

ISSN : 2455-6319

Anudhyan An International Journal of Social Sciences

Volume 8 • Issue 1 • August 2023

Raja Narendralal Khan Women's College (Autonomous)

Gope Palace Midnapore • Paschim Medinipur West Bengal India PIN-721102

ISSN : 2455-6319

Anudhyan An International Journal of Social Sciences

(AIJSS)

Volume 8 ■ Issue 1



Raja Narendralal Khan Women's College (Autonomous)

Gope Palace • Midnapur • Paschim Medinipur • West Bengal • India

Website: www.rnlkwc.ac.in

Anudhyan: An International Journal of Social Sciences

(AIJSS)

Volume 8 ■ Issue 1

Published on: August 2023

CHIEF EDITOR

Dr. Rina Pal, *Associate Professor, Department of History, RNLK Women's College*

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Dr. Sujoy Kumar Maity, *Associate Professor, Department of Bengali, RNLK Women's College*

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Dr. Bipul Kumar Mandal

Associate Professor, Department of Bengali, RNLK Women's College

Dr. Krishna Kumar Sarkar

Assistant Professor, Department of History, RNLK Women's College

COPY EDITOR

Dr. Bhibhas Chand, *Assistant Professor, Department of English, RNLK Women's College*

EDITOREAL BOARD

Prof. Mesba Kamal, *Professor of History, Dhaka University*

Prof. Sanjoy Mukherjee, *Professor of Film Studies, Jadavpur University*

Dr. Sarbani Ganguly, *Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University.*

Prof. Layek Ali Khan, *Professor, Department of Bengali, Vidyasagar University*

Prof. Tanveer Nasreen, *Professor, Department of History, Burdwan University.*

Prof. Rajkumar Kothary, *Professor, Department of Political Science with Rural Administration, Vidyasagar University*

Prof. Anil K. Jana, *Retd. Professor, Department of Political Science with Rural Administration, Vidyasagar University*

Prof. Prabhat Mishra, *Retd. Professor, Department of Philosophy and the Life-world, Vidyasagar University*

Dr. Sobhan Lal Datta Gupta, *Rtd. Professor, Department of Political Science, Calcutta University.*

Dr. Durga Shankar Rath, *Professor, Department of Library Science, Vidyasagar University*

Dr. Sankar Prasad Sinha, *Retd. Professor, Department of English, Vidyasagar University.*

Dr. Ambarish Mukhopadhyay, *Professor, Department of Political Science with Rural Administration, Vidyasagar University.*

Dr. Sumanta Kumar Mandal, *Professor, Department of Physical Education, Biswabharati University.*

Prof. Rabindranath Chattopadhyay, *Emeritus Professor, Architecture and Regional Planning, IIT-Kharagpur*

Prof. Jayanta Jaydeb, *Visiting Professor, Department of Philosophy, Utkal University, Former Director, School of Women Studies, Utkal University.*

Dr. Alak Pal, *M.D., FRCOG, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Ealing Hospital NHS Trust, London.*

Dr. Sebak Jana, *Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Vidyasagar University.*

Dr. Debashis Bandopadhyay, *Associate Professor, Department of English, Vidyasagar University.*

Dr. Papiya Gupta, *Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Vidyasagar University.*

Dr. Tapan De, *Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Vidyasagar University.*

Dr. Ramkrishna Maity, *Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Vidyasagar University.*

Sri. Ladli Mukhopadhyay, *Film Director and Film Critic.*

Dr. Pradip Kumar Ghosh, *Musicologist*

Anudhyan: An International Journal of Social Sciences (AIJSS)

Anudhyan An International Journal of Social Sciences (AIJSS) is an open access, peer-reviewed Journal of Raja Narendralal Khan Women's College, Midnapore. The main objective of AIJSS is to provide an intellectual platform for the faculty members, researchers and scholars.

The Journal publishes research papers in the fields of Social Sciences such as Economics, Education, Ethics, Geography, History, International Relations, Information Science, Law, Linguistics, Library Science, Media Studies, Human Rights, Philosophy, Political Science, Population Studies, Psychology, Public Administration, Sociology, Social Welfare, Literature, Performing Arts (Music, Theatre, Dance), Anthropology, Cross-cultural Studies, Demography, Development Studies, Visual Arts, Women's Studies and so on.

The Journal will be published annually in both Print and Online versions. IJSS publishes original papers, review papers, conceptual frame work, analytical and simulation models, case studies, empirical research, technical notes and book reviews. Special issues devoted to important topics in humanities and social science will occasionally be published.

Editorial Policies

Subject to the editorial screening at the preliminary stage, all papers are sent to the experts of university/IIT level for review.

The author of the manuscripts is provided with the opportunity to revise the manuscript, if necessary, to improve the standard by incorporating the suggestion of the Reviewer within a given time.

Manuscript submitted for publication is under the Jurisdiction of Copyright Act. The Editorial Board reserves the full copyright of the published paper. Editor reserves the right to make cosmetic/stylistic changes which do not affect the motive of the paper without consulting the author.

The Journal receives manuscripts anytime during the year and considers for publication in the forthcoming issue.

The views expressed in the paper are of the authors' own and the Editorial Board bears no responsibility for it.

Page Charges – There are no page charges for this Journal.

Manuscript Preparation : Instruction to the Author

Manuscripts must be submitted electronically as an attachment in MS Word and PDF Version through e-mail to the chief editor at ijssrnk@gmail.com

Language

The language of the manuscript must be in English (either American or British standard, but not the mixture of both except for Bengali literature).

Type and Length of paper

Original papers, review papers, conceptual framework, analytical and simulation models, case studies, empirical research, technical notes, and book reviews will be considered for publication. An article would normally consist of 8-10 pages with about 4000 words (excluding figures, tables and references), "although high-quality articles which exceed the word limit will be considered. Manuscripts must be typed in MS word.

Title Page

Title page is a separated page before the text. It should include the following information:

Title

Title should be concise and informative. Try to avoid abbreviations.

Author's names and affiliations

Please indicate the given name and family name clearly. Present the authors' affiliation addresses (where the actual work was done) below the names. Indicate all affiliations with a lower-case superscript letter immediately after the author's name and in front of the appropriate address. Provide the full postal address of each affiliation, including the country name, and, if available, the e-mail address, and telephone number of each author.

Corresponding author

Clearly indicate who is willing to handle correspondence at all stages of refereeing, publication and also post-publication. Ensure that telephone numbers (with country and area code) are provided in addition to the e-mail address and the complete postal address.

Abstract

A concise abstract is required with a maximum length of 150 words. The abstract should state briefly the purpose of the research, the principal results obtained and major conclusions. An abstract is often presented separately from the article, so it must be able to stand alone. References should therefore be avoided, but if essential, they must be cited in full, without reference to the reference list.

Keywords

Immediately after the abstract, provide a maximum of 8 keywords, avoiding general and plural terms and multiple concepts (avoid, for example, 'and', 'of').

Subdivision of the article

Divide your article into clearly defined and numbered sections. Sections should be numbered 1, 2, etc. The abstract is not included in section numbering.

Main Body or text can be subdivided into headings and subheadings (subsections). Subsections should be numbered as 1.1, 1.1.1, 1.1.2 etc.)

Table and Figures

Present tables and figures at appropriate positions in the text. Caption should be placed at the bottom of the table/figure. Number the captions as 1., 2., 3. etc. Please note that the article will be published in black and white.

Acknowledgement

If the research is sponsored or supported by an organization, please indicate it here.

References

Citations in the text

Please ensure that every reference cited in the text is also present in the reference list (and vice versa). Avoid citation in the abstract. Unpublished results and personal communications should not be in the reference list, but may be mentioned in the text. Citation of a reference as 'in press' implies that the item has been accepted for publication.

Reference List

References should be arranged first alphabetically and then further sorted chronologically if necessary. More than one reference from the same author(s) in the same year must be identified by the letters "a", "b", "c", etc., placed after the year of publication.

Examples:

Reference to a journal publication:

Van der Geer, J., Hanraads, J. A. J., & Lupton R. A. (2000). The art of writing a scientific article. *Journal of Scientific Communications*, 163, 51-59.

Reference to a book:

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (1979). *The elements of style*. (3rd ed.), (Chapter 4). Macmillan, New York.

Reference to a chapter in an edited book:

Mettam, G. R., & Adams, L. B. (1994). *How to prepare an electronic version of your article*. In B. S. Jones, & R. Z. Smith (Eds.), *Introduction to the electronic age* (pp. 281-304). New York: E-Publishing Inc.

Reference to a web source:

Smith, Joe, (1999), One of Volvo's core values. [Online] Available: <http://www.volvo.com/environment/index.htm> (July 7, 1999).

Submission Preparation Checklist

Before submitting the manuscript, author(s) should check the following list.

1. The submission has not been previously published, nor is it before another journal for consideration.
2. The submission file is in Microsoft Word file/ PDF format.
3. Manuscript has been made in the light of Journal's author guidelines.
4. Author(s) did not mention his or her name and affiliation in the main text but only on the title page.
5. Author(s) has read all the terms and conditions of the journal.
6. Authors may prepare a list of three reviewers with Institute name and designation , full address, contact number and email and submit separately with the manuscript.

Sample Of The Title Page

Title (First Letter in Caps)

Studies on Some Historical Sites in Midnapore

Author's names and affiliations

Maity, Jayanta^a ; Ghosh, Subhra^b and Pal, Dilip^{b*}

^a Vidyasagar University, Address, Phone Number/Mobile, email

^b University of Calcutta, Address, Phone Number/Mobile, email

*Corresponding author

Copyright

Copyrights for articles published in IJSS are retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the journal. The journal/publisher is not responsible for subsequent uses of the work. It is the author's responsibility to bring an infringement action if so desired by the author.

From the Desk of the Editor

Anudhyan: An International Journal of Social Science has gained a reputation over the years. It is a matter of pleasure that this journal has maintained its regularity of publication, unlike many academic journals of Indian universities. *Anudhyan* has now been the target place for bringing out research articles by young researchers, PhD scholars, and professors from various colleges and universities. As per the UGC regulations, *Anudhyan* is always an Academic, Peer-reviewed, and Non-commercial research journal. The 2023 volume of this journal has addressed the variegated critical research areas such as Ramakrishna Mission Movement, Left Politics, Sundarbans studies, Industrialisation of colonial India, Tribal studies, Etymology, Music etc. Several new research articles have been accommodated in this volume.

Dasarath Paul, a Ph.D. Research Scholar, in his paper on “Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission” tries to evaluate the role of Ramakrishna Sarada Mission to spread the basic ideals and methods of the Ramakrishna movement in providing education, medical services, distribution of relief materials, rehabilitation, etc. irrespective of all caste, creed, class, colour, and religion. “The Plight of the Tiger-Widows in the Sundarbans” is an empirical study of Sundarbans tiger-human conflicts and their impact on widows whose husbands were killed by tigers. The study attempts to analyze the socio-economic profile of the tiger-widows and to measure the impact of the incident including the cultural stigma related to being killed by a tiger. This is ethnographic research to excavate how the lives of Sundarbans-women have been influenced by the incident of tiger-human conflicts leading to their economic and social insecurity, deprivation, abuse, and exploitation. Interviews of tiger-widows and focused group discussions help to unfold the cultural stigma related to tiger killings and how their life has been squeezed. Souvik Das in his paper “The Intoxicating Drug Culture of Colonial Bengal” shows how several intoxicating substances were common in pre-colonial Bengali society. The British rulers introduced new factors that profoundly altered Bengal's social and cultural perceptions and drug intoxication patterns. Consumption of intoxicating drugs was not only a social concern but also a subject of colonial power's excise regulations to impose imperial control over the colonised people, with the drug industry being an essential source of revenue.

Dr. Sanjib Ghosh has written on the pioneering contribution of Sir Rajendranath Mookherjee in Engineering and entrepreneurship during colonial rule in India.

Puspendu Routh's paper is a historical study of the Portuguese Trade in Mediaeval Bengal. The Portuguese came to Bengal in the early part of the sixteenth century. Since the Portuguese came to Bengal for trade purposes, they started ways and means to set up trade centres in various parts of Bengal. The granting of trade licences to the Portuguese greatly accelerated the growth of Bengal as a European trading nation in India. The entry of the British in the later centuries came in the wake of the exploitation of Bengal's resources by the Portuguese. Thus, although the Portuguese helped in the progress of trade in Bengal, they also paved the way for British imperialism in India via Bengal.

Bhumij is one of the tribes who still retain a set of totemic exogamous subdivisions closely resembling those of the Munda and Santal. As a result, there was an impact of both tribal Mundari socio-cultural traits and Hindu traits on the Bhumij people. Rupa Ghosh has written on the Tribal Theology of the Bhumij of South-Western Bengal. Dr. Arnab Adhikary's paper "Allegory of an Alternative Politics" throws new light upon, a comparatively less-touched subject, women empowerment in Left Regime in West Bengal. It attempts to investigate how and why the women of Bengal were left behind from the main political realm during the Left Front era in West Bengal. It also tries to analyse how much CPI (M)'s class politics was accountable for that. Dr. Bibhas Chand in his paper has written, quite interestingly, on the development and transmission of Bengali anglicized words by analysing their components.

All other papers on various areas of humanities and social science are equally rich in research and innovative way of representation.

The 'Anudhyan Team' heartily acknowledges the support received from all corners, especially the reviewers, the copy-editors, the printer, and above all, Dr. Jayasree Laha, Principal, Raja N.L. Khan Women's College (Autonomous) for bringing out the present issue of the journal.

Contents

Sabitri Bai Phule : The First Woman Teacher of India	
Rina Pal	11
Allegory of an Alternative Politics: Women Empowerment in Left Regime	
Dr. Arnab Adhikary	26
State of Exception and Embrace: Analyzing the rise of the K-Wave in Northeastern India	
Dr. Sourish Ghosh	37
Use of Social Networking Site for Academic Purposes	
Sk Sabbar Hossain	53
The Tribal Theology: A Brief Case Study on Bhumij of South-Western Bengal	
Rupa Ghosh	75
Portuguese Trade in Mediaeval Bengal : A Historical Overview	
Puspendu Routh	87
Indian Migration and Its Impacts on Indian Women	
Dr. Malyashree Mandal	96
From Engineer to Entrepreneur: Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee, a Torchbearer of Indian Industrialization	
Dr. Sanjib Ghosh	108
The Intoxicating Drug Culture of Colonial Bengal and the Altered Taste	
Souvik Das	116
Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission: An important stream of the Ramakrishna Movement	
Dasarath Paul & Kakoli Tah	135
Shyama Prasad Mukherjee: Partition of Bengal and its Aftermath	
Dhiraj Choudhary	149
Secularism in Swami Vivekananda's Religious Philosophy	
Gargi Medda	159

**Prominent Interpretations and Translations of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*:
Perspectives and Outlook**

Dr. Pratim Bhattacharya 167

Affectionate Mother: Divinity and Humanity of Sarada Devi

Dr. Rajesh Biswas 182

The Plight of the Tiger Widows in the Sundarbans: An Empirical Study

Moitrayee Basu & Dr. Atish Prosad Mondal 187

Ethnicity, Identity and Power: A Study on Contemporary Thailand

Dr. Purabi Barman 197

Simulation: An Alternative to Mindreading

Dyuti Ghosh 213

**Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's Rajmohan's Wife: An Eastern Figure in
Western Dress**

Atasi Sahoo 221

Therapy of Mind through Indian Classical Music and Yoga: The Concept

Dr. Sujata Roy Manna 229

Chārvāka Ethics and Its Practical Impact in Our Life

Swarnali Maitra 234

বাংলা উপন্যাসে চর্যা প্রসঙ্গ : নির্মাণে ও বিনির্মাণে

সেখ সাব্বির হোসেন 240

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর রবীন্দ্র-ভাবনা : একটি আলোচনা

সুলগ্না ব্যানার্জী 252

বাঙালি বিবাহের লোকাচার : ঐতিহ্য না ইতিহাস?

ড. অমিত কুমার নন্দী 273

মহাশ্বেতা দেবীর 'অগ্নিগর্ভ' : একটি পর্যালোচনা

দুলালী সরেন 280

Savitri Bai Phule : The First Woman Teacher of India

Rina Pal

Abstract

Savitribai Phule was a prominent figure in Maharashtra at the time and a significant social reformer. She was the first woman to teach at an Indian girl's school. She was a great social reformer as well as a teacher. She was a powerful advocate for women's education and empowerment in the nineteenth century. She also helped establish contemporary Marathi poetry. In 1848, during a time of crisis, she and Jyotirao Phule established a nine- student girl's school in Bhide Wada, Pune, and she also taught there. She did not stop there; in the interest of the human race and society, she spoke out against child marriage, sati pratha, and child widows. She also advocated for a positive outlook on widow remarriage. She, like Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, was a hero to the Dalit and Mang communities. Additionally, she advocated against untouchability and caste and gender discrimination. Savitribai Jyotirao Phule was a well-known poet, educator, and social reformer from India who was instrumental in advancing women's education and empowerment in the nineteenth century. Savitribai, along with her husband Jyotirao Phule, is credited with founding the first girl's school in Pune in Bhide Wada.

Keywords : First female educator, Savitribai Phule, Caste Discrimination, Women's Liberation Indian culture, education, and feminist thought

Introduction

Savitribai Phule was born on January 3, 1831, in Naigaon, Maharashtra's Satara district. Lakshmi Bai and Khandoji Nevse Patil were her parents. She married Jyotirao Phule, also known as Mahatma Jotiba Phule, when she was 9 years old in 1840. In addition, Jyotirao Phule was a great thinker, writer, social activist, and social reformer who opposed caste. Jotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule had no children of their own. They adopted the child of a Brahmin widow. That child went by the name Yashawant Rao. After getting married, Savitribai Phule started going to school. Jyotirao Phule insisted that she start learning on her own because of her interest in education. She became interested in teaching after passing a normal school's third and fourth year exam. After that, she attended training at Ms. Farar's Institution in Ahmednagar to improve her skills. Jyotirao Phule was continuously standing and enormously upholds movements of every sort of Savitribai Phule. With her husband, she runs numerous social services. Savitribai Phule and Jyotirao

Associate Professor, Department of History, Raja N.L. Khan Women's College, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal.

Phule made many school for ladies training and low cast kid. In honor of the Phule family's contributions to education, the British government held this event on November 16, 1852. In 1983, the Pune City Corporation constructed a memorial in her honor. On March 10, 1998, the Indian government issued a postal stamp in her honor. The name of the university was changed to Savitribai Phule Pune University in 2015 from The University of Pune. On January 3, 2017, Google created a Google Doodle to commemorate her 186th birthday.

On her birthday today, Savitri Bai Phule, the first female educator in modern India, is being honored. She was born in Naigaon, a small village in Maharashtra, on January 3, 1831. In India, her life is celebrated as a shining example of women's rights. In 1840, she married Jyotirao Phule when she was only nine years old. Savitribai was taught to read and write by Jyotirao, who was impressed by her eagerness to learn. In 1847, she completed teacher education and became a licensed educator. In 1848, Savitribai and Jyotirao opened a school for girls in Pune with the intention of improving the situation of women in the country. She became India's first female educator. In 1864, Savitribai also established a shelter for homeless women because she was sympathetic to the plight of widows in the country. Satyashodhak Samaj, founded by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, was shaped by Mrs. Savitribai. Savitribai established a clinic for plague victims in Hadapsar, Pune, in the 1890s, as the bubonic plague spread throughout Maharashtra. She also contracted the disease while transporting a 10-year-old plague victim to the clinic. Savitribai Phule passed away on March 10, 1897. The life and work of Savitribai are examples of social change and female empowerment in Indian society.

Savitribai was born on January 3, 1831, in Naigaon, British India, into a farming family. She was the eldest daughter of Khandoji Neveshe Patil and Lakshmi. In 1840, Savitribai, who was nine years old at the time, wed Jyotirao Phule, who was 12 years old at the time, in accordance with the custom. Jyotirao went on to become an anti-caste social reformer, thinker, writer, and social activist. He is regarded as one of the most influential members of the social reform movement in Maharashtra. After Savitribai got married, she started going to school. After he noticed that she was eager to learn and educate herself, it was her husband who taught her to read and write. She passed a normal school's third and fourth year exams and became passionate about teaching. She took preparing at Ms Farar's Foundation in Ahmednagar. Savitribai had Jyotirao's full support throughout all of her social

endeavors. She was one of the few women of her time who were literate. She put in a lot of effort to educate and free child widows, opposed child marriage and sati pratha, and supported widow remarriage. She is regarded as an icon of the Dalit Mang caste alongside the likes of B. R. Ambedkar and Annabhau Sathe. She was a leading figure in the social reform movement in Maharashtra. She actively worked to end caste and gender-based discrimination and campaigned against untouchability.

Objectives of The Study:

This study aims to

- Investigate Savitribai Phule's pragmatic outlook and feminist ideology.
- To examine Savitribai Phule as a revolutionary and social reformer.
- To learn about Savitribai Phule's impact on education
- In the 21st century to learn about Savitribai Phule's impact
- On women's education in the 21st century.

Before the early nationalists used social reform as a campaign strategy, Savitribai Phule started several initiatives for social change. The challenge she posed to the well-established patriarchal and Brahmanical relationships, particularly in terms of combating female illiteracy and the caste system, was one of her main interventions. Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule were the first to make numerous efforts among Stree-Shudra-Atishudra, opening their schools to "women and lower castes," providing untouchables with access to drinking water, and providing their homes to widows and orphans. According to the report, "The prejudice against teaching girls to read and write began to give way the good conduct and honesty of the peons in conveying the girls to and from school, as well as the parental treatment and indulgent attention of the teachers made the girls love the schools and literally run to them with joy." During a time when women were oppressed, Savitribai Phule fought against injustice against women. Her contributions to women's education in India, including the establishment of the nation's first school for women, have earned her a reputation. She has been referred to as a feminist for each of these exceptional works. In fact, she is often referred to as the first modern Indian feminist. We call this perspective on her the feminist perspective. The first modern Indian feminists who advocated for women's rights and opposed widow shaving of their heads.

Role in Women Education & Empowerment

In 1848, while Savitribai was still in her teens, Jyotirao and Savitribai established

Poona, Pune's first indigenously run school for girls. The determined couple was provided shelter by a friend, Usman Sheikh, and his sister, Fatima Sheikh, who also gave the Phule couple a place in their premises to start the school, despite the fact that they were ostracized by both their family and the community for taking this action. The school's first teacher was Savitribai. Later on, Jyotirao and Savitribai established schools for children from the Mang and Mahar castes, which were thought to be untouchable. In 1852, there were three Phule schools in operation. The Phule family was honored by the British government on November 16 of that year for their contributions to education, and Savitribai was named the best teacher. She also established the Mahila Seva Mandal that year with the intention of raising women's awareness of their rights, dignity, and other social issues. She was able to successfully organize a strike by barbers in Mumbai and Pune to oppose the widespread practice of shaving widows' heads.

By the year 1858, the Phules had closed all three of their schools. This was due to a number of factors, including the end of private European donations following the Indian Rebellion in 1857, Jyotirao's resignation from the school management committee due to disagreements over the curriculum, and the government's withdrawal of support. Jyotirao, Savitribai, and Fatima Sheikh also took charge of educating members of oppressed communities, despite the circumstances. Savitribai taught children from various castes in 18 schools over the course of her life. Savitribai and Fatima Sheikh started teaching women and people from underprivileged castes. Many people didn't like this, especially the upper caste of Pune who didn't want Dalits to learn. The locals threatened Savitribai and Fatima Sheikh, and they also socially harassed and humiliated them. Savitribai was confronted as she made her way toward the school with mud, cow dung, and stones. Savitribai, determined to achieve her goal, would carry two saris, but such atrocities would not deter her. Saguna Bai, who later rose to prominence as a figurehead in the education movement, later joined Savitribai and Fatima Sheikh. In the meantime, in 1855, the Phules opened a night school for farmers and laborers so that they could work during the day and go to school at night. Savitribai instituted the practice of providing stipends to children who enrolled in school in order to monitor the dropout rate. For the young girls she taught, she remained an inspiration. She encouraged them to engage in artistic and writing endeavors. Mukta Salve, one of a student's essays, became the poster child for Dalit feminism and literature during that time. She held parent-

teacher conferences on a regular basis to educate parents about the value of education and encourage them to send their children to school. Jyotirao and Savitribai also opened a care center in 1863 under the name “Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha,” which is thought to have been the very first home in India dedicated to the prevention of infanticide. It was established so that pregnant Brahmin widows and rape victims could deliver their children in a secure location, thereby reducing the number of infanticides and preventing widow deaths. In 1874, Jyotirao and Savitribai, who had no children of their own, adopted a child from a Brahmin widow named Kashibai, sending a clear message to society’s progressives. Yashavantrao, the adopted son, went on to become a doctor.

Contribution of Savitribai Phule on Education in 21st Century As a Mother of Modern Education:

Today, we found women working in every field in India. Because Savitribai Phule initially struggled and was frequently criticized in the past, they are able to walk, talk, and engage in social activities freely. Not only did she fight for girls to get an education, but she also fought for widows, single mothers, and women who had unwanted pregnancies the right to dignity. She recognized the significance of women’s education as well as the significance of knowing English. She continued to exert herself despite the ongoing harassment. There have been numerous revolutions around the world, including the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution, the information revolution, and the bio revolution, but none of these revolutions have been able to alleviate human suffering or problems. She worked for the ladies when ladies were objects to be utilized, training for them was viewed as a wrongdoing. Because she was a modern woman, she defied all boundaries when she spoke. The women of today should be thankful for the numerous lives she ignited. Women of today are enjoying the fruits of the education tree that was nurtured and planted by Savitribai Phule. She saw education as igniting the minds and personalities of everyone, not just literacy or knowing the words. The concepts of the Earn and Learn program, the Midday Meal Program, and the Right to Education Act of today are novel. However, Savitribai Phule incorporated all of these ideas into her education. She once provided students with a stipend to keep them from dropping out of school. She inspired students to request a library rather than present her with gifts. She used to direct the parent-educators meeting at

ordinary stretches so guardians can comprehend the significance of instruction and they can propel their kids for training. She used to feed students because she was well aware of the connection between education and malnutrition.

Role of Women Empowerment in Society:

Schools for children from the Mang and Mahar castes, which were thought to be untouchable, were established by Jyotirao and Savitribai. In 1852, there were three Phule schools in operation. That same year, she also established the Mahila Seva Mandal to educate women about their rights, dignity, and other social issues. Jyotirao and Savitribai also started a care center in 1863 called “Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha,” which may have been the first home in India to ban infanticide. It was established so that pregnant Brahmin widows and rape victims could deliver their children in a secure location, thereby reducing the number of infanticides and preventing widow deaths. Savitribai tirelessly opposed social problems like child marriage and sati pratha, two of the most sensitive social issues that were gradually reducing women’s ability to exist. She also worked to integrate child widows into society by educating and empowering them, as well as by advocating for their remarriage. Such pursuits additionally met areas of strength for with from the moderate upper rank society

Women Education

A year in the wake of finishing her preparation in 1848 Jyothirao Phule opened a young ladies school with Savitiri as headmistress. She established India’s first school for women. People were opposed to her running a school for girls at the time because women’s education was not considered to be of any importance. Particularly the upper positions emphatically went against Dalit instruction. Only nine students from the community of Sudra – Atisudra, at the bottom of the caste ladder, made up her first batch. Due to a lack of funds, the school had to close after six months of operation. In Pune’s Rastapeth, they opened a second girl’s school. Later, they opened a third girl’s school in Pune’s Bataalpeth. The subject included Grammer, Maths, Geology and the Historical backdrop of Maratha’s rather than Brahmanical texts like Vedas and Shastras. The Phule family was honored by the British government on November 16, 1852, for their contributions to education, and Savitribai was named the best teacher. By 1858, all three schools had been closed.

This was due to a number of factors, including the cessation of private European donations following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the Jyotirao's resignation from the school management committee due to disagreements over curriculum, and the government's withdrawal of support. Despite the circumstances, they and Fatima Sheikh assumed responsibility for educating oppressed communities as well. Savitribai taught children from various castes at 18 schools over the years. To deter her, the high rank individuals tossed cow-waste and mud at her separated from obnoxious attacks while she strolls towards the school. She carried two sarees with her every day and continued her journey despite the atrocities she had to endure. Jyotirao and Savitiri made a formidable team, and their ultimate goal was to bring together all oppressed communities in one place. They were the first modern Indians to fully challenge the Brahminical casteist social structure. They eventually included Muslims and Adivasis, and they fought fervently for their emancipation as well. She offered stipends to children who attended school in order to control the dropout rate. She used to hold parent-teacher meetings to make parents aware of the requirements for education because she believed that parents played a significant role in educating their children. In the 1850's the Phule couple started two instructive trusts - the Local Female School in Pune and The General Public for Advancing the Training of Mahars, Mangs and Etceteras which came to have many schools under them. One of these schools' headmistress was Savitri. In 1855, a request came to Fatima Sheikh to take over a school. In addition, in 1855, the couples established a night school for workers and peasants. There are a lot of poor people who can't go to regular schools because they can only work at night, so a couple started a night school to meet their needs.

According to Thakur (2012), a number of factors contribute to girls' lower educational attainment rates, including being tasked with household chores, being raised to accept a domestic role, having mothers who are illiterate and unable to educate their children, relying economically on men, and sometimes facing child marriage. Savitribai Phule's efforts to raise awareness about women's education at the time led to boycotts and criticism primarily from men. As she worked to improve the status of women in India and raise awareness of the significance of women's education, her husband Jyotirao Phule was one of her most ardent supporters. When Jyotirao Phule was nine years old and illiterate, Phule married her. In 1851, Savitribai Phule established three schools and taught 150 students.

She would later establish Dalit and lower caste women's schools as well as 18 schools across the country, the majority of which were for upper caste women. She gave women stipends to encourage them to go to school.

Social Activist

Savitribai, like her husband, was a revolutionary who led numerous progressive movements on her own. She began the MahilaSeva Mandal in 1852 which worked for the consciousness of ladies' privileges and thoroughly crusaded against the dehumanization of widows and pushed widow remarriage. She also opened a rehabilitation center for illegitimate children and spoke out against infanticide. Savitribai also successfully orchestrated a strike by barbers in Mumbai and Pune to protest the inhuman practice of shaving the heads of widows. Additionally, she never hesitated to implement her reforms within her own home. Savitribai valued Jyotirao as her teacher as well as her husband. He had helped her get back on her feet, educated her, and given her a new lease on life. She gave her husband her full cooperation and endured all of the difficulties they faced together. The Phules' primary goal was education, but they also participated in a number of other charitable endeavors. A satri from the neighborhood raped a young Brahmin widow who was working as a cook in the house of Jyotiba's friend. The satri refused to take responsibility when the widow Kashibai gave birth to a child. She gave birth to a son after all attempts to kill the baby failed. She killed the child out of fear of the social stigma that comes with having children outside of marriage. Kashibai was charged by the police, and she was later given a life sentence in the Andaman Islands. In 1863, a Phule couple established an infanticide prevention home for the benefit of pregnant women and their children.

They distributed provocative pamphlets in Brahmin colonies to promote the facility. This not only saved the lives of numerous pregnant widows but also drew the ire of many Brahmins. because upper-caste Hindu widows were shunned by society and prohibited from remarrying. When people were unwilling to provide thirsty untouchables with water, even their shadow was regarded as impure. In 1868, Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule made their house's well available to untouchables. The Samaj's goal was to educate backward communities about their rights as human beings and assist them in escaping Brahminical society through this symbolic act, which challenged the caste system's notions of purity and pollution. This bold

move questioned the Brahmins' authority, who had long presided over religious ceremonies. Savitribai started to lead the pack here and aided a young lady, the girl of a dear companion, wed youthful single man she was enamored with. The wedding went off without a Brahmin in charge, despite opposition. In British India, this may have been one of the first civil weddings. Even though Jyotiba had already made arrangements for police protection, the second wedding went off without a hitch. At the age of sixteen, their son Yashwant also wed a woman from a different caste. In British India, this was the first marriage between people of different castes that was recorded. Jyotiba and Savitri invited Radha, Yashwant's fiancée, to stay in their home well in advance of the date so that the young couple could get to know each other better and see if they were compatible. Savitri personally tutored Radha and sent her to school during this time. In a society that believed in marrying children without their consent, this was a revolutionary step. With the assistance of Satyashodhak volunteers, the couples in Maharashtra provided the famine victims with all the assistance they could. In addition, they established 52 boarding schools to educate and feed orphaned children.

Literature Review

A study titled "Savitribai Phule Contribution to Indian Social Elements – A Study" was conducted in 2019 by S. M. Katke. In this study, it was mentioned that Savitribai Jyotirao Phule was a well-known Indian social reformer, educator, and poet who actively contributed to the education and empowerment of women in the 19th century. With her husband, Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai established the first girls' school in Pune, Bhide Wada, making her one of the few educated women of her time. She went to great lengths to raise and free child widows, she opposed Sati Pratha and child marriage, and she advocated for widows to remarry. She is regarded as an icon of the Dalit Mang caste alongside B. R. Ambedkar and Annabhau Sathe because she was a major player in the social reform movement in Maharashtra. She battled against unapproachability and effectively lobbied for the cancellation of station and orientation segregation.

A study titled "Locating Savitribai Phule's Feminism in the Trajectory of Global Feminist Thought" was conducted by R. Pandey in 2019. When she talked about self-reliance, the ability to reason, and public schools, she drew inspiration from the first wave of feminism. As she spoke out against shelters and marriages between

castes, her feminism showed traces of the second wave. When she talked about bringing Stree Shudra Atishudra together and raising women with different identities, her feminism also displayed some useful characteristics of third wave feminism. Savitribai was also the first woman in India's history to stake her husband's claim. The most extreme feminists must have been shocked by her decision to light her husband's pyre.

Mangala, K. D. (2018) carried out the study titled "Savitribai Phule: Savitribai's educational philosophy is an era promoter, and this study's key issues are revolutionary work and literature. Savitribai Phule is widely regarded as a positive influence on Maharashtrian women's lives. It is gratifying to note that Savitribai elevated the woman as a result of her status as a noble and revolutionary observer of her activities and personality. Women who have demonstrated their worth through work in a variety of fields find inspiration in this new light of innovation. Because Savitribai advocated for the liberation of all women and the Shudratishudra society from slavery in the then-orthodox society of the nineteenth century, her work was a challenge to the difficulties of the time. In the wake of India's first teacher women's liberation movement, Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule's position as a champion of the oppressed and supporter of teaching is unavoidable. The medium of phenomenal education is social change. Through education, he wanted to raise society's awareness. One of India's great educators, Savitribai Phule established the foundation for universal education approximately 175 years earlier. The social and educational work that Savitribai Phule does is amazing and phenomenal. Savitribai also wrote books at the same time. The society was being educated by her writings. The entirety of his writing focused on social awareness. The public good was the focus of all literature.

S. Jain conducted a research project titled "Caste and Education: The Vision of Mahatma Jotirao Phule" The main findings are that the anti-caste movements' ideologies were focused on Dalits' "emancipation," which all intellectuals desired. Phule was the first anti-caste intellectual to advocate for Dalit mass education. According to Omvedt, Dalit Visions 8: "superstition, bag of tricks, weapon of domination," he opposed Brahmanism. His wife, Savitribai Phule, is the primary contributor to the education mission for oppressed women. Phule is not only regarded as the primary figure of the anticaste movement; she is also a protester for the empowerment of women. Jyotirao Phule says that women's and lower-caste

people's education should be the top priority because their social positions and conditions are so bad.

The study "Dalit Women Poets and New Themes in Poetry" by P. Somkuwar (2014) focuses on the following major issues: Dalit literature written by contemporary women writers has undergone a multifaceted revolution. It hardly remains the literature of the lower classes, judging new themes and concepts. These contemporary poets' works are feministic, reflective, and universal, in addition to being praising, lamenting, or even considering. They have elevated the Dr. Ambedkar movement to new heights through the representation of universal themes in their text. Their society and Dalit writers of the first and second generations have lofty expectations for these contemporary Dalit women poets. The quote from Dr. Ambedkar, "I measure the progress of the community by the degree of progress that women have achieved," concludes all discussion.

Savitribai Phule was the subject of a study by Wolf, T. (2011). It is argued that the influence of the four original and extraordinary ideas shared by Comenius and Savitribai can be seen in today's literate Indian women anywhere in the world: that education must be accessible to all children, child-friendly, intellectually critical, and socially transformative for every child. In addition, every girl child in any school in India sits with boys to read, browse the Internet, and learn new things. It is of the Savitribai variety in India. Could such a different arrangement lead to a different kind of social structure in the future—a world venue for education that is different from the culture of the detention center where Savitribai lived? If that's the case, then I don't know if the Indian children can still sing in a pleasant house and be released into a truly original and extraordinary future, similar to that of Comenius and Savitribai.

Role In Women Education & Empowerment

Savitribai Phule is well-known for her significant involvement in the fight against slavery, inequity based on religion, caste, and race, and education for women's empowerment and emancipation. Savitribai Phule and Jyotirao Phule founded a nine- student girl's school in 1848 in Bhide Wada, Pune, to make this idea a reality. Both faced social rejection as a result of this step. A friend, Usman Sheikh, and his sister, Fatima Sheikh, offered assistance in this dangerous circumstance. They likewise gave over their convenience to begin school. Savitribai Phule became the

school's first teacher. The social studies, mathematics, and science sections of the Western curriculum were taught in this school. In 1852, Savitribai Phule and Jyotirao Phule opened a second school for children from the Mang and Mahar castes in an effort to combat untouchability. Savitribai Phule and her husband opened three different schools for girls in Pune in 1852. There were a total of 150 students enrolled in these three schools. Savitribai Phule opens 18 schools over the course of a year to educate women, children, and other members of disadvantaged castes. For the upper castes of Pune, all of these social activities became an eyesore. They opposed educating dalits or members of lower castes. The upper caste people repeatedly harassed and humiliated Savitribai Phule. They hit Savitribai Phule with cow dung, mud, and stones, but she stuck to her goal and started an evening school with her husband for farmers and day laborers.

Savitribai Phule was a feminist or social reformer who established the foundation for women's education in India around 180 years ago, when there was a lot of orthodoxy, strict caste division, and superstition. The revelation of all aspects demonstrates this. She also spoke out strongly against issues like caste discrimination, child marriage, and feticide. At the time, this was a very inspiring event in India. Later, great thinkers like Rabindranath

Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar also had similar ideas about women's education and empowerment. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, with the assistance of Lord Bentinck, abolished the crucial practice of satidaha pratha in 1829, approximately two years prior to the birth of Savitribai Phule. After that, in 1856, the Widow Marriage Act was approved by the government on the initiative of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Savitribai Phule's contemporary Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar also established 38 women's education centers in West Bengal in 1858. That is, the positive influence of Savitribai's voice in Maharashtra spread to West Bengal through Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Rabindranath Tagore, and Swami Vivekananda, who then spread it throughout India and the world, resulting in today's improved society.

Role as Social Reformer

The Mahila Seva Mandal was established by Savitribai Phule to educate women about their rights, self-respect, and other social issues. In protest of the conventional narrow-mindedness toward widows, she participated in numerous social activities.

After that, Savitribai Phule and Jyotirao Phule established the Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha, a center for pregnant Brahmin widows and rape victims, where they assisted with childbirth and saved their children. This wonderful movement made it possible to prevent infanticide. Savitribai Phule and Jyotirao Phule adopt a child from Kashibai, a Brahmin widow, at this time. Society benefits greatly from this adoption. In addition, Jyotirao Phule promotes remarriage of widows, opposition to child marriage, and sati pratha. After that, in 1897, Savitribai Phule and her adopted son Yashawant Rao open a clinic in pune to treat people in the Nalasopara area who were affected by the bubonic plague pandemic. Everyone fled the pandemic situation, but Savitribai Phule did not hesitate to fight the crisis. In order to fight this pandemic, she even risked her life.

Savitribai even composed expositions on issues like liquor fixation and obligation traps. She vehemently opposed the practice of borrowing money to celebrate festivals in “Karz” [Essays] because it led to enormous debt. She wrote about how religious superstitions ensnared the poor. She was also a great speaker, and many of her speeches were published while she was alive. She wrote, “The Shudras are irreversibly blind due to lack of education. The Shudra does not understand his happiness; he considers his sorrows to be his blessings.” in one of them. He has carried this burden for 2000 years. She and her husband had attempted to shake it off as a burden. Savitribai wrote his verse biography, *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar*, or *The Ocean of Pearls*, as an ode to Jyotiba’s outstanding life. Additionally, she edited and published four speeches on Indian history by Jyotiba. Savitribai carried on with the vision she had presented to Jyotiba. She was elected president and assumed control of the *Satyashodhak Samaj*. She was the only female leader in India in the 19th century who actively opposed caste and patriarchy and understood its intersectional nature. Savitribai was a loving but fiercely revolutionary spirit who changed many lives. She was referred to as *Kaku*, which means “paternal aunt,” by all of her students. In 1983, the Pune City Corporation constructs a memorial in her honor. On March 10, 1998, one hundred years after her death, *India Post* issued a stamp in her honor. In 2015 the College of Pune was renamed as *Savitribai Phule Pune College* in her honor.

Conclusion

A name that was closely associated with women's education and equal rights was Savitribai Phule. In the nineteenth century saw the start of spread of ladies schooling essentially by Savitribai Phule. She assisted women and members of the lower caste to live in society with dignity in addition to providing education. She was a social reformer as well as qualified instructor. She was such a lady whose fundamental object was to teach the whole human race. Additionally, she established numerous schools to serve those ends. His contributions to social welfare and education are greatly appreciated by not only the nation but the entire world. She paved the way for women's education and served as a counterweight to B R Ambedkar in the fight to reduce racial inequality in India.

Savitribai Phule set the standard for educating marginalized groups of society and girls. Together with her husband, Jyotirao Phule, she established a school for girls and became India's first female educator in 1848. She went on to start a shelter in 1864 for homeless women and helped Jyotirao Phule start the first institution, Satyashodhak Samaj, in 1873, to fight for equality between people of all classes. In India, her life is celebrated as a shining example of women's rights. She is frequently referred to as Indian feminism's "mother." Along with her revolutionary husband, Savitribai Phule also struggled and suffered. She is little known outside of academia, except for the fact that she is known as Jyotirao Phule's wife.

The first woman teacher in modern India, a radical advocate for mass and female education, a proponent of women's liberation, a pioneer of engaged poetry, and a brave mass leader who fought against caste and patriarchy are all examples of her distinct identity and contribution. She advocated for education and wrote a lot of poems about discrimination. Savitribai was the first Shudra woman, and she was also the first Indian woman whose poems were read in Britain. She was the founder of contemporary poetry, and her poems emphasized the importance of English and education. In Indian society, her life and work are examples of social reform and female empowerment. She continues to be a source of motivation for many modern activists for women's rights. She is frequently referred to as Indian feminism's "mother." Everyone ought to be familiar with the name Savitribai Phule in order to comprehend the current state of affairs. Despite the British era, her ideas are still relevant and useful today. She separated every one of the conventional generalizations and biases of the nineteenth hundred years to support

up another time of reasoning in English colonization of India. She emphasized secular education as a means of social liberation. She thought that education could help socially backward classes change their circumstances. Beyond promoting education, the idea was to get rid of the idea that Dalits, untouchables, lower-caste people, and women weren't eligible. Others admire her because she was the first woman to work for social change and advocate for women's rights and empowerment. She tried to create a society with inequality.

References

- "Women's Day | american marathi mission misses Cynthia Farrar Girl's education at early age". 10 March 2023
- Savitribai Phule-Pioneer of Women's Education and Liberation". eSakal- 3 January 2022.
- "How Savitribai Phule, India's one of the pioneer female teachers, dealt with abusers hell bent on preventing her from educating girls". India. 3 January 2022
- "Goswami, Shreya 15 June 2021. "Schooling Women: The Story Of India's First Schools For Girls".
- "Sundararaman, T. 2009. Savitribai Phule first memorial lecture, 2008. National Council of Educational Research and Training.
- Kandukuri, Divya 11 January 2019. "The life and times of Savitribai Phule". Mint. Archived from the original on 19 April 2019.
- Savitribai Phule-Pioneer of Women's Education and Liberation | Sakal". www.esakal.com. 24 June 2021.
- Rege, Sharmila 2009. Savitribai Phule Second Memorial Lecture, 2009. National Council of Educational Research and Training.
- "Life Sketch of Savitribai Phule- Timeline". Velivada. 9 November 2017.
- O'Hanlon, Rosalind 2002. Caste, Conflict and Ideology: Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India.

Allegory of an Alternative Politics: Women Empowerment in Left Regime

Dr. Arnab Adhikary

Abstract

After capturing the state level state machinery, CPI (M) promised that they would provide good governance and promote alternative politics. They also said they were going to decentralize the political power and also assured that people of lower strata would be benefitted from that. But the reality was far beyond from their promises. From the beginning of the parliamentary democracy in India we found that there was a vacuum regarding the voice of marginalized people especially the case of the women. West Bengal was not an exception of that in any sense. Though the Lefts claimed that they stood for the rights of the oppressed but in their entire regime they never took any alternative initiative to ensure the empowerment of the women. As most of the party leaders were male, the empowerment of their female counterpart of the society remained a myth during the Left rule in Bengal. Due to their ideological dogma they overlooked the perpetual deprivation of the women. The left seems to have deliberately ignored the question how the tiny Hindu middle class erudite male section in Bengal could monopolize the power and authority in all spheres of the states since independence. And this procedure of monopolization of political power continued throughout their regime. In this paper there is an attempt to investigate how and why the women of the Bengal were left behind from the main political realm during the Left Front era. And also tried to analyze how much CPI (M)'s class politics was accountable for that.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Class politics, Representation, Patriarchy, etc.

Introduction

From the beginning of the parliamentary democracy in India, we find that there was a vacuum regarding the voice of marginalized people especially the case of the women. West Bengal is not an exception of that in any sense. Though the Lefts claimed that they stood for the right of the oppressed but in their entire regime they never took any alternative initiative to ensure the empowerment of the women. As most of the party leaders were male, the empowerment of their female counterpart of the society remained a myth during the Left rule in Bengal. Due to their ideological dogma, they overlooked the perpetual deprivation of the women. The left seems to have deliberately ignored the question how the tiny Hindu middle class erudite

SACT-I, Department of History, Syamaprasad College, Kolkata, 700026, West Bengal.

male section in Bengal could monopolize the power and authority in all spheres of the state since independence. This procedure of monopolization of political power continued throughout their regime. Now it is necessary to investigate how and why the women of the Bengal were left behind from the main political realm during the Left Front regime. It is also important to analyze how much CPI (M)'s class politics was accountable for that.

This paper tries to relate and argue how the champion of class-politics, CPI (M), totally ignored the question of women empowerment. It also tried to find the modus operandi of the Lefts regarding the women issues.

Participation of Women in Core Political Circle during the Left Front Rule

Political participation is an obvious procedure of every political system. But it is not unprecedented that in various regions of our society, political power is monopolized by only a few incumbents of political authority and in the name of culture or religious dogma or ideology they resisted the 'others' in participating in politics. According to N.D. Palmer, political participation helps the individual to be effective and it associates her or him with the political system. The higher the rate and levels, the more varied the forms of participations, the higher is the democratic system.¹ On this occasion L.W. Milbrath and M.L. Goel said that the citizen must at least participate in the choice of their public officials in order to keep public action responsive to the wishes and desires of the people. They also state that '*participation in politics and in public debate helps to build a better and noble character.*' According to them, it helps the people to build a strong well-structured democratic society where everybody's choices and rights are secured.² So, to build a truly democratic and politically sensitive society, it is necessary to maintain some kind of balance in the power structure through the equal representation of women in the main circle of power. Now, in this context it is essential to analyze the situation of political representation of the women in Left regime.

To understand the real situation of the political representation of women, it is necessary to analyze it in two sections, first, the electoral representation of the women in West Bengal Assembly, in Lok Sabha and also in LF ministry and secondly, representation of the women inside the political organization of CPI (M). The second thing helps us to understand the patriarchal structure of the party. So, it would be better to discuss it in a separate way. If anyone has gone through the local body election statistics, the figures might not reflect the reality because the 73rd and

74th constitutional amendments ensured the minimum representations of women in the Panchayats and Municipalities i.e., 33% of total numbers. Areas were also reserved only for the female candidates to ensure their political representation. If half of the elected members were women, then it was mandatory that the post of *pradhan* or *chairperson* or *mayor* should be appointed from the female candidates. So in this context, the Indian Constitution forced the concerned political parties to ensure political representation of women. But in the case of general and assembly election, there is no restriction. That's why the representation of women in their respective political parties, both in the national and state level is not very encouraging.

In West Bengal, the number of women candidates contesting the Assembly elections had been highly discouraging. It is true that the fault did not lie only to the Marxist, but it is a continuous process. But the important thing is that CPI (M) did nothing for the empowerment of the women. First state Assembly election was held in 1952, where 13 women contested³ and only 2 got elected and the percentage of women members in that Assembly was only 0.8%. In the Seventh Assembly election i.e. 1972's election, the figures were the following- 11 women candidates contested, 5 became successful and the percentage of women members in Assembly was then 1.78%.⁴ The scenario remained more or less same even after the empowerment of Lefts. In 1977's election, total 27 women candidates contested and 4 became successful and in this year the percentage of women candidates in Assembly was 1.36%. But the interesting fact was that, only 3 women contested on behalf of CPI (M). In Ninth Assembly Election (1982) where 23 women contested and only 7 were elected and, in this Assembly, only 2.38% members were female. In this election only 5 women candidates got ticket to fight from the side of CPI (M). The next State Election was held in 1987, where 26 women contested and 10 got elected as MLA. The percentage of female representatives during the Tenth Assembly was only 3.40%. Only 8 women candidates fought in this election in favor of CPI (M). If anyone ever goes through the statistics of 1991's Assembly Election, the overall situation did not improve much. Only 27 women participated in this election and 21 were successful and during this Eleventh Assembly session, only 7.62% of members were female. In this Assembly, only 17 women got ticket from the main ruling party. Next State Election was held in 1996, where 55 women contested from main premier political parties of the state and 20 became successful and during this assembly session only 7.40% members were female. CPI (M)

gave ticket only to 26 women candidates to fight the election. The situation was more or less same during Twelfth Assembly session (2001), 63 women contested and 29 were successful and 9.86% members of assembly were female. In this election, 26 women fought on behalf of Marxist Communist party.⁵

Likewise, on the daunting situation of political representation of female in assembly, the statistics speak volumes about the dismal state of affairs as far as participation of women in the parliament is concerned. Between 1980 and 1999, the number of women Parliamentarian (Lok Sabha) from West Bengal varies from 2 to 5. In Seventh Lok Sabha, (1980) the number of elected females from Bengal were 2. In 1984, it increased to 5 but in the very next session (1989) it decreased to 2. During the Tenth session of the Parliament (1991-1996), the number was only 3, and then in 1996's election it became 4. In the last two Lok Sabha Election of last millennium, the number of elected women members was only 5.⁶ During these elections, winning MPs were Geeta Mukherjee (CPI), elected from Panshkura constituency consecutively for 7 times (from 1980-1999), Bibha Ghosh Goswami [CPI (M)] for 4 times (1972, 1977, 1980 & 1984), Mamata Banerjee (Congress & AITMC) for 5 times (1984, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999 and so on), Sandhya Barui (CPI (M)) for 3 times (1996, 1998 and 1999), Malini Bhattacharya [CPI (M)] for two times (1989, 1991), Indumati Bhattacharya (Congress) for once (1984), Krishna Bose (Congress & AITMC) for 3 times (1996, 1998, 1999), Phulrenu Guha (Congress) from Contai for once (1984), Minati Dey [CPI (M)] from Jalpaiguri for two times (1998, 1999 and so on). So, in-between these 20 years only 5 Communist MPs were elected.⁷

Rajya Sabha is also a very significant constitutional body. Elected MLAs of various states were elected as the MPs of Rajya Sabha. So, sometimes it becomes interesting to know how the political parties were looking in this aspect. Other than some exceptions whenever the concerned seats of Rajya Sabha becomes empty, it turns easy for the political parties to easily win over their candidates. These mindsets of the political parties are reflected whenever they chose their Rajya Sabha candidates. During this discussion period, (1982-2001) CPI (M) sent only 4 female members to the Upper House; they were Kanak Mukherjee (two times from 03.04.1978 to 02.04.1990), Sarala Maheshwari (for two times from 03.04.1990 to 02.04.1996 and 19.08.1999 to 18.08.2005), Chandra Kala Pandey (from 19.08.1993 to 8.08.2005) and Bharati Roy (from 03.04.1996 to 02.04.2002).⁸ The interesting

fact was that, two members of these four candidates were not from Bengal. So, it is quite clear that CPI (M) never did too much for the empowerment of women separately.

Very few women had been able to reach the high level of power and authority during the Left regime. Actually, this phenomenon is also an inheritance of the age-old political culture of the state. Though West Bengal had a women Governor for almost a decade, from 1957-1966, but it didn't effect on the female representation in Legislatures and also in State Ministries. Lefts too never tried to get over from this. In the year 1977, the First Left Front Govt. was formed and since then, they retained their position up to 2011. In the First LF Ministry of 1977, out of 30 ministers, only one woman MLA was selected as a Minister of State post. Since then, the Second (1982) and Third (1987) Left Front Govt. also retained its position, both in 1982 and in 1987 though it comprised of 45 and 32 ministers respectively, but the Lefts appointed only one female MLA as Minister of State. Finally, a Forward Block MLA Chaya Ghosh was appointed as a cabinet minister by Jyoti Basu during the 4th Left Front Government. This ministry also comprised of 3 more women as MoS. But the number of four ministers was actually next to nothing when the strength of ministry was 44 in total. During the Fifth LF Govt. Lefts were expanding their cabinet and the number was 46, but it constituted of only one woman as cabinet minister and three as MoS. The Sixth LF Govt. was formed in 2001 under the Chief Ministership of Buddhadev Bhattacharyya and with the number of 48 ministers it became the largest Left Front Cabinet. Five female MLAs (Nandarani Dal and Chaya Ghosh joined as Cabinet Ministers and Anju Kar, Bilasi Bala Sahis and Ibha Dey were appointed as MoS) were recruited as the members of this vast cabinet.⁹ After analyzing these disgraceful statistics some interesting facts came out, like during the first three LF Govt. no Female MLAs were recruited as the cabinet ministers, Smt. Chaya Bera and Smt. Nandarani Dal, were the only two CPI (M) candidates who worked as Cabinet Minister during this period.¹⁰ Women ministers, during the rule of Left Front governments, though few in numbers, held portfolios which were not much important or challenging in terms of political significance, such as, social welfare, adult and continued education, Family Welfare, cooperatives, agriculture marketing and tribal welfare. However, ministries like home, police or finance still remained the male bastion and have never been held by a woman. Thus, the story of political significance through equal participation in

all constitutional bodies still remained bunged up for women during the entire communist rule.

Patriarchal Political Structure of CPI (M) and Alienation of Female Counterpart

Now the main question is- what then is causing such gender disparities in political participation? Strong patriarchal traditions, coupled with religious and socio-cultural and ideological norms are the crucial factors holding women back from active participation in politics. Some of these constraining factors are very subtle and derived from deeply entrenched social relations, whilst others are overt, such as blatant discriminatory legislation. But in a matured democratic political system, it is expected that every section of citizens should participate in various political activities to secure their equal rights and they have to take part in the decision-making process. The most appropriate way by which people can take part in the decision-making process is to become a member either of the constitutional institutions like National Legislature, State Legislative Assembly and local-self institutions or they should go for party membership, attending public meetings and joining the decision making body of a political party. In a Parliamentary Democracy like India, it always depends on the concerned political parties about who is eligible as their candidate. In this connection it should be mentioned here that, regarding the measurement of the nature and extent of political participation, what was the position of the women in CPI (M)'s political structure.

In a democratic set up, the political road to decision making usually leads to the system via the political parties. Discussing about the political involvement of women in various movements and activities, Ms. Mamata Roy, an ex-member of WBLA from the CPI (M), said that participation of women in politics is not active enough, day by day the percentage of women members is decreasing; in this situation more women political activists are definitely required.¹¹ Senior CPI (M) leader Sarojini Balanandan once said that the party was dominated by men and that many leaders still nursed "male-feudalistic mentality."¹² Anyone can find the authenticity of these remarks within the CPI (M) party's internal structure. One interesting fact is that, CPI (M) never elected a Bengali woman as a politburo member. Actually until 2005's 18th party congress, CPI (M) never elected a single woman in their Politburo.

¹³ The situation was almost the same in state level also. It would be clearer if we

go through a table, comprising with the numbers and positions of women in all national parties of Bengal.

Participation of Women in Four National Political Parties in West Bengal (2000)

Name of the party	Total members of the party	Name of the women's Organizations of the party	Number of women members in the party	Percentage of women members in the party	Total members in highest decision-making body	Number of women representatives in highest decision-making body
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	2,65,000	<i>Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti</i>	25,440	9.6%	85	8
Communist Party of India	70,156	<i>Paschimbanga Mahila Samiti</i>	10,285	14.66%	9	1
Indian National Congress	3,50,000-40,00,00	<i>Mahila Congress</i>	Not available	-	80	27
Bharatya Janta Party	5,60,000	<i>Mahila Morcha</i>	186,675	32.67%	11	1

Source: Data provided by the all-Respective political parties. The author computed the data.

The scenario is clearly depicted in the table, where we found that regarding the women participation both in numbers of the women party members or their presence in decision making committee, Lefts hold the worst position. Anil Biswas of the CPI (M) said that, women membership in the party had increased by 60 per cent from the early seventies to 2000. In 2000, at the district level, 8 to 10 per cent members were women. In every frontal organization of the CPI (M), women's representation is adequate. He said that both at the administrative and policy making levels, women have a voice in the party. Anil Biswas claimed that the CPI (M) had already targeted 2003 for an increase in the number of women members in every party branch. Usually, each party branch has 9 to 10 per cent women members and there are 34,000 party branches in the state. He said that the party also has a special syllabus for women cadres for acquainting them with its policies.¹⁴ But the statistical data are showing exactly the opposite to what Mr. Biswas had said. Leftist leader Rekha Goswami upholds the basic fact and said that the number of women members of the CPI (M) did not reflect the strength of its women's organization (*Ganatantrik Mahila Samiti*). Feudal attitude and the party's recruitment policy were responsible for this, she thought.¹⁵ Though Mrs. Goswami

said that district-wise separate as well as joint sessions are held for men and women and more than 60 per cent women participate regularly in these classes and women are much more serious about attending these sessions. And also, the party emphasizes women's equality in its general policy and views women's rights as basic human rights¹⁶ but regarding the participation of women in decision making body of CPI (M) remained minimal during this time.

