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Editor -
Bishwajit Bhattacharjee



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শেষের কবিতা : পুনঃপাঠের প্রস্তাবনা

মধুমিতা সেনগুপ্ত

গবেষক, বাংলা বিভাগ, আসাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, শিলচর

Abstract

Most of the people say, Tagore's 'Shesher Kabita' is the story of Amit Roy. The question arise, who is this Amit Roy? Is Rabindranath Tagore's 'Shesher Kabita' really a just story of Amit Roy? We know, this Amit Roy and his revolutionary theory of devine love is note of admiration till now. There has been a lot of debate regarding its acceptability of new theory of love. As a male character, so far priority was given to Amit Roy, whether the similar importance was given to female characters? The present paper attempts to explore the answer of these questions and review the novel with analyzing various characters.

‘শেষের কবিতা’ উপন্যাস লিখতে গিয়ে ‘কালের যাত্রার ধ্বনি শুনতে পেয়েছিলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ। সফল সাহিত্যিক যাঁরা, তাঁরাই তো এই ধ্বনি শুনতে পান। তবুও আমরা জানি, ‘চোখের বালি’, ‘গোরা’, ‘যোগাযোগ’ বা ‘চতুরঙ্গ’র মত উপন্যাসের স্রষ্টাকেও তাঁর সমসাময়িক বা ঈষৎ পরবর্তীকালে সমালোচনার তির্যক বাক্য শুনতে হয়েছিল। একথাও আমাদের অজানা নয় যে, মূলতঃ কল্লোল-কালিকলমীয় লেখকেরাই এই অভিযোগকে আন্দোলিত করেছিলেন। ফলে শুরু

হয়েছিল বিদ্রোহ। স্ববির সমাজের বিরুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহ নয়, কোন বাধা বন্ধনের বিরুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহ নয়, বিদ্রোহটা ছিল রবীন্দ্রনাথেরই বিরুদ্ধে এককভাবে।

আধুনিক সাহিত্যের ফ্যাশন দৌরাতে রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্য যে ক্রমে একঘরে হতে চলেছে – তা অনেক আগেই অনুভব করতে পেরেছিলেন স্বয়ং রবীন্দ্রনাথ। তাই কোন সংঘর্ষে না গিয়ে গভীর অভিজ্ঞতায় কবিগুরু উচ্চারণ করেন-

“সব লেখা লুপ্ত হয়, বারম্বার লিখিবার তরে
নূতন কালের বর্ণে। জীর্ণ তোর অক্ষরে অক্ষরে
কেন পট রেখেছিস পূর্ণ করি। হয়েছে সময়

নবীনের তুলিকারে পথ ছেড়ে দিতে হবে।
হোক লয় সমাপ্তির রেখাদুর্গ। নবলেখা আসি
দর্পভরে তার ভস্মস্তূপরাশি বিদীর্ণ করিয়া
দূরান্তরে উন্মুক্ত করুক পথ, স্বাবরের সীমা
করি জয়, নবীনের রথ যাত্রা লাগি।”^১

এই নবীনের রথযাত্রার গান
করতেই কবির শেষ প্রচেষ্টা ‘শেষের
কবিতা’। রচনার দিক দিয়ে
রবীন্দ্রনাথের শেষ তিনটি খণ্ডোপন্যাস
বাদ দিলে ‘শেষের কবিতা’ (১৯২৯)-ই
শেষ উপন্যাস। নামটিও তাই এমন
ইঙ্গিতপূর্ণ।

উপন্যাসে কবিত্বের ছড়াছড়ি
নিয়োও অনেকে প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন। আমার
মনে হয় নবলেখার দর্পভরে গৎবাঁধা
লেখালেখি থেকে যে লেখকেরা বেরিয়ে
আসতে রবীন্দ্রনাথের বিরুদ্ধাচরণ
করেছিলেন, কাব্যময় এই উপন্যাসটি
তাদেরই বিরুদ্ধে কবির এক নীরব
প্রতিবাদ। কবি রবীন্দ্রনাথ কবিতার
উপরেই দিয়েছেন তার শেষ কথা বলার
গুরুদায়িত্ব। হয়তো তাতে উপন্যাসের
সংজ্ঞার যে নির্দিষ্ট মাপকাঠি তা কিছুটা
বঁকেচুরে গেছে সত্য। কিন্তু এটাও তো
অস্বীকারের উপায় নেই যে, ‘ভাঙন
পেছনে থাক, নির্মাণ সম্মুখে; পুরনোকে
গুড়িয়ে দিয়েই বিনির্মিত হয় নতুন
সত্য’।

আকারের দিক দিয়ে খুব ছোট
‘শেষের কবিতা’ উপন্যাস। মাত্র
সতেরোটি পরিচ্ছেদে তার পরিসমাপ্তি।
এক্ষেত্রে একটা ব্যাপার আমার খুব
গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মনে হয়, জানিনা পাঠকেরা
আমার সহমত হবেন কিনা। টাইপ এর

দিক থেকে ‘শেষের কবিতা’ উপন্যাস
কবিতারই বৈশিষ্ট্য বহন করছে। কবিতা
যেমন কবির কম শব্দ খরচে ব্যঞ্জনাময়
উপলব্ধি প্রদান। ‘শেষের কবিতা’
উপন্যাসও আসলে তাই নয় কি? বক্তব্য
পেশ কিংবা চরিত্রের দ্বন্দ্ব সব ব্যাপারেই
ঔপন্যাসিক বিশদ বিশ্লেষণের পথ
এড়িয়ে গেছেন। নিপুণ তুলির টানে
বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন চরিত্রের গতিপ্রকৃতি,
আর বক্তব্যের শেষ ভার তুলে
দিয়েছেন, ছন্দোবদ্ধ ভাষাভঙ্গির উপর।

উপন্যাসটি শুরু হয়েছে,
অমিতের গল্প দিয়ে। চমৎকৃত হই যখন
নিজের সৃষ্ট চরিত্র এই অমিতের মুখ
দিয়ে লেখক নিজেই সমাপ্তি ঘোষণা
করেন নিজের কবি জীবনের। এদিক
থেকে উপন্যাসটিতে নতুনত্ব আছে।
উপন্যাস পড়তে শুরু করে স্বয়ং
ঔপন্যাসিকের এমন মরণ-মহোৎসবে
আমরা রীতিমত হকচকিয়ে যাই। কিন্তু
যে, ‘শেষের কবিতা’ তার মাত্র
সতেরোটি পরিচ্ছেদ নিয়ে আমাদের
কাছে এত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হয়ে উঠে, তার
কারণ লুকিয়ে আছে অন্যত্র।
সমালোচনাগ্রন্থের পাতা খুললে চোখে
পড়ে, ‘শেষের কবিতা’ যে আলাদা
করে খুব বেশি আলোচিত হয়েছে তা-
নয়। তবুও ‘শেষের কবিতা’ আলোচিত
হয়। হয় কলেজ পড়ুয়াদের ক্লাসের
ফাঁকে ফাঁকে, কলেজ ক্যান্টিনে,
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের গাছতলায়। কখনো বা
বুদ্ধিজীবীদের সাক্ষ্য আড্ডাতেও তা
আলোচনার বিষয় হয়ে উঠে।

প্রশ্ন উঠতে পারে কেন? ‘শেষের কবিতা’ আস্ত একটা প্রেমের উপন্যাস বলেই কি? বাংলা সাহিত্যে প্রেমের উপন্যাসের তো ছড়াছড়ি। তবে ‘শেষের কবিতা’-ই কেন এত জনপ্রিয়, পাঠকের বিশেষত তরুণ পাঠকের কাছে। আসলে উপন্যাসটিতে লেখক প্রেমবিষয়ক এমন অনেকেরা নতুন এক তত্ত্ব উপস্থাপিত করেছেন-যা এতদিনের প্রচলিত ধ্যানধারণা বিশ্বাস থেকে একঝটকায় সরিয়ে এনে এক হঠাৎ আলোর মুখোমুখি দাঁড় করিয়ে দেয় আমাদের। প্রথমে বিশ্বাস করতে কষ্ট হয়। তারপর উঠে হাজারো তর্ক-বিতর্ক। তত্ত্বের বাস্তবতা-অবাস্তবতা নিয়ে নানা দ্বন্দ্ব। সরাসরি সেই দ্বন্দ্বের খুব কাছাকাছি না গিয়ে বরং সেই চরিত্রগুলোর কাছাকাছি যাই, যে চরিত্রগুলোর সুখদুঃখ, ব্যাথা-বেদনার আঙ্গিকে নরনারীর প্রেমের সেই সূক্ষ্মতত্ত্বের উৎসারণ।

‘শেষের কবিতা’ মূলতঃ চারটি চরিত্র অমিত-লাবণ্য-কেটি-শোভানলাল এর প্রেমের গল্প। কেউ কেউ বলেছেন- ‘শেষের কবিতা’ অমিত লাবণ্যের প্রেমের গল্প। কেউ আবার বলেছেন- ‘শেষের কবিতা’ অমিত রায়ের গল্প। সবগুলো মতামতকে এক জায়গায় জড়ো করে উপন্যাসটি যদি একবার নতুন করে পড়ি, তবে মনে হয় যেন চরিত্র যেন চরিত্র হিসেবে অমিত রায় একটু বেশি প্রাধান্য পেয়েছে। প্রাধান্য পেয়েছে তার অভিনবত্বে। অস্বীকার

করার উপায় নেই যে, মহেন্দ্র-বিহারী-শচীশ-শ্রীবিলাস-গোরা-বিনয়-কিংবা মধুসূদনের পাশাপাশি অমিত রায় রবীন্দ্রনাথের এক ব্যতিক্রমী সৃষ্টি।

কিন্তু একটা ব্যাপার অনেকেরই চোখ এড়িয়ে যায় যে, ‘শেষের কবিতা’ উপন্যাসে অমিত নামের একটিমাত্র পুরুষ চরিত্রকে কেন্দ্র করে উপন্যাসের সমস্ত নারীচরিত্রগুলি আবর্তিত হয়েছে। কেউ তাকে মাতৃস্নেহে ধন্য করেছে, কেউ প্রেমম্পদের স্থান দিয়েছে, কেউ স্বামীরূপে বরণ করেছে, কেউ বা তার বিয়ের জন্য উদ্বিগ্ন হয়েছে, কেউ আঘাত করেছে, তার স্বপ্নকে ‘আইডিয়াল-ফানুস’ বলে উড়িয়ে দিয়েছে। তবুও প্রতিটি নারীচরিত্রের একমাত্র লক্ষবিন্দু হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে অমিত রায়। কিন্তু কোথাও যেন আমার মনে হয়, উপন্যাসে প্রতিটি নারীচরিত্রের দ্বারা নিয়ন্ত্রিত হয়েছে লেখকের অতিযত্নে লালিত অমিত চরিত্র। জানিনা, এ ভাবনায় আজকের পাঠকের বিশ্বাসী হবেন কি না?

অমিত ভাবে, সে নিজে যেমন স্বতন্ত্র প্রকৃতির, তার প্রণয়ের পাত্রীটিও তেমন অদ্বিতীয়া হয়। চাই; যাতে ড্রয়িং রুমে আর পাঁচজনের মাঝখানে তার অস্তিত্ব হারিয়ে না যায়। অমিতের কল্পনায় নারীর অবয়ব কল্পিত হয় স্বর্গদেবের আকল্পে। ‘মন্দিরপর্বতের নাড়া খাওয়া ফেনিয়ে ওঠা সমুদ্র থেকে’ যে দেবীর আবির্ভাব।

আর বাস্তব সমাজের নারী? যুগযুগ ধরে যে নারীরা পুরুষতন্ত্রের বানিয়ে তোলা গোলকধাঁধায় পথভ্রান্ত হচ্ছে সেই নারীদের কোন চোখে দেখছে রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রিয়পাত্র অমিত রায়? আমাদের ভুলে গেলে চলে না, মেয়েদের উপরে পুরুষদের আধিপত্য নিয়ে কোন এক সমাজহিতৈষীর সঙ্গে কথোপকথনে অমিত মুখ থেকে সিগারেট নামিয়ে ফস্ করে বলে---

“পুরুষ আধিপত্য ছেড়ে দিলেই মেয়ে আধিপত্য শুরু করবে। দুর্বলের আধিপত্য অতি ভয়ংকর।” সে আরো বলে- “যে পক্ষের দখলে শিকল আছে সে শিকল দিয়েই পাখিকে বাঁধে, অর্থাৎ জোর দিয়ে। শিকল নেই যার সে বাঁধে আফিম খাইয়ে অর্থাৎ মায়া দিয়ে, শিকলওয়ালা বাঁধে বটে, কিন্তু ভোলায় না; আফিমওয়ালী বাঁধেও বটে, ভোলায়ও। মেয়েদের কৌটো আফিমের ভরা, প্রকৃতি শয়তানী তার জোগান দেয়।” খুব স্বাভাবিকভাবেই অমিত চরিত্রের কাছে তা আমাদের প্রত্যাশিত ছিল না।

শানিয়ে বলা কথার তুরূপ সাজিয়ে অমিত সভায় বড় বড় বক্তৃতা দেয়, চিন্তাধারায় স্বাতন্ত্র্যে মেয়েদেরকে মুগ্ধ করে। কিন্তু তার স্বাতন্ত্র্য যে কতটা অন্তঃসারশূণ্য মেয়েদের তা বুঝতে বাকী থাকে না। বোন সিসির কাছ থেকেই আসে প্রত্যাঘাত “কিন্তু তোমার নিজের মত বলে কোন পদার্থই নেই; যখন যেটা রেশ ভালো শোনায় সেইটাই তুমি

বলে বস।” উত্তরে অমিত বলে-“আমার মনটা আয়না, নিজের বাঁধা মতগুলো দিয়েই চিরদিনের মতো যদি তাকে আগাগোড়া লেপে রেখে দিতুম তা হলে তার উপরে প্রত্যেক চলতি মুহূর্তের প্রতিবিশ্ব পড়ত না।” তাই সমালোচকদের বক্তব্য অনুযায়ী অমিত চরিত্রের স্বাতন্ত্র্য আসলে কোথায় সে প্রশ্নের মীমাংসা পাই না।

কলকাতা থেকে ছুটি কাটাতে এসে শিলং পাহাড়ে কাকতালীয়ভাবে লাভণ্যের মুখোমুখি হয় অমিত। শিলং পাহাড়ে প্রথম পরিচয়ের পর লাভণ্যের সঙ্গে অমিতের ধীরে ধীরে আলাপ এবং আলাপ থেকে প্রেম। মূলতঃ সেই প্রেমের বিশেষত্ব এবং কাব্যনিষ্ঠ মোহমায়াই আচ্ছাদিত করে রাখে সমগ্র উপন্যাসকে। আর সেই আচ্ছাদনের তলায় হারিয়ে যায়, মানবীসত্তার যথার্থ জীবনোপক্ৰির গুরুত্ব এবং তাকে বিশ্লেষণ করে দেখার আশু প্রয়োজনীয়তাও।

রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যের নায়িকা বলতে সাধারণভাবেই ব্যক্তিত্বময়ী নারীর ছবি ভেসে ওঠে মনে। বিনোদিনী, কুমুদিনী, সুচরিতা, দামিনী, কিংবা এলা সবার মুখেই আসলে সমস্বরে উচ্চারিত হয়েছে

“নত করি মাথা
পথপ্রান্তে কেন রব জানি
ক্লান্ত ধৈর্য প্রত্যাশার পূরণের লাগি
দৈবাগত দিনে?
শুধু শুণ্যে চেয়ে রব? কেন নিজে নাহি লব চিনে
সার্থকের পথ?” (সবলা)

লাবণ্যও তার ব্যতিক্রম নয়। কিন্তু সমালোচকেরা আবার প্রশ্ন তুলেন “একটি যুক্তিবাদী ও বাস্তববুদ্ধি সম্পন্ন মেয়ে অমিতের উচ্ছসিত প্রেমে যেভাবে বিগলিত হয় এবং শেষে সেই প্রেম প্রত্যাখানের মধ্য দিয়ে যে আপাত অস্বাভাবিক পরিণতি বেছে নেয়, সেই কারণেই তার চরিত্র কিছুটা দুর্বোধ্য ও জটিল হয়ে পড়েছে।”^২ আর সেজন্যেই লাবণ্য চরিত্রের গুরুত্ব অনেকখানি। আদৌ তার পরিণতি অস্বাভাবিক কিনা, স্বেচ্ছায় এই পরিণতি বেছে নেওয়ার পেছনে তার চারিত্রিক অসংগতি ধরা পড়ে, না কি নারীচেতনার অন্য একটি গতিপথের সন্ধান দেয়-আজকের যুগে তা একবার নতুন করে ভেবে দেখার প্রয়োজন আছে বৈকি।

সম্পর্ক যত এগিয়েছে প্রেম তত গভীর হয়েছে। ক্রমে লক্ষ্য করি অমিত এবং লাবণ্য পরস্পরের কাছে ‘মিতা’ ও ‘বন্যা’ এই দুটি নামে বাঁধা পড়েছে। অমিতের কর্ণেই শূনি – “হে মোর বন্যা, তুমি অনন্যা/আপন ধন্যা।” যথারীতি লাবণ্য মুগ্ধ হয়। হবেই বা না কে, আসলে নারী তো তাই চায়, পুরুষ তার সমস্ত পৌরুষ নিয়ে বলিষ্ঠ দৃষ্ট কর্ণে ঘোষণা করুক ভালোবাসার কথা। এর চেয়ে বেশি চাওয়া নারীর আর কী হতে পারে। সেই অঞ্জলীভরা মুগ্ধতার জন্যে নারী সারাজীবন অপেক্ষা করতে পারে। আর সেজন্যেই হয়তো শোভনলালের আবির্ভাব লাবণ্যের

জীবনে তেমন ছাপ ফেলতে পারে না। রবীন্দ্রনাথ তার কারণ হিসেবে বলেন – “একদিন শোভনলাল বরদান করবে বলেই বুঝি লাবণ্য – নিজের অগোচরেই অপেক্ষা করে বসেছিল। শোভনলাল তেমন করে ডাক দিলে না।”

ডাক দিয়েছিল অমিত। ভালোবাসার উত্তাপে ধন্য করেছিল লাবণ্যের নারীজীবন। ‘ঘরে বাইরে’র বিমলাকেও সন্দীপ এমনকি করে ডাক দিয়েছিল। যে ডাকে নিখিলেশের নিশ্চিত আশ্রয় ছেড়ে বেরিয়ে এসেছিল বিমলা। অবশেষে ভুল বুঝে শুভবোধ নিয়ে পুনরায় ফিরে গেছে নিখিলেশের কাছে। কিন্তু কেন জানি মনে হয়, পুরুষের প্রবৃত্তির কাছে হার মানেছে বিমলার নারীত্ব। সন্দীপ নিজের প্রয়োজনে ব্যবহার করে বিমলাকে। আর নিখিলেশ; বিমলা ভুল করেছে জেনেও তাকে বাধা দেয় না। বরং গৃহসীমায় স্বেচ্ছাবন্দী স্ত্রীকে বলে – “আমি চাই বাইরের মধ্যে তুমি আমাকে পাও, আমি তোমাকে পাই, ওইখানে আমাদের দেনা পাওনা বাকি আছে।” কিন্তু বিমলা একান্ত নিজস্ব চাওয়া পাওয়া যেন অস্পষ্টই থেকে যায় সমগ্র উপন্যাসে।

লাবণ্য এর থেকে ব্যতিক্রম। রবীন্দ্রনাথের বিনোদিনী কিংবা দামিনীও তাই। তারা কেউই বিনাপ্রশ্নে জীবনে ত্যাগ স্বীকার করতে শেখেনি। ‘নারী ত্যাগের প্রতীক’ তথাকথিত এই প্রবাদকে তারা ভেঙে গুড়িয়ে দিয়ে

যুক্তির মাধ্যমে জীবনের সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। অমিত যখন লাভণ্যকে বিয়ে করার প্রস্তাব নিয়ে যোগমায়ার কাছে এসে মত চায় এবং পেয়েও যায়, তখন থেকেই লাভণ্যর মনে বাঁধে দ্বন্দ্ব। বাস্তবঘেঁষা চরিত্র লাভণ্য বুঝতে পারে, অমিতের স্বপ্ন-কল্পনা, তার বড়ো বড়ো আদর্শ সবকিছুই আসলে ফাঁকি। নিজের কল্পিত স্বপ্নরাজ্যে নারীকে সে করে রেখেছে অর্ধেক মানবী আর অর্ধেক কল্পনা। তার প্রেম প্লেটোনিক, বাস্তবের সঙ্গে যার কোন সংযোগ নেই। প্রেয়সী এবং শ্রেয়সীকে সে এক জায়গায় বাঁধতে চেয়েছে কিন্তু লাভণ্য অমিতকে ধরিয়ে দেয় তার ভুল – “তুমি তো সংসার ফাঁদবার মানুষ নও, তুমি রুচির তৃষ্ণা মেটাবার জন্য ফেরো।” তাই অমিতের প্রতি অদম্য ভালোবাসা থাকা সত্ত্বেও সেই স্বপ্নরাজ্য থেকে লাভণ্য সরে এসেছে নিঃসন্দে। যে লাভণ্য বলতে পারে – “আপন রুচির জন্যে আমি পরের রুচির সমর্থন ভিক্ষে করিনে” – তার পক্ষে সেটাই স্বাভাবিক।

চেতনাসম্পন্ন নারী কখনোই পুরুষের ছকবাঁধা এই স্বপ্নের খাঁচায় ধরা দিতে চায় না বরং স্বপ্নকে গুড়িয়ে দেয়। মনে পড়ে যায় রবীন্দ্র পরবর্তী সাহিত্যিক মানিক বন্দোপাধ্যায় ‘পুতুলনাচের ইতিকথা’র কথা। যেখানে শশী কল্পনা করে “কেয়ারি করা ফুলের বাগানে ব্লাউজ পরিহিত রমণী” কে। তার স্বপ্নকে গোলাপের চারার মতো

পায়ে মাড়িয়ে দিয়ে যায় এক গ্রাম্য গৃহবধু কুসুম। বলিষ্ঠ কণ্ঠের জোরে সে শশীর সাজানো বাগান গুড়িয়ে দিতে চায়। লাভণ্যর প্রতিবাদ কুসুমের মত ততটা সোচ্চার নয়, গভীর উপলব্ধির আলোকে সমস্ত বন্ধন থেকে অমিতকে মুক্তি দিতে সে নিঃশব্দ অভিযান চালিয়ে যায়। ছন্দোবদ্ধ ভঙ্গিতে বলে-

“তোমারে দিই-
নি সুখ, মুক্তির নৈবেদ্য গেনু রাখি
রজনীর শুভ্র
অবসানে। কিছু আর নাই বাকি,
নাই প্রার্থনা, নাই
প্রতি মুহূর্তের দৈন্য রাশি,
নাই অভিমান,
নাই দীন কান্না, নাই গর্ব হাসি,
নাই পিছু ফিরে
দেখা। শুধু সে মুক্তির ডালিখানি
ভরিয়া দিলাম
আজি আমার মহৎ মৃত্যু আনি।”

অমিতের প্রতি তার ভালোবাসা যে কতখানি গভীর ছিল – সমগ্র উপন্যাস জুড়ে তার পরিচয় পাই আমরা। অথচ অমিত কিন্তু লাভণ্যর মনের খবর রাখে না। একদিন বর্ষার দিনে অপেক্ষারত লাভণ্যর কাছে ইচ্ছে থাকলেও একটি তুচ্ছ ‘বর্ষাতি’র অভাবে সে যোগমায়ার বাড়ির দিকে পা বাড়ায় না। খোঁজ রাখে না সে যোগমায়ারও। যে যোগমায়া লাভণ্যের দুঃখমোচনে মাতৃহৃদয়ের অসীম মমত্ব নিয়ে এগিয়ে এসে চার হাতের মিলন ঘটিয়েছেন অমিতের বাসায়, সেই যোগমায়াকে যখন নিজের বোন এবং পুরনো প্রেমিকা এসে অপমান করে, তখন অমিতের

সরব প্রতিবাদ করতে দেখিনা, ফলে পাঠকের অতিপ্রিয় অমিত চরিত্রটিকে আর একটু নতুনভাবে ভেবে দেখার অবকাশ থেকেই যায়।

অমিত চরিত্র বিশ্লেষণে শ্রী অমিয় চক্রবর্তী অবশ্য অমিতের পক্ষে বলেন – “যাঁরা আর্টিস্ট হয়েও আর্টিস্টের চেয়ে বড়ো অর্থাৎ যাঁরা মহান চরিত্রবান পুরুষ তাঁরা আর্টকে স্বমহিমায় প্রতিষ্ঠিত করেও জীবনের বিবিধ দায়িত্বের মধ্যেই আর্টকে সংগত করেছেন। যেকোন আর্টিস্টের পক্ষে এই দুই দায়িত্ব – সংসারের প্রতি দায়িত্ব এবং আর্টের প্রতি দায়িত্ব – এক সঙ্গে পূর্ণ করে চলা কঠিন। অমিত রায়ের পক্ষে তা শুধু কঠিন নয়, অসম্ভব। প্রথম থেকেই সেকথা আমরা বুঝতে পারি।”^৩ লাভণ্যও গভীরভাবে একথা উপলব্ধি করেছিল বলেই বিয়েতে অসম্মতি জানিয়েচে। তার এ অভিব্যক্তি আরও দৃঢ় হয়েছে অমিতের পূর্বতন প্রেমিক কেটি মিত্রের আগমনে।

ড. শ্রীকুমার বন্দোপাধ্যায় প্রশ্ন তুলেছেন, কেটির প্রতি “অমিতের সঙ্গত আকর্ষণের ব্যাখ্যা কোথায়?”^৪ তাঁর মতে অমিত কেটিকে ভালোবাসেনি, অভিনয় করেছে মাত্র। কথাটি অনেকাংশে সত্যি নয়। কারণ বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতালব্ধ লাভণ্য উপলব্ধি করে নারীমনের অন্তর্নিহিত বেদনার কথা, যখন অভিমানক্ষুব্ধ কেটি অমিতকে তার আংটি প্রত্যাৰ্পণ করে বললো – “বাজিতে যদিই হারলুম, তবে আমার

এই চিরদিনের হারের চিহ্ন তোমার কাছেই থাক অমিত।” প্রেমহীন আংটির কথা কেতকী ভাবে পারে না। তাই লেখক জানান – “আংটি খুলে টেবিলটির উপর রেখেই দ্রুতবেগে চলে গেল। এনামেল করা মুখের উপর দিয়ে দরদর করে চোখের জল গড়িয়ে পড়তে লাগল।”

এই প্রথম একটি যন্ত্রণাকাতর মেয়েকে আবিষ্কার করি আমরা। মেকি প্রসাধন, কৃত্রিম জীবনযাত্রা সবকিছুকে তুচ্ছ করে যার ভেতর থেকে বেরিয়ে আসে এক চিরন্তন প্রেমিক, যে অমিতকে যথার্থ ভালোবাসতে পেরেছিল। বুদ্ধদেব বসু এই দৃশ্যটিকে খুব গুরুত্ব দিয়ে বলেছেন – “তাঁর মুখের কথায় যে বেদনার সুর শুনতে পাই, সেই সুর অমিত-লাভণ্যের কথাবার্তার মধ্যে একবারও লাগেনি। ‘শেষের কবিতা’য় প্রেমের বিষয়ে ব্যাখ্যা আছে অনেক। কিন্তু ঐ একটি জায়গাতেই আমরা অনুভব করি যে কেউ কাউকে ভালোবাসলো – বা বেসেছিল।”^৫ সমালোচকের এই মন্তব্যকে আমরা অস্বীকার করতে পারি না। শুধুমাত্র বিস্মিত হই এই ভেবে যে, এরকম একটি নারীচরিত্র বাংলা সাহিত্যে প্রায় অবহেলিতই থেকে গেল। এর জন্যে হয়তো দায়ী অনেকটাই স্বয়ং লেখক। কারণ অমিত-লাভণ্য আখ্যানের প্রাবল্যে উপন্যাস কেটি মিত্রের জন্যে জায়গা রেখেছিলেন সীমিত।

লাবণ্য তো ঠিক করেই ছিল, যে পুরুষ শুধুমাত্র নিজের মনোরঞ্জন করে বেড়ায়, অন্যের মনের খবর রাখে না এবং কল্পনার নারীকে ঘরের সিংহাসনে অধিষ্ঠিত করতে চায় – তাকে নিয়ে ঘর করা চলে না। এছাড়া কেতকীর মনের ভালোবাসার সন্ধান পেয়ে সে একটুও দেরী না করে অমিতকে অনুরোধ করে – “অন্তত হুণ্ডাখানেকের জন্যে তোমার দলকে নিয়ে তুমি চেরাপুঞ্জিতে বেরিয়ে এসো। ওকে আনন্দ দিতে নাও যদি পার, ওকে আমোদ দিতে পারবে।” নারীমনের এই ঔদার্য আমাদের বিস্মিত করে। লাবণ্য জানত, বাস্তব লাবণ্য অমিতের কামনা নয়, তাই কল্পনার লাবণ্য বিবাহের প্রাত্যাহিক তুচ্ছতায় মলিন হয়ে যাক অমিতের কাছে তা সে কোনমতেই চায়নি। কবিতায় সে বলে –

