ধি পেল যে বনরাজা বাঘ তাদের আক্রমণে যতপ্রায় হয়ে গেল। কিন্তু বাঘকে মারেন নি নাট্যকার। চরিত্রটি যদিও প্রতীকী, বাস্তব জগতে বিপন্ন প্রকৃতির শিকার বাঘও। তাকেও বাঁচিয়ে রাখার দায় মানুষের। সুতরাং কোনো ভুল বার্তা না যায়, তাই পরিচালককে নির্দেশ দিয়ে রেখেছেন শেষ দৃশ্যে হয় বাঘকে অচেতন দেখাবার জন্যে কিছু করুন, অথবা বাঁধন ছিঁড়ে পালিয়ে যাওয়া দেখান যেন তিনি।

প্রতিটি নাটক একাক্ষিকা। সবচাইতে বেশি এগার দৃশ্যের নাটক “পলরীয়া প্রতিধ্বনি”, আর সবচাইতে ছোট পাঁচ অঙ্কের নাটক ‘জোন-তারার সাধু’। ‘রজার দেউলে’ কেন কোনো দৃশ্য বিভাজন নেই, সে আমাদের স্পষ্ট হলো না। নাট্যকার বা সম্পাদকের ভুলেও হয়ে থাকতে পারে। হরেন্দ্রনাথ বরঠাকুর একজন কবিও। নাটকগুলোতে অনেক প্রচলিত এবং পরিচিত শিশু পাঠ্য ছড়া, গান, লোককাহিনি, উপকাহিনির আংশিক বা সম্পূর্ণ ব্যবহার আছে, যদিও বেশ কিছু গান কবিতার কথা তাঁর নিজেরই লেখা। নিছক গল্পে বা ভাববস্তুতেই নয়, নাটকগুলোকে

রসসিক্ত করে তুলবার যাবতীয় আয়োজন তিনি করেছেন এই সব ছড়ায়, গানে এবং অভিনয় কালে নাচবার সুযোগ করে দিয়েও। এইখানে বলে রাখা ভালো, অসমীয়া আধুনিক শিশু সাহিত্য যদিও মূলত লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবরুয়ার হাতে শুরু, নাটকের শুরু জ্যোতিপ্রসাদে। তাঁর 'নির্মাণী কইনা' প্রথম শিশুদের জন্যে লেখা কাব্যনাটক। প্রচলিত লোককাহিনি, কিন্তু তিনি নিয়েছেন লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবরুয়ারই রচনার থেকে। জ্যোতিপ্রসাদের সম্পর্কে হরেন্দ্রনাথ লিখেছেন, "জ্যোতিপ্রসাদের উল্লেখযোগ্য কৃতিত্বটি হল— তিনি অসমীয়া শিশুনাটকের পরম্পরাগত ধারাটিকে চিহ্নিত করে স্থানীয় উপকরণেই উন্নততর আধুনিক মানের শিশুনাটক সৃষ্টির চেষ্টা করেছিলেন। অসমীয়া আধুনিক শিশুনাট্য সাহিত্যের এটিই ইতিবাচক তথা প্রগতিশীল ধারা। এই ধারাটিকে বিকশিত করে নেবার উপরেই অসমীয়া শিশু সাহিত্যের ভবিষ্যৎ আজও নির্ভরশীল।" (অসমীয়া শিশু নাট্যধারার গতি-প্রকৃতি প্রসঙ্গ অসমীয়া শিশু নাট্য, পৃ:৩৫ থেকে বাংলাতে অনূদিত।) ফলে তিনি নিজে যে সেই ধারারই অনুবর্তী হয়ে কাজ করবেন, সে লেখাই বাহুল্য। শিশু নাটক খুব বড় হওয়া উচিত নয়, মিনিট বিশেষে শেষ হতে পারলে ভালো। সেসব তাঁর সুগভীর অধ্যয়ন এবং অভিজ্ঞতার থেকে নেয়া সিদ্ধান্ত। সেই সঙ্গে তিনি শিশুনাটক পরিবেশনার সময় মঞ্চ, আলো, শব্দ সংযোজন, দর্শকাসনের ব্যবস্থা ইত্যাদি নিয়েও সুগভীর অধ্যয়ন করেছেন। যেমন তিনি লিখেছেন, শিশুনাটক পরিবেশনের সময় হল পুরো অন্ধকার করা উচিত নয়। অভিনেতা-অভিনেত্রীকে দর্শকের প্রতিক্রিয়া দেখতে দেয়া উচিত। সেই সব প্রসঙ্গ আমরা নাটকের পাঠ আলোচনাতে বাদ দিতে পারি। কিন্তু তথ্য হিসেবে একটি কথার উল্লেখ মনে হয় থাকা ভালো যে তিনি মনে করেন প্রসেনিয়াম পদ্ধতিতে আদর্শ শিশুনাটক পরিবেশিত হতে তথা বিকশিত হতে পারে না, তার জন্যে পরম্পরাগত লোকনাট্যের অভিনয় পদ্ধতি না হলেও, পথ নাটক পদ্ধতিই ভালো। যদিও তিনি যখন নাটকগুলো লিখেছেন, বর্তমান বাস্তবতার সঙ্গে সমঝোতা করেই লিখেছেন, এবং সেগুলোতে মঞ্চ নির্দেশনাও ভালোরকমই দেয়া রয়েছে।

রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যে ভক্তিরস

শেলী দত্ত

Abstract:

Since the hoary past, the noble souls dedicated to the Indian culture, aspired to develop a soulful communion with the creator, in order to remove the distance between themselves [ie, the Supreme Self and the Mundane Self]. However, they hankered after the development of a conscious communion between the incognizable and the volary, but never under the influence of any religious faith or any spiritual trance or any esoteric occultism. This very expression to develop such a communication has been recognized as 'Devotion' by the Vaishnavite sect through the interpretation of various literary text of the Medieval Age and finally assumed a novel shape in the literary creations of Rabindranath. The article in question ventures to highlight the evolution of the devotional trait in the literary creations of Rabindranath Tagore.

“তোমাতে সমস্ত লীন, তুমি আছ একা
আমি হীন চিত্তমাঝে একান্ত তোমারে
শুধু দেখা।”

(বীথিকা / ধ্যান)

অধ্যাত্মচেতনার এই যে অভিব্যক্তি রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যে নতুন নয়, তাঁর অনন্ত সৃষ্টিপ্রবাহে অধ্যাত্ম-অনুভূতির প্রকাশমান রূপটি প্রজ্জ্বলিত। এই চেতনা কবির সম্পূর্ণ নিজস্ব, “শৈশবকালেই রবীন্দ্রনাথের অধ্যাত্মজীবন শুরু হয়েছিল প্রকৃতির সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠতা আর নিবিড় সংযোগের মধ্যে। ভোরের সূর্যকিরণে বাতাসে আন্দোলিত নারকেল গাছের পাতা, মধ্যাহ্নকালের নিস্তব্ধতা, বর্ষামুখর রাতে, ফাল্গুনের সমীরণ ইত্যাদি, প্রকৃতির এই নানারূপী মাধুর্যের বিকাশের ভিতর কবি এক প্রচ্ছন্ন সত্তার অস্তিত্ব উপলব্ধি করেছিলেন, তখন থেকেই সেই প্রচ্ছন্ন সত্তাকে জানবার, তাকে পাওয়ার জন্য মনে তীব্র আকুতি জাগত ফলে পরিণত বয়সে রবীন্দ্রমানস গড়ে উঠেছে তার আপন ধর্মে, অনুভূতিই সেখানে প্রধান উপজীব্য।”^২ শৈশবের অধ্যাত্মচেতনার এই উত্তরীজই পরবর্তীকালে উপনিষদ আর বৈষ্ণবসাহিত্যের সংস্পর্শে এসে প্রবলভাবে মুখরিত হয়ে সাহিত্যের রূপ পরিগ্রহ করল। তাই রবীন্দ্র - কাব্যের মূল প্রেরণাই হচ্ছে তাঁর অধ্যাত্মচেতনা, যদিও তাঁর কাব্যে বারবার পালা বদল হয়েছে, তথাপি তার মধ্যে এক ধারাবাহিকতা রয়েছে, একথা রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিজেও স্বীকার করেছেন — “My religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as has my poetic life. Somehow, they were wedded to each other and though their betrothal had a long period of ceremony, it was kept secret to me.”^৩

রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছিলেন — “বৈষ্ণব সাহিত্য এবং উপনিষদ বিমিশ্রিত হইয়া আমার মনের হাওয়া তৈরি করিয়াছে।”^৪ সুতরাং রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যে ভক্তিরসের যে প্রত্যক্ষ অনুরণন ঘটেছে তা উপনিষদ আর বৈষ্ণবীয় বিশ্বাসের সূত্র ধরেই, যার উপর টিকে রয়েছে রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যে ঈশ্বর চেতনার দর্শনভূমিটি, উল্লেখ্য যে শাস্ত্রকারগণ দু-প্রকার ঈশ্বরসাধনার কথা বলেছেন — একটি হচ্ছে ‘রতি’ এবং অপরটি হচ্ছে ‘ভাব’।^৫ ইন্দ্রিয়ের দ্বারা যে ভক্তি সাধন হয় তা রতিভক্তি এবং ভাবরূপ সাধনাই ভাবভক্তি। কিন্তু বৈষ্ণবীয় পদকর্তাগণ ইন্দ্রিয়কে ভাবপ্রকাশের মাধ্যম রূপে গ্রহণ করে, রতি এবং ভাব-ভক্তির বিমিশ্রণ ঘটিয়ে ঈশ্বর সাধনাকে এক তুরীয় লোকে উন্নীত করেছেন (পূর্বে যেখানে ঈশ্বরসাধনায় পঞ্চ ইন্দ্রিয়কে

অস্বীকার করা হয়েছে, সেখানে বৈষ্ণবীয় পদকারগণ সেই পঞ্চ ইন্দ্রিয়কে ঈশ্বর সেবার তথা তাঁকে অনুভব করার মাধ্যম করে তুলেছেন।), যেখানে রতি অর্থে ভাবেরই পরাকাষ্ঠ। অর্থাৎ তাঁর প্রতি ভক্তের অগাধ প্রেমকেই সূচিত করে, সেই অর্থে কৃষ্ণরতি বলতে — কৃষ্ণকে পাওয়ার অগাধ স্পৃহাকে বোঝানো হয়। গৌড়ীয় বৈষ্ণবীয় তত্ত্ব অনুযায়ী ভক্তের রতি পাঁচটি — শম, সেবা, বিশ্বাস, বাৎসল্যতা, মধুরা যা ক্রমে পাঁচটি রসের নিষ্পত্তি ঘটায় — শান্ত, দাস্য, সখ্য, বাৎসল্য, মধুর। যা পর্যায়ক্রমে ভক্তের হৃদয়লোকে দানা বাঁধে এবং ভক্ত তাঁর চিরন্তন অবস্থান প্রাপ্ত হন — এবং প্রভুর সঙ্গে ব্যক্তিগত সম্পর্ক স্থাপন করেন। প্রসঙ্গত উল্লেখ্য যে চিরন্তন রসের সামগ্রী হতে পারে চিরন্তন ভাব। সাধারণীকৃতি দ্বারা ক্ষণিক বস্তুও ভাবরাজ্যে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়ে চিরন্তনতায় অধিষ্ঠিত হয় এবং ভক্তিরসের যে চিরন্ময়তা তা শুধুমাত্র বহিঃসং বিতাবাদির সাধারণীকৃতি নয়, ভোক্তার অন্তরঙ্গ বাসনাদিরও সাধারণীকৃতি প্রয়োজন। ‘সাহিত্যদর্পণে’ এই বিষয়ে বলা হয়েছে — “সাধারণ্যে রত্যাতিরিক্ত তত্ত্ব প্রতীয়তে”^৬

সহৃদয়ের অন্তরঙ্গ রতিপ্রভৃতিও যে সাধারণভাবে প্রতীত হয় তার কারণ সঙ্গারূঢ়। রজোগ্রস্ত বা মোহগ্রস্ত ব্যক্তির চিত্ত সর্বদাই চঞ্চল ও মুহমান। তখন মন বিষয় থেকে বিষয়ান্তরে যেন ঠোঁকর খায়, কিংবা গ্লানি ও অবসাদের খাদের পাঁকে ডুবে থাকে, সুতরাং তখনকার চিত্ত সমারূঢ় করা চাই সত্ত্বে। সত্ত্বোদ্বেক এক আন্তর ধর্ম যার দ্বারা চিত্ত বিষয় বিমুক্ত হয়ে অন্তর্মুখী হয় —

“বাহ্যমেয় বিমুক্তাপাদকঃ কশ্চনাস্তরো ধর্মঃ সত্ত্বম্।” চিত্ত-আন্তর্মুখী হলেই পরম পুরুষের প্রতিবিশ্ব গ্রহণ-যোগ্যতাকে অর্জন করে। সেই আনন্দস্বরূপ পরমপুরুষের প্রতিবিশ্ব সস্বল্পবশতই চিত্তবৃত্তি সংশ্লিষ্ট যাবতীয় বাহ্যবস্তুর প্রতিচ্ছায়াও আনন্দময় হয়ে উঠে। বাহ্যবস্তুর সঙ্গে জ্ঞানস্বরূপ পরমপুরুষের সংযোগকারক চিত্তবৃত্তিগুলি সত্ত্বরূঢ় চিত্তের ধর্ম হিসেবে আনন্দময় হয়। চিত্তবৃত্তিগুলি যদিও আনন্দময় হয়ে তবু বিশেষ অংশ পরিত্যক্ত হওয়ার জন্য সাত্ত্বিকচিত্তের বৃত্তিগুলিও আনন্দময় হয়ে উঠে। ফলে ভক্তিরসও যে আনন্দময় এ নিয়ে আর দ্বিমত থাকে না। এই রসের উদ্দেশ্যে ভক্ত তাঁর চিরন্তন জগত, পরমপুরুষের সান্নিধ্যে নিজেকে অনুভব করেন এবং নিজ অবস্থান বিশেষে গৌড়ীয় বৈষ্ণবীয় তত্ত্ব নির্দিষ্ট রসসমূহের অধিকারী হন (শান্ত, দাস্য, সখ্য, বাৎসল্য, মধুর)। পঞ্চবিধ রসের প্রথমটি শান্ত হলেও ‘দাস্যভাবনা’ থেকেই ভক্তিরস সক্রিয় হয়, মধুররসে গিয়ে যা পরিপূর্ণতা পায়। শান্তরসের সর্বপ্রথম সমার্থক হলেন আনন্দবর্ধন। ‘ধন্যালোক’ গ্রন্থে তিনি লিখেছেন যে এই রসের বশবর্তী

হয়ে ভক্তের একমাত্র লক্ষ্য হয় মোক্ষ-প্রাপ্তি —

“ততশ্চ শান্তোরসঃ রসান্তরে মোক্ষলক্ষণপুরুষার্থঃ

পুরুষার্থান্তরে পরত্বানু - গম্যমানোধিগতত্বেন বিবক্ষা

বিষয়ঃ ইতি মহাভারত - তাৎপর্যঃ” ৮

“অর্থাৎ মোক্ষলাভই শান্তরসের অন্তিম লক্ষ্য মেনে নিয়ে আনন্দবর্ধন এই রসকে ভক্তির প্রথম সূচক হিসেবে ব্যবহার করেছেন এবং উত্তরসকে ভক্তিরসের সমীপেই স্থান দিয়েছেন। অতএব শান্তরস হচ্ছে বৈষ্ণবীয় ভক্তিরসের ভিত্তি, এই রসকে অতিক্রম করেই ভক্তের পরবর্তী যাত্রা নির্দিষ্ট হয় অর্থাৎ শান্তরস হচ্ছে ভক্তিরস তথা মধুর রসের (যেখানে ভক্ত তাঁর চরম অবস্থা প্রাপ্ত হন) প্রবেশপথ, কিন্তু শান্ত সাধনায় শান্ত হচ্ছে ভক্তের শেষ অবস্থা অর্থাৎ শান্তসাধকের লক্ষ্য হচ্ছে শান্তরস। ড° ব্রজেশ্বর বরমা, তাঁর ‘পোহার অধিনন্দন গ্রন্থ’ এ লিখেছেন যে “भक्ति के स्वरूप का गवेषणात्मक अनुभव शान्तोमुखी है।” ৯ সুতরাং একথা স্পষ্ট যে আনন্দবর্ধনের ‘শান্তরস’ বিষয়ক যে ধারণা তা ভক্তিরসের সমীপবর্তী। একথা মেনে নিয়েই বলা যায় যে বৈষ্ণবীয় পঞ্চরসের মূল স্বরূপই হচ্ছে ভক্তিরস, তবে সরাসরি ভক্তিরসের যে অভিব্যক্তি তা ‘দাস্যরস’ তথা দাসভাবনাতেই প্রথম দেখা যায়। এই ভাবনায় ভক্ত ‘সর্বদা परिचर्येसु प्रभोरासक्तेचेतसः’ ১০ অর্থাৎ সেবায় তন্ময় হয়ে থাকেন। এই সেবাকর্মে ভক্ত কৃপা তস্ত সমপ্রিত্য পৌড়া নান্যমপেক্ষতে” ১১ অর্থাৎ কোনো কামনার বশবর্তী না হয়ে সর্বদা কৃষ্ণ প্রেমে (যে প্রেম ভক্তিভাবে সূচিত করে) মগ্ন থাকেন। উল্লেখ্য যে ভক্তি শব্দটি সং ধাতু ভজ থেকে নিষ্পন্ন, সেই অর্থে ‘ভক্তি’ হচ্ছে আনুগত্য বা সেবা। পরমেশ্বরের তথা পুরুষোত্তমের কাছে সেবা প্রার্থনাই তার লক্ষ্য। পরমপুরুষের ভূত্য হিসেবে পরিচিতি দানেই তাঁদের তৃপ্তি। রবীন্দ্রসংগীতের মধ্যেও একথা স্পষ্ট —

তুমি বন্ধু তুমি নাথ, নিশিদিন তুমি আমার

তুমি সুখ, তুমি শান্তি, তুমি হে অমৃত পাথার।

তুমিই তো আনন্দলোক, জুড়াও প্রাণ, নাশো শোক।

অপহরণ তোমার চরণ অসীম শরণ দীন জনার।” ১২ ভক্তিভাবে ভক্তপ্রাণ স্বভাবতই নিজেকে দীন মনে করেন। উক্ত রচনায় সেকথা স্পষ্ট। প্রভুর দ্বারে ভক্ত চিরভিখারি, তবে তাঁর ভিক্ষার ঝুলি ধন-জনের পিয়াসী নয়, তিনি হচ্ছেন ভাবের কাঙাল। ঈশ্বরকে প্রেমপূর্বক সেবাই তাঁদের কাম্য। রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছেন — “ভালোবাসা ব্যতীত ভক্তি হতেই পারে না, ভক্তি হতে যদি ভালোবাস।