Sometimes CPI (M) accepted the reality. In their various plenums, the Party emphasized to build a stronger women front. But due to their patriarchal mindset and ideological dogma, CPI (M) never fixed their focus on this thing.¹⁷ Actually the Lefts never tried to bring women in decision-making body with some special care. Sandip Kumar Ghatak had explained this aspect in a different way. According to him, the male leaders of CPI (M) never wanted to lose their control within the party both in local or upper level. He said women's participation to the local level has always been satisfactory. Before 1990, women in the local politics were generally either politicians who had lost membership of higher institutions, or those who were given such an opportunity to serve the purpose of publicity. In most of the cases, the motive was partially to satisfy the aspirations of these few women, since they could then be kept under virtual political control and denied higher aspirations.¹⁸ Trijita Gonsalves states that patriarchal mindset of the political parties was always very common in West Bengal. CPI (M) was never being an exception to this. According to her, the politicians have rarely attached 'political' importance to 'gender' as a separate category deserving attention. As the Left ideology and culture has an extremely uneasy relationship with anything relating to 'gender' or 'feminist issues, feminism or women's issues have always been looked at with suspicion and treated as Western imperialist imports by the Left parties.¹⁹ An eminent scholar Sanghamitra Sen Chaudhuri conducted a case study in early 90's regarding the socio-political affiliation of women in West Bengal. She concluded her study by emphasizing on some crucial findings. According to her, women largely participated in political rallies or meetings, they also casted their votes but regarding the leadership, women were least interested. She states that it might be the age-old tradition which stands as an obstacle in the path of women empowerment. She concluded that the mainstream political parties including the Lefts never took any practical initiative to overcome this situation.²⁰

Conclusion

During their regime, Lefts always received complete subordination from the women and other oppressed section of the society. Left-front decentralized the power via Panchayet elections. Due to the reservation women get the chance to be elected in panchayets. But the upper caste male leaders of the CPI (M) used to exercise actual power as they were in the superior position within the party hierarchy. As most of the party leaders belonged to the upper caste male erudite sections, known as '*bhadralok*', the empowerment of the lower strata and the deprived sections and also women of the society remained a myth during the loft Left rule in Bengal. Due to their ideological dogma, they overlooked the perpetual deprivation of the women. Due to this disproportion of the Lefts, it caused a serious poisonous effect in society. Generations of Bengali people never relate or understood the historic faults and the necessity or importance of women empowerment in politics. Female members of CPI (M) never raised their voice against the symbolic violence with the women by suppressing their equal rights in the name of class politics. Due to their ideological dogma, Lefts never specified or separated the general issues of women from theory of class struggle. It is evident from this brief analysis that, women question and their movement did not have any significant theoretical position in the experiment of communist movement in Bengal during these years. By analyzing the game of political representation, it can be said that CPI (M) was established as a patriarchal, middle-class, upper-middle caste dominated somewhat elitist party structure, where the people of lower strata and women surrendered their political ambitions and remained subordinate to the supreme command of the party. The elitist leaders of the party command which was always dominated by the '*bhadralok*' class ensured their political superiority on behalf of some hollow promises.

Notes and References:

1. Palmer, N.D., 1976, *Elections and Political Development in India*, Vikas, New Delhi, pp-60
2. Milbrath L.W., Goel. M.L., 1977, *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics*, Rand McNally, Chicago, pp-2,3.
3. From the very beginning some women were contested as individual candidate or some

- irrelevant political parties gave tickets to them. If we try to understand the actual situation of the women in main stream politics we should maintain our focus only to the relevant political parties of the state like CPI (M), Congress, GNLF, CPI, RSP, AIFB, AITMC and BJP and also to their female nominees. It helps us to analyze the actual situation. So, in this context whenever the statistics of ‘total number of female participants’ displayed it refers to those candidates who were represented these parties.
4. Banerjee, D. (2012). *Election recorder: An analytical reference*. Kolkata: Star Publishing House. Data was computed by the author from the election records of 1952, 1972.
 5. *Statistical Report on The Legislative Assembly of West Bengal*, from 1977-2001, computed by the author, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.
 6. Banerjee, D. (2012). *Election recorder: An analytical reference*. Kolkata: Star Publishing House. Data was computed by the author from the election records from 1980 to 1999 Lok Sabha elections.
 7. Banerjee, D. (2012). *Election recorder: An analytical reference*. Kolkata: Star Publishing House. Data was computed by the author from the election records from 1980 to 1999 Lok Sabha elections.
 8. Sources were collected from *The Statesman* newspaper. Data was computed by the author.
 9. Sources were collected from various newspapers like *The Statesman*, *The Hindu*, *Anandabazar Patrika*, *Times of India*, *Bartaman* etc. Data was computed by the author.
 10. Sources were collected from various newspapers like *The Statesman*, *The Hindu*, *Anandabazar Patika*, *Times of India*, *Bartaman* etc. Data was computed by the author.
 11. Roy, Alok, ‘Women Representation in Electoral Politics In West Bengal’, *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 5, Issue 5, May 2017, P-53
 12. *Hindustan Times*, 10th February, 2012.
 13. In 2005’s 18th Party Congress of CPI (M), held in New Delhi and Brinda Karat elected as a politburo member.
 14. Munshi Vidya, Political Participation, ed. Jasodhara Bagchi, *The changing status of women in West Bengal, 1970–2000: the challenge ahead*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004. pp-90-91
 15. Ibid, p-91.
 16. Ibid, p-91
 17. Our Tasks On Party Organization, adopted by Central Committee of the C.P.I (M),

Calicut session-1967, OCT-28th –Nov 2, 1967 and Resolution adopted by central committee of the CPIM its Muzaffarpur Session on March 9-15, 1973.

18. Ghatak, Sandip Kumar, Political Participation of Women of West Bengal its Nature And Extent, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, JAN. MAR., 2010, Vol. 71, No. 1, p. 289.
19. Gonsalves Trijita, 'Where Aare The Women?: A Study of Electoral Promises in the West Bengal Assembly Elections', *The Indian Journal of Political Science* , OCT-DEC., 2011, Vol. 72, No. 4., 2011, p. 983.
20. Sen Chaudhuri Sanghamitra, *Women and Politics: West Bengal A Case Study*, Minerva Associates, Calcutta, 1995, pp-128-133.

State of Exception and Embrace: Analyzing the rise of the K-Wave in Northeastern India

Dr. Sourish Ghosh

Abstract

A state of exception has been prevalent in the northeastern part of India since it has been amalgamated within the territory of India. In the garb of national security, a draconian act like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) had been introduced by Indian state since 1958 to control the secessionist tendencies. The Act gave immense power to the armed forces which led to massive human rights violations. The coercive measures created have created a sense of isolation for the northeastern people. Above all, in the milieu of a so-called national culture, the people and culture of the northeast has been marginalized. They are ethnically sidelined too for their mongoloid features. This has also created a crisis of cultural identity for them in the national plane. The ban on Hindi films and TV channels by the insurgent forces created a void in entertainment. With the rise of K-Wave the people of the north-eastern India has found a new way of articulating their cultural distinctiveness. The reception and appropriation of K-Wave among them is increasing.

The paper will intend to understand how the state of exception has facilitated the rise of the new cultural identity for the north-eastern India under the hex of a deterritorialized global cultural import. The method is primarily based on field work documents in terms of survey of existing literatures and public documents in this area; analysis of the accounts of experts and life stories of north-eastern youth, who are the major consumers of the K-wave, will be collected.

Keywords: State of Exception; Embrace; K-Wave; Culture; Identity, etc.

Introduction

The events which occurred after the 9/11 incident and the announcement of “war on terror” had the hallmarks of what Carl Schmitt, an anti-liberal German philosopher of the 20th century, describes as a “state of exception”. Presently, it has been argued that the state of exception is becoming a permanent feature of governance across nations. In the contemporary political situation, a state of exception can be defined as the ways by which democratic states are driven by the growth of discriminatory executive power, increasingly evading legislature and judicial institutions. To analyze the state of exception turning into a widespread phenomenon in democracies, the political writings of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben

ICSSR Post-Doc Fellow, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata-700032, West Bengal

become relevant. Agamben theorizes the state of exception from the Foucauldian aspect of biopolitics and claims that it has become ‘a dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics’ (Agamben, 2005, p.2).

Theorizing the State of Exception

The state of exception as a concept can be traced to the time of the French Revolution. It defines a special condition in which the juridical order remains suspended due to emergency or a serious crisis threatening the state. In such a situation, the sovereign, which is the Executive in democracy, prevails over the others and basic norms and laws can be violated by the state while facing the crisis. Carl Schmitt in his book *Politische Theologie*, which was published in 1922, established the adjacency between the state of exception and sovereignty. Schmitt defined the sovereign as ‘he who decides on the state of exception’ (Schmitt, 2005, p.5) and followed the Hobbesian concept of sovereignty which is the secularization of a theological concept but as a decisionist one rather than a rational theology.

Sovereignty is not just a technical concept in state theory; it is a personal privilege of the ruler. It is a mix of decision and domination. David Held was much more technical in his understanding of sovereignty as he differentiated between internal and external aspects (Held, 1995, p.100). But who will decide on the exception? The answer is contained in the stature of the sovereign. Schmitt had mentioned that sovereignty is a ‘borderline concept’, ‘one pertaining to the outermost sphere’ but he moved on to argue that though the sovereign ‘stands outside the normally valid legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it’ (Schmitt, 2005, p.7). He belongs to it on his capacity to decide on the exception. As Tracy B. Strong had pointed out in the forward of the 2005 edition of *Political Theology*, for Schmitt ‘it is the essence of sovereignty both to decide what an exception is and to make the decisions appropriate to that exception’ (p.xii). But Bruno Gulli argues that what provides the sovereign that special capacity to see that there is an exception, a state of emergency and subsequently decides on it? Does the sovereign become sovereign because he can decide on the exception, or he can decide on it because he is already a sovereign? (Gulli, 2009, pp.23-30). The answers to these questions may not be found distinctly in Schmitt’s work because he only mentions about the decision and not about any understanding of recognition and judgement. Rather the answer can be found in Walter Benjamin’s writing as he had argued that violence

is always 'implicated in the problematic nature of the law itself' (Benjamin, 1978, p.287). Gulli mentions that any person with special powers could be acknowledged as sovereign but objectively a sovereign is that person who can recognize the exception and tackle it (Gulli, 2009, pp.23-30).

Agamben challenges Schmitt's logic of sovereignty and affirms to Benjamin's argument as he mentions, 'it not only appears increasingly as a technique of government rather than an exceptional measure, but it also lets its own nature as the constitutive paradigm of the juridical order come to light' (Agamben, 2005, p.7). He continues to argue that 'the transformation of a provisional and exceptional measure into a technique of government threatens radically to alter rather or has already altered the structure and meaning of the traditional distinction between constitutional forms. From this point of view, the state of exception appears as a threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism.' (Agamben, 2005, pp. 2-3).

The state of exception engages into an exclusive interplay between sovereign states and their laws. During national crisis such as natural disasters or war, government suspends the law by means of asserting order. This suspension has different names across nations; for example, the 'State of Siege' in France, 'Martial Law' in Canada, 'Patriot Act' in the USA, and 'Armed Forces Special Powers Act' in India etcetera, but in actuality they are fundamentally the same thing, a state of exception. The state of exception is frequently accomplished under the guise of suspending laws and the rights to guarantee the protection of citizens, so they may be reinstated once normality is restored. On this point, Agamben criticizes Schmitt and argues that 'all such theories remain a prisoner in the vicious circle in which the emergency measures they seek to justify in the name of defending the democratic constitution are the same ones that lead to its ruin' (Agamben, 2005, p.8). The laws that undermine the capability of the state to uphold control, such as the right to free movement or rights of privacy are stopped all along the crisis until the normalcy is restored. This sublimation of regulation by the executive allows the state to act unhindered by legal accountability, bestowing it with power and stripping rights from citizens (Durantaye, 2005, p.182). The state of exception is the state's mode of self-sustenance while compromising the law and the rights of the citizens.

Agamben argues that the state of exception has become a norm for liberal democracies across the world. The slow decline of the law making capacities of

the legislature and simultaneous increase in the powers of the executive has led to the dissolution of democracy. He traces many instances of its implementation especially after the First World War and its continuation in the twenty-first century. Through various examples, Agamben demonstrates how the state of exception has become a frequently used political tool. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the construction of the camp. For Agamben, the camp, be it Auschwitz, Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, or Nauru, is the “spatial arrangement” of ‘the absolute space of exception’ (Ross, 2012, p.423). As Bourke argued that it is a physical space outside the juridical sphere where inhabitants are indefinitely detained and at the mercy of unrestrained sovereign power (Bourke, 2012, p.443). The Australian Migration Act of 1992, the United States Military Order of 2001, and the Patriot Act etcetera undermine the personal freedom and thus turn the exception into a norm. These orders radically erase the legal status of the individual, in a way producing a legally unnamable and unclassifiable being leading to the birth of the ‘Homo Sacer’ (Ray, 2012, p.3). Agamben states ‘The immediate biopolitical significance of the state of exception as the original structure in which law encompasses living beings by means of its own suspension; emerges clearly in the “military order” issued by the President of the United States on November 13, 2001, which authorized the “indefinite detention” and trial by “military commissions” (not to be confused with the military tribunals provided for by the law of war) of non-citizens suspected of involvement in terrorist activities’ (Agamben, 2005, p.3).

The state of exception is not used as a singular reactionary measure to reinstate order. It is instead used as a pre-emptive means of forestalling potential disorder. The camp is not any more the sole indicator of a state of exception. The pre-emptive measures are exemplified by the creation of temporary Protective Security Zones. These are policification or militarization of a particular area where these agencies have additional powers to search individual houses and vehicles in the name of security. The forestalling of citizens’ rights in the face of a potential emergency is a sign of the state of exception becoming a norm (Calarco et al., 2007, p. 220). It diminishes the potential for political action as it anticipates the disturbance of sovereign order. The creation of these Protective Security Zones demonstrates how sovereign states use the state of exception to suspend laws and rights as per their convenience.

While considering the normalization of the state of exception in liberal

democracies, Agamben argues that through this normalization of exception liberal democratic states descend into totalitarianism. He argued that ‘modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system’ (Agamben, 2005, p.2). Agamben assumes his concept as the essence of the sovereign right to kill and let live. The political status and function of the legal exception is the crux of Agamben’s understanding of biopolitics and it is through this he identifies the existing condition of politics which he describes as abandonment and nihilism.

North East, AFSPA and the Exception

The Northeastern part of India comprises the state of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Manipur. The North East is connected to the rest of India by a narrow stretch of plains through North Bengal and Assam known as the Siliguri Corridor which leads into the Brahmaputra river valley plains. West of Gauhati, which is in Assam, the valley widens substantially to merge with Bangladesh and the Gangetic plains. The Himalayan Mountains of Nepal, Sikkim, North Bengal, Bhutan, Arunachal, and Tibet bound the Brahmaputra and the Gangetic Valley Plains to the north, the eastern hills link the Indian mainland and Myanmar to the east, and Meghalaya-Karbi Anglong Plateau, the Barak River Valley and the plains of Bangladesh to the south. The Cachar and North Cachar Hills, the Manipur Valley and Manipur Hill ranges, and the Piedmont Plains of Tripura in turn bound the Barak Valley. The major part of the mountains is covered with forests and dissected by a large number of rivers with deep gorges flowing into the central river systems which segregate the valleys making them mutually distinct and inaccessible to the extent that the ethnic groups remained in geographical isolation.

The geographical isolation turned the Northeast into a region clouded with a lack of knowledge and ambiguity for most of mainland India. Historically, the major part of Assam, Tripura, and Manipur were princely states and acted as a buffer for British India. There were different ethnic aspirations after India’s independence in 1947 as these states were not willing to join Indian territory. To quell the ethnic aspirations, Indian government carved out new states from Assam and Nagaland

in 1963, Meghalaya in 1972, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram in 1987 were formed. The concept of Northeast was formalized politically and the term became popular with the formation of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in 1971 (Haokip, 2012, p.304). Reportedly, a combination of baits and threats were used in integrating Tripura and Manipur as well. The people of the Northeast could never digest it and the urge among different ethnic groups to become independent made them rebel against the Indian government. With over 500 different ethnic groups and a diverse ethnic sub-nationalism governed by the primeval values of 'tribe-land autonomy', there was a commonality- a partially mongoloid heritage (Mukherjee, 2005, p.13). While the Dravidian culture of South India was recognized but the Mongoloid cultures of the Northeastern region remained in oblivion. The ignorance of the Indian government towards the Northeast and its urge for national integration instigated it to shun conciliation and adopt coercive measures against the rebellion. In 1958, the Indian Parliament passed the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to provide blanket cover to the Indian Army operating in the Northeast to adopt any measure to maintain law and order. The implementation of ASPA not only grievously damaged human security in that region but also permanently alienated the Northeastern people from mainland India. This arrogance and ignorance to bulldoze national integration and culture in the fear of Balkanization aggravated the conflict as the people felt deceived and insulted because their values and identity have not been respected and they have been alienated by segregation, social deprivation, underdevelopment, and exploitation because they look, speak and believe differently.

One of the main factors that lie behind the exclusion is the widespread lack of understanding about the region and bulldozing of the 'national culture' and identity in the name of 'mainstream'. Sunanda K. Datta Ray, a notable journalist, made a telling remark on the ignorance of the Indians in general about the Mongoloid heritage of the North East, 'deep in the Indian psyche lies the belief, lately encouraged by obscurantist political groups, the Bharat is Aryavarta or the Hindi heartland, and that outlying districts which do not conform to its manners, customs, language, and religion are colonial possessions and must be ruled as such until they can be absorbed in a superior code' (Verghese, 1996, p.281). People of the North East frequently claim that in the rest of the country they are regarded as foreigners and that an attitude of misplaced superiority and disdain has characterized their treatment by

‘mainstream’ Indians. They often face racist abuses and have even been heckled in the mainland for their features and are equated with the Chinese. The sense of exception and trauma has only increased with India’s enmity with China. The perceived parochialism of successive Indian governments, taken together with widespread ignorance about the region has encouraged the mentality of ‘them and us’ which has been a significant contributory factor to civil unrest and armed conflict.

The implementation of AFSPA gave blanket power to the Indian armed forces to quell any rebellion which led to enormous human rights violations in the region. As violence breeds violence, several insurgent groups emerged to champion the cause of sovereignty leading to a vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence which turned the region into a war zone. Underdevelopment, illiteracy, poverty, and corruption are high as successive Indian governments relied on coercive tactics as an outcome to all problems and protests. A state of exception has been created to isolate and coerce the so-called ‘disobedient’ people of the North East.

The promulgation of AFSPA was closely related to an event in 1953 at Kohima, in Nagaland. Then Indian Prime Minister Nehru visited Kohima with his Burmese counterpart U Nu, on March 30, 1953, the Nagas wanted an audience with Nehru so that they can place their demand for sovereignty but no audience was allowed on the meeting grounds, and that created discontent among the Nagas and they turned their backs on the leaders. What Nehru saw was hundreds of Nagas whacking their backsides as they left. This was a deliberate attempt to humiliate Nehru and Nehru was so annoyed that he vowed never to visit Naga Hills and never did (Hazarika and Chasie, 2009, p.8). After this incident, violence increased in the North East and the Assam government in May 1953, introduced ‘Assam Maintenance Public Order’ Act (AMPOA) to quell the revolt. This act was the precursor to other draconian measures which eventually led to the birth of AFSPA. The third clause of the AMPOA stated that ‘the individual of any area’ is to be ‘collectively’ fined in any manner the ‘authority’ thinks fit. A sub-inspector can arrest any person on suspicion without a warrant and there was no mention of requiring an arrested person to be produced in court, although the maximum penalty was two years imprisonment or fine or both. To provide the police with the immunity, no legal proceedings were allowed against any officer under the Act (Sanajoaba, 2003, p.216), which later became the core of AFSPA.

AFSPA gives the Indian armed forces wide powers to shoot, arrest and search, all in the name of aiding civil power. It was first applied to the states of Assam and Manipur and was amended in 1972 to extend to all the seven states in the Northeastern region. The enforcement of AFSPA has led to innumerable incidents of arbitrary detention, torture, rape and looting by security personnel. But the Indian government has always justified the legislation on the plea that it is required to stop the Northeastern states from seceding from the Indian Union. When India presented its second periodic report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) in 1991, members of the commission asked numerous questions about the validity of AFSPA as it clearly violates the Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). India relied on the sole argument that it is necessary to prevent secession (SAHRDC, 2003). AFSPA even violates Article 21 of the Indian constitution which guarantees the right to life to all people. There are several cases pending before the Indian Supreme Court which challenges the constitutionality of AFSPA but they are pending for many years. In 1997, to everyone's surprise the Indian Supreme Court endorsed the constitutionality of AFSPA, though the judgement did make some cosmetic recommendations, basically a list of 'Do's' and 'Dont's' to check the flagrant abuse of the act (Legacy IAS, 2021). But for the people living under the draconian law, it is practically useless. The use of AFSPA pushes the demand for more autonomy, bestowing the people of the region more reason to want to secede from a state that enacts aforementioned capacities. As resistance increased many insurgent groups developed over the years as they resorted to violent means to resist the Indian state which provoked more violence and civilian casualty increased multifold. Apart from violence by state and insurgents, there are ethnic and communal violences in the region which has also claimed many lives in the region.

The insipid figures of death as a result of insurgency and security action which appear in official records do not give a complete and accurate picture of the extent of the violence. These figures only reveal deaths due to conflict; they do not include deaths in custody, nor do they record non-lethal violent crimes such as rapes, tortures, and beatings. The records blur the distinction between combatants and non-combatants by regarding all suspects as genuine insurgents. Another problem was the continuous disappearances of young people in army custody (CORE, 1998). There are a few violent incidents from the security forces that need a mention, the

first being the high-profile case where Assam Rifles (a regiment of Indian Army) got involved in Malom massacre in November 2000 (Begum Ara, 2010). Assam Rifles convoy was attacked near Malom in Manipur by insurgents. In retaliation the troops shot at civilians at a nearby bus stop leaving 10 civilians dead, including a 60-year-old woman and a boy. The incident was followed by a brutal combing operation which led to the torture and arrest of many. The incident led Irom Chanu Sharmila, a rights activist, to start fasting unto death in the demand of repealing of AFSPA and it continued for 16 years but did not achieve its demand. The Heirangoithong massacre of 1984 was another chilling incident in which thousands were watching a volleyball match at the Heirangoithong ground in Imphal. Some extremists tried to snatch weapons from the security personnel there which resulted in the armed forces beginning to fire killing five people. As the injured extremists fled, the security personnel at the spot started firing indiscriminately at the crowd leading to the death of 13 civilians and 31 injured (Begum Ara, 2010). Operation Blue Bird at Oinam in 1987 was another gruesome incident in the history of Manipur. Insurgents raided the armoury of security personnel and killed 9 Assam Rifles jawans and that triggered Operation Blue Bird. Three months saw a reign of terror in 30 villages of Manipur. Around 14 civilians were shot dead and several others died of hunger, starvation, and torture in camps. Reportedly, a woman was forced by the security forces to deliver her child in public view in an open field, as the troop's jeered (Amnesty International, 1990). The level of brutality reached its peak, and contempt for the Northeastern people became evident in the incident of July 2004. At midnight a party of Assam Rifles broke their way into a house in Bamon Kampu Mayai Leikei in Imphal and arrested a 32-year-old woman named Thangjam Manorama Devi (Human Rights Watch, 2008, pp.25-32). After beating up family members who tried to protest they blindfolded Manorama and tied her hands and feet and beat her mercilessly on the corridor of the house and sexually assaulted her. Her body was later found dumped in a village. She was half-clothed and had seven bullet wounds in her back and knife wounds to the thigh. The story of arresting troops was that she was trying to escape from the truck and was shot while doing so. The forensic examination revealed that the small amount of blood at the spot where the body was recovered demonstrates she had been shot elsewhere. Manorama's case became a cause of public uproar and Manipuri women agitated fully naked on the streets of Imphal holding banners and placards 'Indian

Army Rape Us'. The issue also became a national concern and agitations spread throughout the country which forced the security forces to release a press statement that she was a cadre of an insurgent group. As per reports over 50,000 people have been killed and 20,000 widowed in Manipur alone since the clamping of AFSPA in 1958 (Nepram, 2020). Random shootings and extra-judicial killings continue in North East and the inhabitants' lives in utter poverty, isolation, and under the aegis of death.

One of the menaces in this war zone is the prevalence of drugs in the region. Substance abuse in the North East is much higher than in the rest of India. The spread of narcotics began in the North East around 1983 when Heroin became prevalent, especially in Manipur. Within two decades, the North East states recorded 1, 10,000 drug addicts and over 6871 HIV-positive cases, with Manipur having nearly 8 percent of India's total HIV positive cases and ranked third in India. Around 75 percent of HIV-positive cases in Manipur were intravenous drug users, and the disease spread to their sexual partners and their children (Nepram, 2020). HIV/AIDS has devastated society in the North East. As North East India shares a 1,643 kilometers border with Myanmar, which belongs to the Golden Triangle, a drug-producing area where 68 percent of all known illicit opium production and refining in the world take place (Haq, 1996, pp.945-963). The Government of India has always accused China of providing huge money to the drug lords in Myanmar to enhance their production of heroin in North East (Swami, 2022). China, on the other hand, has been vocal on India's human rights violations in North East region.

The worst sufferers in the region are children and women. Drug peddling is a common scenario in the region because of unemployment and impoverishment. The North East also has a matrilineal society which is in stark contrast to mainland India. On the other hand, children are forced by traffickers to peddle drugs and most of them are forced to do this for their livelihood. The rates of child addiction are also very high in the North East especially in Manipur and Nagaland (Ghosh, 2010, p.210). The government has been insensitive and nonchalant regarding this issue because to it the people of the North East are potential Homo Sacer, who are unnamable and has been reduced to hold on to mere 'naked life' thereby nearly abolishing all that is considered social and humane. For Agamben, a naked life is a bare life; a life bereft of political and social status and stripped of any protocol of citizenship (Agamben, 2000, p.9).

Rise of the K-Wave in the North East

Korean Wave or Hallyu which primarily includes South Korean television series and pop music has already become a worldwide phenomenon. It has created a huge fan base, especially among youths, and is making a sweeping impact on the western music industry. The Hindi music and film industry, popularly known as Bollywood, which is often promoted by the Indian government as the model of national culture is also feeling its impact. The Oscar-winning Indian music director A.R. Rehman praised and posted the photograph of 'BTS' on his Instagram page (Vaishnavi, 2020). Indian superstar Shah Rukh Khan had once tweeted that his kids had recommended him the Korean film 'Parasite' (K-Pop High India, 2019). The impact has been such that youths in major cities of India have not only started using Korean beauty products and costumes and has even embraced Korean way of living.

The K-Wave entered India from Manipur which is one of the underdeveloped and insurgency-marred states in the region. In the year 2000, the Revolutionary People's Front of Manipur, an insurgent group, imposed a ban on Bollywood movies and Hindi television series as an act to prohibit the 'Indianisation' of the region. This created a void in the lives of the Northeastern people. 'People who were already reeling under the fear of death were left with no entertainment and people were searching for an option to hold on to' (Langpoklakpam, 2020). Since the late 90s, the Indian government was pushing the Look East Policy (it is an effort to cultivate economic and strategic relations with the nations of South East Asia to bolster India's standing as a regional power) which centers on the North East. With the opening of borders with Myanmar, pirated DVDs of Korean films and music started entering Manipur. It became instantly popular, especially among the youth and soon the streets of Manipur were filled with pirated Korean DVDs. Then with the advent of Arirang TV Channel and Korea's KBS World, Manipur started resembling a mini-Korea. In an interview, Paul Ningthouja said, 'If there is electricity in the evening, people especially youths watch Korean programs leaving every job undone' (Ningthouja, 2020). Gradually the wave spread to the other parts of Northeastern India and it became such a sensation that Northeastern fashion changed and embrace the Korean way of dressing. This is considered the first major change that occurred due to the impact of the Korean wave in the North East. Popular Korean words became a day-to-day dialect like 'annyeong' (hello),

‘kamsahamnida’ (thank You), ‘saranghaeyo’ (I love you), and others. The prevalence of K-Fashion among the youths completely changed the way they used to look and it became stereotypical with similar hairstyles, make-up, and clothes. Reportedly, young people in the region started to sleep on floors instead of beds which are a common practice in Korea. While K-Pop became a sensation among youths, Korean soap operas attracted the middle-aged and the old. Dari Rynjah, who is in her early forties, was excited to talk about Korean dramas ‘K-Drama is addictive. Many of my friends who are either my age or senior to me are into K-Dramas. ‘The Heirs’ became very popular’ (Rynjah, 2019).

The Hornbill Festival is organized by the government of Nagaland to showcase the local culture of the North East and it attracts tourists from all over the globe. The influence of the Korean wave has been such that Korean musical troupes have been regularly performing at the festival. In 2018, K-Pop band ‘Mont’ performed at the festival enthraling thousands of fans in Dimapur (Northeast Now, 2018). Often due to poor internet connections, K-fans in the region cannot attend idol and fan meets, so they travel to nearby big cities like Kolkata or Guwahati to participate in the meetings (Priyanka, 2020). The hype to converge with Korean way of living is such that fashion brands like ‘Mumuso’, ‘Gashena’ and ‘Beccos’ stores in major cities of India regularly ships huge amount of products to the North East region. The North East’s love for all things Korean has led to a rapid increase in black marketing of products and it shows no sign of a slowdown. Nitesh Rohit, the founder of K-Beauty Con India, mentioned in an interview ‘I have noticed that skincare is fundamental to the beauty regime of Northeast’s millennials. At K-Beauty Con, young entrepreneurs wanted to take dealerships, even if they hailed from established business families with experience in the beauty industry. There were doctors running beauty salons keen to invest in Korean cosmetics’ (Borah, 2018). The illegal infiltration to the North East emerged because online shopping on sites was straddled with shipping costs and customs hassles. Many entrepreneurs from the North East have come with local companies that specialize in Korean beauty products to satisfy the dire need of the market.

Apart from beauty products, the demand for Korean food has increased leading to the mushrooming of Korean restaurants and eateries. Wabang Chungtia, proprietor of ‘The Korean Kitchen’ in Shillong had mentioned in an interview with a newspaper that ‘the Northeastern youths are very much into Korean culture, music, fashion,

and movies. And given the interest, the restaurant could provide an opportunity for the people to taste the cuisine of a place they have been influenced by' (The Northeast Today, 2017). The craze has attracted South Korean citizens to come and settle in India. The majority of Korean cafes in Kolkata, which is the nearest metropolis to Northeastern states, are run by Koreans. The ever-increasing demand for the Korean language has provoked them to open Korean language learning centers, mostly adjacent to these cafes, and students are increasing every year. The K-fans of the North East often travel to Kolkata to get enrolled in language courses. Mr. Shin, who runs a Korean language institute, has agreed '[The] Youths are interested to learn Korean. We are getting a good response. We arrange tours to Korea as they want to go there meet their idols and even settle there' (Shin, 2020). The hype of settling in South Korea is increasing among the Northeastern people as they can feel a racial bonding with that country.

The rise of the Korean Wave in the North East came as a surprise to the Indian government. Initially, it could not believe that a completely alien culture that has originated far away from its borders with historical resemblance has swept those whom it has always considered the 'other'. So, varied arguments and conspiracy theories cropped up, like China instigated the rise of this wave to destroy Indian culture. But such claims were never validated. Initially, the Korean embassy was not prepared to recognize the wave but as it gained momentum, Korean Cultural Centre is now directly involved in promoting it. Now, the wave has spread to other parts of India and has turned into a tsunami changing many popular dynamics and forming a new cultural identity vis-à-vis the so-called Indian 'national culture' and transnationality in the global south.

Conclusion

Agamben pointed out that the state of exception we experience in liberal democracies 'is not a dictatorship but a vacuum of space of law. That is a zone of anomie in which all legal determinations and above all the very distinction between public and private are deactivated' (Agamben, 2005, p.50). Over the years the prevalence of AFSPA has categorically diminished the distinction between public and private in the North East region. The isolation and coaxing of the Northeastern people have been a deliberate attempt to make them submit to the socio-political, economic, and cultural framework of the Indian state. Even during the Covid

pandemic, many leaders from the ruling party has accused the Northeastern people to be the carrier of the virus and they had to face vulgar attacks in many towns and cities and called out names as their racial features resemble the Chinese. As Agamben has argued that the killing or vilification of the homo sacer should not be viewed as capital punishment or sacrifice but simply the actualization of a 'mere capacity to be killed' which was inherent in the condition of the Jews in Germany (Agamben, 1995, p.114). The truth is the Jews were not exterminated in a mad or giant holocaust but exactly as Hitler had announced, 'as lice' which is to say, as 'bare life'. The deaths, torture, sexual violence, vilification, isolation, and judicial ignorance that North East has been suffering are ideal examples of a bare life. There are probably few or maybe no instances in the world where the potential homo sacers are culturally resisting the juggernaut of an oppressive state. The response to the Korean Wave has been phenomenal in the Northeastern region and the cultural and ethnic identity which they have hardly been able to register in the sphere of India's national culture is being addressed through the wave. The wave is being perceived as a shield against the pushing of the national culture and so the embrace has been magical. It is the instinct when somebody is sinking, and has nothing left to hold on to, that individual makes an extra push to survive. The Northeastern people found that push in the Korean Wave and they have embraced it with open arms. Though the debate continues whether Korean Wave will gradually jeopardize the indigenous culture of the North East and will change their simple way of living; there is no doubt that by embracing the Korean Wave they have been able to find a new global cultural identity against the national culture or the 'Indianness' which it has opposed for years. So, it is important to understand that the Korean Wave in the North East has a deep rooted political dimension than the other parts of India.

References

1. Agamben, G. (1995). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press
2. Agamben, G. (2000). *Means without End*. University of Minnesota Press
3. Agamben, G. (2005). *State of Exception*. University of Chicago Press

4. Amnesty International. (1990). India: "Operation Bluebird" A case study of torture and extrajudicial executions in Manipur. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa20/017/1990/en/>
5. Benjamin, W. (1978). *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical writings*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
6. Borah, J. (2018, December 18). Northeast's Seoul-stirring Beauty Obsession. *The Voice of Fashion*. <https://thevoiceoffashion.com/fabric-of-india/inside-northeast/northeast-seoulstirring-beauty-obsession—1942>
7. Bourke, G. (2012). Bare Life's Bare Essentials: When all you've got is hope – the state of exception in the road, district 9 and blindness. *Law, Culture and Humanities*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1743872111433671>
8. Calarco, M., DeCaroli, S. & Gulli, B. (2007). The ontology and politics of exception: reflections on the work of Giorgio Agamben. In Giorgio Agamben. *Sovereignty and life*. (pp.219-242). Stanford University Press
9. Centre for Organization Research and Education (CORE). (1998). *Children of Manipur: A Supplementary Report on the Rights of the Child*. CORE. <http://www.resourcecentre.savethechildren.se>
10. Durantaye, D.L.L. (2005). The Exceptional Life of the State: Giorgio Agamben's State of Exception. *Genre*, 38, 179-196
11. Ghosh, S. (2010). Northeast India: The Region of Blood Money. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, 14, 206-212
12. Gulli, B. (2009). The Sovereign Exception: Notes on Schmitt's word that Sovereign is he who decides on the Exception. *Glossator*, 1, 23-30. <https://solutioperfecta.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/gulli-the-sovereign-exception-8x10.pdf>
13. Haokip, T. (2012). Political Integration of Northeast India: A Historical Analysis. *Strategic Analysis*, 36 (2), 303-314
14. Haq, I. (1996). Pak-Afghan Drug Trade in Historical Perspective. *Asian Survey*, 36 (10), 945-963
15. Hazarika, S. & Chasie, C. (2009). *The State Strikes Back: India and Naga Insurgency*. East-West Center
16. Held, D. (1995). *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*. Stanford University Press
17. Human Rights Watch. (2008). These Fellows Must Be Eliminated: Relentless Violence and Impunity in Manipur. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/09/29/these-fellows-must->

- be-eliminated/relentless-violence-and-impunity-manipur
18. Langpoklakpam, S. Personal communication, (2020, February 5)
 19. Mukherjee, J.R. (2005). *An Insider's Experience of Insurgency in India's North-East*. Anthem Press
 20. Nagaland Probe on AFSPA and 1997 SC Judgment. (2021). *Legacy IAS*. <https://www.legacyias.com/nagaland-probe-on-afspa-and-1997-sc-judgment/>
 21. Nepram, B. (2020, September 25). Drugs, Guns and Four Stories from the North East. *The Outlook*. <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-drugs-guns-and-four-stories-from-the-northeast/360878>
 22. Ningthouja, P. Personal communication, (2020, February 7)
 23. Nagaland: K-Pop band Mont enthralles fans in Dimapur. (2018). *Northeast Now*. <https://nenow.in/entertainment/nagaland-k-pop-band-mont-enthralles-fans-dimapur.html>
 24. Priyanka. Personal communication, (2020, February 1)
 25. Ray, M. (2012). Giorgio Agamben: Biopolitics, Homo Sacer and the Musselman. In P. Basu (Ed.) *Modern Social Thinkers* (1-17). Setu Prakashani
 26. Ross, A. (2012). Agamben's political paradigm of the camp: Its features and reasons. *Constellations*, 19(3), 421-434
 27. Rynjah, D. Personal communication. (2019, December 20)
 28. Sanajaoba, N. (2003). *Manipur: Past and Present, Vol. I*. Mittal Publications
 29. Schmitt, C. (2005). *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. University of Chicago Press
 30. Shin. Personal communication. (2020, January 10)
 31. South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (SAHRDC). (2003). *Armed Forces Special Powers Act: A Study in National Security Tyranny*. SAHRDC.
 32. Swami, P. (2022, May 11). In Myanmar, a new 'criminal' State is rising. And China is paying to build it. *The Print*. <https://theprint.in/opinion/security-code/in-myanmar-a-new-criminal-state-is-rising-and-china-is-paying-to-build-it/951365/>
 33. The K-Pop wave washes over the youth of Northeast. (2017). *The Northeast Today*. <https://thenortheasttoday.com/states/sikkim/the-k-pop-wave-washes-over-the-youth-of-northeast/cid2531204.htm>
 34. Verghese, B.G (1996). *India's North East Resurgent- Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development*, Konark Publishers

Use of Social Networking Site for Academic Purposes

Sk Sabbar Hossain

Abstract

In India, young people in academic organizations and students are rapidly increasing their use of social networking sites for academic communication. The current study aims to assess how teachers and students use social networking sites for academic purposes. The professors' and students' use of Social Networking Sites, as well as their frequency, duration, issues, and level of satisfaction with higher education, will be investigated in this study. The platforms themselves provide a vast array of communication channels and services that can assist academic institutions in resolving a variety of administrative issues. However, universities and other institutions in India have not yet officially recognized it. This article investigations studies and examinations led by scholarly analysts all over the planet. This study has elaborated on a number of studies and experiments to demonstrate the value and significance of Social Networking Sites in the academic setting. As a result of the proposal, the conclusion suggests that using social networking sites at educational institutions will significantly alter how tasks and operations are managed.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, E-learning.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out level of awareness among the students about various Social Networking Sites.
2. To know the sources of information about how to use the Social Networking Sites.
3. To find out that Social Networking Sites is helpful in receiving information.
4. To know the top three commonly using Social Networking Sites among the users under study.
5. To identify the purpose of using Social Networking Sites by students.
6. To find out the frequency of use of Social Networking Sites per day.
7. To find out the satisfaction level of using Social Networking Sites by the teachers and students.
8. To know teachers and student's opinion about the positive use of Social

Ex Student of Library and Information Science (MLISC), Jadavpur University Qualified for UGC NET JRF

Networking Sites.

9. To know the reason involving to academic usage of Social Networking Sites.
10. Find out and analyze the problems being faced by the teachers and students of colleges in Paschim Medinipur while using Social Networking Sites for academic communication.

Review of Related Literature

A comprehensive summary of previous research on a subject is called a literature review. The writing survey overviews insightful articles, books, and different sources pertinent to a specific area of exploration.

Stephen (2014) conducted a study on “Use of Social Networking Sites among the Students of Engineering & Education Colleges in Karaikudi. A Study”. The study aims to find out the activities and reasons for using Social Networking Sites by the students of Engineering and Educational colleges in karaikudi city, Tamilnadu, India. In this study the survey method is used to collect the data. This study found 100% were aware about various SNSs, 95% of the respondents using for interact with their friends, 62% respondents using Smartphones to accessing SNSs and 26% of the students are frequently using 2-5 hours per day. Despite the fact that the majority of college students use social media and spend a lot of time on them, these findings indicate that there was a negative aspect to their use of social media.

Kumari, Kantharaju (2014) studied “Awareness and use of Social networking sites among the student of business Schools & management college libraries in Mysore city”. They found that all the students are aware of social networking sites and they use these sites to interact with their friends. It should be noted that social networking sites can be used as an interactive platform for academic communication and can be a source of information, knowledge and help.

Singh and Anil Kumar (2013) in their paper entitled ‘Use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) by the research scholars of Panjab University, Chandigarh: A study’ explored to study the activities and purposes for using SNSs by the scholars of Panjab University, Chandigarh. The findings of their study shows that majority of the respondents were found to be aware and making use of such applications in their research work. Their study also reveals that Facebook is the most popular SNSs by all categories of researchers.

Jahan and Zabed Ahmed (2012) studied perceptions of academic use of social networking sites (SNSs) by students of the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. That study indicates a positive attitude towards academic use of SNSs by the students. Although students have different opinions about how SNSs are used in academic settings, the fact that these sites aren't welldefined is largely to blame for the differences. Higher education institutions need to come up with appropriate policies and plans for how to use social networking sites to help students learn and educate themselves outside of the classroom.

Kindi & Alhasmi (2012) conducted a study "use of Social networking among Shinas college of Technology students in Oman". According to the study, news sharing and information discovery are the primary motivations for using SNSs frequently.

Additionally, the study found that a lack of IT expertise, insufficient time, and lack of experience are significant barriers to using SNSs. Finally, the study found that Facebook, Google Groups, and Yahoo! Students at SHCT use 360 the most frequently.

Yan Zhang (2012) explored college students' use of social networking sites for health and wellness information. Thirty-eight college students were interviewed. The interview transcripts were analyzed using the qualitative content analysis method. Overall, participants were skeptical about the quality of information. Based on the results, a model of students' acceptance of social networking sites for health and wellness information was proposed and implications for designing social platforms to better support health inquiries were discussed Using social networking sites for health and wellness information is not a popular behavior among college students in this study.

Mahajan (2009) in her paper entitled 'Use of social networking in a linguistically and culturally rich India' explored the usage, impact and problems related to social networking sites and their impact on the social and cultural values of India. She also described the top most social networking websites of India along with their bad and good factors.

Thanuskodi (2009) India has significant advantages in the 21st century knowledge race. It has a large higher education sector – the third largest in the world in student numbers, after China and the United States. Next to China, India

is the most populated country in the world. The purpose of education is well-rounded development. Students need a combination of arts, computer science, science, and humanities or literature courses to achieve this kind of development. A well-equipped and well-managed library is the foundation of modern educational structure. It is said that education without library services is like a body without soul, a vehicle without an engine, and building with bricks but no cement.

Jeff Cain (2008) in the research paper “Online Social Networking Issues Within Academia and Pharmacy Education” has discussed that Facebook is a tool that aids students in developing their identities and finding their “fit” within a college community. Helping students connect, establish a network and stay in contact with old and new friends is the center of attraction and significant benefits of Facebook. Making connections on campus which help them feel that they belong to may be an important factor in student retention.

Perryman (2011) states “Social networking is everywhere today and is being used by people of all ages and for the widest variety of purposes. Social networking tools are commonly used by individuals of all ages, but are used especially by young people and college students.

Na’ndez and Borrego (2012) also reveal that the demographic profile of social networking sites users varies, with junior and younger researchers more likely to be frequent users of social networking sites.

Subrahmanyam (2008) conducted a study to assess the use of online social networking sites among the college students of a large urban university in Los Angeles. The study reveals that the students often used social networking sites to connect and reconnect with their friends and family members.

Hargittai (2008) also conducted a study on usage habits of social networking sites by college students. The findings of the study reveal that a majority of the college students are active users of the social networking sites accessing these sites seven times or more in a week, followed by semi-active users accessing them less than seven times a week.

Bicen & Cavus (2011) study the social networking sites usage habits of undergraduate students. The study reflects that most under-graduate students use Facebook for more than four hours a day. Chatting, sending messages and sharing links are common activities on Facebook. The researchers proposed that by

integrating Facebook into teaching and education, a significant impact on student's lives in the university could be made.

Haneefa and Sumitha (2011) 'conducted a study on use of social networking sites by the students of Calicut University, Kerala'. The study shows that a majority of the students were aware and make use of social networking sites. The results reveal that 75.4 percent of the students used social networking sites for friendly communication, 36.6 percent for academic communication, 29.1 percent for discussing social issues, (11.2 percent) for promoting their work and 8.9 percent to publish their writings.

Bhardwaj (2014) conducted a study on the use of social networking sites by library and information science professionals in higher education institutions in India. The results reveal that 71.9% respondents are members of more than 10 groups; whereas 17.7% are members of 11 to 50 groups; 15 (7.8%) more than 50 groups and 5 (2.6%) are not members of any group on SNS. Further, the study shows that the majority of respondents (94%) preferred Facebook followed by 115 (60%) LinkedIn, 84 (44%) Orkut, 78 (40%) Twitter, 72 (37%) YouTube and 27 (14%) Flickr whereas Xing (1%) and Myspace (4%) are the least preferred SNS. Above studies reveal that social networking sites are heavily used by a large population of the globe. Youngsters, especially students, are the avid users of the social networking sites and use these sites for a variety of purposes.

Ji-Hong Park (2010) explored the usage of a SNS by different university students. Data were collected through semi-structured and open-ended interviews conducted with undergraduates, graduates, and faculty members at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea. Data were analyzed according to the three groups (undergraduates, graduates, and faculty members) and within each group SNS user perception and use were examined across the three different user activity groups (active students, semi-active students, and non-active students). The analyses indicated that the three groups of students demonstrated distinct patterns of SNS use. Most faculty members were not active students. Six factors that affected these different usage patterns were identified: desire for expression, peer influences, familiarity with information technologies, sensitivity to privacy, nature of using the internet, and perception of the SNS.

Methodology of the Study

Introduction

Research methodology is the path through which researchers need to conduct their research. It shows the path through which these researchers formulate their problem and objective and present their result from the data obtained during the study period. This research design and methodology chapter also shows how the research outcome at the end will be obtained in line with meeting the objective of the study. This chapter hence discusses the research methods that were used during the research process. It includes the research methodology of the study from the research strategy to the result dissemination. For emphasis, in this chapter, the author outlines the research strategy, research design, research methodology, the study area, data sources such as primary data sources and secondary data, population consideration and sample size determination such as questionnaires sample size determination and workplace site exposure measurement sample determination, data collection methods like primary data collection methods including workplace site observation data collection and data collection through desk review, data collection through questionnaires, data obtained from experts opinion, workplace site exposure measurement, data collection tools pre- test, secondary data collection methods, methods of data analysis used such as quantitative data analysis and qualitative data analysis, data analysis software, the reliability and validity analysis of the quantitative data, reliability of data, reliability analysis, validity, data quality management, inclusion criteria, ethical consideration and dissemination of result and its utilization approaches. In order to satisfy the objectives of the study, a qualitative and quantitative research method is apprehended in general. The study used these mixed strategies because the data were obtained from all aspects of the data source during the study time. Therefore, the purpose of this methodology is to satisfy the research plan and target devised by the researcher (Jilcha, 2019).

The research design is intended to provide an appropriate framework for a study. A very significant decision in research design process is the choice to be made regarding research approach since it determines how relevant information for a study will be obtained however, the research design process involves many inter-related decisions (Aaker, 2000).

Research Design & Methods

The following data collection instruments were used in order to collect the primary data from the respondents:

Survey Method

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the use of social networking site for academic purposes from the colleges in Paschim Medinipur using a survey. There are currently 489 teachers and 38,046 students enrolled in 27 colleges that are the subject of the study; the total population for this study is 135. As a result, the survey research method has been found to be suitable for the current study.

Questionnaire Method

A well-designed questionnaire with pertinent study-related questions was developed for the purpose of gathering primary data from respondents. A structured questionnaire with 36 questions about how students and teachers use social networking sites was given to 54 teachers (two from each college) and 81 students (three from each college) to get the information needed to evaluate how students and teachers use SNSs. From the 135 questionnaires that were given out, 55 respondents— 27 students and 28 teachers—from the 27 colleges did not receive their questionnaires back. In order to evaluate the use of SNSs, a questionnaire was completed by 54 students and 26 teachers.

Use of Social Networking Site for Academic Purposes

Introduction

The usage of social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram is increasing among students and teachers. Students and teachers use social networking sites to share learning resources, collaborate and post content online, manage and coordinate schedules, gain motivation for serious studies, participate in peer education, socialize and enjoy a sense of community belonging, communicate with their instructors, gratify themselves and get entertainment. Numerous studies have demonstrated that through using social networking sites, students achieve better academic performance. On the other hand, unwarranted use of social

networking sites may negatively influence students' academic performance.

Consensus on whether the use of online social networking among students improves academic performance of user students or not is yet to be arrived at. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to investigate the effect of online social networking usage on student academic performance among college students; specifically to assess the direct effect of social networking sites usage and study the indirect effect on academic performance; basing on Student and teacher general characteristics and, whether this be the case with upper class men (people who spend significantly more time using technology for academic and work-related purposes) or under class men (people who spend significantly more time using technology for non-academic purposes), student time management ability, student major (arts or sciences) and student preferred mode of learning (using traditional, hybrid or online).

Information Sharing Through E-Learning

E-learning is a method of obtaining knowledge through digital or, web-enabled gadgets like computers, laptops, tablets, or smartphones. The technique of online learning or e-learning enables remote access to systematic learning or any desired course through a digital device aided by stable internet connectivity. With e-learning, a learner can digitally access learnings or insights of any chosen subject from anywhere across the world. E-learning or online learning extensively varies from traditional learning methods as the latter mandates physical presence for both teachers and learners. With the rise of the coronavirus pandemic, the system of education underwent a radical change. The criterion of social distancing and worldwide lockdown forced the educational institutions to shut down for an indefinite span which then resulted in the advent of e-learning. With the availability of modern technology and innovation, this revolutionary transition in the field of learning became easy and possible even amidst the crisis (Inspiria, 2020).

Information dissemination (diffusion) has been a key social process, but especially in modern information-centric societies, it has become one of the most critical ones. Furthermore, it can be observed that most of the commercial communication infrastructures have been initially developed in the last thirty years mainly to allow transferring diverse types of information. There are different types of information

disseminating in human societies and especially through the computer and communications networks available. These different types range in scope (e.g. academic, educational, healthcare, gossip, financial, and military to name a few), criticality (e.g. confidential, noise-sensitive, and public information), value (e.g. low/medium/high cost and invaluable), and overall desire by human consumers (e.g. useful, harmful, and indifferent) (Karyotis, 2016). Technology based e-learning incorporates the use of the internet and other important technologies to produce materials for learning and teaching in organization. As a result internet and information technology in tutoring and studying has created a different necessity to modify how university students learn by using more modern, effective and alternative such as e-learning system. Regarding to e-learning many people are now attracted to training and education who previously would not have considered it as a relevant part of their lives. With the development of computer and internet technologies, this technology has a high interaction and collaboration level between instructors or lectures and peers than traditional environment for learning. Hence, e-learning system might be able to deliver a broad array of solutions to enable learning and improve student's performance.

E-Learning is commonly referred to the intentional use of networked information and communication technology in teaching and learning. The concept of e-learning is getting very popular these days, as many universities are offering degree and diploma programs through e-learning mode. Subjects matter experts are developing new and versatile tools to create e-learning modules. Thus, the day is not far away when e-learning will become the future popular method of education throughout the world (Goyal, 2012).

The development of multimedia and information technologies as well as the use of internet as a new technique of teaching, has made radical changes in the traditional process of teaching. E-learning has come to be more and more important in institutions of higher education. The introduction and expansion of a range of e-learning tools has been initiating several changes in higher education institutions, particularly when it comes to their educational delivery and support processes. The "adjunct e-learning" is the situation which e-learning is employed as an assistant in the traditional classroom providing relative independence to the learners of students. In this form of usage, the e-learning is total so that there is maximum independence of the learners or students has gone further to explain that the online model is

divided into the individual and collaborative learning, where the collaborative learning also consists of the synchronous and asynchronous learning (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014).

Social Networking Site's Effect on Academic Communication

The Internet is more than just a means of seeking information. People have discovered that the Internet can be used to connect with other people for business or commercial purpose, to make new friends, or to reawaken old friends and long lost relatives. The emergence of social networking sites (SNSs) simplifies the process because they do not require advanced internet knowledge or experience and are made up of a wide array of different formats and topics. This means that anyone can connect through SNSs. With such extensive acceptance, it is no surprise that SNSs have impacted the way people live and socialize.

SNSs are also being used by teachers and students as a communication tool. It is a bidirectional process as students are using these mediums to share comments with their teachers. This study attempts to answer the questions: what are the reasons students engage in the use of SNSs? And how does the use of SNSs impact on students' academic performance? According to Man is a social animal, He needs to interact and live in society. Personality of man is directly or indirectly reflected to his society. For becoming an active member of this larger unit one needs to have efficient communication skills from all points and edges. Communication has developed since ages as civilization and development goes hand in hand. In 21st century the communication is faster, better and efficient and the credit goes largely to technology.

Internet has profoundly changed the human experience; Socialization is an important aspect of this technology. All internet users say one of their primary purposes for going online is for communication. Socialization via the internet has become an increasingly important part of young adult life. The primary tools that enable socialization on internet are Social Networking Sites and instant messages. Social Networking Sites are the example of techno-oriented communication. Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, and Skype are examples of the new phenomenon of online social networking. It is through these sites that people come in contact of their society members to seek mates, search for entertainment and participate in political activities.

Social Network Service is also known as SNS. An SNS is an online service platform, or site that focuses on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. Adolescents who become members of these SNSs communities such as Facebook and Twitter, they will firstly get a personal profile which will show their personal information including the name, job, photo, relationship status, religion, hobbies and so on then a network of friends are made and other users can then click on their profiles and traverse ever broadening social networks. Although this facility is used by people of all age groups, but the predominant Social networking site users are young adults; three quarters of adult internet users under age 25 have a profile on these sites. The popularity of these sites is attracting more and more adult users.

The excessive use of these sites not only has long lasting effect on students but also affects the physical, mental and social aspect of life. Sometimes these sites also affect the Academic Achievement of the student because they don't want to leave that particular mood and thus their concentration stands divided.

Besides the above mentioned view there is yet an arena of knowledge that holds the view that every student is unique in his/her own way; some who are able to express themselves openly are termed as extroverts while others who are shy in nature are called introverts. Social networking facilitates open communication, leading to enhanced information discovery and delivery. In addition, it does not require one to voice out their opinions and ideas. Individuals are able to choose the preferred option and that is to communicate through social networks. Social networking sites have brought both good and bad to the present generation. Social networking site has helped many students to acquire knowledge from one another over internet without necessarily have to meet physically. On the other hand, social networking sites have caused many problems. For instance many students have lost their interest in their studies as they spent most of the time on these sites. What started out as a hobby for some computer literate people has become a social norm and way of life for people from all over the world.

The youth use social networking sites as a means of interaction, socializing, and for purely entertainment purposes? Although many people do not think of it, social networking sites harbour many unsafe elements and many people are concerned about some major problems that they contain, which includes education

and poor academic performance.

Came up with a conclusion that social networking sites do affect one's academic performance adversely. It directly causes the gradual drop of grades of students. It directly affects a student's academic performance if the student invests his time in social networking sites instead in his studies, in his research on effect of online social networking on student academic performance found that there is statistically significant negative relationship between time spent by students on online social networks and their academic performance. The time spent on online social networks was found to be heavily influenced by the attention span of the students. Specifically, we determined that the higher the attention span, the lower is the time spent on online social networks. Further, attention span was found to be highly correlated with characteristics that predict or influence student behaviour, such as their perceptions about society's view of social networking, their likes and dislikes of online social networks, ease of use of Online social networks, etc. On the other hand there are many researches highlighting that there is a use of social networking sites does not affect academic achievement adversely (Kado, 2017).

Social Networking Sites in Higher Education

Social Networking is one of the most promising technologies that can be used for e-learning purposes to create an interactive learning environment and support student learning. However, its uses for educational purposes are still in the early stages and the potential advantages and benefits of social networking in education are still very much underappreciated and undervalued (Rahamn, 2013).

When it comes to social media and education, some parents and teachers view these platforms as distractions that negatively influence students. But in today's increasingly digital world, social media plays a meaningful role in higher education every day. When used the right way, social media can enhance a student's learning journey, also making it much easier for pupils and educators to connect.

Research has shown how beneficial social media can be in terms of learning. Through these various platforms, teachers can connect with students and incorporate social media into their lessons, making them more interesting, relatable and engaging.

Social sites are a great tool when it comes to interacting with students since it's something they are so familiar with, using these sites frequently throughout daily life.

So what are the most effective ways teachers can use social media in their lecture halls and classrooms? David Altounian, marketing professor in Digital Media Management at St Edward's University, devised a way to teach his students how to combine traditional marketing techniques with digital components.

His students are required to create a Tumblr blog about a subject they're interested in, marketing it as a product over the course of the semester. Then they were asked to conduct market research about customer segmentation at the same time as finding appropriate audience distribution channels.