“মর্তের মৃত্তিকা মোর, তাই দিয়ে অমৃতমূর্তি
যদি সৃষ্টি করে থাক, তাহারি আরতি
হোক তব সন্ধ্যাবেলা
পূজার সে খেলা
ব্যাঘাত পাবে না মোর প্রত্যাহের স্নান স্পর্শ
লেগে।”

লাবণ্যর এই প্রত্যাখ্যানের মধ্য দিয়ে উপন্যাসের সমাপ্তি হতে পারত। কারণ বাংলা সাহিত্যে বিয়োগান্ত গল্পের জনপ্রিয়তার অভাব ছিল না। কিন্তু রবিন্দ্রনাথ সেই গডডলিকা প্রবাহে গা ভাসাননি। আর তাই উপন্যাসের শেষ পরিচ্ছেদ ‘শেষের কবিতা’য় আমাদের জন্যে অপেক্ষা করে থাকে অপার

বিস্ময়। শুনতে পাই, শহরে রাষ্ট্র কেতকীর সঙ্গে অমিতের বিয়ে, এবং অমিতকে বিয়ে না করার সিদ্ধান্ত জ্ঞাপনের মধ্যে কেটিকে বিয়ে করার অনুরোধের কোন ইঙ্গিত আমরা পাইনা। বুঝতে পারি, এটা অমিতের নিজস্ব সিদ্ধান্ত। রবীন্দ্র সাহিত্যে খুব কম নারীই বিনা প্রশ্নে পুরুষের এধরণের অন্যায় মাথা পেতে নিয়েছে।

লাবণ্যও প্রতিবাদ করেছিল। কিন্তু তার স্বরূপ সম্পূর্ণ ভিন্ন। আর তাইতো সে বলে –

“মোর লাগি করিয়ো না শোক,
আমার রয়েছে কর্ম, আমার রয়েছে বিশ্বলোক।
মোর পাত্র রিক্ত হয় নাই –
শূণ্যেই করিব পূর্ণ, এই ব্রত বহিব সদাই।
উৎকর্ষায় আমার লাগি কেহ যদি প্রতীক্ষায়
থাকে
সেই ধন্য করিবে আমাকে।”

উপন্যাসের শেষে শোভনলালের সঙ্গে যে লাবণ্যর বিয়ে ঠিক হয়েছে, একথারও ইঙ্গিত পাই আমরা। খুব স্বাভাবিকভাবেই এই সিদ্ধান্ত লাবণ্য চরিত্রটিকে একটু জটিলতার মুখোমুখি দাঁড় করিয়ে দেয়। কিন্তু আমরা জানি, শোভনলালের প্রেমকে প্রত্যাখান করলেও তার জন্যে লাবণ্যর মনে বেদনা সঞ্চিত ছিল। অমিতের জীবন থেকে সরে এসে সে সেই বেদনার মধ্যে নিজেকে খুঁজে পায়।

তাই বলে অমিতের প্রতি তার ভালোবাসায় কোন খাদ ছিল কিনা – এ সন্দেহ বৃথা। অমিতের স্বপ্ন কল্পনার সোনালী খাঁচা এবং দাম্পত্যজীবনের

গঞ্জীতে নিজের প্রেমকে আবদ্ধ করতে
চায়নি বলেই শোভনলালকে সে নিজের
জীবনের সঙ্গে গ্রথিত করে। তাই শেষ
চিঠিতে অমিতকে বলে –

“যে আমারে দেখিবারে পায়
অসীম ক্ষমায়
ভালোমন্দ মিলায়ে সকলি,
এবার পূজায় তারি আপনারে দিতে চাই বলি।”
আর অমিতের উদ্দেশ্যে সে রেখেছে –
“সব চেয়ে সত্য মোর সেই মৃত্যুঞ্জয়
সে আমার প্রেম।
তারে আমি রাখিয়া এলেম
অপরিবর্তন অর্ঘ্য তোমার উদ্দেশ্যে।

...
তোমারে যা দিয়েছিল, সে তোমারি দান
গ্রহণ করেছ যত ঋণী তত করেছ আমায়।
হে বন্ধু, বিদায়।”

রবীন্দ্রনাথ কিন্তু এজায়গাতেই
থেমে থাকেননি। লাভণ্য কর্তৃক
প্রত্যাখাত হয়ে কেটি মিত্তিরকে বিয়ে
করার পেছনে অমিতের যে যুক্তি শেষে
স্থাপন করেছেন, তার অভিনবত্বেরই
‘শেষের কবিতা’ পৌঁছে যায়
জনপ্রিয়তার শীর্ষে। যতিশংকরের সঙ্গে
কথোপকথনে অমিত বলে – “যে
ভালোবাসা ব্যাণ্ডভাবে আকাশে মুক্ত
থাকে, অন্তরের মধ্যে সে দেয় সঙ্গ; যে
ভালোবাসা বিশেষভাবে প্রতিদিনের
সবকিছুতে যুক্ত হয়ে থাকে, সংসারে সে
দেয় আসঙ্গ। দুটোই আমি চাই। ...
একদিন আমার সমস্ত ডানা মেলে
পেয়েছিলুম আমার ওড়ার আকাশ, আজ
আমি পেয়েছি আমার ছোট্ট বাসা, ডানা
গুটিয়ে বসেছি। কিন্তু আমার আকাশও
রইল।”

বলা যায়, প্রেম সম্পর্কিত যত
যাবতীয় সংস্কারে আমাদের মন এতদিন
বদ্ধ ছিল। বিবাহ বহির্ভূত প্রেমের
সন্ধানে তার মুক্তি ঘটল। কিন্তু আদৌ
কি বাস্তব তা সম্ভব? ছোট্ট বাসায় ডানা
গুটিয়ে বসা পাখি একই সঙ্গে আকাশ
এবং বাসায় তার ডানা মেলে উড়তে
পারে বলে আমাদের সন্দেহ হয়। এ
শুধু অমিতের পক্ষেই সম্ভব। তাই যে
অমিত বলতে পারে, – “কেতকীর সঙ্গে
আমার সম্বন্ধ ভালোবাসারই, কিন্তু সে
যেন ঘড়ায় তোলা জল, প্রতিদিন তুলব,
প্রতিদিন ব্যবহার করব। আর লাভণ্যর
সঙ্গে আমার যে ভালোবাসা সে রইল
দীঘি, সে ঘরে আনবার নয়, আমার মন
তাতে সাঁতার দেবে।” সে-ই-আবার
বলে-

“আমি যা বলছি, হয়তো সেটা আমারই কথা।
সেটাকে তোমার কথা বলে বুঝতে গেলেই
ভুল বুঝবে, আমাকে গাল দিয়ে বসবে।”

অমিত এবং লাভণ্য চরিত্রের
বৈপরীত্য এখানেই। অমিতকে অস্বীকার
করে শোভনলালকে গ্রহণ করতে গিয়ে
লাভণ্যের কোন সঙ্গ – আসঙ্গ তত্ত্বের
অবতাড়নার দরকার হয় না। দরকার
হয় না, দুটি পুরুষের মধ্যে নিজের
অস্তিত্বকে জিইয়ে রাখার প্রয়োজনও।
বরং অকুণ্ঠ সততায় সে বলতে পারে –
“পরিবর্তনের স্রোতে আমি চাই
ভেসে/কালের যাত্রায়/হে বন্ধু বিদায়”।

অমিত সম্পর্কে সমালোচক
বাসন্তী মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেন – “অমিত
রায় বাস্তব জগতে দূর্লভ; সে

মনোবিজ্ঞানীর গবেষণার বস্তু, কিন্তু কবির সচেতন সৃষ্টি।”^৬ আমাদেরও মনে হয় যতটা সচেতনতা নিয়ে লেখক অমিত চরিত্রকে ঐকেছেন, ততটা অন্য চরিত্র নয়। অথচ অমিতের বিশেষত্ব – তার ব্যতিক্রমী স্টাইল এবং শৈশোক তত্ত্বকথার অবতাড়নায়। কিন্তু একটু সূক্ষ্মভাবে ভাবলে বলতে পারি, লাভণ্য যদি অমিতকে বাস্তবজীবনে অস্বীকার না করত, তবে অমিতকেও সেই অসাধারণ তত্ত্বকথা আওড়াতে হত না। এককথায় বলতে পারি, অমিতকে অস্বীকার করার উপলক্ষিটা যদি লাভণ্যর না আসত, তবে অমিত কথিত সেই বিস্ফোরক তত্ত্বকথাটিও উহ্য থেকে যেত। আর অমিত ? সম্ভবত বাংলা সাহিত্যের এক প্রত্যাখান নায়ক হয়েই থেকে যেত চিরকাল।

“শেষে নাহি যে, শেষ কথা কে বলিবে”-তাই আমারও ভার নেই শেষ কথা বলার। আমার শুধুমাত্র আপাত-কথা বলার অধিকারী। সেই অধিকার নিয়েই বলতে পারি, যে অমিত বলতে পারে – “আমার রোমান্স আমিই সৃষ্টি করব। আমার স্বর্গেও রয়েছে গেল রোমান্স, আমার মর্তেও ঘটাব রোমান্স” – সেই অমিত অবশ্যই রবীন্দ্রনাথের আর পাঁচটা নায়ক থেকে আলাদা। তাকে বুঝতে গেলে সহমর্মী মন নিয়ে তার খুব কাছাকাছি যেতে হয়, কারণ

বাস্তব জগতে সে বেমানান। অথচ এই অমিত চরিত্র রূপায়ণে লেখকের যত আয়োজন সব ব্যর্থ হয়ে যেত, যদি না তিনি নারী চরিত্রগুলোকে এত কার্যকরী করে তুলতেন। অমিত নিজেই বলেছে – “জয় হোক আমার লাভণ্যর, জয় হোক আমার কেতকীর, আর সব দিক থেকেই ধন্য হোক অমিত রায়।” অমিত রায় ধন্য হয়েছিল অবশ্যই। কিন্তু শুধুমাত্র কেতকী লাভণ্য নয়, প্রতিটি নারী চরিত্রের অকুণ্ঠ অবদানে। অমিতের সফলতায় লিলি গাঙ্গুলি, মিমি বোস, যোগমায়া কারোর কথা আমাদের ভুলে গেলে চলে না। কেননা তাদের সবার কেন্দ্রবিন্দু ছিল অমিত। অমিতের কল্যাণে সবাই কোন না কোন লড়াইয়ে ব্যাণ্ড ছিল। বিনিময়ে তারা কিন্তু একমুঠো আলোও পেল না। কারণ অমিত এবং অমিত কথিত তত্ত্ব নিয়ে ‘শেষের কবিতা’ এমনভাবে আমাদের কাছে মাথা তুলে দাঁড়ায় যে, আমরা প্রায় ভুলেই যাই নেপথ্যচারিণী নারী সত্তার কথা। যে নারী অকপটে দাবী করে –

“আমি নারী, আমি মহীয়সী
আমার সুরে সুরে বেঁধেছি জ্যোৎস্নাবীণায়
নিদ্রাবিহীন শশী।
আমি নইলে মিথ্যা হত সন্ধ্যাতারা ওঠা,
মিথ্যা হত কাননে ফুল ফোটা।”

সূত্রনির্দেশ

১। অচিন্ত্যকুমার সেনগুপ্ত/হীরেন চট্টোপাধ্যায় : শেষের কবিতা : শিল্পিত জীবন, পৃ; ১৮ ।
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- ২। হীরেন চট্টোপাধ্যায় : শেষের কবিতা : শেষের কবিতা : শিল্পিত জীবন, পৃ; ৫৯ ।
- ৩। অমিয় চক্রবর্তী/ হীরেন চট্টোপাধ্যায় : শেষের কবিতা : শিল্পিত জীবন, পৃ; ৬৩ ।
- ৪। শ্রীকুমার বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় : বঙ্গসাহিত্যে উপন্যাসের ধারা, মডার্ন বুক এজেন্সী প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড, প্রথম প্রকাশ-১৩৪৫, পৃ; ১৬৬ ।
- ৫। বুদ্ধদেব বসু : রবীন্দ্রনাথ : কথাসাহিত্য ।
- ৬। বাসন্তী মুখোপাধ্যায় : রবীন্দ্র কথাসাহিত্যে চরিত্র ব্যাখ্যান, পুস্তক বিপণি, প্রথম প্রকাশ- ১৯৮০, পৃ;১৬৮ ।

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অভিজিৎ সেন এর ‘মেঘের নদী’: বাস্তবতার নানা মাত্রা

তানিয়া চক্রবর্তী

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Abstract

Abhijit Sen is one of the prominent narrative writers in Contemporary Bengali literature. He is one who has stood ideologically against the inheritance of colonial model in the Bengali narrative world both in terms of form and content consciousness. Off and on, in his writings, Sen has criticized the trend of writing stories of love & sex only in Bengali fiction and pointed out that so called mainstream literature only depicts the life of growing middleclass and rich people, ignoring the struggle for existence of the common mass, their livelihood. Like Debesh Roy, Abhijit maintains the European model of novel is not useful for depicting the heterogeneity of the reality of life of the larger section of people. He says, like the Third World literature, our narrative is to stand politically and ideologically against neo-colonial attack over the heterogeneous culture of marginalized mass and for this. The present day narrative should be emancipated from the domain of time-space contactless middleclass centric story writing, and it should take the way of re-evaluating & re-constructing of myth, folktales & traditions to represent the present day reality. Depiction of reality, in Sen's idea is a protest against the traditional way of misrepresenting time & space. When we go through a narrative discourse of Abhijit Sen, we should be conscious about the narrative consciousness of the writer can be termed as post-colonial and post-modern in Indian and Bengalee sense, otherwise, the reader may fail to find the path of entry in the narrative world of Sen, and also will not be able to understand the ideological protest against all kind of hegemony, be it in federal productive relation or in the domain of politics & culture.

We want to prepare a critical discourse on Abhijit Sen's novel 'Megher Nodi' from post-colonial and post-modern viewpoint of literary criticism.

অভিজিৎ সেনের রচনার প্রধান অবলম্বন সাধারণ মানুষ। তাঁর সমকালীন কিছু লেখক যেমন ভগীরথ মিশ্র, সাধন চট্টোপাধ্যায় প্রমুখের মত অভিজিৎও শোষণমূলক সমাজ ব্যবস্থার কঠোর সমালোচক। শোষণমূলক ব্যবস্থা, অর্থাৎ মানুষের দ্বারা মানুষের শোষণ এই বিষয়টি অভিজিৎের কথাসাহিত্যে নানাভাবে উঠে এসেছে। একদিকে তাঁর ‘রাজপাট-ধর্মপাট’ উপন্যাসে লেখক চৈতন্য আন্দোলনকে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে মনে করেছেন, কেননা যে শ্রেণীহীন সাম্যতা প্রতিষ্ঠার লক্ষ্যে চৈতন্যদেব আন্দোলন গড়ে তুলেছিলেন তা অভিজিৎকে প্রাণিত করেছে। আবার অন্যদিকে ‘রহু চণ্ডালের হাড়’ উপন্যাসে ফুটে উঠেছে শোষণের আরেক ভিন্নতর রূপ। এই উপন্যাসটির একদিকে যেমন রয়েছে আধিপত্যবাদী শক্তির দ্বারা রহুর দলের উৎখাত হওয়ার কাহিনি, অন্যদিকে ফুটে উঠেছে প্রবল শক্তিমান colonizer রা কীভাবে রহুর দলের সংস্কৃতিকে গ্রাস করছে তারই আখ্যান। নয়া-উপনিবেশবাদের সংস্কৃতির রাজনীতিকে অভিজিৎ এখানে অনাবৃত করে দেখানোর চেষ্টা করেছেন।

অভিজিৎ সেনের বিভিন্ন উপন্যাসে কোনো না কোনোভাবে হাজির হয়েছে কৃষিজীবন। লেখক বড়

দরদের সঙ্গে কৃষক জীবনকে তাঁর রচনায় তুলে ধরেন। তাঁর ‘হলুদ রঙের সূর্য’ উপন্যাসে তিনি উদ্বাস্ত কৃষকদের যে কঠোর সংগ্রামের কথা তুলে ধরেছেন, সেই সংগ্রাম কেবল একটি বাড়ি, উদ্বাস্তর নতুন ঠিকানা কিংবা দুবেলার অন্নসংস্থানের সংগ্রাম নয় বরং এর মধ্যদিয়ে তারা নিজেদের অস্তিত্বকেই নতুনভাবে দাঁড় করাতে চায়, যে অস্তিত্ব রাজনৈতিক প্রক্রিয়াতে প্রত্যাখ্যাত হয়েছে। তাদের নির্দিষ্ট কোনো স্থান নেই। পূর্ব পাকিস্তানে বা বাংলাদেশে তারা হিন্দু এই অপরাধে আক্রান্ত হয়, আবার ভারতবর্ষে অখণ্ড দেশের মানুষ হওয়া সত্ত্বেও নিজের দেশেই চিহ্নিত হয় উদ্বাস্ত নামে। এই জায়গাতে তার যে আত্মপরিচয় অর্জনের সংগ্রাম, এতে একদিকে উঠে আসে কৃষকদের সাধারণ জীবন, অন্যদিকে তেমনি একটা সাংঘাতিক অস্তিত্বের সঙ্কটও আভাসিত হয়। অভিজিত এই অস্তিত্বের সংকটের গোড়া ধরে নাড়া দেবার চেষ্টা করেছেন। এইভাবে অভিজিৎ সেনের আরও দুটি রচনা ‘বর্গক্ষেত্র’ এবং ‘দেবাংশী’ তেও কৃষক জীবনের নানা প্রেক্ষিত আলোকিত হয়েছে লেখকের বিশেষ দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির আলোকে।

অভিজিৎ সেনের রচনার প্রধান অবলম্বন হলো গ্রাম। আর গ্রামীণ অর্থনৈতিক মূল বৈশিষ্ট্য কৃষিকেন্দ্রিকতা। তাই লেখকের গল্প-উপন্যাসের মধ্যেও প্রধানত সামন্ততান্ত্রিক উৎপাদন ব্যবস্থার মধ্যে কৃষিকেন্দ্রিক জীবনের বাস্তব অবস্থা, কৃষিজীবী মানুষ বা কৃষিশ্রমিকদের নানাভাবে নিগৃহিত হওয়ার কাহিনি বর্ণিত হয়েছে। আলাদা করে অভিজিৎ সেনের কয়েকটি উপন্যাসকে কৃষিকেন্দ্রিক উপন্যাস বলা কষ্টকর। তবুও গবেষণার স্বার্থে আমরা উপন্যাসের মূল theme বা বিষয়ের উপর ভিত্তি করে কিছু বিভাজন করার চেষ্টা করেছি। কিন্তু এই বিভাজন নিতান্তই কৃত্রিম। কেননা অভিজিৎ সেনের সমস্ত রচনাই কম বেশী কৃষিজীবন, কৃষকজীবন এবং যে শোষণ-শৃঙ্খলা কৃষকের জীবনকে বিপন্ন করে তুলেছে, মূলত এইসমস্ত বিষয়ভিত্তিক। ‘মেঘের নদী’ উপন্যাসটিতেও এভাবে কৃষক ও কৃষিজীবনের নানা প্রেক্ষিত ওঠে এসেছে। ‘মেঘের নদী’ উপন্যাসটি নানাকারণে কৃষক জীবনকেন্দ্রিক হওয়া সত্ত্বেও কৃষকজীবন, কৃষিকেন্দ্রিক শোষণব্যবস্থা, শোষণের জাতাকালের বর্ণনার মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ হয়ে থাকে নি। বেশ কয়েকটি জটিল বিষয় অভিজিৎ

এই উপন্যাসে স্পর্শ করেছেন। ফলে উপন্যাসটির অবয়বে তৈরী হয়েছে বেশ কয়েকটি তল (surface), প্রতিটি surface এ জীবনে বাস্তবের স্বরূপ ভিন্ন, আর সবগুলি একই আখ্যানের পাঠে উপস্থাপিত হওয়ায় ‘মেঘের নদী’ নামের ছোট উপন্যাসটি উত্তরবঙ্গের উদ্বাস্ত কৃষকজীবনের সাদামাটা বাস্তবচিহ্ন হয়েই থাকে নি, বরং তা সময়ের inner structure এ যে জটিল তন্ত্রসমূহ বিরাজমান তার সবগুলোকেই চিহ্নিত করেছে। দেশ-কাল সংলগ্ন জীবন বাস্তবের বহুরেখার কাটাকুটিতে এই আখ্যান প্রকৃত প্রস্তাবে বহুরৈখিক বাস্তবের এক polyphony হয়ে উঠেছে।

এই উপন্যাসে উত্তরবঙ্গের কোনো এক জেলা সদরের জেলা পরিষদের একটি সভার কার্যবিবরণী রয়েছে। সংক্ষিপ্ত এই কার্যবিবরণীটি উপন্যাসের ক্ষেত্রে খুব গুরুত্বপূর্ণ এবং বহুস্বরিক। পশ্চিমবঙ্গের উন্নয়নের প্রক্রিয়ায় আমলাতান্ত্রিক কাজকর্মের স্বরূপ, কৃষি ব্যবস্থায় ব্যাঙ্কের ভূমিকা, রাজনৈতিক শক্তির ভূমিকা, ইত্যাদি নানা বিষয় অত্যন্ত বাস্তবতার সঙ্গে হাজির হয়েছে উপন্যাসে। অভিজিৎ দেখাচ্ছেন দলমত নির্বিশেষে রাজনৈতিক সংস্কৃতি হয়ে পড়েছে

দায়িত্বজ্ঞানহীন। ফলত লোকসভা, বিধানসভা ইত্যাদিতে জনগণের উন্নয়নের লক্ষ্যে যে সমস্ত আইন এবং পরিকল্পনা গৃহীত হয়, তা বাস্তবায়নে কারও তেমন দায় নেই। জেলার মহকুমা শাসক, যিনি একজন দায়িত্বশীল, স্থানীয় কর্মকর্তা; একটি নির্দিষ্ট অঞ্চলের উন্নয়নের প্রধান চালক তিনি। কিন্তু তিনিই ঋণদান কর্মসূচির মাধ্যমে সরকারি প্রকল্পের বাস্তবায়নের জন্য, স্থানীয়ভাবে নীতিনির্দেশনার জন্য যে মিটিং হয় তাতে উপস্থিত থাকার প্রয়োজন বোধ করেননা। যিনি সরকারের আমলা হিসেবে জেলা প্রশাসনের প্রতিনিধিত্ব করেন সেই ডেপুটি ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট দু-এক দিন আগে পথ অবরোধ মোকাবিলা করতে গিয়ে কিছু ভুল সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন এবং ফলত তিনি খানিকটা লজ্জিত হয়ে আছেন। তার এই লজ্জার কথা কেউ যদি কোনো ভাবে জেনে ফেলে এই ভয়ে তিনি এই সভা থেকে পালিয়ে বাঁচতে চান। সামগ্রিক ভাবে উন্নয়নে ব্যাঙ্ক এর যে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা রয়েছে তা ব্যাঙ্ক এর অফিসারদের কথাবার্তায় পরিস্ফুট হয় না। অর্থাৎ কোনো পক্ষেই কোনো আন্তরিকতা নেই। আর যারা প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়নের জন্য কাজ করে এরা কেউ সভায় আহৃত হয় না। মহিম শিক্ষিত,

এবং মধ্যবিত্ত শ্রেণীর কৃষক বলেই এই সভাগুলিতে আমন্ত্রণ পায়, কিন্তু সাধারণ কৃষকের প্রতিনিধি সেই সভায় ডাক পায় না। এখানে এই সভার প্রতিবেদনের মাধ্যমে অভিজিতের কলম যেন এই প্রশ্ন তুলতে চায়, তাহলে সত্যিকারের উন্নয়ন হবে কি করে? অভিজিতের একটি বৈশিষ্ট্য হল তিনি নিজে সরাসরি সমাজের বা system এর সমালোচনা করেন না, কিন্তু নিরপেক্ষতার আড়ালে থেকে তিনি ঘটনাকে এমন ভাবে তুলে ধরেন যাতে প্রকৃত বাস্তব ছবিটা উঠে আসে, এবং পাঠক অন্তত সমালোচনা করবার জায়গায় পৌঁছে যান। পাঠকের চেতনাকে এইভাবে অভিজিৎ আঘাত করেন।

অন্যদিকে এই উপন্যাসে উঠে এসেছে সরকারের দুর্বলতার সুযোগ নিয়ে NGO (Non-government organization) বা বেসরকারী সংস্থাগুলির বাড়বাড়ন্ত হয়ে ওঠা রূপ। নয়া উপনিবেশবাদী বিশ্বায়ন যা প্রায় ৮০/৯০ এর দশকে জন্ম লাভ করেছে এবং এর পর থেকেই সারা পৃথিবীতে এই NGO র একটা বিশেষ ভূমিকা চোখে পড়ছে। এই সংস্থাগুলির প্রধান কাজ হচ্ছে নানাভাবে fund জোগাড় করে তথাকথিত উন্নয়নের উদ্দেশ্যে

এগিয়ে আসা। কিন্তু এর সাথে এগুলোর একটি ব্যবসায়িক লক্ষ্যও থাকে। যার কিছু আমরা পেয়েছি আধুনিক কিছু লেখকদের রচনায়। এরকমই একটা লক্ষ্য করি ভগীরথ মিশ্রের ‘আড়কাঠি’ উপন্যাসে। এই উপন্যাসে দেখা গেছে যে ‘ইন্সট ওয়েস্ট ফোক ফাউন্ডেশন’ নামক আমেরিকান এক NGO, যা লোকসংস্কৃতির চর্চা, প্রসার, গবেষণা ইত্যাদি নিয়ে কাজ করে এবং তা করতে গিয়ে সেই অঞ্চলের গবেষক রাজীবকে তার দালাল বা আড়কাঠিতে পরিণত করে। আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠার মোহে মধ্যবিত্ত রাজীব ক্রমশ হয়ে ওঠে ফাউন্ডেশনের স্থানীয় কর্মকর্তা। ভগীরথ মিশ্র লক্ষ্য করেছেন আমেরিকান সংস্থাটির কর্মকৌশল। গ্রামের সহজ সরল মেয়েদের নাচ, গান দেখিয়ে, তাদের নানা stage দেওয়ার নামে এরা কোটি টাকা রোজগার করছে। ভগীরথ এভাবেই অনাবৃত করেছেন NGO র নেতিবাচক ভূমিকা। ‘মেঘের নদী’ উপন্যাসে অভিজিৎও খুব হালকাভাবে এই NGO সমূহের ভূমিকার ওপর একটা সন্দেহের ভাব ব্যক্ত করেছেন। কেননা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষক জ্যোতির্ময় রায়ের চাকরি ছেড়ে দিয়ে NGO তে যুক্ত হওয়া এবং মহিমের মত একজন উদ্যোগী, পরিশ্রমী মানুষকে তার

কর্মকাণ্ডে সামিল করার জন্য এত উৎসাহ দেখানোর মধ্যে কোথাও যেন রয়েছে একটা স্বার্থের চোরাটান। মহিমের সাথে তার মাষ্টারের কথোপকথনের একটা অংশ এখানে উদ্ধৃত করা যেতে পারে,

“যদি সত্যিকারের কাজ করতে চাও, গ্রামীণ মানুষের যথার্থ উন্নয়নের কাজ করতে চাও, আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগ দেও।.....স্বেচ্ছাসেবা কেউ করতে বলছে না তোমাকে। তুমি যা করছ তাই কর, যেখানে করছ, সেখানেই কর। কিন্তু আমাদের সঙ্গে সংঘবদ্ধ হয়ে কর। তুমি এন.জি.ও কর। টাকার অভাব হবে না।সারা পৃথিবী এইসব কাজের জন্য টাকা দিচ্ছে। ইদানিং আমাদের সরকার ও বেসরকারি সংগঠনকে নানা উন্নয়নের কাজে অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য ডাকছে। এন.জি.ওরা পৃথিবীতে রাষ্ট্র ও রাজনীতির বিকল্প শক্তি হিসাবে মাথা তুলে দাঁড়িয়েছে। সমস্ত পৃথিবীর সমস্ত রকমের মঙ্গলই আমাদের কাম্য।”^১