উঠাইয়। লওয়া যায়, শুদ্ধ কেবল শাসনভয় মাত্র অবশিষ্ট থাকে।” ১৩ আর ভীতি কখনই নিষ্কাম ভক্তির মাধ্যম হতে পারে না বরং তা হয় পারিপার্শ্বিক অন্তরায়কে কাটিয়ে উঠার সাময়িক প্রয়াস মাত্র। ভক্তি বলতে যে প্রসন্ন পবিত্র হৃদয় বিগলিত আত্মসম্পূর্ণ বোঝায়, ভক্তিতে যে ঈশ্বরচেতনার উপলব্ধি রয়েছে তা রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যে ঔপনিষদিক ধর্মসাধনা এবং বৈষ্ণবীয় রাগাত্মিক ভাবের সংমিশ্রণে এক নতুন রূপ ধারণ করেছে। যেখানে জীবনকে তিনি এক নতুন সংজ্ঞায় পরিবেশিত করেছেন। তিনি বলেছেন— “In human life we soon slip back from this condition of self-forgetfulness, in the supreme state of bliss we have a perpetuation of this condition. The final state is a total transformation of the personality into an explicit organ of the Absolute. The independent false will destroy, the perfect surrender to god makes the divine will. We obtain this condition, not by abstraction, but by comprehension, not by exclusion but by inclusion. It is therefore fullness of life” ১৪ অর্থাৎ ঈশ্বরানুভূতির ঐকান্তিক মহিমায় দেহ-মন সমস্তকে ঈশ্বরানুভূতিমুখী করে তোলাই হচ্ছে সামগ্রিকভাবে জীবনকে উপলব্ধি করা। নারদভক্তিসূত্রে বলা হয়েছে —

“Satu asmin parama prema rupa” ১৫ অর্থাৎ Devotional service manifests as the most elevated, pure love for god. এই অবস্থায় ভক্তিত নিশ্চয়কে ভুলে নিরন্তর পরমদয়িত ঈশ্বরের ধ্যানে সমাহিত থেকে ঈশ্বরময় হয়ে উঠেন। যা দেহ, মন ও প্রাণের দ্বারা সম্পূর্ণভাবে ঈশ্বরের চরণে নিজেকে বিলীন করা ভিন্ন আর কিছুই নয়। তাই দীনতাই ভক্তের শ্রেষ্ঠ সম্পদ, আর যুগে যুগে ঈশ্বরের পরিচারক হিসেবে জন্মলাভই তাঁর শ্রেষ্ঠ পরিচিতি। তাই রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখেছেন —

“প্রভু হইবার নাইকো আমার শক্তি সামর্থ্য

যুগ যুগ ধরি পরিচারক আর আমি যে ভূতা।” ১৬

ঈশ্বরের সাযুজ্য লাভ তাদের কাম্য নয়, নিজ সেবা দ্বারা তাঁকে তৃপ্ত করাই ভক্তের চরম লক্ষ্য, বৈষ্ণবীয় এই প্রেম বিশাল বিশ্বের মর্মস্থলে দ্বৈত সত্তাকে উদ্ব্যাপিত করে সেই দ্বৈত সত্তার ভাগীধার স্বরূপ নিজেকে পরম পুরুষের চিত্তায় নিবিষ্ট করেন। এই বিষয়ে ভাগবতে বলা হয়েছে—

“সংবর্ধয়ন্তি যত্ কামাঃ স্বারাজ্য পরিভাবিতাঃ

দুর্লভা নাপি সিদ্ধানাং মুকুন্দং হৃদি পশ্যতঃ।” ১৭

যারা ভগবানের সেবাজনিত চিন্ময় আনন্দে মগ্ন, তাঁরা সিদ্ধপুরুষদেরও যা পরমপ্রাপ্তি সেই সমস্ত বিষয়েও আগ্রহী নন, কারণ হৃদয়ে নিরন্তর শ্রীকৃষ্ণের কথা চিন্তা করার ফলে যে দিব্য আনন্দ অনুভূত হয়, তার কাছে সিদ্ধ পুরুষদের সিদ্ধি ও নিতান্তই তুচ্ছ। ফলে ব্রহ্মে লীন হয়ে যাওয়ার আনন্দ এবং অষ্ট যোগ-সিদ্ধি জনিত আনন্দ (অগ্নিমা, লঘিমা, প্রাপ্তি ইত্যাদি) ভগবদ্ভক্তকে কোন রকম আনন্দ দিতে পারে না।

শ্রীল প্রবোধানন্দ সরস্বতী বলেছেন —

“কৈবল্যং নরকায়তে ত্রিংশপুলাকাশপুষ্পায়তে।

দুর্দান্তেন্দ্রিয়কালসম্পপটলী প্রোৎখাত দংষ্ট্রায়তে।।

বিশ্বং পূর্ণসুখায়তে বিধিমহেন্দ্রাদিশ্চ কীটায়তে।

যৎ কারণ্যকটাক্ষবৈভবতাং তাং গৌরমেবস্তুমঃ।।”^{১৮}

অর্থাৎ ভক্ত যখন ভগবানের চিন্ময় সেবা সম্পাদনার সৌভাগ্য অর্জন করেন, তখন তাঁর কাছে ব্রহ্মসায়ুজ্যও নরক বলে মনে হয়, স্বর্গসুখ আকাশ কুসুম সদৃশ বলে মনে করেন। এই কথার পুনরাবৃত্তি ঘটেছে চৈতন্য জীবন দর্শনেও, সার্বভৌমের সঙ্গে কথোপকথন কালে তিনি বলেছিলেন —

“মুক্তি শব্দ কহিতে মনে হয় ঘৃণা ত্রাস।

ভক্তি শব্দ কহিতে মনে হয় উল্লাস।।”^{১৯}

ভক্তিরসের জাগরণে কৃষ্ণসেবক মোক্ষবাঞ্ছা পরিত্যাগপূর্বক নিজ সাধনার পথে অগ্রসর হয়েছেন। যে ভক্তিতে হেতু থাকে তা কৈতব ভক্তি। ধন, জন, যশ, মোক্ষলাভ ইত্যাদি বৈষ্ণবীয় দর্শন অনুযায়ী একে কৈতবভক্তি বলে। যে ভক্তিতে নিবেদনের কোনো হেতু থাকে না, জন্মজন্মান্তরে কৃষ্ণচরণ সেবায় বিভোর হয়ে থাকতে চান, তাই হচ্ছে অকৈতব ভক্তি — যা প্রেমের গাঢ়তা ভিন্ন, কৃষ্ণচরণ সেবা ভিন্ন কিছুই কামনা করে না — “ন ধনং ন জনং সুন্দরীং / কবিতা বা জগদীশ কাময়ে / মম জন্মানি জন্মনীশ্বরে / ভবতাত্ত্বিকি হৈতুকী ত্বয়ি।”^{২০} মানবসাধনার এই দিকটিকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন এভাবে — “এই বিপুল হাটের বাহিরে নিখিল ভূবনের নিভৃত ঘরটির মধ্যে একটি জায়গা আছে যেখানে হিসাব কিভাব নাই, কেবল আনন্দ আছে। কর্মই যেখানে সকলের চেয়ে প্রবল নহে, প্রভু যেখানে প্রিয় সেখানে একবার যাইতে হইবে, একবোরে ঘরের বেশ পরিয়া, হাসিমুখ করিয়া। নাহিলে প্রাণপণ চেষ্টায় কেবলই আপনাকে জীর্ণ করিয়া কতদিন এমন করিয়া চলিবে? নিজের মধ্যে অন্ন নাইগো অন্ন নাই অমৃত হস্ত

হইতে অন্ন গ্রহণ করিতে হইবে। সে অন্ন উপার্জনের অন্ন নয়, সে প্রেমের অন্ন — হাত খালি করিয়া দিয়া অঞ্জলি পাতিয়া চাহিতে পারিলেই হয়।”^{২১} তাই মানুষ দৈনন্দিন কর্মবাংলাতার সত্ত্বেও, জীবদেহের স্বাভাবিক প্রবৃত্তি এবং প্রবৃত্তির স্তর বাদ দিয়ে পদার্পণ করেন এক ভাবপ্রণোদিত জগতে যেখানে তাঁর মনে জাগে সেই স্রষ্টার চরণে আত্মবিলীনের সুর, জাগে নিষ্কাম কর্মযোগের প্রবৃত্তি, যেখানে তাঁর সবই হয় ভগবদুপসনার নৈবেদ্য। আর রবীন্দ্রনাথ এই প্রবৃত্তিকেই মানবজীবনের শ্রেষ্ঠ এবং স্বাভাবিক পরিচিতি বলে মনে করেছেন। কারণ মানবজীবনের এই যে প্রবৃত্তিতা ভাবের দ্বারা চালিত আর যা ভাবের সামগ্রী সেখানে অপরের হস্তক্ষেপ থাকে না সেখানে ব্যক্তিদেহ স্বাধীন, তাই রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছেন — “যাহা আপনার ভাব হইতে উঠে তাহাই স্বাভাবিক, সেই অন্যের তাড়না নাই, তাহাতে নিজেরই প্রেরণা। যে কর্ম আমার স্বাভাবিক, সেই কর্মই আমি আপনার সত্য পরিচয় দিই। এই সাধনা ব্যক্তির সম্পূর্ণ নিজের, এই অধ্যাত্মচেতনাই তাঁর ব্যক্তিসত্তার শ্রেষ্ঠ প্রকাশ। এই ভাবের জগতকে কেন্দ্র করেই ভক্ত মনে ‘রতির সঞ্চারণ হয়, যার থেকে পঞ্চবিধ রসের সৃষ্টি।’^{২২} বৈষ্ণবীয় বৈষ্ণবীয় এই পঞ্চরসের তত্ত্ব বিশ্লেষণে লিখেছেন “ক্ষিতির প্রতি — বৈষ্ণবীয় ধর্ম পৃথিবীর সমস্ত প্রেম সম্পর্কের মধ্যে ঈশ্বরকে অনুভব করিতে চেষ্টা করিয়া যখন দেখিয়াছে মা আপনার সন্তানের মধ্যে আপনার ঈশ্বরকে উপাসনা করিয়াছে, যখন দেখিয়াছে প্রভুর জন্য ‘দাস’ আপনার প্রাণ দেয়, বন্ধুর জন্য বন্ধু আপনার সমস্ত স্বার্থ বিসর্জন করে, প্রিয়তম এবং প্রিয়তমা পরস্পরের নিকটে আপনার সমস্ত আত্মাকে সম্পূর্ণ করবার জন্য ব্যাকুল হইয়া উঠে তখন এই সমস্ত পদাবলির মধ্যে একটা সীমাতীত লোকাতীত ঐশ্বর্য অনুভব করিয়াছে। বৈষ্ণব পদাবলির ভক্তিরস সাধনার এ হচ্ছে প্রকৃষ্ট সংজ্ঞা, যা ঈশ্বরচেতনার জারকরসে অভিসিদ্ধিত। এই রসের সংক্রমণ প্রক্রিয়া সম্পর্কে রূপগোস্বামী তাঁর ‘ভক্তিরসামৃত সিদ্ধ’ গ্রন্থে লিখেছেন —

“সামগ্রীপরিদোষণ পরমা রসরূপতা।

বিভাবৈরনুভাবৈশ্চ সাত্বিকৈর্ব্যমিচারিभिः।।

স্বাद्यात्वं হৃদি भक्तानामानीता प्रवणादिभिः।।

एषा कृष्णरतिः स्थायीभावो भक्तिरसो भवेत्।।”^{২৩}

অর্থাৎ ভগবদ্ভক্তি যখন বিভাব (আলসন ও উদ্দীপন), অনুভাব, সাত্বিকভাব এবং ব্যভিচারী ভাবের সঙ্গে একত্রিত হয়ে এক অত্যুতকৃষ্ট জগতে মানুষকে

প্রেরণ করে এবং ভক্তচিন্তে এক নবরতির সঞ্চার হয় যাকে ‘কৃষ্ণরতি’ বলেও অভিহিত করা যায়, ভক্তের এই অবস্থাকেই ভক্তিরস বলা হয়েছে। উল্লেখ্য যে অলংকারিকদের মতে ‘মনের সুখকর প্রিয় বস্তুতে চিন্তের যে অনুরাগ তাহাই রতি’^{২৬} অর্থাৎ রতির ঘনীভূত অবস্থাই প্রেম। সেই অর্থে ভক্তি প্রেমেরই নামান্তর। মনস্তত্ত্ববিদরাও ভক্তিকে প্রেম বলেই স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছেন। তাঁরা একথা স্বীকার করেছেন যে —

“The psychology of bhakti allows degrees of love, and the highest of all stands the bride the creature, the locus and the relish of madhurya rasa”^{২৭} দেখা যায়, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও ভক্তি অর্থে প্রেমকেই স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছেন, তিনি বলেছেন—“দেবতারে প্রিয়ে করি, প্রিয়েরে দেবতা।”^{২৮} চৈতন্যদেব ও ‘দাস্যরসকে’, ‘এহোহয়’ বলে স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছেন যদিও তা অতিক্রম করে ‘কান্তাপ্রেম’ কে শ্রেষ্ঠ স্থান দিয়েছেন। যা মধুররসের ঘনীভূতরূপ। ‘দাস্যভাবে জীবের পুরোপুরি আত্মসমর্পণ হয় না। ‘আমি দাস’ এই ‘আমত্বিবোধে’ অহং ভাবটুকু থেকে যায়। দাস্য, সখ্য, বাৎসল্য ভাবে জীবের সম্পূর্ণ আত্মবিসর্জন ঘটে না এবং ‘সম্পর্কানুগা’ প্রেমের হাত ধরে ‘অহং’ এর স্পর্শ সেখানে থাকে। তাই মহাপ্রভু কান্তাপ্রেমকেই ‘সর্বসাধ্যসার’ হিসেবে স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছেন। কারণ এ হচ্ছে ‘প্রেমানুগা’^{২৯} — যা সেবাবাসনার সর্বোৎকৃষ্ট পথ। ভক্তিরসের এই পর্যায়কে S. Radhakrishnan বর্ণনা করেছেন এভাবে — “A person engaged in the devotional service of the Lord in full Krishna consciousness automatically becomes carried away by ecstasy which he chants and hears the holy name of Krishna. His heart becomes slackened while chanting the holy name, he becomes almost like a madman, he does not care for any outward social conventions..... Neither formal religious rituals, economic development, sense of gratification nor liberation can compare with his sweet stage of perfection of love Krishna, love of the supreme Lord”^{৩০} এই অবস্থায় ভক্ত যেমন করেই হোক, এমনকি নিজ অঙ্গ দিয়ে সেবা করেও স্রষ্টাকে সন্তুষ্ট করেন। এই সাধনা তথা প্রেমের কোনো সংজ্ঞা নেই, না আছে পরিধি, তা মূল্যায়ণ ক্ষমতা রহিত। এর কারণ — “Love itself is a merit, and itself its own reward. Beyond itself love seeks neither cause nor outcome, the outcome of it is one with the

practice of it. I love, because I love, I love that I may love..... This is the love that bride has, for all and everything she is, is this. All her being hope, is love and love alone, the bride overflows with love..... and it is impossible that a soul should love thus and not be beloved”^{৩১} এই হচ্ছে প্রেমের সার্বিক প্রকাশ — যা সেবাবাসনার (ভক্তির) সর্বোৎকৃষ্ট পথ। আসলে ‘ভক্তিরস’ হচ্ছে “ঈশ্বরের প্রতি সম্পূর্ণ অনুরাগ।”^{৩২} যা শেখায় “ইহ লোকের সুখও তাঁর গোলামি, পরলোকেরও ঠিক তাই।”^{৩৩} এই চেতনা হচ্ছে আধ্যাত্মিকতার চূড়ান্ত পর্যায়। যেখানে ভক্তপ্রাণ কেবল গেয়ে চলেন তাঁর (ঈশ্বরের) চরণে আত্মবিলীনের ঐকান্তিক সুর —

“কত জনম মরণেতে তোমারি এই চরণেতে
আপনাকে যে দেব, তবু বাড়বে দেনা।।
ঘাটে ঘাটে

আমার যে নামতে হবে
বারে বারে এই ভুবনের প্রাণের হাটে।
ব্যবসা মোর তোমার সাথে চলবে বেড়ে দিনে রাতে,
আপন নিয়ে করব বেচা কেনা।”^{৩৪}

ঈশ্বরসাধনায় ভক্তের উদ্দীষ্ট হল ঈশ্বরচরণ। তাঁর দেহ-মন সর্বদা প্রভুর চরণেই নিবদ্ধ থাকে। তাই দেখি রবীন্দ্রকবিতা এবং সংগীতে ‘চরণের’ কথা বারবারই এসেছে। উল্লেখ্য যে উক্ত গীতে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ‘ব্যবসা’ এবং ‘বেচা-কেনা’ শব্দের ব্যবহারে স্রষ্টার কাছে ভক্তের সমস্ত কিছু অর্পণকেই বুঝিয়েছেন, সেই অর্থে তাঁর প্রতি ভক্তের অগাধ প্রেমকেই সূচিত করে, সেখানে জাগতিক চাওয়া-পাওয়া অর্থাৎ অর্থ উপার্জনের মাধ্যম রূপে তা প্রকাশ পায়নি বরং প্রভুর স্নেহে ভক্ত নিজেকে বিকিয়ে দিতে প্রস্তুত একথাই প্রকাশ পেয়েছে। তাই রবীন্দ্রনাথ আবার লিখছেন —

“প্রেম ডোর দিয়া রাখিব বাঁধিয়া
দুখানি চরণাবিন্দ
কে বা নিতে পারে কাহার শক্তি
পাঁজরে কাটিয়া সিদ্ধ।।”^{৩৫}

এই ভক্তিই হচ্ছে ঈশ্বরের প্রতি গাঢ় প্রেম অর্থাৎ ‘মধুর’ ভাব। এখানে ভক্ত তার একান্ত সাধনার পরিচয় দিয়ে থাকেন, যেখানে তিনি ঈশ্বরের একনিষ্ঠ প্রেমিক, তাঁর সেবক, ভক্ত যে কর্মে নিজেকে শ্রেষ্ঠ বলে মনে করেন, তাই শুদ্ধতা রিক্ততার

মরুপথে কিছু না খেয়ে, কিছু না পেয়েও তিনি নিজ আসন থেকে টলবার নন, বরং শত অন্তরায়ের মধ্যেও উদ্দীষ্ট চরণে তাঁর নিরন্তর সেবা আরও যেন বেড়ে যায়, তাঁকে (ঈশ্বরকে) আঁকরে রাখার প্রয়াস যেন আরও প্রভাবশালী হয়ে দাঁড়ায়। এই পর্যায়ে ভক্ত তাঁর চরম অবস্থা লাভ করেন। তখন তিনি কেবল ভাববিহীন হয়ে ভগবানকে ডাকেন, ভাবরসে ভাবুককে ধরে রাখেন আর কেবলই বলেন—

“আমারে তুমি কিসের ছলে পাঠায়ে দুরে
আবার আমি চরণতলে আসিব ঘুরে।।”^{৩৬}

এই অনুভূতিতেই তাঁর সুখ, এখানেই তাঁর তৃপ্তি। এই সুখ হিতবাদীদের কথিত ইন্দ্রিয়ভোগ্য সুখ নয়, রবীন্দ্র-পরিভাষায় একেই বলা হয়েছে ‘আনন্দ’, আবার কখনও বলা হয়েছে ‘মহাসুখ’। এই সুখ প্রেমের অনুভূতি দ্বারাই সম্ভব যে প্রেম জৈবিক চাওয়া পাওয়ার উদ্বেগ, এখানে ভক্তের নিজ জীবন পর্যন্ত তুচ্ছ বলে মনে হয়। তাই ভক্ত ধাবিত হন শুষ্ক পতঙ্গের ন্যায় ঈশ্বরের সেবায় নিজেকে শান্ত, তৃপ্ত করতে। যে সাধনায় রূপ, রস, শব্দ, স্পর্শ, গন্ধের বিচিত্রতা নেই, আছে শুধু তাঁর নামের মাহাত্ম্য, তাঁর সেবায় আত্মনিয়োগের লালসা, বুকভরা ভালোবাসার মাধুর্য, যা ভক্তিরই পরাকাষ্ঠা। রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখেছেন —

“মোহ মোর ভক্তিরূপে উঠিবে জ্বলিয়া
প্রেম মোর ভক্তিরূপে বহিবে ফলিয়া।”^{৩৭}

‘উজ্জ্বলনীলমণি’ গ্রন্থে বলা হয়েছে—“মোহে বিচিন্তিতা প্রোক্তে। নৈশ্চল্যপতনাদিকৃৎ”^{৩৮} অর্থাৎ চেতনারহিত অবস্থাকেই মোহ বলা হয়েছে। এতে নিশ্চলতা ও পতনাদি ঘটে থাকে। ‘মোহ’ শব্দের সাধারণ অর্থ (অস✓মোহ, মোহিতা) মোহিত করা অথবা আকৃষ্ট করা^{৩৯} হলেও, এই শব্দটির নেতিবাচক দিকটিই সর্বাধিক, তাই সাধারণতঃ ‘মোহ’ বলতে ষড়রিপুর অন্যতম, চিন্তের অন্ধতা, অবিদ্যা এবং মাত্রাতিরিক্ত আবেশকে বোঝানো হয়।^{৪০} এর সঙ্গে আত্মসুখ অথবা আত্মতৃপ্তির যোগ রয়েছে। কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথ সেই মোহকেও ভক্তির পথে নিবিস্ত করেছেন, যেখানে এই শব্দটি (মোহ) ভক্তিরূপ প্রেমেরই স্বীকৃতি প্রদান করে। উক্ত রচনায়ই সেকথা স্পষ্ট উল্লেখ্য যে এই যে ভক্তিরসের উপলব্ধিতা জ্ঞান আহরণে লব্ধ নয়, নয় শাস্ত্র নির্দিষ্ট বিধানের তালিকাপুঞ্জি থেকে আহৃত, এই ভক্তি হচ্ছে অজ্ঞানের, সেই অজ্ঞাত প্রেমের, মাধুর্যের, এ সাধনা হচ্ছে বিনম্রতার। ভারতবর্ষ প্রাচীন কাল থেকেই এই পথেই নিজেকে করেছে অভিসিদ্ধিত। এই সম্পর্কে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ‘শান্তিনিকেতন’ — নামক প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থে লিখেছেন —

“ভারতবর্ষ আপনার সমস্ত সাধনার দ্বারা এই ঋষিদের চেয়েছিল। ... ঋষি কারা? না যাঁরা পরমাত্মাকে জ্ঞানের মধ্যে পেয়ে জ্ঞানতৃপ্ত, আত্মার মধ্যে মিলিত দেখে কৃতাত্মা, হৃদয়ের মধ্যে উপলব্ধির বীতরাগ, সংসারের কর্মক্ষেত্রে দর্শন করে প্রশান্ত।..... এই ঋষিরা ধনী নন, ভোগী নন, প্রতাপশালী নন, তাঁরা ধীর, তাঁরা যুক্তাত্মা..... পরমাত্মার যোগে সকলের সঙ্গে যোগ উপলব্ধি করা, এই থেকেই ভারতবর্ষ মনুষ্যত্বের চরম সার্থকতা বলে গণ্য করেছিল।”^{৪১}

ভারতের চিরাত্মক সাধন-ভূমির সর্বোচ্চতা এখানেই। আর গৌড়ীয় বৈষ্ণবীয় তত্ত্ব নির্দিষ্ট পঞ্চবিধ রসের মাধ্যমে ভারতীয় সাধনার দর্শনভূমিটি আরো পরিপক্বতা পেয়েছে। এই ‘পঞ্চবিধ’ রসের মুখ্য বিষয়ই হচ্ছে ভক্তিরস — যা মধুরে গিয়ে পরিপূর্ণতা পায়। যেখানে আমিত্বকে জলাঞ্জলি দিয়ে পরমপ্রাপ্তি অনুভব করেছেন ভক্তপ্রাণ। প্রসঙ্গত উল্লেখ্য যে বেদোপনিষদেব জ্ঞান মার্গকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ পুরোপুরি স্বীকার করেননি। রবীন্দ্র দর্শন মতে ‘জ্ঞানমার্গের সাহায্যে আমরা যা পাই তা হল জানা, তা নিতান্তই বাইরের জিনিস। পরম সত্যকে জানা শুধু নয়, তাকে পেতে হবে, তাকে উপলব্ধি করতে হবে। সেই হল পাওয়া। এই পাওয়া জ্ঞানমার্গের নাগালের বাহিরে। ... আবার যাকে নিছক অনুভূতি বলি ঠিক তাও নয়। এ হল অনুভূতির যা শ্রেষ্ঠ বিকাশ, প্রেম শক্তি, তারই প্রয়োগ। পরম সত্যের সহিত প্রেমের সম্বন্ধ স্থাপন করে তবেই তাঁকে সম্পূর্ণরূপে পাওয়া যায়। মনোবিজ্ঞানের মতে মনের প্রধান তিনটি বৃত্তি — প্রথম হল মনন, দ্বিতীয় ইচ্ছাবীচীন কর্মপ্রণোদন, আরেকটি হচ্ছে অনুভূতি। অর্থাৎ জ্ঞানে আকর্ষণ, কর্মে লিপ্সা আর ভালোবাসায় স্পৃহা। বিজ্ঞানে বা দর্শনের সাহায্যে আমরা যা জানি তা সকল সম্পর্ক বিরহিত খাঁটি জ্ঞান। জীবনে এই জ্ঞানের প্রয়োজনীয়তা অনেক, তবে কেবল জ্ঞানে মানুষের অন্তরাত্মার তৃপ্তি নেই কারণ মননশক্তির সাহায্যে আমরা যে সত্যকে পাই তা শুদ্ধ, নীরস, তা বস্তুর পরিচয় দেয়, তাই দর্শন যেখানে বাইরের আবরণ। কিন্তু অনুভূতির দ্বারা প্রেমকে লাভ করা যায়, তাই দর্শন যেখানে বস্তু নির্ণায়ক বীতির জ্বালে আবদ্ধ সেখানে অনুভূতি ব্যক্তিগত সম্পর্ক স্থাপন করে। তাই এখানে ভক্ত কর্তব্যের খাতিরে ভগবানের সেবায় প্রবৃত্ত হন না, মনের তাগিদে ইচ্ছায় প্রেমরূপ সেবায় নিজেকে নিমজ্জিত করেন। “অনুভূতির ভিত্তিতে প্রেমের সম্পর্ক স্থাপন করে আমাদের কাছে যে সত্য প্রকট হয়, তা আমাদের হৃদয়ে আনন্দ দেয়, তা জেয়ে বস্তুর সহিত ঘনিষ্ঠতম সম্বন্ধ স্থাপন করে। মনন শক্তির সাহায্যে আমরা জেয়েকে জানি মাত্র, তাকে পাই না। প্রেমসিদ্ধ অনুভূতিতে

আমর জ্ঞেয়কে পাই, জ্ঞেয় সেখানে প্রেমাস্পদ রূপে আমাদের নিকট ধরা দেয়।”^{৮৩} রবীন্দ্রসাধনায় মননবৃত্তিকেও একেবারে অস্বীকার করা হয়নি, মননবৃত্তি আর অনুভূতির মেলবন্ধন লক্ষ করা যায় রবীন্দ্রচিন্তনে। কর্মকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ অস্বীকার করেননি এবং কর্মের সঙ্গে জ্ঞানকেও তিনি স্বীকার করেছেন। রবীন্দ্রদর্শন মতে — “সত্য বলতে বুঝি দুইটি বস্তুর সম্বন্ধ নির্দেশক এমন একটি উক্তি, যাকে আমরা বিশ্বাস করি অর্থাৎ যা বিশ্ব সম্বন্ধে অংশিক ভাবে হক, সাধারণভাবে হক, যথার্থ জ্ঞান দেয়। কিন্তু মানুষের জ্ঞান স্পৃহা যখন উগ্র হয় তখন কেবলমাত্র ব্যবহারিক জীবনের গরজই তার একমাত্র প্রেরণা থাকে না। সেই জানবার নেশা তখন তাকে সুসংবদ্ধ আকারে সত্যগুলি আবিষ্কারে যত্নবান করে।”^{৮৪} এই প্রসঙ্গে ড° রাধাকৃষ্ণনের মন্তব্য এই যে — “When pure necessity drives man to his work, it takes an accidental and contingent character, it becomes a more makeshift arrangement, it is deserted and left in ruins when necessity changes its course. But when his work is the outcome of joy, the forms that it takes have elements of emorality.”^{৮৫} অতএব যথার্থ জ্ঞান মানুষকে কর্মে লিপ্ত করে, অজ্ঞেয়কে কাছে পেতে সাহায্য করে। মানুষের ধর্ম” প্রবন্ধে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছেন — “পরমসত্তাকে যত ভাল রকম জানব ততই তাঁর প্রতি শ্রদ্ধাবোধ মনে উদ্বেল হয়ে উঠবে। এই ত হল দার্শনিকের সাধনা।”^{৮৬} অতএব রবীন্দ্রনাথ যে জ্ঞানের কথা বলেছেন তা হচ্ছে সেই জ্ঞান যা মানুষকে সত্য আহরণের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তাঁকে অনুভব করতে শেখায়, যে জ্ঞান ঈশ্বরের সান্নিধ্য লাভে মানুষকে সাহায্য করে, যা শাস্ত্রের তালিকাপুঞ্জি দ্বারা আহত নয়, যা হৃদয়ানুভূতির জারকরসে অভিসিঞ্চিত, যার দ্বারা মানুষের বোধশক্তির বিকাশ ঘটে। শ্রীকৃষ্ণও গীতায় ভক্তিমান জ্ঞানীকেই শ্রেষ্ঠ বলেছেন। এ প্রসঙ্গে ভগবান চতুর্বিধ ভক্তের উল্লেখ করেছেন — আর্ত, অর্থার্থী, জিজ্ঞাসু ও জ্ঞানী। আর্ত ও অর্থার্থী হল সাধারণ ভক্ত যারা ঈশ্বরকে জাগতিক সুখ ও স্বাচ্ছন্দ্যের প্রয়োজনে স্মরণ করেন, জিজ্ঞাসুর সর্বদা মনে আশঙ্কা থাকে, এমনকি তাঁর পূজা ঈশ্বরকে নিয়ে পর্যন্ত, কারণ তাঁর বুদ্ধিবৃত্তি প্রবল, সেখানে হৃদয়ানুভূতি অনেকটা স্নান, কিন্তু জ্ঞানী ভক্ত বিন। হেতুতে ঈশ্বরের প্রতি ভক্তি দ্বারা আবিষ্ট হন, বুদ্ধি দ্বারা তাঁকে জেনে নেন এবং হৃদয় দিয়ে তাঁকে উপলব্ধি করতে চান। তাই জিজ্ঞাসু যেখানে বিশ্বরহস্য ভেদে তৎপর, সেখানে জ্ঞানী স্রষ্টাকে জড়িয়ে রাখার অভিপ্রায়ে এগিয়ে আসেন। এখানে হৃদয়বৃত্তি

প্রবল।”^{৮৭} তখন উপলব্ধ হয় যে — “Our inoral faculty is the faculty by which we know that life is not made up by fragments, purposeless and discontinuous.....He truly belongs to individuals who are not included in his own individuality and whom he is never even likely to know. As he has a feelings for his greater self which is outside the limits of his personality”^{৮৮} নিখিল মানুষের প্রেম শক্তিতে জাগ্রত এই কল্যাণ বোধই ব্যক্তিজীবনের সকল প্রসার এবং অগ্রগতির সঙ্গে যুক্ত, নিবিড় আনন্দস্বরূপ সেই অধীশ্বরের সাধনাই তাঁদের পাথেয়, তাঁদের উচ্ছ্বাস-আবেগের একমাত্র সম্বল —

“হেরে তোমার করব সাধন
ক্ষতির ক্ষুরে কাটব বাঁধন,
শেষ দানেতে তোমার কাছে
বিকিয়ে দেব আপনারে।”^{৮৯}

লক্ষণীয় যে রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যে অনেকস্থানেই ঈশ্বরপ্রেমে নিজেকে বিকিয়ে দেবার কথা এসেছে যা আত্মনিবেদনেরই পর্যায়ভুক্ত, যেখানে আমিত্বকে বর্জন করে পরমপ্রাপ্তি অনুভব করেছেন ভক্তপ্রাণ। এই পর্যায়ে এসে শত অন্তরায়ের মধ্যে ভক্তের ঈশ্বর প্রেম গাঢ় থেকে গাঢ়তর হয়ে উঠে আর নিজস্ব সকল কিছু বিকিয়ে দিয়ে কেবলই বলেন ‘আমার কিছুই নাই, সবই তোমার, সবই তোমায় দিলাম, আমি শুধু ভালোবেসে তোমার সেবা করতে জানি।’ উপনিষদের “ত্যাগেন ভুঞ্জীয়া”^{৯০} (ত্যাগের সঙ্গে ভোগ কর) ভিতরকার ত্যাগ শব্দকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বিশ্লেষণ করেছেন সংকোচধর্মী, ভেদধর্মী অহংকে ত্যাগ করে ঈশ্বরের অভিমুখে যাত্রা করবার সত্যরূপে, আন্তরিক সেবার প্রকাশরূপে। তাই ভারতবর্ষের চিত্তপ্রাণ সর্বদা একথাই স্বীকার করেছেন যে — “আত্মোৎসাহ বা আত্মজ্ঞান জীবনের একটা গভীর সত্য এবং অধ্যাত্ম সাধনার একটা অপরিহার্য অঙ্গ, কেননা আমাদের অহং এর অপেক্ষা বৃহত্তর কোনো কিছু আত্মোৎসর্গ বা আত্মত্যাগ চেনা আমাদের সত্য আয়ত্ত হয় না। তবে তা জ্ঞানের ভিত্তিতে প্রতিষ্ঠিত স্বতময় চেতনা এবং ইচ্ছা বা সঙ্কল্প হইয়াই করতে হয়।”^{৯১} নিষ্কাম ভক্তির এই সূত্রকে স্বীকার করেই সাধকগণ ভোগকে পূজার অর্থ্যরূপে প্রদান করেছেন আর রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যে এই বিশ্বাসেরই আবাসস্থল। কারণ তিনি জানতেন মানুষের মন যখন সকল জড়ত্বকে অস্বীকার করে প্রকৃত বিকাশের পথে অগ্রসর হয় তখন “আধ্যাত্মিকতাই মানুষের

সকল শক্তির কেন্দ্রগত, কেননা তাহা আত্মারই শক্তি, পরিপূর্ণতাই তাহার স্বভাব। তাহা অন্তর বাহির কোনো দিকেই মানুষকে খর্ব করিয়া আঘাত করিতে পারে না।”^{১২} ঈশ্বরের সেবায় সকল বিদ্রোহকে শান্ত করে ‘কৃষ্ণগতপ্রাণাঃ’ ভক্তগণ তখন একাকী, নিশ্চিত, তৃপ্ত, অখণ্ড এবং সম্পূর্ণতার রাজ্যে বিরাজ করেন। আর কেবল বলেন —

“তোমারে নমি হে সকল ভূবন — মাঝে
তোমারে নমি হে সকল জীবন কাজে,
তন ধন, মন করি নিবেদন আজি
ভক্তিপাবন তোমার পূজার ধূপে।
জননী তোমার করুণ চরণখানি
হেরিনু আজি এ তরুণ কিরণ রূপে।”^{১৩}

সূত্রনির্দেশ

- ১) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, রবীন্দ্র-রচনাবলী, দশমখণ্ড, কলকাতা, বিশ্বভারতী, ১২৫ তম জন্মজয়ন্তী উপলক্ষে সুলভ, সং ১৩৯৬, পৃ ১১।
- ২) বন্দোপাধ্যায়, হিরন্ময়, ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উপনিষদ, কলকাতা, নবপত্র প্রকাশন, ১৯৮০,
- ৩) Tagore, Rabindranath, The Religion of Man, The Vision, introduced by Robinson, New Delhi, Harper Collins publisher's, 1993, P.
- ৪) রায়, সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ, রবীন্দ্রনাথের চিন্তাগত (দর্শনচিন্তা), কলকাতা, গ্রন্থালয় প্রা. লি., ১৩৯৮,
- ৫) এই ‘ভাবের’ সাধনাই অন্যতম, এই ভাবের দ্বারাই ভক্তিরস সংক্রমিত হয়। এর ঘনীভূত অবস্থাকেই ‘মহাভাব’ আখ্যা দেওয়া হয়, যে সাধনার বশবর্তী হলেন ‘রাধা’, উজ্জ্বলমীলমণিকার একমাত্র রাধাকেই মহাভাবের স্বরূপ বলে উল্লেখ করেছেন —

“সাক্ষাতে বিরহ হএত অনুরাগে।
রাধার ভাবে ভাবিত তাহাকে ব্যথা লাগে।।
রাধা বিনু এই ভাবে অন্যে নাহি হয়ে।
মহাভাব স্বরূপা রাধা সর্বশাস্ত্রে কহে।।”

রূপগোস্বামী, উজ্জ্বলমীলমণি (আনন্দচন্দ্রিকা তথা লোচনরজনীটীকা সহ)
কলকাতা, কাব্যমালা নির্ণয়সাগর প্রেস, ১৪১৩, পৃ. ৬২।