Next, students used Hootsuite, a social media management platform, to collect information about their customers, find content they're interested in, and use this knowledge to drive awareness of their product on social media.

It makes sense that marketing and communications professors can use social media to their advantage, since it's related to their major and can be easily integrated into the curriculum.

But professors of other disciplines can also incorporate social media learning. Richard Ng and Latifah Abdol Latif outlined their experience in a research paper on how their university, Open University Malaysia (OUM), uses social media to improve the teaching of mathematics in a distance learning course.

Students encountered a problem in their Management Mathematics and Statistics courses, whereby adult students were finding it difficult to grasp the subject due to their negative experiences with math or lack of self-confidence.

They also faced problems with the software Microsoft Equation Editor, used to input mathematical symbols for their coursework, as they were unfamiliar with the tool.

To overcome these problems, OUM started a pre-tutorial mathematics workshop to teach students how to use the Microsoft Equation Editor software. They were also taught how to access video clips and PowerPoint slides posted in the blog, as some students were not well versed enough in technology to effectively use these resources.

Students were then shown how extended discussion can be conducted through a specially created Facebook group. At the same time, this increased their engagement and encouraged interaction, reducing feelings of isolation which is one of the major challenges of distance learning courses.

Social media is also great for research, offering useful audience and subject monitoring tools. Students can use polls, surveys, or even just post a simple question to gauge how people feel about a particular topic.

A way to communicate with students

In a university setting, social media can be incredibly useful when it comes to reaching out and engaging with students. It's a less formal way for professors to communicate, showing students a more personal side while improving the teacher-student relationship.

A study that analysed the use of social networks as a communication tool between teachers found that they primarily communicate through social networks for academic reasons.

Results of the study led researchers to conclude that teachers should use social networks as communication tools for purely academic-related issues, such as addressing aspects related to class organization and coursework. Teacher-student interaction in the social media sphere should be kept strictly professional.

The study also uncovered that teachers found Facebook and WhatsApp to be the most effective social media tools due to the popularity and versatility of Facebook, and the easy-to-use communicative abilities of WhatsApp.

Professors should also be careful about what they post and how much they wish to share with their students via social media platforms, as their online profile content could affect their credibility as an education professional.

They are advised to keep their profiles primarily for academic purposes or to keep their personal profiles private, creating a separate public profile for connecting with students or sharing academic-related content.

For students taking distance learning courses or for lectures with large class sizes, teachers can make themselves more accessible to students via social media.

They can hold 'virtual office hours' through Skype or get them to use Facebook, Twitter or WhatsApp to raise questions they didn't get the chance to in class.

Connecting students

Professors and educators can and should encourage their students to better

communicate with one another for group projects, either by using Whatsapp groups or Google Hangouts.

Personally, I found social media helpful when I was a student back in 2009. I was struggling in a Psychology Statistics class, and felt a bit lost in a sea of around 300 students.

A fellow classmate introduced me to a Facebook group for the particular course, which had members from my current class and previous students who had taken the course before.

Students posted questions regarding assignments, exams and coursework, while other students commented with answers and suggestions.

I found it extremely helpful to be able to connect with fellow classmates and seek help from them. This was ten years ago, and social media has come so far since then, making it even easier for student communities to strengthen.

In a university setting, social media is a valuable tool in terms of keeping staff members engaged and informed.

They can use their Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram profiles to spread awareness about a particular news incident related to the university, broadcast important information, and share anecdotes or videos about the institution.

Ultimately, social media plays an increasingly important role in higher education. It's a rapidly evolving field, so there's plenty of potential to integrate social media platforms and tools in student learning.

Professors would be wise to adopt ways to incorporate these platforms into their coursework and student interactions, if they're not doing so already, to keep up with the ever-growing digital world and encourage 21st century learning (SEGAREN, 2019).

Popular Social Networks As Tools For Educational Support

The most popular social network nowadays is undoubtedly Facebook. The user who wants to use Facebook services must be 13 years old and above. Therefore the application of this SNS in education is possible for the students of higher classes (8th and 9th grades of the elementary school). Schools often use Facebook as a tool of their presentation in public. Students form groups on Facebook whose size

corresponds to the number of students in one class. On this SNS they share study materials, current information about the assigned tasks, tests or other assignments and events.

Twitter also offers practical exploitation during tuition at school as well as at home. Twitter as an educational tool can serve for communication, organization, searching for sources or written communication. Some teachers at Northern Illinois University in the USA use Twitter as a noticeboard on which they record current information concerning their classes, for example, cancelling their classes. Therefore, this SNS can be used for setting teacher's consultation hours. Twitter can be also used as a note blog for each class where students can upload their contributions. Students can debate there online and thus, they can receive almost immediate feedback on their discussions. The teacher can ask his students to inform him about what they are learning and what learning difficulties they are having by the so-called tweeting. In this way students create their online diary of learning. In addition, parents can exploit Twitter for an overview of their children's activities. Twitter can also be used for summarizing of the teaching matter on a given day. Moreover, Twitter provides their users with an extensive source of information. Students can with its help communicate with experts. Twitter can also broaden student's horizons, their vocabulary, spoken and written communication. As Twitter has a limited length of messages, it is also a suitable tool for concise and simple expression of user ideas. (Klimova, 2015)

YouTube EDU is a special educational channel focused on the educational videos. It is the so-called global video classroom which users can exploit both for school or home instruction. The channel offers interesting videos from all fields of human activity. Users can sort them out not only according to their interests but also according to their level of education. The videos are mostly made by the representatives of various educational institutions or experts in a given issue (YouTube EDU, 2013). Furthermore, teachers can modify the content of the service to their teaching purposes. The content is divided according to individual subjects and difficulty level (YouTube pro skoly, 2013).

Use of Social Media for Information Dissemination

In last few years, libraries have been subject to significant force due to the information

revolution. Information has to be properly composed, organized and disseminated for the user at right time in a right way. Libraries around the world are facing vital challenges due to budget cuts, increased user base, the rapid growth of resources, rising costs, networking demands, and complexity in information requirements compelling the professionals to look up the open source technology available on the web. At the same situation require to promote and aware users for available sources. Dissemination is supposed to be an intentional social process of communicating materials, products and new ideas. Dissemination takes on the theory of the traditional view of communication, which involves a sender and receiver. Historically, social media used to be enough to have an online presence on the internet for the one-way broadcasting and dissemination of information. SNSs also provide library with an innovative and effective way of connecting with their users (Vyas & Trivedi, 2014).

Social media has greatly changed the way of study in the present generation. The students are now referring the social media to get the information which is available on the internet even it is the best medium to get the information and also time saving. Social media can be used effectively for research purpose.

According to Livingstone and Brake (2010), “Social Networking Sites, like much else on the internet, represent a moving target for researchers and policy makers”, social media is useful for all kinds of educations. The social media types like blogs and content communities has better role in education. The content communities and Blogs can act as a digital library. It 108 can provide useful information and contents which are not available by nearest resources (Rajesh & Michael, 2015).

Social Networking Sites allow users to create profile and share information and connect with other members. Social media sites not only function in effective communication but also in the development of collaboration and networking of the users. Technology offers students an array of options to socialize, network, stay informed and connected. These students are now using technology to communicate more than face-to-face interaction and also disseminate information through social media. Entertainment is another benefit for using social media and Facebook has some recent attraction such as game applications that have appeared over the last couple of years. Real-time information sharing is also one of the benefits of social media use. Many social media sites incorporate an instant messaging feature, which

means users can exchange information in real-time via a chat. Social media has been found very useful in exchanging or dissemination of information such as breaking news, research findings, and latest trend globally on different issues, disaster outbreak etc. This feature has been particularly useful to students in higher institutions of learning. With the advent of social media, dissemination of information by the students has become easy and free. The network permit and favour the publication and sharing of information, self-learning, teamwork communication both between students and teacher feedback, access to other sources of information. Online social networks have become the ideal space for students to exchange information and knowledge in a swift, simple and convenient way (Adetimirin & John, 2016).

Conclusion

SNSs are an effective means of communication in the digital world of today, and the use of social media is growing at an exponential rate. In today's digital environment, e-learning has emerged as a crucial tool for teaching and learning through the use of digital resources. It makes it easier to share and communicate information, which makes relationships that last longer and help students learn better. Social networking sites (SNSs) give library professionals excellent opportunities to interact with users. Social software, like Library 2.0 technologies, can be used to share information with the online community and work together, and web 2.0 can be used to improve library services.

Social networking has significant effects on knowledge management in both the educational institution and student behavior. Long range informal communication has created as one of the main act of understudy's life which changed the way understudies think and associate. Students communicated and discussed common interests through social media. The utilization of informal communication has expansive the meanings in the scholastic as well as in public activity of the understudies and helps in working on the nature of connection between the clients. For certain difficulties social organizing has turned into a significant devices which has been utilized for correspondence furthermore, dispersal of data to the understudies which incorporate educating and learning. When creating institutional policies and educational resources for distance learning, social networking sites (SNSs) were successfully utilized for both educational and administrative purposes.

Research Questionnaire

1. Name of Institution:
2. Designation:
3. Name of the Department:
4. Gender:
5. Age group of the respondent:
6. How do you rate your computer knowledge and skills
7. Are you a regular user of Internet?
8. What is your frequency of using internet?
9. From where do you access internet?
10. Are you satisfied with the speed of internet?
11. Are you aware about Social Networking Sites?
12. Are you using Social Networking Sites?
13. How long are you using SNS?
14. What are the devices you used for accessing SNS?
15. How many types of social networking (site you have) account(s) do you have?
16. What is your frequency of using Social Networking Sites?
17. How much time do you spent on using Social Networking Sites in a day?
18. Which SNSs you retrieve more frequently?
19. What is your preferred time of using SNSs?
20. What is your preferred place for accessing SNSs?
21. What is your purpose of using SNSs?
22. Do you think that Social Networking Sites is helpful in receiving information about your subject?
23. What is the reason involving to academic usage of SNSs?
24. What is your satisfaction level of using social Networking Sites?
25. What are the main problems you face while using SNSs?
26. Do you think that Social Networking Site have created negative impact on your Personal life?

27. Do you think Social Networking Sites influence your lifestyle?
28. Are you addicted to using Social Networking Sites?
29. Do you think that Social Networking Sites is useful as a linkage for academic communication?
30. Do you think your personal information is secure on Social Networking Sites?
31. Do you think that the information available on Social Networking Sites is reliable?
32. What are the features do you most dislike on SNSs?
33. From where do you get the knowledge of using SNSs?
34. What is your opinion regarding the flexibility of using SNSs?
35. What is your opinion about the positive use of SNSs?
36. What are the features you most likely to see on SNSs?

References

- Adetimirin, Airen & John, Goodhope. (2016). Use of Social Media for Information Dissemination by Undergraduates in University of IBADAN, Nigeria. *Computer Communication & Collaboration*, 4(3), 12-20.
- Arkorful, Valentina & Abaidoo, Nelly. (2014). The Role of e-learning, the Advantages and Disadvantages of its Adoption in Higher Education. *International Journal of Education and Research*. 2(4). 100- 104.
- Aaker A, Kumar VD, George S. *Marketing Research*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc; 2000.
- Bicen, H., & Cavus, N. (2011). Social network sites usage habits of under graduate students: case study of Facebook. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 28 (0), 943-947.
- Bhardwaj, R. K. (2014). Use of Social Networking Sites by LIS Professionals in Higher Education Institutions in India: A Study. *The Reference Librarian*, 55(1),74-88, DOI: 10.1080/02763877.2014.855604 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2014.855604> (accessed 15 January 2016)
- Cain, J. (2008). Online Social Networking Issues Within Academia and Pharmacy Education. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 10.
- Goyal, Sumit. (2012). E- Learning: Future of Education. *Journal of Education and Learning*,

6(2), 239-242.

- Haneefa, M. K. and Sumitha E. (2011). Perception and Use of Social Networking Sites by the Students of Calicut University, *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*, 2011, 31 (4), 295-301.
- Hargittai, E. (2008). Whose space? Differences among users and non-users of social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2008, 13 (1), 276-97.
- Har Singh and Anil Kumar (2013). Use of social networking sites (SNSs) by the research scholars of Panjab University, Chandigarh: A study. 58th International Conference on: Next Generation Libraries: New insights and Universal Access to Knowledge. 682-691
- Inspiria. (2020, September 08). *Inspiria knowledge campus*. Retrieved from Inspiria.com: <https://inspiria.edu.in/e-learning/>
- Jahan, I., & Ahmed, S. (2012). Students' perceptions of academic use of social networking sites: a survey of university students in Bangladesh. *Information development*, 28 (3), 235-247. doi:10.1177/02666669114331916.
- Jilcha, K. (2019, August). *Research Design and Methodology*. Retrieved from researchgate: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335110374_Research_Design_and_Methodology.
- Kado, M. H. (2017, December). Impact of Social Networking Site on Student Academic Performance. *International Journal of Engineering Research and Advanced Technology*, Vol.3, 11.
- Karyotis, V. (2016). Malware Diffusion Models for Wireless Complex Networks. *Science Direct*, 181- 214.
- Klimova, B. (2015). *A SOCIAL NETWORKS IN EDUCATION*. Retrieved from eric.ed.gov: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED562164>
- Kindi, S., & Alhashmi, S. M. (2012). Use of Social Networking Sites among Shinas College of Technology Students in Oman. *Journal of Information & Knowledge Management*, 11 (1), 1250002-1-1250002-9.9.
- Mahajan, Preeti (2009). Use of social networking sites in a linguistically and culturally rich India. *The International Information & library Review*. 41, 129-136.
- Na'ndez, G. and Borrego, A. (2012). Use of social networks for academic purposes: a case study. *The Electronic Library*, 31 (6), 781-791.
- Park, Ji-Hong. (2010). Differences among University students and faculties in social networking site perception and use. *The Electronic Library*, 28(3), 417-431.

- Perryman, B.E. (2011). Use of social networking as an instructional aide in higher education. PhD dissertation, OK State University, Stillwater, OK.
- Rahamn, A. A. (2013). Social Networking Sites in Higher Education: Potential Advantages for Student Learning. *International Journal of Research in Education Methodology*, 22.
- Rajesh, Sreeja & Michael, Jithin, (2015). Effectiveness of Social Media in Education. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Advanced Engineering*. 10(2), 29-31.
- SEGAREN, S. (2019, February 01). *The important role of social media in higher education*. Retrieved from Study International: <https://www.studyinternational.com/news/the-important-role-of-social-media-in-higher-education/>
- Social network sites usage habits of under graduate students: case study of Facebook. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 28 (0), 943-947.
- Stephen, D. G. (2014). Use of Social Networking Sites among the Students of Engineering & Education Colleges in Karaikudi. A Study. *Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science*, 306-311.
- Subrahmanyam, K., Reich, S. M., Waechter, N., & Espinoza, G. (2008). Online and offline social networks: Use of social networking sites by emerging adults. *J. App. Dev. Psych.*, 29(6), 420-33.
- Thanuskodi S (2009). The Environment of Higher Education Libraries in India. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. Paper 278. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/278/>
- Vyas, M.J & Trivedi, M.J. (2014). Role of Social Networking Tool in Dissemination of Information at SMT. Hansa Mehta Library. *E-Library Science Research Journal*, 2(9), 1-9. Sociallyspeakinginc.com/blog/
- Yan, Z. (2012). College students' uses and perceptions of social networking sites for health and wellness information. *Information Research*, 17(3), 3.
- YouTube pro školy. 2013. Youtube [online]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/schools>.

The Tribal Theology: A Brief Case Study on Bhumij of South-Western Bengal

Rupa Ghosh

Abstract

The vision and tasks of Tribal theology is so vast; and further it is very difficult to have a clear definition from the other contextual theologies. For example, liberation theology, indigenous theology, contemporary theologies; which aim at the fight for justice for the marginalized people. Tasks of these theologies are more or less similar with one another. So, because of its vastness and features; we may overlap the other theologies because of their similarities. The main vision and task of tribal theology can be said broadly the liberation for the marginalized people in the world.

Here Bhumij is one of the tribes who still retains a set of totemic exogamous subdivision closely resembling those of the Mundas and Santals. As a result there was an impact of both tribal Mundari socio cultural traits and Hindu traits on the Bhumij people.

Keywords: Theology, Religion, Bhumij, Tribal, Hindu, Acculturation, God, Vaishnavic Sects.

One of the factors that lead to the development of tribal theology is the existential reality of the tribal people. Anthropologist used the term 'tribe' or 'tribal' as "a group of people speaking a common language, observing a uniform rules of social organization, and working together for some common purposes such as trade, agriculture or warfare. Other typical characteristics include a common name, a contiguous territory, a relatively uniform culture or way of life, and a tradition of common descent¹." However, in India in general parlance, the usage of the term 'tribe' has a pejorative connotation². According to the constitution of India, the President is given the power to specify the list of Scheduled Tribes for each State and Union Territory. Anthropologist, Stephen Fuchs, describes how the President decides which groups are to be considered 'tribe' as:

The Indian Government extends the privileges granted to the Scheduled Tribes to those social groups which are not fully integrated into the Indian nation for reasons of economic handicaps, different ecological conditions, different racial origin, and a different mental and religious world outlook and culture³.

Hrangkhuma summarized this statements as, "the degree of integration in the

Ph.D Research Scholar in History, Raja Narendra Lal Khan Women's College (Autonomous) under Vidyasagar University, Gope Palace, Paschim Medinipur- 721102, West Bengal, India.

national mainstream, economic position, environment, ecology, racial origin, and religion are the criteria used to differentiate tribals from non tribals.” Lalsangkima Pachuau, in his critique to the nomenclature of “tribalism”discloses the fact that the very choice of the term indicates the marginal existence of the people so called “tribal” and the oppressiveness of the structure that imposed the identity to them. He further say that the very use of the term ‘tribal’reveals the intent to dominate and oppress the people to whom the nomenclature is imposed. Therefore, the creation of tribalism is artificial; which is also done for the convenience of the administrative system that is thoroughly influenced by the caste stratification mindset, and politically and culturally controlled by the caste Hindu society, which eventually leads us to the understanding that Hinduism or its Indic culture is a major factor in defining who is a tribal and a non-tribal in India. Therefore, in short, tribals in India can be described as politically powerless, economically exploited, socially stigmatized, and culturally alienated⁴.

Tribal religion is based on oral traditions. The tribes express their beliefs in everyday language. Their rituals are aimed at solving day to day problems of life. Objects of worship are things of nature such as trees, rivers, mountain, sun, moon and earth. Rituals are mostly performed collectively and transmitted orally.

Tribal world view is grounded in the natural events and life experiences. Their cosmology is socially effective i.e. existential, but un-interpretative. Faith in supernatural is structured in a tribal society. According to the 1961 census of India⁵, it would appear that about 89 percent of the tribals claimed to profess Hinduism and 5 percent had converted to Christianity. Most of the tribals in India follow some or other form of Hinduism. It is mainly due to the contacts the tribals had with their Hindu neighbours. Christianity was introduced among the tribal groups during the British rule.

Almost all the tribal religions across India believe in the existence of spiritual powers. The most important problem of life is to deal with these powers to ensure individual and collective well-being. The solution for this is to seek conciliation and communion with the more indefinite and impersonal forces by way of control, expulsion or avoidance through appropriate rites, ceremonies, spells and taboos.

Religion of a tribe is simple. Religious beliefs and behaviour are not treated as something apart from other kinds of beliefs and behaviour. Religion pervades all aspects of their life. Tribal life and society cannot be fully understood without

understanding their religion.

Tribal theology in India is in the making. There are more or less three approaches to tribal world-view evident in Tribal theologians while theologising. First is the approach of contextualisation and Indigenisation represented by senior thinkers like Nirmal Minz and the Renty Keitzer. Here the suggestion given is for adaptation of the Tribal cultural values. The second approach takes a perspective that the gospel-values are already present in the Tribal culture and world view. For example, Timotheos Hembrom would hold that the Santhal creation stories are in line with the Genesis creation stories. The third approach insists that a Tribal Christian theology has to emerge from a tribal world-view. The spacecentred tribal world-view contributes to the very content of Tribal theology. The younger creative theologian A. Wati Longchar is a major exponent of this approach.

Some Important Characteristics of Tribal Religion

The key characteristics of Tribal Religion are identified as the following⁶ -

- (a) There is an absence of any written scripture in Tribal religion. It is the religion of oral traditions. It is the religion of corporate 'memory' passed on from generations. Religious rituals, teachings and principles are transmitted orally from one generation to another.
- (b) No human-made images or temples are used for worship of the Divine. Natural objects are accepted as symbols of the divine presence and adoration and oblations are given seasonally. Life-cycles, birth, marriage and death, and annual cycles of major seasons and changes of nature accordingly form an integral part of occasional and seasonal festivals and scarifies.
- (c) A nature-human spirit continuum is the key to the tribal vision of life. All religious rites, observances, festivities are based on this holistic vision of reality. Tribal religion accepts the integral relationships of nature, humans and spirit in their experiences. The Tribal totem is one of the concrete examples of this continuum.
- (d) Another important characteristic of Tribal religion is .the worship of ancestors: Ancestors are part of the life of those who are alive and they are interested in the welfare of the living. The Tribals offer grains of rice at the beginning of their meal to the ancestors and the faith is that they partake of the meal with the living ones.

Famous anthropologists like E T Dalton and H. H. Risley identified the Bhumij as a Hinduised branch of Mundas who entirely had been transformed into the Hindu caste in the eastern fringe of Ayodhya Range. Risley observed, 'Here a pure Dravidian race have lost their original language now speak only in Bengali; they worship Hindu god in addition to their own (the tendency being to relegate the tribal gods to the women) and more advanced among them employ Brahmans as family priests. They still retain a set of totemic exogamous subdivision closely resembling those of the Mundas and Santals'. As a result there was an impact of both tribal Mundari socio cultural traits and Hindu traits on the Bhumij people⁷.

At present the Bhumij are found to be predominantly settled in the districts of Singhbhum, Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Dhanbad of Bihar province and in Purulia, Midnapur and Bankura districts in West Bengal. In West Bengal, the Bhumij have been described as the original inhabitants of Dhalbhum, Patkum, Barabhum and Baghmundi. They may chiefly be located in the area between the Kansai and Subamarekha rivers. They are found in Odisha and Assam. There is also a sizeable population found in Bangladesh.

A close examination of the annual cycle of religious activities of the Bhumij proved the assimilation of the two religious processes constantly. The religious integration of the Bhumij with the Hindu society varies within certain limits, according to social position and territorial status of the individuals concerned. The deities that were considered to be very important in their daily life were Boram, Dasum, Bamoni, Kaishar, Pahari Devi, Kali, Mahadev, Lahangbir, etc. Boram was a prototype of the sun god worshipped throughout the world particularly in pre-historic period. The Egyptian people during the period of Pharaoh used to worship sun in order to enhance the fertility of soil as well as man. In India, particularly amongst the Hindus, surya cult was held to be the most sacred cult. The bright orb of the sun was considered in Indian mythology to be represented by the god Surya. He surveys the universe in the consciousness of power and puts to flight the evil spirit of darkness and disease. Amongst the tribals boram and Singhbonga were conceived in his manifold aspect namely, fertility and also as the constant companion, and as vivifies.

Dasum was a disease god resembling with the bishahari of Hindu mythology. Bishahari was the Hindu prototype of Dasum deity of the Bhumij. Bamani represented the worship of tree spirit in India. Actually, it was considered to be the

survival of totems. In Bengal, Tulsi amongst the Vaishnabic people was the synonym of God Vishnu, the creator. In the oceanic region, the plant spirit was revered as Kamis. In order to enhance fertility of housewife tulsi is ceremoniously worshipped by the Bengali household. Bamani is simply a Bhumij term for this sacred plant⁸. 'Kaisar' was worshipped by the women with the offering of Kesar i.e. the root of Durba grass. In tribal medicine Kesar was taken to be the most effective rejuvenate for the fallen health of the women during their maternity.

'Pahari Devi' was the principal goddess worshipped by the Bhumij of Purulia and adjoining districts. In several villages 'Thakuranimai' was worshipped as goddess Kali in the style of Hindu injunctions. Thakuranimai or paharidevi was offered special puja in the month of Agrahayana at the time of harvesting. The new crop was offered to her as naukhania, which was equivalent to the 'Navanya' of the Hindu community. Bloody sacrifices were always associated with the worship of the goddess, Thakuranirnai. These practices are still prevalent in the present days also.

The Bhumij worshipped Baro Pahar or Marang Buru as God. The deity had emerged out of the hill spirit conceived by the Mundari people. Mahadeva was sometimes identified with the Marang Buru or Baro Pahar in his magnified form as Supreme God. In 1956-57, S. Sinha noticed that mainly the wealthy tenure holders and local zamindars belonging to the Bhumij community worshiped Marang Buru. The local Hindus in general were, however, inclined to regard Marang Buru and his wife Chuprangi as equivalent in status to any other important Hindu deities⁹.

Lahangbir was the hero of jungle. The word 'bir' in Mundari language represented the forest. The deity was worshipped during hunting. Panchbahini and Baradela were local divinities worshipped by the Bhumij of Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur in as much the same fashion as Jahir-Buru, the chief difference being that the offerings to the Panchbahini were usually goats and a kind of incense called 'mathaghasha', while only fowls were presented to bardela¹⁰.

The Bhumij worshipped Gram Devi or Gram Thakur. The Gram Thakur was worshipped before each religious work. The concept of Gorai Thakur was derived from the Mundari concept of Gorbhu that was observed during Sohrai festival. Manasa was a Hindu Goddess of snake venom. The concept of snake God was very primitive among the tribal. Among the Mundari people, there was one naga era, which was considered to be the snake deity.

The Bhumij of Manbhum worshiped a cruel female deity named as Rankini. It was believed that Rankini especially enjoyed in human sacrifices. It was freely admitted that in former years, children were frequently kidnapped and sacrificed at her shrine. Karakata is another deity worshipped for rains. Traditional Bhumij priests had been performing the divine services¹¹. The raja of Barabhum worshipped tantric goddess of Chamundi, locally known as Koteswari.

The Bhumij of Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur worshipped the following Hindu God and Goddesses: Shiva, Durga, Kali, Manasa, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Srikrishna, Rama, Ganesha, Bhagwan and the like. To them the deities were merely powerful spirits whose aid was to be invoked for personal benefit.

Rajas and all the Taraf Sardars of these areas sponsored Durga puja by making clay images of the Goddess, maintained priests who were offered gifts of land. They also put on sacred threads. The same image followed by the level of village headman or ghatwals. With his limited resources he would perform Durga puja with a small earthen pot (ghat) representing the goddess.

The Bhumij of eastern Ajodhya worshipped goddess Kali. Goddess Kali among the Bhumij had been conceived as the Goddess of fertility as well as production of vegetation on earth. 'Mahadeva' is a Hindu god. Originally it was represented through phallic worship. Phallic worship in the primitive culture was virtually directed to the promotion of fertility forces. Since human organs for generations were taken to be the symbol of production, the phallic was taken to be the image of Mahadeva. The Bhumij people also worshipped the Goddess Lakshmi. During Marga-Sira i.e. during November and December months the Goddess of wealth was worshipped and offerings to her in the form of sweets and flowers were made. On each Thursday the Bhumij women offer pujas to Goddess Lakshmi as a part of their domestic activities.

Magico Religious Approach

In the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, the Bhumij people followed the tribal path to remit their diseases and calamities, which are still continuing. Like other Tribals the Bhumij considered all types of diseases to be supernatural phenomena haunting man in order to chastise him for his own faults or to streamline his course of action in the path of development through various problems and hazards. Disease

was caused according to the tribals not for any natural factors, but for the malevolence of some disgruntled supernatural beings inhabiting in the surrounding. Since the phenomenon was saturated with supernatural characteristic the matter should be dealt with by persons conversant with supernatural tricks or magico religious approaches. Two methods namely, (i) the application of herbal and mineral elements and (ii) administration of spells or mantras were applied by skilled persons on the affected victim in order to cure him of the ailments. Herbs like Aentha (*Helicteres Isora*), Baghrandi (*Jatrophacurcas*), Banabar (*Zizyhus*), Baryari (*Sidacarpinifolia*), Bhonsri (*Anisomelesovata*), Bhuir Jamoon (*Premnaherbacea*), etc., were used by the specialist class of medicine men who were proficient also in supernatural practices¹². The spells they used were looked upon to be the gift of a presiding deity - she might either be Manasa, or, Bishahari, Sitala, Kali, etc. The spells were uttered in musical sound and are popularly known among them as 'Ramoj Gan'.

According to Surajit Sinha, "The recognition of supernatural interference is particularly strong in connection with major economic operations and in diseases. This is particularly so, because in these matters mere technological control often fails to bring about the desired results. In the cultivation of paddy beginning from the first, ploughing to garnering, each stage is coloured by magico religious rites. In the main social rites such as birth, marriage and funeral, magico-religious activities play a significant role. The general attitude to the deities is one of awe and wonder due to their superior powers. But with regard to the village tutelary deities, they seem to possess also a sentiment akin to kinship bond"¹³.

Traits of Acculturation

The tribes under our consideration are undergoing changes. The nomenclature of the tribe is gradually bereft of its implications in the perspective of the changes. Tribe is normally defined as a group of ethnic splinters that remained static in their social and cultural behaviour, which means a tribe belonging to hill hunting stage, will remain in the same stage for ages in spite of various impending changing circumstances. The tribes in static conditions are less prone to digest and assimilate the foreign cultural elements within themselves. Metamorphosis in this sense is rarely discernible amongst the tribal groups.

Traits of acculturation are normally observed in the development of Siva or Mahadeva concept among the Bhumij. It has already been stated that the Bhumij people worshipped the spirit of hill in the form of Barapahar. It is needless to mention that this Barapahar is the nucleus of the siva concept, which has been elaborated through the influence of traditional Hindu god siva or Mahadeva. In this connection it is apt to indicate that the name siva is so quickly replacing the term Barapahar that at present the entire worship of hill God is known among the Bhumij as siva puja¹⁴. The word siva may be taken as a compound word, the constituents being 'Si' and 'Va'. In Santali language 'si' means ploughing 'va' means the source or origin¹⁵ of ploughing. It should be mentioned in this connection that in the popular religion of Bengal God siva is closely related with the origin or discovery of ploughing cultivation. It is quite familiar to the Bengali people that the Himalayas are some times taken to be identical with the God Siva. Even the small hillocks scattered in the districts of Purulia and Bankura are worshipped by the Bhumij of this region as a symbol of lord Siva.

The above analysis of the Siva concept of the Bhumij revealed that the hill spirit or Burubonga or Barapahar which has base in an animistic tradition has been transformed into the God Siva and Bhairava due to their close association with agriculture as well as induction of thought from higher culture.

In the month of Baisakh, Kartick and Agrahayan the mother Goddess Kali is adored amidst joy with the sacrifice of goats and fowls. Like the Oranon 'Kalo Pachcho', Kali of the Bhumij has been elevated to the position of the principal mother Goddess who looks after the well-being of the people. It is interesting to note that in some places of the south west of West Bengal, Kali being the wife of Lord Siva, is attributed the little 'sat-ti', the well known Hindu Goddess venerated in Hindu mythology. The title of 'Sat-ti' attributed to Kali, has also a meaning relevant to soil. In Mundari language, 'Sat-ti' means kind hand ('sat' means honest or kind and 'tii' means hand) and is used for a noble woman who fills up the hands (tii) of everyone with some food or grain¹⁶.

It is interesting to note that the village gods about whom we have already discussed had transformed into town or city gods with different names. As for example, Barapahar was gradually being amalgamated with the concept of Siva, Jahirburu was elevated to Kali and Singbonga or Sun God had transformed into Dharam thakur. The last one i.e. Dharam thakur is universally worshipped in the

district of Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur even today. Whatever be the origin of Dharma concept, the rituals observed during its worship depict it with the halo of Sun god. Sometimes, Dharmapuja was nicknamed as ‘Sada Pantha’ Puja because white goats resembling the colour of sunrays were sacrificed on the occasion. All bhaktas or worshippers adored their bodies with white clothes or uttariyas. Special Suryargha or oblations to sun were offered in the name of Dharmathakur.

Dharma is a God to bring fertility to a sterile woman. He is also the potent force to cure diseases like leprosy, scabies, etc. The male folk invoked the god in aspirations of being powerful in productive activities till old age. Sometimes germinated seeds are swallowed by the women in the name of Dharmathakur anticipating blessings of the god that would make them fruitful i.e. capable of giving birth to child. Dharmathakur is closely related with fertility cult as well as the general well being of the community. It may be said that the Dharmathakur is the epitome of acculturation process generated amongst the community through Hinduisation or de-tribalisation.

Vaishnavic Impact

In the district of Jungle Mahal, large numbers of Bhumij people had been converted into Vaishnavic sects. The original tribal religious concepts were modified or readjusted with the various deities propagated by the Vaishnavic people in West Bengal. In Bengali literature, ‘Sri Chaitannya Charitamrita’ by Krishnadas Kaviraj is a reputed epic. In this book references of the arrival of Sri Chaitannya, keeping Cuttak on the right side and his entry into the forest region through some subways are available. The people of this forested area had been described as ‘Mahapasanda’ - great criminal. They were Vhilla by race.

“Mathura jabar Chafe Asi Jarikhanda .

Villaprai Lok Taha Param Pasanda.^{17”}

Vaishnavic cult has been alluded to by Surajit Sinha in his famous article entitled, ‘Bhumij Kshatriya a social Movement in South Manbhum’. According to him one of the informants had said that even in their childhood days they had been aware that the Bhumij of this area were divided into three social strata, namely, the ataisha, nagadi and nichu. Surajit Sinha’ himself has remarked “Most importantly, the operation of the Vaishnava influence offers a model for transforming and enriching

the social and cultural horizon of a primitive isolated people without violently disturbing the original social and cultural structure¹⁸.

Surajit Sinha's contention was based on the local hearsay, which could not be historically proved. The fact is that the Bhumij people were originally low aboriginal people. The inculcation of Vaishnavism and other faith was simply the manifestation of the effort of upgradation of the tribe. Adoption of Kshatriya title was also a by-product of this process. These are termed as a pull process of the innate dynamism of mankind. The process was accentuated by historical facts of subjugation of the tract by the Kshatriya Rajput people and also by the on set of Vaishnavic faith through various preachers. The story related by Surajit Sinha testified to the process of Sanskritisation enunciated by Dr. Srinivasa in his theory of 'Aryanisation in India'.

The impact of Vaishnavism built up a new mould of Hinduism in Manbhum and adjoining areas that pulled out the Bhumij chieftains from the fold of tribalism and helped them to push amongst the aristocrats of feudal India¹⁹.

Conclusion

Many tribes in India show considerable syncretism with Hinduism, such as the Kadugollas of Karnataka, who worship gods such as Junjappa, Yattappa, Patappa, and Cittappa, but in reality are more devoted to Siva, who dominates their festivals and religious observances. Local deities are still of importance, though, as with the Bedanayakas of Karnataka, who worship Papanayaka, a deity supposed to have lived 300-400 years ago as a holy man among them and who performed miracles.

Some historians and anthropologists assert that much of what constitutes folk Hinduism today is actually descended from an amalgamation of adivasi faiths, idol worship practices and deities, rather than the original Indo-Aryan faith. This also includes the sacred status of certain animals such as mon-keys, cows, peacocks, cobras (snake) and elephants and plants such as the Pipal Tuisi, Neem which may once have held totemic importance for certain adivasi tribes. But this Scheduled Tribe groups who were identified as more isolated from the wider community and who maintain a distinctive cultural identity have been categorized as 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups' (PTGs) (previously known as Primitive Tribal Groups) by the Government at the Centre. So far seventy-five tribal communities have

been identified as ‘particularly vulnerable tribal groups’ in different States of India. About 7% of Indians between 60 and 65 million people, are officially classified into ‘Scheduled Tribes’²⁰. These hunting, food-gathering, and some agricultural communities, have been identified as less acculturated tribes among the tribal population groups and in need of special programmes for their sustainable development. The tribes are awakening and demanding their rights for special reservation quota for them.

Reference

1. L. P. Vidyarthi and Binay Kumar Raj, *The Tribal Culture of India* ; New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1985; p.7.
2. A. Wati Longchar, “*Tribal Theology: Issues, Method and Perspective*,” Journal of Tribal Studies, Vol. IV. No.2 (July- December, 2000), p. 70.
3. F. Hrangkhuma. “*Christ and Tribal Culture*,” in Christ and Cultures, Jacob Kavunkal and F. Hrangkhuma, ed.(Bombay: St. Pauls, 1994), p.140. Cited in Zolawma, “*Tribal Theology in Northeast India*,” p. 3.
4. K. Thanzauva, *Theology of Community* (Aizawl: Mizoram Theological Conference, 1997), pp. 1-6.
5. Census of India, 1961 , Assam ; District Census Handbook ; p. 220.
6. Nirmal Minz, “*The study of Tribal Religion in India*,” in Re-visioning India’s Religious Traditions, ed. by David C. Scott & Israel Selvanayagi!!ri; Delhi/Bangalore: ISPCKIUTC, 1996, p. 122.
7. H. H. Risley, *The People of India*, Calcutta 1915, p.75.
8. James Hastings, T. Edinburgh & T. Clerk, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. I, 1980, pp. 535-37.
9. Amiya Kumar Banerjee, West Bengal District Gazetteer of Bankura, September 1968, Calcutta, p.155.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Dr. Satya Prakash Gupta, *Tribes of Chotonagpur plateau: An Ethno-nutritional and Pharmacological Cross section*, Bihar Tribal Research Institute, Ranchi, 1974, pp.126-27.

13. Surajit Sinha, '*Some aspects of change in Bhumij Religion in South Manbhum*', *Man in India*, Vol. 33, No.2. April-June 1953, P-150.
14. J.B. Medda, *Religious Concepts of the Tribal People of Birbhum*, Birbhum, 1977, p.65.
15. Ibid., p.71.
16. Ibid., p.68.
17. Dr. Sudhir Kr. Karan, 'Bangia Sahitya Purulia' in Debaprasad Jana (Ed.) *Ahalyabhumi Purulia*, Vol-1, p.171.
18. Pashupati Prasad Mahato, *Jharkandi lokodarshan*, Prasik, 2004. p.33.
19. Ibid., p.31.
- 20 *The Dictionary of Art*; ed. Jane Turner, NY. Macmilan, 1996, Vol-15, p.731.

Portuguese Trade in Mediaeval Bengal : A Historical Overview

Puspendu Routh

Abstract

The Portuguese came to Bengal in the early part of the sixteenth century. All the countries were in search of markets for their products as well as places in which to locate resources. In this respect, the Portuguese were no exception. When they came, they were not left with disappointment as what they had heard about Bengal back in their homeland was not far from the truth and were fully satisfied. Since the Portuguese came to Bengal for trade purposes, they started ways and means to set up trade centres in various parts of Bengal. They had come to India mainly for trade but the difficulties which the native rulers kept in their path led them to engage in arm conflicts also. The granting of trade license to the Portuguese greatly accelerated the growth of Bengal as a European trading nation in India. Thus, by the latter part of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese were the dominant sea-power as most of the trade of Bengal had passed into their hands.

Keywords: Portuguese, Bengal, Trade Centre, Trade Route, Economy.

Bengal was connected by network of rivers like no other parts of India which greatly attracted the sea faring people like the Portuguese who had love for adventures and navigation. The Portuguese had heard a lot about the wealth and trade of Bengal and this was confirmed when Vasco da Gama and Albuquerque had reported to the king of Portugal in Lisbon about the various prospects of trade and commerce in Bengal.¹ Since the Portuguese came to Bengal for trade purposes, they started ways and means to set up trade centres in various parts of Bengal. In order to facilitate trade and seek permission to set up a factory or trade centre where goods would be exchanged, D. Joao de Silveira sent a messenger with his compliments to the king of Bengal around the period 1517-1518 AD. But they were not received very warmly which led the Portuguese to constitute themselves into a military power as to be ready to encounter any attack from the opponents. They had come to India mainly for trade but the difficulties which the native rulers kept in their path led them to engage in arm conflicts also.²

Apart from the attitudes of the Bengal rulers, another reason for the failure of the Portuguese to establish a trading centre in Bengal in their early attempts was because of their too much reliance on the authority of the Papal Bull. This led them to think of themselves as having the authority to do whatever they wanted without

Ph.D. Research Scholar in History, Raja Narendra Lal Khan Women's College (Autonomous) Gope Palace, Paschim Medinipur - 721102, West Bengal, India

realising the fact that it (Papal Bull) might not have authority outside His Holiness's spiritual jurisdiction.³ Although the Portuguese were unsuccessful in their first mission to facilitate trade with Bengal, yet they did not lose hope and from the time of Silveira's visit, every year a Portuguese ship with merchandise was sent to Bengal to commence trade with Bengal until they met with success. The province of Bengal had several towns and ports which greatly facilitated her sea-borne trade. At the time of the coming of the Portuguese, most of the trade had gone from the hands of the Natives to the merchants of Arabs and Persia who enjoyed uncontrolled monopoly in the movement of ships in the Eastern Seas.⁴

Between the years 1517 - 1538 AD, the Portuguese were in constant conflict with the Sultans of Bengal in their mission to establish trading centre in Bengal. The relationship between the two worsened when the Sultan of Bengal imprisoned one emissary of the Portuguese, named Martim Affonso de Mello. He was not freed till the time when the Sultan of Bengal, Mahmud Shah was attacked by the Afghans under Sher Shah and the Sultan needed the help of the Portuguese. So, the Sultan at that time had no other choice but to ask the Portuguese for help in return for which he promised to allow them to erect factories in Satgaon and Chittagong.⁵ Although the Sultan did not win the campaign yet, he did not refrain from his promise. The result was that Martim Affonso de Mello was allowed to build factories in Chittagong and Satgaon in the year 1536 AD and to control the custom houses of those ports as well.⁶ Nuno Fernandez Friere was made the chief of the custom house in Chittagong and was given the power to collect rent from the Moors and the Hindus who lived there, while the custom house of Satgaon was given to Joao Correa. Thus, only after a long time, the Europeans were allowed to settle in Chittagong and Satgaon in the province of Bengal.⁷

This was the first establishment of the Portuguese in Bengal and was followed by the death of the then Sultan of Bengal, Mahmud Shah. But the dreams of the Portuguese were already realised. Thus, the supremacy of the Arab and Persian merchants ended with the coming of the Portuguese who opened trade in Bengal to Europe and the south-eastern Asian countries from the third decade of the sixteenth century, during the rule of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah, the Sultan of Bengal. The granting of trade licence to the Portuguese greatly accelerated the growth of Bengal as a European trading nation in India.⁸ In the year 1579-1580 AD, during the rule of the Mughals under Akbar, the Portuguese were allowed to set up a

factory under a Farman to Pedro Tavares, a merchant captain, at Hugli on the bank of the Ganges,⁹ not far from the custom house at Satgaon. The reason for allowing the Portuguese to establish a factory at Hugli by Akbar was to achieve a greater share in the profits of the Eastern dominations through the active participation of Bengal in the sea-borne commerce of Asia and also because the Mughal ruler was greatly impressed by Pedro Tavares.¹⁰ They were also allowed the monopoly of the salt trade by the payment of 100,000 rupees a year to the Nawab of Bengal.¹¹ Because of that, they used to earn huge profits with which they used to buy commodities and in trade. Thus, by the latter part of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese were the dominant sea-power as most of the trade of Bengal had passed into their hands.¹²

The climate of Bengal was favourable for the growth of cotton and so was famous for her textile products which she supplied to the regions on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal in return for gemstones, silver and spices.¹³ In the eastern coast of India the two main trading regions were the Coromondal coast and Bengal. The latter at that time comprised the Orissa ports of Pipli and Balasore. To the west of Bengal on the river Saraswati lie Satgaon and to the East lie Chittagong at the mouth of the river Kamaphuli which were the two major ports of Bengal in the early 75 years of the sixteenth century.¹⁴ Of the two ports of Bengal, Chittagong occupied much more important place than Satgaon as it was closely linked with the city of Gaur which at that time was the Sultanate capital that controlled the whole of Bengal. Another principal port was Sripur which was situated on the Meghna, only a short distance away from Sonargaon, the capital of Eastern Bengal.¹⁵

After the Portuguese established themselves in Satgaon, it attracted sufficient commerce to be able to feed the merchants. It was the royal port of Bengal till the emergence of Hugli as an important port in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Satgaon attracted merchants from all over the world and it was made a Portuguese port in 1537 AD, It was the main emporium of the Portuguese since then and was called the 'Porto Piqueno'.¹⁶ But the Portuguese did not built any permanent settlement there as big vessels could not enter when they came and they had to build temporary houses whenever they went to do trade there. With the coming of the Portuguese, Satgaon lost its importance as one of the main trading centres of Bengal and the reason was that the river Hugli changed its current through the main channel thereby causing the silting of the river Saraswati which

gradually made it unsuitable for navigation by bigger vessels.¹⁷ Another reason that came up was that the decline of Satgaon was due to the commercial activities of the Portuguese who with their coming diverted all the trade to their own port in Hugli where they were settled permanently, thereby bringing great harm to the trade of Satgaon. It had also become a problem for the Portuguese to make and unmake houses every time they went to Satgaon during trading season and so trade was finally diverted to Hugli.¹⁸

After the decline of Satgaon, the merchants who also traded there apart from the Portuguese, went to Hugli where the Portuguese had their trade centre, This shows that wherever the Portuguese went, they took the trade with them and the other traders especially the natives had to follow the route of them. So, when the Portuguese traders left Satgaon, the native traders also left that place. With the settlement of the Portuguese in the port of Hugli, it was turned into a big town.¹⁹ As the number of Portuguese traders in Hugli grew, their trade and influence also increased in Bengal as well. Both the internal and the external trade of Bengal thus were diverted from Satgaon to Hugli where the Portuguese held the sway of the overseas trade with the participation of a few Malaya, Arabs and Indian traders.²⁰ It became the common emporium of the vessels of India, China, Malacca and Manila. Thus, by 1596-97, Hugli had taken the place of Satgaon as one of the most important and flourishing ports of Bengal.²¹ Its location on the banks of the river Ganges, whose branches spread all over Bengal, greatly enhanced the importance of Hugli as an important trading centre. It remained so even after the expulsion of the Portuguese from there.²²

Both the ports of Satgaon and Hugli were in the hands of the Portuguese. Under the Portuguese, the port of Hugli grew with great speed and quickly rose to the position of one of the most important trading ports in Bengal. It became so prosperous than Chittagong- which was one of the leading trade centres- that it deserved to be called “Porto Grande” i.e. great port, which was the name by which the latter was known to the Portuguese.

So. Chittagong started losing its importance while Hugli was prospering by the end of the sixteenth century.²³ But still Chittagong remained one of the important ports of Bengal and did not lose its title of being called the “Porto Grande”.²⁴ From the beginning till the end it was the “Porto Grande”, while Satgaon was the “Porto Piqueno”. After the decline of Satgaon, Hugli took Satgaon’s place of being called

the “Porto Piqueno although the volume of trade in Hugli, where the Portuguese were firmly settled, was much more than that of Satgaon.²⁵ Finally in 1590, Chittagong came under the hands of the Portuguese.²⁶

At the time when Satgaon and Chittagong were flourishing under the Portuguese, the Mughals under Akbar and Jahangir were in an understanding relationship with the latter. After sometimes the Mughals took over Sandwip, which belonged to a person named Kedar Rai. Sandwip was rich in salt and so the Portuguese had for a long time wanted to take over this port. Thus, in 1602, under the leadership of Domingo Carvalho, they attacked and captured the port of Sandwip from the hands of the Mughal authorities.²⁷ The Portuguese did not limit themselves to these ports only. They had their factories in other parts of the province at Dacca, Tamluk, Hijli, Jessore, Barisal, Noakhali, Chattagram, Dianga, Dakshin Shahabazpur, Chandikan, Katrabu, Midnapore and other places which eventually were occupied by the Portuguese.²⁸ Pipli and Balasore in Orissa were also the other important ports in Bengal.²⁹

Thus, the most important trade centres during the time of the Portuguese were Dacca, Hugh, Hijli, Chittagong, Pipli and Satgaon. These could command the position of being an important trade centres because of their location in the most favourable part of Bengal, on the river highways which were easily accessible by the merchants.³⁰ There were three important lines of trade routes from Bengal.³¹ The participation of the Portuguese brought some changes in the trade of Bengal. Trade to Malacca which was important, declined in the 1540's when Bengal products started paying more at the entry than goods from other parts of Asia.³² But the loss of Malacca was the gain of Acheh as its trade increased to a great extent at the expense of the former.³³ The trade with Coromondal coast continued while the trade with Gujarat and the Red Sea under the Indian traders came to an end by the middle of the sixteenth century and it was revived only around the middle of the seventeenth century. Ormuz was the only region that linked Hugli and the western part of the Indian Ocean and this trade was carried on by the 95 Casados merchants.³⁴

In the beginning, the vessels of the Portuguese Crown only had the licence to trade in Bengal. In course of time, in the 1530's, individual Portuguese were also given the permit to make voyages to Bengal as part of the Crown initiative or sometimes independently.³⁵ The Portuguese traders comprised of the ‘Casados-

soldiers who were married and retired from active service- and fugitives and who soon took wives from among the natives. Everyone from the soldiers to the merchantmen as well as from viceroys to cabin boy came to be interested in the trading activity and such was the effect of trade that their discussion came to revolved around the prices of merchandise.³⁶

But the main reason that attracted the individual Portuguese to take part in the trade of Bengal was profit. But with their entry, the official Portuguese approach to the trade in Bengal was changed in that the Crown shipping was abandoned entirely for concession voyages as individual Portuguese became more and more interested in the trade of Bengal.³⁷ So, the Portuguese policy of not interfering in the political affairs of Bengal was in practice. They mainly concentrated only in the commercial activities and because of that they could gain success in the trade in Bengal. In the external trade, they almost monopolised it, while in the Inland trade, the Indian merchants and other foreigners were their main competitors.³⁸

The power of the Portuguese had increased to such a great extent in course of time that, even the vessels of the Mughal governor had to take permission from them to enter the port of Hugli and had to give in to various rules enforced in the port which was under the possession of the Portuguese.³⁹ This was one of the policies of the Portuguese to establish their supreme authority in the whole of trade in Bengal. The main aim of the Portuguese was to establish supremacy in the Indian seas which would enable them to control and direct the course of trade.⁴⁰ But it was not easy for the Portuguese to get the supreme position in the trade of Bengal where every other nation was trying to grasp opportunities to get a foothold. There were some methods adopted by the Portuguese for controlling the sea-borne commerce. The first method adopted by the Portuguese was the declaration of some trade routes as the of the king of Portugal where the vessels of other nationalities were not allowed to travel. Although the reserved routes were not fixed, at the end of the sixteenth century, East Africa, China, Japan or the Spice Islands were the places where no Indian ship was allowed to undertake voyages.⁴¹

After the monopoly of few trade routes,, Portuguese passes were issued, apart from the licence- fees which had to be obtained- to whoever wanted to trade in Hugli and the ships of the Indian or the foreign merchants that did not get the pass were treated as enemy ships and were made liable to be captured and confiscated. Custom were also levied at ports like Ormuz and Malacca. Because of this rule, the

Portuguese were feared by all and the Dutch and the English were not able to establish trade with Bengal as long as they (Portuguese) were solidly established there.⁴²

Although at the height of their power the Portuguese maintained monopoly in the trade of Bengal yet, this monopoly was not without any limitations. The Portuguese could not fully wipe out all their rivals. In spite of the oppression of the Indian merchants, some of them took active part in the trade in Bengal as middlemen, while some of them were in a state of commercial alliance with the Portuguese.⁴³ Apart from the native merchants and the other foreign traders, the Portuguese traders also traded with their fellow countrymen who were stationed all over Asia.⁴⁴

The Portuguese in Western India, mainly at Goa had its greatest impact on the society, whereas, on the eastern side, in Bengal, the impact was largely felt on the economic sphere. The study of the Portuguese trade in Bengal is important because it transformed Bengal's trading activities..The Portuguese were the first among the European countries to have come to India and taken control of the trade in Bengal. Although the Portuguese control of the trade in Bengal could not last for more than a century, yet in a short period they were able to take the trade into their own hands and eventually gained prosperity for themselves as well as for Bengal. Accordingly came the Dutch, the French and, lastly, the British in succession of each other after the expulsion of the Portuguese from Hugli and other trading centres. The entry of the British in the later centuries came in the wake of the exploitation of Bengal's resources by the Portuguese. Thus, although the Portuguese helped in the progress of trade in Bengal, they also paved the way for British imperialism in India via Bengal.

Reference

1. Campos, J.J.A., *History of the Portuguese in Bengal*, Janaki Prakashan Press, Patna, 1919, p.25.
2. Ibid., p.29.
3. Sarkar, Jadunath (ed.), *The History of Bengal, Muslim period 1200-1757* vol.

- II. University of Dacca, Ramna, Dacca, 1948, pp.352-353.
4. Tarafdar, Momtazur Rahman *H, ussain Shahi Bengal, 1494-1538: Socio-Political Study*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1965, p.146.
 5. Campos, J.J.A.o, *p.cit.*, p.37.
 6. Sarkar, Jadunath (ed.) *o, p.cit.*, p.357.
 7. Chaudhari, K.N.T, *radeand Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p.74.
 8. Roy, Atul Chandra, *History of Bengal (Mughal Period, 1526-1757)*, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1968, p.338.
 9. Majumdar, R.C., *The History of Bengal* vol.I, 2nd Edition, University of Dacca, Dacca, 1963, p.108.
 10. Winus, George D., *T' heshadow-empire 'of Goain the Bay of Bengal'*, Itinerario, vol.7, no.2, 1983, p.280.
 11. Chicherov, A.I., *India: Economic Development in the 16th-18th centuries; Outline History of Crafts and Trade*, Nauka Publishing House, Central Department Oriental Literature, Moscow, 1971, p.112.
 12. Raychoudhury, Tapan, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Orient Publishers, Delhi, 1953, p.95.
 13. Winus, George D.o, *p.cit.*, p.279.
 14. Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, *N' otes on the Sixteenth-Century Bengal Trade'* in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol.24, no. 3, 1987, p.99.
 15. Moreland, W.H. *From Akbar to Aurangzeb-A Study in Indian Economic History*, First published in 1923 by Macmillan and Co. Ltd, London, First Indian Edition January 1972, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, New Delhi, p.198.
 16. Chaudhury, Sushil, *"The Rise and Decline of Hugli"*, *Bengal Past and Present (BPP)*, vol. 86, no. 161, January-June 1967, p.35.
 17. Campos, J.J.A.o, *p.cit.*, p.22.
 18. Chaudhury, Sushilo, *p.cit.*, p.37.
 19. Chicherov, A.I.o, *p.cit.*, p.136.
 20. Chaudhury, Sushilo, *p.cit.*, p.37.
 21. Campos, J.J.A.o, *p.cit.*, p.57.
 22. Chatterjee, Anjali, *Bengal in the Reign of Aurangzeb, 1658-1707*, Progressive Publishers, Calcutta, 1967, p.100.
 23. Chaudhury, Sushilo, *p.cit.*, p.41.
 24. Sarkar, Jadunath (ed.) *o, p.cit.*, p.364.
 25. Chaudhury, Sushilo, *p.cit.*, p.41.
 26. Raychoudhury, Tapan, *op.cit.*, p.95.
 27. Campos, J.J.A.o, *p.cit.*, pp.67-68.
 28. Sarkar, Jadunath (ed.) *o, p.cit.*, p.364.

29. Prakash, Om, *The European Trading Companies and the Merchants of Bengal 1650-1725*, in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1964, p. 19.
30. Chatterjee, Anjal, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99. 31. Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, *p. cit.*, pp. 100-103. 32. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-103.
33. Prakash, Om, *p. cit.*, p. 69. 34. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
35. Subrahmanyam, Sanjay *op. cit.*, p. 106.
36. Boxer, C. R., *Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, 1415-1825*, - Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1961, p. 42. 37. Prakash, Om, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
38. Chaudhury, Sushilo, *p. cit.*, p. 44. 39. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
40. Moreland, W. H., *p. cit.*, p. 23. 41. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
42. Chaudhury, Sushilo, *p. cit.*, p. 45. 43. Prakash, Om *op. cit.*, p. 247.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

Indian Migration and Its Impacts on Indian Women

Dr. Malyashree Mandal

Abstract

The word 'migration' is historically valued with wandering, conflict with the indigenous population, and displacement or cultural assimilation. It is a movement by human beings from one place to another, sometimes over long distances or in large groups inside and outside the country. Migration can be divided into Internal-migration and International-migration. The migration process in the present context is common among men and women. This paper will mainly focus on the women's migration inside India and outside India for the betterment of the self and family, with its causes and effects and also challenges. Though women migration has a good impact on remittances and the growth of the country's economic condition, the real scenario behind this success is not good. These women are humiliated, tortured, psychologically affected, and disrespected by society and sometimes by family members. The first section of this paper will deal with the process and reasons for women's migration, and the second part will deal with the results of women's migration and their conditions in society and family. Towards the end of this paper, there will be observations on improving these conditions with references to implementing policies.

Keywords: *Migration, Women, Humiliations, Indian, Remittances, Family, Society.*

Introduction

The word 'migration' came from the Latin word *migrate*, which has a historical value with wandering, conflict with the indigenous population, and their displacement or cultural assimilation. It is a movement by the human being from one place to another, sometimes over long distances or in large groups. Some movements occurred to escape famine and natural hazards and hide from the politico-religious prosecution. According to Theodore Caplow (1959),

Migration is, strictly speaking, a change of residence and need not necessarily involve any change of occupation, but it is closely associated with occupational shifts of one kind to another. The principal directions of migration are illustrated by more or less continuous movements from rural areas of stable population towards [the centers] of cities to their suburbs. (p. 6)

According to H. Tinker (1977), there are two factors in the migration process for the universe. One is the 'pushed' factor, and the other is the 'pulled' factor.

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Diamond Harbour Women's University, Diamond Harbour Road, Sarisha, West Bengal: 743368, India.