এভাবেই কৃষিক্ষেত্রে পুঁজির প্রবেশ ঘটছে, সামন্তবাদের মধ্যে পুঁজির অনুপ্রবেশ ঘটছে। এই পুঁজির অনুপ্রবেশ কৃষকদের জন্য এক নতুন সমস্যার সৃষ্টি করতে পারে। এর ফলে যে কৃষকেরা পরিশ্রম করে উৎপাদন করবে, তারা তাদের উৎপাদিত ফসল নিজেরা বাজারজাত করতে পারবে না, তা NGOর মাধ্যমে বাজারজাত হবে যার ফলে লাভও হবে এই সংস্থাগুলিরই। অর্থাৎ নতুন রকমের একটা প্রজা শোষণের, কৃষক শোষণের ব্যবস্থা আসছে এই NGOর যত্রতত্র গজিয়ে ওঠার মধ্যে দিয়ে, অভিজিৎ সেন স্পষ্ট ভাবে না হলেও ইঙ্গিতের মাধ্যমে এই শোষণের ব্যাপারটাকে পাঠকের সামনে তুলেছেন।

‘মেঘের নদী’ উপন্যাসটি শুধুই কৃষকের জীবনের শরিক উপন্যাস মাত্র নয়, এই উপন্যাসে যে সিংহভাগ মানুষ উঠে এসেছে তারা প্রধানত বঙ্গভাষী বাঙালি চরিত্র যারা প্রায় সবাই হচ্ছে নমঃশূদ্র সম্প্রদায়ভুক্ত। এই নমঃশূদ্ররা আমাদের বাঙালি হিন্দু সমাজে বাঁশ-বেতের কাজ করে, মৎস চাষ করে, কেউ আবার কৃষিজীবী, বলা ভালো কৃষিশ্রমিক। অর্থাৎ এদের পেশাগুলির কোনটাই তেমন অর্থকরী নয়। অন্যদিকে শূদ্র বর্গের মধ্যেও এরা

নিন্দিত ও নিচু অবস্থানে বাস করে। ইতিহাস থেকে জানা যায় যখন ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে দেশভাগ হয় তখন নমঃশূদ্র সমাজের কিংবদন্তী নেতা যোগেন্দ্র মণ্ডল পাকিস্তানকে সমর্থন করেন। এটা যেন, যে হিন্দু Identity তাকে সারাজীবন অসম্মান করেছে, তার বিরুদ্ধে এক ধরনের প্রতিবাদ। কিন্তু এতে যে তার জাতের খুব উন্নয়ন হয়েছিল তা নয়, বরং ব্যক্তি যোগেন্দ্র মণ্ডলের কিছু লাভ হয়েছিল, তা সত্যি। তিনি ক্রমশই একটা রাজনৈতিক পরিস্থিতির ক্রীড়নক এ পরিণত হয়েছিলেন, উত্তরকালে তিনি পাকিস্তানের মন্ত্রীও হয়েছিলেন। উপন্যাসে যোগেন্দ্র মণ্ডলের প্রসঙ্গ আছে। যাইহোক, এই নমঃশূদ্র জাতের লোকেরা খুব পরিশ্রমী এবং স্বভাবতই এদের মধ্যে ক্ষোভ ক্রোধ কিছুটা বেশী। মূলত পরিশ্রমের যথাযোগ্য মূল্য না পাওয়ায়ই তাদের মধ্যে এই ক্রোধের জন্ম হয়েছে। এরা অত্যন্ত ঐক্যবদ্ধ জাতি। আর এই জাতির একজন দেবোপম ব্যক্তি হলেন দেবেন বিশ্বাস। দেবেন বিশ্বাস উদ্ধাস্ত নমঃশূদ্র সমাজের নেতা। পূর্বপাকিস্তান থেকে সর্বহারা হয়ে আসা স্বজাতীয় লোকদের পুনঃপ্রতিষ্ঠান, তাদের নিয়ে জনপদ গঠন, তাদের অন্নসংস্থান, তাদের নতুন দেশে নতুন ভাবে থিতু করাই জীবনের

একমাত্র প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য রূপে গ্রহণ করেছেন দেবেন বিশ্বাস। মহিমের সাথে অসুস্থ দেবেন বিশ্বাসের আলোচনায় রয়েছে এর প্রমাণ,

“যে সব মানুষ দণ্ডকারণ্য, আন্দামান কিংবা আসামে হারিয়ে গেছে, আমাদের গোষ্ঠীর সব মানুষ, সবাইকে খুঁজে নিয়ে আসব। এখানে তাদের ঘর করে দেব, জমি করে দেব।”^২

দেবেন বিশ্বাস যথার্থ অর্থেই একজন গোষ্ঠী নেতাক। তাঁকে সকলে বিশ্বাস করে, শ্রদ্ধা করে, মানে। তিনি স্কুল গঠন করেছেন। তাঁর গোষ্ঠীর লোকেরা যাতে পড়াশুনা করতে পারে, যাতে পৃথিবীর সঙ্গে পরিচিত হতে পারে এই চেষ্টাটা তিনি করেছেন। যদিও এটা খুব পরিষ্কার না যে এই সমস্ত কাজ করার জন্য উদ্যমের সাথে যে অর্থের প্রয়োজন হয়, তা উদ্বাস্ত দেবেন বিশ্বাস কোথা থেকে জোগাড় করেছিলেন? তবে উপন্যাস থেকে একথা অনুমান করা যায় যে সম্ভবত তিনি নমঃশূদ্র সমাজের বিত্তশালী পরিবারেরই লোক ছিলেন। আর সেই সাথে লোকটির মধ্যে ব্যক্তিগত প্রতিষ্ঠালাভের লোভটাও ছিল কিছু কম। শুধু এটা নয়, এর পাশাপাশি ব্যক্তিজীবনেও তিনি কিছু অনুশাসন মেনে চলতেন। নিম্নশ্রেণীর হিন্দু সমাজে

যৌনতা, যৌন সম্পর্ক, অবৈধ সম্পর্ক ইত্যাদি নিয়ে এতটা স্পর্শকাতর নেই, যতটা তথাকথিত উচ্চবর্ণীয়দের মধ্যে রয়েছে। এর প্রমাণ আমরা তারাশঙ্করের বিভিন্ন উপন্যাসের মধ্যেও পেয়েছি। কিন্তু দেবেন বিশ্বাস একেবারেই পিউরিটান মানসিকতার লোক ছিলেন। তিনি তাঁর শ্রেণীর উন্নয়নের জন্য নিজেকে যথাসম্ভব এ সমস্ত ব্যাপার থেকে দূরে রাখার চেষ্টা করেছেন, এবং পুত্র মহিমকেও এই পরামর্শই দিয়েছেন।

মহিম দেবেন বিশ্বাসের যথার্থ উত্তরাধিকারী। সে সমস্ত মানুষকে নিজের সাথে নিয়ে চলতে চেয়েছে। সে রাজনৈতিক নেতা হতে চায়নি। সে একজন নতুন entrepreneur, সে দেশসেবক নয়। তাই সে মাস্টারকে বলে,

“চাকরী করিনি, একথা ঠিক নয় স্যার। পাশ করার পর বেশ কিছুদিনের চাকর খুঁজেছি। করবার মত উপযুক্ত চাকরি পাই নি। আর আমি ঠিক গ্রাম উন্নয়নের কাজ করছি না স্যার। গ্রামাঞ্চলে যে সব কাজে পয়সা আছে, সেই সব কাজ আপনাদের কাচ থেকে শেখা বিদ্যাবুদ্ধি দিয়ে শুরু করেছি। যদি সফল হই

অনেক মানুষ উপকৃত হবে।
আমারও রোজগার হবে।
স্বচ্ছাসেবক হওয়ার মতো তো
পারিবারিক অবস্থা আমার নয়
স্যার।”^৩

এই কাজ, এই চেষ্টা করতে
গিয়ে সে তার গোষ্ঠির এবং গোষ্ঠির
বাইরের বেশ কিছু মানুষের
কর্মসংস্থানের ব্যবস্থা করে নিয়েছে। কিন্তু
সরকারি লালফিতার বাঁধন যে কীভাবে
মহিমের মত মানুষের পরিশ্রমী
কর্মকাণ্ডকেও অনেকসময় বিফল করে
দিতে পারে এর প্রমাণ রয়েছে ‘মেঘের
নদী’ উপন্যাসে। মহিম তার সমস্যা
নিয়ে প্রত্যেকটা ব্যাঙ্ক এ গেছে। ব্যাঙ্ক
এর নিয়ম মতে মাছ মারার সময় হল
ফাল্গুন মাস, তাই প্রবল খরায় জ্যৈষ্ঠ
মাসেই জলের অভাবে মাছ মরতে শুরু
করলেও মাছ তুলে বিক্রি করা চলবে
না। এদিকে মহিমের টাকা বাকি পরে
আছে ব্যবসাদারদের কাছে, তাকেও
টাকা দিতে হবে অনেকের। এমন
অবস্থায় বাস্তবের সঙ্গে একেবারে
সম্পর্কহীন সামাজিক, রাজনৈতিক ও
প্রশাসনিক ব্যবস্থার চাপে মহিম হারিয়ে
ফেলছে তার আত্মবিশ্বাস। উৎপাদনের
শৃঙ্খলায় ক্রমশই ঘুণ ধরছে যথার্থ
ব্যাবস্থাপনার অভাবে। মহিম তার
শ্রমিকদের টাকা দিতে পারছে না,

ব্যাবসাদাররা তার পাওনা টাকা দিচ্ছে
না, অন্যদিকে ব্যাঙ্ক এর কিস্তিতে সে
নিজেই দিতে পারছে না। চাপের মধ্যে
আছে মহিম। এই চাপটা সৃষ্টি হয়েছে
মূলত যথার্থ পরিকল্পনার অভাবে।
উপন্যাসের মিটিংটা এখানে খুব জরুরী।
লেখক প্রথমেই বলেছেন যে ‘সভা না
বলে মিটিং বলা ভালো’। সভার মধ্যে
একটা বড় ব্যাপার থাকে অর্থাৎ সভায়
প্রচুর মানুষের অংশগ্রহণের ব্যাপার
থাকে। আর মিটিং মুষ্টিমেয় কিছু
মানুষের যান্ত্রিক উপস্থিতি ও ততোধিক
যান্ত্রিক এজ্যান্ডার মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ
থাকে।

মূলত কৃষক জীবনের সমস্যা
সংকট, পরিকল্পনাবিহীন উন্নয়ন এবং
এই পরিকল্পনাবিহীন উন্নয়নের ফলে
বিভিন্ন কাজকর্ম গ্রামাঞ্চলে কীভাবে নষ্ট
হয়ে যাচ্ছে, এর বর্ণনা রয়েছে
উপন্যাসটিতে। জনজীবনের সঙ্গে
একবারেই সম্পর্কহীন রাজনৈতিক
কর্তব্যাক্তির কীভাবে কাগজে পত্রে
উন্নয়ন করে নিচ্ছেন এবং যার ফলে
মহিমের মত কর্মদ্যোমী মানুষের
কর্মযজ্ঞও বিফলে যাচ্ছে শোষণের মধ্যে
পরে মহিমের মত উদ্যমী মানুষ,
শিক্ষিত ছেলেও চাপ সামলাতে পারছে
না উপন্যাসটির এটি একটি প্রধান
বিষয়। আর এই বিষয়টির উপন্যাসে

দাড় করানোর ক্ষেত্রে একটি সমস্যার দিক রূপে দেখা দিয়েছে যৌনতা। এই যৌনতা এসেছে একটি ধর্ষণের ঘটনা, একটি পরিস্থিতিগত প্রক্রিয়ার মধ্য দিয়ে। এই ঘটনাটির বর্ণনা করতে গিয়ে লেখক বলেছেন কীভাবে বেদনার্ত তন্ত্রাচ্ছন্ন মহিমের খুলে রাখা শার্টের পকেট থেকে টাকা চুরির করার লোভে ঘরে ঢোকে পোলিয়াদের মেয়ে উত্তরা, যে মহিমের খামাড় বাড়িরই এক ঠিকে ঝি বা কর্মচারী। টাকাটা নিতে সে সংকোচ করছে, ভয় পাচ্ছে, আর এই অবসরেই জেগে গেছে মহিম। জেগে সে চোর ধরেছে। চোর ধরতে গিয়ে সামান্য বিদ্রস্তু হয়েছে উত্তরার পোশাক। আর এর পরই ঘটছে মহিমের কর্তৃক উত্তরাকে ধর্ষণের ঘটনা। এই ঘটনাকে উপন্যাসের প্রায় প্রধান রূপে দেখাচ্ছেন লেখক। এটা কি একেবারেই উদ্দেশ্যহীন ভেবে? অভিজিৎ সেনের রচনায় দেখা গেছে যে সমস্যাকে একটি অন্যমাত্রা দেওয়ার জন্য লেখক ব্যবহার করেছেন যৌনতাকে। যৌনতা, যৌনদৃশ্যের বর্ণনা এগুলির বর্ণনায় লেখক ইঙ্গিতে বিশ্বাসী নন, বিবরণে বিশ্বাসী। অথচ বিবরণের মধ্যে এমন একধরনের ভাষিক সংঘম থাকে যে দীর্ঘ বর্ণনা সত্ত্বেও তা পর্ণগ্রাফির স্তরে পৌঁছায় না। এও লেখকের একটা

রচনার কৌশল। এই কাম, যৌনতা, এসবকে এতটা বর্ণনা না করলেও লেখকের উপন্যাসের শিল্পসিদ্ধি ঘটত বলে আমরা বিশ্বাস করি। তবে যৌনতার এই অতিকথিত প্রসঙ্গ যে লেখকের রচনার দুর্বলতা তাও বলা যায় না। কেননা তা কখনই হয়ে ওঠে না।

অভিজিৎ সেন মহিমকে ব্যক্তিচরিত্র হিসাবে গড়ে তোলার প্রয়োজনে, মহিম যে দেবতা নয় একথা স্পষ্টভাবে বুঝিয়ে তোলার প্রয়োজনে, মহিমেরও যে আর পাঁচটা সাধারণ মানুষের মতই চাহিদা রয়েছে তা দেখানোর জন্য মহিমের এই কাজটিকে একধরনের যুক্তিগ্রাহ্যতার দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করেছেন। লেখক এক অদ্ভুত যুক্তি দিয়েছেন এখানে। তিনি বলেছেন মহিমের সারা জীবন ধরে নিম্নশ্রেণীর মানুষ হয়ে থাকার যন্ত্রণার কথা-

“সমস্ত পৃথিবীর বিরুদ্ধে তার প্রতিশোধের আকাঙ্ক্ষা সারা জীবন ধরে বাঙালিক উচ্চবর্ণের কাচ থেকে পাওয়া তার সূক্ষ্ম ও স্থূল ঘৃণা, স্কুল থেকে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় পর্যন্ত দীর্ঘ যাত্রাপথে সংরক্ষণ সুবিধার জন্য পাওয়া শ্লেষ, অপমান, ক্রোধ, বিগত তিনমাসের যৌন যাত্রাপথে সংরক্ষণ সুবিধার জন্য

ক্রমবর্ধমান খরা ও উজ্জীবিত দাবদাহ তার শরীর ও মনে এমন এক বিচিত্র আলকেমি সৃষ্টি করল যা তার জাগ্রত চেতনাকে, তার আত্মশাসনকে এবং দেবেন বিশ্বাসকে পর্যুদস্ত করে ফেলল। তার নিজেকে মনে হল স্বেচ্ছাচারের অধিকার অর্জন করা এক প্রবল ব্যাভিচারি।”^৪

এখানে যেন উপন্যাসের কথক তাঁর নায়কের রক্ষা করার জন্যই এমন যুক্তিজাল রচনা করেছেন। এখানে আরেকটি প্রসঙ্গের উল্লেখ আসতে পারে। মহিমের মত কাজসর্বস্ব মানুষের নেপালী মহিলার বাড়িতে যাওয়া কেন? এই ঘটনাটি আসলে পরবর্তী ঘটনাটিকে বিশ্বাসযোগ্য করে গড়ে তোলার জন্যই উপন্যাসে এসেছে। এই আধা দেবতা, আধা অবতার মহিমও যে রক্তমাংসের দোষে গুণে মিলে একটি মানুষ তাই যেন লেখক এখানে দেখাতে চাইছেন। তাইসে বন্ধু গুইন্দুর সাথে উপস্থিত হয় সেই নেপালী মহিলার ঘরে। সেই মহিলার দিকে আকৃষ্ট হয়ে মহিম যখন তার কাছে যেতে অগ্রসর হয়, তখন সে আয়নায় দেখতে পায় দেবেন বিশ্বাসের প্রতিচ্ছবি। এ শুধুই দেবেন বিশ্বাসের প্রতিচ্ছবি নয়, এ দেবেন বিশ্বাসের

শিক্ষা, সংস্কার, দায়িত্ববোধ। দেবেন বিশ্বাস তাকে শিখিয়েছেন, সমাজ নেতাকে সাধারণ মানুষের মত চললে হবে না, তাই যখনই বাঁধাধরা নিয়মের বাইরে একটু উত্তেজনা, একটু অবৈধতার দিকে মানুষের প্রাণের স্বাভাবিক ঝাঁকবশত অগ্রসর হয়েছে মহিম, তখনই তার সামনে তর্জনী তুলে হাজির হয়েছেন দেবেন বিশ্বাস। এ তারই বিবেক দংশনের প্রতিচ্ছবি।

লেখক মহিম চরিত্র রচনার ক্ষেত্রে অনুপুঞ্জ বর্ণনার মধ্য দিয়ে বারবার এটাই প্রমাণ করতে চেয়েছেন যে, সে কোনো ইউটোপিয়া বা অলীক-অবাস্তব-স্বপ্নময় চরিত্র নয়, সে মানুষ। মহিম চিত্ত দুর্বল এক যুবক, যার দুর্বলতার একটি বিশেষ দিক আছে। নারীর স্তনের প্রতি তার প্রবল আগ্রহ সারাজীবনে, তার উপর পত্নীর গর্ভাবস্থায় তার সাথে স্বাভাবিক দূরত্ব, সারাদিনের পরিশ্রমে বিভ্রান্ত অবস্থা, তন্দ্রাচ্ছন্ন অবস্থায় তার স্বপ্নের বর্ণনা এসমস্ত কিছুর মধ্যেই রয়েছে যৌনতার অনুসঙ্গ। সব মিলিয়ে দেবেন বিশ্বাস পরাভূত হয়েছেন। এখানে প্রশ্ন জাগে তাহলে কি অভিজিৎ সেনের উদ্দেশ্য শুধুমাত্র এই ধর্ষণের ঘটনাটিকে সমর্থন করার মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ? উপন্যাসটি সচেতন পাঠকের দৃষ্টিতে পড়লে দেখা

যায়, গোটা ব্যাপারটি অভিজিৎ ব্যবহার করেছেন অন্য একটি উদ্দেশ্যে, অন্য একটি ব্যাপার উপন্যাসে নিয়ে আসার জন্য।

প্রথমত এই ঘটনাটি দরকার একটি সমস্যাকে চিহ্নিত করার জন্য। উত্তরা ধর্ষিত না হয়ে অন্য কোনো মেয়ে ধর্ষিত হলে ব্যাপারটা এমন দাঁড়াত না। মেয়েটি পোলিয়াদের হওয়া দরকার, মেয়েটি রাজবংশীদের হওয়া দরকার, কেননা উত্তরবঙ্গের কামতাপুরি আন্দোলনকে আখ্যানের ক্রনোটপে তুলে আনতে হবে, চেষ্টা করতে হবে তার যথার্থ স্বরূপ সন্ধানের। এই দায় সমাজ-সচেতন লেখক অভিজিৎ সেনের। সারা উত্তর-পূর্বাঞ্চলে গত ত্রিশ-চল্লিশ বছরের প্রধান সমস্যা হল Identity বা অস্তিত্বের সন্ধান। প্রত্যেকটা ছোট ছোট জনগোষ্ঠী তার অস্তিত্বকে পুনরুদ্ধার করতে চাইছে, এবং যখন দেখছে যে তার সংস্কৃতি, তার স্বাতন্ত্র্য, তার ভাষা, তার আত্মপরিচয় কোনোও না কোনোও ভাবে আক্রান্ত হচ্ছে প্রতিবেশী ক্ষমতামূলী শক্তির দ্বারা, তখন তারা স্বতন্ত্র রাজ্য চাইছে, স্বতন্ত্র অঞ্চল চাইছে, কখনও চাইছে গোটা রাষ্ট্রও। ডিমাসা, মার, রিয়াং, চাকমা সকলেই অর্থাৎ উত্তর-পূর্বভারতের বিচিত্র জনগোষ্ঠী আত্মপরিচয় পুনরুদ্ধারের জন্য

সশস্ত্র আন্দোলনের দিকে যাচ্ছে, যাচ্ছে বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদী আন্দোলনের দিকে। এই আন্দোলনের প্রক্রিয়া, এই জাতিগঠনের প্রক্রিয়া post-colonial জাতি গঠনের প্রক্রিয়া রূপে চিহ্নিত হতে পারে। এই উত্তর পূর্ব ভারতের জাতি গঠনের প্রক্রিয়ায় কোচ বা রাজবংশীরাও নিজস্ব অভিজ্ঞান বা আত্মপরিচয়ের সন্ধানে ব্রতি হয়েছেন। আক্রাসু (All Assam Koch Rajbansi Students Union) আমাদের পশ্চিম আসামের এক প্রবল শক্তিমূল ছাত্র সংগঠন। এই সংগঠনই পশ্চিমবঙ্গে কামতাপুরি নামে খ্যাত। কোকড়াবার অঞ্চল সহ গোয়ালপাড়ার একটা অংশ নিয়ে, বাংলাদেশের রংপুর থেকে বিহারের পুর্ণিয়া পর্যন্ত এবং গোটা উত্তরবঙ্গ জুড়ে ব্যাপক হারে রাজবংশীদের বাস। এই রাজবংশীরা আসামের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলে অসমিয়া, আবার শিলিগুড়িতে-কোচবিহারে-দিনাজপুরে-মালদাতে নিজের বাড়িতে, স্বভূমিতে তারা বাঙালি পরিচয়ে বাস করে। অথচ তারা মোঙ্গলয়েড, আর বাঙালি হচ্ছে অস্ট্রিক মিশ্রিত জনগোষ্ঠী। এই কামতাপুরি আন্দোলনটিকে এক অন্য মাত্রা দেবার জন্য ঘটনাটিকে তুলে আনা হয়েছে উপন্যাসে। প্রথমে এই পোলিয়াদের মেয়ের ধর্ষণের বর্ণনা, তারপর ব্রজেন রায়ের বৃত্তান্ত। কত কত

বাঙালি মানুষ ইউনিয়নের নামে কাজ করে না, কিন্তু বিচার হলে চাকরি যায় কেবল রাজবংশী ব্রজেন রায়ে। তিনি দেখাচ্ছেন রাজবংশীরাও নির্ধাতিত। অভিজিৎ তাই বলে কোন জাতি-গোষ্ঠীর বিচ্ছিন্নতাকে সমর্থন করেন না, কিন্তু এই আন্দোলনের প্রেক্ষিতটি রচনায় তুলে ধরে তিনি দেখাতে চাইছেন যে স্পর্শকাতর সময়ে একটি সাধারণ ঘটনা, একজন পুরুষের দ্বারা নারী নির্ধাতন মাত্র হয়ে থাকে না, বরং হয়ে যায় বাঙালি পুরুষের দ্বারা রাজবংশী নারীর উপর আক্রমণ। রাজবংশী সমাজ তাই বন্ধ ডাকে, রাস্তা অবরোধ করে, বিদ্রোহ করে। এই ভাবে গত বিশ বৎসর ধরে চলতে থাকা রাজবংশীদের স্বতন্ত্র কোচ রাজ্যের জন্য আন্দোলনের ছবি উঠে আসে উপন্যাসে। এই বিষয়টি উপন্যাসে স্থান পাওয়ায় এটি কেবল কৃষক জীবন ভিত্তিকতার মধ্যে সীমাবদ্ধ হয়ে থাকে নি, পেয়েছে নতুন মাত্রা। উপন্যাসে যুক্ত হয়েছে বাস্তবতার আরেকটি তল, সে মহিমের পৌরুষে মুগ্ধ হয়েছিল, কিন্তু মহিম যখন তাকে সমস্ত শক্তি দিয়ে চেপে ধরলো, তখন মেয়েটির মুখ থেকে একটি আর্ত চিৎকার (মহিমের যা ‘শীৎকার’ বলে মনে হয়েছিল) ব্যাতিত আর কোন আওয়াজই বেরোল না, এবং তার পর

থেকে গোটা উপন্যাসে জুড়ে মেয়েটি বোবা হয়েই থাকল। উপন্যাসের পরাপাঠে উঠে আসলো নিম্নবর্গের ধর্ষিতা মেয়ের অভিযোগ শোনবার কান আমাদের সভ্য রাষ্ট্রের আজও তৈরি হয়নি। উত্তরাকে কেন্দ্রে রেখে আখ্যানটির একটি নারীচেতনাবাদী ভাষ্য রচনা করাও সম্ভব। অন্যদিকে মহিমের স্ত্রী মনিমালার প্রসঙ্গটিও এখানে উঠে আসতে পারে, উত্তরা অশিক্ষিত, আদিবাসী মেয়ে। কিন্তু মনিমালা ত শিক্ষিত, রাজ্যের শিক্ষক নিযুক্তির পরীক্ষায় সে উত্তীর্ণ হয়েছে ভালোভাবেই। ধর্ষক, বিশ্বাসঘাতক স্বামীর সাথে আর থাকতে পারবে না বলে স্কুলে চাকরি নিয়ে দূরে কোথাও চলে যাবার কথাও বলে মনিমালা। কিন্তু পরমুহুর্তেই সুজাতা দিদিমনির মুখে,

“তা ছাড়া তোদের ছেলে আছে। তার কাছে ভবিষ্যতে জবাবদিহি করতে হতে পারে।”^৫

এই সামান্য কথায় সে দমে যায় কেন। নারীর এই অবদমন আসলে পুরুষতান্ত্রিক সমাজের বহুমুখী শোষণেরই ফল।

যাইহোক, মহিমের কেস নিস্পত্তি হয় সম্ভবত দশ-পনেরো হাজার টাকায়। কিন্তু একথা জানা বাকী থেকে যায় যে, উত্তরা কি আদৌ ভয়

পেয়েছিল, সে আদৌ কি চেয়েছিল? আমাদের সমাজে প্রান্তিক নারীর অবস্থান কোথায়? তাঁকে নিয়ে রাজনীতি হয়, রাস্তা অবরোধ হয়, তাকে কেন্দ্র করেই চতুর্থ বর্গের কর্মচারী সমাজের নেতা হয়ে ওঠে, তাকে নিয়ে বিশাল বক্তৃতা হয়, কিন্তু মেয়েটির আওয়াজ আর শোনা যায় না, মেয়েটির মুখ আর দেখা যায় না। নানান রকমের বার্তার মধ্যে দিয়ে শোষণমূলক সমাজের নানা অনাচারকে অনাবৃত করার চেষ্টা করেছেন লেখক তাঁর এই ‘মেঘের নদী’ উপন্যাসে। উপন্যাস ছোট্ট পরিসরে বাস্তবতার একটা বহুমাত্রিক ছবি হয়ে উঠেছে। এখানেই অভিজিতের সার্থকতা। অভিজিৎ একটা গল্পে কেবল নিটোল গল্পই বলেন না, কেননা শুধুমাত্র কাহিনি গ্রন্থনা তাঁর উদ্দেশ্য নয়। তিনি সেই গল্পটি কার্যকারণ সূত্রে গেঁথে তাঁর একটা নির্দিষ্ট পরিণতি দানও তাঁর দায় নয়। তাই কাহিনির শেষে মহিম-মনিমালা কি হল তা জানা যায় না, যদিও বিচারের বাণী নীরবে নিভূতে কাঁদে, অর্থাৎ পোলিয়া মেয়েটি উপযুক্ত বিচার পায় না, এমন ইঙ্গিতে পাওয়া যায়। কিন্তু গল্পটি শেষ করার দায়িত্ব লেখক নেন না।

‘মেঘের নদী’ কে উপন্যাস না বলে একটা বড় গল্পই বলা যেতে

পারে। কিছু কিছু narration দীর্ঘ তাই আকারে কিছুটা বড় হয়েছে। একদিকে কামতাপুরি আন্দোলন, একদিকে প্রান্তিক নারীর অবস্থান, পাশাপাশি সমাজে মধ্যবিত্ত নারীর অবস্থান এইভাবে নানা দিক থেকে বাস্তবতার নানা মাত্রা এই উপন্যাসটিতে ধরা পরেছে। আমরা দেখেছি যে অভিজিৎ কেবল কাহিনিই বলেছেন না, বরং কাহিনির অন্তর্ভবনে দেশ-কালের যথার্থ বাস্তবতাকেই প্রতিবিম্বিত করেছেন। লেখক তাঁর রচনায় সময়ের অন্তর্ভূত বাস্তবতার সকল মাত্রাকেই অনাবৃত করার চেষ্টা করেন। অত্যন্ত সময় সচেতন লেখক তিনি। তাঁর রচনার উপজীব্য বিষয় হল মানুষের দ্বারা মানুষের শোষণ। এই বিষয়টাকেই আমরা বোঝার চেষ্টা করব আমাদের গবেষণার মধ্য দিয়ে। বাস্তবতা সম্বন্ধে লেখকের নিজস্ব কিছু বক্তব্য আছে। বাস্তব কীভাবে নির্মিত হয়, তথাকথিত আধুনিক সাহিত্যিকেরা বাস্তবকে কীভাবে নির্মাণ করেন। তাঁর কাছে বাস্তব মানে অজস্র খুঁটিনাটি ঘটনার সমাহার। শ্রেণী ভিত্তিক সমাজে একনতুন বাস্তবতার প্রচার করেন অভিজিৎ সেন। আর তাঁর এই বাস্তবসম্বন্ধীয় ভাবনার সার্থক উদাহরণ হল তাঁর ‘মেঘের নদী’ উপন্যাস।

তথ্যসূত্র-

১. অভিজিৎ সেন – ‘মেঘের নদী’, দেজ পাবলিশিং, কলকাতা জানুয়ারী ২০০৫, পৃষ্ঠা
– ৬৭
২. অভিজিৎ সেন – ‘মেঘের নদী’, দেজ পাবলিশিং, কলকাতা জানুয়ারী ২০০৫, পৃষ্ঠা
– ১৭
৩. অভিজিৎ সেন – ‘মেঘের নদী’, দেজ পাবলিশিং, কলকাতা জানুয়ারী ২০০৫, পৃষ্ঠা
– ৬৭
৪. অভিজিৎ সেন – ‘মেঘের নদী’, দেজ পাবলিশিং, কলকাতা জানুয়ারী ২০০৫, পৃষ্ঠা
– ৭৪
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– ৮৬

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রবীন্দ্রনাথের ধর্ম ও সমাজ বিষয়ক জবনাঃ নির্বাচিত ‘চিঠিপত্র’র প্রেক্ষিতে

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Abstract

If we follow we will see that one third of Rabindranath’s Poetry are indication of expand of literature of letters. Viewing the subject variant of multiple thinking of the literature of letters, it seems that Rabindra paragraph could not get full form if he did not present it to us. In his every letters we see subject variant. Religion, Society, city life, Independence of women, Education, thinking about nature, love; nothing left in his script. All letters written by him in different time are contained in books named “Chinnopotro”, “Bhanusinger Potro”, Russiaer Chiti”. His first countable Book “Europe Probashis Potro”, describes the story of his England journey at teenage. In spite of these the number of letters which are written addressing to his wife, son, relative-friend, pal, colleague & co-operator, are not a lesser quantity; some of these are attached in the book “Chiti Patra”.Where we find Rabindranath as a human being.