- ৬) চট্টোপাধ্যায়, গিরীশচন্দ্র (অনু), বিশ্বনাথ কবিরাজপ্রণীত ‘সাহিত্য দর্পণ’ (১ম খণ্ড), কলকাতা, ক্যালকাটা বুক হাউস, ১৩৬৯, ৩/১০।
- ৭) তদেব, ৩ / ১২।
- ৮) দুর্গাপ্রসাদ (সম্পা), আনন্দবর্ধনচার্যপ্রণীত ‘ধ্বন্যালোক’, বৃত্তিভাগ, নিজ দিল্লী, মুন্সীরাম মনোহরলাল পব্লিশার্স প্রা.লি. ১৯৭৮, পৃ. ৫৬।
- ৯) উল্লিখিত অগ্রবাল, দীপা, ‘সংস্কৃত সাহিত্যশাস্ত্র মেন্ ভক্তিরস’, দিল্লী, বুক লিকর্স, ১৯৬৬, পৃ. ২৪।
- ১০) শ্রী রূপগীস্বামী ‘ভক্তিরসামৃতসিন্ধু’ (দুর্গম সংগীমনী-সহিত), আগরা, বিদ্যাবিলাস প্রেস, ২৬৮৮।
- ১১) তদেব, ৩/২/২৮।
- ১২) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, ‘গীতবিতান’, ৬৯ সংখ্যক গান, কলকাতা, এস.বি.এস. পাবলিকেশন, ৫ ম সং ১৪২৩, পৃ. ৮৭।
- ১৩) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, ‘রবীন্দ্ররচনাবলী’, ৭ম খণ্ড, মুক্তি, কলকাতা, বিশ্বভারতী, ১২৫ তম রবীন্দ্র জন্মজয়ন্তী উপলক্ষে সুলভ সং, ১৩৯৬, পৃ. ৩৩।
- ১৪) Radhakrishnan, S, ‘The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore’, Baroda, Good Companions. Publisher's, 1971, P. 39.
- ১৫) Prabhupadh, Swami, ‘Narada Bhakti Sutra, Gorakhpur, Geeta Press, 2006, Sutra-2
- ১৬) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, ‘শ্রেষ্ঠ কবিতা’, কলকাতা, এস. বি. এস. পাবলিকেশন, ৫ ম সং, ১৪২৩, পৃ. ৬৫।
- ১৭) প্রভুপাদ, স্বামী, ‘শ্রীমদ্ভাগবত’, নবম কন্ড, মায়াপুর, ভক্তিবাদান্ত বুক ট্রাস্ট, ১ ম প্রকাশ ২ য় সং, ১৭ জুলাই, ১৯৯৬, ৯/৪/২৫।
- ১৮) উল্লিখিত, তদেব, পৃ. ৫৪।
- ১৯) মুখোপাধ্যায়, উপেন্দ্রনাথ (সম্পা), কৃষ্ণদাস কবিরাজের চৈতন্যচরিতামৃত, বেদান্তবিচার (ষষ্ঠ পৰিচ্ছেদ), কলকাতা, বিফ্রেস্ট পাবলিকেশন, দ্বাদশ মুদ্রণ, ১ জানুয়ারি, ২০০৫, পৃ ১৩৪।
- ২০) তদেব, অন্তলীলা (শিক্ষাষ্টক), পৃ. ৪২৫।

- ২১) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, 'রবীন্দ্র-রচনাবলী', নবম খণ্ড, 'রোগীর নববর্ষ', কলকাতা, বিশ্বভারতী, ১২৫ তম জন্মজয়ন্তী উপলক্ষে সুলভ সং ১৩৯৬, পৃ. ৫২১।
- ২২) তদেব, সঞ্চয় / ধর্মের অর্থা, পৃ. ৫৩৮।
- ২৩) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, 'পঞ্চভূত', মনুষ্য, কলকাতা, বিশ্বভারতী, সং ১৯৬১, পৃ. ৫৪
- ২৪) শ্রী রূপগোস্বামী, 'হরিভক্তিরসামৃতসিন্ধু', (দুর্গম সংগীমণী সহিত), আগরা, বিদ্যাবিলাস প্রেস, ২৬৮৮, ২/২/৫।
- ২৫) উল্লিখিত, চট্টোপাধ্যায়, তপন কুমার, বৈষ্ণবপদ সমীক্ষা, কলকাতা, গ্রন্থ বিকাশ, ২০০৫, পৃ. ৩৫
- ২৬) Roy, Pabitrakumar, 'Builder's of Indian Philosophy Series [Rabindranath Tagore]', New 26] Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2002, P-120.
- ২৭) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, 'সোনারতরী / বৈষ্ণব কবিতা', কলকাতা, বিশ্বভারতী গ্রন্থবিভাগ, প্রথম প্রকাশ ১৩০০, পৃ. ৪৭।
- ২৮) মুখোপাধ্যায়, উপেন্দ্রনাথ (সম্পাদিত), 'কৃষ্ণদাস কবিরাজের 'চৈতন্যচরিতামৃত', বেদান্তবিচার, কলকাতা, বিফ্রেস্ট পাবলিকেশন, দ্বাদশ মুদ্রণ, ১ জানুয়ারি, ২০০৫, পৃ. ১৪২।
- ২৯) যা অহং ভাব বর্জিত। উল্লেখ্য যে প্রথম অবস্থায় ভক্তি ছিল 'সম্পর্কানুগা' অর্থাৎ ঈশ্বরকে ভক্তরা কোনো সম্পর্কের আবেশে বাঁধতে চাননি, ঈশ্বর তাঁদের কাছে ছিলেন ঐশ্বর্য, তাঁদের সকল কামনা পূরণ করার প্রধান আকর তিনি, এর পর সম্পর্কানুগ।' ভক্তির বশবর্তী হলেন ভক্তরা, যা মূলতঃ উক্ত সমীকরণ দ্বারা দেখানো যেতে পারে— 'সম্পর্কানুগা-ভক্তি + অহং', এরপর, ভক্তরা তাঁর শেষ অবস্থাকে নির্ধারণ করলেন, যাকে ভক্তির সর্বোৎকৃষ্ট পথ বলে স্বীকৃত দেওয়া হয়েছে। 'প্রেমানুগা', যা= 'ভক্তি+প্রেম-অহং' এভাবে দেখানো যেতে পারে (অহং বর্জিত ভক্তি এবং প্রেমের মিশ্রিত রূপ)।
- ৩০) Radhakrishnan, S, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, Baroda, Good Companions Publishers, 1971, P-66.
- ৩১) Happold, FC, Mysticism A Study and an Anthology, London, Penguin Books, 1984, P-230.

- ৩২) উল্লিখিত, চট্টোপাধ্যায়, তপন কুমার, বৈষ্ণবপদ সমীক্ষা, কলকাতা, গ্রন্থ বিকাশ, ২০০৫, পৃ. ১১১।
- ৩৩) বিবেকানন্দ, স্বামী, উল্লিখিত, ভদ্র, কালিদাস (সম্পাদিত), 'অমৃত বাণী বিতান', কলকাতা, এস বি. এস. পাবলিকেশন, বই মেলা ২০১৬, পৃ. ৮৭।
- ৩৪) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, 'গীতিমাল্য', ৮৪ সংখ্যক কবিতা, কলকাতা, বিশ্বভারতী গ্রন্থবিভাগ, জুলাই ১৯৯৪, পৃ. ১১৫।
- ৩৫) তদেব, ৮১ সংখ্যক সংগীত, পৃ. ৯২।
- ৩৬) তদেব, ৮৭, সংখ্যক সংগীত, পৃ. ১১।
- ৩৭) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, 'নৈবেদ্য', ৩০ সংখ্যক কবিতা, কলকাতা, বিশ্বভারতী, আষাঢ় ১৩০৮, পৃ. ২৬।
- ৩৮) চৌধুরী, বিশ্বনাথ (অনু), 'উজ্জ্বলনীলমণি', কলকাতা, রাধা পুস্তকালয়, ২য় সং, কার্তিক, ১৩৮৬ সাল, পৃ. ১০৮।
- ৩৯) বিশ্বাস, শৈলেন্দ্র (সং ক), 'সংসদ বাংলা অভিধান', কলকাতা, সাহিত্য সংসদ, সপ্ত দশ মুদ্রণ ২০১১, পৃ. ৭১৯।
- ৪০) বন্দোপাধ্যায়, হরিচরণ (সম্পাদিত), 'বঙ্গীয় শব্দকোষ' (দ্বিতীয় খণ্ড) কলকাতা, সাহিত্য অকাদেমি, ৮ম মুদ্রণ, ২০১১, পৃ. ১৮৩৫।
- ৪১) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, 'শান্তিনিকেতন' (দ্বিতীয় খণ্ড), কলকাতা, বিশ্বভারতী, ৭ পৌষ, ১৩৬০, পৃ. ২৮৩।
- ৪২) বন্দোপাধ্যায়, হিরন্ময়, 'রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উপনিষদ', কলকাতা, নবপত্র প্রকাশন, ১৯৮০, পৃ. ১৩।
- ৪৩) তদেব।
- ৪৪) তদেব।
- ৪৫) Radhakrishnan, S, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, Baroda, Good Companions publishers, 1971, P. 66.
- ৪৬) ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, 'মানুষের ধর্ম', কলকাতা, এস. বি. এস. পাবলিকেশন, ২য় সং ১৯৮৩, পৃ. ৪৬।
- ৪৭) চতুর্বিধা ভজন্তে মাং জনাঃ সুকৃতি নোহর্জুন।
আরো জিজ্ঞাসুরথার্থী জ্ঞানী চ ভরতভ।।
তেষাং জ্ঞানী নিত্যযুক্ত একভক্তি বিশিষ্যতে। প্রিয়ো হি জ্ঞানিনো হত্যর্থ
মহৎ স চ মম প্রিয়ঃ।। কাব্যতীর্থেণ, প্রসন্ন কুমার, 'শ্রীমদ্ভগবতগীতা',

- कलकता, राजेन्द्र लाइब्रेरी, १४ दश सं १९९९, ९/१५-१९
- ४८) Radhakrishnan, S. "The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore", Baroda, Good Companions Publishers, 1971, P-45.
- ४९) ठाकुर, रवीन्द्रनाथ, 'गीतबितान', ४५ संख्याक, कलकता, एस.वि.एस. पाबलिकेशन, ५ संख्याक, १४२३, पृ. ८७।
- ५०) ईशा बास्यमिदं सर्वं यं जगत्तां जगत् ।
तेन तज्जेन भुङ्क्षीथा या गृधः बास्यविधनम् ॥
श्रीमद्, प्रभुपाद, उपनिषद् - ग्रन्थाली, ईशोपनिषद्, श्लोक संख्या १/१, कलकता, उद्बोधन कार्यालय, ३९ सं २०१९, पृ. ३।
- ५१) घोष अरविन्द, उल्लिखित, भद्र, कालिदास, 'अमृत वागी बितान', कलकता, एस. वि. एस. पाबलिकेशन, बई मेला, २०१७, पृ. १९२।
- ५२) ठाकुर, रवीन्द्रनाथ, 'शान्तिनिकेतन' (प्रथम खण्ड), आत्मार प्रकाश, कलकता, विश्वभारती, ९ पौष, १३७०, पृ. १९२।
- ५३) ठाकुर, रवीन्द्रनाथ, 'गीताञ्जलि', १४ संख्याक कविता, कलकता, एस. वि. एस. पाबलिकेशन, ५५ प्रकाश, १४२३, पृ. २०।

असमिया उपन्यास का विकास : एक अवलोकन

डॉ रघु नाथ यादव

शोध संक्षेप :

किसी भी भाषा के उपन्यास की प्रगति यात्रा की तरह असमिया उपन्यास की विकास कथा भी असमिया भाषा क्षेत्र की सभ्यता और संस्कृति के नवीन रूप के विकास का सर्जनात्मक प्रतिफलन है। समृद्धि और ऐश्वर्या की सभ्यता सहस्राब्दियों से महाकाव्य में अभिव्यंजना पाती रही, पर आधुनिक जीवन में व्याप्त जटिलता वैषम्य और संघर्ष के आख्यान का माध्यम उपन्यास बन चुका है। असमिया उपन्यास की अधुनातन प्रगति के आकलन से भी यही निष्कर्ष पुष्ट होता है।

विषयवस्तु :

भारतीय साहित्य में उपन्यास कलमी पौधा है असमिया में यदि पश्चिम से नहीं, तो कम से कम बंगला कलम से तो लिया ही गया। नवीन कथा विधा को सुबंधु, दंडी, बाण आदि की परंपरा में भी विकसित किया जा सकता था, पर किसी भी भारतीय भाषा में वैसा नहीं हुआ। यह इससे भी सिद्ध है कि जब कविता की चर्चा की जाती है तो प्रकारांतर से भरत अथवा अरस्तु की मान्यताएं भी कमोबेश उदित की जाती हैं, पर उपन्यास के प्रसंग में कथासरित् सागर अथवा कादंबरी अथवा डी के मरान के आदर्श प्रतिपालन का प्रश्न नहीं उठाया जाता है। भारतीय साहित्य में उपन्यास विधा नई है, उपन्यास शब्द नहीं। नाट्यशास्त्र में प्रतिमुख संधि के एक उपभेद के रूप में उपन्यास की व्याख्या "उपपत्तिकृतो

ह्यर्थः उपन्यासः प्रकीर्तितः” और “उपन्यास प्रसादानाम्” अर्थात् कथा को क्रमबद्ध न्यस्त कर प्रसादन योग्य बनाने की बात सुदूर अतीत से ही मान्य रही है। असंभव नहीं कि इन अर्थों को लक्ष्य कर ही बंकिम बाबू ने ‘दुर्गेशनंदिनी’ को उपन्यास की अभिधा दी। इस आधुनिक कथा विधा के लिए उपन्यास शब्द का कदाचित्त यही प्रथम प्रयोग था। तभी से उपन्यास शब्द चल पड़ा और अनेक भारतीय भाषाओं की तरह असमिया ने भी इसे स्वीकार कर लिया। कथा को युक्तियुक्ततापूर्वक क्रमबद्ध रूप में उपन्यास करने की दृष्टि से उपन्यास अभिधा जहां कृतिकार के सर्जनात्मक कौशल का परिचायक है, वही पाठक अथवा ग्रहिता की रुचि का परीक्षक भी। उपन्यास यानी कृति विशेष का अस्तित्व सेतु के समान है। जिससे दोनों एक दूसरे से संबंधित होते हैं।

काफी मत-मतांतरों के पश्चात् जैसे स्वीकार किया जा रहा है कि हिंदी का प्रथम उपन्यास पंडित गौरीदत्त कृत ‘देवरानी-जेठानी की कहानी’ (1870) है, प्रायः वैसे ही पद्मावती देवी फुखनानी रचित ‘सुदामार उपाख्यान’ (1884) प्रथम असमिया उपन्यास है। प्रथम कृतियाँ होने के कारण दोनों की अपनी अपनी खूबियाँ और खामियाँ हैं, उनके नामों में क्रमशः ‘कहानी’ और ‘उपाख्यान’ शब्दों के प्रयोग भी इसे किंचित इंगित करते हैं। हिंदी उपन्यास की विकास-कथा को क्रम देते समय अतीत के प्रति मोहवश जैसे हम पीठिका रूप में ‘रानी केतकी की कहानी’ (1803 ईशा अल्लाह), ‘पूर्णप्रकाश और चंद्रप्रभा’, ‘रामलीला’ (भारतेंदु) आदि का उल्लेख करना नहीं भूलते, वैसे ही असमिया उपन्यास के उद्भव और विकास को आरेखित करते समय भी ‘जात्रिकर जात्रा’ ‘कनिया बेहारू आरू साधु’ (1876) ‘बाहीरे रड चड भितरे कोवा भातुरी’ (1876 हेमचंद्र बरुआ), ‘एलोकेशी बेश्यार कथा’, ‘कामिनीकांत’ (1877 एन के गार्नि), ‘फूलमणि आरू करुणा’ (1877, श्रीमती गार्नि), आदि का उत्साहपूर्वक नाम लिया जाता है। इनमें पहला ‘पिलग्रीम्स प्रोग्रेस’ का भावानुवाद है और दूसरा स्कॉटलैंड की पृष्ठभूमि पर धर्मप्रचार का आलेख। चौथा, पांचवाँ और छठा बंगला से असमिया में हुए अनुवाद हैं। मिशनरियों के इन सभी प्रकाशनों का एकमात्र उद्देश्य है भारत की धरती पर उद्भूत पारंपरिक धर्मसे असमियों को विमुख कर मासीही धर्म में अंतरित करना। उनका उद्देश्य भले ही कुत्सित रहा हो, पर उनसे नवीन कथा विधा को राह खोजने में सहायता अवश्य मिली। हेमचंद्र बरुआ की कृति ‘बहिरे रड चड भितरे कोवा भातुरी’ मौलिक तो है, पर

उपन्यास नहीं। वह गद्य निबंध भर है।

असमिया उपन्यास की प्रगति कथा का प्रथमार्द्ध उन्नीसवीं शती के अंतिम दो दशकों से बीसवीं शती के चौथे दशक तक सीमित है। प्रथम उपन्यास ‘सुधमार उपाख्यान’ की सफलता सहज कथा प्रवाह और प्रचारवादी या उपदेश धर्मी दृष्टि से अभाव में निहित है। वह महिला की कृति तो है ही, प्रथम सामाजिक उपन्यास भी है। आधुनिक असमिया साहित्य के तीन महारथियों लक्ष्मीनाथ बेजबुरुआ (1834-1938), रजनीकांत बरदलै (1869-1939) और पद्मनाथ गोहाई बरुआ (1871-1946) ने उपन्यास लेखन लगभग एक साथ शुरू किया, पर उनकी परिणति अलग-अलग हुई।

उन्नीसवीं शती के सर्वप्रमुख उपन्यासकार हैं पद्मनाथ गोहाई बरुआ। उन्होंने कुल दो उपन्यास लिखें- ‘भानुमति’ (1891) और ‘लाहरी’ (1892)। ‘भानुमति’ मोवामरिया विद्रोह और ‘लाहरी’ बर्मी आक्रमण की घटनाओं पर आधारित है। दोनों माने जाते हैं ऐतिहासिक उपन्यास ही, पर वस्तुतः उनमें कथा को विश्वसनीय बनाने के लिए इतिहास से नहीं ऐतिहासिक छोंक से काम लिया गया है। बाद में गोहाई बरुआ ने अपना लेखन क्षेत्र ही बदल लिया। बेजबुरुआ ने ‘जोनाकि’ में धारावाहिक रूप में ‘पदुमकुंवरी’ (1889) का प्रकाशन कराया। पुस्तकार रूप में वह 15 वर्षों के पश्चात् सुलभ हुआ। उस एकमात्र कृति के अतिरिक्त बेजबुरुआ ने कोई और उपन्यास लिखा ही नहीं। रजनीकांत बरदलै ने लिखना उसी समय शुरू अवश्य किया, पर ‘मिरि जियोरी’ (1895) के अतिरिक्त उनकी सभी रचनाएं बीसवीं शती में ही आयीं। उन्हीं दिनों हरेश्वर शर्मा बरुआ का भी एक मात्र उपन्यास ‘कुसुम कुमारी’ (1899) प्रकाशित हुआ। इसे मात्र संयोग ही कहा जाएगा कि हिंदी में भी देवकीनंदन खत्री जी का उपन्यास ‘कुसुमकुमारी’ 1899 में ही छपा था।

रजनीकांत बरदलै अपने समय के सर्वाधिक समर्थ उपन्यासकार हैं। उनके कुल नौ उपन्यास- मिरि जियोरी (1895), मनोमती (1926), दन्दुवाद्रोह (1909), रंगीली, राधा-रुकमणी (1925), निर्मल भक्त (1926), रहदैलिंगिरी (1930), खाम्बा और थोइबी (1930-31), और ताम्रेश्वरी मंदिर (1936) प्रकाशित हैं। इनमें ‘मिरि जियोरी’ आदि हिंदूगोष्ठी कि मिरि जाति का सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक दर्पण है और ‘खाम्बा और थोइबी’ मणिपुर में प्रचलित प्रसिद्ध प्रेमकथा पर आधारित रोमांस। शेष उपन्यास ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि पर आधारित