Nowadays, migration is being done by both 'pushed' and 'pulled' aspects. In the 'pushed' factor, migrants are willing to move to other places for better livelihood. In the 'pulled' factor, the State or country is forcing people to migrate for business development and economic growth. The term 'displacement' signifies the violence associated with migration, which might be explained as 'forced migration.' The first wave of human migration was taken place around 11,000 years ago when an unfortunate moment happened with the destruction of many species of animal life, like mammoths, camels, giant sloths, and other large mammals. Ehrlich (1979) says,

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, the early human from Homo-erectus had spread from the Far East to the farthest reaches of Africa and Europe. Much of the migration in the ancient world was involuntary; when a territory was conquered, the conqueror customarily enslaved people from the defeated population. In its' heyday, between a quarter and a third of the population of Athens, the 'cradle of democracy,' were slaves. A single Roman military campaign could yield as many as 50,000 enslaved people. Beginning in the third century BC, the flow of enslaved people into Italy was so great that the economic basis of Roman society was changed, causing the Republic's failure and the Empire's emergence. The vast population (for its time) of imperial Rome, perhaps a million, was built and maintained mainly by immigration of the people from the countryside and outlying parts of the Empire, whether they came voluntarily or not. (p. 223)

History of Indian Migration

Indians migrating to other parts of the world is not an eighteenth or nineteenth-century phenomenon. It dates back to the tenth century BC; during the reign of Emperor Kanishka, Romani people, known as 'gypsies,' migrated from Rajasthan towards the northwest and settled in Eastern Europe. Another historical migration started with Cholas, the great naval power, towards Indonesia and Malaysia, called the 'Indianised' kingdoms of Southeast Asia. The record in the *Old Testament* of ivory, spices, apes, and peacocks in far-off lands; the movement of Buddhist disciples; Indian settlements in parts of Africa during the rule of Alexander the Great; Indian mercantile relations with Malay, China, Cambodia, and Rome; accounts of Indian merchants, kings, and priests helped spread Indian languages, literature, religions, philosophies, art, customs, architecture, across the world from the beginning of the Christian era mentioned about migration. Dabra Dammo has yielded a

hoard of Indian gold coins from the third century, the most convincing evidence of Indian trade in Ethiopia. The period of Josaphat's legend and renunciation saw Ethiopian culture influenced by religion.

The vast colonial expansion by the British Empire led to the emigration of Indians to British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese colonies. Indians migrated to Mauritius, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, The Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, Jamaica, Ceylon, Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, and Nepal, during the colonial period. They went in the form of indentured laborers. After being paid minuscule wages and undergoing severe maltreatment on the ships, many of these men were mainly from the low-income families of India, escaped the hold of the supervisors by preceding their return passage home and further abuse during the journey and settling in London; many ended up residing in London simply due to the inability or unwillingness of companies to honor the second part of the agreement. In 1836, a Mauritius-based English firm of *Blyth & Sons* wrote to *Messrs Bettington & Co.* of Sydney, Australia, stating that

The planters, having introduced free Indians, apprenticed generally for five years, keep our cultivation as healthy as we have ever seen it. The free labor experiment has been entirely successful; we have 50 free Indians on our estate; they are quiet, docile, and industrious. The total cost, including a passage from there and back at the end of their apprenticeship, generally five years, together with food and clothing, is no more than 5 shillings per week. It allows cheap labor in any country. In New South Wales, the deficiency of agricultural labor might be beneficially supplied from Bengal. (Tinker, H. 1974)

The concept of women migration is not a new phenomenon. It began during the colonial period under the British rule. Women were also unsafe then; in the women's migration, the authority found many disputes, which caused murders and suicides. The Emigration Commissioners recorded in 1873 that the only remedy for wife murder was to introduce more women: but the numbers remained only forty to every hundred men. Because of this shortage, the custom of polyandry was, in a crude sense, accepted: a man would accept many 'lodgers' in his room, and the woman was required to cook for them and be sexually available to them.

In contrast, India's internal migration also has a history. Since 1891, the data is available. People not born in a state or province lived there 3.8% of the time in 1891. The percentages were 3.3%, 3.6%, 3.7%, and 3.6% in 1901, 1911, 1921, and

1931, respectively (Davis, 1968). The reason for this was the prevalence of agriculture when subsistence farming was the norm. Caste had societal boundaries. Therefore, it was also a problem that provided a barrier. Another critical factor was early or child marriage and the prevalence of joint families in the village, where adult status and responsibilities begin puberty. The lack of education continues to be a prevalent factor.

Indian Women Migration

Women from India are migrating basically into two categories. The first category is skilled women, and the other is unskilled women. 'Skilled women' denotes educated and working white-collar jobs like physicians, lawyers, journalists, engineers, researchers, and teachers. On the other hand, 'unskilled women' means women who are uneducated and go as domestic workers, laborers in construction sectors, daily wagers, tailors, and handicraft workers. Earlier, 29.03 crores of the total population of women migrated to India and outside India. Among them, 70% of married women had to migrate to another location with their spouse only, not with any occupation. (*The Hindu*, 22nd July 1999). Very recently, according to *Migration in India, 2020-21 Report*, 47.8% of women from urban India and 48% from rural India migrated as skilled and unskilled laborers. (<http://mospi.gov.in>)

Under the term 'skilled women,' they also have different groups, like this group does not have problems like the other. They are getting citizenship, moving with a spouse visa, and having all the facilities. They are mainly having problems with their companies regarding not getting holidays due to excessive workload. As a result, they cannot get time for their family members who also reside abroad. Among them, another group of women, who are a handful in number, migrating after marriage with a spouse and not doing any jobs, stays as housewives. These wives are only busy with their household work. They are always dependent upon their husbands. As shown in the well-known book by Jhumpa Lahiri, *Namesake* (2003), the heroine, Ashima, moves to the United States with her husband, Ashoke, a researcher at a university. However, Ashoke was too busy to spend time with his new wife. She had difficulty adapting after spending a whole day at home in another environment and culture. And then the problems started of unhappy marriage life, homeland nostalgia, absence and unaccepting of multi-culture, and hybridity, according to Homi. K. Bhabha, they become the 'Other.' These are the prevalent features among these migrated women who move to different States with their

husbands inside the country. Due to the lack of time of the male member, women cannot go out and mingle with others. Husbands and other senior family members are sometimes very conservative. They do not allow their wives or daughters-in-law to go out alone, even for daily needs and work. So, these women are becoming like 'a bird in the cage'. Another barrier is language. Whether they are crossing the border of the country or crossing the border of the State, the language problem is still there. They cannot communicate with the local people. For this reason, many people are unwilling to move beyond the district or stay at home, tolerating all the problems. According to them, they can somewhat manage other problems, but challenging to survive without communicating with the vegetable seller.

On the other hand, the 'unskilled women' migrants are illiterate and economically forced to leave their home countries. The United States, the United Kingdom, the Gulf States, and Southeast Asian nations are all willing and able to take in these employees. Historically low female involvement, an aversion to manual labor, and a shortage of human capital, particularly in technical fields, all contribute to a persistent shortage of native domestic workers and a low participation rate among the local population in the labor market. Nonetheless, issues among migrants arise from the start of the procedure. They are ignorant of the socially unethical condition due to a lack of knowledge. They depend on those individuals. They deceive them. It is most common in international migration. They began selling their agricultural property to generate high migration costs at the commencement of their international migration. These agricultural grounds are their family's only source of income. They have little regard for their future and are just concerned about money. They spent much money on agents to help them secure passports, visas, emigration permits, and a contract with the corporation. These ladies do not get any pre-departure training from government or non-governmental groups. This training comprises strengthening communication skills with a basic understanding of English and the local language of the migrated nation, utilizing contemporary technology, and explaining the function of the Indian Embassy if they are any issues where to go and how to get rid of this, and so on.

Moreover, the reason is, most of the time, their family members. Some women are trying to escape from family hazards, and for them, they are secretly making the migration process, and all of a sudden, they start their journey one day; the others are not concerned about the benefit of the training. So, they are very casual

and not interested in it. Very few women are there who are overconfident about their potential. They think they know everything.

On the other hand, for inter-state or inter-country migration, people spend money on agencies to receive information about job openings that do not corroborate their positions. There are no employment guarantees in any instance. All of this is a fleeting delight. These unskilled women usually migrate. They will move because they are dissatisfied at home. These women migrants are uneducated, divorced, separated, and the only breadwinners. They suffer a complicated home life, tormented mainly by spouses, severe drinking in the male member of the family, and bad economic situations, all of which hinder them from living a happy life. Fathers of young girls cannot pay a large dowry and blame their daughters for their birth as daughters. Women of this age go to other locations to acquire money for dowry. Tennyson (1859) mentioned that the gap between humanity is as significant as between heaven and earth. Women are constantly disadvantaged, deprived of independence, and subjected to tyranny by males or a patriarchal society. When males are in difficult circumstances, women are the only ones who can rescue them. It is the same in the context of migration.

Reasons behind Migration for Unskilled and Skilled Women Migrants

Reasons for Internal and international women migration from urban and rural India	Number of migrants in percentage
In search of better employment	0.6
Business	0.7
Lack of employment opportunities in India	0.4
Migration of parent/earning member of the family	7.3
To pursue studies	0.6
Marriage	86.3
Natural disasters (drought, flood, etc.)	0.1
Social/ Political problems (riots, terrorism)	0.1
Displacement	0.1
Health Issues	0.3
Acquisition of own house	0.5
Housing problems	0.8
Post-retirement	0.1
Others	1.7

Figure 1: Reasons behind Migration; Source: the statistic is taken from the Press Information Bureau, Government of India. <http://pib.gov.in>

Impact of Migration

Active Impact of Migration on Women

The women who are migrating are not happy in the new place of their work. They report that physical and verbal abuse by employers is expected in the daily life of a domestic worker and a woman as an everyday worker, whether in or outside the country. Sometimes reports can be so pathetic for a domestic worker, like children of the household were said to punch, kick or bite the domestic workers. Even in provocations of such kind, parents seldom reprimanded the children (UNDP Report, 2008). This kind of violence that domestic workers suffer can potentially affect the general, mental, sexual, and reproductive health of migrant workers. Apart from physical and mental violence, sexual abuse and exploitation of women are significant problems that female migrants continue to face. Because of the peculiar nature of domestic work, migrant women are at risk of sexual violence by male members, including grown-up male children, in the employer's family (UNDP, 2008). They face technical problems regarding official papers due to a lack of awareness and misguidance.

Neglect of employment agreements can occur upon arrival. International migration and inter-country migration share a common trait. Employers sponsoring visas for labor sometimes do not receive them on arrival and leave to fend for themselves. Salaries are often unpaid on time and sometimes months after the contractual term. As a consequence, employees are regularly deported without receiving their total compensation. They cannot send their home the whole amount of money, so they are constantly held responsible for it. As a result, everyone in the family has problems, and their survival is in doubt. It is challenging to spend one's income when one has less or perhaps none at all. The cost of the work permit reduces their total incomes. Before enrolling, they had a misconception about this rule.

Working hours are usually much longer than the generally recognized eight work hours daily. Sometimes they do not get weekly holidays. In the Gulf countries, during Ramzan, the whole holy month, Muslim workers are on leave or work for fewer hours than time Hindu and other community workers work for a long time; there is no holiday. In some cases, whether these workers are in India or inside India, they do not get leave for emergency reasons back home and no leave for health reasons. Their salary gets deducted if they are absent without informing

them or their particular leave period. Domestic workers cannot take rest at night despite working around the clock in their employers' homes. They must remain available as the owner may contact them at any hour. Unfortunately, the owner often denies overtime payments, and they often lack access to adequate medical facilities and transportation. Additionally, there is a risk that the owner may not follow their contract regarding medical support.

Along with these problems, they face language and cultural barriers. Completely unknown of the language, whether a new state or a new country, they cannot communicate with local people, even for emergencies or daily needs. Cultural gaps and religious issues are significant if they cross borderless. For the Gulf countries, Hindu women from India who are migrating face many religious customs differences. Being unskilled workers, they are not allowed to mingle with all sections of society and cannot attend all the ceremonies and functions. In these cases, class discrimination is evident.

Passive Impact of Migration on Women

Some women are not migrating, but their family members, like fathers/sons/husbands, are migrating. They are also finding problems at their homes. If a father or son is migrated, the mother is the head of the family. For her, it is difficult to maintain all the household duties alone. Still, in 2021, few parts of India cannot accept a female as a head of the family and make decisions. For that reason, they face social humiliation and discrimination. Their marital relationship is also damaged, and sometimes wives are cheated by their husbands. Husbands are having extra-marital affairs at their workplace.

Children of migrated fathers are deprived of healthy paternal care. Their fathers come home after two years or more and stay for a minimum period. When they go back, children become lonely. Moreover, if the mother migrates, the child is away from maternal care. In some cases, mothers leave their children at a very early stage when they should feed breast milk. These parents bring things, such as dresses for their children, but they cannot give the psychological support of upbringing. They always do not get time or a chance to phone their home; for those outside the country, making an international phone call is very costly. Many of them cannot even afford a smartphone; if they can, they cannot correctly recharge their phones without salary. If a mother leaves her daughter back home, the daughter may face physical harassment by other male family members and neighbors. How-

ever, she is unable to share that incident with her mother. These children are developing problems of depression and psychological diseases. These migrants cannot take their family members while moving because they are on temporary contracts or not having sufficient accommodation for themselves even. The salary they get is also less for them for minimum livelihood. Sporadic cases are there, where husband and wife are moving together. In these cases, their children stay home alone with other family members. Ultimately children are becoming prominent sufferers in these cases.

Impact on Family

On the other hand, these families depend on remittance money. In 2021, India got \$87 billion in remittances, 2.75% of India's total GDP. The male members send their money sometimes every month or occasionally quarterly or are unable to send it for a year. The family stays back in the country or village; they must manage their children's education, health issues, and livelihood with the remittance money. Maintaining all the duties and responsibilities with this amount is not always easy. Because either there is no particular time for sending or it is insufficient. The money migrants are not always satisfactory for survival, though they keep much less and spend significantly. They abroad cannot lead a lavish life. Still, sometimes mothers or wives back home feel very proud that their sons or husbands are staying abroad or in a different State to earn money. They want to spend more money than the other village members, offer donations, and buy expensive items to maintain sound economic status. Nevertheless, they are always unaware of the actual scenario behind this.

Impact of Covid-19 among Migrated Women

The sudden emergence of the worldwide crisis due to Covid-19 has had a terrible impact on the migration process and the migrants. Women who were out of the country and out of the State could not return to their own country or home in a sudden situation. They are neither getting permission from the Indian Embassy, nor the border is closed, or else once they are back, they are afraid of losing their job. Those inside the country could not get any transportation for returning as it was a complete lockdown, and there was no transport system other than any emergency purposes. These migrants are never on the list of the emergency list. Uncertain declaration of complete lockdown did not give time to make a decision. In this situation, these women were stuck in their workplaces. Without doing work, they

were not paid, or some companies paid an advance for some months, which they had to return by working hard and overtime when the lockdown was over, so surviving was a big issue. Very few companies are there, which have taken care of their employees. They paid their salary on time, took measures for their health and food, and ensured their family members' health. Those working in the factory or construction site stayed in unhygienic conditions. The Covid protocol advises keeping a physical distance, yet these individuals remained in a room with ten other people without windows. Those women were domestic employees responsible for looking after the owner's family health. Without caring for themselves, they were devoted to their owner's family to protect the latter from the Covid-19 crisis. Sometimes they did not take the necessary safety measures. There are apparent existential crises. On the other hand, the hiring process and the need for workers decreased due to the absence of global economic improvement. Therefore, the ladies who intend to immigrate or go home for a vacation do not have the opportunity to start new careers or resume their previous employment.

Conclusion

Above mentioned problems of the women migrants from India can be solved. Awareness campaigns among the migrants and implementing and re-structuring policies by the Government of India can resolve and reduce the problems among the migrants. The Government has already introduced some guidelines to improve the condition of the migrants, like Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY), Nation Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY). In the following section of this paper, after researching these women, the Government introduced policies mainly for international migrants. It shows they are benefiting from this path-breaking few recommendations came for their benefit.

On the other hand, women migrants migrating inside the country are also facing the same problems. The Government of India and various state governments are taking care of them, too, and implemented projects to improve their situations and the condition of their families. Nowadays, any migration process is internationally acknowledged as a part of social development, and Government policies are facilitating it from the root level to the international. For instance, the Government is aware of the monetary issue from the international perspective, so the first precaution step is raising and maintaining a minimum wage for every migrant. It made

a Central Database to fill the differences between the demand and supply of employers and employees. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship focuses on the skill development program for all migrants. The Ministry of Education cares for migrant children's education under the Right to Education Act 2009. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is introducing a project to give night shelters, short-stay homes, and seasonal accommodation for temporary migrants. National Legal Service Authority (NALSA) and The Ministry of Labour set up a grievance cell for any complaints from the migrants, and they are giving back responses to them and taking care of necessary actions.

Observations

After completing research for this paper, there are some observations. The Government has taken some necessary actions to control and improve the migration process, but there are still gaps and faults. These can be overcome by following some restrictions and strict rules. There is Pre-departure and Orientation Training (PDOT) by Government, but this should be mandatory for all migrants, especially those migrating internationally. Furthermore, there should be a language training course along with this training. The Government must provide more job opportunities in the homeland, agricultural credit, and insurance. The Government may facilitate the situation further by introducing debt bondage and unfree labor, a pension scheme for the farmers at home, creating an enabling environment for potential migrants. Migration information and support center to facilitate independent women migrants, awareness of social protection schemes, financial entitlement, and legal services for spousal abuse among migrants; community-level interventions, individual or couple counseling to improve physical and mental health, low-cost public health care service and exceptional care during emergency periods like the Covid-19 situation.

References

- Caplow, T. (1959). *The Sociology of Work*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1837-1838.
- Davis, K. (1968). *The Population of India and Pakistan*. Russell & Russell, UK.
- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. <http://mospi.gov.in>.

Paul, R. E., Loy, B., and Anne. H. E. (1979). *Golden Diaspora*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Press Information Bureau. <http://pib.gov.in>.

Tinker, H. (1974). *A New System of Slavery*. London: Oxford University Press.

Tinker, H. (1977). *Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*. London: Oxford University Press.

From Engineer to Entrepreneur: Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee, a Torchbearer of Indian Industrialization

Dr. Sanjib Ghosh

Abstract

Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee (1854–1936) was famous for his entrepreneurship and innovation ability during colonial rule in India. Engineering and entrepreneurship together were quite uncommon in India during that time. One of the notable exceptions was Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee. His alliance with Martian & Company started a new movement in India's industrialisation. He was a trailblazer in this instance. His organisation built several waterworks and power plants that aided imperial India's modernization.

Keywords: Palta Waterworks, T.C. Mookerjee & Co., Martian & Co., Light Railway, Industrialization etc.

Introduction

During the colonial period of India, steamships, railways, electric telegraphs, printing technology, telephones and other innovations began to attract the attention of the aborigines. The continued display of new and advanced technology by the British to consolidate their power in India and increase its productive resources, but aroused a considerable amount of curiosity among the Bengalis. Western technology has created new ambitions among indigenous peoples. In this case, the life and work of Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee (1854–1936) was a remarkable example. He was born in 1854 into a middle-class orthodox Brahmin family in Bhabla, a village near Basirhat town, not far away from Calcutta.¹ In his childhood, he lost his father Bhagabana Chandra Mookerjee, who was a flourishing Muktear in Barasat. He was raised in a family with a strong tradition of entrepreneurship and business acumen. He completed his Matriculation Examination from the London Missionary Society Institution at Bhowanipore. After completing the Matriculation Examination, Rajendra Nath Mookerjee enrolled in the engineering course at the Presidency College. During that period, the civil engineering department of the college primarily served as a channel for the recruitment of surveyors, overseers, and subordinate positions within the Public Works Department (PWD).² Consequently, most students who pursued this degree had limited aspirations and

Assistant Professor, Depart of History, Bangabasi Evening College, Kol, W.B., Mob. -9432685172, Email id – sanjibghosh331@gmail.com

aimed for any jobs within the PWD. Engineering entrepreneurship was quite uncommon at the time. Rajendra Nath, however, spent three years at the college and developed a genuine and intense passion for civil engineering. He found himself deeply engrossed in the subject matter and genuinely enjoyed exploring its intricacies. Unfortunately, his pursuit of a diploma was abruptly halted due to his deteriorating health. Despite his dedication and commitment, Rajendra Nath was forced to abandon his studies. But in Suvobrata Sarkar's recent work, we found that he had completed his B.C.E degree from Bengal Engineering College in 1883.³ In this writing, I will try to explore the role of Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee in Indian industrialization during the hostile phase of colonial India.

Early career as an independent engineer:

Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee, an exceptional individual who started from humble beginnings, achieved remarkable success both as an engineer and through various entrepreneurial endeavours. Revered as the preeminent figure in trade and industry in Calcutta, he embodies the epitome of determination and resilience. With unwavering willpower and unyielding perseverance, he ascended to this prestigious position, leaving an indelible mark on the business landscape. Started his career as a part-time teacher of mathematics in a girls' orphanage in Calcutta.⁴ However, he had developed a sincere and passionate interest in engineering problems, and he never missed an opportunity to carefully study large construction and engineering projects in Calcutta. One day, when he was strolling with Ram Brahma Sanyal⁵ in Alipore Zoological Gardens while observing the construction of a bridge, he noticed that the English engineer in charge was having difficulty explaining to the workers how to construct an abutment wall just before the spring of an arch. Instantly understanding the situation, he called the overseer and clearly explained to him in the local language (Bengali) what needed to be done. This encounter brought him into contact with the English engineer Bradford Leslie, who was then serving as the Chief Engineer of the Calcutta Corporation. Later Leslie gained fame as the designer of the Hooghly Bridge. Impressed by Rajendra Nath's understanding of the project's intricacies,⁶ Leslie took him on a tour of the Patla Water Works, which were being expanded at that time. As a result, Rajendra Nath was awarded the contract for the entire project. This was how Rajendra Nath got his first contract.⁷ The Patla construction was completed on time and the then-chief engineer

was satisfied with Rajendra Nath's work. After completion of the work, he was asked to stay and supervise the maintenance of the filter and settling tanks of Palta. During this time, he also undertook minor construction works under PWD at Calcutta and Chinsurah.⁸

Unveiling New Horizons: T. C. Mookerjee & Co.'s Adventure Begins:

Gradually he rose to prominence in the field of engineering. Sir Rajendra's commercial career started to become large-scale with the setting up of T. C. Mookerjee & Co., with Bhut Nath Mookerjee as a partner.⁹ The initials were borrowed from the name of Bhut Nath's elder brother. A second break came when the Calcutta Corporation had sanctioned a plan for laying a 40-inch (100 cm) diameter main pipeline from Palta to Calcutta, at an estimated cost of over fifty lakhs of rupees. Tenders were called for pipes and laying them out accordingly. Six European firms responded. Two were interested in supplying the pipes but the other four were eager to do the whole work. On behalf of his firm, Rajendra Nath won the contract for installing the main water-pipe, after competing against six European competitors. As a result of his experience, along with his expertise, talent, vision and innovations, Rajendra Nath's firm was able to complete the contract within eighteen months and to the satisfaction of all concerned. The firm of T.C. Mookerjee & Co. came into the limelight as a result. In a short time, he came to be known as the foremost expert on waterworks in Bengal.¹⁰

Rajendra Nath had established himself in the local scene and was looking for greater things. The United Province's government chose to build water systems in the province's major cities. Agra was the first to issue the call for tenders. Sir Stuart Hogg, the chairman of the Calcutta Corporation at the time, endorsed Rajendra Nath's proposal. But Rajendra Nath's proposal was rejected by the UP government. Although he submitted the lowest bid and was strongly recommended by the Agra Municipality, it was not accepted by the Government and the contract was instead awarded to a European firm called M. Edwards of Calcutta.¹¹ The rejection could only be explained because an Indian firm had submitted the tender.¹² But Rajendra Nath's plan was well appreciated by A.J. Hughes, the project's head engineer of the Agra Waterworks.

Collaboration with Martian:

When the advertisement for the Allahabad Waterworks scheme was released, A.J. Hughes, the chief engineer of the Agra Waterworks project, suggested to Rajendra Nath that he should consider collaborating with European companies. Hughes, aware of Rajendra Nath's abilities and qualifications, mentioned his name to Acquin Martin, a resident of Walsh. Impressed by Rajendra Nath's credentials, Martin entered into a contract with him. The agreement stated that Martin would take on the responsibility of financing the purchase of materials from England, while Rajendra Nath would focus on the actual construction work.¹³ This partnership forged a deep and enduring friendship between the two men, which lasted throughout their lives. Rajendra Nath also wanted a European name because already his experience had shown him the usefulness of an English name. Thus the great Indo-British organization known as Martin & Co. of Calcutta was formed in 1892.¹⁴ This company carried out the installation of waterworks in the principal cities of North India like Meerut, Nainital, Benras and Lucknow.

Martian & Co. and Light Railways Connecting India:

The company initially focused on waterworks, however after a few years, Rajendra Nath took the initiative to build a light rail line to improve the internal communication system in Bengal. Except for the main Eastern Bengal Railway line, there were practically any connecting lines between Calcutta and the outlying regions, according to Rajendra Nath, who recognised that communication was one of the province's most pressing requirements. Rajendra Nath, on behalf of his firm, offered services to the administration as a contractor for the construction of light railway lines on the understanding that "during the construction period, or immediately after, his firm would establish a joint stock limited liability company with the guarantee of a minimum dividend rate to the shareholders, this guarantee being issued under the imprimatur of the local municipality or district board, or jointly under the authority of the Government of India and the local administration."¹⁵ The first light railway line constructed under this scheme was the Howrah-Amta Light Railway (1897-98, the popular name of this route was the Howrah-Amta Tramway). The great impetus which the operation of this feeder line has given to bringing the surrounding districts of Howrah within easy transport to reach the trading centre very soon created a popular demand for similar feeder lines all over

the country. The growing number of light railways under this managing agency could have satisfied Rajendra Nath with the victories he had achieved, but his ideas were so fruitful that he felt that there was limitless potential for development in India. Following the Howrah-Amta Light Railway, other 2'6" gauge lines with a combined length of about 270 miles included the Howrah-Sheakhala Light Railway, Barasat-Basirhat Light Railway (1905), Shahdara-Delhi-Saharanpur Light Railway (1907), Arrah-Sasaram Light Railway (1911), and Fautwah-Islampur Light Railway (1922). Martin & Co. also worked on building the Ranaghat- Krishnanagar and Arakan Light Railway during the first decade of the 20th century. The Chaparmukh-Silghat Railway (metre gauge), which spans 50.81 miles, was completed in 1920.¹⁶ Many people were impressed by Rajendra Nath's outstanding accomplishments, which inspired both adoration and enmity. The European business community in Calcutta, in particular, felt uneasy about his success, leading to a response characterized by exerting pressure on the Railway Board. They wanted to prevent the further establishment of feeder lines supported by the government or local authorities. These responses eventually led to the official decision to end the feeder line policy under the guarantee system.¹⁷

Rajendra Nath: Exploring Beyond Entrepreneurship:

After the waterworks, the construction of light railways commenced, and Martin & Co. emerged as designers and constructors. Nearly all the impressive and grand structures that were erected in the city during the initial two decades of the twentieth century were designed by Rajendra Nath. The Mysore Memorial, Esplanade Mansions, and Chartered Bank Buildings, to mention just a few, stand out as his most noteworthy contributions as a civil engineer.¹⁸ The famous Victoria Memorial in Calcutta was designed by Rajendra Nath and King George himself laid the cornerstone of this monument in 1911.¹⁹ This was one of the great achievements of Rajendra Nath.

In 1911, Rajendra Nath was appointed as the Sheriff of Calcutta, a prestigious position. In this role, he was invited by the Government of India to the Coronation Durbar held in Delhi. It was customary for Sheriffs of Calcutta to be knighted at the end of their term, and Rajendra Nath and his friends expected the same. However, during the distribution of Durbar honours, he was surprised to receive the higher award of K.C.I.E. (Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire).

In 1922, Rajendra Nath was further honoured with the title of K.C.V.O. (Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order). This recognition was likely bestowed in appreciation of his firm's contribution to the construction of the Victoria Memorial, which was inaugurated by the Prince of Wales in 1921.²⁰

Though he was well informed about business as well as Indian social and economic conditions,²¹ so we find him appointed as chairman or member of various important committees. He presided over the All-India Economic Conference in Allahabad in 1910, and six years later he served as an influential member and briefly as the chairman of the Industrial Commission (1916-18).²² He served as a member of the Transport Committee, and a little later of the Railway Committee in 1921. He was the first president of the Institution of Engineers (India) (IEI) in 1921 in Calcutta.²³ The same year Indian Science Congress in its eighth session chose him as the president. The following year, he had the honour of chairing a committee comprising distinguished engineering experts, which presented an unequivocal report on the Hooghly Bridge.²⁴ In 1923, he assumed the role of chairman for the Bengal Retrenchment Committee, and in 1924, he served as a member of the All-India Retrenchment Committee under the presidency of Lord Inchcape. Furthermore, he emerged as a notable figure within the Indian Coal Committee of 1924-25. Moreover, his influence was substantial as a member of the esteemed Royal Commission on Indian Currency and Finance during the years 1925-26. He was also associated with the Asiatic Society of Bengal.²⁵

He was also interested in all kinds of educational and welfare movements. He was particularly interested in female education and generously helped a large number of girls' schools and also lent his support to the establishment of the Gokhale Memorial School. Sir Rajendra joined GH Fairhurst and established the Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) at Burnpur in 1919.²⁶ Towards the end of his life, Sir Rajendra Nath added to his business empire by purchasing the firm Burn & Co. in 1927. With this, the firm Martin & Co. expanded to Martin, Burn & Co.²⁷

Sir Rajendra Nath Mookherjee, this public-spirited business magnate not only contributed to the growth of Indian entrepreneurship and industrial and urban development in modern India but also promoted the cause of education and social progress. His remarkable journey stands as a testament to the limitless possibilities that diligent effort and unwavering aspirations can unlock. Despite encountering numerous trials and impediments along the way, Mookerjee persevered, ultimately

emerging as one of his era's most accomplished and revered industrialists. An architect within India's burgeoning industrial landscape, he possessed a visionary understanding of the vast potential inherent in the Indian market. His pioneering endeavours laid the groundwork for the nation's economic advancement, fostering an environment conducive to the growth of indigenous industries. Notably, he advocated for the harmonious fusion of Western technical practices and the nurturing of cordial relations between domestic and international capital. These convictions guided his leadership of Martin & Co., steadfastly steering the firm amidst a climate dominated by Swadeshi principles and nationalistic sentiments. Mookerjee's unwavering commitment to rationality and the pursuit of excellence propelled his enterprise forward, unencumbered by extraneous sentiments.

References

1. K.C. Mahindra., '*Rajendra Nath Mookerjee: A Personal Study*', Calcutta, Martin Burn & Co., 1962, P.5.
2. PWD was established in 1884. The landscape of technical education was changed after the establishment of the Public Works Department. From the very beginning, governmental construction works were at first carried out by military personnel under the control of the Military Board at Fort William, but in 1854-55 Public Works Department (PWD) was established. With the expansion of its activities, the British required a large number of subordinate surveyors, mechanics, and overseers. Trained local youths were obviously cheaper than technical personnel from out of the country. To fulfil this demand, schools and colleges were established.
3. Suvabrata Sarkar, '*Let there be Light: Engineering, Entrepreneurship and Electricity in Colonial Bengal, 1880-1945*', New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2020, p. 109
4. S. P. Sen (ed.), '*Directory of National Biography*', Calcutta, Institute of Historical Studies, 1972, pp. 166"67.
5. Ram Brahma Sanyal was the first Indian to serve a superintendent of the Alipore Zoological Garden. Also, he was Rajendra Nath Mookerjee's friend.
6. Nripendra Krishna Chattopadhyay, '*Dwadash Suriya*', Calcutta, Dev Sahitya Kutir, Boishakh 1350 B.S, p.138.
7. P. C. Mahalanobis, "Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee: First President of the Indian Statistical Institute 1931-1936," *Sankhyā: The Indian Journal of Statistics*, 1936, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 237-240.

8. *The Calcutta Municipal Gazette XVIII.5*, June 24, 1933, p. 201.
9. S. P. Sen (ed.), op.cit., p. 117.
10. K.C. Mahindra., op.cit., p. 138.
11. Ibid., op. cit., p. 150.
12. P. C. Mahalanobis, op. cit., p. 239.
13. 'Life and Work of Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee: The Inaugural-President of The Institution of Engineers (India)' . In *The Institution of Engineers (India), Diamond Jubilee 1980: Souvenir*, Calcutta, 1980, pp. 35–7.
14. Tarun Rana, *The Legendary Sir Rajendranath Mookerjee*, Kolkata, Kolkata Municipal Corporation, 2013, p.54.
15. Tarun Rana, op. cit., pp.62-71.
16. K.C. Mahindra.,op. cit., pp. 193-94.
17. Sudhanshubikash Roy Choudhury, "Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee," *Banik* 8.5, (Bhadra 1340 B.S.) 1933, p. 135.
18. *Martin Burn Limited*, pp.,1"19.
19. *Banik* 8.6, (Aswin 1340 B.S.), 1933, pp.,161"66.
20. P. C. Mahalanobis, op. cit., p. 239
21. Aparajith Ramnath, *Engineers in India: Industrialisation, Indianisation and the State, 1900–47*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 84.
22. *Report of the Indian Industrial Commission 1916-1918*, Calcutta, Superintendent Govt. Printing, India.
23. H. Nandy (ed.), *IEI Marches On*, Kolkata, Institution of Engineers (India), 2002, p. 64.
24. Nripendra Krishna Chattopadhyay, op. cit., p. 140.
25. P. C. Mahalanobis, op. cit., p. 239.
26. N. R. Srinivasan, *History of the Indian Iron and Steel Company*, Burnpur, Public Relations Department of IISCO, 1983, pp.14-41.
27. N. R. Srinivasan, op. cit., p.27.

The Intoxicating Drug Culture of Colonial Bengal and the Altered Taste

Souvik Das

Abstract

The use of drugs is a “natural” feature of human life. Recreational use of mood-altering substances appears to have been widespread throughout human history. Almost every cultural group has accommodated some form of the drug. Their use has often been linked to some kind of faith practice, social rite, or spirit medicine, not to mention regular physical medicine. Several intoxicating substances were common in pre-colonial Bengali society. Colonialism introduced new factors that profoundly altered Bengal’s social and cultural perceptions and drug intoxication patterns. Consumption of intoxicating drugs is not only a social concern but also a subject of colonial powers’ excise regulations to impose imperial control over the colonised people, with the drug industry being an essential source of revenue.

Keywords: Ganja, Charas, Siddhi, Opium, Hookah, Cigarette, Excise

Introduction

Researchers exploring the history of “mood-altering substances” have concluded that intoxicant usage is a “cultural universal,”¹ despite its many complexities. The use of “mood-altering substances” is not only common but frequently integral to many religious rites, social practices, and cultural norms around the globe. The cultural tastes of an individual or a community may change depending on the established social order. Sometimes people might think they had religious, healing, energising, or sexual significance. They also commonly communicated philosophical, ethical, and transformatively significant symbolic aspects. Establishing world trade networks enabled interdependence, the accumulation of wealth, the spread of new ideas, and the movement of cash and commodities. David T. Courtwright has called the widespread availability of intoxicants due to their incorporation into international trade a “psychoactive revolution.”² The drugs’ hedonic, addictive, and (in some cases) nutritious properties led to their widespread acceptance and high sales.

The culture of drug intoxication offers a new view of colonial Bengali society. Colonial rule affected the cultural fabric of Bengal in every way, shape, or form

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Bijoy Krishna Girls’ College, Howrah

with economy, society and mindset. Bengal in pre-colonial times was addicted to its uniqueness. The colonial rule introduced certain new components that dramatically altered the Bengalis' sociocultural outlook and impacted their intoxication pattern. In colonial Bengal, intoxicating drugs became the centre of cultural inheritance as well as a crucial revenue stream for the Indian colonial government in the 1790s. As per the extant worldwide scholarship on the history of alcohol and drugs, an intimate relationship exists between cultural norms and government regulations about mood-altering substances. The correlation between the consumption of hemp drugs, opium, tobacco, and cocaine as commodities with distinct yet definite "pharmacologic" characteristics and the emergence of modern colonialism provides valuable understanding regarding the interrelatedness of broader historical trends and movements. The commercialization of substances that induce intoxication emerged as the basis of a potentially lucrative industry.

The interplay between drug use and individual preferences in Bengali society has undergone multiple transformations in the context of cultural diversity. The main aim of this article is to offer a historical and contextual perspective on the impact of psychoactive substances on personal consumption choices. This study prompts an investigation into the prevalent patterns of drug consumption in colonial Bengal and also investigates how indigenous and Western intoxicants ran in parallel and the temporal evolution of individual preferences. The present study will focus on the historical span from 1893 to 1943. In 1893, it was important for the formation of the Royal Commission on Opium and the Indian Hemp Drug Commission. The ROC was tasked with examining the feasibility of halting India's export trade to the Far East and implementing a ban on the cultivation of poppy and consumption of opium in India, except for medicinal purposes.³ The IHDC has initiated an investigation into the cultivation of hemp, production and trade of drugs, as well as the social and moral implications of such activities in Bengal.⁴ Additionally, the study aims to examine the patterns of usage of ganj and other related drugs among the populace. The year 1943 witnessed a significant development in the Indian excise administration, including tobacco excise articles within the jurisdiction of India's excise department.

Intoxicating Drug Culture

In colonial Bengal, people consumed hemp drugs, opium and its preparations,

tobacco, and cocaine in different modes and forms. Almost all of the ways these widely used drugs can be used for pleasure which was widely recognised, while their possible risks are often ignored by cultural norms and customary patterns of consumption. If used inappropriately or excessively, any of these drugs can result in sickness, bodily or mental harm, addiction, or even death. Carl A. Trocki contends that drugs only became societal issues when they were transported out of their “original” contexts to people or nations that had not been acclimated to their use or when their availability, manufacture, or distribution changed dramatically.⁵ The aforementioned occurrences are commonly referred to as “drug epidemics” or “drug plagues” within the context of historical discourse. This phenomenon occurred in Bengal during the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Bengali society experienced an abrupt surge in the prevalence of individuals consuming and misusing highly addictive substances. This phenomenon has a significant impact on a large number of people. The phenomenon generally elicits a great deal of attention and reaction from colonial Bengali intellectuals, who interpret it as a symptom of societal degradation or collapse. On the other side, there was conflict among different levels of colonial authority. The colonial ruler’s imperial thoughts took on a distinct tone.

Hemp Drugs

In the colonial excise administration, any preparations that were obtained from the hemp plant were classified as hemp drugs. The preparations were used not solely for inducing a state of intoxication but also for therapeutic and medicinal purposes. The excise administration list in Bengal included four different articles of hemp drugs, specifically *ganja*, *charas*, *siddhi*, and *majum*. Ganja was commonly consumed in Bengal for intoxication, and this is just one form of smoking. During the colonial era of the Bengali presidency, two distinct types of ganja were produced, along with three different commercially available sorts. The manufacturing and excise system in Bengal employs a unique terminology, featuring specialised categories such as flat,⁶ round,⁷ and chur⁸ ganja.⁹ Ganja users have mixed feelings about the addictive characteristics of the different ganja strains available in Bengal.

In contrast to *siddhi* and *charas*, which are exclusively consumed on special occasions, *ganja* was consumed daily and was no longer regarded as a holiday

stimulant. Ganja was inhaled using a chillum, a funnel-shaped clay instrument. At least one-tenth of a tola was required for one chillum; preferably, two or three smokers shared one chillum or bowl. A regular smoker requires three puffs to get intoxicated; the effects last for hours. In 1893, there was a debate regarding a frequent smoker's yearly ganja consumption. For moderately frequent smokers, some witnesses proposed to the IHDC a daily allowance of 1/10 of a tola and an annual allowance of 23 tolas.¹⁰ However, K. G. Gupta, Bengal's Commissioner of Excise, stated that the average quantity of ganja used yearly should be 35 tolas and that moderate customers should pay between three and six pies daily.¹¹ However, ganja made up the majority of hemp drug sales in the province. Ganja and similar derivatives provided Rs. 2450685 to 1892–93 excise income of Rs. 11600621. Hemp drugs made up 21% of excise income, behind only country spirits.¹² Ganja accounted for Rs. 2386066 of the four hemp-based drugs taxed. Calcutta, Mymensingh, Dacca, the 24-Parganas, Rangpur, Pabna, Tippera, Cuttack, Puri, and Bihar reported the most significant ganja sales per maund of population in 1892–1893. The table presented provides an estimation of the quantity of hemp drug that was consumed in Bengal.

Table: 1 (All sorts of Hemp Drug consumption and Excise Revenue of the Bengal, 1887-1938)

Year	Sold for consumption (Mds, seers, Chatak)			Retail licenses				Revenue			
	Ganja	Charas	Siddhi	Ganja	Charas	Siddhi	Majum	Ganja	Charas	Siddhi	Majum
1887-88	6550.14	4.35.10	1010	2949	19	265	53	2245020	2272	420661	2202
1892-93	5452	11.26.12	1034	2672	31	288	33	2386066	9097	53558	1984
1897-98	4651	20.24.4	964.9	2706	33	390	21	2657452	19932	64083	1482
1902-03	4843	21.13.13	1104.0.6	2760	39	402	19	3262120	31255	85024	1892
1907-08	2998	32.5	1320	2040	56	448	21	2637531	43770	97828	1286
1912-13	3070.10	27	698.7	1422	51	235	....	2908174	59158	102745	....¹
1917-18	1908.20	19.34	605.4	1267	30	220	....	3418874	52668	124496	....
1922-23	1588.21	32.1	449.26	1184	30	266	....	3662432	108161	180643	....
1927-28	1670.21	69.37	427.10	1208	34	316	....	4686329	326948	203251	....
1932-33	942.29	27.26	263.16	1214	34	335	....	2844438	150380	123161	....
1937-38	837.13	19.11	2221.35	1274	46	390	....	2675921	96728	124565	....
1939-40	866.31	21.1.13	222.38	1285	48	402	....	2765093	126140	120458	....

Both the number of licenced retail ganja shops and ganja usage has decreased since 1905. The question now is whether the drop in ganja usage is due to public

knowledge or whether Bengali society has grown conscious of the negative implications of ganja. In other words, the question is whether the “ganja insanity theory” has acquired traction in Bengal. However, throughout the twentieth century, ganja’s popularity has steadily declined, which can be attributed to a variety of causes. Undoubtedly, the Swadeshi movement in Bengal aided in the growth of the locally-owned tobacco sector.¹⁴ Cigarettes and bidis have been available in Bengal since the early twentieth century. As a result, many people in the province have developed a dependence on cigarettes and bidis rather than ganja. Furthermore, ganja needed more effort and time to prepare than cigarettes and bidis, which merely required lighting up. In addition, young Bengalis imitated Western culture by smoking cigars, cigarettes, and cheroot instead of *ganja kolke*, while the rural poor were addicted to inexpensive bidis.¹⁵ When British India’s capital was relocated from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, the number of people working in government offices as office attendants or guards who were strong ganja users declined. Again, a segment of eastern Bengal’s educated young lost interest in Trinath worship, and as a result, ganja smoking and Trinath rites diverged, with the latter consigned to a small population. The number of ganja retail outlets in 1929–30 was almost the same as it was in 1912–13, but the quantity sold fell to 1159 maunds and 7 seers.¹⁶ Although prices vary greatly, we find that taxes per seer averaged Rs. 22.9 in 1912–13 and Rs. 77.9 in 1929–30.¹⁷ Since 1930, the number of authorised retail stores has fallen from 1422 to 1206 in 1930–31 and to 1211 in 1931–32, as consumption has fallen from 1155 maunds and 9 seers in 1930–31 to 1013 maunds and 16 seers in 1931–32.¹⁸ Despite keeping the price of ganja below its 1929–30 level and increasing the number of authorised merchants to 1422 in 1935–36, sales did not increase. Instead, 811 maunds and 17 seers of ganja were sold for consumption throughout these fiscal years.¹⁹ In addition, ganja usage in Bengal dropped in the following years. The availability of alternative intoxicants, rather than political unrest or the Gandhian movement, appears to be to blame for the decline in ganja’s popularity in Bengal. It is possible that the nature of Bengali intoxication culture has evolved due to the proliferation and accessibility of more intoxicants and that Bengali society has moved away from traditional addictions and towards contemporary addictions.

Charas was only used for intoxication and had no therapeutic properties. Smoking was the only way to consume. The intoxication effect is immediate after

three whiffs, although it is just momentary. The daily allocation was expected to remain at approximately a quarter of a tola, and annual use will be roughly one seer per consumer.²⁰ People in Bengal did not use charas as frequently as other hemp-derived substances such as ganja and bhang. This particular hemp drug failed to gain acceptance in the province of Bengal, resulting in low consumer interest. However, its use was restricted to the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Midnapore, Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas, Calcutta, Nadia, Murshidabad, Jessore, Khulna, Dacca Mymensingh, Rajshahai, Dinajpur, and Manbhum in the province. According to district officials, the substance was primarily used by people of the Punjabi, Peshwari, and Chittagonian Lascar communities, as well as members of the labouring classes, prostitutes, those with a history of criminal behaviour, and the wealthy and bhdralok classes, who used it to substitute ganja due to its terrible odour.²¹ Although charas was popular among both male and female artists, notably those in the Jatra and theatrical groups. several factors led to the low adoption rate. It was thought to be more expensive than ganja. During the fiscal year 1892–93, the average tax per seer for ganja was Rs. 10.8, while bhang was taxed at Rs. 2.5 per seer. Charas, on the other hand, had to pay a far higher tax of Rs. 40 per seer.²² Similarly, the tax on ganja was Rs. 76.16, bhang was Rs. 12.8, and charas was Rs. 132.3 in 1936–37.²³ As a result, the price would be more than twice that of ganja. Charas' high price is thought to be attributable to its importation from Central Asia via Punjab. It is possible that consuming charas was not a prevalent custom in Bengal and was not associated with any established cultural or religious practices. Despite its effectiveness in producing intoxication, its effects wore off quickly, and its high price may have deterred individuals from taking it, encouraging them to resort to other drugs.

Siddhi, Bhang, Sabzi, and Patti are some of the names given to the dried leaves of the hemp plant. In Bengal, the most popular way to take siddhi was by drinking. This drink was occasionally drunk on Bijoya Dashmi, Diwali, Chait Sankranti, Pous Sankranti, Sripanchami, Ramnavami, Sivachaturdasi, and Ganesh Chaturthi.²⁴ Furthermore, bhang was employed in the making of Kabiraji medication. However, tracking bhang consumption was difficult due to the vast cultivation of bhang plants across Bengal, which may be utilised without the involvement of the excise authority. Calcutta, the 24-Parganas, Patna, and Gaya were the only places that sold excise bhang. After Bihar and Orissa left the Bengal administrative

presidency in 1912, bhang demand developed in Western Bengal districts such as Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore, Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas, Calcutta, and Nadia. Only Dacca in eastern Bengal took demand into account. Consumption was low in the remaining Bengal presidency districts. Regional festivals, infectious disease outbreaks, and infrastructure development all had an impact on Bengal's bhang consumption. Excised bhang sales were constant from 1893 to 1912, but thereafter fell. In 1904-05, excise bhang consumed 1078 maunds.²⁵ Consumption fell to 698 maunds and 7 seers in 1912-13.²⁶ Because the majority of Siddhi users are from Bihar and Orisa, the partition of Bengal diminished the incidence. Pricing issues cannot explain the drop in bhang use. This drug was found to be quite affordable compared to other hemp-derived drugs' expenses. Individuals may be more inclined to consume alcohol rather than time-consuming, complex Siddhi preparations for gradual intoxication. Majum is a hemp-flavoured delicacy made with sugar, ghee, butter, milk, siddhi, and bhang. Consuming it for small wants Only Calcutta, Dacca, Patna, and Shabad were major consumption hubs. The Excise Administration stopped mentioning Majum in 1911-12. Demand may imply consumer disinterest.

Opium and its Preparations

Opium, like hemp, was used for a variety of purposes in Bengal, including medical, recreational, ritualistic, and ceremonial applications. The opium department supplied "excise opium" to the excise department for local usage; authorised shopkeepers subsequently sold it to Bengal customers. Opium usage was a common practice. People ate, drank, and smoked opium. Opium, also known as *afim* in colonial Bengali society, was consumed in the form of pills and eaten raw. It was also mixed with water and drunk. The opium habit was largely for medicinal and quasi-medical purposes as well as for non-medical objectives, particularly in ceremonial and social circumstances.²⁷ Opium was used as a popular household remedy by a large number of people in Bengal. It was considered to prevent or cure malaria, rheumatism, diabetes, endemic diarrhoea, cholera, and dysentery, and it was used as a pain reliever. According to the colonial government, malarial areas made up a large portion of the Bengal region. Opium intake was not regarded as a sin or a luxury by the indigenous populace in these locations but rather as a necessity for survival.²⁸

In colonial Bengal, opium's traditional use as a cure for a variety of diseases

gave way to its appeal as a stimulant in the nineteenth century. According to Sir William Roberts, most people began their opium habit between the ages of 35 and 45, when life began to slow down and indications of old age began to appear.²⁹ Opium users often take 2 to 8 grains each day, half in the morning and the other half in the evening. There was a significant disparity in consumption between the poorer and upper groups. Calcutta had the highest opium consumption per head in the late nineteenth century, at 0.02 seer.³⁰ The consumption was similarly high in the districts of the Burdwan division (excluding Bankura), the 24-Parganas, Murshidabad, Rangpur, Chittagong, Patna, Prunea, and Malda, where the incidence per head ranged from 0.001 to 0.003 seer.³¹

Table: 2 (Opium Consumption and Excise Revenue of the Bengal, 1887-1938)

Year	Opium quantity sold (mds)	License			Revenue			
		Opium	Madak	Chandu	Opium	Madak	Chandu	Total
1887-88	1939	2319	369	89	1984918	85305	37415	2107638
1892-93	1934	3025	263	71	2085116	79659	31032	2195807
1897-98	2086	2990	....	....	2318598	....	....¹	2318598
1902-03	2351	3757	....	....	2652154	....	....	2652154
1907-08	2430	1909	....	....	2659207	....	....	2659207
1912-13	1697	1438	....	....	2376309	....	....	2376309
1917-18	1074	1219	....	....	2944947	....	....	2944947
1922-23	1006	2122	....	....	3183170	....	....	3183170
1927-28	994	2401	....	....	4798712	....	....	4798712
1932-33	736	2488	....	....	3818761	....	....	3818761
1937-38	654	2515	....	....	3461916	....	....	3461916

Madak or *goli* smoking and *chandu* smoking were the two most frequent types of opium smoking in Bengal, although their preparation and smoking techniques were considerably different. As per the conclusions drawn by the Royal Commission

on Opium, the act of opium smoking was a recent phenomenon that was predominantly prevalent in foreign cultures.³³ It follows the rise of a new and dangerous drug culture in Bengal, where opium became “smoked” by a rising number of addicts. In urban areas of Bengal, people often smoked *chandu* and *madak*. The divisions of Burdwan, Presidency, Rajshahye, Bhgalpur, and Orissa had the highest rates of *madak* preparation consumption. The cities of Calcutta, 24 Pargunnhas, Dacca, Mymensingh, Chittagong, and Bhagalpore were the most prolific consumers of *chandu*.

In addition, laudanum and morphia from opium preparations were popular in urban areas. The opium tincture Laudanum is used for intoxication. A considerable percentage of addicts combined alcohol and laudanum. Morphia is an opium alkaloid that is exclusively used to get high. Collectors’ customs stated that it was primarily imported to meet rising demand. It is used in place of cocaine for all reasons where cocaine was previously used.³⁴ It was far less expensive than cocaine, and its importation was unrestricted. These were the causes of the growing demand for it. Opium eaters use Morphia as a replacement for raw opium. Except in Jessore at the beginning of the late nineteenth century, it was unknown in the mufassal; it was only consumed in Calcutta. By the early twentieth century, it had spread throughout the province. In the early twentieth century, syringe-administered morphine was most common in metropolitan Calcutta, and many addicts were physicians and their wives.³⁵

The retail price of opium and the high price of food grains decreased the use of opium, but the influx of labour increased consumption, resulting in a fluctuating trend of opium use in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1905-06, there was an upward trend in 26 districts and a drop in 8 districts out of the 34 districts.³⁶ Surprisingly, higher consumption occurred in the regions that were the furthest away from the producing districts. However, the largest opium consumption was 2430 maunds and 31 seers in 1907–08, compared to 2122 maunds and 10 seers in the prior years.³⁷ Although opium usage steadily fell after that, colonial excise policies had a significant impact on this fluctuating pattern. To prevent smuggling, the colonial authorities implemented a restricted system in almost every region of Bengal Province. Consumption fell in the majority of districts as a result of this colonial force. The Superintendent of Excise Revenue, Calcutta, Mr Babonean, pointed out that the consumption of other excisable articles increased rather than

opium, with that of country spirit rising 18% and that of ganja rising 23%, which was the average of three years consumption.³⁸ With the suggestion of the Shanghai International Opium Commission, the colonial government imposed unification of treasury pricing of opium across the province, and hours of the sale were limited. To prevent the entry of illegal opium, the government expanded the number of retail licences, and also under pressure from various international organisations, the government increased druggist permits for opium preparations, although consumption did not increase.

In 1912–13, there were 891 licenced shops, 535 druggist permits, 12 licenced poppy heads, and 1697 maunds and 17 seers of opium used.³⁹ Despite having 948 retail licences and 1480 druggist permits available in 1939–40, only 655 maunds and 28 seers of opium were consumed by the public.⁴⁰ In the opium-growing areas of the Patna division, the retail price per seer was as low as Rs 20 and as high as Rs 55, while in Puri and Calcutta, the price was just Rs 35 in 1907–08. The treasury price of opium was Rs 29 to Rs 35 per seer in 1912–1913. In 1929–30, opium sales brought in Rs 482,164,6, an all-time high.⁴¹ Opium sold for Rs 71 per seer this fiscal year, except in the Calcutta, 24-Parganas, Howrah, and Hooghly districts, where it sold for Rs 91 per seer. In 1912–13, the average consumption per 1000 people was 1.5 seers; in 1929–30, it was .85 seers.⁴² Opium's skyrocketing price was a major factor, and the widespread availability of other intoxicating substances like imported spirits, medicinal wine, and cigarettes also prompted a shift in consumer preferences. Cocaine first debuted in Bengal in the late nineteenth century as a tooth-care medication, but by the end of the century, it had evolved into an intoxicating stimulant. The colonial excise administration classed it as a stimulant and listed it on the excise article list at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Tobacco

Tobacco addiction affects a large proportion of the people in colonial Bengal. The history of tobacco in Bengal is characterised by international connections, major financial factors, and different cultural influences. Tobacco usage has symbolic and frequent moral undertones in every culture. Tobacco, as a social system, subsequently turned into a tool that made it easier for individuals to connect. Giving and getting tobacco is a traditional practice in Indian culture to express friendship, solidarity, and the consultation process. Tobacco was offered to visitors

as a customary norm in Bengali society.⁴³ Specific religious and social practices were interwoven with tobacco smoking in East Bengal. The “prayer of the dervish” was a tobacco use pledge that both Hindu and Muslim groups in this area adopted.⁴⁴ Typically, tobacco-using widows would execute this ritual. After cleaning several sections in the courtyard one day, numerous hookahs and chilli tobacco was put up for some dervishes, who spoke and smoked tobacco at the end of the day. Many non-Bengali ethnic groups came here for employment, bringing their regional tobacco traditions like *Khaini*, *Zarda*, *Gudakhu*, and *Gundi* with them. The benefits of railways led to the introduction of bidis, which was popular among the rural lower classes. Smoking has come to embody freedom and equality for those who have faced discrimination because of their gender or socioeconomic standing, even if it began as a form of rebellion or the pleasure of unlawful experimentation.

On the other side, there was a noticeable shift in Bengali society’s tobacco consumption pattern. Initially, Bengali society consumed tobacco through hookah and chewing, but cultural shifts necessitated the use of other types of tobacco consumption. We noticed that various tobacco use habits include smoking, chewing, applying, sucking, gargling, and so on. Two types of tobacco products were commonly used in colonial Bengal: smoking tobacco and smokeless tobacco. Hookah, cigars, cheroot, cigarettes, and bidis were all forms of tobacco smoking. *snuff*, *khaini*, *zarda surti*, *gudakhu*, *dokta*, *gundi*, and other smokeless tobacco products were available.

The pattern of tobacco smoking in colonial Bengal shifted from traditional to western in the second half of the nineteenth century. Hookah, which had become so popular in Bengali society, began to fade in the second half of the nineteenth century. The fall of hookah popularity is widely linked to the introduction of cigars, cigarettes, and bidis. Hookah addiction was time-consuming, and obtaining ingredients was difficult and expensive. Hookah smoking is a sign of patience and stability, with slow and calm times interspersed with moments of serenity and intense concentration. And, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the era of new technology—railways and telegraphs—began. As a result, Bengali life began to run more quickly. He had to scabble for a living as the taste of Bengali society changed as a result of Western education. In this fast-paced Bengali existence, one can detect a lack of interest in hookah usage. Matches were devised to make hookah usage simpler, but they also aided in the proliferation of cigarettes, cheroot,

cigars, and bidis.