Answers toward questions of Hemantabala Devi (Beloved, personable, Hemantabala is daughter of zaminder Brojendrakishore Roychoudhury of Moimonsing District of Gouripur, & wife of zaminder Brojendrakanta of Rongpur Bhitobongo. She left her family & had become Baishnav, and in alias name communicated with Rabindranath through writing letters, appreciated for “Sesher kabita” & thus starts corresponding by Rabindranath of miscellaneous religious & socialism questions, we find the thinking of Rabindranath about religion & society.

Rabindranath thinks the dirt of body clean through taking bath, but the thinking about clean of mind through taking bath is nothing but foolishness. So, estimating any community as worthless is a sin. All people in spite of different cast & creed should understand that God is devoted always for every era, not let think them personal property which degrades God. If this thinking

will not become clearly known to all, till then in "India" Gods are degraded, Human being are degraded; never this defame will go away.

রবীন্দ্রনাথের গদ্য রচনার প্রায় এক তৃতীয়াংশ জুড়ে লক্ষ্য করা যায় তাঁর পত্রসাহিত্যের ব্যাপ্তি এই পত্রসাহিত্যের বিষয়-বৈচিত্র্য ভাবনার বহুমুখী প্রকাশ-ঐশ্বর্য দেখে মনে হয় যেন রবীন্দ্র রচনা হয়তো বা পূর্ণাঙ্গ রূপ পেত না, যদি না এই পত্রসাহিত্য তিনি আমাদের উপহার দিতেন। তাঁর প্রতিটি চিঠিতে আমরা দেখতে পাই বিষয়-বৈচিত্র্য। ধর্ম, সমাজ, পল্লীজীবন, নারীর স্বাভাবিকতা, শিক্ষা, প্রকৃতিচেতনা, প্রেম কোনো কিছুই বাদ পড়েনি তাঁর লেখনীতে। তাঁর বিভিন্ন সময়ে লিখিত পত্রগুলি স্থান পেয়েছে 'ছিন্নপত্র', 'ভানুসিংহের পত্র' 'রাশিয়ার চিঠি' ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন গ্রন্থে। তাঁর প্রথম গণনীয় গ্রন্থ 'ইউরোপ প্রবাসীর পত্র', কৈশোরে তাঁর ইংল্যান্ড ভ্রমণের কাহিনি এতে বর্ণিত। এছাড়া পত্নী, পুত্র, আত্মীয়-বন্ধু, সুহৃদ, সহকর্মী ও সহযোগীদের তিনি যত চিঠি লেখেন তার পরিমাণও কম নয়, বহুখণ্ড 'চিঠিপত্র' গ্রন্থে তারা গ্রথিত। মানুষ রবীন্দ্রনাথের পরিচয় আছে যাতে।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ কর্তৃক হেমন্তবালা দেবীকে রবীন্দ্রনাথের স্নেহধন্যা, ব্যাক্তিত্বময়ী হেমন্তবালা ময়মনসিংহ জেলার গৌরীপুরের জমিদার ব্রজেন্দ্রকিশোর রায়চৌধুরীর কন্যা ও রংপুর ভিতরবঙ্গের জমিদার ব্রজেন্দ্রকান্ত রায়চৌধুরীর স্ত্রী, তিনি সংসার ত্যাগ করে বৈষ্ণব ধর্ম গ্রহণ করেছিলেন এবং ছদ্মনামে রবীন্দ্রনাথকে পত্র লিখে তাঁর 'যোগাযোগ', শেষের কবিতা'র জন্য অভিনন্দন জ্ঞাপন করেন এবং সেই

সূত্রেই তাঁদের পত্র বিনিময় শুরু।) তাঁর বিভিন্ন রকম ধর্মীয় ও সামাজিক প্রশ্নের প্রদেয় উত্তরে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ধর্ম ও সমাজ বিষয়ক চিন্তাসমূহ প্রকাশিত।

'চিঠিপত্র'র নবম খণ্ডে অন্তর্ভুক্ত হেমন্তবালা দেবীকে লিখিত প্রথম, দ্বিতীয়, তৃতীয়, চতুর্থ, পঞ্চম, ষষ্ঠ, সপ্তম, অষ্টম পত্রে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বারবার যে-কথাটি বলতে চেয়েছেন, তা হলো ভারতবর্ষীয় হিন্দুসমাজের ধর্ম ও আচারের অসদ্ব্যবহার। সেই অসদ্ব্যবহারের ফলে সমাজে অনৈক্যের সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। তিনি হেমন্তবালাকে অষ্টম পত্রে জানান---

"..... সমস্ত পৃথিবীর মধ্যে একমাত্র ভারতবর্ষেই ভগবানকে পূজার ক্ষেত্রে জাতের বেড়ায় বিভক্ত করা হয়েছে অর্থাৎ যেখানে শত্রুরা মেলবার অধিকার রাখে, হিন্দুরা সেখানেও মিলতে পারে না। এই মর্মান্তিক বিচ্ছেদে হিন্দুরা পদে পদে পরাভূত। তারা সর্বজনের ঈশ্বরকে খর্ব করে নিজেদের পঙ্গু করেছে--- মানুষকে হিন্দু সমাজ অবমাননার দ্বারা দূর করে দিয়েছে সকলের চেয়ে লজ্জার বিষয় এই যে সেই অবমাননা ধর্মের নামেই।" (চিঠিপত্র ৯. পৃঃ ৩১০-৩১১)

তিনি আবার সপ্তম পত্রে (হেমন্তবালা দেবীর পত্র) একজায়গায় বলেন যে বাহ্য আচার মানুষে মানুষে ভেদ ঘটায় এবং মানব প্রেমের মাঝখানে প্রাচীর তোলে,

ঈশ্বরপ্রদত্ত বুদ্ধিকে অবজ্ঞা করে শাস্ত্রের অক্ষর বাঁচাবার জন্যে খুনোখুনি করতেও অগ্রসর হয়, তাকে বর্জন করে নাস্তিক ধর্ম গ্রহণ করতে তাঁর কোনো লজ্জা নেই। তিনি যুক্তির প্রতি আস্থা, মানুষের প্রতি শ্রদ্ধা, মানবপ্রেম এইটিকেই মানবজীবনের বড় সত্য বলে জেনেছেন। তাঁর দৃষ্টিতে জাতি-ধর্ম নির্বিশেষে মানবজাতি একই ধারিত্রীমার সন্তান, কাজেই পৃথক মনোভাব আসাটাই অনুচিত।

ষষ্ঠ পত্রে তিনি বলেছেন হিন্দু সমাজের অনৈক্যের কথা। কিন্তু এই অনৈক্য মুসলমান, খ্রিষ্টান সমাজের নেই। তিনি বলেন---

“মুসলমান, ধর্মে এক, আচারে এক, বাংলার মুসলমান, মাদ্রাজের মুসলমান, পাঞ্জাবের মুসলমান এবং ভারতবর্ষের বাইরের মুসলমান সমাজের সবাই এক, বিপদে আপদে সবাই এক হয়ে দাঁড়াতে পারে, এদের সঙ্গে ভাঙ্গাচুরো হিন্দু জাত পারবে না।” (চিঠিপত্র ৯, পৃঃ ২০৮-২০৯)

আর আমরা প্রায়ই সমাজের এই ধর্মের অধার্মিকতার জন্যেই লক্ষ্য করি, প্রায়শই সামাজিক অসম্মান থেকে বাঁচার জন্যে নিম্নশ্রেণির হিন্দুরা মুসলমান এবং খ্রিষ্টান হচ্ছে। কিন্তু ভাটপাড়ার চৈতন্য নেই।

ছুৎমার্গ, আচার, সংস্কার-এসবই আমাদের কাছে বড়ো, সত্যধর্ম আমাদের কাছে এজন্যই বড়ো নয়। শুচিতা রক্ষার জন্যে আমরা মানুষকে দূরে ঠেকিয়ে রাখি। এই প্রসঙ্গে আমরা রায়কে লিখিত

রবীন্দ্রনাথের একটি পত্রের কথা স্মরণ করতে পারি। তিনি সেখানে অস্পৃশ্যতা, ধর্মের অপপ্রয়োগের প্রতি ধিক্কারবাণী বর্ষণ করে বলেন---

“প্রবাদ আছে কথায় চিড়ে ভেজে না। তেমনি কথার কৌশলে অসম্মান তা প্রমাণ হয় না। কুকুরকে স্পর্শ করি, মানুষের স্পর্শ বাঁচিয়ে চলি। বিড়াল ইঁদুর খায়, উচ্ছিষ্ট খেয়ে আসে, খেয়ে আচমন করে না, তদবস্থায় ব্রাহ্মণীর কোলে এসে বসলে গৃহকর্ম অশুচি হয় না। মাছ নানা মলিন দ্রব্য খেয়ে থাকে, সেই মাছকে উদরস্থ করেন বাঙালি ব্রাহ্মণ, তাতে দেহে দোষ স্পর্শ হয় না। ... উচ্চবর্ণের মানুষ যেসব দুষ্কৃতি করে থাকে তার দ্বারা তাদের চরিত্র কলুষিত হলেও দেবমন্দিরে তাদের অবাদ প্রবেশ।” (রবীন্দ্রনাথের চিন্তাজগৎ সমাজচিন্তা-র অন্তর্গত মতিলাল রায়কে লিখিত পত্র, পৃঃ ২৫৬)

রবীন্দ্রনাথের মতে, জাতি ধর্ম নির্বিশেষে সকল দেশের সকল জাতি সমান, জাতের দোহাই দিয়ে কাউকে হীনজ্ঞান করা উচিত নয় তাঁর মতে। “সবার উপরে মানুষ সত্য তাহার উপরে নাই” যুগ যুগান্ত থেকে একথা বলা হচ্ছে রবীন্দ্রনাথও এই মতে একমত। এ বাণী যুগের বাণী। কবি একথাটাকেই বলেছেন একটু অন্যভাবে। কবির ধর্ম একাধারে বাস্তবের উপর ও ভাবের উপর প্রতিষ্ঠিত। এ ধর্ম পরিপূর্ণ মানবতার ধর্ম। এ ধর্ম কর্মে কঠোর জ্ঞানে উজ্জ্বল, ভক্তিতে রসাপ্লুত। সৌন্দর্যে সমন্বিত।

হেমন্তবালা দেবীর কাছ থেকে পূজার বর্ণনা শনার পর তিনি উত্তরে বলেন---

“তোমার লেখায় তোমাদের পূজার বর্ণনা শুনে আমার মনে হয় এ সমস্তই অবরুদ্ধ অতৃপ্ত অসম্পূর্ণ জীবনের আত্মবিড়ম্বনা। আমার মানুষরূপী ভগবানের পূজাকে এত সহজ করে তুলে তাঁকে যারা প্রত্যহ বঞ্চিত করে তারা প্রত্যহ নিজে বঞ্চিত হয়। তাদের দেশে মানুষ একান্ত উপেক্ষিত, সেই উপেক্ষিত মানুষের দৈন্য ও দুঃখ সে দেশ ভারাক্রান্ত হয়ে পৃথিবীতে সকল দেশের পিছনে পড়ে আছে। এ সব কথা বলে’ তোমাকে ব্যথা দিতে আমার সহজে ইচ্ছা করে না – কিন্তু যেখানে মন্দিরের দেবতা মানুষের দেবতার প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী, যেখানে দেবতার নামে মানুষ প্রবঞ্চিত সেখানে আমার মন ধৈর্য্য মানে না। গয়াতে যখন বেড়াতে গিয়েছিলেম তখন পশ্চিমের কোন্ এক পূজামুগ্ধা রাণী পাণ্ডার পা মোহরে ঢেকে দিয়েছিলেন-ক্ষুধিত মানুষের অন্নের থালি থেকে কেড়ে নেওয়া অন্নের মূল্যে এই মোহর তৈরি। দেশের লোকের শিক্ষার জন্যে আরোগ্যের জন্যে এরা কিছু দিতে জানে না, অথচ নিজের অর্থ-সামর্থ্য সময় প্রীতি ভক্তি সমস্ত দিচ্ছে সেই বাদীমূলে যেখানে তা নিরর্থক হয়ে যাচ্ছে। মানুষের প্রতি মানুষের এত নিরৌৎসুক্য, এত ঔদাসীন্য অন্য কোনো দেশেই নেই, এর প্রধান

কারণ এই যে, এ দেশে হতভাগা মানুষের সমস্ত প্রাপ্য দেবতা নিচ্ছেন হরণ করে।” (“রবীন্দ্রনাথের চিঠি অন্তরঙ্গ নারীকে” পৃঃ ১২৭)

রবীন্দ্রনাথ আরও মনে করেন, আমাদের দেশ ভারতবর্ষের পিছিয়ে পড়ার পেছনে যে কারণটি আসল, তা হল মানুষকে হীনজ্ঞান করা। আমাদের ধর্মকে যদি সত্য পথে পরিচালিত করা যেত, পূজার মধ্যে যথার্থ বীর্য্য, সেবার মধ্যে ত্যাগ থাকত, আমাদের সাধনা যদি যথার্থ ক্ষেত্রে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়ে মানুষকে সম্পূর্ণ আত্মীয়তার সঙ্গে স্বীকার করতে পারত তাহলে কখনোই দেশকে এত যুগ ধরে এত দৈন্য এত অপমান সহ্য করতে হতো না। দেশের এক প্রান্ত থেকে অন্য প্রান্তের লোক এত অজ্ঞানের চাপে অসহায় ভাবে দৈবের দিকে তাকিয়ে বিলীন হতো না।

সেই প্রসঙ্গে তিনি অপরদিকে ইউরোপবাসীর ভাবনার কথা প্রকাশ করতে গিয়ে বলেন-

“ইউরোপে এমন অনেক নাস্তিক আছেন যাঁরা বিশ্বমানবের উপলব্ধির দ্বারা তাঁদের কর্মকে মহৎ করে-তোলেন, তাঁরা দূর কালের জন্যে প্রাণপণ করেন, সর্বদেশের জন্যে। তাঁরা যথার্থ ভক্ত। যাঁরা আচারে অনুষ্ঠানে সারা জীবন অত্যন্ত শুচি হয়ে কাটালেন, ভাবরসে মগ্ন হয়ে রইলেন, তাঁরা তো নিজেরই পূজা করলেন – তাঁদের শুচিতা তাঁদেরই আপনার, তাঁদের রসসম্ভোগ নিজের মধ্যেই আবর্তিত, আর মুক্তি বলে

যদি কিছু তাঁরা পান তবে সেটা তো তাঁদেরই পারলৌকিক কোম্পানির কাগজ। ---আমি যাকে পাবার প্রয়াস করি সেই মনের মানুষ সকল দেশের সকল মানুষের মনের মানুষ, তিনি স্বদেশ স্বজাতির উপরে। আমার এই অপরাধে যদি আমি স্বদেশের লোকের অস্পৃশ্য, সনাতনীদেব চক্ষুশূল হই তবে এই আঘাত আমাকে স্বীকার করে নিতেই হবে।” (“রবীন্দ্রনাথের চিঠি অন্তরঙ্গ নারীকে” পৃঃ ১৩০)

রবীন্দ্রনাথ মনে করেন দেহের কলুষ জলে ধুলেই যায়, কিন্তু মনের কলুষ বাহ্য স্নানে দূর হয় মনে করা মূঢ়তা। কাজেই, কোনও জাতিকে হীনজ্ঞান করা অন্যায়। জাতি-ধর্ম নির্বিশেষে প্রতিটি মানুষকে উপলব্ধি করতে হবে যে দেবতা সর্বকালে সবার চির আরাধ্য, তাঁকে ব্যক্তিগত সম্পত্তি ভাবা মানে দেবতার অপমান। এই ধারণা সম্বন্ধে অবহিত না হলে ‘ভারতবর্ষে’ দেবতা অপমানিত, মানুষ অপমানিত; এই কলঙ্কের বোঝা মুছবে না।

সহায়ক গ্রন্থাবলী :

১. “চিঠিপত্র” – রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর।
২. “রবীন্দ্রনাথের চিঠি অন্তরঙ্গ নারীকে”, ডঃ দিগ্বিজয় দে সরকার, এন ই পাবলিশার্স, কলকাতা ।
৩. “আমার দৃষ্টিতে রবীন্দ্রনাথ”, ডঃ ব্রজগোপাল রায়, ত্রিপুরাবাণী প্রকাশনী, আগরতলা, ত্রিপুরা।
৪. “দ্বিরালাপ ৪৭”, সাহিত্যপত্র, এপ্রিল ২০১০, কোয়ালিটি গ্রাফিক্স প্রকাশনা, শিলচর ।

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Potentiality of Women Unveiled: Microfinance...

A study on Gobardhana Block of Barpeta District, Assam

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Abstract

Privation of exposure, women cluster of our society were ignored, their potentiality and credentials never note-of for productive utilization, thus, their qualities remains unveiled. The SHG movement of microfinance (mF), bring an exception and has able to reach all over the world for her easy factors of financing , where women occupied the major share, as such, the entrepreneurial and other potentialities of this neglected cluster, become a case of concern. Same instance is in the Gobardhana Block, where woman's shows their potentialities of excellence in various economic activities, especially in weaving and farming. But, to have desired result, women clients of mF are in need of due care and attention like training, management etc. as demand by the time.

Key words: Microfinance, Potentiality, SHG, Unveil, Women

Introduction: In male dominated society of ours, the “women cluster” is always ill-treated, underweights and are hardly recognized of productive utilization, as such, their potentiality never got a chance to explored. For India, where employment avenues is remains a matter of anxiety, where figures of employment is suffering from “disguised-unemployment”, where

the gap of demand and supply of employment is still healthy, thus, “utilization of women potentiality” is the normal case of ignorance. But, thanks to the concept of “microfinance” (mF), which coined from Bangladesh by Md. Yunus, (the Nobel laureate in 2005, for peace) that has able to cover the ignorant of all sides and section, the poor, especially rural poor and women and the deprived

of formal financial system, under the shadow of mF and also leading towards „financial inclusions“. Mf has become an important component of development, poverty reduction and economic regeneration, women empowerment strategy around the world. By the early twenty first century, tens of millions of people in more than 100 countries were accessing services from formal and semi-formal microfinance institutions (MFIs) (Humble, 2009). Again, women are found more sincere, dedicated and loyal, while they are in economic activity, then male counterpart (except in risk bearing factor), and that is being evidence by many success stories of microfinance, world-wide. Those success stories and achievements became a revolutionary mechanism in the world and every country accelerated to adopt some programmes of mF, especially in the developing countries. Interestingly, mF able to motivate more women, for her easy features and for them it is an entry door to economic activity and results of mF today is the outcome of their sincerity and dedication. Considering their potentiality with mF programme many initiatives had been taken, as in 1997, Micro Credit Summit, held in Washington DC, adopted a resolution to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families,

especially the women of families with credit for self-employment. Again, by proclaiming 2005 as the International Year of Microcredit, the General Assembly of the United Nations requested that “the Year’s observance be a special occasion for giving impetus to microcredit programs throughout the world” (Sharma Borah, 2008). This was in response to microcredit occupying a commanding position in economic development and purposive social change as evidenced by its continuing growth in terms of volume, geographical coverage, and influence over social, economic and political processes, especially women empowerment. The institutions, such as FWWB and RMK are two organisations charged with growing the seeds and saplings of the sector and preparing them for commercial financing by the banks. Friends of Women’s World Banking (FWWB) is a private NGO, and RMK an NGO funded and controlled by the Department of Women and Child Development of the central government, (Ghate. 2009), are the replication of women performance.

Objective:

The objective of the paper is to highlight the performance of women clients in mF programme and how that aiding in productive utilization of women, with special reference to the Gobardhana block

of Barpeta district, Assam.

Methodologies adopted:

The study has been made taking both the primary and secondary data and for primary data questionnaire being used and surveyed in Gobardhana block of Barpeta district. Primary data has been collected from the sample of 10% (i.e. of 119 No's of villages) of the total village of the block. Again, from the selected sample village the mF beneficiaries of SHG model have been selected randomly. While selecting the SHGs, they were categories in terms of „age“ in three groups (i.e. SHGs> 7yrs; SHGs>5yrs but < 7yrs; and SHGs> 3yrs but <5yrs ;), accordingly 368 no's of SHGs has been selected and 10% (i. e. 37 SHGs) of such selected SHGs has been considered as sample of study.

Area of the Study: the Lower Assam District Barpeta, covers an area of 3245 square K.Ms and is bounded by international border i.e. Bhutan Hills in the North, Nalbari District in the East, Kamrup and Goalpara District in the South and Bongaigaon District in the West. The District lies between latitude 26'5" North - 26'49" North and longitude 90'39' East - 91'17' East. The district, having 12 blocks and Gobardhana Block is one of the leading block with highest numbers of village and that is the outcome of merge

of a part of BTC (Bodoland Territorial council) area with this block, as the newly created Baska District of BTC has been attach with Gobardhana Block. There are 119 No's of village along with total population of 1, 76,873, out of that Male- 90,720 Female- 86,153, (Census 2001).

Conceptual Framework:

Microfinance:

Microfinance means the provision of thrift, credit and other financial securities and product of very small amount of the poor in rural, semi-urban or urban areas for enabling them to raise their income levels and improve their living standards. –RBI

Microfinance can be defined as giving access to financing to as many poor people as possible, allowing them to use their capacities in favour of durable development. (Yunus, 2003)

“Microfinance represents a participatory approach to development where people can take control of their lives and because of self-efficiency one does not need to be an individual of significant means to take creative business ideas, save according to ones owns priorities and ultimately plan for the future”

–Joel Wani. (The prominent economist of the United Nation.)

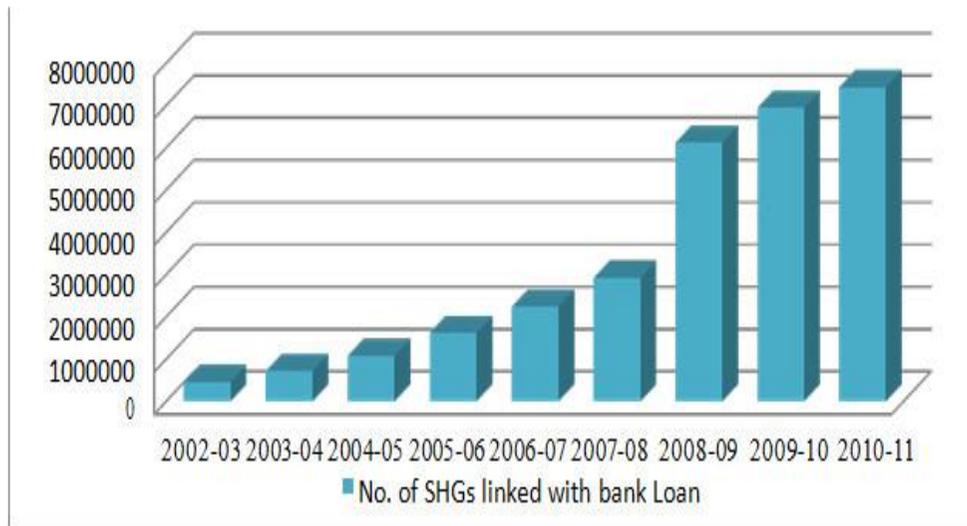
Women performance in

Microfinance:

Mf programs have significant potential for contributing to women' economic, social and political empowerment. Access to savings and credit can initiate or strengthen a series of interlinked and mutually reinforcing empowerment. Mf development has emerged as major strategy to combat the twin issues of poverty and unemployment that continue to pose a major threat to the polity and economy of both the developed and developing countries, (Basu). A number of agencies- Government as well as Non-government Organizations-are, today involved in mF development programmes. Considering the remarkable success of women in mF programme worldwide and its active role as „driving force“ for the development of poor and vulnerable sections of our society, the concept of mF has able to fetch attention of policy makers. Thus, World Summit for Social Development, which was held in Copenhagen, in March 1995, had underscored the importance of

improving access to credit for small producers, landless farmers and other low-income individuals, *particularly women* and disadvantaged groups. Again, while we talk about women in mF, it is the SHG model which able to attract huge women clients world-wide. The SHG-Bank linkage program, in India, which commenced in 1992, with a target to link of 500 SHGs, has grown phenomenally (Sundaram, 2009). As per NABARD report (2010-11), that figure reached to 7.462 million SHG covering over 97 million rural households. Of the total 7.462 million SHGs, over 4.78 million SHGs have access to direct credit facilities from banks with an outstanding loan amount of Rs. 312.21 billion as at end of March 2011. As dominating model of microfinance, the SHG model has made rapid growth in terms of numbers of SHGs, loan disbursement and outstanding and also in linking of SHGs to banks, what is called SBLP. The growth trend can be observed as follows:

Fig: 1. Growth trends in SHG (SBLP):



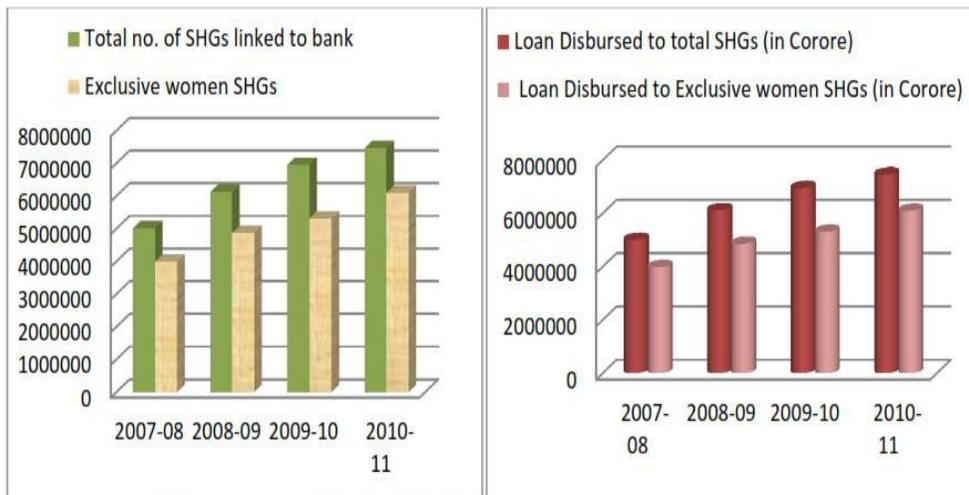
Source: Srinivasan, 2009, NABARD (status of micro finance in India, 2010-11).