है। असमी उपन्यासकारों में बरदलै का वही स्थान है जो हिंदी में वृंदावन लाल वर्मा मा का। बहुधा उनकी तुलना स्काट और बंकिम बाबू से की जाती है। ऐतिहासिक उपन्यासों का कथानक असम के उत्तरमध्य युगीन इतिहास की घटनाओं पर आधारित है। सभी उपन्यास प्रायः सामान्य दहेज प्रेमकथा के रूप में प्रारंभ होते हैं, पर उनकी परिणति अध्यात्म अथवा किसी न किसी आदर्श के धरातल पर होती है। कथावस्तु किसी बुनावट इस रूप में होती है कि उसमें युगीन इतिहास, सामाजिक रीति-नीति और धार्मिक आचार-व्यवहार सहज ही अंतरगृहीत हो चलते हैं। इस संबंध में डॉ. श. नेओग की टिप्पणी है कि “ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि आमार समाजखनक बुजिबर चेष्टा ह’ल बरदलैर भाइ तात्पर्य” वस्तुतः असमिया उपन्यास जब घुटनों के बल रेंग ही रहा था तभी बरदलै ने उसे सहारा देकर न केवल चलाना सिखाया, बल्कि इतनी सामर्थ्य दी कि वह स्वयं सपाट दौड़ने भी लगा। असमिया उपन्यास के विकास में उनका योगदान अप्रतिम है।

भारतीय राजनीति में गांधी के आगमन और स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन के बढ़ते चरण का प्रभाव साहित्य रचना पर भी पड़ा। पिछली शती के तीसरे-चौथे दशक में रचित उपन्यासों पर उनके प्रभाव लक्षित होते हैं। दंडीनाथ कलिता (1890-1950) के उपन्यासों में उनकी अनुगूँज भर मिलती है, पर देवचंद्र तालुकदार (1900-1965) के कई उपन्यासों में उन्हें वाणी भी मिली है। कविता का प्रथम उपन्यास ‘फूल’ (1908) वर्मा आक्रमण की घटना पर आधारित है। वह शिल्प की दृष्टि से दुर्बल कृति है। उन्हें प्रसिद्धि मिली दूसरे उपन्यास ‘साधना’ (1928) से। कुछ के अनुसार ‘साधना’ ही उनका कीर्ति स्तंभ है। लगभग 25 वर्षों के अंतराल के पश्चात् उनके कुछ अन्य उपन्यास- ‘आविष्कार’, ‘परिचय’ (1950) और ‘गणविप्लव’ (1951) भी प्रकाशित हुए। ‘आविष्कार’ भी ‘साधना’ के समान ही महत्वपूर्ण कृति है। तालुकदार के कुल छः (6) उपन्यास प्रकाशित हैं- ‘धुंवाली-कुंवली’ (1922) ‘अपूर्ण’, ‘आग्नेयगिरी’ (1924) ‘विद्रोही’ (1939), ‘दुनिया’ (1961) और ‘आदर्शपीठ’ (1963) 7 इनके सभी उपन्यास सामाजिक कोटि में आते हैं। ‘अपूर्ण’, ‘आग्नेयगिरी’ और ‘आदर्शवाद’ में गांधीवादी प्रभाव अधिक मुखर है, किंतु ‘विद्रोही’ और ‘दुनिया’ में वे गांधी की अपेक्षा मार्क्स के निकट प्रतीत होते हैं। तालुकदार के उपन्यासों को नैतिक उपदेशों ने बोझिल बना दिया है। वस्तु की बुनावट में असंबद्धता, अतिशय प्रचारात्मकता और अतिरंजीत कल्पनाशीलता के कारण तालुकदार के उपन्यास कलात्मक होने से चूक भी गए हैं।

इसी अवधि में अन्य भाषाओं से कई उपन्यास अनुदित भी हुए। उनमें लक्षेश्वर शर्मा द्वारा अनुदित दो उपन्यास- ‘मातृ’ और ‘पंप्पिआइरकाहिनी’ उल्लेखनीय हैं।

ऊपर चर्चित उपन्यासों के प्रवृत्त्यात्मक सर्वेक्षण से प्रत्यक्ष होता है कि द्वितीय विश्व-समर के पूर्व असमिया में मूलतः दो प्रकार के उपन्यासों का ही लेखन हुआ- ऐतिहासिक और सामाजिक। रोमांटिकता कमोवेश सभी उपन्यासों की अंतरालवर्तनी है। जनजाति विषयक मात्र एक उपन्यास ‘मिरि जियरी’ लिखा गया, जबकि असम में उसके लिए खुला मैदान पड़ा था। हां, लीक से हटकर मात्र कुमुदेश्वर बरठाकुर ने कई ‘डिटेक्टिव’ उपन्यासों की रचनाएं अवश्य की, पर उनके वे उपन्यास अल्पजीवी ही सिद्ध हुए। मनोविज्ञान आदि का क्षेत्र सर्वथा अनछुवा ही रहा।

असमिया उपन्यास की प्रगति का द्वितीयर्द्ध द्वितीय विश्वसमरोत्तर काल की कथा है। द्वितीय विश्वसमर एवं उसके पूर्व पश्चात् वर्षों की प्रांतीय और देशीय घटनाओं ने असम के जन जीवन को पुरी तरह झकझोर दिया। सन् (1937) में निर्वाचन के पश्चात् असम में कांग्रेसी मंत्रिमंडल बना। सितंबर 1939 में विश्वयुद्ध के प्रारंभ होने पर भारतीय नेताओं की राय के विरुद्ध अंग्रेजों ने भारत को युद्ध में भागीदार बना दिया। विरोध में कांग्रेसी मंत्रिमंडल ने त्याग पत्र दे दिया। तदुपरांत सर सैयदुल्ला की सरकार बनी। वह प्रकारान्तर से असम की जन भावनाविरोधी सरकार हुई। पुनः असम के श्रमिकों को कपा देनेवाली बड़ी मर्मांतक घटना हुई। तेलनगर डिगबोई में हड़ताल चल रही थी। भारत के औद्योगिक क्षेत्र में ही नहीं, संपूर्ण एशिया में वह पहली सबसे बड़ी धार्मिक हड़ताल थी। विश्वयुद्ध में भारत की भागीदारी की घोषणा के उपरांत युद्ध की आड़ में आपातकालीन नियमों के अंतर्गत हड़ताली श्रमिकों को बर्खास्त कर डिगबोई नगर से जबरदस्ती निकालकर सड़कों पर छोड़ दिया गया। डिगबोई सुरक्षित नगर घोषित हुआ। तीन हजार से भी अधिक श्रमिक रोजी-रोटी विहीन कर दिए गए। उसके विरुद्ध कांग्रेस प्रस्ताव पर भर कर सकी और बमों की बौछार में मजदूरों के असंतोष की आग बेरहमी से बुझा दी गयी। युद्ध की विभीषिका अन्य प्रांतों की अपेक्षा असम को अधिक सहनी पड़ी। 90वें स्कूल कॉलेज बंद हो गए। शिक्षा और सांस्कृतिक अनुष्ठानों के भवन सैनिक बैरकों में बदल दिए गए। सैनिक छावनीयों में विभिन्न वस्तुओं की आपूर्ति के क्रम में

ठीकेदारों की बन आई। नैतिक मूल्य पतनोन्मुख हुआ। सर्वत्र अभाव, भुखमरी, महंगाई और अनिश्चितता का वातावरण हो गया। परिस्थिति की भयानकता और तत्परिणाम के अनुमान हेतु डॉ नेओग का आंखों देखा और भोगा हुआ साक्ष्य है कि “आमार सरु नगर केइखन निशा हले गांवर दरे निशिप्रदीप है पोरिल एन्टीएयरक्राफ्ट हिलैबोर ओपरलै मुख करि रल, बिजुलीर जोरबनतिये आकाशत हाले बाले।... इयार माजत साहित्यर नाम लोवाटो हल येन भीरू आरू अकर्मण्यर काम।... असमिया साहित्य आरू साहित्यिक तेतिया यन्पलायति सन्जीवति करिले”। तभी सन् 1940 में लाहौर अधिवेशन में लीग ने पाकिस्तान की मांग की। सन् 1942 में स्टेफोर्ड क्रिप्स-योजना का बहिष्कार और ‘भारत छोड़ो’ आंदोलन ने राजनीति को नया मोड़ दिया। कई वर्षों के विराम के पश्चात् सन् 1943 में ‘जयंती’ पत्रिका के पुनर्प्रकाशन से साहित्यिक गति विधि पुनः बढ़ चली। द्वितीय समरोत्तर असमिया साहित्य की प्रत्येक विधान विधा इन सबसे जहां प्रभावित-प्रेरित हुई, वहीं प्राचीनता के निर्मोक को बहुत दूर तक छोड़ती हुई अपना बहुआयामी और युगानुकूल विकास कर चली। द्वितीय समारोत्तर असमिया उपन्यासों में यह सब अधिक स्पष्ट है।

इस काल खंड के असमिया उपन्यास की विकास-कथा भी दो चरणों में बटी है। पहले चरण का विस्तार (1945) से (1958) तक है। उसके पश्चात् दूसरा चरण आरंभ होता है। पहले चरण के मुख्य उपन्यासकार हैं- बिरिंचि कुमार बरुवा (1910-1964), मुहम्मद पियार, दीननाथ शर्मा, हितेश डेका, प्रफुल्ल दत्त गोस्वामी, राधिका मोहन गोस्वामी, प्रेमनारायण दत्त इत्यादि। सब में मुकुटमणि बिरिंचि कुमार बरुवा है। सैयद अब्दुल मालिक, योगेश दास, नवकांत बरुवा, बीरेंद्र कुमार भट्टाचार्य आदि ने भी लिखना शुरू किया। इसी समय, पर इन सबकी प्रतिभा के उत्तर प्रतिफलन सठोत्तर के दशकों में ही मिले।

बीरेंद्र कुमार के दोनों उपन्यास पद्म नाम से प्रकाशित हुए, वीणा बरुवा के नाम से ‘जीवनर बाटत’ और रसना बरुवा के नाम से ‘सेउजीपातर काहिनी’। प्रथम में ग्रामीण जीवन के सुख-दुख, आशा-आकांक्षा, के सशक्त और स्वाभाविक अंकन है और दूसरे में असम के चाय बागानों के श्रमिकों कारिंदों, गोरे साहबों और मेम साहिबों के जीवंत चित्र। बरुवा असमिया के प्रेमचंद्र हैं। डॉ शर्मा के अनुसार ‘जीवनर बाटत’ जहां “समस्त सामाजिक उपन्यासर भीतरत जीवन चित्रणत एइ उपन्यासर लगत फेर मारीबो परा द्वितीय एखन सहजे उलीयाबलै

टान हब”, वही “सेउजीपातर काहिनी”, असमर चाह बागानर जीवनर सुंदर आलेख्य’। वस्तुतः बरुवार दुयोखनि उपन्यासेइ उच्चांगर।

मोहम्मद पियार के ‘प्रीति उपहार’ (1947), ‘संग्राम’ (1948), ‘मरहा पापरी’ ‘जीवन नैर जंजि’ (1949), ‘हेरोवा स्वर्ग’ (1952) आदि में ‘संग्राम’ सबसे सशक्त रचना है। उनके उपन्यासों की मुख्य प्रेरणा गरीबी और सामाजिक अन्याय है। दीनानाथ शर्मा चौथे दशक से ही लिख रहे थे। उनके उषा (1938), ‘संग्राम’ (1954), ‘माटि आरु मानुह’, ‘नदाइ’ (1956) ‘शांति’ (1961), ‘नवारुण’ (1968), आदि में ‘नदाइ’ को अधिक सफल कहा जाता है। मध्यवित्तीय घरेलू परिवेश के अंकन में शर्मा अधिक सफल है। हितेश डेका के उपन्यासों- ‘आजिर मानुह’ (1952), ‘नतुन पथ’ व (1956), ‘भाराघर’ (1957), ‘माटीकार’ (1958), ‘एयेतो जीवन’, ‘भूमिकन्या’ (1962), ‘आंचल मानुह’ (1963), ‘बैरी मानुह’, ‘जीवन संघात’ (1967)- की विशेषता प्रत्येक स्थिति के वस्तुपरक मूल्यांकन में निहित है। सब में यथार्थ के साम्यवादी रूप का स्वच्छ अंकन मिलता है। प्रफुल्लदत्त गोस्वामी के ‘कैचापातर कंपनी’ में चाय बागानों के सामाजिक आर्थिक पहलू का अंकन मिलता है। राधिका मोहन गोस्वामी के ‘चाकनैया’ (1954) ‘बाबारली’ (1958) और ‘अपराधी’ में शहरीजीवन की पतनोन्मुखता का सफल अंकन मिलता है। राधिका मोहन घरेलू जीवनदर्शों पर आयातित बाह्य आदर्शों को थोपने से उत्पन्न संघर्ष की व्यंजना में गोस्वामी के उपन्यास सफल हैं। प्रेमनारायण दत्त मूलतः जासूसी उपन्यासकार रहे। उनके बीसों जासूसी उपन्यास हैं, किंतु ‘निर्यतिर निर्मलि’, ‘प्रणयर सूति’ (1954), ‘मुक्ति पथेदि’ (1956), ‘प्राणर परश’ (1957), आदि सामाजिक उपन्यासों के लेखक के रूप में भी वे खूब सफल हुए हैं। सन् 1958-60 के आसपास अनेक नये नाम भी उपन्यास लेखकों में जुटे।

प्रवृत्त्यात्मक दृष्टि से इस चरण में सामाजिक उपन्यासों का ही बाहुल्य रहा। तब भी बिरिंचि कुमार बरुवा का अनुकरण नहीं हुआ। उपन्यास में अपना शाखामय विस्तार इसी समय आरंभ किया। ऐतिहासिक उपन्यासों में यथार्थ का यथार्थ का साम्यवादी रूप भी निखरा। गांव, खेत, नदी, पहाड़, जंगल, चाय-ऐतिहासिक पक्ष ज्यादा विश्वासनीय बना। गांव, खेत, नदी, पहाड़, जंगल, चाय-बागान और जीवन के सामाजिक विस्तारों को छोड़कर उपन्यास ने शहरी सभ्यता को अपने क्रीड में समेटना शुरू किया। व्यक्ति के अतिरिक्त जीवन की

गुत्थियों और गहराइयों को उसने गंभीरता से स्वीकारना सहेजना शुरू किया। नारी अब वैष्णव के चौंके की थाली ही नहीं बनी रही। वह होटलों की मेज पर नाचनेवाली तस्ती के रूप में भी आने लगी। वस्तुतः यह कालखंड असमिया उपन्यास के शाखामय विस्तार का महत्वपूर्ण चरण बना।

दूसरे चरण में कई तो पहले से ही लिख रहे थे। कुछ नये नाम भी जुड़े। सबको मिलाकर विचारने से विदित होता है कि इस समय उपन्यासकारों में संख्यात्मक वृद्धि तो हुई ही, विषय को भी वैविध्य, विस्तार और गाम्भीर्य प्रदान किया गया। प्रख्यात उपन्यासकारों में सैयद अब्दुल मालिक, योगेश दास, नवकांत बरुवा, वीरेंद्रकुमार भट्टाचार्य, होमेन बोरगोहाई, निरुपमा बोरगोहाई, बिष्णुप्रसाद राभा, कैलाश शर्मा, चंद्र प्रसाद शङ्कीया, पद्म बरकटकी, लक्ष्मीनंदन बरा, कुमार किशोर, नलिनी चक्रवर्ती, सुरेश गोस्वामी, आदि के नाम सहज ही प्रत्यक्ष हो उठते हैं। पिछले दशक से निकलने वालों में मेदिनी चौधरी, देवेंद्र नाथ आचार्य, शशिब्रता चौधरी, मामनि रायसम गोस्वामी इत्यादि ने अपनी विशिष्ट पहचान बनायी है। इनके अतिरिक्त बीसों और भी उपन्यासकार हैं जिनका किसी ना किसी रूप में महत्व है।

सैयद अब्दुल मालिक लोकप्रिय कथाशिल्पी है। 'रथर चंकरि घुरे' और 'बनजुड़' (1958) से आरंभ कर अब तक उनके लगभग दो दर्जन उपन्यास प्रकाशित हो चुके हैं। उनमें 'काबिधर' (1959), 'सुरुज मुखीर स्वप्न' 'जिया जुरिर घाट' (1960), 'कंठहार' (1961), 'अन्य आकाश अन्य तारा' (1962), 'रूपतीरर्थर यात्री' (1963), 'आधारशिला', 'ओमला घरर धूली', 'रजनीगंधार चकुलो', 'प्राचीर आरू प्रान्तर' (1967), 'अघरी आत्मार काहिनी' (1969), 'सोनाली सुतारे बन्हा' (1972), 'एका बेंका वृत्त' (1974), 'शरीरत एकुरा जुड़' (1978), 'रूपाबरीर पलश' (1930) आदि अधिक प्रसिद्ध हैं। डॉ. नेओग के अनुसार- "मालिकर लिखा पढ़ा शक्ति अपरिसीम, चरित्र सृष्टि आरू काहिनी परिवेशनतो उत्साह अशेष, किंतु तेओर उपन्यासर संहति आरू जीवन दर्शनर उपलब्धि क्रमात् हे आहिब लागिछे।" उनकी अपेक्षा योगेश दास की संख्यात्मक उपलब्धि कम है, पर महत्व और सामर्थ्य की दृष्टि से ये मालिक से बहुत आगे निकल जाते हैं। इनके उपन्यासों में 'डावर आरू नाइ' (1955), 'संहारि पाइ', 'जोनाकिर जुड़' (1959), 'नीरूपाय नीरूपास' (1957), 'मदारर वेदना', 'छाँ जुड़ खेदि', 'हेजार फुल'; 'एमुठि वेदना', उत्कण्ठ-उपकण्ठ',

‘नेदेखा जुड़र धोंवा’ (1972) ‘अवैध’ (1973) अधिक महत्व के हैं। डॉ. शर्मा के शब्दों में “दासर उपन्यास राजीर काहिनी वास्तवभित्तिक, दृढ़ निबद्ध आरू चांचल्यजनक (परिस्थिति बिबर्जित) सामाजिक समालोचना, दुर्नीतिर प्रति कटाक्षपात तेंओर रचनात थाकिलेओ सिकलासम्मत सीमा चेराइ योवा नाइ।” आधुनिक सभ्यताइ सृष्टि करा सामाजिक आरू व्यक्तिगत समस्यार रूपायण, निरपेक्षमूलक समदृष्टि आरू निरुध्र काहिनी रचना दासर उपन्यासर वैशिष्ट्य। नवकांत बरुवा अपने ‘कपिली पारियां साधु’ (1954), ‘ककादेउतार हाड़’ (1972), और गरमा कुंवरी’ (1980) में असम के ऐतिहासिक सांस्कृतिक परिवेश को पत्यथ करने में सहायी रूप में सफल हुए हैं।

परिवेश को प्रत्यक्ष करने में स्पृहणीय रूप में सफल हुए हैं। उनके डेढ़ दर्जन के वीरेंद्रकुमार भट्टाचार्य शुरू से ही मसिजीवी रहे हैं। उनके डेढ़ दर्जन के लगभग प्रकाशित उपन्यासों में 'राजपथे रिडियाय' (1975), 'आइ' (1960), 'इयारु इंगम' (1961), 'शतधनी' (1964), 'मृत्युंजय' (1969), 'प्रतिपद', 'रंगा मेघ', 'कबर आरू फूल' (1972), 'बल्लरी' (1973), 'डायनी' अधिक जनप्रिय हैं। 'इयारु इंगम', 'मृत्युंजय', 'प्रतिपद' और 'कबर आरू फूल' अपने क्षेत्रों की तो अद्वितीय उपलब्धि हैं। लेखक की दृष्टि समाजवादी है। अधिकांश उपन्यासों के कथानक युगीन घटनाओं पर आधारित हैं। कुछ चरित्रों के तो वास्तविक नाम भी उपन्यासों में प्रयुक्त हुए हैं और उनमें से कई अब भी जीवित हैं। भट्टाचार्य ने लिखा तो है सफलता पूर्वक कई विधाओं में, पर-हुए यशस्वी हैं। भट्टाचार्य ने लिखा तो है सफलता पूर्वक कई विधाओं में, पर-हुए यशस्वी हैं। भट्टाचार्य ने लिखा तो है सफलता पूर्वक कई विधाओं में, पर-हुए यशस्वी हैं।