Although Cheroot and cigars were not very popular among Bengalis. A group of Bengali society members who were familiar with Western customs acknowledged its popularity. The government established Rangpur tobacco farm stations to research tobacco cultivation for the huge demand for tobacco. In 1908, the government established a tobacco unit at Burirhat under the Rangpur farm, which was famous for cigar and cheroot production.⁴⁵ The government's Burirhat Farm guided the production of cheroots and cigars. There were 25 brands of cigars manufactured, such as Coronas, Imperials, Invincibles, Epicures, Favourites, Planters, Havana, Manila, Torpedo, Florida, and so on. The amount of cheroot consumed in Bengal was very small in 1934–35, estimated to be 139,810 lb per capita.⁴⁶ In Bengal, the average yearly consumption is four cigars per person.⁴⁷

Bonshak's invention of the cigarette-making machine altered the global pattern of tobacco smoking consumption. However, smoking in the form of cigarettes remained essentially unknown until 1890. Cigarettes first appeared in Calcutta around 1895⁴⁸ and in Dacca around 1899, according to recorded history.⁴⁹ Several British, American, Egyptian, and Turkish corporations have now begun importing cigarettes into India. However, cigarette usage was initially lower than that of other tobacco products. Cigarette smoking was prevalent in Bengali society around the turn of the twentieth century. Modernity, war, advertising, the Swadeshi movement, and films were just a few of the unique circumstances that aided the extraordinary expansion of cigarette smoking in the twentieth century. The first four causes influenced the popularity of cigarettes in Bengal. Bengali youth saw smoking cigarettes as a mark of both modernism and thrilling smartness. Cigarette smoking is frequently associated with masculinity and confrontation. Cigarettes were a must in the troops' rations, and even Red Cross Society volunteers and nurses took packets of cigarettes for the injured and assisted disabled men in lighting their beloved smoke. Cigarettes are quite popular in Bengal since they are simple to smoke and may be consumed without any preparation. To introduce cigarettes to Bengali society, several European corporations used different advertising strategies.

Cigarettes were heavily imported at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1905-05, India imported 1040 crores of cigarettes.⁵⁰ It is also known that from 1901-02 to 1903-06, cigarettes and cigars worth over Rs 103 lakhs were imported

into Bengal alone, while in 1905-06, Rs 45 lakhs worth of cigarettes were imported into Bengal, a 25% increase over 1904-05.⁵¹ As a result of the steady increase in the importation of foreign cigarettes, the Bengali smoking habit grew. As the smoking habit spread, so did the demand for imported cigarettes and cigars, resulting in a drain of money from the country. That was the height of the Swadeshi movement, and it was widely understood that something needed to be done to meet the challenge and halt the outflow.⁵² On the other side of health concerns, some people began to oppose cigarette use.⁵³ There were several cigarette factories built, and only Indians owned and operated them. The Globe Cigarette Co., the Bengal Cigarette Mfg. Co., the Calcutta Cigarette Co., the Swadeshi Cigarette Co., the Naidu Cigarette Co., the Rangpur Tobacco Co., the Indian Cigarettes Mfg. Co. Ltd., and the National Tobacco Co. Ltd. all owned these factories.⁵⁴ National Tobacco Company Ltd.'s Kohinoor brand cigarettes and Bengal Club brand tobacco combinations were particularly well-liked for their high quality and taste. The Bengal Cigarette Mfg. Co. manufactured several brands of cigarettes, including the Apple, Cricketer, and others, which were considered to be of "unrivalled excellence" and "superior to that of foreign manufacturers." East India Cigarette Manufacturing Co. was a joint venture between India and Turkey that promoted the Kali brand of cigarettes.⁵⁵ Its commercial claims that the paper used to make the Kali cigarettes has a unique material that does not cause respiratory issues such as coughing when smoked. Darjeeling tea plantation labour preferred cheap Battle Axe cigarettes.⁵⁶ An almost identical commercial was written for the well-known Mohini Bidi. Bidi was a direct result of Bengal's Swadeshi movement. Bidi is not a Bengali product; it originated in Gujarat and came to Bengal via Madhya Pradesh owing to railway expansion. Because of its inexpensive price, it became quite popular among lower castes and impoverished people. As a result of the enormous popularity of cigarettes, foreign companies constructed factories in Bengal, and Imperial Tobacco Company of India Limited opened a cigarette manufacturing factory at Monghyer in 1907.⁵⁷ By the 1930s, ITC had controlled the bulk of the Indian cigarette industry, offering over 35 brands of cigarettes, both cheap and luxurious.⁵⁸

Encounter with Drug Culture

The advent of Colonial Modernity impacted the phenomenon of intoxication, which significantly influenced societal attitudes and reactions towards this issue. The Bengali elites realised that the consumption of intoxicating drugs, specifically

ganja and opium, fostered social differentiation. The societal nomenclature for intoxicating drug addiction was deemed “petty addiction,” whereas the Ganjakhor, Afimkhor, Golikhor, Chandukhor, and Addadhari communities were classified in a differentiated manner. In Bengali literature and vernacular magazines, the drug culture is attacked in a variety of ways. Bengali intellectuals have attempted to persuade the people about the negative consequences of drugs based on social and moral considerations rather than public health considerations. Bengali intellectuals bemoaned the fact that, while under British control, Bengal rose to the top of India in terms of education and civilization, it also rose to the top of the country in terms of drug addiction.⁵⁹ They served as moral teachers, warning people about the potential hazards of drug use. Surprisingly, Bengal’s temperance group concentrated on drunkenness rather than intoxicating drugs. The response of Bengali society to drug culture shifted slightly in the twentieth century when some Bengali health periodicals such as *Chikitsha Prakash*, *Chikitsa O Somalochok*, *Chikitsa Twatta Bigan*, *Swasthya*, and *Swasthya Samachar* attempted to raise public health awareness by discussing the harmful effects of drugs. On the other hand, various commercial periodicals, including *Byabshai*, *Krishi Lakshmi*, *Arthik Unnati*, and *Krishak*, promote drug culture, particularly tobacco culture.

However, in the late nineteenth century, numerous Europeans and administrative officials questioned colonial excise policy and the consequences of drugs on public health. In response to the colonial intelligentsia’s reaction to drug culture, the government established the ROC and IHDC in 1893. However, the IHDC stated that the occasional use of ganja in modest dosages can be helpful, and hemp drugs have no negative impact on health.⁶⁰ Similarly, ROC stated that opium is harmless and that moderate use may be beneficial.⁶¹ although Cigarettes received more attention from Bengali intellectuals in the twentieth century than any other form of tobacco product. With the reaction of Bengali intellectuals to cigarettes, the colonial authorities issued the *Bengal Juvenile Smoking Act 2 of 1919* to prohibit boys from smoking. The colonial tobacco policy never sought to curb tobacco usage. Due to the high demand for tobacco in the 1920s, Bengal was India’s main tobacco-producing region. From 1929–30 to 1935–36, the average area for tobacco cultivation in Bengal was 293 acres, which was 27.8% of the total tobacco growing area of British India.⁶²

Conclusion

The correlation between drugs and consumers' inclinations is primarily contingent upon the cost factor. Typically, consumers are compelled to alter their preferences in response to an increase in prices. However, the personal inclinations of the individual motivate them to seek out alternative substances. The alteration of drug use among Bengalis was influenced by cultural practices and colonial policies, which were exerted by colonial force. As a consequence, tobacco consumption, particularly through the use of cigarettes and bidis, has gained more prevalence than other substances within Bengali society during the 20th century. The significant prevalence of tobacco consumption compelled the colonial administration to incorporate tobacco into the excise administration in 1943, as the administration was unwilling to lose the revenue generated from tobacco. Despite the absence of a formal government classification of tobacco as an intoxicant. The colonial administration made efforts to control the physical and mental aspects of the colonised population by disseminating knowledge about drug culture. This was achieved through the establishment of various commissions and excise acts that dealt with drug culture. Intoxicating substances were utilised by colonial authorities not only as a source of financial gain but also as a mechanism of imperialism and as an instrument for propagating civilising endeavours.

References

1. J. Goodman, P. Lovejoy and A. Sheratt (eds), *Consuming Habits Drugs in History and Anthropology*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 5.
2. David T. Courtwright, *Forcess of Habit: Drugs and the Making of Modern World*, USA: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 1.
3. *Report of the Royal Commission on Opium, Vol. 1*, London: For Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1894, p. 3.
4. *Report of the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission, Vol. 1 Report*, Simla: The Superintendent of Government Central Printing Office, 1894, p. 1.
5. Carl A. Trocki, *Opium., Empire and the Global Political Economy A study of the Asian opium trade 1750-1950*, London New York: Routledge, 2006, p. xi.

6. Flat ganja, also called *chapta ganja*, was produced by trampling ganja underfoot. As a result of this phenomenon, the agglomerated flower tops assume a flatter shape.
7. Round ganja, also called *goli* is made by rolling it underfoot rather than stepping on it, which results in the agglomerated flower tips being less firmly adhered to one another and taking on a more rounded appearance.
8. When completely dry, both flat and round ganja are bailed in a specific manner, and a certain amount of loose resinous matter falls off during this process, called *chur*.
9. *Memorandum on Excise Administration in India so far as it is Concerned with Hemp Drugs* by W.S. Meyer, Simla: Govt. of India, Finance Department, Govt. Central Printing Office, 1906, p. 4
10. *Report of the IHDC*, Vol. 1 Report, op.cit, p. 129.
11. *Report of the IHDC*, Vol. 3 Appendices - Miscellaneous, op.cit, p. 13.
12. *Report on the Financial Results of the Excise Administration in the Lower Provinces for the Year 1892-93*, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893, p. 15.
13. Data is not available because Bengal Excise Administration discontinued making specific references to Majum
14. Amit Bhattacharyya, *Swadeshi Enterprise in Bengal: 1900-1920*, Kolkata: Mita Bhattacharyya, 1986, p. 172.
15. Basanta Kumar Chowdhuri, Tamak, *Swasthya Samachar*, No. 12, Chaitra 1337 B.S., p. 366.
16. *Report on the Administration of the Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the year 1929-30*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1930, p. 27.
17. *Report on the Administration of Bengal 1929-30*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1931, p. 153.
18. *Memorandum on Excise (Hemp Drugs) Administration in India for 1931-32, (16th edition)*, Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1933, p. 10.
19. *Memorandum on Excise (Hemp Drugs) Administration in India for 1936-37, (21st edition)*, Delhi: Manager of Publications, New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1939, p. 9.
20. *Report of the IHDC*, Vol. 1 Report, op.cit, p. 133.

21. *Report on the Administration of Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the Year 1921-22*, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, p. 17.
22. *Report on the Financial Results of the Excise Administration in the Lower Provinces for the Year 1892-93*, op.cit, p. 39.
23. *Memorandum on Excise (Hemp Drugs) Administration in India for 1936-37*, Delhi: The Manager Publications, 1939, p. 9-10.
24. *Report of the IHDC*, Vol. 1 Report, op.cit, p. 160.
25. *Report on the Excise Administration in the Lower Province of Bengal for the year 1904-05*, Calcutta: The Secretariat Book Depot, 1905, p. 17.
26. *Report on the Administration of Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the Year 1912-13*, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, p. 16.
27. *Report of the ROC*, Vol. 1, op.cit, p. 99.
28. *Consumption of Opium in India*, London: Her Majestys Stationary Office, 1892, p. 5.
29. *Report of the ROC*, Vol. 6, op.cit p. 102.
30. *Report on the Financial Results of the Excise Administration in the Lower Provinces for the Year 1897-98*, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Press, 1898, p. 42.
31. *Ibid*, p. 42.
32. In accordance with the recommendation of the ROC, the government has banned the licences of Chandu Madak Salons.
33. *Report of the ROC*, Vol. 6, op.cit, p. 9.
34. *Report on the Administration of Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the Year 1905-06*, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1906, p. 22.
35. Arun Nag, *Chitrita Padme*, Calcutta: Dey's Publishing (edition), 2012, p. 23.
36. *Report on the Administration of Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the Year 1905-06*, op.cit, p. 21.
37. *Report on the Administration of Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the Year 1907-08*, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1908, p. 29.

38. *Ibid*, p. 30.
39. *Report on the Administration of Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the Year 1912-13*, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, p. 18.
40. *Report on the Administration of Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the Year 1939-40*, Alipore: Superintendent, Govt. Printing, Bengal Government Press, 1940, p. 37.
41. *Report on the Administration of the Excise Department in the Presidency of Bengal for the year 1929-30*, *op.cit*, p. 32.
42. *Memorandum on Excise (Opium) Administration in India for 1929-30*, Delhi: Manger of Publications, 1931, p. 11.
43. Kaminikumar Roy Sabhatay Pan Tamak, *Masik Basumati*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Kartik 1356 B.S., p. 56-61.
44. *Ibid*, p. 56-61.
45. Jamini Biswas, Tamak, *Bangiya Krishi Bibhager Batsarik Krishi Samachar*, 1324-26 B.S. (1917-19), Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1920, p. 51-54.
46. *Report on the Marketing of Tobacco in India and Burma*, Simla: The Manager of Publications, Government of India, p. 78.
47. *Ibid*, p. 78.
48. J. Barnard Gibbs, *Tobacco Production and Consumption in India and Burma*, United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Foreign Agriculture Relations, Washington D.C., 1939, p. 51.
49. Sadur Rahman, *Dhakai Khabar O Khaddo Sangskriti*, Dhaka: Oitijjhya, 2016, p. 144.
50. Krisak, Bhadra, 1313 B.S., p. 99.
51. An Outcome of the Swadeshi Movement, *DDSM*, March, 1908, p. 79 cited in Amit Bhattacharyya, *op.cit*, p. 170
52. Amit Bhattacharyya, p. 172.
53. Aswini Kumar Chattopadhyay, *Kajer Boi-Ba-Bastab Unnatir-Prakrita-Path Chinta*, Calcutta, 1314 B.S., p. 22-23.
54. Amit Bhattacharyya, *op.cit*, p. 172
55. Kaushik Dutta, *Dhumbilas*, Kolkata: Parcmnt, 2021, p. 13.

56. Narendra Kumar Das, Jibon Kalyan, *Swasthya Samachar*, Boishakh, 1334 B.S., p. 147-150.
57. Kathinka Sinha-Kerkhoff, *Colonising Plants in Bihar (1760-1950)*, India: Partridge, 2014, p. 190
58. Champaka Basu, *Challenge and Change: The ITC Story 1910-1985*, Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1988, p.. 94-95.
59. Kanti Chandra Sarkar, *Tamaker Dosh O Itihas*, Calcutta: B. Banerjee & Co., 1288 B.S., p. 31.
60. *Report of the IHDC*, Vol. 1, op.cit, p. 263-264.
61. *Report of the ROC*, Vol. 6, op.cit, p. 93.
62. *Report on the Marketing of Tobacco in India and Burma*, op.cit, p. 7.

Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission: An important stream of the Ramakrishna Movement

Dasarath Paul & Kakoli Tah

Abstract

The 19th century is known as the 'renaissance era' in the history of Bengal and India. The reform movements that started in the first part of this century under the influence of Western education and culture were fulfilled through the Ramakrishna movement. The movement began and spread around the lives and teachings of Ramakrishna, Sarada Maa and Vivekananda. Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Math and Mission to do public welfare work based on Ramakrishna's life and teaching. Ramakrishna Math and Mission is the main organization of Ramakrishna movement. But among the other organizations which are important in developing this movement are Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, Private Ashramas and groups of Lay devotees. Following the basic ideals and methods of the Ramakrishna movement, Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission have been providing education, medical services, distribution of relief materials, rehabilitation etc. They work on the ideal of 'Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva' (Service to Man is Service to God) and render service to all irrespective of caste, creed, class, colour, region.

Keywords: welfare service, mass, harmony, tradition, moral values, modernity.

Introduction

Ramakrishna Movement is one of the most progressive movements not only in India but also in the world in the modern times. 'Sri Ramakrishna is the central source of all power in the Ramakrishna Movement'¹. Fundamentally it is a religious movement, but at the same time this movement has also brought a new trend in socio-cultural life. The organizers of this movement wanted to create a new type of man, pure in heart, rational in thought, unselfish in motivation, and enlightened by the experience of the unity of existence. They are eager to end all differences and bring about harmony. They believe and propagate the ideology that Hindus will be better Hindus, Muslims will be better Muslims and Christians will be better Christians. The idea of serving God in man, irrespective of his caste, creed, class, language, region etc. is an integral part of the spiritual discipline of the members of the Movement. The base of this movement lies in Vedantic tradition. At the same

Dasarath Paul, Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of History, Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia

Kakoli Tah, Associate Professor, Department of History, J. K. College, Purulia

time, a liberal and universal outlook can be observed in it. That is why Western science, rationalism and organizational techniques have been adopted and integrated into this movement.

In the 19th century, under the influence of Western science and rationalism, the non-existence of God, agnosticism was being propagated in India. At this time there is great confusion all around. In such a context this new movement emerged. The Ramakrishna movement can be said to be the fruitful outcome of the much-discussed renaissance of the 19th century.

Swami Vivekananda, the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, made this movement active, lively and practical. And the living example and inspiration of this movement is Shrima Sarada Devi. In fact the Ramakrishna movement is – ‘the Wide Water of Ramakrishna’. The ‘Wide Waters’ consist of four streams. Ramakrishna Math and Mission together are the main channel of this movement. These two institutions were established by Swami Vivekananda with the help of his monastic brothers, householders and devotees. It has been engaged in public welfare work since their inception under the ideal of ‘Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva’(serving God in Man). Other streams are – Groups of Lay devotees, Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, Private Ashramas and un- affiliated centres. These streams are engaged in human service following the core ideology, motto, activities and programme of the movement. In this article I will discuss the role of Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission in promoting and spreading Ramakrishna Movement.

Establishment of Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission

The great patriot monk Swami Vivekananda traveled across India on foot after the Mahasamadhi (1886) of his Master (Sri Ramakrishna). During this time, he witnessed India’s poverty, discrimination and prejudice and was constantly looking for a way to free India from it. According to him, ‘The great National sin in the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall’². He also wrote- ‘In India there are two great evils .Trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.’³ And the way to solve it is education. Even he emphasized on education for the development of women. According to him, the Welfare of women can be done by women themselves. First they need to be educated, self-reliant and confident. Then they will be able to identify their own

Problems and find solutions. It should be noted that women were at the root of the reform movement that was going on in Bengal and India under the influence of the West in the 19th. Century. Some elites led these reform movements to eliminate women-centric problems. However, women were not directly involved in these movements. The reform movements were going on as if imposed from above. There was no attempt to make women confident and independent. Vivekananda was impressed by the freedom, self-confidence, and organizational power of women in the West, especially in America. And on the other hand, he was deeply troubled by the condition of our women, slavery and misery. He wrote-‘There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.’⁴ So he wanted to establish a Math for women before men. According to him, although there are external differences between men and women, they are not different. ‘Is there any sex-distinction in atman (self)? Out with the differentiation between man and woman- all is atman!’⁵

Therefore, like men, women can attain celibacy. He thinks that if even one of the women is Brahmajna (Knower of Brahman) then thousands of women will wake up with her talent. He noticed the characteristic difference of Indian women from American women. The real characteristic of Indian women is motherhood. According to him, ‘The ideal of womenhood in India is motherhood-that marvelous, unselfish, all-suffering, ever-forgiving mother.’⁶ He wanted to establish a separate Math centering on Sri Sri Ma to give a Holistic form to this maternal development. In one of his letters he wrote: ‘Mother has been born to revive that wonderful Shakti in India; and making her the nucleus ,once more will Gargis and Maitreyis be born in the world ...To me Mother’s grace is a hundred thousand times more valuable than Father’s. First build a Math for Mother. First Mother and Mother’s daughters, then Father and Father’s sons’⁷. Sri Sri Ma, through her practical life and conduct, became the ideal and central character of Stree Math. For 34 years after Sri Ramakrishna’s death, she fulfilled various responsibilities as Guru, Mother, and Sanghajanani. She is like a bridge between traditional and modern lifestyles of India. Sometimes she seems to be the last representative of the old ideals and sometimes she seems to be the forerunner of a new ideal.

The various initiatives he took to establish the Stree – Math are known from his letters. He wrote –‘In this terrible winter I am lecturing from place to place and fighting against odds, so that funds may be collected for Mother’s Math’⁸. Although

Stree -Math was not established during Swamiji's lifetime, within a few years the tone of awakening sounded in the minds of several women. The opening of Nivedita School on November 13, 1898 can be counted as its first step. Margaret Elizabeth Noble became Vivekananda's disciple after listening to Vivekananda's lectures on Vedanta in England and being impressed by various conversations of Vivekananda. She was eager to do anything for the betterment of India in the Guru's (Master) ideals. Vivekananda was also looking for a lioness like Nivedita for the betterment of India, especially for the welfare of women. So in 1897 he called upon Nivedita to lead the Indian women and said-'I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man but a woman; a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women specially. India cannot yet produce great women, she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination, and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.'⁹ Nivedita devoted herself to the development of India's religion, society, science and culture at the call of the Guru. Impressed by her service to India, Rabindranath Tagore honoured her by the name 'Lokamata'. She established a school in Bagbazar (Kolkata) with the blessings of Sarada Maa and the help of Swamiji and other monks for the welfare of women.

Around this school, women were also encouraged to join the service work (welfare work). Several women joined this school, who later became nuns in the Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission. Notable among them are Renuka Basu (later Pravrajika Mokshaprana), Gouri Dasgupta (later Pravrajika Dayaprana), Bijoli Sen (later Pravrajika Vidyaprana), Lakshmi Sinha (later Pravrajika Shraddhaprana) and others. While serving in this school, they were inspired by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda philosophy and took a vow of monastic life. In 1946, Asha Devi (later Pravrajika Muktiprana) wrote an article titled 'Hindu Women's Right to Sannyas' in the journal 'Udbodhan' (a mouthpiece of R.K.M). Through this, she expressed her intense desire for a life of renunciation. Being spiritually inspired, in 1950, a group of women under her leadership requested for the bestowal of the Sannyas to women by the Belur Math authority. There was also a small group of women who desired to join to form a monastic sisterhood under the Ramakrishna Math. Since many young women from various areas and classes had come forward to join, the authorities of Belur Math started giving serious thought to Swamiji's idea of establishing a Stree-Math.

In May 1952, the Monks' Conference recommended the establishment of Women's Math and on May 29, 1952, the trustees of Belur Math accepted the same. This proposal was already put forward by Revered Swami Virajananda, who said in his Presidential Address at the fourth Monks' Conference of the Ramakrishna Math in 1946- "the problem of women-workers has not received our due attention so far long. They have not been given any appreciable scope for leading the monastic life in the Sangha as yet...It is the high time that the case of women-workers who earnestly desire to dedicate their lives to the Sangha should receive careful and sympathetic consideration. In this connection, it is well to remember that Swamiji wanted to establish a Math for women, and gave it precedence over even that for men."¹⁰ But the Belur Math authorities also knew that there were several problems in setting up the Stri-Math. Revered Swami Madhvanandaji Maharaj told Asha Bandyopadhyay (later Pravrajika Muktiprana Mataji) that at least one person should have spiritual knowledge to lead all the women together. It would have been very easy if Sri Ma Sarada Devi or one of her disciples had done that work. It was at this time that the Belur Math authorities selected Sarala as the head of the Stri Math. Her life has been shaped by the presence and teachings of Sri Sri Ma Sarada Devi. She served Sri Ma for three years until her passing away in July 1920. "In 1924 Swami Saradananda initiated her into sannyasa according to Tantra and gave her the name Sri Bharati"¹¹. After Swami Saradananda's death in 1927, she practiced Sadhana at Kalidham for 27 years. She established herself as the inheritor of Sri Sri Ma's spiritual wealth.

On the December 27, 1953, during the Centenary Celebration of Holy Mother's birth, Swami Shankarananda, the president of Belur Math initiated some dedicated women into brahmacharya. And on the 10 th of July 1954, a temporary home was provided for Brahmacharins at Entally, Calcutta. Later in December 2, 1954, Stri-Math (Sri Sarada Math) was established permanently at Dakshineswar. Then on the January 1, 1959, the birthday of Holy Mother, eight senior members of the Sri Sarada Math were ordained by Revered Swami Shankaranandaji Maharaj, President of Belur Math and Mission. Actually it was a preliminary step to the formation of an independent women's organization. On 26 th of the August, 1959, Sri Sarada Math was given independent status and the sannyasinis became its Trustees by virtue of a Deed of Trust executed by the Belur Math authority (Deed No. 4109 for the year 1959 registered on 9.9.1959). From 1954 to 1958 Sri Sarada Math was

a branch center of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur. Its administration was under the responsibility of Belur Math's Achhi Parishad (Trustee of Belur Math). Swamiji wanted Stri-Math to be conducted on exactly the same principles as that for the men, with some restrictions. 'The women's Math will be managed by the men from a distance, so long as competent women are not available for the task. After that, they will themselves manage all their affairs.'¹² So senior monks of Ramakrishna Math and Mission helped them from a distance.

Thus, the birth of the Independent Hindu Sannyasini Sangha is a landmark event in India as well as of the whole world. Shankaracharya (eighth century) did not approve of the asceticism of women. But Swamiji wanted to establish a monastery for women as per the need of the times. His hope was fulfilled 50 years after his death. While preparing the rules of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in 1897, Swamiji spoke about need to the establishment of the Stri-Math. If Swamiji had not mentioned the need of the Stri -Math in the rules of the Sangha or given clear instructions, the Stri-Math centering around Sri Ma might not have been established centered on Srīma. Ramakrishna Sarada Mission was established in May 1960 for the welfare of women and children by the Trustee of Sri Sarada Math on the advice of Belur Math. The nuns of Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission use the title 'Pravrajika' before their ordained name, and are usually addressed as 'Mataji' meaning 'mother'. The aim of the new institution is to carry out various social activities with the help of lay devotees enlightened in the spirit of Ramakrishna's 'Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva'.

Activities of the Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission

The establishment of Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission is a very significant event in the socio-cultural history of post-independence India. Independence was a cause of great joy for the people of India. At the same time it is sad, because the country was divided and riots were seen in different areas. Improvements in food, clothing and shelter, education and health, employment etc. became challenging for the national leaders. The national leaders took initiative to adopt and implement various plans to improve the political and administrative development of the newly independent country as well as socio-economic-cultural etc. Non-governmental organizations also came forward as their partners in this work. Ramakrishna Math and Mission started various welfare works irrespective

of caste, creed, class and region since its inception. After independence, the scope and pace of their work has increased. Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission formed on the ideals of Ramakrishna movement have been doing public welfare work since its establishment. Sri Sarada Math is basically a spiritual institution. They emphasize on spiritual and moral development. And Ramakrishna Sarada Mission is a public welfare organization. It mainly works for the development of women and children through the spread of education, health improvement, vocational training, relief and helping the poor. Apart from the main centre, Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission are currently doing service work through about 35 branch centres. They are doing this welfare work not only in West Bengal, but also in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Delhi, Gujarat etc. Even abroad they are played a leading role in spreading the Ramakrishna ideology. Ramakrishna Sarada Mission bases its work on the principles of Karma yoga, the principle of selfless work done with dedication to God.

Spread of Education

The British did not provide universal education in India during the colonial period. They spent very little money on the spread of education. Even they provided narrow education in India. In post-independence India, national leaders have taken initiative to take education to a higher level by setting up various commissions. But still some narrow influence of the West remains in Indian education. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore—Education became our burden not our pet. Even after independence, the number of female students is very less compared to male students. Education is most needed to make women confident, independent and self-reliant. Vivekananda emphasized on spread of education for the betterment of women and even the whole of India. So he wrote: ‘They (Indian women) have many and grave problems, but none that are not to be solved by that magic word ‘education’¹³. He spoke of a system of education which develops all aspects of the student—physical, mental, spiritual, moral, emotional. It is ‘Man-making education’ or ‘Character-building education’. This ‘Man-making education’ is one of the four pillars of education that UNESCO has mentioned in 1996 as recommended by Delor’s Commission. By getting this education, ‘Mann’ (value) and ‘Hunsh’(awareness) should be created in people. He thought that divinity is hidden in all people. So by

defining education he said-‘Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.’¹⁴ Keeping in Vivekananda’s educational philosophy, Ramakrishna Sarada Mission is expanding education in India by establishing primary schools, secondary schools, college, vocational training centers etc. All women and children irrespective of caste, creed, and class get this service.

Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission started their activities centering Nivedita School. Presently it is named Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, Sister Nivedita Girls’ School. This school is unique being the only educational institution for girls which was inaugurated by Sri Sarada Devi in the presence of Swami Vivekananda and some of his brother disciples on 13 November 1898 at Bagbazar in Kolkata. It is also unique because noble souls like Vivekananda and Nivedita served for it. The school was closed for some time after its establishment due to financial crisis. It was reopened permanently in February 1902. In 1918, the school was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission. Later, when the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission was established, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission authorities handed it over to them in 1963. In the first phase, this school was completely home-based, teaching was imparted in the like of kindergarten system. There are three main section: primary section (I to iv), secondary section (v to x), and industrial department. It runs also a boarding house for the students, a publication department, a free coaching classes for the poor children of the neighborhood. The secondary section is affiliated to the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. It is aided by the Government of West Bengal since 1949. According to Swami Vivekananda –‘The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the students’ soul and see through the students’ eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else.’¹⁵ The teachers of this institution also positive approach in the minds of students by eliminating negative and destructive thoughts. Industrial department or Pura – Stree Vibhaga was started in 1903 by Sister Christine and Sister Nivedita. It aims to make local girls self-supporting and self-confident. Here girls are taught crafts like embroidery, tailoring and toy-making. Since 1949, the department has been recognized by the Directorate of the Government of West Bengal. In fact, in these educational institutions, emphasis is not only on curriculum education, but also on the development of the student’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral, emotional aspects.

Ramakrishna Sarada Mission established a college named Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan in Dumdum in 1961 to provide higher education to girls. This college started with only thirty one students. At present around 500 students get the opportunity to study Bengali, English, Sanskrit, Education, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Economics, Geography, Psychology, Human Rights, Journalism and Mass Communication, Mathematics here. This semi-residential college also offers various career oriented courses. It is known from the prospectus of this college. Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan recently tied up with reputed organizations like the Sister Nivedita University (Techno India Group), National Skill Development corporation, and Sri Sarada Math Rasik Bhita for conducting the following add-on professional courses under the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan School of Professional studies: Hospital/ Healthcare Management, PG Diploma in Advertising and Public Relation, psychiatric Counselling Course, Anchoring, Computer Courses, English for Academic Purpose, GIS and Remote sensing. All-round development is provided to the girl students of this college. “The boarders (college hostel) are taught to be self-reliant, active, and efficient, and responsible. They are entrusted with various duties and responsibilities not only in the hostel, but also in the Shrine, the garden and the sick- rooms.”¹⁶

Vivekananda wanted women to become self-reliant by educating them and society would change for the better. For this purpose, Ramakrishna Sarada Mission has set up primary schools in centers like Dakshineswar, Baranagar, Shillya village (Burdwan), Gangarampore (24 Parganas South), Siriti (Kolkata), etc in West Bengal and outside West Bengal in Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh. Besides, free library, painting classes, adult education classes, free coaching classes, Spoken English classes, Yoga Classes, Computer Classes have been arranged in various centres.

Medical service

Another important area of Ramakrishna movement is to serve sick and suffering people irrespective of cast, color, creed, class, area. They serve in the spirit of ‘service to man is service to God’. Branch centers of Ramakrishna Math and Mission have opened charitable hospitals, mobile medical units. They fulfilled their objective by establishing hospitals. And through allopathic, homeopathic and

ayurvedic treatment thousands of people are cured every year. One of the streams of the Ramakrishna movement is Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission. The nuns of this organization also consider the work of human service as worship of God. They do not consider any task small or unimportant. Even without considering whether they are men or women. Swamiji said –‘We should not think that we are men and women, but only that we are human beings, born to cherish and to help one another’¹⁷. Inspired by Swamiji’s thoughts, they have been working to relieve the diseases of thousands of people by establishing a hospital, several charitable dispensaries and mobile medical units.

Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Matri Bhavan is the only charitable hospital centre run under Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, Dakshineswar, Kolkata. It has been rendering dedicated services to women and children through its charitable hospital, School of nursing, community health services and vocational training unit. It is a non-profitable organization. Its journey began in 1950 with only ten beds under the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Later the Ramakrishna Mission authorities handed over its management to the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission in 1961. ‘From the very beginning the Matri Bhavan aimed at providing health care to poor urban mothers and children, promoting the concepts of self-motherhood among the underprivileged families.’ Now it is a well-equipped hospital with service facilities for obstetrics, Gynecology, General Surgery, General Medicine, Pediatrics, Neonatology, ENT, Dentistry, Ophthalmology, Orthopedics, Dermatology, Homeopath and Operation theatre. The nuns run this hospital with a spirit of honesty and selfless service. Their management skills are very high quality. With the help of a few doctors, nurses and other helpers, this hospital has been selflessly serving all classes of people with efficiency over the years. Selfless service awakens the dormant divinity of the service giver and service receiver. With this idea, they provide modern medical services in various places in India including Bengal through charitable dispensaries and mobile medical units. Medicines are given free or at very low cost in these centres. They also take initiatives to eliminate various superstitions and traditional blind medical practices prevalent in remote areas.

Development of spiritual life

Ramakrishna Math and Mission promote the ideal of harmony of all religions in the spiritual field. The basic foundation of their spirituality is Ramakrishna’s ‘Yata Mat

Tata Path' (as many faiths so many paths). Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission also conduct all their activities on that ideal. Sri Sarada Math and its sister concern organization, Ramakrishna Sarada Mission have the same motto –"Atmano mokartham jagat hitaya ca"(for one's own liberation, and for the welfare of humanity).The nuns of this organization do not just seek their own liberation. They want to improve themselves spiritually not only through service and religious practices in monasteries and missions, but by prioritizing the welfare of the world .They believe in Swamiji's ideology of 'Practical Vedanta'. They consider all work as worship. No work is neglected as small for them. They not only preach this attitude, but at the same time express their attitude through their actions. Apart from the main centre, every branch centre also propagates spiritual ideas through daily worship, spiritual speeches and discussions, birthday celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna, Maa Sarada, Swami Vivekananda and others. The essence of this Sangha is renunciation, austerity and devotion to God. In the presence of nuns, this spiritual attitude expands among people as well. As a result, people get disillusioned and Peace of mind comes and self-strength increases. Besides, they publish books on the life of Sri Ramakrishna, Ma Sarada, Swamiji and others in Bengali, English, Hindi, Oriya, Taegu, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi etc. languages. These books are distributed at very low cost or free in order to illumine the life of general public. Simultaneously this organization publishes a English journal 'Samvit' since 1980 and Bengali journal 'Nibodhata' since 1987 to propagate spiritual and social values among the masses. They are trying to represent the traditional ideals of India to the world in a new way.

Rural development and Relief work

After Ramakrishna's Mahasamadhi (death), Vivekananda traveled across India on foot and saw the poverty and misery of marginalized people. He took various initiatives along with the brother disciples to alleviate their plight. When Swami Akhandananda started his service work at Mahula in Murshidabad district of West Bengal, he encouraged him to work for the poor and the ignorant. He took initiative to improve these lives neglected by people taking up various projects and providing financial help. Above all, he wanted to make them confident and self-reliant by spreading education among them. Besides, his Master's (Ramakrishna) heart was filled with compassion to see the poverty and misery of the marginal people when

going through a village near Vaidyanath at the time of his pilgrimage to Kashi, Vrindavan and other holy places with Mathur (son-in-law of Rani Rashmoni). He forced Mathur to help these poor people-”Give these people sufficient oil to cool their heads and each a piece of cloth to wear and feed them to their fill once”¹⁸. Thus he started ‘Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva ‘(Service to Man as God). Following this ideology , service work is conducted in Ramakrishna-Spirit. Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission have also taken various initiatives to make girls self-reliant, self-confident with these ideals and practices. They have provided formal education as well as vocational training through their centres .To fulfill this objective in 1903 Sister Christine along with Nivedita formed the industrial school, known as ‘Pura- Stree Vibhaga’. Various vocational trainings are given to girls here since its inception. Such as toy making, tailoring, embroidery etc. Besides, vocational training for girls have been arranged in centers like Gangarampur (South 24 Parganas), Thakurnagar (Purba Midnapore), Shillya (Burdwan) etc.

Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission also provide relief work and rehabilitation services following the path Ramakrishna Math and Mission. During natural calamities like storms, floods, droughts, earthquakes etc. they also stand by the helpless people permanently and temporarily. The details of their relief and rehabilitation are known from Pravrajika Jnanadaprana’s Bengali book titled ‘Swamijir Swapna Rupayan: Sri Sarada Math’. In 1978, floods in West Bengal took a terrible form. During this time they distributed dry food, medicines, clothes, and blankets to the helpless people. Odisha was devastated by super cyclone in 1999. They provided relief work as per their capacities. On January 26, 2001, a large area of Gujarat was devastated by the massive earthquake. Valsad Centre, a sub-centre of Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, was active in serving the distressed to the best of its ability. In 2002 they built a school house in an earthquake-ravaged area. Thus every year relief is provided by Math and Mission where ever needed. They stood by the side of the suffering with compassion. Apart from providing immediate relief, they later help them build toilets, houses etc.

Conclusion

At the time of the establishment of Sri Sarada Math, many of the monks of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission had doubts whether women could be as successful in outside work as men. But within a few years of establishment, they proved their

worth and efficiency. That is why the Ramakrishna Mission authorities gave them the status of independent institution. They also granted the right of initiation to the President of Sri Sarada Math. Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission have opened new branch centers to work intensively for the welfare of women and children. Not only in India, but also in Australia and Sri Lanka, they have taken initiative to spread the Ramakrishna movement. This resembles a 'spiritual and social revolution'. They opposed blind superstitions and rigid rules and embraced modernity. But they did not cancel the original traditional ideals of India. According to Swamiji's 'Practical Vedanta', they are engaged in social welfare work. They have taken monasticism not only for their own liberation but also for the welfare of the world. They have shown amazing management skills in every sphere of the activities. A few nuns did great service in a short time with the help of a few householders and devotees. They considered the work of spreading education, medical service, relief and rehabilitation, spiritual improvement etc. among the people as worship. Through their unconditional and selfless service, the status of human being is elevated to divinity. This idea is undoubtedly unique. They have been trying relentlessly to bring modernity to the marginalized people as best they can.

Reference

1. Swami Gahanananda, *Ramakrishna Movement for All*, (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 2012), p.3.
2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 5*, (Howrah: Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur, 1964), p. 222.
3. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), p. 207.
4. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 201.
5. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 141.
6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 8*, (Howrah: Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, 1959), p. 58.
7. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, p.p. 181-182.
8. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1993), p. 181.
9. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1960), p.433.

10. Pravrajika Atmaprana, 'A New Monastic Tradition for Women: Sarada Math & Ramakrishna Sarada Mission' in *The Story of Ramakrishna Mission*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2006), p. 541
11. Atmaprana, 'A New Monastic Tradition for Women', p. 539
12. Swami Gambhirananda, *History of Ramakrishna Math and Mission*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1957), p. 135.
13. *Complete World of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 5*, p. 231.
14. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 70.
15. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 4* (Howrah: Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur, 1962), p. 183.
16. *Prospectus of Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan*, p. 14.
17. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 5, I* p. 412.
18. Shiv Shankar Chakraborty, 'Ramakrishna Mission and Uplift of Indian Masses', in *The Story of Ramakrishna Mission, I* p. 573.

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee: Partition of Bengal and its Aftermath

Dhiraj Choudhary

Abstract

As a Calcutta University candidate for the Indian National Congress, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee began his political career in 1929 by being elected to the Bengal Legislative Council. He served as Bengal Province's finance minister in 1941–1942 during A.K. Fazlul Haq's progressive coalition administration. In 1939, after leaving the Congress party, he joined the Hindu Mahasabha. During the division of Bengal, Shyama Prasad actively defended the rights of the local Hindu population. After the partition of Bengal, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee founded the "Bharatiya Jana Sangh" (BJS) political party in 1953. One of the important political parties in India after independence that actively promoted Hindutva aspects was this one. This study emphasizes Shyama Prasad Mukherjee's contribution to the partition of Bengal. It also aims to draw attention to the question of whether Shyama Prasad Mukherjee played any part in West Bengal being an integral part of India.

Keywords: Bengal Legislative Council, Congress Party, Hindutva, Hindu Mahasabha, Partition, West Bengal, etc.

Introduction

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was born into one of Bengal's most distinguished families. Sir Ashutosh, a well-known Bengali name, was his father. Shyama Prasad made major contributions to the political and cultural life of the nation in addition to enhancing the reputation and status of the family to which he was born. On 6th July 1901 he was born. He had an excellent academic record while attending Calcutta University. He was elected a Fellow of the University of Calcutta Senate in 1923. In 1924, he registered as an advocate with the Calcutta High Court. He departed for England in 1926 to pursue his Bar studies, joined Lincoln's Inn and was admitted to the Bar in 1927. He became the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University in 1934, when he was thirty-three years old, and he served in that capacity until 1938.¹

From the sphere of education Shyama Prasad moved to the realm of Politics. In 1929 he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council as a Congress candidate representing Calcutta University, but the following year he resigned when the Congress decided to boycott the legislature. Shyama Prasad did not agree with the

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Prabhu Jagatbandhu College, Howrah

policy of Congress and he stood for election as an independent candidate and was re-elected. From then onwards he was actively involved in politics till his death in 1953.²

Partition of Bengal

Curzon divided Bengal in 1905, but it was a very different process. Almost one-fourth of the nation at the time was in Bengal, which also encompassed Bihar and Orissa. Curzon divided Bengal in order to sever the unity of the Bengali-speaking people and to establish a distinct province with a Muslim majority. East Bengal and Assam were combined to form a single province with a preponderance of Muslims. In 1911, this division was lifted, and Bengal's linguistic unity was re-established. Bengal was divided into Bihar and Orissa. The only connection between the two splits (of 1905 and 1947) was that the new Bengal that arose after 1911 had a Muslim majority. In 1947 Bengal was divided once again as a result of severe conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Bengal had witnessed considerable communal violence in 1946 before the partition. The partition of Bengal was the result of firstly, a demand made by the Muslim League that the Indian Muslims were a nation in themselves, and hence ought to have a separate nation-state of their own. Therefore, all the Muslim-majority provinces were claimed under this scheme. Secondly, a massive communalization of the society along religious lines, culminating in serious communal violence in what was then known as Calcutta in August 1946.³

An organized protest that called for the vivisection of the province on the basis of religion came before the partition of Bengal. The so-called 'bhadralok', or "respectable people," of Bengali society, who had controlled that nation's nationalist politics ever before Bengal's first partition, led this effort. In less than 40 years, the politics of Bhadrakok had completely circled, going from nationalist agenda to more parochial concerns and from 'nationalism' to 'communalism'.⁴ An ideology known as communalism emphasises the importance of the community's intrinsic unity in relation to other communities while suppressing differences within the group. It has been used as a political propaganda weapon to create division, discord, and tensions amongst the groups based on religious and ethnic identity, which has resulted in animosity and bloodshed between the communities. People of many faiths lived side by side in harmony in ancient Indian civilization. The introduction of Islam to India throughout the Middle Ages was marked by sporadic acts of violence, such

as the demolition of Hindu temples by Mahmud Ghazni and the attacks against Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists by Mahmud of Ghor. Rulers like Akbar and Sher Shah Suri adhered to the Islamic doctrine of tolerance for the various cultures and traditions observed throughout the nation. It is a contemporary phenomenon that resulted from the effects of British colonialism and the reactions of Indian social classes.⁵

The Permanent Settlement's system of property relations, which gave rise to the Bengali Bhadrak, was fundamentally its product. They were generally a type of rentiers with intermediate tenurial rights to land rentals. There were several variations among the bhadrak. The term "bhadrak" in the vernacular is helpful since it conveys a feeling of exclusivity and social interactions as well as hints to the colonial origins of this class and its predominantly Hindu composition.⁶ By the mid-nineteenth century, bhadrak authors began referring to their class less and less as the 'bhadrak'—a term that connotes a class dependent on landed wealth—and more and more as the *shikkhita sampraday* (educated community) or the *shikkhita madhyabitta* (educated middle class). One of the prominent among these bhadrak people is Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. During the time when he was attached to the politics of the pre-Hindu Mahasabha bubble, Shyamaprasad played several long-lasting and noble humanitarian responsibilities. Even though he still had a strong Hindu awareness at the time, he was a more compassionate and perceptive leader of the populace.⁷

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee began his political career by participating in Congress action, but his support for Hindu interests never became an undercurrent. He didn't hesitate, though, to discuss his political engagement with Abul Kasem Fazlul Haq. In order to advocate the interests of Hindus in Bengal, Mukherjee joined the Hindu Mahasabha in 1939 under the advice of Hedgewar and Savarkar and became its president after Savarkar fell ill.⁸ He served in the Bengal Assembly before being appointed minister of industry and supply in Nehru's government in 1947.⁹

Shyamaprasad spoke for advancing the interests of the Hindu community several times in the leaves of his diary. His consideration for non-Hindus decreased as he became increasingly focused on serving the interests of Hindus. His frustration with Congress politics stemmed from their disregard for Hindu interests, which is ultimately why he quit the party. Despite urging Sarat Chandra Basu and Subhas Chandra Basu to consider the Hindu cause and support his opinions, he was

discouraged himself. He made a special effort to change Subhas Chandra Bose's mind on Hinduism, but in vain. Subhash Chandra, on the other hand, wrote, "that a long time ago, when prominent leaders of the Congress could be members of the communal organizations like Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League. But in recent times, the circumstances have changed. These communal organizations have become more communal than before. As a reaction to this, the Indian National Congress has put into its constitution a clause to the effect that no member of a communal organization like Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League can be a member of an elective committee of Congress".¹⁰ Eastern India, which was then undivided, was the origin of both the Indian independence movement and the 1947 split. In Dhaka, the Muslim League was established in 1906. It won the Bengal provincial elections of 1937 in an alliance with the Krishak Praja Party, which led to its election to power. In the Bengal Assembly, it won an absolute majority in 1944, and Hussein Suhrawardy was appointed chief minister. Muhammad Ali Jinnah announced "Direct Action Day" on August 16th, 1946, with the stated intention of publicizing the call for a Muslim nation in British India. Hindus in Calcutta were attacked by Muslim revelers coming back from a conference at the "Shaheed Minar" of Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy, the then-Muslim League Chief Minister of Bengal. They could be heard yelling, "Larke lenge Pakistan," which means, "we will take Pakistan by force." The distribution of leaflets prior to Direct Action Day indicated a definite link between the demand for Pakistan and the use of violence. According to official sources, the rioting lasted for three days and resulted in about 4,000 fatalities, with Muslims and Hindus both losing an equal number of lives.¹¹ 'The Great Calcutta Killings' began as a result of the August call. Then followed the 1946 Noakhali-Tipperia riots as a follow-up. Mukherjee was deeply affected by the riots of October 1946 in the Noakhali district of East Bengal where an estimated 5,000 Hindus were lynched by Muslim mobs for over a week, many women were raped, and hundreds of people were forcibly converted to Islam. By 1947, the Hindu Mahasabha was advocating for Bengal's division and urging the establishment of a distinct Hindu province inside the Indian Union. The "Bengali Hindu Homeland Movement" got its start when the Hindu Mahasabha authorized Mukherjee to take action to ensure the partition of Bengal during a conference held at Tarakeswar in April 1947. In his statement on April 5th at the Bengal Hindu Conference in Tarakeswar, Shyama Prasad proposed partitioning Bengal as the best way to address the issue

of intergroup conflict. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee formed a council of action to create a homeland for the Bengali Hindus on the final day of the Bengal Hindu Conference at Tarakeswar. Following this, both the Congress and the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha stepped up their campaigning. There were a minimum of 76 partition meetings, of which 59 were called by the Congress, 12 by the Mahasabha, and 5 by both. To promote the division of Bengal, Shyama Prasad enlisted the aid of the media, including prominent publications of the day as Dainik Basumati, The Statesman, Amrita Bazar Patrika, and others. Since Dr. Mukherjee, Major A.C. Chateerjee, and Dr. Pramathanath Banerjee are leading the Bengali Hindu Homeland Movement, one can be confident that they will do everything in their power to realise their goals, according to Sajanikanta Das, editor of the Bengali weekly "Shanibarar Chithi." 'Homeland for Bengali Hindus' was the title of an article that appeared in Amrita Bazar Patrika on April 23rd, 1947 where the gallop poll results were published. According to the study, a whopping 98.3 per cent of Bengali Hindus were in favour of dividing Bengal into separate states.¹²

Vallabhbhai Patel endorsed the proposal when Lord Louis Mountbatten publicly announced it on June 3rd, 1947, and he successfully persuaded Nehru and other Congress leaders to embrace it. At the All India Congress Committee meeting called to vote on the proposal, Patel said, "I fully appreciate the fears of our brothers from the Muslim-majority areas. Nobody likes the division of India and my heart is heavy. But the choice is between one division and many divisions. We must face facts. We cannot give way to emotionalism and sentimentality. The Working Committee has not acted out of fear. But I am afraid of one thing, that all our toil and hardwork of these many years might go to waste or prove unfruitful. My nine months in office have completely disillusioned me regarding the supposed merits of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Except for a few honourable exceptions, Muslim officials from the top to down to the chaprasis (peons or servants) are working for the league. The communal veto given to the League in the Mission Plan would have blocked India's progress at every stage. Whether we like it or not, de facto Pakistan already exists in Punjab and Bengal. Under the circumstances, I would prefer a de jure Pakistan, which may make the League more responsible. Freedom is coming. We have 75 to 80 per cent of India, which we can make strong with our genius. The League can develop the rest of the country."

Patel represented India in the Partition Council after Gandhi rejected and

Congress approved the Plan, where he presided over the partition of public property and chose the Indian council of ministries alongside Nehru. All members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly from the province's Hindu-majority regions voted in favour of the division of Bengal and the establishment of (West Bengal), a separate homeland for Bengali Hindus, on June 20th, 1947.¹³

Congress-Muslim League

On 20th, June, 1947 Bengal was partitioned, the Bengali Hindu majority of West Bengal became the part of India and Bengali Muslim majority East Bengal (now Bangladesh) became the province of Pakistan. The role of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Hindu Mahasabha during the partition of Bengal were that they spoke about the interest of Hindus. But it was the Congress Party that played an important role during the partition of Bengal. Mookherjee and the Hindu Mahasabha were not present during the discussions between the Muslim League and the Congress. The split and the creation of contemporary West Bengal were the results of negotiations between the Congress party and the Muslim League. According to Sk. Mujibur Rahman's autobiography, the first president of Bangladesh and a former Muslim League leader during the 1947 partition (as well as Jinnah's friend), Jinnah first sought the whole Bengal province but ultimately agreed to a division of Bengal following negotiations with Congress. Mr. Rahman said that the whole Bengal area was an independent Muslim majority territory and that Mr. Sohrabardy, Bengal's former prime minister, wanted Bengal to be a distinct country like India and Pakistan. Bengal, which covers Assam and the entire North-east, except for Tripura, was a princely state.¹⁴

Mr. Sarat Bose, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's older brother, likewise supported a free Bengali nation based on language. At the time, this was not accepted. Congress, according to Mr. Rahman, was prepared for the division of Bengal, but they were not prepared to leave Calcutta in order to join Pakistan. Formerly the richest city in India, Calcutta would undoubtedly become Pakistan's capital if India joined that country. However, Jinnah preferred Karachi as the nation's capital, meaning that West Pakistan, not Eastern Pakistan, would be the country's political hub. Thus, despite the fact that 60 per cent of the population of Calcutta and the nearby district 24 Pargana was Muslim, these two territories were included in India for the benefit of Nehru's Congress and Jinnah's Muslim League. Khulna

and Barishal, the two districts with a majority of Hindus, were handed to Pakistan, and the district of Dinajpur was divided, all in order to include Calcutta in India. Maldah and Murshidabad, two areas with a majority of Muslims, were also transferred to India. Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts were ceded to India, while Sylhet district joined Pakistan by a popular vote, in order to provide a land connection to North-East India. A princely kingdom named Coochbehar signed the instrument of admission and ultimately joined India. The modern West Bengal is a result of these districts.¹⁵

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Nehru-Liaquat Pact

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee disagreed with the Nehru-Liaquat Pact, which called for the establishment of a joint commission to ensure minority rights in Pakistan and India.¹⁶ On April 8th, 1950, the Nehru-Liaquat Pact, commonly referred to as the Delhi Pact, was an agreement between India and Pakistan that established guidelines for how minorities in both nations would be treated. Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan, the two prime leaders of the respective nations, both signed it. Minorities in both nations saw the necessity for such an agreement after Partition, which was accompanied by severe communal unrest. Over a million Hindus and Muslims are believed to have relocated to and from East Pakistan (current-day Bangladesh) as early as 1950, three years after the Partition was proclaimed, amid latent bloodshed and racial tensions. The governments of India and Pakistan formally concur that each will guarantee full equality of citizenship to all minorities within its borders, regardless of religion, as well as freedom of movement within each nation and the right to freedom of occupation, speech, and worship within the bounds of morality and the law. Minority members must share equal opportunities with members of the majority group to engage in public life, occupy political or other office, and serve in the civil and armed services of their nation. Both governments affirm the importance of these rights and commit to upholding them. But Mukherjee felt that in essence, the Pact would leave Hindus in East Bengal at the will of the Pakistani government. As an alternative, he promoted a planned exchange of people and property between East Bengal and the states of Tripura, Assam, West Bengal, and Bihar. This would allow East Bengal's Hindu minority to settle in India while driving the country's Muslim minorities to East Bengal.¹⁷

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS)

After the partition Shyama Prasad Mukherjee wanted to launch a political party before the first Lok Sabha election in 1951. On 21st October, 1951, Bharatiya Jana Sangh was officially formed with Shyama Prasad Mukherjee elected as its first national president. The Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh (RSS) deputed three men to help Mukherjee set up the party organization. One of them, Deendayal Upadhyaya, was to become president of Jana Sangh later. The others were Sundar Singh Bhandari and Bhai Mahavir who was the son of Bhai Permanand, a staunch Arya Samaj member who was president of Hindu Mahasabha in the early 1930s. It was thus that a national democratic alternative that broadly represented Hindu interests came to be established. Within two months of the BJS' formation, the first general elections were announced. The Jana Sangh won three Lok Sabha seats in the election. Two were from West Bengal, Shyama Prasad won the Calcutta (East) seat while Durga Charan Banerjee elected from Midnapur Jhargram. Dr. Mukherjee provided several arguments for why Jana Sangh is the only political party with a unique strategy for addressing issues unique to Bengal. The Jana Sangh was effective in bringing the issues in Bengal to national attention and developed particular plans for assisting East Bengali Hindu immigrants, enacting land reforms, reducing unemployment, and boosting industrial output in Bengal. S. P. Mukherjee was scrambling to find housing for the underprivileged refugees. He urged the Assamese to abandon their animosity against Hindus and make place for the migrants. He hoped that Orissa and Bihar would also assist the refugees.¹⁸

Conclusion

The role of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee after coming into politics is widely seen as controversial. Whether he played a part in actually protecting Hindu interests or fanned communal sentiments to further political interests and his own political career is a subject of intense debate and discussions.

Scholars and political analysts continue to pen their thoughts on paper and exchange views on national television regarding Shyama Prasad while steering the discourse on Bengal politics and partition.

Was Shyama Prasad a product of the changing political developments of his time, or did he always possess a genuinely Hindu conservative bent of mind which gradually manifested over time - is what this article tries to address.

Notes and References

1. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, *Leaves from a Diary*, Oxford University Press, 1993.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Partition of Bengal*, 2023.
4. Joya Chatterjee, *Bengal Divided : Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
5. *Drishtias*, 2019.
6. Joya Chatterjee, *op.cit.*
7. S.N. Mukherjee , ‘*Bhadralok in Bengali Language*’, p.233.
8. P.K. Chatterji, ‘*Dr. Shyamaprasad Mookerjee and Indian politics 1938–1953: An account of an outstanding political leader*’, Delhi, Foundation Books, 2010.
9. Sengupta, 2023
10. Chattopadhyay, 2019
11. Animesh Biswas, ‘The rise of the right in Bengal’, Prabhat Paperbacks, 2021, pp.53-54.
12. Pralay Kanungo, ‘The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in West Bengal’ 2015, studies in politics.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman ‘*Memoir, Autobiography*’, Oxford University Press, 2012.
15. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, *op.cit.*
16. B.R. Madhok, ‘*Portrait of a martyr: A biography of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji*’, Delhi, Rupa, 2001.
17. Sengupta, 2023.
18. Kingshuk Nag, ‘*The Saffron Tide: The Rise of the BJP*’ 2014, Rainlight, Rupa.

Selected Bibliography

- Chaterjee, Joya. (2002). *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition (1932-1947)*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mukherjee, S.N. (1975). *Daladali in Calcutta in the Nineteenth Century*. Modern Asian Studies, 9(1) 59-80
- Chaterjee, Joya. (2007). *The Spoils of Partition : Bengal and India 1947-1967*. Cambridge University Press

- Chatterjee, P.K. (2010). *Shyama Prasad Mookherjee and Indian Politics 1938-1953 : An Account of an Outstanding Political Leader*. Cambridge University Press.
- Madhok, B.R. (2001). *Portrait of a Martyr: A Biography of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji*. Delhi:Rupa.
- Mukherjee, S.P. (1993). *Leaves from a Diary*. Oxford University Press
- Kanungo, Pralay. (2015). *The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in West Bengal*. Sage Publication.
- Biswas, Animesh. (2021). *The Rise of Right in Bengal*. Prabhat Paperback
- Chandra, Bipan. (2008). *Communalism in Modern India*. Har Anand Publication.
- Sharma, Jotirmaya. (2003). *Hindutva: Exploring the idea of Hindu Nationalism*. HarperCollins.
- Rahman, Sheikh Mujibur . (2012). *Memoir, Autobiography*. Oxford University Press
- Nag, Kingshuk. (2014). *The Saffron Tide: The Rise of the BJP*, Rainlight:Rupa

Secularism in Swami Vivekananda's Religious Philosophy

Gargi Medda

Abstract

Man, the rational, social and spiritual being is not satisfied with the fulfilment of physical or material desires only. Even in the midst of luxury and comfort man strives for something higher and better. Thus religion originates in man's struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses. But the problem is that when the intensest love that humanity has ever known has come from religion while the most hatred has also come from it. Religions, having tremendous power have often done more injury to the world than good simply on account of their narrowness and limitations. Secularism has a remarkable position in such an arena of religious chaos. Though in narrow sense secularism stands for an anti-religious attitude but in broader sense it means tolerance towards all religious beliefs. In this context my study is an attempt to show that Swami Vivekananda's whole philosophy including attitude towards universal religion is based on secularism in its broader sense.

Keywords : Secular, religion, Vedanta, Hinduism.