One of the most distinguishing features of the program is that a majority (81.7 per cent) of the SHGs are exclusive woman groups. Women SHGs have accounted for 75.5 per cent of the total savings and 83.7 per cent of the total loan outstanding of SHGs in 2010-11 (Sinha, 2012). In mf status reports of NABARD, the mf performance has been

disclosed, which depicts the SHG model as the only dominating model in India in terms of clients reach, loan disbursement, loan outstanding, group formation etc. The details of total SHGs, number of women SHGs and credit linked from the last four years are given below:

Year	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Total SHG linked to	5009794	6121147	6953000	7462000
Exclusive Women	3986093	4863921	5310000	6098000
Loan Disbursed all	8849.26	12253.51	14453.30	14547.73
Loa Disbursed to Exclusive Women SHGs (In Corore)	7474.26	10527.38	12429.39	12622.33

Source: Status of Microfinance in India, NABARD.



Source: Status of Microfinance in India, NABARD.

The performance of women in SHG model of mF can be considered satisfactory in terms of SHGs formation, loan

disbursed or linking towards banks, because they become the key factors of the model. Interestingly, the performance scenario of women in this model is not an over-look for India, but it is an average scenario all over the world. As for example, the „Grameen Bank“ of Bangladesh, is women dominated organization, where all the executive members are women, thus an replication of unveiling of women potentiality in practice. The dealing organisations and agencies like NGOs, Banks etc. feel confident and secure, as women are more sincere and honest in transactions and those intermediaries are willing to execute more transaction with them and the high recovery rate

has been encouraged by many banks,(Purkaystha, 2004).

Women participation in mF in the Block:

The block is one of the leading blocks of the district in terms of numbers of village and population, as such; it has good numbers of mF clients, which in majority are women. Again, among the various models of mF, the „SHG model“ is the only dominating model of the block and is under the domain of women clients, thus, the study is confine to the said model.

Beneficiaries of mF in the Block: The beneficiary of mF here means the clients, who deal in mF in the block. The study reveals the following position of SHG beneficiaries:

Table: 1 Clients under SHG model in Gobardhana block up to Dec. 2011:

MFI of the Block	Total SHG	Total Members	Tribal Members	Non-tribal Members	Group Size (Members)
Gobardhana Block	1,480	18,760	5,482	13278	10 to 16
ASOMI	1,170	9,870	997	8873	5 to 10
RGVN	948	3,958	403	3555	05
Bandhan	108	2,867	346	2521	25 to 30
Total	3,706	35,455	7,228	28,227	-----

Source: Annual Reports of MFI Branches.

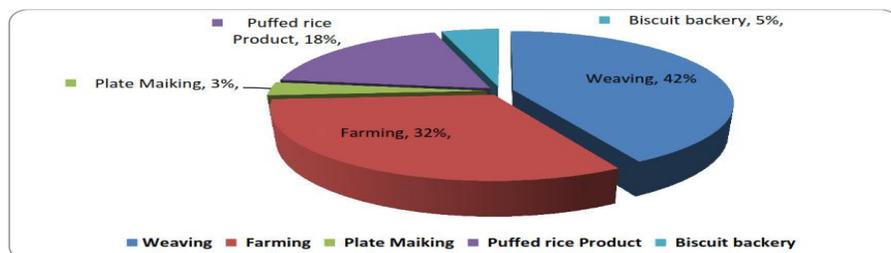
So, of the total members of mF in the block 20.39 percent are tribal and rest 79.39 percent are non-tribal clients, out of that, women members accounts for 93 percent, who engaged in SHGs.

To consider the performance of women in mF and to reach to the objective of the study some factors which generally taken as the performance indicator are replicated here. But studies reveals that, among the others factors, „economic factors“, (i.e. income generation factors) can be considered as dominating one in a developing country, (Morduch & Haley, 2001). So, more stress has been given in „economic factor“ and efforts are also made to know the saving behaviors of the women in the block. Thus, the study primarily focuses on the following:

- Nature of economic activity initiated;
- Income and savings position of women members;

Nature of economic activity: During field investigation, the respondents were asked about the nature of activities, they involved in. Though, mF programmes are not designed to follow any particular category of activity, but considering her basic nature of thrift, small size credit, group approach etc. it's generally influences the mF clients to have small and ancillary types of activities/ industries, which mainly required small amount of investment, (Soile, et al., 2003).

The types of activities noticed during investigation in the block are weaving, farming like piggery, dairy, fishery, goatary, poultry, making plates by of areca nut-leaf, making various types of product out of puffed-rice, Biscuit bakery etc. The weaving and farming activities are found to be two major economic activities in block and become the main earning source, and following diagram is being used to present the proportion of mF clients in various activities



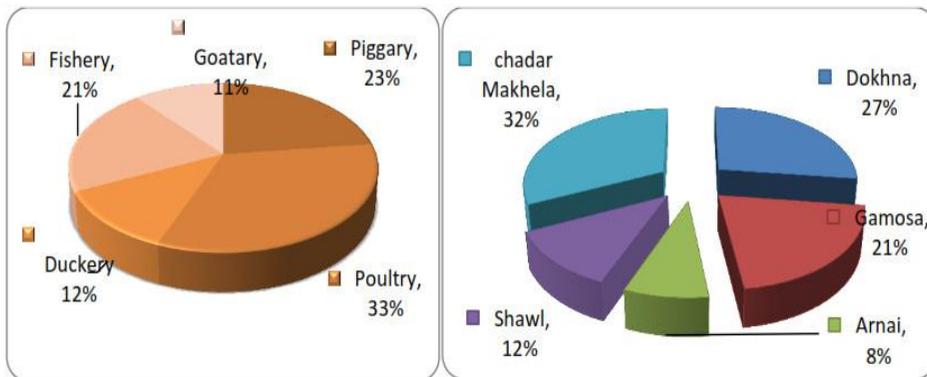
Source: Field survey.

Fig. 4 shows that, 42 percent of the total activities are covered by weaving and then farming, because of sizable tribal population and clients”, again weaving is their traditional activity. Among the various farming activity, the piggery, poultry and fishery units are highest in numbers in the block. The performance of other types of activity like puffed-rice products is moderate and that of areca-nut leaf is very poor because of raw-materials

problems.

As, weaving and farming activities become the two main sources of income generation, for the t women clients in the block, because these activities are hassle free and they have easy access to those in terms of knowledge, skill, time, low investments etc. The following diagrams are offered to depict the details of farming and weaving activity of the block.

Fig. 5. Division of Various Farming Activities. Fig. 6. Division of Various Weaving Activities.



Source: Field Survey. (Dokhna means traditional Bodo dress; Chadar Makhela means traditional Assamese Dress; Arnai (Bodo terms) means Scarf; Gamosa mean traditional tawel).

In farming, “poultry” and in weaving, “Chadar Makhela” scored height percentage; clients of the block are more interested to these activities as given in the diagram. Rests of the activities are in the growing stage and yet

to come-up in greater way. Proper exposure like training, adequate capital (i.e. credit), provision for equipment’s etc. if provided, than much can be expected from this field.

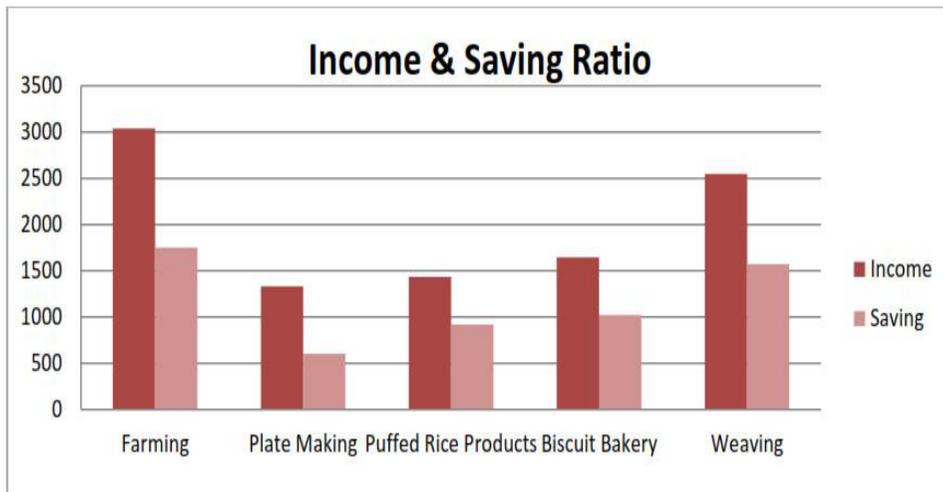
Income and savings

position of women members:

During investigation effort were made to know the income and savings pattern of the respondents and found positive. Though, existing income level is not satisfactory, in present day context, but a movement has been noticed among them for mF and respondent feel secure, because

„having some income is more than nothing“. Again, women are basically of less-expensive nature and willing to save more, as such they maintain some savings even in such low amount of income. The following diagram is used to present the income wise savings pattern of women in mF:

Fig: 7. Average Annual Income and Savings Patterns of Individual women Clients of the Block.



Source: Field Survey.

From the diagram, it is cleared that, in an average 58.59 percent savings are made by the mF clients, and that seems highest, in case of weaving and biscuit bakery, which are 61.57 and 61.97 percent, respectively. Though the income and saving amounts are small, but it is a movement towards economic

empowerment, so appreciable. The intermediaries of mF also like to deals with the women clients, as they found high recovery rate and has encouraged by many banks to provide microcredit through SHGs which has helped the microcredit movement, (Purkaystha, 2004). Thus evidencing the women’s

active involvement performance in earnings and savings and that leading towards economic empowerment.

Consequences of unveiling Women Potentiality:

Unveiling of women potentiality emerges on many factors and gives the sense of their empowerment, thus an effort were made to realize that in practice considering decision making power rights in family and interest towards politics, which considered the outcome of economic power.

Women mobility and decision making in family:

the MFIs/NGOs of the block claim that women are increasingly „coming out“ as a result of credit programmes. In some cases, where mobility outside the home is often restricted, women have reported increased mobility, simply having to inform male heads of households instead of soliciting their permission (Sharma Bora, 2008). Although NGOs appear to have had some success in supporting women to travel to NGO and local government offices, much more could be done to empower and support women to enter the market place. One important indicator of change is the ability to make decisions within the household. On this issue, we asked the respondent about their involvement in decision making of her family, they reveal that,

they could decide on spending their own income, although men were often consulted in case of big amount of spending like on purchase of jewelry or assets etc. and has developed self-confidence and self-esteem, among them. Women are more able to articulate their views and were able to command attention and respect within the household, and often within the community.

Interest towards politics: It is the “economic power” which actually influences other factors, like education, health, living standard, thoughts etc. and has bring sea change in the mindset of women of eighties and nintees and women of today, (Sharma Borah, 2008). While reflecting the performance of women, basically in SHGs, ‘*Jeevika*’, a model SHG of rural Bihar, which reveal the potentiality of rural women’s called the *Didi* (Sister) in driving the social and economic shifts. The change entails first the empowerment of the poorest women both economic and social development, (Tiwari, 2010). During investigation efforts were made to know the position of women in the society and their involvement in the same, taking the factor ‘**politics**’

Majority of the women of the block are interested in politics i.e. 61percent of total and this signifies the sense of their empowerment, and is the result of economic performance, because economic power and politics has a key link. Again, among the interested, 4 percent has already involved in politics i.e. in panchayat election. In all, the level of involvement, self-confidence, and self-esteem of women in the block has turn in positive way, thus evidencing their positive performance.

Conclusion:

Once women start enjoying freedom in the areas like formal education, independent decision making on economic matters and policy matters as well, access to better health care and health facilities, one can say that they are empowered, which will contribute to better self-image and will encourage her to perform in a better way for herself for her family, to the society and the nation as a whole.

The mF become a driving force of society, especially for poor and women, in economic empowerments, poverty alleviation, productive utilization and social development. The

same have been seen among the women of Gobardhana block, deals in mF under SHG model. Results depict that, performance of mF is not up to the mark and that is owing to **small size of loan, lack of training, SHG management/ monitoring etc.** The positive aspect is that, women of the block are more productive and hardworking, though as of now they are engage basically in traditional activities, but special training about innovative business ideas or for small industrialization etc. will materialize and can make the involved clients more beneficial.

Some suggestion for further development:

- As the members of SHGs are mostly women and from poor and remote places, so they face many difficulties in reaching the MFIs branches. So, an effort to enhance the „mobile service“ of mF will go long way and will avoid such problems.
- The existing credit limit/slabs needs to increase, considering the needs of capital in

present day context, as the demand for more amount loan always exist and lack of so, hindered in the progress of their business.

- The regulatory bodies have to be more active and should make some policy regarding deposits mobilization of SHGs. There exists the

need for, SHG promotional institution (SHGPI) to manage the SHGs of the block for long and active sustainability and care should also be made to conduct regular training for giving innovative business idea to raise their income level

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Prevalence of Morbidity Among Women: an analysis of North Tripura and Unokuti District, Tripura

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Abstract:

The study is based on primary data which are collected with the help of a structured schedule from four different castes of population spread over North Tripura District and Unokuti District of Tripura. Stratified random sampling technique was applied for the collection of data at household level where the sample units are the adult women in the age group of 18 - 55 years. All the data are collected based on the criteria of balanced representation of different social castes such as ST, SC, OBC and General in the sample. Altogether 90 samples have been collected. Main objective of the study is to determine the morbidity status and also to determine the key variables which affect morbidity status of the people of North Tripura. Binary logistic regression model has been applied to determine the key determinants of morbidity status. It has been found that age of the respondent, respondents per day calorie intake and educational level of the respondents are the key determinants of morbidity status of the respondents. The model as a whole explained between 30.6% (Cox & Snell R Square) and 41.1 % (Nagelkerke R Square). And $\chi^2 (6.460, N=90) = 32.811$.

Key Words: Morbidity, Health, Body Mass Index, Chronic diseases, Seasonal diseases

Introduction: I

Poverty eradication with an explicit recognition that deprivation has multiple dimensions, both income and non-income, human in particular is the revised approach of Public policy in the New Millennium. Among the non-income dimensions, health and education have received special attention. Recognizing this fact, the central govt of India in 2013 budget promised to spend 0.34 percent of GDP compared to 0.25 percent in 2011-12. The enhanced allocation in Health and Family welfare in 2012-13 is 30477 crore as against 24315 crore in 2011-12. Given the universal trend towards liberalization, privatization and revising the scope for public health centres with emphasis on cost recovery, choice of cost-effective strategy towards health care assumes importance. This in turn would call for an understanding and appreciation of the morbidity profile of the population and the proximate determinants.

Self-reported measures of poor health and morbidities from developing countries tend to be viewed with considerable scepticism. In an influential editorial, Amartya Sen argued that there is a fundamental disconnect between an individual's subjective perception of their health and the objective or actual health

condition that they may have (Sen, 2002, 1993). According to Sen, because an individual's assessment of their health is directly contingent on their social experience, socially disadvantaged individuals will fail to perceive and report the presence of illness or health deficits (Sen, 2002). For instance, an individual with no formal knowledge of diseases but residing in an area with substantial disease burden that has inadequate social infrastructure facilities may be inclined to treat disease symptoms as "normal" given their lack of awareness, and therefore, health expectation. Sen, therefore, reasons that perceptions and self-reports of health – which he refers to as the "internal" view of health – can be "extremely misleading" as they obscure the true extent of health deprivation (Sen, 2002).

The study is of interest for a different reason. In particular, following from previous findings (Zimmer et al., 2000) and given the fact that self-assessed health is a subjective measure, there may be differences in the way people from different cultural settings subjectively interpret their health and health disorders.

Therefore in this study it has been attempted to determine the morbidity status of the respondents by considering the self-perception of the investigator

by observing the health of the respondents during survey.

Background of the study: II

Morbidity among people has an important influence on their physical functioning and psychological well-being. The objective of this study is to assess morbidity status of the women population in North Tripura and Unokuti District of Tripura and to determine relationship of morbidity with on body mass index, illness record of the 12 months preceding the year and the present health condition of the respondent, destructive Habit Index, Household Amenities Index of the respondent and other socio economic variables among the population in North Tripura and Unokuti of Tripura, India.

Departure from a state of physical or psychological well-being, resulting from disease, illness, injury, or sickness, specially where the affected individual is aware of his or her condition. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), morbidity could be measured in terms of (1) number of persons who were ill, (2) illnesses these persons experienced, and (3) the duration of these illnesses.

Using data from a study conducted among rural urban communities in North Tripura and Unokuti, this study examines the factors associated with health

status among the adults women aged 18-55 years in these district's settlements with particular emphasis on morbidity experiences in the twelve months preceding the survey.

Health problems in Tripura: III

Major health problems in Tripura are Diarrhoeal diseases, parasitic infestation, infective hepatitis, enteric fever and other waterborne diseases originating from sources such as non-potable drinking water and poor sanitation, malnutrition among children, anaemia, malaria, and respiratory diseases. Diarrhoeal diseases and enteric fever (group of diseases) was the leading cause of mortality in the state. As per data available of recent time, 47.7 percent of rural population is not covered by potable water facilities, 24.6 percent is only partially covered. High endemic levels of diarrheal diseases together with epidemics cause much of the work load for the health services, leaving very little time for other activities such as MCH and Family Welfare (Tripura Human Development Report 2010).

Materials and methods: IV

The study is based on primary data which are collected with the help of a structured schedule from four different castes of population spread over three municipalities of

North Tripura and Unokuti District during December 2010 to June 2011. Stratified random sampling technique was applied for the collection of data at household level where the sample units are the adult women in the age group of 18 - 55 years. All the data are collected from both urban and rural areas and the basic criteria of selection of population groups was a balanced representation of different social castes such as ST, SC, OBC and General in the sample.

The sample size is 90. Only the adult women who looked apparently active at the time of survey are included in the sample. Information pertaining to the body weight (W) and height (H) of the respondents are collected through household survey with the help of appropriate kit.

Variables included in the study are To estimate the result binary logistic regression model has been applied with following set of variables:

Dependent variable

Here the dependent variable is categorical

- Morbidity (Health condition of the respondents observed by the investigator as well as reported by the respondents)=1 for chronic diseases(12 months preceding the survey or more) and 0 otherwise

(seasonal and initial stage of any disease)

Independent variables are

- Respondents monthly income
- Age of the respondents
- Education level of the respondents
- Sex of the respondent (it is categorized as 1=male, 0 otherwise)
- Marital status (it is categorized as 1=married, 0 otherwise)
- Respondents working condition (it is categorized as 1=permanent, 0 otherwise)
- Respondents calorie intake per day
- Residence of the respondents(it is categorized as 1=urban, 0 otherwise)
- Household amenities(house type-pucca/ kucha, number of rooms, sq. ft. area under roof,kitchen-separate/attached, latrine-sanitary/kucha/attached/ separate, fuel for cooking, water source,electricity,in house drainage,and sewage disposal facility) index ($Z_{hai} = \frac{X-M}{\sigma}$)

X = unit observations of the series

M = Mean of the observations

And σ = standard deviation of the series

- Destructive habits (alcohol, exercise, drinking of water, vaccination, medical checkup, working hours, smoking-drinking tobacco chewing etc. and rising time in the morning)
- $$\text{index}(Z_{dhi} = \frac{X-M}{\sigma})$$

X= unit observations of the series

M= Mean of the observations
And σ = standard deviation of the series

- Body mass index(BMI) it is categorized as 1=normal, 0 otherwise

Physical Status of the Respondents: V

Table: 1
Physical Status of the Respondents

Place	Normal	Handicapped
Rural	60	0
Urban	30	0
Combine	90	0

Source: Field Survey

Table-1 explains the physical status of the respondents as appeared at the time of survey. Out of the 90 respondents, all respondents are found to be physically normal and active. And no handicapped respondents are there in the sample.

Morbidity details of the respondents: VI

To assess health in terms of mortality rates only is misleading.

This is because; mortality indicators do not reveal the burden of ill health in a community, for example mental illness and rheumatoid arthritis. Therefore morbidity indicators are used to supplement mortality data to describe the health status of a population. In this case study morbidity is given due importance as an indicator of health.

Table: 2
Morbidity Details of the Respondents

Place	Frequency of Illness	
	Number of respondents suffering from Chronic diseases	Number of respondents suffering from Seasonal diseases
Rural	27	33
Urban	11	19
Combine	38	52

Source: Field Survey

Fig: 1-Respondents Morbidity Records

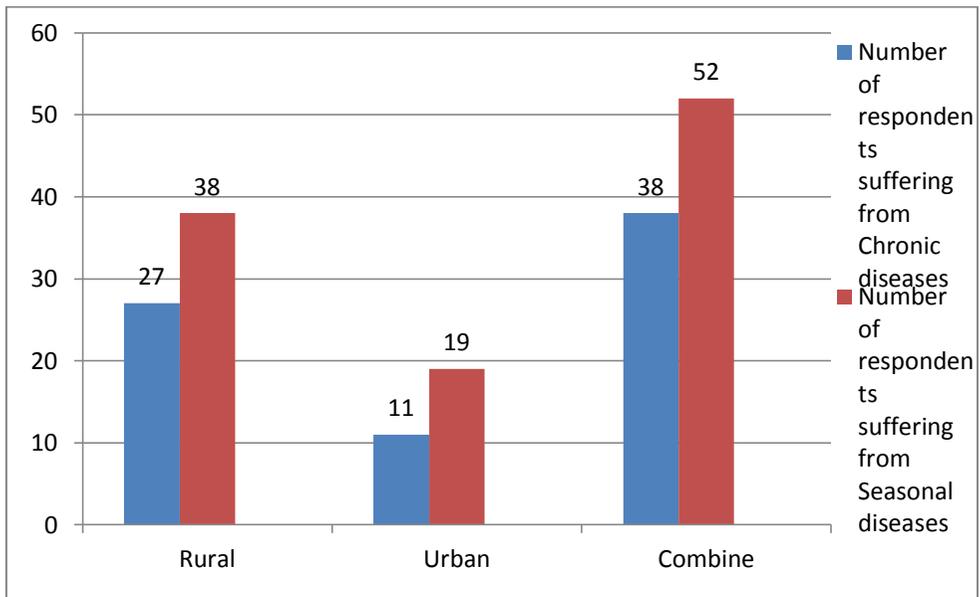


Table-2 and Figure-1 represents the morbidity records of the respondents. In table-2 morbidity records of the respondents (recall basis) is shown into two categories i.e. morbidity due to chronic diseases like chronic gastric, skin diseases, diabetic, TB, sexual impotency etc. and morbidity due to seasonal diseases like cough, cold, fever, diarrhoea etc. Out of the total 90 respondents, a total of 38 rural and urban respondents suffer from chronic diseases in which rural respondents constitute the major part comprising of 27 persons. A total of 52 respondents are found to have suffered/suffering from seasonal diseases. However, seasonal disease is

almost common to those who have suffered or are suffering from chronic diseases. The prevalence of the seasonal diseases is more in rural areas of the district, 33 rural respondents suffer from seasonal diseases and 19 females of municipalities suffer from seasonal diseases.

Table-3 documents morbidity records of the respondents at the time of survey. Records of morbidity have been collected under three categories i.e. respondents suffering from communicable diseases i.e. illness due to a specific infectious agent or its toxic products capable of being directly or indirectly

transmitted from man to man or from the environment through air, dust, soil, water, food etc. , non-communicable diseases and seasonal diseases. It is a good sign that only 1 respondent suffer from communicable diseases. In rural areas no respondents suffers from communicable diseases. In urban areas it is only 1 female respondent who suffer from communicable diseases. In case of

non-communicable diseases 40 respondents, 29 rural females and 11 urban female respondents suffer from non-communicable diseases as recorded at the time of survey. Prevalence of seasonal diseases is more in rural areas recording 31 female respondents who reported that they suffer from seasonal diseases as against 18 female respondents in urban areas.

Table: 3

Morbidity details of the respondents (at the time of survey)

Place	Communicable Diseases	Non-Communicable Diseases	Seasonal Diseases
Rural	0	29	31
Urban	1	11	18
Combine	1	40	49

Source: Field Survey

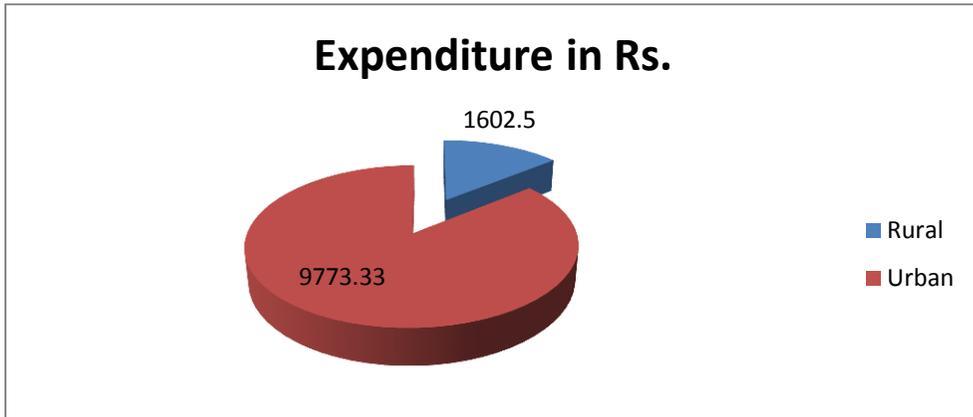
Table: 4

Place	In Rs.
Rural	1602.50
Urban	9773.33
Combine	3969.99

Average medical Expenditure of the respondents

Source: Field Survey

Figure: 2- Medical Expenditure of the respondents



Health status and expenditure on health shows a direct relationship. Table-4 presents average medical expenditure incurred by the respondents. Table-4 shows that average medical expenditure is higher for urban respondents at an average of Rs. 9773.33 as against Rs. 1602.50 for rural female respondents. Table-4 conveys another important message that average urban medical expenditure is almost 5 folds higher than rural average medical expenditure.

Results and Discussion: VII

Variables in the Equation

In order to identify the morbidity determinants within this limited scope of study, a qualitative response model (Logit Model) is constructed where the dependent variable is a categorical variable taking value $Y_i = 1$ if a respondent in the age group 18-55 years have chronic diseases value in the normal range and $Y_i = 0$, otherwise (implying seasonal diseases).

Table: 5- Logistic regression predicting likelihood of reporting a problem of morbidity

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Odds Ratio
Step 1(a)	RMI	.000	.000	.332	1	.564	1.000
	AR	.072	.034	4.448	1	.035	1.074
	EDLR	-.206	.081	6.460	1	.011	.814
	MS	-22.744	40193.000	.000	1	1.000	.000
	RWC	.900	.695	1.676	1	.195	2.460
	RCAI	-.004	.002	3.838	1	.050	.996

PD						
RESI	.632	.822	.592	1	.442	1.882
HAI	-.152	.094	2.612	1	.106	.859
DHI	-.192	.120	2.561	1	.110	.825
BMI	-.291	.708	.169	1	.681	.748
Constant	30.513	40193.000	.000	1	.999	17843796359348.370

A Variable(s) entered on step 1: RMI, AR, EDLR, MS, RWC, RCAIPD, RESI, HAI, DHI, BMI.

Table6: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	32.811	10	.000
	Block	32.811	10	.000
	Model	32.811	10	.000

Table: 7 Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	89.769	.306	.411

Direct logistic regression was performed to access the impact of a number of factors on the likelihood that respondents would report that they had a problem of chronic diseases. The model contained ten independent variables(Respondents monthly income, Age of the respondents, Education level of the respondents, Sex of the respondent (it is categorized as 1=male, 0 otherwise), Marital status (it is categorized as 1=married, 0 otherwise), Respondents working

condition (it is categorized as 1=permanent, 0 otherwise) Respondents calorie intake per day, Residence of the respondents(it is categorized as 1=urban, 0 otherwise), Household amenities index ($Z_{hai} = \frac{X-M}{\sigma}$), Destructive habits index($Z_{dhi} = \frac{X-M}{\sigma}$), Body mass index(BMI) it is categorized as 1=normal, 0 otherwise). The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant, χ^2 (6.460, N=90) =32.811, p<.001, indicating

that the model was able to distinguish between respondents suffers from chronic diseases and otherwise. The model as a whole explained between 30.6% (Cox & Snell R Square) and 41.1 % Nagelkerke R Square) of the variance in morbidity status and correctly classified 32.811% of cases. As shown in table 5 only three of the independent variables made a unique statistically significant contribution to the model (age of the respondents, respondent's calorie intake per day and education level of the respondents). The strongest predictor of reporting a morbidity problem is age of the respondents, recording an odds ratio of 1.074. The odds ratio of 0.996 for respondents calorie intake per day is less than 1, indicating that respondents are .996 times less likely to report having a problem of calorie intake. And the odds ratio 0.814 for education level of the respondents is less than 1, indicating that respondents are .814 times less likely to report having a disadvantage of education.

Appendix

Brief Description of Statistical Technique used for Analysis the details of the multivariate statistical technique used for the analysis of data and the need to use the technique and basic model are briefly provided below. However, formulae and algorithms

are not described. Appropriate references have been cited for them.

Logistic Regression Analysis

Logistic regression (logit regression) is used when the response or dependent variable is dichotomous (i.e., binary, or 0-1). The predictor variables may be quantitative, categorical or a mixture of the two. Suppose, the probability of the occurrence of event Y, [P (Y=1)] depends on a set of explanatory variables $X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_k$.