जीवनक प्रतिफलित करिबलै तेओं, विप्लव सत्याग्रह प्रतीक
 अंकित करिछे।”

चंद्रप्रसाद शङ्कीया नगर जीवन को वर्णित करने वाले रोमांटिक आदर्श
 से प्रेरित उपन्यासकार हैं। इसके बावजूद कहना पड़ता है कि ‘मंदाक्रांता’
 (1950), ‘मेघमलार’ (1963), ‘उत्तरकाल’ और ‘जन्मांतर’ (1978) जैसे
 उपन्यासों में शङ्कीया ने “जीवन को फोटोग्राफी की भांति पेश किया है।
 शङ्कीया यदि वैयक्तिक और रोमांटिक है तो असमिया के ‘शक्तिधर गह
 शिल्पी’ होमेन बरगोहाई सर्वथा निर्वैक्तिक और वस्तुपरक। ये फ़ायड और

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युग से प्रभावित भी है। इन्होंने 'सुबाला' (1963), 'तांत्रिक' (1967), 'तिमिरतीर्थ', 'हालधीया चराये बाओ धान खाय' (1973), 'पितापुत्र' (1975) आदि उपन्यासों में मनोविश्लेषण को नवीन रूप दिया है। नगर जीवन की विदूरूपताओं, यौन आचार, आदि को अतिप्राकृतवादी दृष्टि से इन्होंने प्रस्तुत किया है। 'पिता पुत्र' जैसे परवर्ती उपन्यासों में पीढ़ियों के अंतर के कारण उत्पन्न स्थितियों पर इनका ध्यान गंभीरता से टिका है। उनकी पत्नी निरूपमा बरगोहाई भी सशक्त उपन्यास लेखिका है। 'सेइ नदी निरवधि' (1963), 'दिनर पाछत दिन', 'सामान्य झुअसामान्य', 'एजन बूढ़ा मानुह' (1966), 'हृदय एटा निर्जन द्वीप' (1978) आदि उपन्यासों में श्रीमती बरगोहाई नारी जीवन के अंदर में प्रवेश कर उसे नारी हृदय से ही देखने का प्रयास करती है। नारी समस्याओं को सूक्ष्मता से उपस्थित करना उनके उपन्यासों का वैशिष्ट्य है।

हिंदी में उग्र के उपन्यासों के लिए कभी "घासलेटी" शब्द प्रयुक्त हुआ था। ठीक वैसे ही पद बरकटकी के उपन्यासों को चार्ज बारो के उपन्यासों के समकक्ष रखते हुए हेम बरुवा उन्हें "आवारा साहित्य" से अभिहित करते हैं। वे नगर जीवन के उपन्यासकार हैं। उनके 'मनर दापोण' (1958), 'खबर बिचारि' (1959), 'विचार बाबे' (1961) आदि उपन्यासों में मध्यविकीय समाज की दुर्बलता, ऐन्द्रिक परवशता, यौनाचार के खुलेपन आदि का बड़ी साफगोई से गठन किया गया है। वे सदा उत्तेजक वातावरण बनाये रखते हैं। लक्ष्मीनंदन बरा ग्रामीण जीवन के सुलझे हुए कथाकार हैं। उनके उपन्यासों 'निशार पूरबी' (1962), 'गंगा चिलनीर पाखी' (1963), 'सेइ सुरे उतला', 'आकाश चमकी रय', 'वन्य व्याकुलता', 'बालुकात बिजुली', 'आकौ शराइ घाटत' (1981) अधिक प्रसिद्ध हैं। कैलाश शर्मा नगर जीवन को अंकित कर चलनेवाले कलाकार हैं। उनके दोनों प्रसिद्ध उपन्यास- 'विद्रोही नगर हातत' (1958) और 'अनामी नागिनी' (1963) नगा जीवन विषयक हैं। जनजातियों के जीवन को अंकित करने वाले अन्य उपन्यासों में बिष्णुप्रसाद राभा के 'सोनपाहि' और मिचिङकनेड एवं लुम्मेर दाइ कृत पाहारर शिले शिले' (1960), और 'पृथिवीर हांहि' (1963) आदि प्रसिद्ध हैं। पिछले दशक में सर्वाधिक सशक्त उपन्यास के रूप में उभरे देवेंद्र आचार्य। उनके तीनों उपन्यासों 'अन्य युग अन्य पुरुष' (1971), 'कालपुरुष' (1976), और 'जंगम' (1932) में नवीन युगबोध के अनछुये रूप उभारे। अल्पायु में ही उनकी अकाल मृत्यु से असमिया उपन्यास

की अपूरणीय क्षति हुई है। वर्णन कुशल नये ऐतिहासिक उपन्यासकारों में मेदिनी चौधरी भी अपनी भिन्न पहचान बनाये हैं। बण्डुका- बेहार' (1975) 'तात नदी आछिल' (1977) और फेरेंगा दाओ' (1983) उनके महत्वपूर्ण उपन्यास हैं। कुमार किशोर के उपन्यास- कपिली निरवे कांदे', 'शताब्दीर स्वप्न' 'एमुठि तरार झिलमिल' आदि दैनिक वासना के नग्न रूपों के अंकन के उदाहरण बन गए हैं। इन सबके अतिरिक्त नारायण बेजबरुवा के 'नतुन दिगंत' और 'प्रेरणार प्रतीक', नीरोद चौधुरी के 'देह देओल' (1968), 'कुंवरी आखर', 'कला हीरा', 'देवी' (1969), 'पानी' (1970), 'स्तब्धवृंदावन' 'जटायु' (1971); रोहिणी काकती के 'एक नक्षत्र निशारे' (1964), 'सूर्य रेखा' 'भनांश', 'भग्नदूत' (1978), शीलभद्र के 'मधुपुर', 'तरंगिरि', 'आंहतगुरि' 'आनामणिर घाट', 'अविच्छिन्न' आदि पशुपति भारद्वाज के 'उड़न्त मेघ छौं' (1960), 'रड रड तेज' (1967) आदि, धनकांत गौ के 'सोनर नाडल' और 'भूमिकन्या', महेंद्र बोरठाकुर के 'बगम पारा', 'उदासी संध्या', 'बेलिफूल' आदि प्रेमधर राजखोवा के भूलर समाधि', सुरेश चंद्र गोस्वामी के 'सात रड करोड', तिलक दास के 'शिल्प', गोविंद के 'कृषकर नाति', मथुरा डेका के 'देवगिरि', जमीरउद्दीन के 'अभीयात्री' 'चंदन' आदि, कामाख्या सभापंडित के 'जीवनर दाबि', कृष्णप्रसाद बरठाकुर के लुइतर इपारे सिपारे', लुइतर पारे धुनिया छेवाली 'जनी', देवेंद्र भट्टाचार्य के 'आधुनिका', त्रैलोक्य भट्टाचार्य के 'चराइदेओ', वीरेन बरकटकी के 'भरलीर पारे पारे', शुचित्रता रायचौधरी के 'मारली' उमा बरुवा के 'शियेननदीर दौ', कांचन बरुवा के असीमत यार हेराल सीमा, यतीन गोस्वामी के 'माटिर बुकुत' आदि उपन्यास भी किसी ना किसी कारण अधिक महत्वपूर्ण हो गए हैं।

लेखिकाओं में इधर सर्वाधिक लेखन का साक्ष्य उपस्थित किया मामनी रायशम गोस्वामी न। उनके 'चिनावर सोर्त', 'नीलकठी ब्रज' (1978), 'अहीरण' (1980), 'मामरे धरा तरोवाल' (1980), और 'दंताल हातीर ऊईये खोवा हाउदा' (1983), से उनकी स्वतंत्र पहचान बनी है।

असमिया उपन्यास के विकास का ऊपरी संक्षिप्त आलेख में कुछ नामों का छूट जाना असंभव नहीं है। लेखकों में नित्य नये नाम जुड़ते जा रहे हैं- "सौभाग्यक्रमे एचाम सुस्थ मानसिकता संपन्न युवा उपन्यासिकर उदय होवा देखा याय" यह प्रगति सूचक है। आज उपन्यासों के विषयवस्तु में वैविध्य,

और गाम्भीर्य आता जा रहा है। गद्य की विधा जहां बौद्धिक होती जा रही है, वहीं बिखराव भी बढ़ता जा रहा है। विषय चयन में एकांगिता भी दिखाई पड़ती है—कुछ आंचलिकता की आड़ लेकर और कुछ मौलिकता सिद्ध करने के नाम पर। पुनः इतनी अधिक संख्या में उपन्यास लिखें और छपे जा रहे हैं कि सचेत पाठक के लिए भी उसके साथ तालमेल बनाये रखना असंभव नहीं तो मुश्किल अवश्य हो रहा है। कुछ केवल छपास की होड़ का परिणाम है। यह स्थिति और अस्वाभाविक नहीं है। भविष्य में इसकी स्वस्थ प्रगति के प्रति डॉ. शर्मा आशान्वित हैं—“एने एटा स्तरत किछु चंचलता अहाटो स्वाभाविक,..... बारिषार नदीये सोतत पलस आनि पथार उर्वरा करे, किंतु लगते किछु किछु बिह मेटेकाओ उठाइआनि क्षति साधन करे। चकु राखिब लागिब याते बिह मेटकाइ पथार चानि नेपेलाय।”

असम में नदियों और पहाड़ों का आधिक्य है। मैदानी और पहाड़ी भागों में बीसों बनवासी गिरिवासी जातियां निवास करती हैं। उनके रहन-सहन, आचार-विचार और उच्चार में पर्याप्त अंतर है। आंचलिकता के नाम पर उन सबसे संबंध आज अधिसंख्य उपन्यास लिखे जा रहे हैं। नवकांत वरुवा के कपिली परिया साधु, शीलभद्र के ‘मधुपुर’ और आगमणिर घाट, बिष्णुराभा के ‘मिचिड कनेड’ और लुम्मेरदाई के ‘पृथिवीर हांहि’ तथा ‘कइनार मूल्य’ में आंचलिकता के तत्व अपनी समग्रता में प्राप्त होते हैं। इन सब में अरुणाचल की पृष्ठभूमि पर रचित श्री लुम्मेरदाई के उपन्यास अधिक महत्व के सिद्ध हुए हैं। असमिया के आंचलिक उपन्यासों में उन्हें विशिष्ट स्थान प्राप्त है।

आंचलिक उपन्यास और भी लिखे गये हैं। जिनके उत्तम पक्ष सराहनीय हैं, पर इस विधा के अनुचित प्रयोग और अनौचित्य का नजर अंदाज करने के दुष्परिणाम भी सामने आ रहे हैं। वैशिष्ट्य के संरक्षण के नाम पर कई अल्पसंख्यक जन जातियों द्वारा—अलगाववादी आंदोलन शुरू किए जा रहे हैं। आंचलिकता के नाम पर सर्वभौमिकता का गला टिपना क्या हितकर होगा?

निष्कर्ष :

अंत में आलेख को समाप्त करते हुए इतना ही संकेत करना आलम है कि आज उपन्यासकार और पाठक में दूरी बढ़ती जा रही है। यदि पाठक के साथ उपन्यासकार सामंजस्य स्थापित करने में चूक गया तो निश्चय ही उपन्यास आलमारियों की शोभा ही अधिक बढ़ावेंगे, पाठकों तक पहुंच नहीं पायेंगे।

फिर अभी तो असमिया उपन्यास को बालजाक और टालस्टाय को पाना बाकी ही है।

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राही मासूम रज़ा के 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में नारी की स्थिति

कृष्णा पंडित

शोध संक्षेप :

राही मासूम रज़ा बीसवीं सदी के यथार्थवादी साहित्यकार हैं। उन्होंने अपने उपन्यासों में समाज के विभिन्न समस्याओं का चित्रण किया है। वे समाज के हर समस्या के मूल कारणों को खोजने का प्रयास करते हैं जिसके चलते समाज में विभिन्न समस्याएं उत्पन्न होती हैं। उन्होंने अपने उपन्यासों में स्त्रियों के विभिन्न समस्याओं को उजागर किया है। समाज में स्त्रियों के साथ जिस तरह के अन्याय, शोषण, अत्याचार होते हैं उसका राही मासूम रज़ा ने अपने उपन्यासों में दर्शाया है। उनके उपन्यासों में स्त्रियों के अस्तित्व के प्रश्नों को उठाया गया है। उनके उपन्यासों में विधवा-स्त्रियों, शोषित एवं प्रताड़ित स्त्रियों आदि की स्थिति का चित्रण हुआ है। इस तरह स्त्रियों की समस्याओं को दृष्टि में रखते हुए राही मासूम रज़ा का उपन्यास महत्वपूर्ण साबित होता है।

विवेचन :

समाज में स्त्रियों की भूमिका बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण होती है। जिस तरह तार के बिना वीणा का महत्व नहीं रह जाता ठीक उसी प्रकार स्त्री के बिना समाज का कोई महत्व नहीं रह जाता है। प्राचीन काल में स्त्रियों का समाज में महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रहा है। प्राचीन काल से आधुनिक काल तक आते-आते स्त्रियों की स्थिति में काफी बदलाव हुए हैं। प्राचीन काल में स्त्रियों की स्थिति लगभग अच्छी थी। प्राचीन काल में समाज में स्त्रियों की स्थिति उन्नत दशा में थी, यहाँ

तक की ईश्वर को भी अर्धनारीश्वर कहा गया। वैदिक एवं उत्तरवैदिक काल में गार्गी, मैत्रेयी, घोषा, अपाला आदि जैसी विदुषि स्त्रियों का चित्रण मिलता है जिनका स्थान समाज में पुरुषों के समान रहा है।

मध्यकाल में आते-आते स्त्रियों की हालत दयनीय हो गई। मध्यकाल में तरह-तरह के कुप्रथाएं जैसे-पर्दा प्रथा, दहेज प्रथा, बाल-विवाह, सती प्रथा, विधवा आदि प्रचलित होती चली गई। नारी को तुच्छ समझा जाने लगा। जिसका वर्णन गोस्वामी तुलसीदास ने 'रामचरितमानस' में किया है -

“ढोल गवाँर शुद्र पशु नारी
सकल ताड़ना के अधिकारी”

इस तरह स्त्रियों का जीवन संघर्षमय बन गया। धर्म के नाम पर स्त्रियों का शोषण होने लगा। उन पर तरह तरह के कुप्रथाएं थोपी जाने लगी। सामन्ती युग में बाल-विवाह, विधवा विवाह, वेश्यावृत्ति जैसी समस्याएं पैदा होने लगी। स्त्रियों को सामाजिक अधिकारों से वंचित रखा जाने लगा। आधुनिक काल में अनेक सामाज सुधारकों ने स्त्रियों की स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए पूरा प्रयास किया। इसके बाद भी स्त्रियों की स्थिति में कोई खास सुधार नहीं हुआ। आधुनिक काल में हिन्दी साहित्य में अनेक साहित्यकारों ने अपने साहित्य के माध्यम से स्त्रियों की दुर्दशा को सुधारने के लिए प्रयास किया है। इस संदर्भ में हिन्दी साहित्य के राष्ट्रकवि रामधारी सिंह दिनकर ने लिखा है “अब वह समय नहीं रहा कि हम स्त्रियों को एक छोटी सी सीमा में बांधे रखें जब कभी हम समाज में उनकी गिरी हुई स्थिति पर विचार करते हैं तब स्त्रियों की इस अवस्था का कारण बहुत कुछ अशिक्षा ही दिखाई पड़ती है।”

राही मासूम रज़ा के उपन्यासों में स्त्री के विभिन्न रूपों का चित्रण हुआ है। उनके उपन्यासों में माँ, बहन, प्रेमिका, पत्नी, वेश्या आदि स्त्रियों के विभिन्न रूपों का चित्रण हुआ है। राही मासूम रज़ा के उपन्यासों में समाज के यथार्थ रूप का चित्रण हुआ है। उनके अधिकांश रचनाओं में मुस्लिम समाज का चित्रण हुआ है साथ ही हिन्दू समाज का भी समावेश हुआ है जो इस प्रकार है-

नारी की अस्तित्वहीनता

राही मासूम रज़ा ने अपने उपन्यासों में नारी के अस्तित्व का प्रश्न को उजागर किया है। हमारे समाज में जहाँ पुरुष को स्वतंत्रता का अधिकार दिया गया है वहीं दूसरी ओर स्त्रियों को सेविका के रूप में देखा गया है। पुरुष प्रधान

समाज में स्त्रियों को पुरुषों की प्रतिष्ठा में रहना होता है। मनुस्मृति के अनुसार स्त्रियों को बचपन, युवा एवं वृद्ध तीनों अवस्थाओं में पराधीन माना गया है जैसे पुरुषों के बिना उसका अपना कोई अस्तित्व ही नहीं है। उनकी पहचान समाज में सदैव बहु, बेटी, पत्नी और माँ के रूप होती है। स्त्रियों का अपना स्वतंत्र अस्तित्व ही नहीं है। राही मासूम रज़ा ने दर्शाया है कि मुस्लिम समाज में नारियों की स्थिति और भी ज्यादा दयनीय है। राही के उपन्यासों में अस्तित्वहीन नारी के दर्शन होते हैं।

भारतीय समाज में स्त्रियों के उपनाम का कोई महत्व नहीं माना जाता है। जन्म होने के साथ साथ पुत्री को उसके पिता का उपनाम मिल जाता है और शादी होने के बाद अपने पिता का उपनाम बदलकर उसके पति का उपनाम लगाना पड़ता है। भारतीय समाज में अधिकतर स्त्रियों को उसके पति के उपनाम से ही जाना जाता है। जिन स्त्रियों को उनके नाम के सिवाय दूसरे के नाम से जाना जाता हो उन स्त्रियों का समाज में कोई अस्तित्व ही नहीं रह जाता है। 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में राही मासूम रज़ा लिखते हैं कि - "बेनाम होना तो बहुओं की तकदीर है फर्क बस इतना हो जाता है कि वह अच्छे घरानों में 'बो' की जिल्लत के बच जाती हैं, वह या तो बहू कही जाती है या दुल्हन या दुलहिन। बहु अगर मालदार हुई तो उसे खिताब दिये जाते हैं- अज़ीज दुल्हन (चाहे ससुराल में उसे कोई मुँह न लगाता है) और नफीस दुल्हन (चाहे वह निहायत फूहड़ हो) वगैरह वगैरह....."।¹³ इस तरह यहाँ राही मासूम रज़ा ने दिखाया है कि चाहें अमीर हो या गरीब लेकिन नारी का अस्तित्व केवल पत्नी होना ही है उसके अपने नाम से कोई नहीं जानता है।