In popular sense the word 'secularism' depicts a kind of anti-religious attitude. It implies that what was previously regarded as religious is ceasing to be such and also a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of the society political, economic, legal and moral becoming discrete to each other. But in broader sense secularism stands for tolerance and respect towards all religious beliefs and practices of the world. In this context my study is an attempt to show that the root of Swami Vivekananda's whole religious philosophy consists in secularism adapting freedom and spiritual brotherhood as its root.

Religion helps to unfold all that is best in man. This is why religion is often described as a science of being and becoming, a science of growth. Physical and intellectual growth is not enough. There must also be the moral growth, growth in character. This success of man depended greatly on the growth of religion. Religion inspired him, guided him, took him to the height he has reached. This is what gives religion its credibility.

The present crisis in human affairs is due to a profound crisis in human consciousness. Vivekananda realised that ours was an age of a spiritual crisis in human history. This crisis was the climax of the one sided growth of our modern

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Raja N. L. Khan Women's College, Midnapore, W.B.

rational scientific civilisation. A theoretical understanding of this crisis, its causes and its remedies, was a necessary prelude to future progress of man and it required an examination of the entire processes and methods of social development. Man, today, needs an integral philosophy which would clarify the relation between individual and society, as also help in an integral evolution of the human race into a spiritual era. It is not out of the way to think that the 'spirituality' which according to Vivekananda, is the 'theme' or principal characteristic of Indian culture and civilization was not a revealed message or a product of a sudden inspiration but the result of centuries of striving, experiment, and assimilation. Out of the innumerable religions Vivekananda has tried to evolve one Religion of which the most distinguishing feature is that it tolerates everything except intolerance. Vivekananda was not a mystic nor a transcendentalist. He was not a materialist either. He was truly religious in so far as he subscribed to the basic values that constitute the essence of all religions.

Vivekananda has tried to see through the intellectual tensions between continued emotional allegiance to past dogmas and the new rational acceptance of scientific beliefs. He found a viable sacred-secular formula designed to reconcile spiritual heritage and achieve socio-economic change simultaneously.

The highest goal of religion is self-realisation which transcends all diversities. In so far as the sanctity of the highest goal is not violated, changes can be introduced in the substantive content of beliefs and practices. As a challenge to the West has been an effect to locate the source of secularism within the Hindu tradition. This led to a variety of interpretations of both the secular ideals and the Hindu tradition. Both were transformed in order to produce a synthesis which may combine 'good' elements from either. A distinction between the secular and the non-secular is often sought by separation of the personal from the inter-personal and thought from action. One can be non-secular in one's beliefs but secular in one's actions. The secular and the non-secular continue to co-exist in a presumed harmonious whole. At the highest level, the two coalesce in a single definitive ideal; the perfect religious man is also supposed to be a perfect secular man. On an intellectual plane sacredness without the secularist attitude is dubbed as obscurantism while secularism without the sacred attitude is equated with gross materialism. The two in conjunction are expected to produce attitudes and institutions.

It is wrong to categorise Vivekananda as either secular or non-secular.

Vivekananda's chief contribution is not the propagation of a secular ideal, not withstanding his occasional writings on the intrinsic equality of all religions. His major pre-occupations was re-interpretation of Vedanta in order to transform it from a metaphysical creed of renunciation into a living motive force of altruistic activism. He was thus secularising the non-secular. His positive valuation of the non-secular has lent respectability to religious pursuits. In fact, his non-secularity is considered to be an indispensable component of the dominant Indian ideal. The Indian secular ideal is not taken as alternative to religion but as a form of secularity. His secularity or non-secularity does not stand in isolation. The two are functionally inter-related.

He operates in a Hindu world, is obsessed with Hindu degeneration and seeks Hindu renaissance. His mission assumes a secular character not by renouncing its Hindu predicament. Theoretically, the door is open to anybody who believes in 'renunciation and service'. The ideal the freedom of the self and service of mankind. The methods is work and worship. Hinduism is not mentioned here at all. But in all this the major sources of inspiration are Hindu ideals as interpreted by Vivekananda. The identity of religions is conceived in terms of Vedantic non-dualism. Beneath the acceptance of the equality of all religions, the notion of the ultimate superiority of Vedanta continues to lurk in the background.

This aspect of non-secularity was inherent in Vivekananda's outlook from the very beginning. It was brought forth in two ways. One was his acceptance that religion is central to Indian life and the other was his belief in the universal relevance of Vedantic ideals. He could foresee the equality of all religions in order to bring about the unity of mankind. But as a Hindu he unhesitatingly glorified Hinduism.

"Whether we call it Vedantism or any ism the truth is that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity."²

He held that Vedanta alone was compatible with reason and modern science. The argument launched in favour was that it could cater to individuals of different stages of spiritual development. Vivekananda has identified Vedanta as the kernel of all religions and an abstract science embracing all methods. He went to the extent of maintaining that 'Vedanta' is the rationale of all religions. "Without the Vedanta every religion is superstitious, with its everything becomes religion." In its

empirical application, this belief is purely non-secular and explicitly denies an equal and secular status to other religions. In upholding his own religious potentials he encourages religious particularism and tries to bring the secular ideal within ascertain type of Hindu religiosity. All through he suggests popularisation of spiritual and secular knowledge among the masses of people so that they can see the evil of the caste system and resist the humiliation and exploitation following the caste system with courage and conviction.

For him religion was a means, a vehicle for rousing and awakening the millions of India. The West separates religion from politics by granting the two spheres their respective autonomy and assumes a situation of mutual non-interference. In Hinduism, politics is a lower level manifestation of the same goal and, accordingly, the two are hierarchically related. The sphere of action is identical but the means of attainment are different. Non-secular thought became a motive for secular action. Between the secular attainment of freedom and the non-secular realisation of liberation, there was hardly any choice. In Vivekananda's outlook the former was meaningless without its socio-economic counterpart. He felt that true freedom was freedom from imperfection. This can be attained when the pursuit of mukti is itself transformed into an instrument of service. This transformation leads to the well-known synthesis which seeks to combine the sacred and the secular into a single frame of reference. Both sacred and secular become instruments of each others. The former is supposed to facilitate ethically appropriate secular behaviour. The latter was supposed to become a vehicle of sacred values. The most common form in which this ideology is expressed is the desire to retain India's spiritual heritage and surpass the West's material modernity. This desire to have the best of both the world's has led to a separation of Eastern spirituality and Western materialism. It is generally in the context of such separation that one talks of India's contribution to world thought and culture. Vivekananda himself distinguished between the Oriental and the Occidental and realised that each needed the other for an ideal synthesis.

Math education is supposed to consist of courses in Western sciences as well as Indian religions. Mission workers are expected to be both secular and spiritual teachers. With respect to the solution he believes that secular and non-secular pursuits should be carried on which an equanimity that comes only to saints. He says, "You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense

practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields.”

In order to make the secular and the non-secular consistent with each other, both need to be modified in order to make proper adjustments. The scope of ‘non-secular’ needs to be broadened. The apparent conflict between the worldly maya and the transcendental truth has to be narrowed down to a point where Dharma no longer requires a withdrawal from the secular involvement. This was one of the most important contributions of Vivekananda. The Vedanta does not in reality denounce the world. The ideal of renunciation nowhere attains such height as in the teachings of the Vedanta. The ideal of renunciation, according to Vivekananda, is giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us and to know what it really is. He wants the world to be deified, regarded as God not to be rejected as maya. In deifying the world, Vivekananda has introduced a qualitative change from perception to substance. The world becomes real in substance and not merely an ignorant perception. God assumes the form of ‘Daridra Narayana’ and the worship of man becomes primarily a religious action. There is a suggestion of moving Advaita from forest caves to busy streets and turning the intricate mythology into concrete moral form. We no longer remain the passive recipients of the will of God but are active instrument of his power. The popular interpretation of the doctrine of Karma which identifies it with fatalism is rejected. Vivekananda in fact, sums up the Vedantic message in a single word ‘strength’, the sanctification of the secular and the secularisation of the religious implies two related innovations. One is to dissociate prevalent religiosity from its pristine forms. The other is to isolate within pristine from its essential and non-essential aspects. Vivekananda’s attempt to modernise Hinduism admirably succeeded on both these counts.

In the first place, he vehemently attacks the corrupt form of religious behaviour institutionalised by exploitative Brahmins, the sceptical attitude of disbelief and disillusionment popularised by the educated Westernized elites, and the endless antiquated ritual practices observed by the ignorant Indian mass. He is critical of the absurd notions of purity and pollution and through this criticism, he attempts to attack the very basis of Hindu social institutions. He says:

“We are neither Vedantists, most of us now, nor pauranics, nor trantrics. We are Just I Don’t Touchists’. Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is, the cooking pot, and our religion is ‘Don’t tough me, I am holy.’ If this goes on for another

century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum.”³

Vivekananda argues that such notions of pollutions can be shed away to regain the lost purity of Hinduism. With alacrity he could see the inner contradiction between the original teachings of Hindu religion and its later practices. “No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.”⁴

Despite Vivekananda’s Vedanta-centricity, his secularism is indisputable. The religious pluralism is reinforced through his definition of Vedanta itself. He separates the religious Vedanta which has to be realised within oneself from different creeds and sects which have external relative validity for different communities. He accepts the truth of the Bible for the Christians and of the Koran for the Muslims. The same truth is found in every religion and the good and virtuous have been produced by every creed. There is no point in leaving one’s own religion in order to embrace another. People belonging to different religions of the world must assimilate the spirit of others and yet preserve their own individuality. He attacked all religions, including Hinduism, for promoting obscurantism. At the same time he upheld the achievements of all religions in so far as they inspired men to proper ethical conduct. About Hinduism, he frankly confessed, “personally I take as much of the Vedas as it agrees with reason”. He was not apologetic and suggested deliberate alternations and additions in Vedic laws. His secular rationality, however, did not lead him to challenge the very validity of all metaphysical revelations. He says,

“We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran, yet this has done by harmonising the Vedas, Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of the Religion, which is oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.”⁶

He was ready to forego any religious doctrine or throw away any ceremonial that acted as a barrier in his service to mankind. He was ready to forego mukti if it came in the way of his ungrudging service for mankind and the country. When the nature of his social service was criticised fearing that it may delude man from the spiritual domain, Vivekananda retorted:

“You think Jnana is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path killing out the

tenderest faculties of the heart. Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense which makes one important. Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares what the scriptures say? I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times if I can rouse my country men, immersed in Tamas, and make them stand on their own feet and be men, transpired with the spirit of Karma Yoga.”⁷

He was bent upon serving and helping others even without caring for his own salvation. Here Vivekananda comes to approximate the pure secular ideal which seeks human welfare without any reference to divine authority. He is prepared to reject all sects and dogmas. He often spoke that a religion which tolerates and glorifies poverty cannot be a religion of man.

During his travels in India, he saw pathetic scenes of object poverty. With ardent fervour he said, “I do not believe in God or religion which cannot wipe the widow’s tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan’s mouth.”⁸ Poverty was described as a sin. Food came before God. In another context playing football was considered more important than paying in order to reach heaven. Religious instrumentalities of limitless rituals, the various vratas, danas and pujas common to a Hindu definition of ethical action, were dismissed as merely secondary details. Material advancement became for him a pre-requisite for progress. Service held the central idea and no other Gods were allowed. His secular rationality went beyond the constraints of reason. Even if it were unreasonable to equate man and God, Vivekananda did this in order to restructure and upgrade the norms of religious action.

Vivekananda’s mission was designed to raise the level of religious consciousness to the height of secular ideals. The ideal religious Hindu in Vivekananda’s practical Vedanta is not a recluse looking after his own salvation. He is not a sanyas in operating above the norms of ordinary human beings. He is, in fact, immersed in the secular world pursuing secular goals in order to attain the desired level of religiosity, Hinduism becomes a creed of altruistic service. The secular and the non-secularism are in thought. In doing this, Vivekananda demolishes the dichotomy between secular science and non-secular religion. He questioned the unconditional obedience to authority. He emphasised :

“To believe blindly is to degenerate the human soul. Be an atheist if you want, but do not believe in any thing unquestioningly. Why degrade the soul to the level of animals ... Stand up and reason out, having no blind faith. Religion is a question of

being and becoming, not of believing. This is religion and when you have attained to that you have religion.”⁹

If a choice exists between a scientifically proved truth and a religiously maintained dogma. Vivekananda becomes a secularist upholds the former. This only reinforces his religious sensibilities.

References

1. S.C. Sengupta, Swami Vivekananda and Indian Nationalism, Shishu Sahitya Sansad (P) Ltd., 1984, p. 36.
2. Complete Works, Vol. VI, p. 415.
3. Complete Works, Vol. VII, p. 310.
4. Complete Works, Vol. V, p. 15.
5. Complete Works, Vol. VIII, p. 255.
6. Complete Works, Vol. VI, p. 416.
7. The Life of Swami Vivekananda, by his Eastern and Western Disciples, Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1965, p. 507.
8. Complete Works, Vol. V, p. 50.
9. Complete Works, Vol. IV, p. 216.

Prominent Interpretations and Translations of *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*: Perspectives and Outlook

Dr. Pratim Bhattacharya

Abstract

Śrīmadbhagavadgītā or the Lord's Song is found at the beginning of Book VI (*Bh ṣma Parvan*) of the Mahabharata. It is a discourse presented by Lord Krishna to his friend and disciple Arjuna prior to the Great War. Apart from the immediate purpose of convincing Arjuna to perform the duty of a warrior, the *Gītā* offers a vast range of philosophical and ethical doctrines about how the duties are to be carried out or how to achieve the supreme human goal of salvation. The *Gītā* has amalgamated in itself the essence of all the foremost schools of Indian Philosophy and also elemental thoughts of the Sanātana Dharma. The work owes its great popularity to the very fact that the most conflicting philosophical doctrines and religious views are united in it so that adherents of all schools and sects could make use of it. The *Gītā* has created a universal appeal in the minds of the readers for ages. Eminent Indian and foreign scholars from time to time have interpreted the teachings of the *Gītā* in the light of their own thoughts and perceptions. The work has also been translated into Indian and various foreign languages with English being the most popular medium of translation. All these interpretations and translations have led to the development of a universal intellectual and philosophical outlook of the text and have been instrumental in the immense popularity of the work throughout the world.

Keywords: The *Gītā*, Interpretations of the *Gītā*, Translations of the *Gītā*, Philosophical and Allegorical value of the *Gītā*.

The Mahabharata, one of the two great epics of India, is embellished with several didactic sections that basically deal with *nīti* i.e. worldly wisdom and politics, *dharma* i.e. systematic law and general morality and *mokṣa* i.e. liberation or salvation. Of all these didactic portions of the Mahabharata, the *r madbhagavadgītā* or the Lord's Song (in Book VI, 25-42) has attained unprecedented popularity and fame. The other title of this portion is '*r madg topaṇiṣat*'¹ or the esoteric doctrines laid by the Exalted or Adorable God i.e. Lord Vishnu incarnated as Krishna.

Gītā is found at the beginning of Book VI (*Bh ṣma Parvan*) when the descriptions of the great fight of *Kurukṣetra* commence. As the armies of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas confront each other, Arjuna lets his war-chariot halt

Assistant Professor, Department of Sanskrit, Sukumar Sengupta Mahavidyalaya, Keshpur, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, India

between the two armies and surveys them. He is overcome by the feeling of deep pity as well as horror at the thought that he is to fight against his own relatives and friends. Arjuna declares his unwillingness to fight to his friend, philosopher, guide and charioteer Krishna. Then Krishna instructs him, in a detailed philosophical discourse elaborated in eighteen chapters, that Arjuna's primary duty as a warrior is to fight whatever the consequences may be. There is no cause for mourning over the imminent murder, for the spirit of the man is eternal and indestructible and it is only the bodies which are destroyed². And from this Krishna leads on to exhort Arjuna to go forth into this righteous war in the spirit of his duty as a warrior. For if he does not fight, he burdens himself with shame worse than death. If he falls in the battle, he is assured of heaven and if he is victorious he will rule the world.³ Therefore he must in any case fight.

Apart from this immediate purpose of convincing Arjuna to perform the duty of a warrior, the *Gītā* offers a vast range of philosophical and ethical doctrines about how the duties are to be carried out or how to achieve the supreme human goal of salvation. It emphasizes on desire-less action i.e. to act according to duties without any consideration of success or failure or of the possible rewards⁴. A man following this path of action popularly known as '*karma-mārga*' approaches most closely the supreme path of liberation— the path of knowledge or '*jñāna-mārga*'. The *Gītā* also sites a third path to knowledge and salvation— the path of love and devotion towards God or '*bhakti-mārga*'. Out of this selfless love of God arises the knowledge of God followed by true liberation. The kernel of all these teachings can be found in a verse (11.55) which is known as the 'quintessence verse'⁵.

The *Gītā* has amalgamated in itself the essence of all the foremost schools of Indian Philosophy such as Yoga, Sāṃkhya, Vedānta etc. and also elemental thoughts of the Sanātana Dharma. The work owes its great popularity to the very fact that the most conflicting philosophical doctrines and religious views are united in it so that adherents of all schools and sects could make use of it. It is the sacred book of the Hindus and in India, there is scarcely any book which is read so much and esteemed so highly as the *Gītā*. Though we find the *Gītā* as an integral part of the *Mahābhārata*, it is studied and commented upon as an independent text, complete in itself. All the ancient Indian commentators who wrote *bhāṣyas* (commentary) on the *Gītā* regarded it as a source text of valid knowledge. It was even considered as the 'fifth veda' (*pañcama veda*). It is cited in various doctrines as a *pramāṇa* or

a text of undisputed authority⁶. The *Gītā* has even come to be recognized as a 'Holy Book' in India's legal practice upon which one swears to 'tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but truth'.

Doubts have been raised from time to time that whether the *Gītā* is an integral original part of the *Mahabharata* composed by Vedavyasa or it was interpolated in a later period. Even if it did not belong to the original heroic poem, it is certain that it is a work of a true and great poet. None of the philosophical sections of the *Mahabharata* could bear the least comparison with the *Gītā* in terms of poetic value. It is this strength of its poetic value, the forcefulness of its language, the splendor of its images, the appropriateness of its metaphors and the breath of inspiration which pervades it, the *Gītā* has made such stupendous impact and created a universal appeal in the minds of the readers for ages.

The Interpretations

The conversation (*Samvāda*) that takes place in the *Gītā* is not very lengthy. It does not exceed 700 verses. Yet, it caused thousands of commentaries and interpretations over the centuries. As a philosophical text, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* is a part of the basic source-book of the Vedānta which speaks in terms of Brahman, the Absolute, infinite and eternal. But as a religious Book, it could even be reckoned as a Vaiṣṇava text, since it regards Viṣṇu (Krishna) as the Supreme Lord of the Universe. It is closely associated with the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata and related traditions of Vaiṣṇava doctrine. However, the scholars of the Kashmir Śaiva School, such as Rājānaka Ramākaṇṭha, Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara and Abhinavgupta interpreted *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* from the Śaiva point of view and regard it as the one among the Śaiva 'āgama' class of texts⁷. The Vedānta scholars of the medieval period like Śrī Śaṅkara, Śrī Mādhava, Śrī Rāmānuja etc have all interpreted the text in accordance to their respective school of thought and in the process have either opposed or ignored other possible interpretations. Santa Jñānesvar or Jñānadeva, a 13th century scholar of Maharashtra, advocated that the *Gītā* teaches that pure devotion and surrender of self to God is the only mean of attaining salvation⁸. Caitanyadeva, a 15th century saint of Bengal, carried the teachings of love and devotion of the *Gītā* as an integral part of his 'Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava' movement.

In the British Colonial period, the study of the *Gītā* was first initiated as tool for

the cultural and philosophical study of the East. It was also studied for its linguistic and literary value. The apparent monotheist approach of the *Gītā* evoked the interest of the Christian Missionaries who tried to utilize its teachings to spread Christianity in Colonial India. The several reassessments of the *Gītā* by intellectuals and social influencers educated in Western system led to the review of the principles of the Hindu philosophy and the practices of its faiths. Raja Ram Mohan Roy regarded *Gita* as the essence of all scriptures and interpreted *Gītā* as a message for selfless action⁹. A leading force in the ‘Brahma Samaj’, Debendranath Tagore tried interpreting *Gītā* in the Biblical view. He saw the text as a sort of allegory depicting the final battle (Armageddon) between the forces of ‘good’ and ‘evil’¹⁰.

Swami Vivekananda was one of the most prominent figures in India in the 19th century who popularized the teachings of *Gītā* worldwide. His epoch-making speech in the Parliament of the World’s Religions in 1893 in Chicago had a great influence in this regard. He gave great emphasis on the allegorical aspect of the *Gītā*. The conversation of Lord Krishna and Arjuna to him was the eternal quest for the resolution of inner conflicts of human soul and mind¹¹. Sister Nivedita, the famous disciple of Swami Vivekananda, saw the *Gītā* as a constant motivation to work ceaselessly without attachment to consequences¹².

The Nationalist Movement of Colonial India was also immensely influenced by the teachings of the *Gītā*. Some of the leaders and eminent scholars considered it as a symbol of Nationalism and integrity. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, one of the most famous Nationalist writers of Bengal, depicted *Gītā* as the pinnacle of ancient Indian wisdom which can be used as a potential weapon against the British Colonial oppression¹³. Sri Aurobindo envisioned *Gītā* as a divine action, where the battle field (*Kurukṣetra*) is in the heart and soul of every human being. Krishna, the Supreme One, hides behind the veils of our minds and in course reveals the mysteries of life¹⁴. Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak took *Gītā* as an inspiration to fight a ‘Dharma-yuddha’ or just war against the British¹⁵. On the contrary, Mahatma Gandhi interpreted *Gītā* as a text that teaches the practice of ‘*Niṣkāma-karma*’ or selfless duties. According to him, *Gītā* demonstrates the futility of violence and its true message is non-violence and peace¹⁶. Gandhi’s consideration of non-violence as the core teaching of the *Gītā* gave rise to ‘Satyagraha’ (the non-violent resistance for the quest of truth) as an effective mean to express protest against the British rulers.

The Translations

There are countless manuscripts and translations of the *Gītā* in almost all modern Indian languages. In the early twentieth century, the Gita Press at Gorakhpur also did remarkable work in spreading the message of the *Gītā* among the common Indian people. It widely distributed copies of *Gītā* translated into Hindi and other Indian languages. They are continuing this pious work till date. The influence of the *Gītā* began to spread far and beyond Asia following its translations into English and other European languages during the latter part of 18th century.

The early translations

In 1785, the *Gītā* became the first Sanskrit work to be translated into English and published from London. It was translated into English by Charles Wilkins, a merchant in the service of the East India Company¹⁷. Charles Wilkins was trained as a typesetter and printer. He was also the first to attempt to design the typeset of the Bengali script. He also assisted Sir William Jones to establish the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. Wilkins saw the *Gītā* as encouragement to a monotheist form of Unitarianism which eventually seeks to draw Hinduism away from the polytheism advocated by the Vedas¹⁸. Charles Wilkins's translation gained wide publicity and within a decade it was further translated into French by Abbé Parraud (1787)¹⁹, into Russian by Nikolay Ivanovich Novikov (1788)²⁰ and into German by Friedrich Von Majer (1802)²¹.

Kashinath Trimbak Telang was the first Indian to translate the *Gītā* into English²². He was a Sanskrit scholar and a Judge at the Bombay High Court. He translated *Gītā* in both poetry (1875) and prose (1882, '*Sacred Books of the East*' series edited by Max Muller, vol-8) forms.

Sir Edwin Arnold was a famous poet and journalist of his time. He translated the *Gītā* into blank verse and published it under the title '*The Song Celestial*' (1885). The author admires the effort of Telang in translating the *Gītā* but also criticizes him²³. In the preface of his work Sir Arnold explains the motivation behind his endeavor— "...because English literature would certainly be incomplete without possessing in popular form a poetical and philosophical work so dear to India."²⁴ The work achieved great fame as the then most widely-read version of the *Gītā*. It also inspired Mahatma Gandhi to indulge himself in the life-long study of the *Gītā*.

Mohini Mohun Chatterji was a Bengali attorney and scholar and had also served as the Assistant Secretary of the Bengal branch of the Theosophical Society. His translation is titled '*The Bhagavad Gītā or The Lord's Lay*' and it was published in 1887 from New York. The translation is enriched with commentary and notes as well as references to the Christian scriptures. The author dedicates his work "for the benefit of those in search of spiritual light." In the introduction of the book, the author expresses his reverence and affection for *Gītā* lucidly— "Beyond doubt the Bhagavad Gītā is the best book in existence for the study of the spiritually-minded; for it is suited to all conditions of men; it is short; it is complete and not ambiguous; it is direct, speaking as friend to friend or teacher to pupil, and thus is not coldly impersonal.²⁵"

Translations by famous spiritual leaders and personalities

Shri Purohit Swami was a Hindu monk who came to Britain in 1931. He became involved with British spiritualists who helped him set up an Ashram in London. Swami then came in contact with the renowned Irish poet, dramatist and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1923), William Butler Yeats, who had keen interest in spiritualism. After being requested by Yeats, Swami translated *Gītā* in a manner that could be understood by the British general reader. In 1935, Swami's translation of *Gītā* was published under the title '*The Geeta; The Gospel of the Lord Shri Krishna*'.

A notable scholar, academician, freedom fighter and a close follower of Sri Aurobindo, Anil Baran Roy is acclaimed as the best exponent of the *Gītā* as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo. His translation titled '*The Message of the Gita*' was first published in 1938 from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

Swami Prabhavananda was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He arrived in the USA during 1923 and founded the Vedanta Society of Portland and the Vedanta Society of Southern California. Swami's scholarly doctrines on Vedanta attracted the attention of several intellectuals like Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, Frederick Manchester and Christopher Isherwood. Swami Prabhavananda's translation of the *Gītā* in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood titled '*The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*' was published in 1944. It contained an introduction explaining the allegorical interpretations of the *Gītā* by Aldous Huxley which became as famous as the book itself. Writing in the midst of World War II which saw destruction and

violence on an unprecedented scale, Huxley reinterpreted the *Gītā* in the light of non-violence. He, like Gandhi, emphasized that the true message of the *Gītā* is to show the futility and uselessness of violence and how violence leads to self-destruction causing harm to even forthcoming generations²⁶.

Mahatma Gandhi's doctrines on '*anāsaktiyoga*' based on the *Gītā* was translated from Gujarati to English in 1946 (titled '*The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gita according to Gandhi*') by his personal secretary Mahadev Desai. The original passages and Gandhi's thoughtful and elegant comments on their allegorical implications are included in this work.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is known as the founder of Transcendental Meditation. He was born in India in around 1917. Since his first global tour in 1958, Maharishi's techniques for human development have been taught worldwide. His translation is called '*Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary, Chapters 1-6*' (1967). The author believes that the *Gītā* "is like an anchor for the ship of life sailing on the turbulent waves of time."²⁷

Born as Abhay Charan De, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada was an Indian spiritual teacher and the founder-preceptor of the ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness). His translation of the *Gītā* titled '*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*' (1968) is one of his most admired works and it has been translated further into more than sixty languages.

Paramahansa Yogananda, born Mukunda Lal Ghosh, was a monk, yogi and guru. He established Yogoda Satsanga Society of India and through it introduced millions to the teachings of meditation and 'kriya-yoga'. His translation of the *Gita* along with a commentary in two volumes titled '*God Talks with Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita- Royal Science of God Realization- The Immortal Dialogue between Soul and Spirit-A New Translation and Commentary*' was published posthumously in 1995 in Los Angeles.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati was a monk of the Hindu monastic order and a renowned traditional teacher of Advaita Vedanta. He has been teaching Vedanta in India for more than five decades and around the world since 1976. He is the founder of Swami Dayananda Ashram in India and U.S. His translation of the text called '*The Teaching Of The Bhagavad Gita*' (2005) is based on the commentary of Sri Sankaracharya on the *Gītā*.

Other notable translations

A. B. Van Buitenen was a traditional scholar-translator and Professor of Sanskrit in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. His translation of the *Gītā* was edited by James L. Fitzgerald and published posthumously in 1981. His translation is praised for its accurate rendering of the original text and exceptional clarity.

Eknath Easwaran was a scholar and a spiritual teacher who wrote several books on meditation. He learned Sanskrit from a young age and became a professor of English literature before coming to the West. Easwaran's translation of the *Gītā* (1985) is reliable, readable, and profound. His 55-page introduction places the *Gītā* in its historical context, presents key concepts, and brings out the universality and timelessness of its teachings. Easwaran also wrote a three volume commentary called '*The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living*' as well as a simpler commentary titled '*Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*'. The author asserts that the central idea of the *Gītā* is to guide us to resolve our conflicts²⁸ and to live in united harmony through the practice of meditation and spiritual disciplines. The author also thinks that the *Gītā* is a handbook for self-realization and a guide to action that offers something to every seeker after God, of whatever temperament, by whatever path. The reason for this universal appeal is that it is basically practical.

Barbara Stoler Miller was a scholar of Sanskrit literature, Professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures at Barnard College, New York and was the president of the Association for Asian Studies in 1990. Her translation of the *Gītā* titled '*The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*' (1986) was extremely admired and she helped popularize Indian literature in the U.S.

Dr. Nicholas Sutton was a full time lecturer in Eastern Religions at Edge Hill University College and is currently associated with University of Nottingham and Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. His core area of study is the religious doctrines in the *Mahabharata*. His translation of the *Gītā* is basically a guide-book for the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. This scholarly yet lucid translation is balanced and objective. The author provides illuminating perception and also points out some of the ambiguities regarding the translation of the text.

Steven J. Rosen, also known as Satyaraja Dasa, is an American author. He is the founding editor of The Journal of Vaishnava Studies and an associate editor of

Back to Godhead, the magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement. He authored many books on Vaishnavism and related subjects. His translation is called ‘*Krishna’s Song: A New Look at the Bhagavad Gita*’ (2007). The author provides an overview of the *Gītā*’s narrative and teachings alongside documentation of its traditional application. It is an attempt to culturally translate the text, making use of concepts and categories to which Western readers are accustomed.

Some other prominent translators of the *Gītā* are John Davies (1882), J. C. Thomson (1885), Charles Johnston (1908), Stephen Mitchell (2000), Jack Hawley (2001), Georg Feuerstein (2011), Dev Bhattacharyya (2014), Richard H. Davis (2014) etc. Apart from the above mentioned works several other translations of the *Gita* in English and other foreign languages have emerged through time and this trend continues till date.

The numerous interpretations and translations of the *Gītā* not only proves its immense value as a text but also makes it remarkable in the history of religious and philosophical texts in the world. Though being a predominant text of Hindu religion and culture, the *Gītā* has fascinated the minds of the intellectuals with diverse religious backgrounds. It teaches about living a worthwhile, meaningful life in the world among fellow beings by means of knowledge, work and devotion. It supports involvement in the performance of one’s social and moral responsibilities according to his ‘Dharma’ and at the same time it endorses the Upanishad manifested ideal of self-realization which leads to liberation from confines of relative existence. The uniqueness of the *Gītā* lies in its flexibility of the paths that lead to its ultimate goal and that is the reason that we come across such varied interpretations of this gem of ancient Indian wisdom.

References:

1. At the end of each chapter of the *Gītā* it is said that— “*iti śrīmahābhārate śatasahasryāṃ saṃhitāyāṃ vaiyāsikyāṃ bhīṣmaparvaṇi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇāryunasaṃvāde...*”
2. *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācinnāyaṃ bhutvā bhavitā vā na bhuyah/ ajo nityah śāśvato ’yaṃ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre//*- 2.20.

3. *hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṃ jītvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm/
tasmāduttiṣṭha kaunteya! yuddhāya kritaniścayaḥ//*- 2.11.
4. *tasmādasaktaḥ satataṃ kāryaṃ karma samācara/
asakto hyācaran karma paramāpnoti puruṣaḥ//*- 3.19.
5. *matkarmakṛmatparamo madbhaktaḥ sangavarjitaḥ/
nirvairāḥ sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ sa māmeti pāṇḍava//*- 11.55.
6. Explaining the portion –“*vedānto nāma— upaniṣatpramāṇam tadupakāriṇi śarirakasūtrādīni ca*”- of the book *Vedāntasāra* by Sadānandayogīndra the commentator Rāmatīrthayati states in his commentary *Vīdyanmanorañjinī*— “*ādiśabdena bhagavadgītādyadyātmaśāstrāṇi gṛyante, teṣāmapī upaniṣacchabdavācyatvāditi bhāvaḥ*” — *Vedāntasāra* of Sadānandayogīndra. Ed. Kalivara Vedantavagisa with the commentaries *Subodhinī* by Nṛsiṃhasarasvatī and *Vīdyanmanorañjinī* by Rāmatīrthayati. Vedantavagisa Niketana: Hoogly, 1932 (Fourth Edition). P. 9.
7. “A word may be said regarding the philosophical tenets of Rāmakaṇṭha. It is well known that he holds an important place in the history of the Pratyabhijñā system of Śaiva thought. In the Gītā commentary he explains the type of advaita known as bhedābheda, the doctrine of difference-in-identity— the standpoint taken by... the authors of the school of Bhāskara.”— *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* with the commentary *Sarvatoḥhadra* by Rājānaka Rāmakaṇṭhācārya. Ed. T.R. Chintamani. Madras University Press : Madras, 1941. Introduction, p. XLI. Also— “Several teachers of Śaivism from the time of Vasugupta down to that of Abhinava commented upon the Bhagavadgītā. ... It is therefore, necessary to state here how Kròsònòà is connected with the Trika Śaivism, and consequently what position the Gītā does occupy in the Śaiva literature. ... Kròsònòà was thought by the Śaivas to have been himself a follower of the Trika. Perhaps for this very reason the Bhagavadgītā is classed with the Āgamas.”— Pandey, Kanti Chandra. *Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study*. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office : Benaras City, 1935. pp. 54-55.
8. “I rather feel that these verses are the very pillars of the Court (hall) of the king ‘Supreme Self’: or the Gita might be likened to the Goddess described in the Saptasati Scripture (700 verses)— the Goddess that got gladdened by giving

- absolution (by slaying him) to the Demon named Mahisha buffalo in the form of infatuation. Therefore, one who becomes its devotee (servant) through mind, body and speech would be the sovereign King of the empire in the form of self bliss.”— Sri Jnanadeva. *Bhāvārtha Dīpikā otherwise known as Jnāneshwarī*. Trans. From Marathi by Ramchandra Keshav Bhagwat. Samata Books: Madras, 1979. p. 663.
9. “Without entirely rejecting the authority of the Geeta, the essence of all Shastrus, no one can praise rites performed for the sake of fruition, nor recommend them to others; for nearly half of the Bhuguvud Geeta is filled with the dispraise of such works, and with the praise of works performed without the desire of fruition.”— Ghose, Jogendra Chunder (Ed.). *The English works of Raja Rammohun Roy* (Vol-II). S.K. Lahiri & Co : Calcutta, 1901. p. 146.
10. “I proceeded to read the Mahabharata, the Gita, the Manu-smriti, etc., and by collecting verses there-from to swell the record of commandments. In this work I got great help from the Manu-smriti. It also contains verses from other smritis, from the Tantras, the Mahabharata, and the Gita.”— Tagore, Devendranath. *The Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore*. Translated from the original Bengali by Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi. Macmillan and Co. Limited : London, 1914, (Chapter- XXIII) p. 172. Also— Commenting on the verse no. 94 of Chapter XII of *Brahma Dharma* Hemchandra Sarkar states that— “It is rather a fainter echo of the teaching of the Bhagavadgita, “*ātmavat sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*”. It may be compared with the Biblical precepts “do unto others as you would be done by.”— Tagore, Devendranath. *Brahmo Dharma*. Trans. by Hemchandra Sarkar. Sadharan Brahmo Samaj : Calcutta, 1992 (Reprint of the First Edition of 1928). p. 215.
11. “Intense action in the whole body, and withal a face expressing the profound calmness and serenity of the blue sky. This is the central idea of Gita— to be calm and steadfast in all circumstances, with one’s body, mind and soul centered at His hallowed Feet!”— Swami Vivekananda. *Complete works of Swami Vivekananda* (Vol.VII). *Conversations and Dialogues- Swami Vivekananda* (Translated from Bengali) *Shri Priya Nath Sinha/ XXXI*. <https://vivekavani.com>.
12. “Two armies faced each other, in the second between the sounding of the trumpets and the shooting of the first arrows; but in that one moment of expectancy the Lord Krishna revealed Himself to the soul of His worshipper, in

such a way that he saw his duty clearly; all hesitation dropped away from him, and springing to his feet fearlessly he sounded the war-cry of the Pandavas, and flung himself upon the fortunes of battle. For to see God is the only thing that can make a man strong to face the world and do his duty. ... And what was taught in a single flash of insight and knowledge has stood since, through all the ages, as one of world's Scriptures, under the name of "Bhagvad Gita, the song of the Blessed One."- Sister Nivedita. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Vol. III). Sister Nivedita Girl's School (Under Ramakrishna Sarada Mission) : Calcutta, 1955 (First Edition). *Krishna Partha Sarathi, Charioteer of Arjuna* (Under the mother essay 'The cycle of Krishna'). pp. 286-288.

13. Bamkim Chandra Chattopadhyay, in his Bengali commentary on the *Gītā*, has clearly stated the superiority of the Hindu spirituality reflected in the *Gītā* to that of Christianity propagated by the so-called intellectual Europeans especially the British— "*ātmatattvaviṣayak ei sthūla kathāṭā khṛīṣṭiyādi sakal dharmeī āche/ kintu tāhār upar ār ekṭā ati sūkṣma, ati camatkār kathā, keval hindudharmeī āche/ sei tattva ati unnata, udār, viśuddha, viśivāsmātre manuṣyajanma sārthak hay/ hindu bhinna ār kono jātīi sei ati mahatattva anubhūta karite pāre nāi/ ye sakal kāraṇe, hindudharma anya sakal dharmer apekṣā śreṣṭha, iha tāhār madhye ekṭi ati gurutara kāraṇ*"— Chattopadhyay, Bamkim Chandra. *Śrimadbhagavadgītā*. Ed. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das. Bangiya Sahitya Parisat : Calcutta, 1940. P. 32.

Also—"The messianic idea in Hinduism has found, its fullest expression in the well-known verses of the Bagabad-Geetā... Bunkim Chunder Chatterjee, the author of the Bande-Mātaram hymn, stands prominently among those who have helped to call the present national spirit into being; and in modern Bengalee literature we owe the revival of the old Hindu messianic idea to him."— Pal, Bipin Chandra. *The Spirit of Indian Nationalism*. Hind Nationalist Agency : London, 1910. p. 27.

14. "Thus the figure of Krishna becomes, as it were, the symbol of the divine dealings with humanity. Through our egoism and ignorance we are moved, thinking that we are the doers of the work, vaunting of ourselves as the real causes of the result, and that which moves us we see only occasionally as some vague or even some human and earthly fountain of knowledge, aspiration, force, some

Principle or Light or Power which we acknowledge and adore without knowing what it is until the occasion arises that forces us to stand arrested before the Veil. And the action in which this divine figure moves is the whole wide action of man in life, not merely the inner life, but all this obscure course of the world which we can judge only by the twilight of the human reason as it opens up dimly before our uncertain advance the little span in front. This is the distinguishing feature of the Gita that it is the culmination of such an action which gives rise to its teaching and assigns that prominence and bold relief to the gospel of works which it enunciates with an emphasis and force we do not find in other Indian Scriptures. Not only in the Gita, but in other passages in the Mahabharata we meet with Krishna declaring emphatically the necessity of action, but it is here that he reveals its secret and the divinity behind our works.”— Sri Aurobindo. *Essays on the Gita*. The Sri Aurobindo Library Inc : New York, 1950. *The Divine Teacher* (Book I). p.17.

15. “The conclusion I have come to is that the *Gita* advocates the performance of action in this world even after the actor has achieved the highest union with the Supreme Deity by Jnana (Knowledge) or Bhakti (Devotion)... If the *Gita* was preached to desponding Arjuna to make him ready for the fight— for the Action— how can it be said that the ultimate lesson of the great book is Bhakti or Jnana alone?”— Tilak, Bal Gangadhar. *Sribhagvadgitarahasya or Karma Yoga Sastra*. (Vol-I) Trans. B.S. Sukthankar. Tilak Bros : Poona, 1935 (First Edition). Introduction, p.xxv.

Also— Tilak’s idea of Svaraj was closely associated with the utterance of the *Gita* (3.35.). Bipin Chandra Pal explains this Vedantic influence on Svaraj as— “The term (Svaraj) is used in the Vedanta to indicate highest spiritual state... the cancellation of all conflicts and the absolute settlement of all disputes.”— Pal, Bipin Chandra. *The Spirit of Indian Nationalism*. Hind Nationalist Agency : London, 1910. pp. 46-47.

16. “But to say that the *Gita* teaches violence or justifies war, because advice to kill was given on a particular occasion, is as wrong as to say that *himsa* is the law of life, because a certain amount of you it is inevitable in daily life. To one who reads the spirit of the *Gita*, it teaches the secret of nonviolence, the secret of realising the self through the physical body.”— Gandhi, M.K. *The Message of the Gita*. Navajivan Publishing House : Ahmedabad, 1959 (First edition).

Gita and Nonviolence (Chapter II), pp. 12-13.

17. It is clearly stated in the cover page of the book *Bhagvat-geeta or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon; in eighteen lectures; with notes; translated from the original, in Sanskreet, or the ancient language of the Brahmans* that the translator Charles Wilkins was a “senior merchant in the service of the honourable The East India Company, on their Bengal establishment.”
18. “It seems as if the principal design of these dialogues was to unite all prevailing modes of worship of those days; and, by setting up the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead, in opposition to idolatrous sacrifices, and the worship of images, to undermine the tenets inculcated by the *Veds*.” – Wilkins, Charles. *Bhagvat-geeta or Dialogues of Kreeshna and Arjoon; in eighteen lectures; with notes; translated from the original, in Sanskreet, or the ancient language of the Brahmans*. C. Nourse: London, 1785. Preface, pp.19-20.
19. Published as *Le Bhagvat-Geeta, ou dialogues de Kreeshna et d’ Arjoon; contenant un Preicis de la Religion & de la Morale des Indiens, Traduit du Samfcrit, la Langue facreie des Brahmes, en Angolis, Par M. Charles Wilkins*. A Londres : Paris, 1787.
20. Published as *ÁÁÁÓÁÒ-ÃÁÒÀ, èèè, ÁÁÑÁÃÛ ÊÐÈØ Hbl, cb, À Ð Æ ÓÍí ùú. óíèääðñèòàòñéíé Òèñãðàð³í ó Í. Íiãèèiãà* : Mockba, 1788.
21. Published as *Der Bhagvat-Geeta, oder Gesprache zwischen Kreeshna und Arjoon*. Kessinger Publishing : Berlin, 1802.
22. Sinha, Mishka. *Corrigibility, Allegory, Universality: A History of Gita’s Transnational Reception— 1785-1945. Modern Intellectual History*, 7, 2. Cambridge University Press : Cambridge, 2010. pp. 304-307.
23. “Mr. Telang has also published at Bombay a version in colloquial rhythm, eminently learned and intelligent, but not conveying the dignity or grace of the original.”— Arnold, Edwin. *The Song Celestial or Bhagavad-Gita (From the Mahabharata) Being a Discourse Between Arjuna, Prince of India, and the Supreme Being Under the Form of Krishna*. Trubner & Company: London, 1885. Preface, pg.9.
24. *Ibid.* pp.9-10.
25. Chatterji, Mohini Mohun. *The Bhagavad Gita or The Lord’s Lay*. Trubner & Company: London, 1887. Introduction, p.3.

26. “The Bhagavad-Gita is perhaps the most systematic scriptural statement of the Perennial Philosophy. To a world at war, a world that, because it lacks the intellectual and spiritual prerequisites to peace, can only hope to patch up some kind of precarious armed truce, it stands pointing, clearly and unmistakably, to the only road of escape from the self-imposed necessity of self-destruction.”—*The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*. Trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood. The New American Library : New York, 1958 (Fifth edition). p. 22 (Introduction by Aldous Huxley).
27. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary, Chapters 1-6*. Penguin Books, Reprint edition, 1990. Introduction, p.1.
28. “I think, it becomes clear that the struggle the Gita is concerned with is the struggle for self-mastery. It was Vyasa’s genius to take the whole great Mahabharata epic and see it as metaphor for the perennial war between the forces of light and the forces of darkness in every human heart. Arjuna and Krishna are then no longer merely characters in a literary masterpiece. Arjuna becomes Everyman, asking the Lord himself, Sri Krishna, the perennial questions about life and death – not as a philosopher, but as the quintessential man of action. Thus read, the Gita is not an external dialogue but an internal one: between the ordinary human personality, full of questions about the meaning of life, and our deepest Self, which is divine.”—Easwaran, Eknath. *The Bhagavad Gita (Easwaran’s Classics of Indian Spirituality Book 1)*. Nilgiri Press: USA, 2007 (2nd edition). Introduction, p. 2.

Affectionate Mother: Divinity and Humanity of Sarada Devi

Dr. Rajesh Biswas

Abstract

This paper discusses the service of Maa Sarada Devi to the mankind. Sarada Devi served for the humanity continuously since her childhood. It is true that Sarada Devi is accepted by all of the devotees of Ramakrishna order. Generally, it is believed and recognized that she is a Devine Mother. She is obtained as a mother of all for her ministration and devotion to the humanity. She served food to the famine victims in her childhood at Joyrambati of Bankura. She was a strong and positive in spiritual life and she was automatically authorized as a Sangha Janani for her renouncement and ministrations. This paper deals with her strong personality, ideology and focused attitude to the society. It also highlights her service to the humanity and contributions in Ramakrishna movement. Sarada Devi served for the upliftment of the humanity continuously. She had a great ideology. Beside spirituality her aim was to serve the society. So, she actively worked for the social welfare and human need.

Key words: Service, Society, Mother, Sangha Janani, Devotion

Introduction

The Indian tradition has generally respected womanhood and women in ancient period, precisely in the Vedic age enjoyed high status and position in the society. But, on the other hand, we find derogatory references to women in ancient religious scriptures and secular literature developed in India since medieval period of its history. In this period of Indian history, the freedom and privileges that women enjoyed earlier were taken away and women in general was badly and sadly neglected. She lapsed into illiteracy and superstition. Women, in general, remained in a degraded condition, which they had deliberately been subjected to, for centuries.

However, it was due to Ramakrishna movement and Gandhian social movement that women slowly started regaining their lost status and position. Sri Sri Ramakrishna advocated and preached for spiritual upliftment of women. Gandhi engaged many women in his struggle for political liberation of India. Thus began the process of emancipation of Women in India in late 19th and early 20th century and women in India began her journey on the path of modernisation with a heart and mindful of spirituality as taught by Swamiji and Sri Sri Thakur. Women

Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Ramakrishna Mission Residential College (Autonomous), Narendrapur, Kolkata – 700103

empowerment, Women studies, Gender equality etc are most relevant topics today. Social movement, neo social movement etc made women a topic for discussion. In this context an important character is Universal Mother Sarada Devi. Her first identity, obviously, spouse of Sri Ramakrishna Dev. But her best identity is, no doubt, is 'Sangha Janani'. She is the mother of Ramakrishna movement. She gradually established herself as 'Sangha Janani' after the death of Ramakrishna Paramahansa Dev. She was the inspiration of the monks and devotees and all.

Renunciatory Mother

She was born in Jayrambati, an interior village of Bankura where Sarada Devi started her activity to the society for humanity. She married Sri Ramakrishna Dev when she was only 5 years old girl. Then she came to Dakshineswar as a spouse of Ramakrishna Dev and perfectly made herself as a Guru Maa at Dakshineswar. A rural so-called uneducated woman from this time was very popular to the devotees of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna Dev. Selfless love and devotion made her popular to the humanity. The personality of the holy Mother developed in a liberal environment of the society of 19th century Bengal. Her outstanding personality grew in magnificent minded Bengal. She became in the centre of the Sangha without any so-called movement or politics. "I am the mother of the wicked, as I am the mother of the virtuous. Never fear. Whenever you are in distress, just say to yourself, 'I have a mother,'" this saying of Maa is the greatest example of her selfless love. She knows how to love so she was loved by the devotees and they also obey and acknowledge her without any fear.

Her power of love could not be explained by any theory. Her kindness and care made her Universal Mother. She really was a noble and caring woman. She was really the mother of the virtuous and the wicked. Just people accepted her as well as evil also equally obey Maa Sarada. These examples are available in her biography. Ramkrishna movement accepted her for Sarada's greatness and nobility. Ramkrishna mission really is an organisation based upon reality and liberty. This feature of Ramakrishna Mission helped Maa to establish herself as a mother of all. She advised "Everyone must experience the consequence of his past actions. Nevertheless, the remembrance of God's name helps one this much - instead of losing a leg one may suffer merely from a thorn entering one's foot."²

Holy Mother – The Stimulating Force behind the Ramakrishna Movement

Sarada Devi said “If one wants to achieve something noble, he must be sincerely arduous and seized with a firm resolve. When I used to stay in the Nahabat, on moonlit nights I would look at the reflection of the moon in the still waters of the Ganges and, weeping, pray to God, ‘There are stains even on the moon, but let my mind be absolutely stainless.’”³

At the initial stage of life, she looked after her brothers and sisters. She serves famine victims food in her childhood, so she serves for the mankind from her early days.⁴ In Dakshineswar devotees of Ramakrishna Dev were served by maa as their children. She cooked food selflessly for the Bhaktas of Ramakrishna Dev. One of the Bhaktas of Ramakrishna Dev was given money for the transport fare to the home by Maa Sarada Devi.⁵ So self-less love of Maa Sarada, this way spread to the society and she became the mother of all. Many female Bhaktas who came to Thakur, face problem to stay in the Dakshineswar. Sarada Devi give them shelter to her Nohabat. She believed that all of them were their children and she was the mother of all.⁶ She was never feeling tired to serve the Bhaktas of Thakur and these tiredlessness and love ensure her to become Mother of all. Background of being mother of all came about when Ramakrishna Dev was alive. He kept for mother some great sons like Naren, Rakhal, Master, Balram Basu etc. But Sarada devi was not fully happy with these great people. Who were common, uneducated, not devoted themselves - she was bewildered for them⁷ and ardent for everyone. Really, she was a real mother.⁸ After having food of every devotee Maa used to clean the leftover because everyone is equal to her. Class, Cast, Society everything is egalitarian to her. She was really a mother of good and evil.⁹ Sarat was a monk and Amjad was dacoit. Sarat belong to Hindu community and Amjad was a Muslim but they were equipotential to divine mother.¹⁰ Village, Urban, Suburban people tantamount to her. Sarada Devi said - “One must do some work. Through work alone, one can remove the bondage of work, not by avoiding work. Total detachment comes later on. One should not be without work even for a moment.”¹¹

She was really a compassionate woman. She also said - “Don’t try that by any means. Do your duty towards everyone, but bear love towards anyone except God. Loving others brings much misery.”¹² These attributes help her to become a mother of all. She was a woman of the era of so-called renaissance. People of Bengal used to accept everything by logic. No movement, no assertion only by the

emphasis of love she become the mother of Universe. She uttered “Even the impossible becomes possible through devotion.”¹³ She proved that she was devoted to the society. Her motherly behaviour was reflected all her life. She was a woman with strong ideology. She believed that “The only ornament of a woman is her modesty.”¹⁴ A rural woman so-called uneducated woman, thus, accepted by the society. Sarada Devi also inquired day-to-day activities of the various centres of Ramakrishna Order.¹⁵ Thus, “the Holy Mother even outbid earthly mothers by her passionate attachment to her virtually adopted child”¹⁶ and became Universal Mother.

Conclusion

Sarada Devi was a very spiritual woman. She could easily adopt other people as her own. She played a huge role to Ramakrishna Movement. She properly guided the Ramakrishna Sangha. Holy Mother was the Stimulating Force behind the Ramakrishna Movement. She admittedly was a renouncer and cooperative. Swami Vivekananda said that mother is above all.¹⁷ Sarada Devi’s motherly attitude expressed rightly to the world. She innocently manifested the education of love, education of Liberty, education of devotion, education of service. Her way of teaching is relevant equally to the present world. Really, she is the Holy Mother. Her faith and innocence were the power of Maa Sarada. Undoubtedly Eternal Mother is the reverence of simulacrum. Genuinely, Sarada Devi was an affectionate mother.

Notes and References:

1. Swami Atmasthananda: *Sri Sarada Devi the mother of All*, (Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2008), p. 90.
2. *Sri Maa Saradadevi Sayings with Portrait*, (Sri Sri Sarada Devi’s 150th Birth Anniversary, Ramakrishna Mission Lokasiksha Parishad, Narendrapur, Kolkata-700103), p. 13.
3. *Ibid*, p. 17.
4. Probrajika Bedantoprana: ‘Lokojononi’, in Swami Lokeshwarananda (ed.): *Shatorupe Sarada*, (Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Golpark, Kolkata 700029, 1985), p. 309.
5. *Ibid*, p. 309.

6. *Ibid*, pp. 309-310.
7. *Ibid*, pp 310-311.
8. Swami Gombhirananda: *Shrimaa Sarada Devi*, (Udhobodhan Karjalaya, Kolkata, 1384), p. 140.
9. Swami Sardeshananda: *Shri Shri Maayer Smritikotha* (Udhodhon Karjalaya, Kolkata, 1389), pp. 61-62.
10. Durgapuri Devi: *Sarada-Ramakrishna*, (Shri ShriSaradeswari Ashrama, Kolkata, 1368), pp. 209-210.
11. *Sri Maa Saradadevi Sayings with Portrait*, (Sri Sri Sarada Devi's 150th Birth Anniversary, Ramakrishna Mission Lokasiksha Parishad, Narendrapur, Kolkata-700103), p. 18.
12. *Ibid*, p. 20.
13. Swami Pavitrananda: *A Short Life of the Holy Mother*, (Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2023), p. 93.
14. *The Message of Holy Mother* (Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2018), p. 1.
15. Swami Atmasthananda: *Sri Sarada Devi the Mother of All*, (Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2008), p. 43.
16. Swami Nirvedananda: *The Holy Mother*, (Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Kolkata, 2008), p. 73.
17. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. I*, (Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 1962), p. 68.

The Plight of the Tiger Widows in the Sundarbans: An Empirical Study

Moitrayee Basu & Dr. Atish Prosad Mondal

Abstract

Human-tiger conflict (HTC) is a serious public health issue in Sundarban Reserve Forest, India. HTC is a continued concern for the significant mortality and morbidity of both human and tiger populations. Tiger attacks in the communities around the Sundarban Reserve Forest are under constant threat. A major portion of the population from the villages of Sundarbans depends upon the forest resources as their livelihood activities, where they become the victim of tiger attacks. Thus, HTC has become a regular event in Sundarbans. Most of the forest-goers are landless poor people, the husband being the only earner of the family, and his untimely death hurls the widow into deep poverty and hardship.

This a comprehensive report on Sundarbans tiger-human conflicts and its impact on widows whose husbands were killed by tigers. The study attempts to analyze the socio-economic profile of the tiger widows and measure the impact of the incident including the cultural stigma related to being killed by a tiger.

This is ethnographic research using qualitative tools tried to narrate how their lives have been impacted by this incident leading to their economic and social insecurity, deprivation, abuse, and exploitation. Interviews of tiger widows and focused group discussions help to unfold the cultural stigma related to tiger killings and how their life has been impacted.

Keywords: Tiger-Widows, Human-Tiger Conflict, Tiger-Attacks, Human-Wildlife Conflict, Sundarbans Reserve Forest.

The world's largest delta, formed by the rivers Ganges, Meghna, and Brahmaputra along the Bay of Bengal, is in the South Asia area of Bangladesh and India known as the Sundarbans. The Sundarbans of India comprise 19 community development blocks, out of which 13 are in South 24 Parganas and 6 in North 24 Parganas, having 190 Gram Panchayats and 1064 villages, with a total area of 9630 sq.km., comprising 102 islands out of which 54 are inhabited (Samanta et al., 2014). A total of 64 mangroves and more than 600 animal species have been enumerated in

Moitrayee Basu, Assistant Professor, Department of Accounting & Finance, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata

Dr. Atish Prosad Mondal, Associate Professor & Head, Department of Accounting & Finance, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata

the Indian part (Samanta et al., 2013). It is also home to an estimated 200 tigers considering both Bangladesh and Indian parts of the Sundarbans (TOI, 2018).

The Sundarbans not only give shelter to numerous flora and fauna but also plays an important role in the national economy. The livelihoods of the habitants are mainly depending upon forest resources (Mondal, 2004). It is one of the poorest and highest population density areas where people are dependent upon forest resources for their livelihood, it seems these people from the Sundarbans have little opportunity to carry on with one of the most dangerous professions in the world. Human-tiger conflict (HTC) is a serious public health issue in the Sundarban Reserve Forest. HTC is a continued concern for the significant mortality and morbidity of both human and tiger populations. The communities residing around the Sundarban Reserve Forest face a constant threat of tiger attacks (Chowdhury et al., 2010). Human-tiger conflict in recent years has increased as their dependency on forest resources has increased due to the factors like job loss during the lockdown, return of the migrant workers, environmental stressors, and infiltration of wildlife in search of prey (Chatterjee, 2023).

The identification of the Sundarbans Reserve Forest (STR) has impacted the lives and livelihoods of the natives; to overcome such situations they adopted such measures that they are being victimized (Ghosh, 2013). The cultural stigma of tiger killings in the local community exacerbates an already difficult situation for widowed women, serving as an amplifier of problems faced by all women who have lost their husbands. Their widowhood impacts all aspects of life, namely psychological well-being, mental health, and economic security which are intimately attached to tiger-killing (Chowdhury et al., 2014). The Sundarbans are home to 3000 widows known as 'Bagh-Bidhoba' who has lost their husbands in tiger attacks (Bhattacharya, 2012). The official records show that on average 10-15 people were annually killed by the tigers in the Sunderban Tiger Reserve (STR) (Das, 2012). Experts have argued that the wandering of tigers in close proximity is increasing the potential for HTCs (Das, 2012).