The basic form of the logistic function is

$$P = P\left[Y = \frac{1}{X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_k}\right] \\ = \frac{e^x}{1+e^x} = \frac{\exp(Z)}{1+\exp(Z)}$$

Where Z, is a linear function of a set of predictor variables, $X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_k$, given by

$$Z = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k, \\ \text{and } b_0, b_1, b_2, \dots \\ \text{. } b_k \text{ are regression coefficients.}$$

Logit of P is derived by taking natural logarithm, that is, $\log [(p/1-p)] = Z$

The quantity $[(p/1-p)]$ is called the odds and hence $\log [(p/1-p)]$, the log odds. The coefficients $b_0, b_1, b_2, \dots, b_k$ are similar to regression coefficients and are called logit

regression coefficients. These coefficients are used to compute odds ratios (reported in results), which give the ratio of two odds of an event occurring ($Y=1$). In the case of a dichotomous independent variable, the odds ratio can be interpreted as the increased odds of a positive outcome on the dependent variable for the affirmative category ($X=1$) over the negative one ($X=0$). An odds ratio more than one indicates a positive association between the independent and dependent

variables and an odds ratio less than one indicate a negative association.

Owing to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable Morbidity (*Chronic diseases Vs. Seasonal diseases*), the technique of logistic regression has been used for the analyses. The logistic regression technique can be used not only to identify the risk factor but also to predict the probability of success.

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ASHA- the Lady Health Activist and Health Status of Rural Women – A Case Study of Karimganj District

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Abstract

Women constituting almost half of the population of a country are the major human resource and accordingly the involvement of women in every sphere - economic, social, political is urgently felt for the development of a country. Health is one of the major infrastructures to constitute a strong human resource and is emerging as a significant element of human capital and a vital indicator of human development. Improvement in the health status of women plays a very important role in the improvement of socio-economic condition of an economy.

In India nearly 70% of the population are coming from rural areas and are suffering and dying from preventable diseases due to unavailability and inaccessibility of health care services. Among the rural population women are the most sufferer. They are trapped in poverty, malnutrition, low level of literacy, and are facing high rate of infant and maternal mortality rate with low expectancy of life at birth etc. Providing sound health care to these rural women is the urgent need and accordingly the Government of India has launched National Rural Health Mission to improve the availability of and access to quality health care by people, especially for those residing in rural areas, the poor, and women. ASHA – one of the stakeholders of NRHM play a very important role in smoothening the delivery of health care services to the rural population specially the woman. A female from a village acts as an ASHA in improvising the health condition of the rural women. The present paper is prepared with the following objectives:

1. To study how ASHA is functioning in providing health care services.

Methodology and data base:

The study will be based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data will be collected by using multistage sampling. In the first stage of

sample selection 2 Community Blocks of Karimganj will be selected at random. From the selected 2(two) Community Blocks 1 Gaon Panchayat from each Blocks will be selected on the basis of simple random sampling. From each of 2 selected Gaon Panchayat 2 villages will be selected by using simple random sampling. From each village 10% of total household will be surveyed and the ASHA workers will be directly interviewed. The main sources of secondary data are the official publication of governments.

Women are the mother of a race. The development of a nation requires development of women by giving them opportunity to contribute their potentialities. Creating opportunity requires empowerment of women from social, economic and political point of view. In the recent sphere of development paradigm where human development is the most concern, mere increasing the volume of output or other macroeconomic indicator are no more considered as growth or development of a country unless there is improvement of the overall development of human being. The main element of human development paradigm is people and considering the same as human capital. Women constituting almost half of the population of a country are the major source of human capital or human resource. Without the development of women half of the human resources remain unutilized. Realizing the fact all planners and policy makers are giving great attention for women development.

Transformation of human resource to human capital requires strong

base of social infrastructure. Health is one of the major infrastructures to constitute a strong human resource and is emerging as a significant element of human capital and a vital indicator of human development. In this respect the health of women is very significant. Good health status of women not only enables them to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives as well remunerative employment but also assures healthy child or healthy family. However, it is a known fact that the health status of women is very low compared to their male counterpart. Mortality either in the form of maternal or infant seems to be highest in case of female. For instance, the maternal mortality rate (per 100,000) is 407 in India, whereas it is only 56 in China, in the year 2004, and 101 in Japan. Infant mortality rate is 85 (per1000); 36 in China. Expectations of life at birth in 2004 was, 63.9 for male and 66.9 for female where as it was 79 and 86 respectively for male and female in Japan. But the picture is very acute for the rural population of India. Of the total population, Infant mortality rate is

75 (per1000) compared to 44 in urban areas.

Since women are the custodian of the health of a family they play a unique role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of communities. Accordingly the International Conference on Population and Development at Cairo in 1994 and Fourth World Conference of women at Beijing in 1995, it was accepted that women's health and reproductive rights are important means of women's empowerment and quality of life. In India importance of improvising women's health is thus felt and the landmark approach in this regard is the National Rural Health Mission launched in April 2005. The prime focus of the mission is child and mother. The mission seeks to improve the health care delivery system. To strengthen the infrastructure of health delivery a cadre of Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) is created to bridge the gap in rural health care especially for the women and child. Selected from the village itself and accountable to it, the ASHA is a female health activist who is trained to work as an interface between the community and the public health system.

About functions of ASHA:

Rural women are selected as ASHA and they perform various functions related to health care delivery however, here those

related to women and child is mentioned:

- Empowered with knowledge and a drug-kit to deliver first-contact healthcare, every ASHA is a fountainhead of community participation in public health programmes in her village.
- ASHA is the first port of call for any health related demands of deprived sections of the population, especially women and children, who find it difficult to access health services.
- ASHA is a health activist in the community who will create awareness on health and its social determinants and mobilise the community towards local health planning and increased utilization and accountability of the existing health services.
- She is a promoter of good health practices and provides a minimum package of curative care as appropriate and feasible for that level and makes timely referrals.
- ASHA provides information to the community on determinants of health such as nutrition, basic sanitation & hygienic practices, healthy living and working conditions, information on existing health services and the need for timely utilization of

health & family welfare services.

- She counsels women on birth preparedness, importance of safe delivery, breast-feeding and complementary feeding, immunization, contraception and prevention of common infections including Reproductive Tract Infection/Sexually Transmitted Infections (RTIs/STIs) and care of the young child.

- ASHA mobilises the community and facilitate them in accessing health and health related services available at the Anganwadi/sub-centre/primary health centers, such as immunisation, Ante Natal Check-up (ANC), Post Natal Check-up supplementary nutrition, sanitation and other services being provided by the government.

- She acts as a depot older for essential provisions being made available to all habitations like Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORS), Iron Folic Acid Tablet(IFA), chloroquine, Disposable Delivery Kits (DDK), Oral Pills & Condoms, etc..

Due to non- availability of good health care delivery system, illiteracy and ignorance of the importance of women's health

earlier the maternal mortality was very high. All these functions of ASHA workers are directly affecting the health status of rural women. Here the parameters of health status of rural women are confined to maternal mortality, infant mortality.

In this respect it *necessitates* in the present paper to study the how ASHA workers being a lady health activist are engaged in improving health status women in particular and rural areas in particular in the Karimganj District of Assam.

Background of the study

Karimganj with an area of 1839sq.km is a district in the southern part of Assam. Of the three districts of Barak valley, Karimganj has an international border with Bangladesh in its North West side, Tripura on its southwest, Mizoram in the south and other two districts of Barak valley Cachar and Hailakandi on the eastern side.

Karimganj is situated between longitude 92°15' and 92°35' east and between 24°15' and 24°55' east latitude. The north and north eastern district are plain areas while south and south western parts are covered by dense forests.

Largest number of population of Karimganj i.e.92.67% resides in the rural areas and their main occupation is agriculture and allied activities. Rice accounted for nearly 80% of the gross cultivated area. But this practice is

seasonal, in other times they
mainly depend on other
Overview of the district:

occupations such as day labour.

1.	Total land area	1089 sq.km
2.	Total population	1003678
3.	Total rural population	934126
4.	Total urban population	73,747
5.	Sex ratio	944
6.	Literacy rate	55.74
7.	Poverty line	40.86

Source: Department of statistics and economics. (2001 census)

With largest rural areas Karimganj has local rural self-government or Panchayat Raj institution (PRIs) constituting of 1 Zillah Parishad, 7 Anchalik Parishads with 96 Gaon Panchayat.

Objectives of the study:

The paper is presented with the following objectives:

1. To study the changes in health status of rural women with the service provided by the ASHA workers.

Methodology and data base:

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected by using multistage sampling. In the first stage of sample selection 2

Community Blocks of Karimganj is selected at random. From the selected 2(two) Community Blocks 1 Gaon Panchayat from each Blocks is selected on the basis of simple random sampling. From each of 2 selected Gaon Panchayat 2 villages is selected by using simple random sampling. From each village 10% of total household is surveyed and the ASHA workers are directly interviewed. The main sources of secondary data are the official publication of governments.

Findings:

The first part of the findings of our study is about the health status of the women of the rural areas in Karimganj district. This is depicted in the table below:

1.	Total land area	1089 sq.km
2.	Total population	1003678
3.	Total rural population	9,30,131
4.	Total urban population	73,747
5.	Sex ratio	944
6.	Literacy rate	55.74
7.	Birth rate *	26.6(per thousand)
8.	Death rate *	9.2(per thousand)
9.	Poverty line	40.86
10.	Fertility rate	7.08
11.	Doctor-population rates (per lakh of population)	6.48
12.	Health facilities	
	1. ASHA(per lakh of population)	99.99
	2. No. of bed available (per lakh of population)	6.45

The maternal mortality rate in Assam in 2004-06 was 254 and was 212 in 2007-09. Infant mortality is 70 per thousand. Performance of ASHA in promotion of health status of the rural women can be visualized in the following cases:

Increase of institutional Delivery: The numbers of rural mothers for preferring institutional delivery has increased. It is found that the number of institutional delivery has increased district wise form 4920 in 2007 to 11439 in 2010. As from the table 1 it can be seen that the percentage of institutional

delivery has increased from 25 percent in 2007 to 61.2 percent in 2010. These increased preferences are due to the awareness of the rural masses about the benefit of both good health of mother and child, less risk of infant and maternal death and other complicity during after the birth of child. It is an undoubted fact that ASHA workers are most responsible for increasing the preference of institutional delivery as well promotion of maternal health.

The following table shows the number of increasing institutional delivery in the sample areas.

Table 1: No of institutional delivery in the sample areas.

Year	Institutional delivery
2007	25%
2008	27%
2009	49%
2010	61.2%

Source: Author

Table no 2. No. of Institutional Delivery in Karimganj District

Year	Karimganj District
2007	4920
2008	7557
2009	7964
2010	11439

Source: Joint Director of Health Services, Karimganj

Awareness of people: Another performance of ASHA workers is increasing the awareness level of the rural women to live a healthy life. Keeping in continuous touch with each and every rural woman they become aware about different practices to live a healthy life which included child immunization, nutrition, basic sanitation & hygienic practices, healthy living and working conditions, information on existing health services and the need for timely utilization of health & family welfare services. Visiting the rural areas interviewing with the villagers it was found that there has been increasing realization of the numbers of rural masses for complete immunization of their

children. It was a known fact that rural people due to their ignorance and poverty fail to give proper nursing to their children and thus giving an unhealthy future to the society. This challenge is reduced as ASHA workers have successfully coming forward with increasing the awareness of the people to immunize their children from deadly diseases. It is found that about 90.50 percent of the rural people are aware about the providing polio drop and nearly 69.93 percent about complete immunization (refer table no 3 Awareness score). Almost 96.09 percent of children are fully immunized in the district in 2010 (Joint Director of Health Services, Karimganj)

Table 3 Awareness score of rural women:

Sl. no	Heads	Score (in percentage)
1	Aware to use sanitation	35.75
2	Aware to use purified water	72.07
3	Aware about NRHM	23.02
4	Aware about complete child immunization	69.93
5	Aware about giving polio drop to child	90.50
6	Aware about institutional delivery	58.10
7	Knows ASHA of their village	100
8	Knows the functioning of ASHA	68.72

Source: Author

This changes in the health status as well the awareness level to live healthy life is the reflection of the better performance of the ASHA.

In the conclusion it can be said that ASHA the lady health activist in the rural area is thus smoothening and promoting the health scenario of the rural women. Being a female she is working as custodian of the promotion of health status of females in her village. Interviewing the ASHA workers it is found that they are enjoying empowerment both social and economic empowerment. It has

been found that this village lady with some basic education and health training performing the best. Her status in the family as well in the society has increased. Another important fact to be mentioned here is that the both the female is working as the promoter of health condition of the society one as a distributor(ASHA) and other as the receiver (the rural woman) of health care services.

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Craft Industry of a Marginalized Community & Its Prospects for Rural Employment under Globalization

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Abstract

Rural handicraft industry has performed exceedingly well and enables our country to achieve a wide measure of industrial growth and diversification. By its less capital intensive and high labour absorption nature, this sector has made significant contribution to employment generation and also to rural industrialization. Small scale industrial sector in India create largest employment opportunity for the Indian populace, next only to agriculture. A failure to modernize the rural industrialization programme and revamp the rural non-farm and agricultural sector on the part of the government is partly responsible for the apathetic condition of some rural craft industry and “Pottery industry” of the Hira people provides a good example in this regard. This pottery industry which is given full and part time employment opportunities to a large section people belongs to a marginalized community is crippled by various problems. The real incomes of the workers associated with this profession have declined over the years instead of increasing in tandem with the growth of economy. Consequently the no. of workers working in this industry has been decreases to large extent despite its potentialities for self-employment. The paper studies the prospect of Pottery Craft industry for rural employment in Assam particularly in Karimganj district of Barak Valley and various views of Hira (Kumar) people to solve their basic problems.

INTRODUCTION:

Rural handicraft industry has performed exceedingly well and enables our country to achieve a wide measure of industrial growth and diversification. By its less capital intensive and high labour

absorption nature this sector has made significant contribution to employment generation and also to rural industrialization. Small scale industrial sector in India create largest employment opportunity for the Indian

populace, next only to agriculture.¹ (*Yojana*, May, 2010, (A Development Monthly Magazine), Upkar Prakashan, Agra, p-08) After independence lots of fund has already been spent to strengthen and restructure the rural economy and even now we talk about inclusive growth of the economy without realizing the importance of our traditional crafts industry. But this sector along with other allied activities holds the key to faster economic development. They not only remove poverty and unemployment from the villages but also make them self-sufficient economic units. In fact a failure to modernize the rural industrialization programme and revamp the rural non-farm sector and agricultural sector on the part of the government is partly responsible for the apathetic condition of some rural craft industry and the “Pottery industry” of the Hira people provides a good example in this regard. Pottery industry refers to a particular rural craft industry where the person produces different kinds of earthen pots from a special type of clay without using technical and scientific instruments. This pottery industry which has given full and part time employment opportunities to a large section people belongs to a marginalized community, it-self crippled by various problems. Consequently the number of workers working in this industry

has decreased to large extent despite its potentialities for self-employment.

Earthen pots like “Kalah”, “Charu”, “Ghat”, “Tekeli”, “Nagra”, “Madali” etc. are still considered important from religious and cultural point of view and still occupy an important place in auspicious occasions like celebration of marriages, religious occasions like “Puja”, performance of “Preta Karma” of deceased. Increasing cost of collecting the Hira clay, difficulty of getting necessary and required burning materials and more importantly the availability of similar cheap plastic items everywhere reduced the demand for the product produced by this industry. Further, in this age of globalization it has failed to attract large capital and more importantly the upcoming generation of this community is also not interested to work in such a profession. As a result, this industry is facing extinction which in turn will bring disaster to this community.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH GAP:

The origin, growth and development of the Hira community can be traced from mythological, historical and ethnological sources. From mythological point of view, the word “Hira” is derived from “Mahadeva”, while the “Kumar”

was born from father, “Viswakarma” and mother “Gritachi”.² (Haloi, R. (2007), A Study on the Problems and Prospects of Pottery Industry of Hiras in Nalbari district with reference to Pub-Nalbari Block, (M. Phil dissertation),p-74

Historically about 600 hundred years ago, late Mahendra Mahapatra along with his wife Hira Devi came to Assam from Orissa to visit the temple of “Maa-Kamakhya”. One day in a pleasant morning while she was passing by the bank of the mighty Brahmaputra, she noticed some lumps of earth were sparkling and shining like a diamond. Then with the help of Kumars she learnt the art of making earthen pots from this clay. From then on, the soil is known as “Hira mati” after the name of its discoverer “Hira Devi” and the different earthen pots are called “Hira bachan”, and her descendents are known as “Hira Jati”.³ (Haloi, R. (2007), A Study on the Problems and Prospects of Pottery Industry of Hiras in Nalbari district with reference to Pub-Nalbari Block, (M. Phil dissertation), p-74

From the ethnological point of view, the Hira people originally belonged to higher castes like Brahmins, Kalitas, etc. and Schedule castes Namasudras. By making a study in terms of “Gotra” the origin of the Hiras can

be traced. The gotras of the Hiras of Assam are Parasara, Alemyan and Kashyap which are found to be similar among the Brahmins and the Namasudras. But it is a matter of regret that, at certain turns of history of our social system, they have fallen within the fold of untouchable under certain unavoidable circumstances.⁴

(Haloi, R. (2007), A Study on the Problems and Prospects of Pottery Industry of Hiras in Nalbari district with reference to Pub-Nalbari Block, (M. Phil dissertation),p-75

As per the 1931 census report, there were 17,000 Hira people, which has increased to 28,310 in 1961, 32,622 in 1971 and to 49,336 in 1991. According to the 2001 census report, the Hira people live in districts like-Barpeta (15.7%), Kamrup (15.7%), Darang (13.5), Nalbari (13.1%), Marigaon (18.7%), Nagaon (9.4%), Goalpara (6.0%), Bongaigaon (5.2%), Dhubri (1.3%), Kokrajhar (0.7%) and it is 0.7% in Sonitpur district of Assam. But it has been observed that with the change in nature of the economy and due to the diversification of the attitude of the people of this traditional craft industry, it is going to disappear from our society. The social standing of this vulnerable community depends on the prospect of this industry, so

different scholars and researchers carried out a number of intensive and extensive studies with respect to mobility, origin of the pottery work and its socio-cultural importance in the live of Assamese people. In this regard Roy (1977), Medhi, B. (1992), Sharma and Sarma (1998), Sarmah, H. C. (1991), Sarmah, P. R. (2001) and Bezbaruah, D. K. (2003) focused on this craft industry through their research work. But till date no one has worked on the Hira community extensively from employment perspectives in the era of globalisation.

AREA OF THE STUDY:

The study was carried out in Karimganj district of Barak-Valley of Assam. It is selected keeping in mind the deplorable conditions of this craft industry. It has seven blocks and is surrounded by beautiful geographical and natural scenarios along with national and international border link. This is the first attempt to make a survey study in Karimganj district in relation to life conditions of the people of a marginalized community like “Hira” and the prospect for rural employment in their profession.

OBJECTIVES:

The prime objectives of this study is-

1. to know about the prospect of the pottery industry with respect to

rural employment in terms of their socio-economic conditions and participation in the profession of pottery works;

2. to know their views to overcome their problems.

METHODOLGY:

As there is a dearth of data, the study is exploratory in nature and is dependent upon field survey. For the purpose of interview, a structured open-ended questionnaire was developed. The interviews took place with the author writing down or a tape recorder was used to collect views of the people from this community. Each interview lasted for about 30 to 40 minutes. Here a sample of 25% families selected from Sadarashi block where the inhabitants of Kumar people are large in number out of seven blocks in the district as per report of the official person of the District Economics and Statics department of Karimganj. The study was conducted under normative survey method. Besides official's data, information from memory of the old-age person and informal discussion were held with different social workers and with some people of Karimganj town area who exclusively deals in the business of earthen products.

Apart from this, a case of example is also considered here for our better understanding of the

problems and for this purposes the “Rural Tourism Project on Terracotta Craft Cluster of Asharikandi” in Dhubri District of Assam is selected.

DELIMITATION:

1 The study is confined with the Kumar (Hira) people of Karimganj district, particularly in Sadarashi block; and

1. The head of the family members were interviewed in this study.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

1. The number of working Kumar people has decreased to a large extent during the last few years but up to the nineties pottery works had been their principal means of occupation. Altogether nine villages in the seven blocks of the district of Karimganj are inhabited by the Kumar people. But the number of families and workers has declined to a large extent and it is evident from the following statistical Table-1

VILLAGES	TOTAL NO. OF KUMAR FAMILY(approx.)	TOTAL NO. OF FAMILY PRODUCING POTTERY(approx.)
Maizgram	103	18
Jiadhara	25	04
Baropara	15	03
Beelbari	30	10
Teelbum	15	03
Nebia	18	Nil
Suraibari	16	01
Raipur	10	03
Sadhukuchi	30	02
Total	262	44

Source: - i) Field survey

ii) Information from interviewed old-age person.

The above table reveals that the number of family surviving by this profession of pottery decreased over the last decade. During nineties, altogether there were 262 families which highlighted the importance of this industry for their day to day survival. In the absence of their own agricultural land and other means of occupation, they concentrated on their inherited work culture and thus maintained a subsistence life. But at present approximately 44 (16.79%) families are engaged in this sector. Interestingly, out of these 44 families, all the members of each family are not engaged in this profession, rather they are seeking or diverting to other jobs for day to day survival.

A Case of Example:

Under the “New Country Programme 2003-07” sponsored by “United Nations Development Programme” (UNDP), the honourable District Commissioner of Dhubri district of lower part of Assam inaugurated a new project

entitled “Rural Tourism Project on Terracotta Craft Cluster of Asharikandi in Dhubri District” at a proposed cost of Rs. 70 lakhs. Though the project has not been formally inaugurated but it has practically started to reap benefits out of it. It benefits directly 400 artisans and indirectly 1000 people at present. Thus, it is expected that the completion of the project would cater to the need of the tourist and the artisans and the villagers in bigger manner and this experience can provide a good example for our proposed study.

2. Another important observation regarding the Kumar workers is that all the workers engaged in this profession are not able to earn the minimum income for their subsistence level and at the same time the rate of dependent person is also very high indicating disguised and underemployment in the study area.

TABLE NO.2
Person engaged in pottery works in surveyed areas

Head of the Family	Total population			Person engaged in Pottery			Subsistence Income earner			No. of dependent (18-60 Yrs)
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
Nripendra R. Paul	03	03	06	01	01	02	01	01	02	03
Satyendra R. Paul	03	02	05	01	01	02	01	00	01	02
Bhushan R. Paul	04	01	05	01	01	02	02	01	03	02
Rasendra R. Paul	02	03	05	01	01	02	01	01	02	03
Niranjan R. Paul	03	04	07	01	04	05	01	00	01	02
Kripesh R. Paul	06	03	09	04	03	07	02	00	02	01
Karuna R. Paul	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	NIL
Anil R. Paul	04	02	06	NIL	NIL	NIL	01	00	01	03
Ashutosh R. Paul	03	01	04	01	01	02	01	00	01	02
Gagendra R. Paul	05	01	06	01	01	02	01	01	02	03
Total	34	22	56	12	15	27	12	06	18	21

Source: - Field survey

It is evident from the Table-2 that out of 56 person 27 (48.21%) person are engaged in pottery works whereas 21 (37.5%) number of people are workless. Moreover, although 48.21% people are working in their own profession but only 18 (66.66%) workers can earn their minimum income and the rest 33.33% people are unable to earn their minimum income and thus show a significant percentage of disguised unemployment.

Another important feed-back gained during the survey is that in most of the family only the head persons are engaged in the works of pottery and their children are not interested in becoming potters. As a result the real incomes of the workers have declined over the years instead of increasing in tandem with the growth of the economy. This calls for policy changes both at the Centre and state level.

3. Almost more than 90% people engaged in pottery industry in the survey area said that the demand for their products is very high. Though it is a season based business, but throughout the whole year they can produce and sell it at local market. But the marketing system followed by these people is not organized in nature and in general they sell their products to the whole seller or to the middleperson.

4. Regarding the educational status, the number of literate person is not so less compared to other communities but the quality is very poor. Low income, improper guidance, lack of educational environment and basic facilities are the factors responsible for their educational hindrance. In our survey we found that 85.17% people are literate (can just read and write their mother language) and remaining 14.83% are illiterate. Sex-wise the literacy rates among the peoples are not equal. It is found that 88.23% male persons are educated against 81.81% female candidate. But the number of higher educated person (minimum graduation or more) is less than 10.71% in the study area. So they do not know or are not aware of the environment of modern business and consequently unable to receive the benefits of new economic and industrial strategies.

5. During the study period it is observed that apart from their conventional hindrance this industry has suffered due to its being unorganized, with the additional constraints of lack of education, low capital, poor exposure to new technologies, absence of market intelligence, and a poor institutional framework.

6. One of the paradoxes of a nation full of paradoxes is our attitude to its crafts and craftspeople. Even craftspeople themselves do not respect their own skills and traditions. Only in our society the potters think it as a liability rather than an asset with enormous potential whereas the countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal and even the Philippines have realised that indigenous crafts can give them an international edge.⁵ (Yojana, May, 2010, (A Development Monthly Magazine), Upkar Prakashan, Agra, p-32) But during our study period an important feedback was gained that most of the young boys and girls are not interested in becoming potters due to the lack of dignity of this work. They think that workers of this profession do not have high social status or value in the eyes of society. Accordingly, they jump to other areas and jobs which clearly indicate mobility of occupational pattern.

VIEWS OF SOME HIRA WORKER TO OVERCOME THEIR PROBLEMS

With respect to solution of their problem most of the Hira people of the surveyed area opined that-

i) Earthen product produced by this community can give them national or international edge and

in the long- run the upcoming generation will also be inspired to work in such industries.

ii) Since it is an eco-friendly product to some extent compared to plastic product, its use can protect our environment. The scarcity of raw-materials particularly of fire-wood and Hira soil can be overcome if the government lends its support;

iii) To reduce their physical labour they want modern equipment's;

iv) They feel that if possible, at least one "Work-shed house" should be supplied to this section of the people engaged in this sector;

v) They also suggest that special awareness/training programme should be organized to encourage the youth so that their mind-set can be changed.

PROSPECTS FOR RURAL EMPLOYMENT IN POTTERY CRAFT

The future prospect of pottery craft with respect to employment generation will depend upon certain consideration regarding its modernization keeping in view its demand and use of potteries. In fact craftspeople need what is called market professionals; require education, investment, research and development, modern

technology, design and product development, credit facilities, proper work places, market access and most importantly social acceptance and status, and thereafter we can expect a favourable effect on this industry.

i) Specialization of work will take place among the members of Hira people. As an outcome, along with the male and female members, youth can pay wholehearted attention to their industry. So, it can be expected that this industry will be able to cut the massive unemployment not only among the Hira community people but also among the people living in other backward classes in our society.

ii) With the development of this industry its demand will rise, and consequently the production of pottery industry will get enlarged and this sort of enlargement will widen the scope of market and the skills of an entrepreneur in sourcing inputs and selling their product will also rise. Thus, there is a scope for policy intervention for providing appropriate and sustained market intelligence and necessary supply conditions for a sustained growth path of the artisans.

iii) After the modernization of this industry, its output can compete with the substitute items produced in large and medium

scale industries and at the same time the country's heritage and history can be protected and developed.

iv) The migration of labour force from the rural areas can also be checked. By developing such crafts industries, basic employment opportunities in the rural areas can be provided.

CONCLUSION

The future of this marginalized community and the profession of pottery lies in our attitude, in our ability to recognize that our unique heritage and a large number of living practitioners are an enormous strength rather than a weakness and also in recognizing that they require encouragement and investment. The Kamauli and Nidhanpur Grants refer respectively to Kumbakara (Potter) and Kumbhakargarta (the Potter's pit) and it is obvious that pottery was then an important village craft as it still is.⁶ (Barua, B. K. (2003), A Cultural History of Assam, (Early Period), Bina Library, Guwahati (Originally Published:1951), p-110). "We are talking about inclusive growth excluding the already marginalized....." and therefore it is observed that the problem with crafts and craftspeople today is not dwindling market demand, or even access to a globalised market.⁷ (Yojana, May, 2010,

(A Development Monthly Magazine), Upkar Prakashan, Agra, p-35) It is our own attitude to crafts people of this community. Even crafts people of this group do not respect their own skills and traditions. Craftspeople belonging to this Hira community need to change their mind set and should

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concentrate on their own work culture, and at the same time this beautiful art of these people should have social acceptance. Then only time will tell whether these wonderful skills and tradition end up a triumphant success story or a tragically lost opportunity.