राही मासूम रज़ा ने इस बात की पुष्टि की है कि विवाह के समय बेटी से उसके पिता का उपनाम बदलकर पति का उपनाम लगा दिया जाता है जैसे स्त्री कोई उपभोग की वस्तु हो। स्त्रियों एवं बेटियों को हमारे देश में 'पराया-धन' कहा जाता है और घर में 'पराये घर की बेटी' कहकर नारी का उपहास उड़ाया जाता है। इस तरह नारी को पूरे जीवनकाल में पराया माना जाता है। इस बारे में राही मासूम रज़ा 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में लिखते हैं- "गरज कि हमारे समाज में या तो यह होता है कि मायकेवाले दहेज देकर बेटी से अपना दिया हुआ नाम छीन लेते हैं या फिर यह कहिये कि ससुरालवाले इसे गवारा नहीं करते कि उनके यहाँ किसी और घर का दिया हुआ नाम चले। बात जो हो, नतीजा यही निकलता है कि मसलन नौ साल या सत्रह साल तक रान्या खातून उर्फ रब्बन या

कनीज फातमा उर्फ कुदून रहने वाली लड़कियाँ एकदम से फलां-बो या बहु या दुल्हन या सुल्तान दुल्हन बनकर रह जाती हैं- भाभी, चाची, ममानी और कभी-कभी ब्याह होते ही दादी और नानी भी बन जाती हैं। मगर नहीं रह जाती तो रान्या खातून या कनीज फातमा। बेनाम रहना शायद जमींदारों और उनके हवालियों-मवालियों की बेटियों की तकदीर है; इसलिए ये बेनाम लड़कियाँ कंदूरी के फर्श पर बैठने और बिरादरी के दूसरे मामलों में शरीक होने या न होने की होकर रह जाती हैं।"¹⁴ इस तरह राही मासूम रज़ा ने अपने उपन्यासों में नारी के अस्तित्व के विविध आयामों को उद्घाटित किया है।

विधवा नारी की स्थिति :

हमारे भारतीय समाज में अनेक प्रकार के रीति-रिवाज और रूढ़ियों के वजह से समाज में विधवाओं की स्थिति मृत के समान माना जाता है। भारतीय समाज में हिन्दू धर्म को मानने वाले लोगों में यह परम्परा है कि अगर किसी महिला का पति का मृत्यु हो जाता है तो जीवन भर उस महिला को सफ़ेद साड़ी पहन कर जीवन गुजरना पड़ता है और यहाँ तक की उस महिला को दूसरी शादी करने पर भी रोक लगाया जाता है। विधवा महिला को श्रृंगार करने के अधिकारों से भी वंचित रखा जाता है। इस तरह विधवा का पूरा जीवन इस तरह की मान्यताओं एवं परम्पराओं को मानकर चलना पड़ता है जिससे उनकी स्थिति मर्मस्पर्शी हो जाता है।

समाज में हिन्दू या मुस्लिम चाहे कोई भी धर्म को मानने वाले लोग विधवा महिला की स्थिति को नियति या अभिशाप कहकर उसे समाज में समस्या मान लेते हैं। राही मासूम रज़ा के 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में विधवा महिला के मानसिक संघर्ष का मार्मिक एवं मनोवैज्ञानिक चित्रण हुआ है। 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में हुसैन बली मियाँ की बहन उम्मुल हबीबा का चित्रण करते हुए राही मासूम रज़ा लिखते हैं- "हुसैन अली मियाँ की बहन उम्मुल हबीबा तो कोई बीस साल से सफ़ेद कपड़े पहन रही थी। शादी के तीसरे दिन वह बेवा हो गयी थी। ... उम्मुद हबीबा शादी-ब्याह के मौकों पर अछूत हो जाती थी। दुल्हन के कपड़ों को वह छू नहीं सकती थी। ... फिर धीरे-धीरे वह बेवगी की आदि हो गयी और धीरे-धीरे उसे यह भी मालूम हो गया कि बेवा के फ़रायज़ क्या हैं। बस, एक बात के सिलसिले में उसका जेहन साफ़ नहीं था। जब आँ-हजरत ने पहली शादी एक बेवा से की तो क्या ये अशरफ आँ-हजरत से बड़े हैं कि बेवा

से शादी नहीं करते। लेकिन वह यह सवाल करती किससे?''⁵ भारतीय समाज में विधवा महिला को समाज के रीति-रिवाजों एवं परम्पराओं के बंधन में बंधकर रहना पड़ता है जिसका राही मासूम रज़ा ने अपने 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में दिखाया है। भारतीय समाज में विधवाओं की स्थिति दयनीय है। विधवाओं को समाज में समानता का अधिकार नहीं मिलता है, उसे समाज में कैदी के जैसे जीवन गुजारना पड़ता है। हमारे समाज में विधवा को अछूत माना जाता है यहाँ तक कि उसे किसी शुभ कार्य में भाग लेने से भी वंचित रखा जाता है। इस तरह राही मासूम रज़ा ने अपने उपन्यास में विधवा नारी की दुर्दशा का चित्रण किया है।

प्रताड़ित नारी की स्थिति

भारतीय समाज में महिलाओं की स्थिति बदतर रही है। समाज में चाहे परिवार हो, राजनीति हो, आर्थिक कारण हो या नारी की विभिन्न समस्या हो महिलाओं को प्रताड़ित किया जाता है। पुरुष सत्तात्मक समाज में महिलाओं का शोषण किया जाता है जिसका राही मासूम रज़ा ने अपनी रचना में जिक्र किया है। राही मासूम रज़ा अपनी रचनाओं में स्त्रियों के विभिन्न समस्याओं का चित्रण किया है। उनके उपन्यासों में प्रताड़ित स्त्रियों की व्यथा का मार्मिक चित्रण प्रस्तुत किया गया है।

भारतीय समाज में लड़की पैदा होने से उसको अभिशाप माना जाता है जिससे स्त्री-पुरुष अनुपात में लगातार गिरावट आ रही है। अगर किसी के घर लड़का जन्म लेता है तो हर्षोल्लास मनाया जाता है वहीं दूसरी ओर लड़की का जन्म होने से अधिकतर परिवारों में चिंता का विषय बन जाता है। अगर परिवार में किसी महिला के गर्भ से लड़की पैदा होता है तो उसके ससुराल वाले से उस महिला को प्रताड़ित किया जाता है और उस लड़की को अपने परिवार में उपेक्षा का शिकार बनना पड़ता है। ऐसे ही घटना राही मासूम रज़ा के 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में देखा जा सकता है, जब फुस्सू मियाँ के परिवार में एक से अधिक लड़की पैदा होने की वजह से उन लड़कियों को अपने ही परिवार में उपेक्षित होना पड़ता है और उन लड़कियों की माँ को भी पारिवारिक एवं सामाजिक स्तर पर प्रताड़ित होना पड़ता है। 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास का उद्धरण देखिए- "सकीना के यहाँ ताबड़तोड़ सात लड़कियाँ हो चुकी थी और फुस्सू मियाँ एक बेटे के अरमान में मरे जा रहे थे। जब बच्ची पैदा होती तो फुस्सू मन्नतें-वन्नतें मानकर और गंडे ताबीज में जकड़-जकड़कर फिर कोशिश में लग

जाते। यहाँ तक कि सकीना को मतली होने लगती और वह कोरे बरतन में खाने लगती। ये दिन फुस्सू बड़ी बेचैनी में गुजारते। यहाँ तक फिर लड़की हो जाती और फुस्सू का मुँह लटक जाता और रब्बन-बी हाथ उठा-उठाकर सकीना को कोसने लगती। 'लड़की-पे-लड़की पैदा किये जा रही हो- बाकी ई घर में रोकड़ ना धरा है।' सकीना इस कोसनों की पी जाती। तनहा होती तो रोती और अपने को बड़ुआ देती।''⁶ इस तरह लड़की पैदा होने से रब्बन-बी सकीना को इसका जिम्मेदार ठहराती है और उसको कोसने लगती है। इस प्रकार राही मासूम रज़ा के 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में प्रताड़ित महिलाओं की स्थिति को अनेक रूपों में देखा जा सकता है।

निष्कर्ष :

इस प्रकार राही मासूम रज़ा के 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में नारी की विभिन्न स्थिति का चित्रण हुआ है। भारतीय पुरुषसत्तात्मक समाज में स्त्रियों को लैंगिक शोषण, परम्परा और रूढ़ियों का सहारा लेकर सामाजिक अधिकार के साथ-साथ पारिवारिक अधिकारों से भी वंचित किया जाता है। आर्थिक रूप से भी नारी को सहयोग प्राप्त नहीं होता है। समाज में नारी का अनेक प्रकार से शोषण होता है जिसका जिक्र राही मासूम रज़ा ने 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में किया है। सामाजिक कुरीतियों के वजह से नारी को दुःख, कष्ट एवं पीड़ा झेलना पड़ता है और नारी को अनेक प्रकार से शोषण का शिकार बनना पड़ता है। इस तरह राही मासूम रज़ा के 'आधा गाँव' उपन्यास में नारी की अस्तित्वहीनता, विधवा नारी की स्थिति, प्रताड़ित नारी की स्थिति आदि का चित्रण हुआ है।

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सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक परिप्रेक्ष्य में दलित आत्मकथा 'जूठन' की प्रासंगिकता

सरोज प्रसाद

दलित आत्मकथाओं को भारतीय समाज एवं दलित जीवन का दस्तावेज माना जाता है। दलित आत्मकथाओं में दलित समाज की सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक व्यवस्था के अंतर्संबंधों की पड़ताल की जाती है। दलित आत्मकथाओं में जिन पहलुओं पर चर्चा की जाती है वो अधिकतर व्यक्तिगत न होकर समष्टिगत होती हैं। दलित आत्मकथाकार अपने जीवन में भोगे गए अनुभवों के यथार्थ धरातल पर दलित जीवन के पीड़ा, अन्याय, अत्याचार, गरीबी, भुखमरी, जातिवाद, अशिक्षा, अंधविश्वास आदि त्रासद स्थितियों के साथ-साथ दलित लोकजीवन के सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक पक्ष को भी उजागर करता है। दलित आत्मकथाकार सम्पूर्ण दलित समुदाय से जुड़े सरोकारों को अभिव्यक्ति प्रदान करता है। दलित आत्मकथाकारों की सामाजिक पृष्ठभूमि गैर दलित आत्मकथाकारों से भिन्न होती है इसीलिए इनके धार्मिक-सामाजिक विश्वास भी अलग-अलग हैं। सामाजिक स्तर की पड़ताल की जाए तो यह ज्ञात होता है कि दलित समुदाय श्रमजीवी समाज रहा है। इनमें दक्षता और कौशल की कोई कमी नहीं है। कार्यकुशलता पर ध्यान देने पर हमें ज्ञात होता है कि खेतीबाड़ी से लेकर चमड़े के जूते-चप्पल बनाना, बांस या लकड़ी का काम, लोहे का काम, मिट्टी के बर्तन बनाना, बाल काटना, कपड़ा बुनने एवं रंगने का कार्य, स्थापत्य, मूर्तिकला, चित्रकला आदि कार्यों में दलित समुदाय के लोग अग्रणी भूमिका पालन करते आए हैं।

दलित आत्मकथाओं के संदर्भ में प्रश्न खड़ा होता है कि जब हिंदी साहित्य में आत्मकथा लेखन की सुदृढ़ परंपरा मौजूद रही है ऐसे में 'दलित आत्मकथाओं' की क्या प्रासंगिकता है? हम देखते हैं कि हिंदी साहित्य के मुख्यधारा में दलित समाज के सरोकारों की उपेक्षा की गई है और दलित समाज को यथोचित स्थान नहीं दिया गया है। इसका बीज हमें भारतीय समाज के धार्मिक एवं जातिगत व्यवस्था में मिलता है। दलित समाज हाशिए का समाज रहा है। वर्णव्यवस्था के अंतर्गत सदियों तक यह समाज दासता के बेड़ियों से जकड़ा रहा है जिसके कारण दलित आत्मकथाकार समाज के सामाजिक एवं सांस्कृतिक पहलुओं को समझते हुए मुक्ति की राह तलाशते नजर आते हैं। वर्तमान परिदृश्य में तमाम आधुनिक परिवर्तनों के बावजूद भी अस्पृश्यता जैसे भेदभाव समाज में व्याप्त हैं। दलित लेखक अपनी आत्मकथाओं के जरिए अपने जीवन के त्रासदी को समाज के समक्ष प्रस्तुत करके समाज में प्रगतिशील बदलाव की चेष्टा करता है। जिससे वंचित समाज में एक नई प्रगतिशील चेतना का संचार होता है। दलित साहित्यकार शिक्षा को लेखक हथियार की तरह इस्तेमाल करते हैं। हरपाल सिंह 'अरुण' लिखते हैं, "साहित्य केवल लेखक और पाठक के बीच ही सेतु की तरह विद्यमान नहीं रहता, अपितु लेखक और पाठक किन सामाजिक स्थितियों, परिस्थितियों में रह रहे हैं, यह भी पहचान करता है। इतना ही नहीं, परिवेशगत यथार्थ को उकेरकर, साहित्य अपने समय की जटिलताओं को खोलता हुआ प्रस्तुत होता है। आर्थिक व्यवस्थाओं, सामाजिक संरचनाओं, सांस्कृतिक संस्थाओं और राजनीतिक केन्द्रों के पारस्परिक संबंधों के सन्धानों को झेलते हुए मानव समूहों की जिजीविषा, संघर्षशीलता, स्वप्न और आकांक्षाओं की उद्दामता का चित्रण करना और बेहतर भविष्य की ओर बढ़ने के रास्तों की खोज करना साहित्य के गुणों में स्वीकार किये जाते हैं।"¹

सामाजिक न्याय और समानता के पक्षधर दलित आत्मकथाकार अपने भोगे हुए जातिगत भेदभाव एवं यथार्थ अनुभवों को दस्तावेज के रूप में हमारे समक्ष प्रस्तुत करते हैं। आत्मकथाओं को लिखने के दौरान लेखक से सच्चे अनुभव और प्रमाणिक लेखन की अपेक्षा की जाती है। आत्मकथा लिखकर लेखक अपने सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा को भी दाव पर लगाता है किन्तु सच के अभिव्यक्ति के समक्ष संकोच बर्झमानी जान पड़ती है। ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि

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‘जूठन’ के भूमिका में लिखते हैं - “इन अनुभवों को लिखने में कई प्रकार के खतरे थे। एक लम्बी जट्टोजहद के बाद मैंने सिलसिलेवार लिखना शुरू किया। तमाम कष्टों, यातनाओं, उपेक्षाओं, प्रताड़नाओं को एक बार फिर जीना पड़ा। उस दौरान गहरी मानसिक यंत्रणाएं मैंने भोगीं। स्वयं को परत-दर-परत उधेड़ते हुए कई बार लगा- कितना दुखदायी है यह सब! कुछ लोगों को यह अविश्वसनीय और अतिरंजनापूर्ण लगता है।”²

ग्रामीण समाज में अकादमिक परिवेश भी जातिगत मानसिकता के गिरफ्त में रहता है, साथ ही जातियों के पिरामिडनुमा प्रकृति को भी यहाँ देख सकते हैं। दलित जातियों ने भी अपने अहं को शांत करने हेतु अपने से निम्न कुछ जातियों को चिन्हित कर लिया है। जिन दलित जातियों की आर्थिक स्थिति अन्य दलित जातियों से थोड़ी अच्छी है वह भी थोड़ी उच्चता के भाव प्रदर्शित करते देखे जा सकते हैं। ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि ‘जूठन’ में जिला स्तरीय प्रतियोगिता के लिए स्काउट दल के शहर जाने के लिए साफ वर्दी पहनने की घटना का वर्णन बहुत ही मार्मिकतापूर्ण ढंग से करते हैं। लेखक जब वर्दी लेकर इस्तरी करने अपने कक्षा में पढ़ने वाले धोबी के लड़के के घर जाता है। इसपर धोबी के लड़के का पिता अपने आजीविका खोने के वजह से लेखक के कपड़े पर इस्तरी करने से साफ इंकार कर देता है। ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि धोबी के कथन को संदर्भित करते हुए लिखते हैं - “हम चूहड़े-चमारों के कपड़ें नहीं धोते, न इस्तरी करते हैं। जो तेरे कपड़े पे इस्तरी कर देंगे तो तगा हमसे कपड़े न धुलवा ?गे, म्हारी तो रोजी-रोट्टी चली जा गी...”³ इससे स्पष्ट होता है कि दलित जातियों में भी सुविधा के हिसाब में विभाजन है, चाहे वह आजीविका के प्रश्न को लेकर हो अथवा ब्राह्मणवादी व्यवस्था से प्रभावित अपने स्वाभिमान को संतुष्ट करने की चाह रही हो।

समाज का वर्चस्ववादी वर्ग कमजोर तबकों को शिक्षा प्राप्त करने की राह में अड़ंगा लगाता है। डॉ आंबेडकर ने शिक्षा ग्रहण करने के लिए प्रेरित करते हुए कहा था ‘शिक्षा शेरनी का दूध है जो पीएगा, दहाड़ेगा।’ इसी वाक्य को चरितार्थ करते हुए ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि के पिता यह समझते थे कि ‘पढ़ने लिखने से जाति सुधरती है’ इसलिए वे निरंतर कोशिश करते रहें की वह अपने बेटे को बेहतरीन शिक्षा दिलाएं। ‘जूठन’ आत्मकथा में ओमप्रकाश

वाल्मीकि स्वयं भी शिक्षा के लिए संघर्ष करते हुए दिखाई देते हैं। आत्मकथा में ऐसे कई सवर्ण पात्रों की अभिव्यक्ति लेखक ने की है जो उन्हें शिक्षा से वंचित रखने का हर संभव प्रयास करते हैं। ऐसे प्रसंग ‘जूठन’ में भरे पड़े हैं। ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि शुरू में विद्यालय में प्रवेश देने से मना कर दिया जाता है। पिता के अथक प्रयासों से अंततः ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि को विद्यालय में प्रवेश मिल जाता है। तत्पश्चात ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि को नकारात्मक परिस्थितियों का सामना करना पड़ता है जो एक बालक के मनोबल को गिराने का काम करते हैं। उन्हें स्कूल के हैंडपंप से पानी पीने नहीं दिया जाता। विद्यालय का हेडमास्टर कलीराम छठी कक्षा में लेखक ने एक मास्टर जिनका नाम योगेन्द्र त्यागी हैं, कक्षा के दौरान उनके प्रश्न की तरफ लेखक हमारा ध्यान आकृष्ट करते हैं। मास्टर योगेन्द्र त्यागी लेखक से पूछते हैं - “सुअर की कितनी सांटे (सुअर की गोश्त की बोटी) खाई हैं? एक पाव तो खा ही लेते होंगे?”⁴ इस प्रश्न को सुनकर बाकि कक्षा के लड़के भी लेखक को तंग करते थे, वे कहते - “अबे चूहड़े के, सुअर खाता है!”⁵ “कितना भी पढ़ लियो, रहेगा तो चूहड़ा ही...”⁶ इस तरह गाँव में दलित छात्र-छात्राएँ नकारात्मक परिवेश में हीनताबोध का शिकार होकर बीच में ही पढ़ाई छोड़ देते हैं। ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि के परिवार में भी शिक्षा को लेकर अनुकूल वातावरण प्राप्त नहीं हो पाता। उन्हें एकबार उनके पारंपरिक जातिगत पेशा बैल की खाल उतारने एवं बेचने के लिए मजबूरन जाना पड़ता है। ऐसी घटनाओं के माध्यम से मन पर गहरा नकारात्मक प्रभाव पड़ता है। उपरोक्त उदाहरणों के माध्यम से देखते हैं की ग्रामीण परिवेश में दलितों के लिए शिक्षा के लिए सहयोग का वातावरण का अभाव साफ जाहिर होता है। यह जाति-व्यवस्था की सड़ांध को उजागर करता है।