Method

This study gives an array of Sunderban human-tiger conflicts and its impact on widows whose husbands were killed by tigers. It attempts to explore the situation

analysis of HTC and the aftermath of the incident including privation and coping and consequent discrimination and disruption of livelihoods and food security in Deulbari, Katamari, and Dakshin Durgapur and Purba Gurguriavillage of Kultali block II. This block has a significant proportion of the population who are mainly dependent on forest resources for their livelihood (fishing, crab collection, honey collection, and other things), subsequently risking their lives to tigers, crocodiles, and sharks. The paper focuses on the interviews of tiger widows and focused-group discussions (FGDs) to unfold how their lives have been impacted by this incident leading to their economic and social insecurity, deprivation, abuse, and exploitation. The number of widows interviewed is 35 as some of them have declined to be interviewed or examined. The selection of the FGD participants was based on their willingness to participate and suggestions given by the key informants.

Discussions

Panchami Naiya, a 35 years old lady narrated her prolonged and unpleasant experience of her severe pain of survival on the way home from fishing in the creeks, “there are crocodiles in the river and tigers on the land, and erosion of land attacked us from the other end.” Almost a decade ago, her husband had been attacked by a tiger and dragged into the forest where she was the only witness. Keeping her faith in Bonbibi (the defender of the forest) she enters those creeks every night and waits till dawn spreading the net into the water. In the morning she returns home with fresh catches. During her night-long endeavor, she often encounters tigers.

Unlike Panchami, Aparna Kumar, another tiger widow, has turned her back on the forest and took up the work of domestic help on the island after her husband had been taken away by a tiger in a similar fashion. Even today, she reminiscences that ‘accident’ which happened almost eight years ago.

Panchali Mondal, a 40 years old woman, tries a living as an agricultural laborer and is ardently looking for better work options for her sustenance. Her husband became the prey of the wild beast while they were fishing in the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve (STR) forest. She too shares a similar experience of being a witness to the incident.

Morijan Loskar, after the death of her husband Echak Molla, is dependent on

her sons who are rickshaw pullers and occasionally entered into forest for some extra earnings.

Ayasha Halder, 40 years old women, tries a living as a laborer in a hotel in the Canning area and is ardently looking for better work options for her sustenance. Her husband became the prey of the wild beast while they were fishing in the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve (STR) forest. She too shares a similar experience of being a witness to the incident.

Elias Mondal and his younger brother had gone into the forest for honey collection on October 2014. All of a sudden the beast jumped on Elias, his brother tried to save him with an axe, at that moment the tiger left wounded Elias and pounced on his brother and went into the jungle Elias tried to rescue him but could only rescue his mutilated corpse. He left behind his wife Farida Mondal, one of the youngest widows at 25 years of age, and his two children. The police said that in his case at least his body has been recovered, but in most cases, it is even difficult to find the dead body from the forest. After his death, none of his family members entered the forest and instead engaged themselves in agricultural work.

Sikha Mondal became the sole earner for her family after her husband's death from a tiger attack. Since then she had to earn for her three daughters, the youngest one was nine years old during the incident. Though she was haunted by the idea of being attacked by a tiger, still she used to go to the forest for her livelihood. Gradually, the situation changed when an NGO named the Rashmoni Foundation extended its help. Initially, they provided her with a cow and a few chickens for husbandry. Now, she has stopped going to the forest for her livelihood.

Golapjaan Laskar, another tiger widow, has chosen bee-keeping as a livelihood and restrained herself from venturing into the forest. Earlier, she used to go to the forest for wood and crabs which involve uncertainty of income but an NGO helped her by providing training and supplying materials needed for apiculture. She said, "Bee-keeping offers me a guaranteed income of Rs.6000 to Rs.7000 per month, which is enough to run my family."

Analysis and Interpretation

In most of these cases of death by tiger attacks is due to illegal entry to the reserve forest by the habitants in search of their livelihood. These attacks occurred

predominantly in the months from November to April when the entry in the forest increases as it is the season of honey collection. As in most cases the entries in the forest itself are illegal (without permission from the forest department), the victim's family did not receive any compensation from the Forest Department or they were cheated out by others. For claiming such compensation it is necessary to recover the dead body from the forest and conduct the autopsy, after which necessary documents need to be deposited to the concerned department for getting the compensation. Amongst all the interviewees only two of them received compensation from the Forest Department.

The victim's body was missing in 28 incidents, and only 7 were recovered out of which 5 were honey collectors, whose bodies could be recuperated as the tigers were chased away by others and 2 were recovered from the forest only after the tiger left their mangled bodies. Out of that, only 3 of the bodies were brought back home, the rest have been either cremated or buried in the forest. Those corpses have brought with them a horrific experience for their dear ones. In an interview, the widow narrated that her husband's body muscle mass was half eaten and covered in blood and it was difficult to recognize him. This ocular clash had a deep psychological impact along with a strong sense of guilt, and misfortune. Out of these 35 widows, 10 are still engaged in forest-based livelihood activities, 18 are engaged in various labor-based jobs (household helper, SHG worker, agricultural worker), 5 are not earning (dependent on their grandchildren or relatives) and 2 have to earn their bread by begging.

Anadi Dolui, an authorized honey collector narrated his experience during the interview. When he entered the forest for honey collection, he was attacked by a tiger but he was able to survive as his associates had counter-attacked the animal with sticks. After the attack he was fainted and admitted to a hospital for a week as his legs were pierced by the claws, still, he continued to carry out his expeditions in the forest.

Presently there are 258 million widows in the world and almost one-tenth of them live in extreme conditions of poverty (UN, 2019). Being women, they have their specific needs but their voices and experiences are not enough to have an impact on their survival. Women in the Sundarbans (Chowdhury et al., 1999) are poorly educated and have very limited access to resources for their betterment. The estimated female marriage age is 14 years and motherhood often begins at a

tender age of 16 years with the burden of a patriarchal society characterized by an abusive and an alcoholic husband 10 which increases the rate of domestic violence 11 which aggravates the stress level or mental illness of those women. These circumstances are related to their husband's death along with the associated economic and psychological stress of widowhood. The life of widows is a classic example of gender discrimination and can be perceived as marginalized, sexual, economic abuse, and oppression. It is estimated that 3000 tiger widows are there in the Sundarbans region of Bengal (Bhattacharya, 2012). The husband's unnatural and sudden death turns them into social outcasts. Cultural stigmas attached to these tiger widows worsen their suffering; with the loss of their husbands, they lose their social security, economic security, and well-being.

It is evident from the study that the tiger widows are physically abused, sometimes by their in-laws for domestic disputes or by their children or others as they are the outcasts; they often face flak even in the workplace. Though this is a very sensitive issue in the community, some of the widows revealed how they are quietly suffering dishonor at the hands of others. During the interview, one of the widows revealed that "a wealthier landlord has given her the proposal of being the mistress and assured to pay the maintenance money", she ruled out the proposal as it seems humiliating to her. There were some shreds of evidence that younger women are trapped in trafficking and reported as lost in the Sundarbans, sometimes they are forced into prostitution (Malik, 2013). Remarriage is not at all encouraged as they are held responsible for their husband's death. In some cases, they are so attached to their deceased husband that they do not want to replace that with someone else. In my study, a young widow who was in their early 30s married again, to a widowed man who also have children from his deceased wife. So the chance of remarriage is rare.

Tiger widows are mainly a marginalized population. Out of the 35 widows interviewed, 26 were living below the poverty line (BPL) mainly because their husbands were illegal forest workers from poor families and the sole earner, so after their death, these women were thrown into economic crisis. Almost in all cases in this study, their relatives had denied the financial responsibility towards the widow or their children. The tiger widows are mainly illiterate, unskilled labor as a result earning opportunities for them are also very less. So, they again choose some form of forest-based living or a day-labor job. In a few cases, they have

been employed as a servant in a well-off family. As they are considered as evil or cursed very few are willing to employ them. Only 2 widows (interviewed) had some agricultural land and they survive on the agricultural produce. One widow in my study moved to Kolkata in search of work and currently, she is working in a household. As she moved out, her neighbors labeled her as a bad woman and criticized her character, “in my bad days there was no one to help me, but now they are gossiping about my character as I am working in Kolkata”.

To cope with this crisis they instigated their children to discontinue their schooling and send them to work for the survival of the family. This had led to a high rate of dropouts from school and an increase in child labor. Many tiger widows will arrange their daughters' early marriage (sometimes at the age of nine) not only to secure their financial condition but also to ensure their social security (Chowdhury et al. 2014). It has been reported that Sundarban girls are at risk, especially of being trafficked to other states of India (Gupta, 2010). To fight these issues, some NGOs have started up schools for the children of tiger victims. The government has also taken initiatives for creating livelihood options by providing them with livestock and conducting training programs to make them skilled workers, building artificial bee hives, or encouraging fishing in ponds. The differential load and multidimensional fragility of tiger widows open up the need for social justice, support, and security (Chowdhury et al. 2016).

Conclusion

The Forest Department report shows that the number of HTC increased in the year 2018, also in 2019 the number of tigers in STR increased to 200 (National Tiger Conservation Authority) only on the Indian side. As a result, the number of tiger widows has also increased in the region. So, the conservation policies need to be reformed as it is seriously affecting both the tigers (Goodrich, 2010) and humans (Ahmed et al., 2012). The participation and perception of inhabitants regarding tiger conservation policies need to be considered (Bhattarai et al., 2014). The balance between the biodiversities in nature and the population dependent on it should be the prime concern. For that purpose, it is pertinent to keep the wild habitat area undisturbed. The government must initiate measures to prevent encroachment in the core area. Alternative sustainable economic activities should be regenerated for the marginalized section (Datta et al., 2011). The economic

and social security of the victim's family should be addressed for their survival (Dhakal, 2011) and in the long term livelihood opportunities for the local people must be a key issue (Ghosh, 2013). Enhancing the social acceptability (Manfredo, 2001) of the tiger widows through active community participation, and addressing gender-environment issues are recommended. All these are possible through the active participation of the locals under a strong and coordinated strategy (Dhakal, 2014).

References

1. Ahmed, R.A. et al. (2012). Prevailing Human Carnivore Conflict in Kanha-Achanakmar Corridor, Central India, *World Journal of Zoology*, Vol. 7, No. 2. Available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ce6a/3b30fc040e68f2497a6fb3f38ed74e30620b.pdf>, accessed on November 3, 2019.
2. Bhattacharya, S. (2012). The tiger widows of the Sundarbans, *N World*. Available at <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/south-asia/the-tiger-widows-of-the-sundarbans>, accessed on October 26, 2019.
3. Bhattarai, B.R. et al. (2014). Human-tiger, Panthera tigris conflict and its perception in Bardia National Park, Nepal, *Flora and Fauna International*, available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/740a/022caed744c64445151f1da190ae66978cf4.pdf> accessed on November 5, 2019.
4. Chatterjee, Sisir. (2023). Rising trend of man-tiger conflict at man-nature interface of Indian Sundarbans: study towards traditional understanding and challenging livelihood of Sundarbans people. *Safety in Extreme Environments*. 5. 1-12. 10.1007/s42797-023-00069-5.
5. Chowdhury A, et al. (1999). Eco-psychiatry of urbanization in Sunderban Deltas: study of drug and alcohol problems, *Man and Life*, Vol. 25, pp.187-196.
6. Chowdhury, A. (2009). Pattern of domestic violence amongst non-fatal deliberate self-harm attempters: A study from primary care of West Bengal, *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 51, Issue. 2, pp.98-99.
7. Chowdhury, A et al. (2010). Eco-stress of Human Animal Conflict in the Sunderbans, *CurrConserv*, Vol. 4, Issue. 4, p.45.
8. Chowdhury, R. M. (2014). Stigma of Tiger Attack: Study of Tiger widows from SunderbanDelta. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 12-19.
9. Chowdhury, A et al. (2014). Culture and Stigma: Ethnographic case studies of tiger widows of Sunderban Delta, *World Cultural Psychiatry Research Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp.100-101.
10. Chowdhury, N A et al. (2016). Ecopsychological Aspects of Human-Tiger Conflict: An Ethnographic Study of Tiger Widows of Sunderban Delta, India, *Environmental Health Insights*, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4712980/>

- , accessed on November 2, 2019.
11. Das, C. (2012). Tiger straying incidents in Indian Sunderban: statistical analysis of case studies as well as depredation caused by conflict, *European Journal of Wildlife Research*, Vol. 58, Issue.1, pp.209-210
 12. Datta, D. et al. (2011) Prospective livelihood opportunities from the Mangroves of the Sundarbans, India, *Research Journal of Environmental Sciences* , Vol. 5, No.6, available at: <https://scialert.net/fulltextmobile/?doi=rjes.2011.536.543> , accessed on November 5, 2019.
 13. Dhakal N. (2011). Assessment of Residents' Social and Economic Wellbeing in Conservation Resettlement: A case study of Padampur, Chitwan National Park, Nepal, Dissertation, *University of Minnesota* , available at:https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/119825/Dhakal_umn_0130E_12453.pdf; accessed on November 6, 2019.
 14. Dhakal, N. (2014). Saving Tigers: Local Knowledge and Conservation, *Local Futures*. Available at: <https://www.localfutures.org/saving-tigers-local-knowledge-and-conservation/> ,accessed on November 12, 2019.
 15. Ghosh, P. (2013). *Impacts of Biodiversity Conservation on Rural Livelihoods in and Around the Sunderban Tiger Reserve (STR) : A case study of struggles over access to forest based resources. Perspective in Indian Development*. New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.
 16. Goodrich, J. (2010). JM, Human-tiger conflict: A review and call for comprehensive plans, *Integrative Zoology* , Vol. 5, No. 4, pp.300-312.
 17. Gupta R. (2010). Human Trafficking in Asia: Trends and Responses, in Laipson, E and Pandya, A, (eds.), *On the Move: Migration Challenges in the Indian Ocean Littoral*, *Stimson Centre*, p.76.
 18. *International Widows' Day. 23 June*”, *United Nations* , available at: <http://un.org/en/events/widowsday/>, accessed on October 27, 2019.
 19. Malik, V. (2013). Problems of widow remarriage in India: A study, *Journal of Business Management and Social Science Research* , Vol .2, No. 2, pp.23-31.
 20. Manfredo, M. et al. (2001). Concepts of Exploring the Social Aspects of Human Wildlife Conflicts in a Global Context, *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* , Vol. 9, No. 4, pp.1-2.
 21. Mistri A, (2019). Is the Migration from Indian Sunderban an Environmental Migration? Investigating through Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA). *Asian Profile*. 47(3), 195-218.
 22. Mondal, A K, *The Sundarban of India: A Development Analysis* , Indus Publishing, New Delhi, 2003, p.40.

23. Samanta, A et al. (2014). Moule: HoneyCollector of Sunderbans and their Indigenous Technical Knowledge, *Frontier Farming*, Vol. II, Issue II, p.3.
24. Samanta, A et al (2013). Moule, HoneyCollectors of Sundarbans and their ITKs, *American Journal of Advances in MedicalSciences*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p.2.
25. (2018, January 29) *India and Bangladesh join hands to count Royal Bengal Tiger*. *Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/india-and-bangladesh-join-hands-to-count-royal-bengal-tiger/articleshow/62694895.cms>.
26. Raj, G N. (2013). Forest Corridors Crucial for Tiger Conservation, *The Hindu*, p.9

Ethnicity, Identity and Power: A Study on Contemporary Thailand

Dr. Purabi Barman

Abstract:

Ethnic movements received worldwide attention as one of the destabilizing factors troubling nation states in the post-cold era. The countries where the ethnic tension has become a center of concern are Myanmar, Srilanka, India in Asia; Sudan and Rwanda in Africa. But more ethnic movements in Asia are found in the Southeast Asia. Thailand is no exception. Thailand is a multiethnic country with a great variety of ethnic groups. These groups quarrel and vie with each other for the betterment of their living conditions and sometimes they choose the path of violent action. As a result, Thailand has experienced unrest in each of its peripheral regions. In this paper, I have tried to explain the meaning of ethnicity and briefly dealt with several ethnic groups and their movements in Thailand.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Thailand, Ethnic groups, Ethnic movements, Insurgency, Hill People

Ethnicity, Identity and Power: A Study on Contemporary Thailand

Socio-political movements of ethnic communities are not a recent phenomenon. It became the main concern for the whole world. Ethnic movements received worldwide attention as one of the destabilizing factors troubling nation states in the post-cold war era. It was no more confined to the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in Europe, but also spread to the two other big continents like Asia and Africa. The countries where the ethnic tension has become a center of concern are Myanmar, Srilanka, India in Asia; Sudan and Rwanda in Africa. But more ethnic movements in Asia are found in the Southeast. Here Thailand is no exception. Hence we discuss the ethnic movements in Thailand in its entirety.

Understanding Ethnicity

The concept of ethnicity is somewhat multidimensional. It consists of aspects such as race, origin or ancestry, identity, language and religion. The term ethnicity derives from the ancient Greek term *ethnos* which originally means heathen or pagan¹. It appeared in the English language only in the 1950s and was first recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary of 1953. According to Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, “Ethnicity seems to be a new term”².

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Heramba Chandra College, Kolkata-700029, West Bengal.

Earlier no such attention was paid to ethnicity by scholars. But the situation changed during the decade of 1960-1970. Since the late 1960s, ethnicity has been a main preoccupation in social and cultural anthropology and it remains a central focus for research after the turn of the millennium³.

There are different views about the meaning of ethnicity. According to Thomas Hylland Erikson “ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of a regular interaction. It can thus also be defined as a social identity (based on a contrast vis-à-vis others) characterized by metaphoric of fictive kingship”⁴.

Ethnicity is social in nature and is also an alternative form of social organization and social identification based on the presumption of shared history and a common cultural inheritance. It also shares certain distinctive features such as language, culture, physical appearance, religion, values and customs.

There are also several approaches to the study of ethnicity. The most important approach is that of the so called ‘primordialists’. This term was first used by Edward Shills (1957). In the primordialist view, the ethnic ties are treated as a coercive social bond. In contrast to ‘primordialists’, the ‘instrumentalists’ treat ethnicity as a social, political and cultural resource for different interest and status-groups (Brass, 1991; Cohen, 1974).

In short ethnicity can be used to build unity and solidarity within a fragmented, weak community that is seeking to attain some form of equality. It also benefits society only to the extent that it aids individuals and groups in the transition from one state to another⁵.

Most of the countries in the world are multiethnic and the population is divided into heterogeneous groups within the framework of existing state structures. The groups are distinguished according to certain ethnic attributes and may be referred to as ethnies. Through ethnicity, these groups demand equal opportunities in social, economic and cultural fields. Sometimes their ways to achieve these goals have proved violent, and then comes ethnic conflict.

There are again several sources of ethnic conflict. Economic inequalities and transformations are particularly important. But the major sources are cultural, linguistic and religious differences. Also, there are international conflicts triggered

by ethnic differences: conflicts between national states which are caused or exacerbated by ethnic movements of secession and irredentism⁶.

These above causes of ethnic conflict have been seen in Thailand. In order to discuss ethnic disparities in Thailand, we should first explain its location and the number of ethnic groups.

Thailand: Its Location and Ethnic Groups:

The Kingdom of Thailand is located at the center of mainland Southeast Asia. It is bordered on the west and north by Myanmar, to the northeast by Laos and to the southeast by Cambodia. It extends southward along the Isthmus of Kra to the Malay Peninsula where it borders Malaysia. It has a maximum dimension of about 2500 km north to south and 1250 km east to west.

Thailand is a multiethnic country with a great variety of ethnic groups. Ethnically Thailand is a heterogeneous nation but in terms of population Thailand is homogeneous, with more than 85 percent speaking a Tai language and sharing a common culture (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, January 2010). The ethnic group of Thailand can be divided into three categories: 1. Thais; 2. Hill peoples of the North; 3. other groups include the Chinese and minorities in the South⁷.

Estimates in 1957 concerning ethnic groups in Thailand are as follows:

Thai	18,585,000
Chinese	3,000,000
Malay	670,000
Cambodian	185,000
Vietnamese	25,000
Indian and Pakistani	60,000
Mon	60,000
Karen	60,000
Westerners	5,000
Others	150,000
Total	22,800,000

Source: The 1957 Population and Housing Census, National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand.

Thais may be divided into four major groups: Central Thai (Siamese) of the Central valley; the Northeastern Thai (Lao) of the Northeast (Khorat); the Northern Thai (Lanna) of North Thailand; and Southern Thai (Chao Pak Thai) of Peninsular Thailand. The Thai's migration from southern China began during the 11th century. Central Thai have been the dominant group culturally, politically and economically. It comprises about 32 percent of Thailand's population. Central Thai retain their prestigious identity irrespective of whether they live in the core Central Thai regions of Central Thailand or elsewhere in the nations⁸.

Ethnic Groups:

Thai	75%
Chinese	14%
Others	11%

Source: The 2000 Population and Housing Census, National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand.

Religions:

Buddhist	94.6%
Muslim	4.6%
Christian	0.7%
Other	0.1%

Source: The 2000 Population and Housing Census, National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand.

The Northeast Thai, the second largest Thai Group are also known as the Thai Lao or Lao Isan which indicates their similarity to the Lao across the border. They are more like the Lao than like Central Thai in language and in some customs. This group comprises about 30 percent of the population. They live in the northeast region which has been run by Central Thai Administration for over 100 years and their living standard is very poor. They survive by growing rice and other crops and raising cattle and water buffalos for sale. The northeast thais are the followers of Theravada Buddhism, although they also celebrate regional festivals not celebrated by other Thais⁹.

Another major Thai-speaking group is the 'Northern Thai'. Although the Northern Thai are assimilated into Central Thai Society, they desire to see themselves as a distinct and major Thai group in Northern Thailand and continue to use their own written language.

'Southern Thai' are another major Thai speaking group. They live in the poor rural southern region. The Southern Thai have been influenced by the Malays of neighboring Malaysia. The majorities are the Buddhist, but when they came into contact with the Malays, a small Muslim minority appeared in the region. The economic condition of the Southern Thai is very critical. For that reason many southern Thai people have migrated to other countries for employment¹⁰.

In addition to these four major Thai speaking groups, there are also a number of ethnic minority groups in the North and North-east, most of them have either been assimilated into the larger Thai population or retain ties to co-ethnics in Laos, Myanmar or China. Minor groups are Phuthai, Shan, Lue, Phuan, Saek and Kharat Thai¹¹.

The Hill people of Thailand live in the North West region. This region is also known as the Golden Triangle, one of Asia's main illicit opium producing areas. It is an area of 950,000Km² that overlaps the mountains of four countries of Southeast Asia: Myanmar (Burma), Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. Principal tribal groups are Khis and Kaleung in the northeast; the Mons living in the Peninsula along the Burmese border and the Karens living along the Northern Burmese border. They migrated from China. The total number of population is unknown because some individuals or communities have assimilated into Thai society, while some others live isolated in the hills. The Chaobons are also classified as a Hill people and live in the South and the East of the North West territory. There also exist Yamburi, indigenous hunter gatherers. They have also been assimilated into Thai society. There are also some 20 other minority groups including Akha, Musso, Meo, Kamuk, Tin, Lawa, and so on. Those communities which are not assimilated into Thai society survive by shifting cultivation in rugged, isolated mountain or dense forest terrain. Most of the people are Buddhist in assimilated societies.

There are also many national minority (defined as a group of people which has culture, language, race etc. distinct from those of the rest of the population and also small in number) groups in Thailand. A major ethnic minority is the Chinese (about 14%) who live in cities and towns in the central and southern regions. They

are engaged in business and commerce throughout the country. The Chinese migrated to Thailand and easily assimilated into Thai society. They remain a distinct minority group due to continued use of the Chinese language, membership in trading networks, and adherence to their traditional Buddhist- Taoist- confucionist religion- all important markers of Chinese society.

In Thailand there are also some Vietnamese and Khmer who have mostly come from Cambodia. The Vietnamese number about 70,000 (source) and Khmer close to 1million. Also small numbers of residents from India, Europe and US live mainly in the urban areas in Thailand. With the existence of multiple ethnic groups, Thailand is facing various ethnic movements among these groups.

Ethnic Movement in Thailand:

These ethnic groups which we mentioned above live in Thailand with their cultures, attitudes and religions. In spite of these differences among ethnic groups, they lived peacefully in the past. But now they quarrel with each other for the betterment of their living conditions and sometimes they choose the way of violent action. As a result, Thailand has experienced unrest in each of its peripheral regions and become an attractive subject for study by the scholars. Here we examine the nature of the problems which have not yet disappeared.

The situation of the 'Hill people' of Thailand who are living inside the Thai border is under threat. They migrated from China and live in the northern part of Thailand. The state's policy towards these people remained one of neglect rather than active political and economic intervention until the early 1950s. Since then the government has proclaimed policies to promote the economic development and national integration of the Northern communities. In practice, however, the relative underdevelopment of the region and the political subordination of its communities have intensified¹². The hill peoples are also harassed by the state officials who often violate their human rights. The hill people are deprived of Thai nationality though there is a policy to grant Thai nationality. Historically, Thai government policy towards the hill people has been framed with a view to preventing them from becoming a threat to national security; curbing opium cultivation in the hilly terrain region along the Burmese and Laotian borders and preventing de-forestation. Thai officials claim that through shifting cultivation hill people destroyed the forests. They are also treated as second class citizens. Overall, hill people have been

facing some major problems including the inability to participate in the larger Thai society and economy equally, limited access to government services, lack of land rights and citizenship and increasing disruption of social system leading to drug addiction, prostitution and gradual loss of cultural identity¹³.

The Northeast Thai group represents another restive ethnic group in Thailand. The sole problem among the ethnic groups is communist insurgency. The northeastern region lacks internal cultural homogeneity in that it consists of a variety of related dialect and cultural groups¹⁴. It includes Puthai, Yuai, So, Saek and Kaleung. There are also Chinese and Central Thais and migrant groups such as Vietnamese refugees who have migrated recently. Other groups are Kha Brao, Khmer, Kui and the hill tribe Chaobon. Some of them are not interested in assimilating into the Thai society. But some desire to be included in the Thai society. For that reason there exist inter-ethnic problems within the society. Those ethnic groups who are not assimilated are always trying to separate themselves and form an independent society. In order to achieve this goal they follow the path of rebellion.

The Thai- Muslim problem in Southern Thailand constitutes the most serious ethnic group problem. It is now attracting much attention today because it is the most violent movement and threatening regional stability. This problem has now changed the political landscape of entire Thailand.

The Southerners are different from the majority Thai of the country- physically, linguistically and culturally. They look like Malays, and speak Yawi, Malay dialect as well as follow the Islamic code of life. Their geographical distance from Bangkok and closeness to Malaysia pushes them to lean on their immediate neighbor. The overall aim of the southerners is the establishment of an independent Islamic State. For achieving this goal, they have begun a separatist movement which is threatening the stability of the country Thailand.

The separatist movement in Southern Thailand began in the early 1900s. The root causes of this movement are a complex mixture of history, ethnicity and religion, fueled by socio- economic disparities, poor governance and political grievances¹⁵.

The problem in Southern provinces started when King Chulalongkorn decided to speed up the process of assimilation and centralize the administration in 1901. After that the three provinces wrapped by violence, Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani originally formed the part of an independent entity called the Pattani Kingdom which was slowly included by the Thai state from the late 18th century onwards.

The two Anglo Siamese treaties in 1902 and 1909 resulted in the formal incorporation of the three provinces into Thailand, while the rest of the Pattani kingdom became part of British Malaya¹⁶. After 1910, the Siamese government began to emphasize the use of Thai language. There was a concerted attempt to educate the Malays in Thai (Dulyakasem 1991, p.141) and this led to periodic protests in the southern provinces. Siam then embarked on a centralizing policy that led to the imposition of Thai administrative officials in the three southern Malay provinces. Most of these officials were Thai Buddhist and unfamiliar with the local Malay language and Muslim culture that led to social antagonism.

In the three provinces of Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani, the majority of population were Malay-Muslim. They spoke Malayu and adhered to Islam. Soon after the introduction of 1921 Primary Education Act, a major rebellion was organized in 1922 by Tengku Abdul Kadir from Kalatan, where he moved in 1915. Beginning in the 1920s the Thai government initiated the policy of forced assimilation with the aim of turning this Malay Muslim into Thai-Muslim¹⁷. A modernization program was also introduced to eliminate 'backward' Islamic customs and dialects and impose uniformity in language and social behavior.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the government declared that Pondok (religious schools), Madrassa like schools should give instruction in Thai instead of Malay and Arabic. Local Malay Muslims saw this as a threat to their identity and Pondok began to encourage Pan- Malay Nationalism and Islamic revivalism through their curricula¹⁸. After that thousand of Thai Muslim youth after completing their pondok education started going to other Muslim universities.

The Malay Muslims of Southern Thailand realized that national integration is the source of their own cultural disintegration. They also believed that Thai Buddhist and Malay Muslims belong to two different cosmological orientations.

The era of the Second World War (1939-45) was marked by protests, riots and the Dusun Nyor (Dasunnayur) uprising¹⁹. Led by Haji Sulong, Chairman of Pattani Provincial Islamic Council the rebels made seven ethno-religious demands to the Central government, focusing on political freedom for the Malays and the preservation of their language. His only religious demand was the recognition and enforcement of Muslim Law. But his effort to sever the Malay region from the rest of the country was put down by the Central Thai authorities.

Organization and Mobilization of Ethnic Groups in the South:

The period of 1960s and 1970s marked a new phase of political tension in the region and Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat became a zone of dissidence and this situation has further deteriorated to the extent that the so-called Deep South is now in the throes of full-scale ethno- religious insurgency. In this period a variety of militant separatist movements occurred in the Southern Thai provinces. The common aim of these movements was to carve out an independent Muslim state with Pattani as the center. Violent action in pursuit of this objective typically fell into the classic pattern of low-intensity conflict, generally involving ambushes, kidnappings, assassinations, extortion, sabotage and bomb attacks²⁰. Their main aim was also to create a sense of insecurity among ethnic Thais living in the region and to mount more pressure on the central government to accept the political demands of Malay Muslim separatism. In that period some groups emerged which were in the forefront of this unrest. They are as follows—

BarisanRevelusi Nasional (BRN): BRN was formed in 1960 by Abdul Karim Hassan in a response to a government education program that forced the network of nominally independent religious boarding schools in Pattani to take as a secular curriculum in addition to their Islamic studies²¹. It rejected the Thai Constitution and wanted to bring about complete secession of the South Muslim provinces to form an independent Pattani state.

Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO): PULO was the most prominent and active rebel group among the other groups operating in Thailand. It was formed in 1960 by Tengku Bira Kotanila and followed a dual track policy of both non-violent and violent action. Its non-violent action was the improvement of education standards among the Southern Malay population. Through armed action, this group wanted to draw international attention to the plight of the indigenous Southern Thai population and wanted to establish a separate wing known as the Pattani United Liberation Army.

New PULO: Furthermore, a split within PULO saw the creation of a group called New PULO in 1995 led by A-rongMuleng and Haji Abdul Rohman Bazo²². The goal of this faction appears to align with that of its parent.

Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani (BNPP): Along with BRN, PULO, New PULO, there was another group operating in Southern Thailand called BNPP led

by Tengku Abdul Jalal. Islam was part of its policy.

Barisan Bersatu Kemerdekaan Pattani (Bersatu): Due to their different ideological outlooks BRN, PULO, BNPP and New PULO, never managed to attain their actual objective. Operating under the umbrella of Bersatu, they carried out a coordinated series of bombings and shooting attacks code named Falling Leaves that resulted in 9 deaths, several injuries and economic damage²³.

The activities of these organizations dropped markedly by the late 1980s because of the demise of the New PULO. In that period the government also defeated the separatist insurgency in the south through a combination of improved governance, economic development projects, and blanket amnesties for the insurgents and stepped-up security cooperation with neighboring Malaysia. Another attempt was made through the Southern Borders Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC), established in 1981 under the Ministry of Interior(MoI) to formulate broad ranging policies for defusing tension.

Despite these policies taken by the Thai government to normalize the situation in the southern provinces, violence re-erupted. After assuming power in 2001, Thaksin Shinawatra dismantled the SBPAC and imposed martial law in the Deep South. In protest separatist movements has resurfaced in southern Thailand.

The first signs of a re-emergence of violence showed at the end of 2001, when five- well coordinated attacks on police posts in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat left five officers and one village defense volunteer dead. The number of incidents increased from 75 in 2002 to 119 in 2003. But the two most significant incidents occurred in 2004. They are the Krue Se (April28, 2004) and Tak Bai (October25, 2004) incidents.

Kreu Se Jihad: In protest against martial law, on April 28, 2004, religious militants assaulted military forces and occupied the famous Krue Se Mosque in Pattani, a symbol of Malay Muslim resistance to Thai (Siamese) domination. This incident led to a large public media debate about the methods employed in dealing with the situation.

Tak Bai Incident: There was another incident in Tak Bai district of Narathiwat. 86 Muslims died who demonstrated against the jailing of a local Muslim accused of inciting violence, due to the suffocation in trucks on which they were piled on for transportation to a military camp.

These two incidents in 2004 marked another phase of insurgency. After these two incidents the government realized that they should concentrate on promoting a secular curriculum rather than censoring religious education through the *pondok*.

Recent Trends:

Between January 2004 and the end of August 2007, the number of attacks increased day by day. In that period two groups were responsible for the majority of attacks. First are the Barisan Revolusi Nasional-koordinasi (BRN-C) and its right wing Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK). The second is Gerakan Mujahideen Islami Pattani (GMIP). Their overriding goal would seem to be the creation of a separate Malay-Muslim state incorporating three provinces, Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani within five years. In order to achieve independent statehood, these groups (BRN-C and GMIP) have adopted some strategies. The first is to shatter the fabric of society in the south, polarize society, force Thai Buddhists to migrate and destroy Thailand's governmental structure in the Deep South. To date, the militants have achieved a high degree of success. Another notable incident occurred in April 2005. Militants exploded bomb at Hat Yai International Airport, The French owned Carrefour Supermarket, and the Green Palace Hotel in Songkhla. In August 2006, 22 Commercial Banks were targeted for bombings. In December 2006, the Bangkok Post reported that separatist groups were planning to form an alternative government for the Islamic Pattani state which included their own flag.

During 2006-2007 the situation was controlled by new Prime Minister General Surayud. He apologized for the mishandling of the crisis by the Thaksin government. He also revived SBPAC under its new name of Southern Border Provinces Development Center (SBPDC) which is playing a crucial role in resolving the Southern Conflict to create mutual acceptance and trust between Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims. PM General Surayud also took some measures such as delivering justice, recognizing local language and culture, and letting locals manage their own affairs²⁴. He tried to solve the problem in Southern Thailand but at last he failed to do so.

The situation was partly controlled by new premier Samak Sundaravej in 2008. He initiated some form of autonomy to solve the problem in the Southern provinces. Samak government proposed joint military and private business ventures to boost

the local economy for ending insurgency in the South. The government also transferred the responsibility for running the southern provinces to the army. Despite several steps taken by the Samak Government, the situation could not be totally controlled.

After the Samak Government, the Somchai Wangseat Government also unveiled a strategy to solve the problem. He wanted to improve the economic condition of Deep South. But the condition is still deteriorating.

Nowadays the instability in the South has been marked by an explicit religious, jihadist undertone. Separatists frequently attack drinking houses, gambling halls, Karaoke bars and other establishments associated with western decadence and secularism. They also distributed leaflets (printed in Malay language) warning the local people to wear traditional muslim dress and fully respect the Friday holiday. The situation in Southern Thailand remains highly worrying and the government should adopt some measures to curb this problem as soon as possible.

The problems in the peripheral regions in Thailand are the result of decades of economic backwardness, the cultural hegemony of Thai Buddhism, lack of employment opportunities, the non-recognition of religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity within the Thai polity and widespread feelings of deliberate neglect by Bangkok.

While the northeast is the poorest region, measured against core indicators of economic development, Pattani, Yala and Narahiwat are among the least developed provinces of the country²⁵. Government policies towards the promotion of development in these areas failed to reduce regional economic disparities. But the situation in north, northeast, northwest Thailand is apparently well tackled by the Thai government. At the same time the volatile condition in the southern region could not be tackled by the Thai government.

State responses to the upsurge in separatist violence proved futile and exacerbated the situation. During the Thaksin era (2001-2006), some measures had been taken to tackle the problem. In 2001, when the separatist sentiment was on the rise, Thaksin dismissed the violence as a turf war between rival criminal gangs. He did not want to know the actual reason behind the unrest. In 2002, he abolished the SBPAC and the Civil-Military Task Force 43(CMP-43) which were the key elements in the Thai government's successful counter insurgency campaign.

He transferred the responsibility to keep peace in the south from the army to police. In 2004, when major violent incidents occurred, the Thaksin administration could no longer ignore the problem and declared martial law in the south.

In other words, state responses also helped to fuel the separatist sentiment. In February 2005, the government announced that the south would be divided into red, yellow, and green zones; red zones contained villages deemed to be supporting the insurgents and would be denied government funding²⁶. This policy was widely condemned. After the bombings in Yala in July 2005, the government announced an Emergency Decree after revoking martial law. These new measures gave the security services immunity from prosecution and the power to search and make arrests without warrants and to hold the suspects for seven days without charge²⁷. The new measures give the license to the security forces to kill.

Not all the measures taken by the Thaksin government were harsh. In March 2005, in response to domestic as well as international pressure following the Tak Bai incident, Thaksin appointed a National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Its recommendations included, inter alia, the need to right past injustices, encourage greater participation by Malay Muslims in decision-making bodies and allow the use of the local dialect as a working language by government officials. To achieve peace, the Thaksin government was ready to talk secretly to the exiled leaders of separatist organizations which had been active from the 1960s until the late 1980s, such as PULO, BRN and Bersatu. But no such kind of fruitful outcome was achieved by these secret talks.

The Thaksin government's heavy-handed response to the violence not only embittered separatist movements but also strained the relations with neighboring countries such as Malaysia. So that it can be illustrated that the state responses under the Thaksin government proved futile.

In order to improve the economic condition of the three provinces (Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani) plus Satun and Songkhla, Surayud designated these places as a special economic zone. He realized that economic backwardness was one of the main reasons for the secessionist movement. To improve the educational standards in the south, Surayud announced some new scholarship programs for Malay-Muslims attending university. But the real problem lies in the provisions of primary and secondary education.

It was hoped that the Surayud government's adoption of a new strategy would result in a drop in the level of violence in the south. But these hopes were belied. The number of bombings, assassinations and acts of arson increased dramatically. Instead of relying entirely on the traditional law and order approach, the government should undertake effective measures that will solve the whole problem. More autonomy should be given to the provinces. Local political organs such as village councils should be given more authority. Police forces should be localized. The government should undertake a 'mass education' program leading to more political consciousness and active participation of the public in civil affairs. Drastic reforms should immediately be undertaken before "the Land of Smiles" turns into "the Land of Blood and Tears".²⁸

Conclusion:

Ethnic problems in Thailand mainly in the South have more recently become the focus of so much international attention. This ethnic violence in Thailand may soon attract transnational actors who see this conflict as a skirmish in a greater global "War on Terror".

Notes and References:

1. R. Williams, *Keywords* (Flamingo, 1976), p.119.
2. N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan: *Ethnicity- Theory and Experience* (Harvard, UP, 1975), p. 1.
3. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Second Edition, Anthropological Perspectives*, Pluto Press (2002), p. 1.
4. Thomas Hylland Eriksen: *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, (London: Pluto Press, 1993), p. 10.
5. Nathan Glazer, Andrew M. Greeley, Orlando Patterson and Daniel P. Moynihan: 'What is Ethnicity', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol-27, No-8 (May 1974), p. 27.
6. J. Hutchison and A.D. Smith, *Ethnicity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 3-4.
7. David Levinson: *Ethnic Groups World Wide: A Ready Reference Handbook*, (Oryx

- Press, c 1998), p. 287.
8. Ibid. p. 287.
 9. David Levinson: *Ethnic Groups World Wide: A Ready Reference Handbook*, (Oryx Press, c 1998), p. 287.
 10. Wendell Blanchard: *Thailand, its people, its society, its culture*, (HRAF Press, 1970).
 11. David Levinson: *Ethnic Groups World Wide: A Ready Reference Handbook*, (Oryx Press, c 1998), p. 287.
 12. David Brown: *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, (National University of Singapore, Dec, 1992), p. 167.
 13. BoonthanSakanand: "Hill tribes' anger boil over" (atimes. Com, July 29, 1999), p. 1
 14. David Brown: *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, (National University of Singapore, Dec, 1992), p. 171.
 15. Ian Storey: "Ethnic Separatism in Southern Thailand: Kingdom Fraying at the edge?" *Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies*, (March 2007), p. 2
 16. Ibid, p. 2
 17. Ian Storey: "Ethnic Separatism in Southern Thailand: Kingdom Fraying at the edge?" *Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies*, (March 2007), p. 2.
 18. Imtiyaz Yusuf: "Ethnoreligious and Political Dimensions of the Southern Thailand Conflict" in *Islam and Politics: Renewed and Resistance in the Muslim World*, Amil Pandya, Ellen Laipson (eds) (The Henry L. Stimson Center, c 2009), p. 47
 19. Itty Abraham, Sumie Nakaya: "Uncertainty, Knowledge and Violence in Southern Thailand", *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 16, 2007, p.2304.
 20. Peter Chalk: "The Malay Muslim Insurgency in Southern Thailand: Understanding the Conflicts Evolving Dynamic", RAND (NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE) Corporation, c 2008, p 5.
 21. Ibid, p. 5
 22. Rohan Gunaratna, Arabindo Acharya and Sabrina Chua: *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*, (Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), p. 39.
 23. Peter Chalk: "The Malay Muslim Insurgency in Southern Thailand: Understanding the Conflicts Evolving Dynamic", RAND (NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE) Corporation, c 2008, p. 8

24. Imtiyaz Yusuf: "Ethnoreligious and Political Dimensions of the Southern Thailand Conflict" in *Islam and Politics: Renewed and Resistance in the Muslim World*, Amil Pandya, Ellen Laipson (eds) (The Henry L. Stimson Center, c 2009), p. 50
25. A. Ashayagachat: "Apology Not Enough, say Experts", *Bangkok Post*, November 6, 2006, p. 10.
26. Aurel Croissant: "Unrest in South Thailand: Contours, Causes and Consequences Since 2001" *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 27, no-1 (2005), p. 27
27. Ian Storey: "Ethnic Separatism in Southern Thailand: Kingdom Fraying at the edge?" *Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies*, (March 2007), p. 6
28. "Ethnicity Mid Political Unrest In Thailand" by Jingjai Han chanlash. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Society for Asian Studies, Laval University, Quebec, May 1976.

Simulation: An Alternative to Mindreading

Dyuti Ghosh

Abstract

There is no doubt that philosophy is a discipline that has evolved in all parts of the world in a unique way basing on the socio cultural backdrop. Among the dominant domains of philosophy there is the domain of philosophy of mind. In this paper I would like to highlight the role of simulation as an alternative method of knowing other minds. I will thus discuss the epistemological problem of mind which majorly focuses on 'how do we know other minds'. Speaking about the historical background of the different theories of mind, I would gradually shift into the understating of other minds in the 21st century. I would then like to establish why simulation, which is a first personal account of mind reading, stands out as a better alternative than the prevailing account of theory-theory.

Keywords: argument by analogy, authority, theory-theory, simulation theory, folk psychology, theory of mind, first personal approach, third personal approach.

Simulation: An Alternative to Mindreading

1.A Brief mapping of the developments of the problems in the domain of philosophy of mind:

Since ages, philosophers have always raised questions very successfully and efficiently. It is true that they probably have not succeeded to resolve them, but that does not make their questions any less relevant. From such varied range of questions different fields of philosophy have evolved over different courses of time. For example, in the 18th century, the main focus was on metaphysics, later this focus was shifted to epistemology. In the beginning of the 20th century philosophy of language became prevalent, and in the 21st century, it is the era of consciousness. Although it seems that we have come a long way, if we really dive within, we will see that probably we have been able to figure out the nature of the physical world to some extent, but the realm of mind still remains unexplored and is largely unknown to us till date. In this paper I would try to highlight some of the important theories of the domain of philosophy of mind and will also try to shed a little light on why philosophy of mind and its pertinent questions are still prevalent in the recent times. I would start by discussing a little bit about the metaphysical questions and will then shift to the epistemological ones.

M.Phil Scholar, Department of Philosophy Jadavpur University 188,Raja SC Mallick Road Kolkata: 700032, West Bengal, India

Let me begin by introducing certain ideas and questions about mind. Mind itself is such an entity that appears to be very unique in nature and is different from all other things that we generally perceive. We all think that we are free by mind. The mental ability of an organism appears to be both dependent and independent of nature and thus it becomes difficult for us to determine its place in nature. Philosophers of mind have been trying to figure out this problem for long. The different problems of this area can be classified into four broad groups following Paul Churchland. Paul Churchland, in his book *Matter and Consciousness* (1984), has divided the areas into four broad sections.

- a. Ontological issues (deals with existence of things)
- b. Epistemological issues (deals with knowledge)
- c. Semantic issues (deals with relation between words and meanings)
- d. Methodological issues (deals with various methods of knowing mind)

Both in West and India, common sense views of mind always say that mind and body together makes a man and both are intimately connected. This is the starting point of philosophy of mind. If we admit that mind and body are two different substances which are related, the question then arises, how do they interact with each other. This question was first raised by Descartes, and since then, many philosophers have continued to do so. In the dualist tradition mind and body are accepted as two different substances and it is regarded that the nature and characteristics of mind as a substance is entirely opposite to that of body. The mental substances are conscious, non-extended and is free to some extent, whereas, the physical substances have extension but are non-conscious. Physical entities have a spatial existence, whereas mental entities have a temporal one. Although we characterise them into two very contrasting categories, we can never deny that they are related to each other. We do create a causal link between them. But the question is, how do these two substances, whose characteristics are opposite, interact with one another. Descartes mentioned the presence of pineal gland where the mind and body interact. But this is not a very acceptable solution as it was later proved that no such gland exists.

Now, if we say mind is not a substance, it is merely a property or suppose we say that there is a neutral substance with neutral character which has mental and physical properties, even that does not solve the problem. The question, how does

mind act upon body and vice versa, still remains a mystery. If someone was to say that mind does not act upon body, then a question would thus arise, why did mind evolve at all? So, mind cannot just be an epiphenomenal property of matter. There are others who think that mind evolves from matter and once it does, it then becomes independent, after which there is an interaction between the two. So, there are various sorts of theories in this particular area.

When the dualist failed to give a satisfactory solution to this, some thought that autonomy should not be given to mind. They held that mind can be reduced to something else. Mind, to them, is nothing but a vocabulary, which can be completely eliminated. While dealing with the questions ‘whether mind exists’, ‘what is the nature of mind’, etc, we find different kind of ontological theories, for these are the ontological problems regarding mind. In the domain of metaphysical problems of mind, we deal with different kinds of dualism, epiphenomenalism etc. we try to understand their standpoints regarding mind.

The next set of questions that we would deal with are the epistemological questions. The main concerns are, ‘how can we know minds’, ‘how can we know other minds’, etc. Traditionally the nature of problem of other minds was both metaphysical and epistemological. To some extent, if we try to draw it further it can be said that they were methodological also. The metaphysical problem is often bracketed because in psychology (both scientifically and philosophically) of contemporary era, mind is regarded as a physical entity. In 20th century and 21st century, mind is not accepted as something independent of the material world. So, in this system the question that whether mind exists or not, becomes obsolete. Yet, how will we resolve the asymmetry between the status of knowledge of other minds and my own mind, still remains unresolved. This problem is still prevalent because in contemporary times also the first-person access is still taken quite seriously. This is one continuity between the traditional and the contemporary problems of other minds. We still think that we can know our mind in such a way in which no one else can know it. Thus we have a sense of authority regarding our mind and our own mental states. And as an effect, we think that we cannot know the mind of others in the same way, with the same clarity as we know our own minds. This is the asymmetry that prevails between the status of knowledge about our own minds and other minds. One way of knowing other minds was the method of analogy which held that by experience we know ourselves and our own minds,

basing on which we can infer other minds too. We have an assurance that we have minds and we are also sure about the fact that there is a connection between our mind and the behaviour that we exhibit. We can perceive similar kinds of behaviour exhibited by other people around us and thus by analogy we can conclude that they too possess mind. This is the classic argument by analogy which was given by strong empiricists like Mill. Although this is an age-old argument, yet various philosophers in the recent times also deal with this method. The methods which we got for solving the problem of other minds those same methods are discussed in a new form in the contemporary times also. There are two major solutions in the contemporary times. One of them is the theory theory approach and the other is the simulation theory approach.

2. Theory theory: the belief- desire folk psychological account.

In case of the Theory Theory approach, which was previously known as the functionalist strategy, propose that there is a necessary application of folk psychology while knowing other minds. They hold that mental states are not directly observable and theory of mind necessarily needs a system of inference. To them, there is a theory of mind from which we draw inferences in order to attribute mental states to other people. This a very detached third personal approach. While reading other people's mind or while attributing certain mental states to them we usually draw our inferences basing on certain laws and generalisations of causal relations between the observed and unobserved behaviour. They believe in the presence of a boxological diagram, where there are boxes labelled as 'folk psychology' and 'folk physics' which are within an overall 'belief box'. Thus, for them, to know a subject matter is one thing and the thoughts about knowing the subject matter is an independent thing. They presuppose a strict rationality as a condition for mind-reading. This restricts the domain of knowing other minds and rules out the capabilities of babies, autistic children, children with down syndrome, etc of having knowledge about other minds. They say, we grasp principles about how particular thoughts are connected with the content. But these principles do not depend on the connections between the state of affairs and the thoughts. And the grasp on these kind of principles helps in forming successful predictions about the thoughts of others. So this definitely demands a strong rationality as a presupposition of knowing other minds. Thus, the belief-desire folk psychological

understanding of other minds remains a detached third personal approach and fails to bridge the gap between the target and the knower. It will not be right for us to think that this is the only prevailing method following which we get to know about the mental states of others.

3. Simulation Theory: An alternative ‘first personal’ account of mindreading.

There is an alternative approach of knowing other minds. And that is simulation theory. This is not a detached third personal approach like that of theory theory. Rather it is a theory which takes the first personal approach. It was mainly propounded by Robert Gordon and Jane Heal and Alvin I. Goldman. They tried to prove that it was not necessary to rely on any belief desire folk psychological method to know other minds. We all have minds. Yet, it always seems that the way in which we know our own minds is never the same as any other form of knowledge. We know our mind by practices. But in case of knowing others, we observe their behaviour. As the first step we imagine ourselves in the other person’s place and we try to understand his/her situation. So, we are using our power of imagination by which we actually are ascribing some mental state to the other person. When we again comeback to ourselves, we then take the help of the third person ascription. Thus, the methodology in case of simulation is first personal and the ascription is third personal. Let us take up some examples to understand the simulation theory. Suppose there are two bottles of coke of 500 ml each. In such case, we can use one bottle as the model of the other. If someone asks how much water can the second bottle hold, we can easily fill up the first bottle and make the person understand. When there are two similar things, we can use one to understand the other. We must remember that suppose instead of two bottles of coke of 500ml each, if there is one bottle of coke and another bottle of Pepsi, even then we can fill the bottle of coke of 500ml to show how much water a bottle of Pepsi of 500ml can hold. Thus, we need to understand it very clearly that similarity does not mean sameness. But, if someone asks whether a table or chair can be a model of a bottle or not, the answer would always be ‘no’. Because, in case of simulation, if we want to show something as a model of something, there needs to be a similarity either in functionality or in the ideas. Simulation is a process by which we understand one entity or process with the help of some sort of similarity and not by theory or calculations. Here we take the help of age old idea of argument

by analogy and understand others' mental states presupposing that they are same as us. Just as we can predict different things about our future and about which we are unsure of, we can also do so in case of others also as they are same as us. Now let us take a concrete example. Suppose there is an aeroplane and a model aerodrome. When one aeronautical engineer creates an airplane, it goes through various test flights. For this testing it is not possible to put the new airplane on the sky. Thus, they have a model aerodrome which has wind turbulences and all other environmental conditions which would actually be there in the real environment when the airplane flies in real life. The wind tunnel is the model of the actual environment. When an airplane can fly properly in an aerodrome only then it is launched. This is a very good example of simulation process. Alvin I. Goldman says in general there is a distinction between theory driven and process driven simulation. The aforesaid example is an example of both process and theory driven simulation. The aeronautical engineer must know the process of how an airplane flies which makes the simulation process driven, and he must also know the theory of creating an aerodrome and must abide by mathematical law of physics which makes this theory driven also. But, if we take the example of prediction of forest fire, then we can see that forest fire spreads rapidly and thus the prediction of it becomes very important. The scientists thus create a grid map of the area and they actually model the whole thing statistically and mathematically and they model the whole thing theoretically. This is not at all process driven, it is totally based on calculations. It is very important to carefully make this distinction between process driven and theory driven simulation.

Let us now move to mental simulation and see which kind of simulation will they refer to. The people who propound simulation theory always try to say that there is no need of applying any theory of mind to understand the mental states of others. In our day-to-day life we need to understand other people. Actually, one human being is a natural model of the other. Two person may not be totally the same but they do have some kind of similarities or some likeness. Basing on that we do a kind of process driven simulation. Suppose I see that my friend calls me and says that she won't be able to come to see me that day. Now, suppose I notice that while telling this to me over phone, her voice shivered. So, in such a situation I will place myself in my friend's situation and will try to think why did she say so and why did her voice shiver, basing on which I will arrive at a conclusion. And

then I will again switch to being myself and say that ‘yes, she may have this kind of problem’.

We know that the fundamental assumption of simulation theory is similarity or something close to identification. Now, there can be simple and complex simulation. In both the cases we do not use any sort of complex theory of mind. If there is any theory involved, they are the theories about the world or about our sameness with others. What we do is, we simply put ourselves into others shoes and try to understand the situation. This a very first personal approach. But we do not do the actions which are followed by such situation. We understand the situation by placing ourselves in the other persons position and we then come out of that first person approach and we ascribe some mental state to that person. This is something can even be done by a child. Suppose a child sees his/her friend crying. We see that often that child also starts crying. This a very simple form of simulation and is often known as catching. This also happens between a mother and a child which is often called emotional contagion. Again, suppose there is an infant who is not of the age to fully express their feelings. Yet, seeing various behavioural outburst the mother can understand what the child is feeling or what he/she needs. How does the mother do this? She places herself in the shoes of the child and then there is shift of role, that is the mother thinks herself to be the child and she tries to understand that under what circumstances she would project behaviour of the said kind. This is the first personal approach. The mother then again shifts back to her own self and she ascribes a mental state to the child which helps her to understand the actual need of the child. Thus, in our regular lives we always go through a process of simulation. Someone who has down syndrome may not possess the knowledge of a strong and well knit theory of mind and may not have knowledge of the connections of the conditionals. Yet they understand and can correctly predict many behaviours of their immediate care givers. And this is done by simulation where there is no necessity of accepting a strong and strict form of rationality. If we opt for the theory of theory theory as a methodology to understand the mental states of others, we fail to take such situations into account. There is no need to think that simulation is only possible in the aforementioned type of situations. However, complex the situation may be, we can always simulate our fellow beings. Some may ask what if the other person pretends in front of me, and what if they showcase such behavioural states in which is not an expression of what he/she is

actually feeling. There is always a room for such conditions. But simulation does not claim that it is always right. But, just because of that we cannot deny that we do understand other people around us on regular basis without any complex theory of mind. If we would have always believed that others portray wrong behaviour, then communication would have become impossible. Simulation theory thus acts as a first personal process of understanding other minds and it shows us that understanding other minds is not necessarily an abstruse process involving some difficult theory of mind.

Thus, I want to highlight that understanding other minds, which is not only a concern for philosophers alone, but also is equally important area for even a layman, is not something difficult and strongly complex as the theory theory or the functionalist theory claims it to be. It also shows how philosophy is intrinsically related to our daily lives and our several interpretations of others. In a situation so dire, when we are in a need to stay knitted to each other, when there is a necessity to try and understand our fellow mates, the people surrounding us, we do not need a theory of mind which makes it complex and difficult to understand each other. We rather need a process or theory which is not detached rather is majorly first personal and inclusive. Here lies the importance of simulation theory and thus here lies the importance of philosophy of mind as a domain even today.

References

- Churchland, M. Paul. (1984). *Matter and Conciousness* (3rd ed). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Goldman, I. Alvin. (2006). *Simulating Minds: The Philosophy, Psychology, and Neuroscience of Mindreading*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gordon, M.Robert. (1986). Folk Psychology as Simulation. *Mind and Language*, 1(2), 158-171.
- Harman, G. (1973). *Thought*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Heal, Jane. (2003). Mind, Reason and Imagination. *Philosophy of Mind and Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nichols, S.; Stich, S; Leslie, A.; and Klein D. (1996). Varieties of Off-Line Simulation. In P. Carruthers and P. K. Smith, (eds.), *Theories of Theories of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bankim Chadra Chattopadhyay's Rajmohan's Wife: An Eastern Figure in Western Dress

Atasi Sahoo

Abstract

The cultural and linguistic analysis of the first Indian novel in English throws light on the glorious attempt made by the mind hidden behind this novel. Though 'a false start', Rajmohan's Wife presents before us the representatives of both eastern and western ideas as Bankim was an English educated Indian. Under the veil of English language, he has put the contemporary middle class Bengali life, including the helplessness and claustrophobia of women in discordant marriages, the power-structure within the family among upper-caste Bengalis in the nineteenth century. My paper endeavors to sketch out how very much surprisingly Bankim has wrapped a fully Indian theme within the western cloth portraying a woman of uncommon vitality who refused to be totally dominated and subjugated either by her brutal husband or by the expectations of claustrophobic patriarchal society, using the techniques of Victorian novel writing or the classic realist novels of nineteenth century Europe, the trends of Romantic writing and also sometimes taking the help of Vaisnav poetry and Gothic writing. This paper engages itself in discussion on various issues regarding Bankim's attempt to illustrate his contemporary Indian culture through the medium of English after being influenced by the acquired language and its literature.