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Quest for Identity: A Major Concern in the Life and Literature of African-Americans

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Abstract

The painful and tragic experience of the African- Americans in the United States of America led them to struggle for and establish an identity of their own. The survey of the history of the African- American people in different geographical spaces such as the African homeland, the middle passage, the American South and then the industrialized North, presents a picture where identity has been the foremost casualty in a history of displacement and migration, embittered by a conflict with the majority voice, engaged in a struggle for survival against unexpected suffering. The tragedy was that the African- American's quest for identity began over the things for which he himself was not responsible- his black colour, his race, his ancestors, and his physic. All this led the black men to turn himself into an object. It is under such circumstances that an unending and always expanding quest for identity began. Both the African- American men and women were the victims but there is a marked difference in their approach. While the men had to fight only in terms of race and class, the women were additionally burdened with the issues of gender as they saw that it is not only the white man but also the black man who often ill-treated them or misrepresented them in the literature.

The experience of the African-American people, one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States of America today, has been varied, painful and tragic. For this minority group displacement, deprivation, suffering,

marginalization, resistance, survival, and an urge to create and assert a sense of identity against the process of marginalization, has been the burden of history. Deprived of any sense of identity or any satisfying feeling of the

self, they throughout the centuries have been engaged in attempts to define their existence in definite terms. Their cultural aspiration, as expressed in their literature, seems to revolve round an inevitable urge to reinvent and reassert an identity of their own. This turns out to be their primary quests.

Identity may be thought of in terms of self-personal, group or societal. There is no objective or a priori definition of self or essence, that is, of the unit's identity or of what qualities the unit should display. What its identity consists of is those aspects of its existence which enable its constituent frame of reference or meaning. According to *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, identity as a concept can be defined "as the search for self and its relationship to social contexts and realities" (Gates.p-270). What the existential thread or meaning is that which allows them to hang together is a matter of observation, not a priori definition. There is no such thing as the essential nature of human beings or groups, that is, a priori characteristics which transcend individual variations or exist whether persons or groups actually display them or are aware of them.

The African-Americans in their passage through slavery had to struggle to establish a sense of identity, to find a voice, and to

claim a political and cultural space in the United States of America. This murderous transit has formed and reinforced an autonomous sense of black identity. Black literature, music and culture are a testament to that story. Africans were first brought to America as slaves and in this process they were displaced from their native land and culture.

They were hurled into a new land, strange and hostile, where, for a second time they felt the slow, painful process of a new place and as a result of this confronted a concerned attack on a stable sense of identity. They could neither call themselves Africans nor Americans. The institution of slavery, thus, forced on the African-Americans a strange culture. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him. In the New World the Negro, not only lost his culture but his very personal name. He was either given a Christian name or the surname of his master so that he could be easily identified that, he belonged to a particular master. The Negro, in this process lost his very personal indicator of identity.

The colour of the skin “is the most obvious outward manifestation of race” and so “it has been made the criterion by which men are judged irrespective of their social or educational attainments” (Burns.p-16). In the white world the man of colour encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema, where, the common remark made by the white was “Look a Negro” or “Mama, see the Negro I’m frightened” (Fanon.p-110). Along with the colour of the skin, the physical features like hair, stature also made the life of a Negro miserable. The imperialists of Europe made their profits by making the black bodies, the ‘big business’ of the 18th century, which only a few industries of the world could yield. Their hunger for more wealth increased the importation of the Black slaves. But these Europeans, whenever, they saw that the populations of the Black slaves were exceeding the whites, they transported them to other places. In this process many Black families were broken. The African-Americans, thus, lost the sense of a definite kinship. This is the effect of forced migration.

The Africans, transported to this New World also lost their primitive religion. The religion which had helped them together was snatched from them and they were given the new religion of

Christianity. The Blacks, to some extent responded as fervently as did the rest of mankind to the exhortations of the Quakers in their call for liberty, equality and fraternity, to the expressed conviction that all men are equal in the eyes of God. But soon they were disillusioned. Their captivity under Christendom blasted their lives, disrupted their families, reached down into the personalities of each one of them and destroyed the very images and symbols which had guided their minds and feelings in the effort to live. To evade the prevailing Christian injunction that all baptized men are free and equal, they culled from the Bible many quotable verses admonishing the slaves to be true to their masters. They extended Christian salvation to them without granting the boon of freedom. When praises were sung to God, it was enforced that the Blacks must not lift their voices in common hymn.

Each of the white man created an all-powerful atmosphere of ambition and passion in which the black slaves became the objects of exploitation. To protect their delicately balanced edifice of political power, the lords of the land proceeded to neutralize the strength of the blacks and the growing restlessness of the poor whites by dividing and ruling the Blacks, by inciting them against

one another. At this stage division also occurred among the Black communities. One group went against the other and in this process they began to lose their communal identity. The bringing in of the slaves or slavery as an institution was not confined only to the blacks. Even whites, because of abject poverty, were engaged in the plantation as slave-labour. In the case of the blacks, however, the exploitation had two dimensions, based on race and class. Whereas the consideration of race was used to create a sense of restlessness and division along the colour line, class considerations enforced among the black people established a class oriented hierarchy of the ruled and the ruler when a section of the black labourers were engaged as slaves drivers or overseers. This in its turn further destroyed the sense of community life or any possibility of organization of the slaves as a community. This characteristic colonial feature dominated and contributed to the sufferings of the African-Americans for a long time.

The African-Americans were also denied education. Their black bodies were regarded as good tools that had to be kept efficient for labour and hard work. Therefore, when schools were built, it was decided that the Blacks must not partake of the teaching in the schools. The

whites leaped upon the road of progress and their leap was the windfall of the tragedy of the Blacks. The excessive love of life wove a deadly web of slavery; their sense of the possibility of building a more human world brought devastation and despair to the Blacks. The African-American desire to learn, to be able to use language as a tool for emancipation is very poignantly expressed in the *Narrative of The Life of Fredrick Douglass, An American Slave*, written by himself. He very poignantly states; 'the means of knowing was withheld from me' (p-12). Even the Sunday schools were a mere mockery of education to the slaves. The desire to be able to read and use language to articulate grievances has been and still a very significant feature in the African-American quest for identity. Frederick Douglass ironically states:

the more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers.....As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! That very discontentment with which Master Huger had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unalterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing (P-33).

That was Frederick Douglass in 1845. But African-American history has since then been a struggle to master language and use writing as action in the search to understand and express a sense of the self.

A shared sense of the past plays a pivotal role in the way values and visions are transmitted from one generation to the next. History is part of a society's attempt to structure a self image and to communicate a common identity. The African-Americans unable to assimilate and integrate with the whites began to look back to their African past. The new American nationality was inescapably English in language, ideas and traditions because it was able to melt all the European customs and traditions leaving the black Americans outside the plate. Their folkways and folktales, which had once given meaning and sanction to their actions faded from the Black consciousness. They were now no longer the typical Negro nor were they regarded as equal to the sense of identifiable self, which would not oversimplify the multiplicity of simultaneously being an African, an American, and a human being.

The Negro's search for identity began over the things for which he himself was not responsible. He was not responsible for his black colour, for his body, for his race, for his

ancestors, but still then he was subjected to crude definition as a mute object. The white men by capturing the black men in Africa and bringing them to slavery in America killed the black men—killed him mentally, culturally, spiritually, economically, politically, and morally. Hated from outside and therefore hating himself, the Negro was bound to take him far off from his own presence and contribute to the process of turning himself into an object. All he wanted was to be a man among other men and live in a world that he could say, also, belonged to him, but which ironically was denied to him. A concomitant to this state is an unending and always expanding Quest for identity in an ever changing context.

African-American fiction uses the above stated historical forces as the backdrop. For the African-American writers, men and women, it has been unending individual quests as part of the larger quest of the community for a sense of identity, however changing, fragile and temporary it may be. A study of African-American culture and its literary expression of identity is defined essentially by the dimension of race and in some cases class. The African-American fiction came to be seen as dominated by the struggle for freedom from all discriminations and also striving

to establish one's identity as an African-American. The male writers also portray the African-American male protagonists engaged in a quest for identity through an alternating pattern of withdrawal from and involvement with the community, and the female characters as stereotypical one dimensional figure. They remained concerned only with the black male psyche and at times even branded their women with a negative image.

The writings of the African-American woman, though runs parallel to the writings of men, have their own particular views-that of gender. The institution of slavery branded them within the narrow scope of certain stereotype images which denied the scope of a fully

developed notion of the self. The women saw that, in most cases the slave narrative or the later day writings of the black male failed to give a correct picture or expression to the idea of a complete woman. The negative stereotype image of black woman continued to show its presence in contemporary writings while the other aspects of the Negro life went through a series of change. The African-American women, thus, not only had to fight in terms of race and class but also had to struggle to change the negative images in their real life as well as literature. They seem to give greater importance to community involvement, thus designing more prominent and centrally dominant position for the African-American women.

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The Great Indian Revolt: A Short Deliberation

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Abstract

A group of Indian Historians described the Revolt of 1857 as people's revolt and regarded its leaders as national Hero's. Further, some Indian and British Historians have termed the Revolt of 1857 as the 'Mutiny of the Sepoys'. Opinion differs among the Historians as to the nature of the Great Revolt of 1857. I am trying to continue my brief discussion from this background in this essay.

A group of Indian Historians described the Revolt of 1857 as people's revolt and regarded its leaders as national Hero's. Further, some Indian and British Historians have termed the Revolt of 1857 as the "Mutiny of the Sepoys". Opinion differs among the Historians as to the nature of the Great Revolt of 1857.

At the outset we must keep it in mind that if a rebellion when successful is described as a War of liberation. A War of independence when unsuccessful is dubbed as a rebellion. The Indians regard the heroic uprising of 1857 as the Indian first war of Independence, but the British dubbed it as a sepoy Mutiny in which they only found that the sepoys fought for their narrow interest.

It appears that more than two hundred thousand gallant sons of Mother India gave their blood in the rebellion.

Historians observed that the movement was marked by absence of cohesion and unity of purpose among different sections of rebels. There was also absence of rules of civilized warfare on both sides and both sides fought with peculiar savagery. If the mutineers were guilty of terrible enormities the British troops were also on occasions tarnished the fair name of their Country by a severity that was hardly tempered by good sense or moderation.

"Meri Jhansi Nahi Dungi"-
"I shall not surrender my Jhansi."
- was the call of Rani Laxmi Bai, a widow queen of Jhansi, gave a spontaneous expression of her patriotic feelings. What was

Jhansi? It was a small state in Bundelkhand, a part of present Uttar Pradesh. Annual Revenue of the state was Rupees Twenty Lakhs only. After the Annexation of Jhansi British Empire sanctioned a monthly pension of rupees five thousand to Rani. But Rani was not ready to bend her head before the British for her personal welfare. She could realize that British would gradually grab the entire India in future. She was firm in her decision not to surrender to the enemy whatever mighty they may be. She possessed an iron will and refused to surrender.

We observe that Rani Laxmi Bai lastly got fatal hurt while fighting riding on a horse in 'mans' dress with a sword in her hand and ultimately died. Her heroic death was only a sacrifice of life in the aspiration for freedom for motherland.

It reveals from the proclamations issued by the leaders of great Indian Revolts that they wanted earnestly to unite all classes of Indian people specially Hindus and Muslims against the British. Records speaks that both the Hindus and Muslims unitedly fought against the British with a view to oust them from India. Attempts were made to satisfy the poor's by giving higher honor, post and position. There was no sign of communalism. The rebels gave greatest importance for the national safety. Their

slogan was "Delhi Cholo". They declared Bahadur Shah-II, the last Mughal Emperor as their leader.

The British rulers tried to divide the Hindus and Muslims to their level best. The Lieutenant Governor Russel Colvil said in grief, "...at the time of revolt...the benefit of division between the Hindus and Muslims could not be gained up..."

The principal Secretary of Bahadur Shah-II was one Mukundaram. Azimullan Khan was the principal advisor of rebel leader Nana Sahib. Afgan Soldiers were among the main bodyguards of Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi.

Captain Gowan secretly proposed to the Thakur Community of Bareilly to give them Rs. 50,000 as bribe to create a division in the unity of Hindus and Muslims. But the "Thakurs" rejected that abhorred proposal.

James outram a contemporary observed that the revolt was not a thoroughly organized national movement, nor "a war of independence". British Historians like J.W. Keye, G.B. Malleon, G.M. Trevelyan, Lawrance have termed the revolte of 1857 as the "Mutiny of the Sepoys", "Religious war against the Christians", "War between Black and White", "A struggle between Oriental and Occidental", "A Hindu Muslim conspiracy against the British" etc.

The famous Indian Historians namely Dr. Sukumar

Ch. Sen and Ramesh Ch. Mazumder tried to evaluate the Great Revolt of the 1857. They however, differ in their interpretation of the events of the Mutiny. Dr. Sukumar Sen believed and regarded the Revolt as a “War of Independence”, while Dr. R.C. Mazumder found that the Revolt of 1857 was neither first, nor National nor a “War of Independence”. Infact, the Revolt of the Sepoys gradually developed in the areas Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi etc. as a general revolt in which sections of Civil population of all types of classes who were discontented due to tyranny of the British took part and which was the first great and direct challenge to the British Rule in India on an extensive scale. Dr. R.C. Mazumder observed “...it was nothing but a mutiny, of sepoy only since some sepoy revolted for their self-interest. So it cannot be termed as a national war or struggle for independence. There was no sign of rising of nationality in the heart of rebels”.

Thompson and Garret regarded the mutineers as “murderers of European Woman and Children.” They call it a mutiny or revolt. Dr. R.C. Mazumder further observed that “...the sepoy mutiny inspired the national movement for the freedom of India from British yoke which started half a century later”.

Many prominent historians found patriotic favour in the Great Revolt of 1857. Rajani Kanti Gupta in his “Sepahi Juddher Itihas” admitted and showed with details facts that “the sepoy and their associates wanted the end of British rule in India being enlightened with the ideal of Nationalism. Prominent Historian V.D. Savarkar in his book “The Indian War Of Independence” described the great revolt as “...well planned National struggle for Independence”. He termed revolt as “the first war of independence”. Historian Sashi Bhusan Choudhury in his “Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies”, not only titled the revolt as a national war against imperialism but also pointed out that it was a “General Rebellion”. He followed that during the year 1857-58 the Civil people in many parts of India became hostile against the tyranny of the British Empire.

Most carefully, historian Dr. Sushobhan Chandra Sarkar observed that general people got united with a view to end the British Rule. They may not have any idea of “National Country” but they must have the sense of nationality and that is why the revolt should be termed as “National Struggle”.

Karl Marx wrote that the rebellion which the British termed as a military uprising was actually a national movement.

Mr. Disraeli, a leader of British Empire proclaimed in the British Parliament that the revolt was not a mere uprising of the sepoys. He told that the revolt was a national movement in India, where the sepoys were an instrument only.

Discussing the nature of various movements of the world like Carbonary movement of Italy, Movement of Poland against Bonaparte etc, it is followed that there were lack of various reasons in the nature of the movements yet, those were recognized as national movements in the History of national agitation.

We see that Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra, Madras and most of states of South India remained unaffected. But in Assam some of the sepoys mutinied. Maniram Dewan tried to organize an armed revolt by the sepoys to drive away the British from Assam. But his attempt failed and the mutiny was suppressed.

It is observed that all most all historians have admitted the fact that the rebellion of Oudh got a whole shape of national movement. Begum Hazrat Mahal of Oudh led the rebellion there. Md. Hassan of Gorakpur, Mehendi Hassan of Sultanpur, Beni Madho of Sankarpur, Udit Narayan and Madho Prasad of Birhur, Debi Box Singh of Dhorua etc – these all regional leaders took active part in the rebellion.

As per deed dated 13-09-1857, East India Company, the Government found it difficult to detect the participants of the rebellion as a large number of general public took part in it. According to Gen. Homes – only at Oudh 1,50,000 numbers of armed rebels were assassinated by the British to suppress to revolt there out of which only 35,000 were the sepoys.

Nationality is a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is due to the nations states. In Nationalism we observe a call to sacrifice life for the nation. The character of the Great Revolt show that certainly there was a feeling of nationalism in the mind of the rebels though they had no idea of a National Country. In his recent book „Argumentative Indians“ Dr. Amartya Sen shows that the Indians were always “Argumentative”. This query mentality of Indians practically gave birth of the Great Revolt of 1857. So it cannot be started that the revolt of 1857 was mere an temporary uprising of some conservative, superstitious, arrogant native Indians

It is obvious that the actual cause of the revolt was the tyranny of the British throughout a century upon the Indians. It would be a foolish task to evaluate the Great Revolt as a “Mutiny” ignoring this vital cause. The British could have

realized more or less, the actual cause of mutiny as it appears. We carefully observe that after the end of the Great Revolt the control of Indian Government was assumed finally by the British Crown. East India Company ceased to exist. The army was thoroughly organized and the idea of division and counterpoise dominated British Military Policy in India. British Empire took up certain changes in their administration in India.

The sacrifice of life of the real heroes of the first war of Independence remained dishonoured and unsung for a long time but their supreme

sacrifice kindled in the hearts of millions of Indians the flame of patriotism which would never be extinguished. Practically all the Indians were influenced and inspired by it and within a short period of next 50 years entire India became hostile against the British Rule and thus Mother India got her freedom in the birth of a new Nation, new Nationality and a new Unity in diversity. The supreme sacrifice of the Heroes of the Great Revolt of 1857 had become thus successful in 1947 which the Nation would always remember with greatest regard.

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Nature and Extent of the Aryanisation of North East India

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Abstract

The ancient names of Assam were Kamrupa and Pragjyotisa, which had been inhabited by the Kirata or Mongoloid people before the Aryan culture could spread its influence over the North Eastern part of India. Before the advent of the Aryan civilization, the Austric-Mongolian and Dravidian culture was the prevalent culture of the people of this area. According to some scholar, the Aryans advent in North East India was occurrence of the pre-Buddhist period. The period of the Brahmins was followed by the Buddhist period, so far as the cultural history of India is concerned. In comparatively, ancient inscriptions of Assam, we find that, the high caste Aryans like Brahmans, Shatriyas and Kalitas entered into Assam and began to settle here even during the Pre-Christian era.

The mention of Kamrupa and Devoka in the Allahabad pillar inscription of the Gupta king Samudragupta has an important bearing on the Aryanisation of North East India. In the domain of political system, it is all probable that the ancient Assam populated by the non-Khmer group of the Austric and the Tibeto-Burman people was in tribal state of society. Narakasura and Bhagadutta, the legendary kings of Assam were probably the first monarchical rulers and they were in all probability the Aryanised or Hunduised Mongoloid persons. In other words, the tribal political system of Assam was changed into monarchical system by the influence of the Aryan culture.

The ancient names of Assam were Kamrupa and Pragjyotisa, which had been inhabited by the Kirata or Mongoloid people before the

Aryan culture could spread its influence over the North Eastern part of India. Before the advent of the Aryan civilization, the Austric-

Mongolian and Dravidian culture was the prevalent culture of the people of this area. When and how the Aryans entered North-East India and spread their culture is uncertain. However, we find, there are references in the Vedic and later Vedic literature. The gradual advance of the Aryans to the North-East India is described in these works, the Sathapata Brahmana for instance, records the progress of the Aryans up to the Sadanira, identified with the Karatoya, and to the east of that river, the Karatoya as to Dr. P.C Choudhury was the ancient boundary of Pragjyotisa in the west and the source perhaps points to the spread of the Aryan culture to the land before the Buddhistic period. The Aitareya Brahmana gives further indication of the spread of that culture to Kamrupa. The Gopatha Brahmana records a tradition of the origin of the name of Kamrupa indicating an early contact of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements. Moreover, the internal evidences of the Vedic literature itself not only throws light on the question of Aryanisation of Eastern India at an early period, but also gives an indication of the composition of certain portions of the Vedic texts by the Risis from said region. However, it is an undenyng fact that, the Aryan- migration in to the North East India was held during a comparatively earlier period of History.

According to some scholar, the Aryans advent in North East India was occurrence of the pre-Buddhist period. The antiquity of the Aryanised name Kamrupa that finds mention in the Gopatha Brahmana and that of Pragjyotisa, which occurs in the Sankayana Grahya Samgraha and the Ramayana points to the early migration to the Aryans. Nevertheless, simply the mention or references in some ancient scriptures and legends do not hold good that this portion of India was Aryanised at the time of the composition of those books. Again, some scholars are in the opinion that the name Pragjyotisa in the Ramayana was a later interpolation.

The period of the Brahmins was followed by the Buddhist period, so far as the cultural history of India is concerned. The important mention of the names like Lauhitya in the Nikayas, Udayachala in the Samhitas and Pragjyotisa - Kamrupa in the Puranas, preserve the tradition of the introduction of Aryan culture into the land. In some contemporary literary works like Kautilya's - "Arthasastra", refers to the Aryanised place name like Suvarnakudya, Paralauhitya, etc. in connection with the economic products of Kamrupa also points to the conclusion that, during the Maurya-period, an Aryan wave entered into the land.

The details of the Aryanisation of North-East India are referred to in the “Mahabharata”. There is also a controversy about the interpolation of the name or Pragjyotisa in the Mahabharata. However, in the history of the Aryanisation of the North-East India, episode of Narakasura forms a significant symbol. Even though he might be purely legendary, it is told that, Naraka was an adoption of Janaka, the Aryan King of Vedeha. He had to leave his ancestral house and came to Pragjyotisa with an Aryan culture.

Just before and after the beginning of the Christian era, we have some literary evidences regarding Aryan’s advent in Assam. The Brithat Samhitas reference to Pragjyotisa and Lauhitya on the geography of the Parasara-Tantra of the 1st century A.D had an important bearing of the entry of the Aryans.

The Puranas definitely point to the settlement of the Aryans at least into the Brahmaputra Valley. The reference may be made here of the Markendeo, Skando and the Vayupuranas. The Markandeya Purana (57-

58) mentions Pragjyotisa along with Udayacala, Lauhita and Kamrupa as countries in the East. The Skando Purana refers to the prevalence of the Sakti faith in Kamrupa. The Vayu Purana (45)

includes Pragjyotisa and Lauhitya along with others among countries in the east.

In comparatively, ancient inscriptions of Assam, we find that, the high caste Aryans like Brahmans, Shatriyas and Kalitas entered into Assam and began to settle here even during the Pre-Christian era. The mention of Kamrupa and Devoka in the Allahabad pillar inscription of the Gupta king Samudragupta has an important bearing on the Aryanisation of North East India.

The “Accounts of Hieua Tsang” and the Nidhanpur inscription of the Varma king Bhaskaravarman definitely points to the settlement of the Aryans in ancient Assam of Kamrupa. According to Nidhanpur inscriptions, the king donated or granted land to the Brahmans in which more than two hundred groups were present. This is an indicator to the Proof that before the 6th century AD, the Vedic Brahmanas were the dwellers in the region surrounding Nidhanpur in the Chandrapuri visaya.

As has generally happened all over non-Aryan India that the acceptance of the composite religion and culture of the Gangetic India and its way of life by the ruling classes brought an easy and inevitable merger of the entire non-Aryan Tribe or people within the ever expanding Brahminical Hindu world which

had the Aryan Language “Sanskrit” as its vehicle.

In the process of Sanskritisation, the place name in non-Aryan territories would normally be translated in Sanskrit or Sanskritised. Brahmaputra and Lauhitya, names of the Province are all likelihood approximation to Sanskrit of Pre-Aryan names.

In fact, when the Aryan entered into Assam, the modern form of Hinduism had developed with elements from the indigenous belief and highly philosophical Vedic faiths. In Assam, before the advent of the Aryan religion, the worshipping of “Mother Goddess” and the Kirata Mahadeva was in vogue. The Aryan culture with its belief in “Trinity” and the idea of “Mother Goddess” could easily make its headway in the life of the people of Kamrupa.

In the domain of political system, it is all probable that the ancient Assam populated by the non-Khmer group of the Austric and the Tibeto- Burman people was in tribal state of society. Narakasura and Bhagadutta, the legendary kings of Assam were probably the first monarchical rulers and they were in all probability the Aryanised or Hunduised Mongoloid persons. In other words, the tribal political system of Assam was changed into monarchical system by the influence of the Aryan culture.

Over and above, the character of the script and language of the inscription of ancient Kamrupa clearly prove that, the Aryan language Sanskrit make its place most prominent due to explanation of Aryan culture in over this “Land of blue hills and red rivers”.

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Women Literacy Rate in the Princely State Tripura: A Historical Study

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Abstract

Tripura was a princely state and ruled by the rulers of Manikya dynasty for a long period. She merged with the Indian Union on 15th Oct 1949. The rulers of Tripura wanted to modernise their state and educational modernisation was only a part of it. However, that process of modernisation was started only from the last quarter of 19th century. Many schools, both primary and secondary were established during that short span of time. Nevertheless, due to its primitive and patriarchal character the ratio between the male and female literacy growth rate was not uniform. In this article the researcher tried to find out the female literacy growth rate in Tripura before her amalgamation and historically analyse the real cause behind the negligence of women education in the Princely state Tripura on the basis of various statistical records.

Education is one of the pillars of modernisation and literacy growth rate is an indicator through which the educational growth can be measured partially. Tripura was a princely state before her amalgamation with the Indian Union. It was a tribal inhabited state based on its primitive culture and tradition. Hence, the state was far away from modern educational system. The process of

modernisation was started from the last quarter of 19th century. However, due to the lack of proper educational infrastructure the literacy rate was very negligible in the state. During the last three quarters of Manikya rule, it is evident that the literacy growth rate of the state increased handsomely. However, the conditions of women literacy rate in Tripura were very insignificant.

A country or a state cannot make her progress only with her male or female citizens. Both have their equal roles behind the development. Nevertheless, in the patriarchal society the domination of male citizens and in the matriarchal society the domination of female citizens is evident and thus, those countries or states offer us a halfway developmental story. In 19th century, in a primitive state like Tripura with her patriarchal outlook give us an idea about the social condition of women in Tripura.

In 19th century Tripura, tribal people were majority in the state under the Manikya rulers. Table No. 1 depicts that during the period there were very few numbers of schools in the princely state Tripura and the total numbers of pupils were very poor but unfortunately, there were no trace of any female students during the period. Hence, it is clear from the report that the female education was never appreciated by the rulers of Tripura.

Table No. 1. Educational account of the state Tripura (1894-95)

Division	Number of Schools			Students			Race of Students								Average daily attendance of	
	For boys	For girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Thakurs	Manipuris	Tripuris	Kukis	Bengali Hindus	Bengali Muslims	Christians	Others	Boys	Girls
Sadar	10	0	10	448	0	448	56	64	33	0	184	85	11	15	342.89	0
Sonamura	8	0	8	189	0	189	2	0	31	0	61	82	0	13	132.41	0
Bilonia	5	0	5	137	0	137	0	0	0	0	54	83	0	0	95.36	0
Kailashar	12	0	12	306	0	306	0	174	0	15	65	50	0	2	234	0

Total	35	0	35	1080	0	1080	58	238	64	15	364	300	11	30	804.66	0
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Source: *The Administration Report of Tripura State For the Years (1894-95, 1914-15, 1918-19)*, Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 2004

The aborigines were primitive, lived in deep forests and were satisfied with their age old culture and traditions and the people those who lived in urban area i.e. only the town Agartala and divisional headquarters were also very few in numbers. Accordingly, the Census Report of

1901 reveals that the educated tribal people in Tripura were very few in number. Until the thirties of 20th century, the 'Thakur' families represented the educated section of the tribals (Bareh, 2007). Table No. 2 shows the educated aborigines of Tripura in the year 1901.

Table 2. Number of Educated Tribal people (Census 1901)

Total Population	1, 73,325	
Name of the Tribes	Tribal Population	Educated Tribes
Chakma	4,510	10
Tripura	75,781	107
Kuki	7,547	04
Halam	2,215	Nil
Lushai	135	Nil
Mog	1,491	137
Total	91,679	258

Source: Atish Chandra Choudhury *Census Report 1310 T.E. (1901 A.D.)*, Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, Re-printing 1995.

Hence, from the above table it becomes clear that only 0.28% of the tribal population were educated. The person those who were educated other than the tribal peoples were especially the

Bengalis. The reasons behind it was that, the progressive rulers of the state wanted to make their state modern and in this process of modernisation they invited educated intellectuals of colonial

Bengal. Thus, a large numbers of educated intellectuals begin to immigrate into the State especially from Bengal. While, the total number of Bengali people living in Tripura in the year 1901 was 59,689 (Choudhury, Re-print 1995), it was enumerated that 43,894 people migrated to Tripura (Choudhury, Re-print 1995), though in the Imperial Gazetteers of India Vol. XIII the number of immigrants were 40,000 (Imperial Gazetteers of India, Vol, XIII (New Edition), 1908).

As the educated Bengali immigrants began to immigrate into Tripura, the number of literacy increased but the census report 1901 reveals that though the number of male literacy increased significantly, the female literacy growth rate was quite insignificant (Table No. 3). One of the reasons behind this insignificant growth rate of female literacy was that, during the period those who migrated from Bengal to Tripura were moved by the easy earning in Tripura. The officials, government employees, farmers and the working class came to Tripura for employment only, not with the intention of settling in the State permanently and therefore, they left their family members at home. The new comers do not at once entirely leave their residence in British territory, they keep their families and friends there, and make in Hill Tipperah only

Khamar Baris or farmhouses in which they live for the purposes of carrying on their cultivation (Annual Report on the General Administration of the Political Agency of Hill Tippera for the year 1886, No-407, dated , 7th July, 1887, para-34).