‘जूठन’ आत्मकथा में ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि अपने हाईस्कूल पास करने का जिद्ध करते हैं। चमनलाल त्यागी नामक ब्राह्मण व्यक्ति लेखक को अच्छे अंकों से पास करने पर आत्मीय भाव से अपने घर भोजन करवाते हैं। लेखक के लिए यह आत्मीयता किसी पुरस्कार से कम न था। लेखक के खाने भावुक क्षण था। तत्कालीन समय में यह दुर्लभ घटना थी। लेखक के खाने के पश्चात झूठे बर्तन को उठाने पर चमनलाल त्यागी रोक देते हैं और

अपनी बेटी से कहते हैं - “भैया के बर्तन उठाकर ले जा।” लेखक के जीवन में ऐसे पल घने अंधकार में चिंगारी की रोशनी के समान होता हैं जो क्षणिक होते हुए भी रास्ता दिखा जाता हैं। अक्सर दलित आत्मकथा लेखकों पर यह आरोप लगता है कि इनकी आत्मकथाओं में नकारात्मक मानसिकता अथवा एकपक्षीय विचार को बढ़ावा दिया जाता है जो समाज के आपसी बंधुत्व के लिए बाधा उत्पन्न करते हैं। प्रस्तुत प्रसंग यह दर्शाता है कि समाज में समता, समानता और बंधुत्व को स्थापित करने का प्रयास दलित आत्मकथाकार अपने जीवन के सुखद अनुभवों के माध्यम से करते हैं।

ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि ‘जूठन’ आत्मकथा में दलितों के कारुणिक जीवन का मार्मिक एवं यथार्थ चित्रण किया है। बरला गाँव त्यागियों का गाँव है जो खुद को ब्राह्मण मानते हैं। ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि ने ‘चूहड़ा जाति’ यानि भंगी जाति की परिस्थितियों का चित्रण किया है। भंगी जाति के लोग साफ-सफाई, मैला ढोना, बेगार करना, मरे हुए जानवरों को फेंकना तथा खाल उतारना जैसे गंदे कामों को करने के लिए बाध्य थे बावजूद इसके इन्हें भर पेट भोजन नहीं मिल पाता था। बेगार भी बड़ी समस्या थी। तगाओं के घर में गाय, भैंस, और बैल आदि मवेशियों की देख-रेख करने के बदले, दो जानवर होने पर पांच सेर यानी ढाई किलो अनाज, आटे और भूसी को मिलाकर बनी बची-खुची रोटियां, जूठन आदि मिल जाता था। इसी आर्थिक बेबसी के कारण सवर्ण घरों में शादी व्याह के मौके पर उनके घर जाकर ‘जूठन’ में बचे जूठी पत्तलें टोकरी में भर कर खाने के लिए दलित महिलाएं लाती थी और दलित घरों में इसे चाव से खाया जाता था। एकबार लेखक की माँ सुखदेव सिंह त्यागी के बेटी की शादी में काम करने के बाद खाना मांगती है तो सुखदेव सिंह त्यागी ने जूठी पत्तलों से भरे टोकरे की तरफ इशारा करके सख्त लहजे में लेखक की माँ को धमक लगाता है, “सुखदेव सिंह ने, “टोकरा भर तो जूठन ले जा रही है... ऊपर से जाकतों के लिए खाणा माँग री है? अपनी औकात में रह चूहड़ी। उठा टोकरा दरवाजे से और चलती बन।”⁸ इसपर लेखक की माँ प्रतिकार में जूठन भरी टोकरा वहीं बिखेरते हुए कहती है, “इसे ठाके अपने घर में धर ले। कल तड़के बारातियों को नाश्ते में खिला देणा...” इसके बाद से जूठन का सिलसिला बंद हो जाता है।

‘जूठन’ आत्मकथा में लेखक ने दलित समाज में व्याप्त अंधविश्वासों को उजागर किया है। धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों के साथ मिलकर अंधविश्वास दलितों के चेतना को जकड़े हुए है जिससे वैज्ञानिक सोच और परिवर्तनकामी चेतना का संचार नहीं हो पाता। वाल्मीकि जी ने दलितों के अंधविश्वास का वर्णन करते हुए लिखते हैं, “बस्ती में जब भी कोई बीमार पड़ जाता, दवा-दारू करने के बजाय भूत-प्रेत की छाया से छुटकारा पाने के कार्य, झाड़ू-फूँक, टोने-टोटके, ताबीज, गंडे, भभूत आदि की आजमाइश शुरू हो जाती थी। ये तमाम काम रात में किए जाते थे। जब बीमारी लम्बी खिंच जाती थी या गम्भीर रूप ले लेती तो किसी भगत को बुलाकर ‘पुच्छा’ की जाती थी। ऐसे समय में भगत के साथ एक ढोलक बजानेवाला, दो-तीन गानेवाले होते थे। जो ढोलक की खास ताल पर एक ही सुर में गाना गाते थे। गाने में उस देवता का आह्वान होता था, जिसे भगत के शरीर में प्रविष्ट होकर झूमना है। लय-ताल-सुर से ऐसा माहौल बना दिया जाता था कि अच्छा-खासा व्यक्ति झूमने लगे। गाने में अशिष्ट शब्दों की भरमार होती थी, जो देवता के प्रति आत्मीयता दिखाने की अभिव्यक्ति थी।”⁹

ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि ‘जूठन’ आत्मकथा में बरला गाँव के सामाजिक दशा का यथार्थ चित्रण गहराई से करते हैं। ‘जूठन’ आत्मकथा में गाँव के परिवेश में जाति किस तरह से एक महत्वपूर्ण घटक के तौर पर अपनी मौजूदगी दर्ज करवाता है यह प्रमाणिक दस्तावेज के रूप में उभर कर सामने आता है। लेखक आत्मकथा में बरला गाँव के दूषित परिवेश के साथ ही गाँव की संरचना का बहुत ही सूक्ष्म ढंग से विश्लेषण किया है। ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि को यह प्रश्न मन में कचोटता है की यह गंदगी और जहालत भरी जिंदगी दलितों के हिस्से में ही क्यों आती है? महिलाओं की घूँघट काढ़े खुले स्थान में सौच से निवृत्त होने की मजबूरी और दुर्गन्ध भरे वातावरण में लेखक अपने बचपन के विद्वरूपताओं को इसप्रकार शब्दबद्ध करते हैं, “चारों तरफ गन्दगी भरी होती थी। ऐसी दुर्गन्ध कि मिनट भर में साँस घुट जाए। तंग गलियों में घूमते सूअर, नंग-धड़ंग बच्चे, कुत्ते, रोजमर्रा के झगड़े-बस, यह था वह वातावरण जिसमें बचपन बीता। इस माहौल में यदि वर्ण-व्यवस्था को आदर्श-व्यवस्था कहनेवालों को दो चार दिन रहना पड़ जाए तो उनकी राय बदल जाएगी।”¹⁰ यहाँ दलित समाज को जाति आधारित शोषण के मूल वर्ण पर भी लेखक ने प्रहार किया है।

ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि का जन्म स्वतंत्र भारत में हुआ था जहाँ भारतीय संविधान अपने सभी नागरिकों को एक समान शिक्षा और रोजगार का अधिकार का अवसर प्रदान करता है किन्तु लेखक दलित समुदाय के अंतर्गत 'भंगी' जाति में जन्म ग्रहण करने के कारण सवर्ण शिक्षकों के वर्णवादी संकीर्ण मानसिकता का बार बार शिकार होते हैं। शिक्षक उनपर अनेक बार जातिसूचक गालियों से अपमानित अनुभव करवाने का कोई मौका नहीं छोड़ते। शिक्षक के कन्धों पर भेदभाव रहित समाज निर्माण की जिम्मेदारी होती है लेकिन दलित समाज के लिए विडम्बना है कि दलित छात्रों के साथ अमानवीय व्यवहार उनके मानसिक मनोबल को धराशायी कर देता है। शिक्षाजगत में छात्रों के साथ जातिपरक दुर्व्यवहार बहुत ही गंभीर सांस्कृतिक अपराध है। लेखक हेडमास्टर कलीराम द्वारा उन्हें स्कूल में झाड़ू लगवाने की घटना और पिताजी के हेडमास्टर के समक्ष इस कृत्य पर आपत्ति दर्ज करने पर हेडमास्टर कलीराम के कथन का जिक्र करते हुए लिखते हैं, "क्या करोगे स्कूल भेजके" या "कौवा बी कबी हंस बन सके", "तुम अनपढ़ गँवार लोग क्या जाणो, विद्या ऐसे हासिल ना होती।", "अरे! चूहड़े के जाकत कू झाड़ू लगाने कू कह दिया तो कोण-सा जुल्म हो गया", "या फिर झाड़ू ही तो लगवाई है, द्रोणाचार्य की तरियों गुरु-दक्षिणा में अँगूठा तो नहीं माँगा" आदि-आदि।" लेखक के जीवनानुभवों में सवर्ण शिक्षकों का स्थान सर्वथा जातिवादी न होकर स्नेहशील एवं प्रेरणादायक योगदान भी रहा है। लेखक उनके प्रति कृतज्ञता प्रकट करते हुए प्रशंसा करते हुए लिखते हैं, "बाबूराम त्यागी बरला के रहनेवाले थे। एक अच्छे शिक्षक थे। उनका स्नेह और मार्गदर्शन मुझे कई बार मिला। अक्सर वाद-विवाद में हिस्सा लेने के लिए प्रेरित करते थे।...वे हमें हिंदी पढ़ाते थे। मेरी भाषा में उन्होंने कई सुधार किये थे उन दिनों। भाषा में जो रूचि विकसित हुई, उसका श्रेय बाबुराम जी को जाता है। वे मेरे प्रेरणास्रोत रहे थे उन दिनों।" 12

सामाजिक- सांस्कृतिक मूल्यों का विश्लेषण एक कठिन कार्य रहा है। समाज में स्थापित सामाजिक एवं सांस्कृतिक मूल्य जड़ होकर समाज के लिए मूल्यबोध का हिस्सा बन जाते हैं। किन्तु जब यही सांस्कृतिक मूल्य रूढ़ि बनकर एकपक्षीय रूप धारण कर लेते हैं तब यह मानव जाति के लिए अहितकर साबित होता है। ऐसे में हाशिए का समाज अपने स्वाभिमान एवं अस्तित्व के

रक्षा हेतु अपने वैचारिकी के माध्यम से शोषण का प्रतिकार करता है जो हमें दलित आत्मकथाओं में परिलक्षित होता है। भारतीय समाज में व्याप्त चातुर्वर्ण्य व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत प्रथम तीन वर्णों को संपूर्ण सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक एवं आर्थिक सुविधाओं का लाभ दिया गया वहीं तथाकथित निम्न वर्ण के लोगों को सुविधाओं और विकास के अवसर से वंचित कर दिया गया। डॉ. अंबेडकर मानते हैं कि यह व्यवस्था हाशिए के समाज के साथ-साथ राष्ट्र निर्माण के आधार को भी कमजोर करती है। डॉ. अंबेडकर के अनुसार, "जाति-व्यवस्था के नींव को भी कमजोर करती है। आप कोई निर्माण नहीं कर सकते, आप राष्ट्र का निर्माण नहीं कर सकते, नैतिकता का निर्माण नहीं कर सकते। जाति-व्यवस्था के नींव पर आप जो भी निर्माण करेंगे, वह चटक जायेगा और कभी भी पूरा नहीं होगा।" 13 ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि आत्मकथा में सन 1980 के आसपास की एक घटना का जिक्र करते हैं जब वे और उनकी पत्नी चंदा राजस्थान से दिल्ली चन्द्रपुर होकर महाराष्ट्र जयपुर पिक सिटी एक्सप्रेस से लौट रहे थे। उनके पास की सीट पर एक सम्भ्रान्त परिवार के पति-पत्नी और दो छोटे बच्चे बैठे थे, वे जयपुर से दिल्ली जा रहे थे और लेखक को बातचीत में पता चला कि पति किसी मंत्रालय में अधिकारी थे। लेखक की पत्नी और अधिकारी की पत्नी में सहज और सुखद वातावरण में राजस्थान की खूबसूरती पर चर्चा चल रही होती है कि अचानक अधिकारी की पत्नी लेखक की पत्नी से पूछती है, "बहन जी आप लोग बंगाली हैं?" इसपर लेखक की पत्नी का जवाब होता है, "जी नहीं, उत्तर प्रदेश के हैं।" अधिकारी की पत्नी पुनः दूसरा सवाल पूछती है, "कौन जात हो?" यह प्रश्न सुनते ही लेखक की पत्नी का चेहरा फीका पड़ जाता है लेखक के तरफ देखने लगती है। अधिकारी की पत्नी के सवाल जवाब स्वयं लेखक देते हैं, "भंगी।" यह शब्द सुनते ही माहौल गंभीर और बोझिल हो जाता है मानो जैसे अचानक स्वादिष्ट व्यंजन में मक्खी गिर गई। लेखक प्रश्न करता है कि, "इस घृणा- द्वेष के पीछे कौन से ऐतिहासिक कारण हैं?" लेखक अपने पीड़ा को इसप्रकार संदर्भित करता है, "भारतीय समाज में 'जाति' एक महत्वपूर्ण घटक है। 'जाति' पैदा होते ही व्यक्ति की नियति तय कर देती है। पैदा होना व्यक्ति के अधिकार में नहीं होता। यदि होता तो मैं भंगी के घर पैदा क्यों होता? जो स्वयं को इस देश की महान सांस्कृतिक धरोहर के तथाकथित अलमबरदार कहते हैं,

क्या वे अपनी मर्जी से उन घरों में पैदा हुए हैं? हाँ, इसे जस्टीफाई करने के लिए अनेक धर्मशास्त्रों का सहारा वे जरूर लेते हैं। वे धर्मशास्त्र जो समता, स्वतंत्रता की हिमायत नहीं करते, बल्कि सामन्ती प्रवृत्तियों को स्थापित करते हैं।¹⁴ लेखक भारतीय इतिहास की आक्रमण, गुलामियों और हार से सबक देते हुए लिखते हैं, “भारतीय समाज को सबक लेने की इतिहास में भारतीय पराजय का मूल कारण अज्ञानत, संकीर्णता, कूपमंडूकता, धार्मिक जड़ता, पुरोहितवाद के चंगुल में फंसा, कर्मकाण्ड में उलझा समाज, टुकड़ों में बटकर कभी यूनानियों से हारा, कभी शकों से, कभी हूणों से, कभी अफगानों से, कभी मुगलों, फ्रांसीसीयों और अंग्रेजों से हारा, फिर भी अपनी वीरता और महानता के नाम पर कमजोर और असहायों को पिटते रहे।”¹⁵ यहाँ लेखक समता, समानता एवं बंधुत्व के आंबेडकरवादी चेतना से लैस दिखाई पड़ता है।

ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि अपने आत्मकथा के दूसरे भाग में देहरादून की आर्डिनेंस फैक्ट्री में नियुक्ति के दौरान अपनी पहचान को लेकर आई समस्या का जिक्र किया है। कार्यक्षेत्र में दलित जीवन के यथार्थ का चित्रण इस प्रसंग के माध्यम से देख सकते हैं। शिक्षित सवर्ण समाज भी तथाकथित उच्चताबोध से मुक्त नहीं हो पाता है। लेखक एक सम्मानित पद पर विशिष्ट योग्यता के साथ नियुक्त हुए थे यद्यपि लोग इसे आरक्षण द्वारा मिलनेवाली सुविधा के साथ जोड़कर देख रहे थे। लेखक के ‘वाल्मीकि’ उपनाम के वजह से उन्हें किराए के मकान की समस्या हुई। महीने भर इधर-उधर भटकने के बाद कानपुर में डॉ. सिंघवी का मकान किराए पर मिली। वहाँ दूसरी तरफ उपनाम के वजह से ही योग्यता के संदेह को लेकर विभाग के प्रभारी जेठी जी प्रश्न करते हैं, “यहाँ डिजाइनिंग का काम होता है, आप कर पाएँगे?” लेखक के लिए नया अनुभव होता है। लेखक इनकी मंशा को संदर्भित करते हुए लिखते हैं, “वाल्मीकि... वह भी डिजाइनर...?” उनकी कल्पना से बाहर था, एक वाल्मीकि का इस पद पर आना।¹⁶

ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि अपने आत्मकथा में असंगठित मजदूरों से जुड़ी एक मार्मिक हादसे का जिक्र करते हैं जिससे वे काफी विचलित हुए थे। 25 दिसम्बर, 1985 की रात दो-ढाई बजे तेज तूफान और मूसलाधार बारिश हुई थी। इस रात काम से थके-हारे मजदूर अपने झोंपड़ीयों में सोये हुए थे। इसी

दौरान पहाड़ी की ढलान से आनेवाला बरसात का पानी हजारों टन मिट्टी लिए झोंपड़ीयों पर चढ़ गया। इस हादसे में ग्यारह मजदूर मर चुके थे, बाकी बुरी तरह घायल थे। ग्यारह मजदूरों के लाशों को सड़क पर लिटा दिया गया। इतने बड़े हादसे के बावजूद ण निर्माण कम्पनी का जिम्मेदार व्यक्ति था, न ठेकेदार, पुलिस, ग्रामप्रधान, आर्डिनेंस फैक्ट्री में कार्यरत मजदूर संगठनों के नेताओं सभी का रवैया नकारात्मक था। इस हादसे का कारण दो मंजिला छात्रावास के निर्माण के दौरान इंजीनियर की लापरवाही थी जिसे प्राकृतिक आपदा का रूप देकर पल्ला झाड़ लिया गया। इस घटना के ऊपर ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि ने ‘मौत का तांडव’ शीर्षक से एक कविता लिखी थी। उसकी कुछ पंक्तियाँ इस प्रकार हैं - “मौन खड़ा पर्वत/ देख रहा था चुपचाप/ मौत का तांडव/ जो मिट्टी का सैलाब बन/ टूट पड़ा गहरी नींद में सोये मजदूरों पर/ घुट-घुट कर/जिस्म ठंडे पड़ गए/ सर्द रात सन्नाटों में”¹⁷

निष्कर्षतः कहा जा सकता है कि ओमप्रकाश वाल्मीकि ने ‘जूठन’ आत्मकथा के माध्यम से भारतीय समाज के कई अनछुए पहलुओं को उजागर करते हुए दलित जीवन के अंतर्विरोध, अस्पृश्यता, भयंकर गरीबी, अपमान, कटु-अनुभव और यथार्थ को हमारे समक्ष रखा है। ‘जूठन’ आत्मकथा हाशिए के समाज को हीनता बोध से उबार कर धार्मिक पाखण्ड और ब्राह्मणवादी विचारधारा के शोषणकारी प्रवृत्ति की पहचान करवाती है। यह आत्मकथा भारतीय सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक भेदभाव पर प्रहार करता सामाजिक प्रतिरोध का दस्तावेज है।

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