For the first time one girls' school was opened within the campus of Imperial palace by the Queen Maharani Tulshibati. In 9th April, 1894 the school with the name 'Agartala Balika Vidyalaya started her journey. The school was completely aided by the Queen's personal treasury. At first, only the girls from royal families got their education from the school but later, girls from various places took admission. However, if we see table no. 3 than it depicts that initially the school was unable to increase the number of female literacy in the state, though it was an outstanding effort on the way of women education in Tripura. According to the Imperial Gazetteers of India, in 1901, only 2.3 percent of the population could read and write (The Imperial Gazetteer of India Vol. XIII, 1908) and among them 4.1% were males and 0.2% was females. In the year 1903-04 the numbers of educational institutions were 103 in Tripura and the number of pupils increased to 3125 (3008 boys and 117 girls) in the year 1903-04

(The Imperial Gazetteer of India Vol. XIII, 1908). That number of

schools and their pupils increased in the later years.

Table: No. 3 **Number of peoples (according to their religion) those who were educated in different languages in Tripura in the year 1901**

Total Population			Number of peoples those who were educated in different languages.														
			English			Bengali			Hindi			Oriya			Others		
Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
173325	92495	80030	324	316	5	3511	3378	133	111	110	1	15	15	0	313	304	9
<u>Hindu</u> 119192	63147	56045	291	286	5	2503	2403	100	73	72	1	15	15	0	64	62	2
<u>Muslims</u> 45323	24734	20589	31	31	0	990	961	29	38	38	0	0	0	0	108	108	0
<u>Buddhist</u> 5999	3200	2799	0	0	0	10	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	134	129	5
<u>Christian</u> 137	76	61	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
<u>Animist</u> 2673	1337	1336	0	0	0	6	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	2

Source: Atish Chandra Choudhury Census Report 1310 T.E. (1901 A.D.), Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, Re-printing 1995.

In the year 1914-15, the numbers of schools increased to 154 and among them only 12 nos. of schools were made for the girls. Hence, though the number of male literacy increased in Tripura during the period the female literacy did not increase in the same proportion (Table No. 4). In addition, if we compare both the table no. 4 and 5, then we find that

in 1918-19 the total literacy growth decreased though the numbers of administrative divisions in the state were increased. In both the tables, though we find that the number of schools for the girls remained same but the number of female students and their attendance were downwards in the later year.

Table 4 Educational account of the state Tripura (1914-15)

Divisions	Number of Schools			No. of Students			Average daily attendance of	
	For boys	For girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
Sadar	50	2	52	2095	174	2269	1511.63	82.73
Kailashahar	18	4	22	901	55	956	690.97	46.20
Sonamura	20	1	21	1029	39	1068	802.3	34.99
Belonia	13	1	14	699	23	722	569.85	14.89
Khowai	8	1	9	215	12	227	160.46	8.42
Dharmanagar	16	1	17	555	48	603	419.06	32.01
Udaipur	11	2	13	241	35	276	167.42	21.11
Sabroom	6	0	6	189	11	200	157.10	7.80
Total	142	12	154	5924	397	6321	4478.62	249.15

Source: *The Administration Report of Tripura State For the Years (1894-95, 1914-15, 1918-19)*, Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 2004

Table 5 Educational account of the state Tripura (1918-19)

Sub-division	Number of Schools			No. of Students			Average daily attendance of	
	For boys	For girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
Sadar	51	2	53	1643	105	1748	1191.31	64.06
Kailashahar	11	4	15	743	100	843	504.83	63.29
Sonamura	19	1	20	689	29	718	514.43	22.18
Belonia	10	1	11	517	23	540	351.5	14.07
Khowai	5	1	6	137	14	151	104.96	8.89
Dharmanagar	14	1	15	619	26	645	403.54	14.99
Udaipur	3	2	5	181	33	214	117.48	20.39
Sabroom	8	0	8	92	8	100	69.79	5.8
Amarpur	6	0	6	53	0	53	52.68	0
Kalyanpur	1	0	1	42	0	42	18.86	0
Total	128	12	140	4716	338	5054	3329.38	213.67

Source: *The Administration Report of Tripura State For the Years (1894-95, 1914-15, 1918-19)*, Tribal Research & Cultural Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 2004

However, the process of modernisation in Tripura continued and in that process of modernization, many schools including primary and secondary schools were established by the ruler of Tripura. In the year 1922(1332 T.E.) the number of schools were 168 and among them 152 schools were for the boys, while, the girls' schools remain the same. In the next ten years i.e. upto 1931-32, 56 nos. of new schools were established (Debvarma, 1997). A bold step had been taken by the royal

administration in 1931-32 when compulsory primary education was introduced in Agartala, under the State Act 2 of 1932 and later it was decided to expand its scope upto the valley of Howrah and to the linked areas of the Sub-divisional town (Menon, 1975). However, prior to her merger with the Indian union, Tripura had no facilities within her boundary for imparting collegiate education. The below table no. 6 depicts the number of primary schools from the year 1907 to 1946.

Table No. 6. Number of Primary schools in Tripura from 1907 to 1946

Year	Number of Schools	Number of pupils
1907-08	137	4,011
1916-17	125	4,842
1926-27	139	4,215
1936-37	111	5,110
1943-46	123	5,115

Source: *Tripura District Gazetteers*, Government of Tripura, Agartala, 1975, p. 316.

Therefore, as the number of schools was increased during the period, the literacy growth rate was also increased. However, table no. 7 shows that, the

educated people in Tripura, from the year 1901 to 1941 were quite few in number and the number of female growth rate was quite insignificant.

Table No. 7. Literacy in Tripura during 1901 – 1941.

Year	Total % of literates	Male	Female
1901	2.5	4.5	0.2
1911	4.0	6.9	0.8
1921	8.2	14.3	1.1
1931	2.8	4.9	0.4
1941	7.9	12.7	2.5

- Source: 1. Atish Chandra Choudhury, *Census Report 1310 T.E. (1901 A.D.)*, Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, Re-print 1995, p. 16.
2. Thakur Sri Somendrachandra Debvarma, *1340 T.E. Census Biharani of Tripura (in Bengali)*, (Census Report of Tripura 1340 T.E.), Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura, Agartala, Re-print 1997, p. 60.
3. *Census of India 1961*, Vol. XXVI, Tripura, District Census Handbook, Section – I, C.R.Paul, Government of Tripura, Government Printing and Stationary Department, Agartala, 1964, p. 296.

The number of English educated people in Tripura was quite a few but the trends were always upward (Table No. 8). In addition, it was only due to the immigration of English educated peoples from Bengal to Tripura. It is also evident that the Bengali Hindu people were much more English educated than the Bengali Muslim people in Tripura in the year 1931. “In the state 0.8% of people were English educated and

among them 0.14% of male and 0.1 % of female were English educated. Among the Muslims 0.4% of people and among the Hindus 0.9% of people were English educated. Among the male, 0.17% were Hindu and 0.7% were Muslim English educated people.” (Debvarma, 1997). Thus, we can affirm that the Bengali Hindu educated people migrated more than the Bengali Muslim educated people.

Table No. 8 Number of English educated persons

Year	Number of English Educated persons
1901	324
1911	1208
1921	1707
1931	3087

Source: Thakur Sri Somendrachandra Debvarma, *Census Bibarani of Tripura, 1340 T.E. (Bengali)*. Agartala: Tribal Research Institute, Government of Tripura, Re-print 1997, p.61.

In the year 1946, prior to the State's accession to the Indian Union (15th Oct, 1949) there were only 5 Lower Primary, 6 Middle and one High English school for girls in the state. Besides, 4 nos. of free primary schools were run on a co-educational basis at Agartala. The enrolment of girls' students in all the schools during the period was only 1026 (Menon, 1975).

Hence, though the rulers of Tripura instigated several steps to make their state modern but due to her primitive character, static social ethics and patriarchal outlook, female education was in a

setback. Female education among the tribes was never encouraged by the rulers except few steps taken by the female personalities of Royal House. Whatever developments we observe regarding female literacy growth rate from various sources were only due to Bengali female immigrants. Hence, from the female literacy growth rate in Tripura it become evident that in the first half of the 20th century the educational infrastructure still remain in a primitive stage.

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Role of Various Classes in the Revolt Of 1857

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Abstract

Culturally the Indians were always “one”. The Titular Mughal Emperor was there to serve as a thread of unity among the Indians. The British showed disrespect to the Emperor which offended the Indians in General and the Muslims in special. India possesses its own economic system mainly based on agriculture and small industry. The foreign rulers were sending Indian raw-materials to Britain for feeding their new born industries and thus were exploiting Indian resources. The “Doctrine of Lapse” or “Escheat” policy destroyed the Indian Industries. Indian Artisans, craftsman etc. became jobless and the burden of farmland increased. Poverty grabbed seriously the people. The Indian soldiers were paid low-salaries (starting from Rs. 7 to the end of Rs. 9). Indian soldiers were ill-treated in Army by the English causing rise of discrimination in their mind. The number of Indians in Army was far larger than the British sepoy (ratio 6:1). Most of the Indian soldiers were belong to Brahmin and Thakurs of East-India. A general discontent existed among all the Indian soldiers. Such dis-satisfaction were intensified by the Lord Canning introduction of “General Service Act” which required by the sepoy to march anywhere of British Empire. It is obvious that Indian sepoy had natural love and respect their motherland and faith of their own religion. The introduction of Enfield rifle with the cartridges greased with the fat of cow and pig, obnoxious to both the Hindus and Muslims set the spark that enkindled the embers of discontent of the Indian sepoy stored in them for a long time.

Culturally the Indians were always “one”. The Titular Mughal Emperor was there to serve as a thread of unity among the Indians. The British showed dis-respect to the Emperor which offended the

Indians in General and the Muslims in special. The Muslim was already sore at the loss of the post supremacy. Lord Dalhousie’s policy of annexation, the “Doctrine of Lapse” or “Escheat”-

by which many princely states of India were indiscriminately annexed to British. Especially Nana Sahib the adopted son of last Peshwa, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi and the Nawab of Avodh were extremely injured by this policy.

India possesses its own economic system mainly based on agriculture and small industry. The foreign rulers were sending Indian raw-materials to Britain for feeding their new born industries and thus were exploiting Indian resources. This policy destroyed the Indian Industries. Indian Artisans, craftsman etc. became jobless and the burden of farmland increased. Poverty grabbed seriously the people.

States and jagirs of the princes and other aristocratic people were confiscated who became destitute and in the result skilled persons employed under them became jobless. This led them to join the revolt against the British. The soldiers of the confiscated states lost their means of bread. So they also joined the mutiny against the British.

It is a fact that the Indian life is based on religion. The attachment to religion has kept the Indians united. As per Hindu customs adoption was an important ritual which was refused by the British. This refusal affected the social and

religious sentiments of the Indians.

Abolition of "sati" Custom by the Lord William Bentinck, Hindu Widow Remarriage by law etc. put a deep hit on the Hindu religious feelings.

Seizure of religious grants to both Hindus and Muslims and side by side condemnations of eastern religious (Hinduism, Buddhism, Muslimism) also deeply hit in the religious faith of the Indians.

The unwarranted aggressive spirit of some Christian Missionaries on systematic planned manner, by giving jobs to the converted poor Indian to Christianity was also hated seriously. These types of conversions too created hate against the British.

The spread of English teaching in Schools, spread of Western culture, introduction of railways, telegraphs system etc. were also begun to eye with suspicion among the Indians as because they were seriously oppressed by the aggressive imperialism of British as whole. The efforts of British to invite western culture to Indian life led to a serious discontent.

The Indian soldiers were paid low-salaries (starting from Rs. 7 to the end of Rs. 9). Indian soldiers were ill-treated in Army by the English causing rise of

discrimination in their mind. The number of Indians in Army was far larger than the British sepoy (ratio 6:1). Most of the Indian soldiers were belong to Brahmin and Thakurs of East-India. They were sensitive being high caste Hindu. A general suspicion grew up in their mind as to the westernizing and christianizing policy of the British.

Such dis-satisfaction were intensified by the Lord Canning introduction of “General Service Act” which required by the sepoy to march anywhere of British empire. A general discontent existed among all the Indian soldiers.

It is obvious that Indian sepoy had natural love and respect their motherland and faith of their own religion.

The introduction of Enfield rifle with the cartridges greased with the fat of cow and pig, obnoxious to both the Hindus and Muslims set the spark that enkindled the embers of discontent of the Indian sepoy stored in them for a long time. On 29-03-1857 the Brahmin sepoy “Mangal Pandey” fired the first shot of the revolt 1857 in Bengal.

The participant of the the revolt were both Hindus and Muslims. The Zaminders, Artisans, Pndits Phakirs, businessmen all gradually joint the revolt. Hindustanies,

Marathies, Rajputs, Jats, Ruhilas all fought together against the British under leadership of Bahadur Shah-II the last Mughal Emperor.

We observe that the backbone of the revolt was Army (Sepoy). Nana Sahib Peshwa, Azimulla Khan, Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah-II, Begum Hazrats Mahal of Oudh, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, Khan Bahadur Khan of Barrielly all led the revolt. Kanwar Sing aged about 80 years, Tantia Tope, Moulavi Ahmed Shah, Raja Honumant Singh fought to oust of the British.

We see that Hindu Mukundaram was principal Secretary of Bahadur Shah-II, Azimulla Khan was the principal advisor of the renowned rebel leader Nana Sahib. This clever and intelligent leader published in his newspaper- “Piyas-I-Azadi”- “The Hindu and Muslims Brothers of India awake”!! Dear brothers be hostile to British. The best thing that God gifted man is “Freedom”. The oppressive foreigners snatched away that supreme wealth of us by playing falsr tricks. Shall we bear this forever? No, never.....The English Government will try to use Hindus and Muslims each other. Dear brothers never put your steps in their devil trap. Dear Hindu and muslim brothers forgetting minor discrimination

get together unitedly under a flag in this war for independence.” (Adhunik Bharoter Itihas, by Goutam Chattapadhyay and Manju Chattapadhyay).

It appears that the leaders of the rebellion were fully acquainted with their weakness as well as their target and as such they earnestly wanted the unity of both the main classes of India and in this juncture they were very much successful to remove communalism from the Indians.

In Delhi Bhakat Khan a sepoy led the rebellion. In Kanpur Nana Sahib declared himself as “Peshuawa”, Tatyia Tope and Azimulla Khan organized the war on behalf of Nana Sahib. In Lucknow Begum Hazarat Mahal of Oudh led the revolt of declaring her adopted son as Nawab of Oudh. Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi conquered Gwalior with the help of Tatyia Tope In Bihar Kanwar Singh of Jagdispur, a Zaminder, led the rebellion. Moulavi Ahmedulla led the rebellion at Faziabad, Rohilakhand. All of them fought against the British to oust them from Hindustan.

In North and Middle part of India a “General Revolt” started side by side the rebellion. The civil populations, displaced peasants, dispossessed Zaminders oppressed Tribal populations and the dissatisfied sepoys fought together. The aggrieved people not only attacked the British but also

destroyed valuable documents and official records by fire.

Though in this great revolt large number of general civil people, farmer, artisans and labour class people joined themselves yet some Zaminders, businessmen, influential persons favoured by British, showed their loyalty to the British. Talmiz Khaldun pointed out that the Zaminders and Mohajon class of Bengal and also the English knowing intellectual class actively supported and help the British at the time of rebellion. (The great rebellion, T. Khaldun).

As per the dated 13-09-1857 issued by the Company Government it appears that “As the revolt was shaped as favorable character and as it appears impossible to identify the large number of participants the Magistrates ordered to burn out or to destroy the villages as a whole of those villages from which the villagers took active part in the revolt.” According to general Homes “ only at Oudh 1,50,000 no’s of armed rebels were assassinated, out of which only 35,000 were sepoys.”

Noticing the uprising of 10th May 1857 of the sepoys in Meerut, the then Dewan of British of Assam, “Muniram Boruagh” was influenced and inspired to make free Assam from the grab of British. His plan was to drive away the English from

Assam with the help of Indian sepoys of Assam and to make “Kandarpeswar Singh” as the king of Assam. He accordingly sent secret message from Calcutta to Kanderpeswar Singh and Piayali Boruah and some others.

Thereafter and uprising grew up among the sepoys of Gauhati, Jhorhat, Dibrugarh and Goalpara. But the rebellion was stronglu suppressed by British Officers and the conspiracy of Moniram Baruh was focused by one Harnath Parbotia for which the entire plan was failed. Kandarpeshwar Singh was arrested and abandoned to Bardwan. Piyali Baruah, Maya Ram Nazir, Patiram Baruh, Madhu mallik, Bahadur Gaonbura, Marangi Guru Gohai, Karmid Ali etc. were arrested, Some sepoys was suspended and some were abandoned Captain Charles halraid, the Commissioner Shivsagar ordered to hang Moniram Dewan and Piyali Baruah. It is observed that Moniram Baruah led the aristocratic class of Assam who were dis-satisfied upon the British for a Long time.

We carefully observed that in spite of great efforts by the leaders to generalize the revolt all over the India some states, land lords like Punjab, Gujrat, Hyderabad, Madras, Mysore, Bombay, Bengal, South India etc.

did not join the revolt. Rather some of them directly helped the British with wealth, soldiers, fooding materials etc.

We noticed the educated Indians of various parts of India only find out that the rebellion was uprising for the interest of the Muslim Community to gain their lost pride. Further educated Bengali Hindus mainly observed the communal side of the great revolt.

At the time of great rebellion, various newspaper of Kolkata such as “Sombad Probhakor”, “Sombad Bhaskar” “Somprokash” etc. published various articles against the revolt. These newspaper mainly pointed that “ the revolt wasassociated with the interest of regaining political power of the Indian Muslim Community...the communal figure became prominent in lieu of national figure of the rebellion to the educated Bengali Hindus” (Banglar Samajik Itihaser Dhara by Binoy Ghose, Page-293).

We see that Punjab and archa, Datia, Gewalior, samphar etc. states of Uttar prodesh directly acted against the rebels. They fought against the rebel’s along with the British Army.

We carefully observe that from Bengal to Bihar, Uttar Prodesh to Delhi civil people join the sepoys who were directly or indirectly oppressed by the British. They

could realize that only by ousting the British they can earn peace and certainty in their life.

At the end of the revolt we see that the east-India Company ceased to exist. The control of the Indian Government finally assumed by the British crown. This revolt taught an extreme lesson to the foreign imperialistic traders, invaders. The active participation of various classes clearly indicates that there was a direct fight between mainly two classes one of which extortioner and the other is subjected to extortion. We can refer here the message written in the essay news sent from India by Carl Marx that- “The rebellion which the British ruler termed as mere a military uprising was a actually national movement.”

In a national movement each and every class of people use to join it. The character of the revolt of 1857 clearly indicates that all class of the Indians of Middle and north India specially, directly or indirectly, were associated in the revolt which was brutally suppressed by the British Empire. But, the flame of nationalism kindled in the revolt by their supreme sacrifice of the rebels ultimately forced the British to Quit India within next century. The call of the “Delhi Chalo” and “Meri Jhansi nehi Dungi” – I shall not surrender my Jhansi – shall remain a call of aspiration for freedom in the mind of all the Indians forever.

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The Problem of Identity in the Identity Theory of Mind

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Abstract

The identity theory of mind is advocated and developed by different philosophers beginning with Place, Feigl and Smart. The main thesis of this theory is – states and processes of the mind are identical to states and processes of the brain. Although this theory is better than dualism and Behaviourism, still it has its own problems. This theory leaves many things unexplained with regard to the relation between mind and body, which have been questioned by different thinkers in different periods. Hence, in this article I am going to find out only the problem of identity in the ‘Identity theory of mind’.

There is a serious objection against the mind-brain identity theory that has not been satisfactory resolved. This problem concerns various non-intentional properties of mental states on the one hand and physical states on the other. For example, after images may be green or purple in colour, but nobody could reasonably claim that states of the brain are green or purple. Moreover, it may be the

case that with a fair degree of accuracy brain states are spatially located where mental states are traditionally assumed as non-spatial. The identity theory thus appears imply violation of Leibnitz's Law, according to which two identical things must have the common properties and thereby their differences are indiscernible.

Another problem of the theory is that it fails to give a

satisfactory answer to the question of the relation and difference between mental and physical. Hillary Putnam challenges the identity theory from consideration of multiple realizability. According to him, 'pain' is experienced not only by humans but also by many different species of animal. However, it seems unlikely that all these diverse organisms with the same pain experience are in the same identical brain state. Moreover, if the latter is the case, then pain cannot be identical to a specific brain state.

J. R. Searle puts forward certain problems for the identity theory. He states that identity theory violates the principle of logic called "Leibnitz Law". According to this law, any two things are called identical if and only if all the properties, which they bear, are found common to both of them. This means that the properties that we find in one thing are also the properties, which we find in another thing. If this law is violated, that is, if it is possible to show that the properties of mental state cannot be attributed to brain and vice-versa then it refutes the identity theory.

There is another objection against the identity theory. If the identity of mental states and brain states are empirical one, that is if the identity is discovered

empirically, for example, if it could be discovered on the analogy with water and H₂O, or lightning and electrical discharge, then it seems that there would have to be two kinds of properties which will define the two sides of identity statement. Moreover, these two kinds of properties must identify one and the same thing. Thus, when it is said by the identity theorists that 'lightning is identical with an electric discharge' they must have to identify one and the same thing in terms of the properties of lightning and the properties of electrical discharge, or when it is said that 'water is identical with H₂O molecules' has to identify one and the same thing in terms of the properties of water and the properties of H₂O. Thus, when the identity theorists claim that 'pain is identical with a certain types of brain state' they have to identify one and the same thing in terms of the properties of pain and the properties of brain-state. Nevertheless, problem arises if it is believed that in the identity statement, there are two sets of properties and these properties are independent. In that case, it appears that there are two different types of properties – mental properties and physical properties. And this belief of two sets of properties takes us back into property dualism.

Again, if it is true that all mental states are brain states, then what appears is that brain states are of two kinds – mental states and non-mental states. The mental states of brain have mental properties and those of non-mental states of brain have only physical properties. If it is so, then it sounds like property dualism.

Another objection slightly more technical was labelled against the identity theory and this was the accusation of ‘neuronal chauvinism’. This objection really vibrated the identity theorists and they were indeed forced to do some modification in their theory. This charge was highlighted by Searle and says- “If the claim of the identity theorists was that every pain is identical with a certain kind of neuronal stimulation, then it seems that a being that did not have neurons or that did not have the right kind of neurons could not have pains and beliefs. But why cannot animals that have brain structures different from ours have mental states? And indeed, why could not we build a machine that did not have neurons at all, but also had mental states?”

Searle claims that facing this objection the identity theorists are bound to shift from what is called ‘type–type identity theory’ to ‘token–token identity theory’. Thus in order to establish this claim Searle explains the

distinction between type and token. Write the word “cow” three times: “cow” “cow” “cow”. A question arises whether one word or three words are written. It is not debatable that here one type of word is written in three instances, or three tokens of one word is written. By types he means abstract general entities and by tokens he illustrates those which are concrete particular objects and events of those abstract generals. Thus when it is said that ‘a token of a type’ it means that it is a particular concrete example of abstract general type.

Let us now see how Searle proves that the identity theorists are moved from a type–type identity theory to a token–token identity theory. According to him, it is the point of the type–type identity theory that every type of mental state is identical to some type of physical state. Searle claims that by their own assertion it is a bit sloppy of the identity theorists. Because the identity in question is not between abstract universal types but between actual concrete tokens. What the identity theorists mean is that for every mental-state, type there is some brain-state type and thereby every token of the mental type is nothing but a token of the brain type. The simple version of the token identity theorists, according to Searle, is-

“for every token of a certain type of mental state, there is some token of some type of physical state or other with which that mental state token is identical. They, in short, did not require, for example, that all token pains had to exemplify exactly the same type of brain states even though they were all tokens of the same mental type, pain. For that reason they were called ‘token-token’ identity theorists as opposed to ‘type-type’ identity theorists.”

Searle claims that token-token identity seems to be more plausible than type-type identity. In this connection, he cites an example that two persons may have same belief that ‘Denver is the capital of Colorado but it is not necessary to suppose that they have exactly the same type of neurobiological state. The neurobiological state of one’s belief might be at a certain point of his brain and another’s might be at another point although they have the same belief.

Searle thinks that in giving examples the identity theorists are often found very weak and this is unfortunate. Although they have given different examples, the favourite one is that pains are identical with C-fibre stimulations. But in giving this example both ‘type-type’ and ‘token-token’ identity theorists differ in certain extent. The former believes that every pain is

identical with some C-fibre stimulation whereas the latter believes that not every pain but particular pain might be identical with particular C-fibre stimulation. Regarding other pains, they think that this might be identical with some other state of a brain or machine. However, all these are designated by Searle as ‘bad neurophysiology’. In explaining, the status of C-fibre Searle says that C-fibres are a type of axon, which carries certain types of pain signals to the brain. Pain mechanism is a complex one in the brain and nervous system and C-fibre is just a part of this complex mechanism. Thus, neurophysiologically it would be ridiculous to think that except C-fibre stimulation, there is nothing in the pain. Thus, there is a good deal of debate centered round the question whether or not we would get such type of identity as exemplified by the type-type identity theorists. Or is it token identity upon which we could hope for. Searle believes that in between type and token identity, it is latter one, which is more influential than the former.

In spite of its acceptability, the token identity theorists have been facing another question and this is the question of commonness. What common things are there in all of these tokens, which make the same mental state type? If it is believed

by both X and Y that Denver is the capital of Colorado then apart from their brain state what exact thing is common in them but again both X and Y have different types of brain states? There are two answers that we find traditionally-one is from the dualist's quarter and another from type-type. However, none of these answers will do for the token physicalist. Because the whole idea of the token identity theorists is to eliminate any type of irreducible mental properties and as such they cannot accept that the common thing in between X and Y is same irreducible mental properties. Again, the token theorists cannot accept the view that the same type of brain state is common in X and Y because it is this point disagreeing upon which there is move from type identity to token identity. Thus the answer that a particular mental state type and certain brain state type are identical cannot save the identity theorists from their downfall.

Saul Kripke also raised an objection against type-type identity theory from consideration of rigid reference. The identity theorists claim that the identity of mental and brain states are contingent. But Kripke argues that this identity is necessary, if true. He introduces two types of designators of entity, namely, rigid and non-rigid designators and holds that rigid designators

refer to the same entity in every possible world and therefore identity of two entities referred by two rigid designators are necessary. Non-rigid or flaccid designators may refer to different entities in different possible worlds and identities of their referents thereby are contingent. The expression 'Benjamin Franklin', which always refers the same person is a rigid designator. The expression 'The inventor of daylight saving time' which, according to him, is a non-rigid designator, although this expression refers to Benjamin Franklin in the actual world. In a possible world, Benjamin Franklin may not be the inventor of daylight saving time. Anybody else other than Benjamin, the actual inventor, might have been the inventor of daylight saving time. On the other hand, it is not the case that someone else, other than Benjamin Franklin, might have been Benjamin Franklin. It is due to this reason Kripke says that 'Benjamin Franklin' is a rigid designator, where as 'the inventor of daylight saving time' is non-rigid.

Thus with these two types of designators Kripke examines the mind-body identity statement. He claims that if one term is rigid and another is non-rigid in an identity statement, the statement is not necessarily true and it might turn out to be false. Thus the

statement 'Benjamin Franklin is identical with the inventor of daylight saving time' is true no doubt but this truth is contingent one because there may be a possible world where this statement is false. Kripke says that a statement must be necessarily true if it is the case that both sides of the identity statement are rigid and the statement is true. In this connection he cites the statement 'Samuel Clemens is identical with Mark Twain' and says that this statement is necessarily true because here both sides of the above statement mean one and the same person. It is impossible to imagine that there is a world where Samuel Clemens exists and also Mark Twain exists but they are not one and the same person but two different individuals. This is also true in the case of words that name natural kinds of things, for example, the statement 'water is identical with H₂O'. Here both the expressions 'water' and 'H₂O' are rigid and the statement is true, therefore, this identity is necessary. Kripke finds the relevancy of this kind of argument in the case of mind-body problem.

He says that if it is found that both the expressions 'mental state' and 'brain state' refer rigidly and the identity statement containing those expression is true then the statement must be necessarily true. Thus 'pain is equivalent to C-fibre stimulation' would have to be necessarily true if it is the case that pains were really identical with C-fibre stimulations. Here all these depend on the condition that if it were to be true at all. But Kripke claims that this statement is not necessarily true. Because it can be imagined that there exists pain without a C-fibre stimulation and also C-fibre stimulation without pain, although pains and C-fibre stimulations have strict correlations in this world. Thus Kripke logically concludes that if the statement 'pain is identical with C-fibre stimulation' is not necessarily true on the ground mentioned above then it cannot be true at all, and hence it is false. His suggestion regarding identification of pains and neurobiological events is that there is a hope for identity theory if it is really the ide

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