Keywords: Realism, romance, Gothic, fatalism, new woman, Englishness

Literature provides an open space for the amalgamation of different elements undergoing a process of evolution, depending on numerous changes allowing the readers to have a mysterious trip to the creative world. This creative world is minutely connected to the socio-cultural aspect of Bengali society and has been enriched collecting its stuff from home and the world. The creative minds of Bengal have enriched the creative space by their enormous contribution starting from the time of Renaissance till now. The Renaissance in Bengal in nineteenth century has got its fullest fruition through the progressive pens of the great architects of literature namely Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and others. Simultaneously, a very bright and dazzling connecting link was formed between Indian culture and

SACT-I, Department of English, Raja N.L. Khan Women's College, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal.

western culture significantly as a result of commercial purposes of the Europeans. Literature of Bengal before the Renaissance was very limited and was confined within a very short boundary producing rhymes, poems, essays etc. But later on, we can perceive a massive growth of literature with the impact of various other innovative techniques. Like drama, the birth of novel in Bengali literature is also the result of the inspiration of English literature. The present form of novel writing is actually the valuable gift of western literature. The pioneer of successful novel writing in Bengali is Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay as Brajendra Nath Banerji announces in the “Preface” to *Rajmohan's Wife*, “Bengal's first great novelist like Bengal's first great modern poet made his debut in the field of literature in the English language” (Chatterjee). So, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's attempt to start a glorious journey actually started the splendid journey of Indian English Writing.

Now, the question regarding Bankim's initiative to use the medium of English while writing the first novel demands a discussion. Apparently, it can be assumed that Bankim got the inspiration from his English education. Before entering into the academic domain of Hoogly College he had already studied English for six years under the guidance of two Englishmen- Stydd and Sinclair, in Midnapore school. Though he wrote a few English poems, his first endeavor in writing novel in English language introduced the readers with his view about the Englishmen. Though in many of Bankim's Bangla novels the English-knowing urban dilettante is the butt of author's ridicule (for example, Debendra in *Krishnakanter Will*). In *Rajmohan's Wife* Madhav's knowledge of English and his Calcutta background are significantly portrayed as signs of his moral superiority over Mathur, a stereotypical image of a Bangali, who gazes at the women as they return from the river carrying water, indulges in vulgar gossip and uses illegal means to satisfy his greed for money. So Bankim's portrayal of English culture depended on the language he chose to write, based on the desired readers. On the one hand by taking this initiative, Bankim wanted to draw the attention of the Calcutta elites and the Englishmen, who were the government bodies of colonized India and he tried to maintain a safe and stable position in government service. A web of interconnectedness of culture and language, narrative voice and implied readership can be analyzed in this respect. This love for English education among the Calcutta elites is actually the result of the steps taken by the British government to educate the Indian people as Edward Said makes the idea clear in his *Orientalism* (1978) that the Orient is the complete

opposite of the Occident which is 'developed', 'Christian', 'progressive' and 'civilized'. Europe had a completely negative view about the Orient, Orient is the complete 'Other'. As Said puts it, “The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience” (Said 1-2). As they are civilized and superior, they have the responsibility to shower the bliss of education among the illiterate folk living in Orient. So, towards the end of the 18th century and in 19th century the British missionaries took an agenda to fulfil their multipurpose objectives such as spreading English education and religious doctrines, of course, for the sake of their own commercial benefits. In 1857, as a result of Wood's Despatch, three famous universities in India namely Calcutta University, Bombay University and Madras University were established. 'English education' by that time had become an attractive feature of posh lifestyle, thereby, it played a unique role in the lives of the Calcutta elites, as also in the lives of similar men in the other metropolitan areas of India. Even the word 'education' had come to be synonymous with English education, of which the study of English literature had occupied a major part. In this respect we should take a glance at the words of Nirad C. Choudhuri:

From the second quarters of the nineteenth century, the word education which had passed into Bengali speech, sometimes in the contracted form of 'ejoo', was applied only to those who knew English well, and never to anyone else, however learned he may be in Sanskrit or Bengali. A profound scholar who might have been a great authority on Vedanta philosophy, would have been called a pundit, but never an educated man. (qtd. in Chattopadhyay 140)

As a result, a little tint of westernization is apparently evident in Bangali Babu culture and Indian literature. Bankim, one of the seven students in the first graduating batch of Calcutta University, himself also made the idea clear about his attachment and inclination towards Englishness in an essay “Bharatbarsher Swadhinata Ebang Paradhinata”. He talks about the domination of British culture and language as well as Indian's dependence on British governance. Also, he points out India's failure to protect its countrymen from the British clutches. Along with that it's because of the impact of British culture, the Indians are well acquainted with the all-round progress they were making. It might be quite thought-provoking to note in this respect that one of the distinguished younger contemporary writers of Bankimchandra, namely Sri Aurobindo published several dedicatory pieces in a

Bombay based journal Induprakash (1894) and in one of the essays he talks about the problem regarding originality in other language rather than vernacular one though he himself was a prolific writer, writing only in English. In a later essay Sri Aurobindo again declared that Bankim was a leading figure who endowed magical spell over the imaginative minds with his beautiful flowery language and strikingly extraordinary character portrayal throughout his creative world.

All these convince us not to deny the dominant presence of Bankim's infatuation towards Englishness in our first Indian English novel. Though every individual character is portrayed diligently, they are actually the representatives of Bengali middle-class society of 19th century India. Huge success embraced Bankim in the romance mode with his realistic illustration and undoubtedly, he beautified this presentation by the innovative gifts of other narrative traditions. He was enormously influenced by the tradition of Sanskrit Kavya (for example, presentation of female beauty wrapped by the colourful wrapper of metaphor— “charm as that of the land-lotus half scorched and half radiant by the noon-day” (Chattopadhyay 4). He was greatly attracted towards the Victorian narrative model of demonstrating the female protagonists as found in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Simultaneous influence of Victorian British trend of writing is visible in the end as he tries to confine the whole story within the beginning-middle-end structure finding out the rewards at the end as found in the works of Dickens, Thackeray and Eliot. He was also greatly indebted to the elements of Gothic novel in his evocation of horror while he portrays the light of 'a solitary and feeble lamp' and frightening creaking of doors as found in the chapter “Captors and Captive”. Again, the concept of fatalism that we find in the works of western writers as well as Madhusudan Dutt, is not invisible in Bankim's *Rajmohan's Wife*. Sometimes, when Matangini, the protagonist comes across any sudden crisis, she laments mentioning the ill fate of Kulin girls. From the very beginning she has accepted everything as only the outcomes of her fate. Along with these, we can find Bankim's deft use of other few techniques which are available in Victorian novel writing. From chapter- “Love Can Conquer Fear” onwards the author occasionally enters into the narrative to make prefatory comments in the manner of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* or Joseph Andrews. In “Love Can Conquer Fear we find similar approach, “In which the author narrowly misses an opportunity of introducing a few ghosts and regrets that he cannot gratify his young readers”

(Chattopadhyay 46). Sometimes Thackeray's delineation of the theme of conversation between the author and the reader has located itself in a few places in the text, as in the expression 'dear reader' in chapter- "The Last Chapter in Life's Book- and in This". Another point is that the whole story is located at Radhaganj, an East Bengal village by the banks of the river Madhumati. It reminds us of the beautiful illustration of country-side in the novels of Scott and Hardy. Like the unescapable Egdon Heath, the locality of Radhaganj attains a significant space as a protagonist. Again, the readers of *Christabel* can very easily recognize the nocturnal journey of a young girl of eighteen with a beating heart while walking through the jungle. Bankimchandra also tried to create a connecting link between his reformist tendency and the outer world in his creative field bringing together the home and the world. According to the customs of traditional Hindu society, women are restricted only to the domestic sphere but Bankim's heroines, such as Ayesha in *Durgeshnandini*, Rohini in *Krishnakanter Will*, Saibalini in *Chandrasekhar* and notably Matangini in *Rajmohan's Wife* do not represent the meek and docile 'pativrata' women, rather they are strong enough to deal with the shackles of patriarchal society like 'new women' rejecting the boundaries of conservative society. Bankim has tried to combine brilliantly the East and the West, in her use of the words 'Jericho' and 'Durga' simultaneously. Bankim is also skilled in his dealings with the tragic elements, reminding us the echo of Shakespearean diction in order to intensify the dramatic impact of the Othello-like speech. Sukanya Banerjee conveys her critical remark regarding Bankim's choice of English language to write the novel, "That Bankim chose to write *Rajmohan's Wife* in novel form for Indian field (he had earlier written in verse while in college) reflects the enthusiasm generated by the English novel amongst the Western-educated Indians" (Banerjee 477).

The protagonist of the novel is Rajmohan's wife, the name Matangini is insignificant as the title itself suggests her not being free from her marital status in case of her identity referring to all the married Kulin women. But Matangini is a rebellious figure; she is brave and embodiment of uncommon vigour and vitality. Matangini, the eighteen-year-old 'perfect flower of beauty', is attributed with some extraordinary qualities. Bankimchandra delved deep into the socio-cultural problems of Indian society and dealt with the theme of emancipation of Hindu women. The novel impels us to take a glance at the entire question of 'women' in nineteenth century,

the helplessness, the suffering, the claustrophobia of women in incongruous marriages. But Matangini denies to stay dominated and subjugated under the expectations of both brutal husband and patriarchal society. She loves Madhav, her sister's husband; going against the concept of 'ideal' wife she confesses her love which does not suit the contemporary Indian womanhood. Matangini has been forbidden from going to fetch water from the river but she is compelled by Kanak to do so. Here Malashri Lal's 'The law of the threshold' is thus violated by Matangini. As Matangini chose to cross the socially approved 'Laxmanrekha', she cannot re-enter that same space which she left, so she must have other choice in case of her permanent address. Even, she dares to go beyond the threshold to rescue her lover and exposes herself to Madhav. She does not want to stay confined under the traditional bounds. She is the representative of an emerging new modern world, full of vitality, charm, energy, adventurousness. She has the spirit of a new woman as we find in the works of Ibsen, G.B. Shaw and others. Like the 'new woman', Matangini has also a voice of her own and she has enough courage to give utterance of that. Thus, she is not merely Rajmohan's wife, as Paranjape views, "but the 'spirit' or personification of modern India itself" (Mukherjee 149). Defining Rajmohan's Wife as a national allegory, Paranjape continues, "What the novel actually offers is a way of mapping the Indian society of that period on a complex grid of political, social and cultural coordinates. The novel accomplishes this through richly textured negotiation of cultural choices for a newly emergent society which, for the sake of convenience, we may call modern India" (147). Frederick Jameson's words seem praiseworthy in this respect, "All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: They are to be read as what I will call 'national allegories', even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (Jameson 69). Bankim has shown sympathy towards Matangini's confession of love for Madhav, but at this very crucial moment practical Bankim has seized the authorial flow of novelist Bankim who faces the same problem as Matangini herself. Both the protagonist and the creator of the protagonist find themselves puzzled due to a conflict between socially accepted marriage and 'illegal' passion out of the institution of marriage. He could not grant this extra-marital love affair of a wife of nineteenth century India. The author is in dilemma and as a result of this dilemma Matangini is sent back to her father's home because as a

representative of new world she cannot stay in this old traditional world but unfortunately, she died an early death, unknown, unheard. The question remains unanswered—Is it the justice towards a 'new woman'? In this respect Bankim's attitude to the Raj can also be understood, as at the end of the novel justice is brought by the Irish magistrate. So Bankim gives political approval to the colonizers in a moment of crisis. Nineteenth century traditional Bengal was yet to achieve that emancipation, it was in the process of becoming.

The hero of the novel, Madhav, “a remarkably handsome young man of about twenty-two” (Chattopadhyay 8), and an English-educated progressive Zamindar is from Calcutta. Though he lacks the vitality and energy of Matangini, the main point of focus is his love for Englishness, his habit of reading English books, the decoration of his house with western furniture. To some extent we can assume that Bankimchandra himself is reflected in Madhav because of his polished sense of lifestyle like English people. Unlike Mathur, who is a stereotypical representation of Bengali patriarchal husbands, Madhav belongs to those sophisticated babus. But quite interestingly, the female characters are more active than their male counterparts. This feature is visible in Twentieth century celebrated writer Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, where Thamma and Ila are more active than Tridib or the narrator. Still Matangini and Madhav share their equal parts of Bankim's romantic imagination. Depending on the English models, Bankim has given utterance to the desire of woman in chapter “We meet to Part” as he writes that these two are brought to the fore because of their desire. But Matangini's union with Madhav is impossible, because the extra-marital desire of a Kulin Badhu is 'sinful', though both of them personally and ideologically constitute the basis of the new India which is awaiting to come. Matangini, like Hester Prynne should wait patiently for that new world to be united with the man of her love. Similarly, according to the critics, for Bankim, India's destiny is in the hands of new English educated elite, but somehow this cannot be achieved so easily. There are insurmountable obstacles in the path of emerging new India. Thus, Bankim's idea of emerging new world is only broken, but not totally defeated; it is shattered but not destroyed. This idea of the emergence of new India can be found throughout 19th and 20th centuries. Here we can recall Tagore's *Gora* (1909) where we find the probability of new India both in the union of Gora-Suchorita and Binoy- Lolita. Tagore registered success in refashioning that new India. About Bankim's contribution, Srinivasa

Iyengar writes, “In his life-time, Bankim reigned as the literary dictator of renascent Bengal, and while he was a master of the romantic as well as the historical novel, he also frankly confessed: 'I am a teacher or nothing’” (Iyengar 315)

After Rajmohan's Wife Bankim never took any such initiative to give utterance to his imagination in English without ever mentioning the real reason behind such abandonment. He is, like Michael Madhusudan Dutt, a precious gem in the crown of Indian literature. Both of them dared of English embracing their vernacular language. Nevertheless, Rajmohan's Wife always remains “a potent site for discussing crucial questions about language, culture, colonization and representation” (143), as Paranjape counts what Mukherjee believed. So, Bankim's initiative to present the eastern figure in western dress, though considered as a 'false start' by critics, is quite thought-provoking as the readers can feel the magical spell of the first Indian English novel that brought before them a dazzling mixture of century old Indian classical tradition and literary trends of canonical literature from Britain, without missing his excellent style of presentation and showing his successors the path towards the reign of a new way of writing.

Works Cited

- Banerjee, Sukanya (2014). “Troubling Conjugal Loyalties: The First Indian Novel in English and the Transimperial Framework of Sensation.” *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 775-489. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24575893>
- Chattopadhyay, Bankimchandra (2009). *Rajmohan's Wife*. Penguin Books: India.
- Chatterjee, Bankimchandra (1935). *Rajmohan's Wife*. Prabasi Press: Calcutta.
- Iyengar, K R Srinivasa (2010). *Indian Writing in English*, Sterling Publishers Private Limited: New Delhi.
- Jameson, Frederick (1986). “Third-World Culture in the Era of Multinational Capitalism”. *Social Text*, 15 (Autumn), 65-88. JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466493?origin=JSTOR-pdf>
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi (2002). Ed. *Early Novels in India*. New Delhi: Sahitya Academy.
- Said, Edward (2003) *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, London.

Therapy of Mind through Indian Classical Music and Yoga: The Concept

Dr. Sujata Roy Manna

Abstract

Indian Classical Music and Yoga- both are the strong but silent healer of mental stress and depression of human beings. Even, the Bio-Music form is also enriched by Indian Classical Music through the experimental deals with sounds or music performed or created by non-humans. But, in this topic, there are some concepts of the relation between the Indian Classical Music and Yoga, that can be applied to the human-beings for reducing and for healing their stress, agony and depression.

Keyword : Indian Classical Music, Raga, Alap, Tan, Sargam, Chhandas, Yoga, Stimulation, Meditation, Therapy, Circulation, Memory, Cognition, Physiological activities, Mental disorder, Metabolic disorder, Emotion.

All the human beings of the World, are familiar with the two words ; -- Indian Classical Music and Yoga. Apart from our country, Indian Classical Music is very much well known and in many areas it is well practised too. However, the training of Indian classical Music, may be received or not by the non- Indian people, still most of the people can identify Indian Classical Music, while it is sung or played. Hence, the forms of the various types of Indian Classical Music (both in North and South Indian), are familiar, while the people come across with this in any part of the World. The Ragas are the base and ultimate, potential of it :- we can easily realise it.

In the other hand, Yoga (which is organised by the Indian sages in the ancient era) is the common and popular term, that we use to utter or to prescribe, when the health is the topic of our conversation or speech or any kind physical requirement regarding medical assistance or physicians' advice. If anyone is suffering from any disease, the physicians prescribe the medicines as per need of patient. Moreover, it is advised to do some Yoga along with those medicines as well.

But those , who are mental patient or have some mental disorders, they are prescribed to do Yoga. In spite of that, for physical fitness walking and Yoga are the best medicines as we all know and the physicians' advice are in such way.

Assistant Professor & Artist of Music. Raja N.L. Khan Women's College, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal.

Now, here are the common word that most of the people use frequently, - Therapy and Mental- health. So we can easily think about the two terms – Physical Health and Mental Health. The researchers of the World (including the physicians and psychiatrists) found the root and realise the role of Yoga or the cream of Yoga, which slowly but positively effects upon the human-beings to achieve good health of body and mind.

Then, what's about the Indian Classical Music is related and effective with Therapeutic Yoga in our daily- lives and also in the future -lives? Let us have a clear basic concept or outline of the both. Therapy means treatment without oral medicine, injection, ointment through some continuous process of doing Yoga or any other else? Here is the answer;-- the answer is, not only Yoga, It is also possible through Music, by listening and even through singing or playing musical instruments. The question occurs : which type of Music (in India) are eligible to do this Therapy? The answer is: Almost all of them, which can be listen by the normal people, who are capable to choice the specific music, that can be loved or fascinated to listen by them. But if anyone is feeling ill or sick in body or mind, then, they are not capable to choose and to make themselves active for listening according to their choices. Here the actual requirement of Therapy occurs very importantly and emergently for those people.

Now , We may engage ourselves to concentrate upon the Inter-relation between Yoga and Indian Classical Music in the perspective of Therapy. Both help to release the stress, stimulate brain cells, control heart rate, help to overcome depression, anxiety and many other disorders related to body and mind. The anatomical knowledge and the physiological activities are surely be organised by the detection, cognition, selection of any kind of mental disorder or the mental crisis of a person, before singing him/her proper therapy. It is not necessary that, patient of any kind of disorder in body, becomes free from suffering after listening Indian Classical Music or capable to do Yoga. These two mediums of healing are needed to do from days after days before falling on diseases or disorders.

There are so much symptoms of mental disorders similarly as the disorders of the body. But these symptoms of stress or depression, can be observed carefully by the people, in the fast-living-life-styles of the people. We are usually detected the disorders after many -time acuteness or extreme limit of behaviours. The mental disorders can be occurred excluding the structural changes of any person.

The mental disorders have the self existence without any physical disorders of any person. But, there are serious- relations between the body and mind. In most of the cases people have their physical disorders after the long term or short term sufferings of their mental disorders. They use to behave in unnatural manners or spend unnatural life style, which the people are compelled to do without their consciousness or awareness. These mental disorders are basically of two types of source:

1) Neuroses : there are some classifications in it;--- Hysteria, Neurasthenia, Anxiety State, Psychasthenia and

2) Psychosis : is usually in two types;--- Functional & Organic.

In so many medical- surveys, it was observed in most of the cases that, the patients don't co-operate with physicians' advice , during & post of the treatment. Moreover, in most of the cases, the neuro-symptoms and the psycho- symptoms are found as mixed & matched. Those can't be detected separately from one to another category. The Psychoses are basically in five categories : Mania, Melancholia, Manic depressive psychosis, Paranoia and Schizophrenia. International Classification of Diseases and Health Problems by WHO re-constructed the classification of mental-disorders in 1992. Later on, in the year of 1994, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders (DSM-IV) added more & more important information with statistical view. They detected and classified the mental disorders, according to one's age, socio-cultural perspective, suppressed attitude & behaviour, family-situation, updated-symptoms. The latest categorisation of mental disorders are priorly based on five mental situation of people, is called Mental Retardation. The entire mental scenario is situated & grown up in such various ways:

- 1) Mild Mental Retardation,
- 2) Moderate Mental Retardation,
- 3) Severe Mental Retardation,
- 4) Profound Mental Retardation,
- 5) Unspecified Mental Retardation.

Hence, the words 'Remedy', 'Healing', 'Therapy', 'Treatment', 'Recovery', 'Solution' are arosen for the sake of the people or the patients and against of those disorders, captured by the people. The people, who belong to their normal-lives, should walk a mile on everyday-activities (this is too helpful & easy-treatment for anyone). But, those who have in such normal way, what should day do? They

should be prescribed or habituated by their guides, nurses, helpers, family members to make them listened Indian Classical Music or to sing or to play along with them and to make them engaged few types of Yoga and Meditation, which can be easily accessible to them according to their ability and capacity of health (body & mind). We should not think about them as music-performers or music-learners. The resonances of the musical sound make their nerves & brains help to relieve from their sufferings by phobia, agony, depression & psycho-somatic disorders.

In the other hand, the Therapeutic Yoga & Meditation including some special activities, such as Bhraamoari, Pranayam with Anulom & Vilom including some Asanas, which the patients can avail and able to do, those are the healers of their abnormality; prevent to be the disordered persons. As we know very well, that Deep-breathing is very much effective for any person. It is organized, preferably through Yoga & Riyaz of Swaras of the Ragas (like Alap, Taan, Sargam etc.). Usually people have no proper idea & knowledge to do those aforesaid criteria, even during their health-walking (morning or evening) also. The beneficial & effective process are only be received through Yoga & Indian Classical Music.

Actually, the Ragas of Indian Classical Music are the healers of the mental disorders or diseases; the benefits of Therapy through the Ragas with their proper application of performance or expression or to listen it with proper time & guidance by the knowledgeable Experts:

- 1) It reduces Anxiety,
- 2) Reduces the side-effects or the damages of physical & mental stress,
- 3) Most effective in hypertension ,
- 4) It improves all the healing-processe ,
- 5) Prevents Alzhymer & Dementia,
- 6) Very much helpful to reduce depression,
- 7) Helps to reduce & prevent various psychological disorders,
- 8) Even, it works to control Diabetes,
- 9) It is too much beneficial to control Asthma,
- 10) Amazingly helps to improve insomnia,
- 11) Obviously the practice of Indian Classical Music or the stimulations through this is helpful for reducing constipation,
- 12) The Riyaz of Swaras of different Ragas with different combinations & different speeds increase the capacity and works of memorization,

- 13) It reduces acidity ,
- 14) Moreover, the different Ragas help to recover some specific types of weakness and prolonged or acute illness of the mind & body,
- 15) It helps to recover Autism, caused by differences in the Brain, the Genetic diseases.

Specifically, we can remember some name of the Ragas of Indian Classical Music for multi & specific healing & therapy of mind & body also. Such as: Asavari, Bhairavi, Todi, Desh, Khamaj, Bageshree, Bhimpalasi, Puriya, Megh- Malhar, Darbari, Sarang, Malkauns, Jaijaiwanti, Sohni, Marwa, Purvi, Shivaranjani, Mian-ki-Malhar and so on.

Similarly, there are 56 Yoga, oriented with Physical-healing and 28 Yoga are oriented with Psychological-healing . The following names of some categorical names for the example of:-----

- a) Asana: Bhujangasana, Salavasana, Dhanurasana, Shashangasana, Pawanmuktasana, Ardhamatsendrasana etc.
- b) Pranayam: Suryaveda Pranayam, Sheetal Pranayam, Ujjwayani Pranayam , Bhraamari etc.

Benefit of Yoga & Pranayam:

- 1) Acceleration of Blood circulation,
- 2) Increase the Muscle power,
- 3) Mobility of joints of the body,
- 4) Reduces the low-back pain,
- 5) Increases the Lung-capacity,
- 6) Increases the co-ordination of the Brain.

But, it should be strictly done with the proper guidance and instruction by the Expertise- therapists and Physical- instructors as well.

The sources of reference:

- 1) Pandit V.N. Bhatkhande-----2022-----Kramik Pustak Malika (Hindi), Vol-I---(Publisher: Sangeet Sadan Prakashan, India)---Latest Edition (21st December, 2022)---(all through the book).
- 2) Prof.(Dr.) P.S.Das----2004---'Mind and Body'----Yoga Panacea----(Publisher: Indian Publishing House, Kolkata, India)---- (April, 2004, 1st Edition)----Page : 25 to 31.

Chārvāka Ethics and Its Practical Impact in Our Life

Swarnali Maitra

Abstract

Chārvāka Ethics, also known as *Lokayata* Ethics, refers to the ethical philosophy associated with the ancient Indian school of thought known as *Chārvāka* or *Lokayata*. *Chārvāka* was a materialistic and atheistic school of philosophy that emerged in India around the 6th century BC. Carvaka Ethics is primarily concerned with worldly matters and rejects the existence of supernatural entities such as gods, karma, and an afterlife. According to *Chārvāka*, the only reality is the material world, and the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain are the ultimate goals of human life. From an ethical standpoint, *Chārvāka* Ethics advocates for hedonism, emphasizing the importance of maximizing personal pleasure and minimizing suffering. It rejects the idea of moral duties, obligations, and ethical principles based on religious or metaphysical beliefs. In this research article I would like to explore Chārvāka ethics through the lens of practical relevance in our daily life.

Keywords: Chārvāka, Dharma, Kama, Pleasure, Hedonism, etc.

Introduction: Philosophy tries to interpret the meaning and the value of human life and its relation to the world in which we live. it endeavors to comprehend the nature of the reality by Logical thinking. It is impossible for man to live without a specific philosophical outlook. Broadly Indian philosophy is intensely spiritual and has always emphasized the need of practical realization of truth.¹

The schools of Indian Philosophy are divided into two broad classes, namely orthodox and heterodox. There are six orthodox schools and three main heterodox schools, namely Chārvāka, Bouddha and Jaina. The charbaka's are materialists. The school of materialism in India seems to be very old and materialist way of life is the way of enjoying the sensual pleasures. The way of enjoying the pleasures of the senses is as old as humanity itself and will surely last as long as humanity lasts. Accounts of the Chārvāka system are found in Madhabacharyay's 'Sarbadarshansamgraha' and Haribharda Suri's 'Saradarshansamucchay'. The Chārvāka are considered as the only Materilistic School. Brhaspati a heretical teacher is regarded as the traditional founder of the Chārvāka school. The word 'Chārvāka' is not a proper name but a common name given to a materialist and it signifies a person who believes in eat, drink and be marry or a person who eats up

Faculty Member of Department of Philosophy, Dinabandhu Andrews College, 54, Raja S.C Mallick Road, Garia, 24 Parganas (S), Kolkata-700084

all moral and ethical consideration or a person with sweet speaking ability and therefore whose doctrine is superficially attractive to the common people. A materialist is also called 'Lokayatamata'. The entire Philosophy of the Chārvākas logically depend on their epistemology holds that perception alone is the means of valid knowledge. According to them matter is the only readily and the doctrine dismisses necessarily all belief in a supernatural and transcendental being. It recognizes neither a God who controls the universe nor conscience which guides man and it does not care for belief in a life after death, liberation and the law of karma. The Charbakas holds that the world as composed of the four primary elements of earth, water, fire and air, which are perceived in its gross shape. Everything which exists including the mind is due to a particular systematical combination of these four elements. Consciousness is regarded as a mere product of matter. The soul is the body endowed with consciousness. There is no proof for the existence of the soul apart from the body.²

The Chārvāka Ethics:

The most notable characteristic of Indian philosophy of its spiritual outlook. The direct realization of spiritual truths enables a man to attain liberation. It seeks to know what is the ultimate aim or *Summum Bonum* of human life and how it can be achieved? Some Indian Philosophers like the *Mimamsakas* believe that heaven (swarga) is the highest goal of human life which is a state of unalloyed bliss that can be attained hereafter by performing vedic rites. Many others regard liberation as the highest goal of human life. Liberation means complete freedom from all sorrows and sufferings. The Chārvākas answer to this question is in keeping with his epistemological and metaphysical theories.

The Chārvāka also denies future life. Consequently he denies the existence of heaven and refuses to believe that there is any soul apart from the body. Heaven and hell are the inventions of the cunning priests who inculcated the performance of vedic rites by common people in order to carry their livelihood. The Chārvāka holds that if liberation is freedom of the soul from its bondage to physical existence, it is absurd because there is no soul. On the other hand if liberation means the attainment of a state free from pain, it is also an impossible idea because human life is a mixture of pleasure and pain. We should avoid pain as far as possible which inevitably accompanies pleasure. The spiritual outlook of the majority of the Indian system of Philosophy could never regard sensual pleasure to be the highest good of

life. But the materialist Chārvākas consider enjoyment of sensual pleasure on the Summum Bonum of life. In this regard we can quote from Hiriyanna's *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* "draw away man's mind altogether from the thought of a higher life and fix it upon the world of senses; there's neither heaven, nor hell, no permanent soul surviving death and enduring in future life or transmigrating into another body. So live happily so long as you live. Eat, drink and be merry, for once the body is reduced to ashes, there is no hope of coming back here again"³

So try to get the maximum amount of pleasure out of this life. Pleasure is often found mixed with pain in life. This should not discourage us in the pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure should not be renounced in fear of pain which accompanies it. No wise person casts away the grain because of the husk or rejects the fish because of the bones in it. Life in this world is the only life. There is no concept of future life. We must therefore regard the pleasure arising in the body as the only good thing that may obtain. The maximum of sensual pleasure with the minimum of pain is the highest good. Pleasure has an intrinsic value. We should not therefore throw away the opportunities of enjoying sensual pleasure in the false hope of enjoyment hereafter. According to them a sure shell is better than a doubtful golden coin. Pain should be avoided as far as practicable. They refuse to entertain any qualitative difference in Pleasure. It has not been said in Chārvāka Philosophy that one should give up lesser pleasure in order that higher pleasure may be obtained and enjoyed.

Rejection of Traditional Purusārthas:

Ancient hindu thinkers visualized the quality of life acquires a balance between the physical and spiritual aspect of life of the people and it is towards that good that Purusārthas is aimed. Purusārthas constituted the four fold objectives of human life. There are four Purusārthas: Dharma (virtue), Artha (wealth), Kama (pleasure), Moksha (liberation). The four Purusārthas points out the different aspect of human nature. Among of the four Purusārthas, the first three are related to the worldly aspect of human life while Moksha is relevant to the spiritual aspect of life. According to Chārvāka Kāma is the only supreme Purusārtha. The Chārvāka rejects the liberation. Liberation can be attained often death and no men would willingly work for it. Virtue and vice are invention of the cunning priests. Pleasure is the supreme end and wealth is means to pleasure. It is not an end in itself. So enjoyment and wealth ought to be pursued. The sensual pleasure arising from the embrace of a woman and other objects of enjoyment is the highest good or end.

As enjoyment of the maximum quantity of sensual pleasure to be the ultimate end of life are regarded a gross egoistic hedonism. The Chārvāka philosophy resembles in respect to the philosophy of *Aristippus* and *Epicurus* in Greece, who believed pleasure is the highest end of human life and did not qualitative difference among pleasure. Pleasure in this life and that of the individual is the sole aim of man. Collective happiness if it is even thought of, is regarded an expressible in terms of individual happiness and there is no conception of a general good to which the interests of the individual are to be subordinated.⁴

Chārvāka Hedonism: The Ultimate Pleasure Principle

The Chārvāka has become synonymous with materialist and materialist philosophy was very attractive to the common people. Hence it was also known to the doctrine common people as *Lokayata Darshan*. The Chārvāka says eat, drink and be merry, for death nothing remains, while life is our, lives joyously, none can escape death's searching eyes. It is very much true that pain cannot be totally eliminated as pleasure must be fought with pain. We should not throw away the opportunities of enjoying the sensual pleasure. It is foolish to discard pleasure through fear of accompanying pain. It has encouraged the spirit of free thinking. It has its novelty in challenging all the traditional values. It revolted against the blind acceptance of dogmas without subjecting them to critical examination and careful scrutiny. An eminent author remarks that "As Hume aroused Kant from his dogmatic slumber by challenging all that was hitherto to accept in philosophy."⁵ So, Chārvāka gave a death blow to all traditional thoughts and values and thus created the need for reaching and revaluation necessary for all living philosophy.

It is somewhat suspicious that the Chārvāka doctrine should consists so much in denying what is accepted by the other schools and soul little in contributing a new idea of its own to the sum of Indian thoughts the individual hedonism has an appeal to the animal in man and pleasure, in fact is considered by all. The Chārvāka denied all human values which make life worthy. They are so impatient of obtaining sensual pleasure that did not even try to secure freedom from pain. Every man, according to them must make the best of a bad bargain and enjoy himself as long as he lives. But sensual pleasure is a very faint shadow of the supreme pleasure. There is a qualitative difference in pleasure. The pioneer philosopher John Stuart Mill, as best known for utilitarianism, a consequential ethical theorist says that "a life of sensual pleasures ought to be the end of human life. The gratification of

senses can never contribute the highest good of a rational man. The pleasure of a pig is absolutely not the same as the pleasure of the philosopher".⁶ Thus rejects virtue as the end of life, but a life devoid of virtue is the life of a beast. The Indian philosophers never ask men to exclude there in sensual pleasure or desires totally but to control sensual pleasures to rejoined pleasure of the soul by a practical life of temperance, self control and spiritual discipline. It was for this reason that later on distinction was made between crude and refined Chārvākas.

The celebrated work '*Kamasutra*' of Vatsayan recommending the desirability of pleasure including sensual pleasure, yet regarded Dharma or the moral values as the supreme end of life and says that acquisition of pleasure should be in conformity with Dharma. He recommends a harmonious cultivation of all the three values of life *Dharma, Artha and, Kama*. No value should be rejected, suppressed or even looked down. As a man, after all is also a biological animal, satisfaction of his senses is as natural as the satisfaction of hunger or thirst. Above all man is not a merely biological animal, but also a spiritual being with moral constrain, rational and self conscious person capable of realising the values.

Concluding Remarks:

Carvaka Ethics promotes a pragmatic approach to life, encouraging individuals to seek pleasure through sensory experiences and sensual gratification. It suggests that one should prioritize personal happiness and well-being in the present moment, as there is no guarantee of an afterlife or future rewards. However, it's important to note that Carvaka Ethics is a minority viewpoint in Indian philosophy and has been subject to criticism and opposition from other schools of thought, particularly those with religious or spiritual orientations.⁷ Nonetheless; it represents an interesting perspective on ethics within the rich tapestry of Indian philosophical traditions.

On the basis of the above discussion we may conclude that, the Chārvāka is therefore a materialist, positivist, and naturalist doctrine. The downfall of Chārvāka philosophy maybe due to its rejection of authority of the Vedas and the denial of cardinal values.

Notes and References

1. Sinha, Jadunath, *Indian Philosophy, Vol. 1 and 2*, Motilal Banarasidass, 2006.
2. Chatterjee, Datta, Satishchandra & Dhirendramohan, *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Rupa Publication, 2022
3. Hiriyanna, M. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarasidass, 2005.
4. Radhakrishnan, S. *Indian philosophy. Vol. 1* Oxford University Press, 2008
5. Sharma, Chandradhar, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass, 2016
6. Mill, John Stuart, *Utilitarianism*, London: Parker, Son & Bourn, West Strand, 1863
7. বসু, সৌমিত্র, নৈতিকতাঃ চার্বাকের দৃষ্টিতে, *ভারতীয় ধর্মনীতি*, (সম্পা.) অমিতা চ্যাটার্জী, এলাইড পাবলিশার্স লিমিটেড, যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, কলকাতা, ১৯৯৮

বাংলা উপন্যাসে চর্যা প্রসঙ্গ : নির্মাণে ও বিনির্মাণে

সেখ সাব্বির হোসেন

‘চর্যাপদ’ বাংলা সাহিত্যের আদি নিদর্শন। বাংলা সাহিত্যের এই আদি সৃষ্টিকে ঘিরে সমালোচকদের মধ্যে বিতর্কের শেষ নেই। তা সত্ত্বেও সকলেই এর গুরুত্বকে স্বীকার না করে পারেন নি। পদকর্তাদের রচিত পদে বৌদ্ধ সহজিয়াদের সাধন প্রণালী এমনভাবে বর্ণিত হয়েছে যা অনেকেরই আয়ত্তের অতীত। ধীরে ধীরে এই ‘অধরা মাধুরী’কে অনেকেই ধরতে চাইলেন। আধুনিক উপন্যাসের মধ্যে তাকে নতুনভাবে নির্মাণ করতে চাইলেন। এই নতুন করে দেখবার দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি থেকেই বিগতযুগের সাহিত্য, তার সিদ্ধরস পরবর্তীকালে পাঠকের মনে গভীরভাবে রেখাপাত করে। নবনবায়মান জীবনরস জারিত হয়ে তার সম্পূর্ণ এক ভিন্নতর অভিরূপ গ্রহণ করে। সেই অভিঘাত থেকেই তৈরি হয় বেশ কিছু বাংলা আধুনিক উপন্যাস। চর্যাপদের পদকর্তাদের বিভিন্ন উপাদান মিশ্রিত হয়ে অনেক সময়ই তাতে কোনো না কোনো প্রছন্ন ইঙ্গিত অঙ্গীভূত নবযুগের উপযোগী এবং চিরকালের সাহিত্য সমালোচনার ও বিশ্লেষণের অভিসন্দর্ভ রচিত হয়। জাতির অবচেতনায় লুপ্ত প্রচলিত কাহিনির কিছু রেশ অনেক সময় এই ধরনের উপন্যাসের হাত ধরে জাতীয়তাবাদ নির্মাণের একটি প্রক্রিয়াও তৈরি করে। আজকের যুগে দাঁড়িয়ে আমাদের আত্মিক সংকট, দ্বিধা-দ্বন্দ্ব এবং তার থেকে অতিক্রমণের কিছু ইঙ্গিতও হয়তো খুঁজে পাওয়া যেতে পারে এই ঐতিহ্যের শিকড় সন্ধানের মাধ্যমে।

উপন্যাসগুলির মধ্যে গ্রহণ করেছি হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রীর ‘বেনের মেয়ে’, সেলিনা হোসেনের ‘নীল ময়ূরের যৌবন’, শিবাশিস মুখোপাধ্যায়ের ‘কাহু’ ও আবুল কাসেমের ‘সরহ পা’ উপন্যাস। উপন্যাসগুলিতে চর্যাগীতির কীভাবে বিনির্মাণ ঘটেছে তাই আমাদের মূল প্রতিপাদ্য। চর্যাপদের কবি কাহু পাদ ও সরহ পাদকে নিয়ে বিংশ শতাব্দী জুড়ে ও একবিংশ শতাব্দীর গোড়ার দিকে আধুনিক বাংলা উপন্যাসে সংযুক্ত করে তাদেরকে কোনো রাস্ত্রিক, রাজনৈতিক ও ব্যক্তিগত কোনো সমস্যার সমাধানের নায়ক হিসেবে উপস্থাপিত করেছেন আলোচ্য রচনায়।

হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রীর ‘বেনের মেয়ে’ উপন্যাস

রবীন্দ্র-পূর্ববর্তী বাংলা উপন্যাসে চর্যা প্রসঙ্গ নিয়ে যে সমস্ত রচনা মেলে তার মধ্যে হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রীর ‘বেনের মেয়ে’ই একমাত্র উল্লেখের দাবি রাখে। রবীন্দ্র সমকালীন বাংলা উপন্যাসে চর্যা অনুষ্ঙ্গ নিয়ে বিশেষ কিছু লেখা পাওয়া যায় না। ১৯০৭ সালে পণ্ডিত হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রী নেপালের রাজদরবার থেকে চর্যাপদের পুঁথি আবিষ্কার করেন এবং সাহিত্য পরিষদ থেকে ‘হাজার বছরের পুরাণ বাঙ্গালা ভাষায় বৌদ্ধগান ও দোহা’ নামে এটি প্রকাশিত হল ১৯১৬ খ্রিঃ। হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রী চর্যাপদের এই পুঁথির সঙ্গে বাঙালির পরিচয় করালেন। পরবর্তীতে তিনি এই চর্যাপদের সমাজজীবন, ধর্মাচরণ, পদকর্তাদের পরিচয় ও বৌদ্ধসংস্কৃতি নিয়ে নানা নিবন্ধ রচনা করেছেন। চর্যাপদে প্রতিফলিত হাজার বছর আগের বঙ্গজীবনের ইতিহাস চর্চা করতে করতে তাঁর মনোজগতে একটি প্রাচীন ঐতিহ্যের প্রতি মায়াদান সৃষ্টি হয়েছিল। কয়েকটি পদ এবং সে যুগের ইতিহাসের ছাড়া ছাড়া ইতিবৃত্তান্ত নিয়ে তিনি একটি উপন্যাস লিখে ফেললেন, যার নাম

SACT-I, Department of Bengali, Kaibalyadayini College of Commerce & General Studies, Midnapore, West Bengal

‘বেনের মেয়ে’ (১৯১৯)। চর্যাপদকেন্দ্রিক বাংলা কথাসাহিত্যের এটিই প্রথম এবং পথপ্রদর্শনকারী পদক্ষেপ।

উপন্যাসটি প্রথম প্রকাশিত হয় ‘নারায়ণ’ পত্রিকায়। ১৩২৫ বঙ্গাব্দের কার্তিক থেকে ১৩২৬ বঙ্গাব্দের অগ্রহায়ণ পর্যন্ত ধারাবাহিক ভাবে প্রকাশিত হয়। গ্রন্থাকারে প্রকাশের সময় হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রী কিছু পরিবর্তন সাধন করেন। রবীন্দ্র-পূর্ব বাংলা কথাসাহিত্যে চর্যাগীতি নিয়ে যা লেখা হয়েছে তার মধ্যে ‘বেনের মেয়ে’ একটি উল্লেখযোগ্য দৃষ্টান্ত।

উপন্যাসের কাল মুসলিম অধিকারের অব্যবহিত আগের অর্থাৎ ১০ম-১১শ শতাব্দীর বঙ্গীয় সমাজ পটভূমি। হুগলি জেলার সাতগাঁ তথা সপ্তগ্রামের কাছে ধরমপুরকে তাঁর উপন্যাসের পটভূমি হিসেবে বেছে নিয়েছেন। সপ্তগ্রামের রাজা রূপাই সিংহের গুরু হিসেবে বেছে নিয়েছেন সিদ্ধাচার্য লুইপাদকে। তাঁর মতো যথার্থ ধর্মগুরুর চরিত্র মহিমার সঙ্গে অঙ্কিত হয়েছে। বৌদ্ধসমাজ সম্পর্কে জানাতে চর্যাপদের সময়কাল, চর্যাকারেরা, সেই সময়ের বাংলার সমাজ, অতীত বৈভব, সংস্কৃতি, ঐতিহ্য, হিন্দু-বৌদ্ধদের ভাবের আদন প্রদান প্রভৃতি যেভাবে তাঁর উপন্যাসে ধরা পড়েছে, তা থেকে তাঁর বৃহত্তর ভারত চিন্তার পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়।

‘বেনের মেয়ে’ উপন্যাসকে ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস বলতে চাননি লেখক। তবে খাঁটি ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস না হলেও এই কাহিনিবৃত্তে স্থান পেয়েছে বেশ কিছু ঐতিহাসিক চরিত্র। এসেছে চর্যাপদের কবি লুই, চাটিল, বীণা ও সরহ সিদ্ধাচার্যের কথা। তাঁদের রচিত পদেরও প্রয়োগ করেছেন লেখক। উপন্যাসের বাস্তব ভিত্তি রচনা করেছে ততকালীন বঙ্গের ধর্ম সংঘর্ষে বিপর্যস্ত জীবনের কাহিনি। এই উপন্যাসের মধ্যে চিত্রিত জীবন বৃত্তান্তের সমাজ ঐতিহাসিক মূলটি প্রসঙ্গে ঐতিহাসিক রাখালদাস বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ও উচ্চকণ্ঠে প্রশংসা করেছেন।

উপন্যাসে যথার্থ ভাবেই আমরা দেখি ‘হাজার বছর আগের বাংলার অর্থনৈতিক রাজনৈতিক ধর্মীয় সামাজিক সাংস্কৃতিক জীবনের একটি প্রায় পূর্ণাঙ্গ ছবি ধরা পড়েছে। এ বইয়ে ইতিহাসশাস্ত্রী উপন্যাসের পরিচিত রূপটাই পালটে দেবার মত ব্যাপার ঘটেছে।’^১ সপ্তগ্রামকেন্দ্রিক বণিক সমাজের চিত্র বণিকদের গুরুত্ব ও মহিমার কথা আছে। প্রথম পরিচ্ছেদ শুরু হচ্ছে গাজন উতসবের বর্ণনা দিয়ে। সপ্তগ্রামের রাজা রূপাই সিংহের সঙ্গে হরিবর্মার যুদ্ধ সপ্তগ্রামের বৌদ্ধ অধিকারের বিলোপ সাধনের কাহিনি। উপন্যাসের শুরুতে তিনি একটি ইংরেজি সালের কথা বলেছেন-১০০০ খ্রিঃ, আছে হরিবর্মা, ভবদেব ভট্ট, মহীপাল, নয়পাল, বজ্রদত্ত ও সুলতান মামুদের উল্লেখ। উপন্যাসে হাজার বছর আগেকার সমাজজীবন যেন প্রত্যক্ষ হয়ে উঠেছে। সংঘর্ষের চিত্র আছে হিন্দু ও বৌদ্ধদের যদিও এটিই প্রধান নয়। উপন্যাসের কেন্দ্রে আছে বিহারী দত্ত, তার মেয়ে মায়া, সহজিয়া সাধক গুরুপুত্র নবীনের কাহিনি। মায়ার প্রতি নবীনের দুর্বলতা গুরু লুইপাদের নির্দেশে বিপর্যস্ত নবীনকে সাতগাঁয়ের বিদায় নিতে হল। যদিও উপন্যাসের বর্ণনাত্মক ভঙ্গির কারণেই চরিত্রের অন্তর্লোকের পরিচয় তেমন নেই-নেই নরনারীর অন্তর্দ্বন্দ্বের পরিচয়। চরিত্রেরাও একটি সামাজিক ও ধর্মীয় দ্বন্দ্বের উপজাত হয়ে উঠেছে। এ জন্য এটি চরিত্র প্রধান নয়-চরিত্রে ‘হয়ে ওঠা’ তেমন নেই। সমাজ ইতিহাসের উপস্থাপনাই মুখ্য চরিত্রায়ন গৌণ হয়ে উঠেছে। ‘বেনের মেয়ে’ কে নিয়ে সংঘাতের সূত্রপাত সেই মায়াও ঘটনাপ্রবাহের নীরব সাক্ষী যেন। তবে এই উপন্যাসের সর্বাপেক্ষা স্মরণযোগ্য চরিত্র ভবতারণ গিশাচন্দ্রী বা মক্ষরী। তার মধ্যে বহুগুণের সমাবেশ সে আধুনিক এক মানুষ। ছবি দেখিয়ে ভিক্ষাবৃত্তি-পরোপকারের অন্যদিকে সে রাজনৈতিক কূটবুদ্ধির পরিচয় দিয়েছে।

চর্যাপদ ভিত্তিক কাহিনি ও জনজীবন এই উপন্যাসে যেমন এসেছে তেমনি ঔপন্যাসিক নিজেও চর্যাপদের ভাষাভঙ্গি ও ব্রজবুলি অবহট্টের মিশেলে কয়েকটি কবিতা লিখেছেন। কয়েকটি ত্রুটি বিচ্যুতি সত্ত্বেও ‘রচনাটি সে সব স্থলন নিয়ে এবং তা ছাড়িয়ে আপনার মহিমায় বাংলা উপন্যাসের ইতিহাসে ক্লাসিক হয়ে আছে’।^২

উপন্যাসে প্রাচীন বাঙালীর রূপ প্রায় সব দিক থেকেই ধরা পড়েছে। আমরা জানি বাঙালি বাণিকের বহির্বাণিজ্য। বিহারীর সমুদ্র বাণিজ্যের সংগঠনের বিস্তৃত বস্তুনিষ্ঠ বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন লেখক। বিহারী যে শুধু ব্যক্তিবিশেষ নয়, একটা বড় সম্প্রদায়ের প্রতিনিধিস্বরূপ তা সহজেই বোঝা যায়। লেখকের স্পষ্ট নির্দেশও আছে। বৌদ্ধবিহার স্থাপনাকে কেন্দ্র করে উতসবের বিবরণে এই উপন্যাসের সূচনা। লেখকের ভাষার উপরে দখল এবং বর্ণনা করার শক্তির একটি ভালো নিদর্শন। অতীতের কল্পনা মিশ্র বাস্তবতাকে বর্ণনাত্মক বিশ্বাস্য করে তোলা হয়েছে। সমকালীন বাংলায় বৌদ্ধদের নানা সম্প্রদায় মহাযানী এবং সহজযানীদের বিরোধ, এই অঞ্চলে সহজিয়াদের প্রাধান্য তাদের মধ্যে নানা গোষ্ঠীর বিরোধ, তান্ত্রিক বৌদ্ধদের দেবমন্ডলী, স্ত্রী শক্তি সহযোগ সাধন এসবেরই পরিচয় নিরপেক্ষ ঐতিহাসিক দৃষ্টিতে পরিবেশিত। সহজতান্ত্রিক পদ্ধতির ব্যাপক অনুশীলনে অবাধ কামাচার প্রশ্রয় পাচ্ছিল। বিবিধ বিকার দেখা দিচ্ছিল। লেখক তার ইঙ্গিত যেমন দিয়েছেন তেমনি বৌদ্ধধর্মকে আশ্রয় করেই বাগদীরা হিন্দুদের কাছে অন্ত্যজ হলেও রাজা সেনাপতি হয়ে বসেছিল, ডোমেরা সেনাবাহিনীতে গুরুতর ভূমিকা পেয়েছিল। ধনী বিধবা মায়াকে বিহারের ভিক্ষুনি করার চেষ্টার পেছনে রাজশক্তি ও ধর্মপ্রধানদের স্বার্থবোধ সক্রিয় ছিল। তেমনি লুইপাদের মতো ধর্মগুরু ও কবির মহিমা উন্নত চিত্রও উপন্যাসে গুরুত্ব পেয়েছে। সমকালীন বৌদ্ধধর্ম ও সাধন পদ্ধতির বিচিত্র রূপ এবং তাদের ঐতিহাসিক বিবর্তনের এত বিস্তৃত ও গভীর জ্ঞান হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রীর মতো আর কার ছিল? উপন্যাস লেখায় সেই পরিপূর্ণ প্রজ্ঞাকে ব্যবহার করেছেন তিনি ফলে এসেছে অসাধারণ সাফল্য। চর্যাপদের ভাষা কিঞ্চিৎ ব্রজবুলি এবং অবহট্টের মিশ্রণে কয়েকটি কবিতা লিখে হরপ্রসাদ উপন্যাসের নাড়ীতে প্রাচীন বাংলার রক্ত সঞ্চালন করেছেন। এইভাবে ‘বেনের মেয়ে’ উপন্যাস হয়ে উঠেছে বাঙালির শিকড়ের সত্য। তার আত্মপরিচয়।

‘বেনের মেয়ে’ উপন্যাসে যেখানে চাটিল প্রভৃতি ধর্মপ্রাণ সিদ্ধাচার্যদের পদে সহজিয়া ধর্মসাধনার তত্ত্ব, মায়ার কবিতায় শবর-শবরীর রূপকের সাহায্যে নিজের হৃদয় ভাবের নৈব্যক্তিকতায় উত্তরণ, সেখানে গুরুপুত্রের কবিতা একটি খাঁটি আধুনিক লিরিক, সরাসরি আর্ত হয়ে উঠেছে ব্যক্তিগত যন্ত্রণাবোধ, আপনার জীবন-মস্থনজাত বিষামৃত।

সেলিনা হোসেনের ‘নীল ময়ূরের যৌবন’ উপন্যাস

সেলিনা হোসেনের জন্ম ১৯৪৭ সালের ১৪ জুন। বাংলাদেশের রাজশাহী শহরে। প্রথম গল্পগ্রন্থ ‘উৎস থেকে নিরস্তর’। ১৯৬৯ সালে প্রকাশিত। বর্তমানে উপন্যাসের সংখ্যা ৩০ টি। গল্পগ্রন্থ ১২ টি। প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থ ৮ টি। শিশুসাহিত্য ১৭ টি। উল্লেখযোগ্য উপন্যাসগুলি হল ‘যাপিত জীবন’, ‘নিরস্তর ঘন্টাধ্বনি’, ‘হাঙর নদী প্রেনেড’ ও ‘নীল ময়ূরের যৌবন’। বিভিন্ন ভাষায় তাঁর গল্প অনূদিত হয়েছে। পেয়েছেন বাংলা আকাদেমি সাহিত্য পুরস্কার।

সেলিনা হোসেনের লেখা ‘নীল ময়ূরের যৌবন’ ১৯৭১ সালে প্রকাশিত। এটি একটি জীবনীমূলক উপন্যাস। চর্যাপদের বিনির্মাণ করা হয়েছে এই উপন্যাসে। চর্যাপদের মধ্যে সবথেকে বেশি পদ রচনা

করেছেন কাহ্ন পাদ। কাহ্নপাদের জীবন সম্পর্কে তেমন কিছু তথ্য পাওয়া যায় না। অনেকে মনে করেন ‘যোগরত্নমালা হে বজ্রপঞ্জিকা’ কৃষ্ণাচার্য নাম দিয়ে কাহ্ন পাদের লেখা। কাহ্ন পাদের জীবন নিয়ে এই উপন্যাস লেখা হয়েছে। কাহ্ন পাদের লেখা পদ্মুলি এই উপন্যাসের উপাদান হিসেবে বিবেচিত হয়েছে।

অষ্টম থেকে দশম শতাব্দীর চর্যাপদের সময়কালের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে রচিত উপন্যাস। উপন্যাসটি চর্যাপদের কবিগানের যাপিত জীবনের আখ্যানভাগ। কাহ্ন পাদ, কুক্কুরী পাদ, ভুসুকু পাদ, শবর পাদ, ডোম্বী চর্যাপদের সাথে জড়িয়ে থাকা এই চরিত্রগুলোর মাঝেই আবর্তিত হয়েছে উপন্যাসটি। উপন্যাস জুড়ে বার বার ফুটিয়ে তোলা হয়েছে চর্যাপদের কবি ভুসুকু পাদের একটি পদ-‘আপনা মাংসে হরিণা বৈরী’। হরিণ যেমন তার নধর শরীরের কারণে শিকারে পরিণত তেমনি মানুষও তার নিজ ক্ষুধা আর চাহিদার কারণে শিকার হয় বৈরীতার। এই উপন্যাসের মুখ্য বিষয় হল ভাষা।

রাজা এবং তার পরিবারবর্গের সাথে সমাজের সাধারণ মানুষের মুখের ভাষার পার্থক্য এবং এই জনগোষ্ঠীর ভাষাকে কোথাও স্থান দিতে অপারগ রাজসম্প্রদায়। রাজরোযানল থেকে সাধারণ মানুষের মুখের সহজ স্বচ্ছন্দ ভাষাকে টিকিয়ে রাখার নিরন্তর সংগ্রামের রূপরেখা এই উপন্যাস। এই সংগ্রাম যেমন চর্যাপদের সময়কালে ছিল তেমনি এখনো আছে। তার উদাঃ হলো আমাদের দেশের ক্ষুদ্র নৃগোষ্ঠীর ভাষার অবহেলিত এবং অবিকাশমান দশা। হাজার বছরের সংগ্রামী মানুষের সংগ্রামের শিল্পিত রূপ এ উপন্যাস।

চর্যাপদে সমকালীন বাংলাদেশের সমাজ ও লৌকিক জীবনচিত্র উঠে এসেছে। ‘নীল ময়ূরের যৌবন’ উপন্যাসেও সেই পরিবেশ রক্ষিত হয়েছে। ভুসুকুর ভাই দেশাখ, কাহ্ন, রামকীরীদের হরিণ শিকারের দৃশ্য; ডোম্বীর নৌকা বাইবার দৃশ্য; চৌষটি ঘড়া সাজিয়ে দেবকী ও রামকীরী নামক দুই চরিত্রের মদ বিক্রির দৃশ্য; ধনশ্রী ও ভৈরবীর নিত্য অভাবের মধ্যে বাড়িতে অতিথির আনাগোনার চিত্র, নদীতে বড়ো মাছের ঘাই মারার প্রসঙ্গ; অন্ত্যজদের মাদল, পটহ বাজিয়ে সারারাত উৎসবের দৃশ্য; মাটির উর্বরা শক্তি বৃদ্ধি ও ফসলের কামনায় জোড়ায় জোড়ায় অবিবাহিত নারীপুরুষের মিলনের প্রসঙ্গ, দুঃখ, দারিদ্র্যক্লিষ্ট সাধারণ মানুষের উপর রাজার অকথ্য শোষণ নিপীড়নের প্রভৃতি প্রসঙ্গ এই উপন্যাসের পরতে পরতে জড়িয়ে আছে।

কাহ্নপাদের বাড়ির অবস্থা তখৈবচ। তাঁর পত্নী শবরী। শবরী গুঞ্জাফুলের মালা পরতে ভালোবাসে। মেঘডম্বুর শাড়ী তার প্রিয়। মাথায় ময়ূরের পালক গোঁজে। ঘরে ময়ূর পোষে। ঘর বলতে চাঁদের বেড়ার ঘর। ঘরের সামনে অনেক কাপাস গাছ আছে। হরিণের চামড়া বিছিয়ে কাহ্নপাদের জন্য গীত রচনার পরিবেশ তৈরি করে। সেজে গুজে সবসময় কাহ্নর পাশে পাশে থাকে। শবরী কাহ্নর কবিপত্নী হলেও কবিপ্রিয়া হয়ে উঠতে পারেনি।

কাহ্নর বন্ধু ভুসুকু। সেও বাংলা ভাষায় গীত লেখে। কুক্কুরীপাদও গীত রচনা করেন। কুক্কুরীপাদ সমাজ সংসারে মধ্যে থাকে না। তিনি অরন্যচারী, পর্বতবাসী। তার গান ‘রুখের তেস্তুলি কুস্তিরে খাঅ’ কাহ্নকে মুগ্ধ করে। ভুসুকু বাণিজ্যে গিয়ে নিখোঁজ। ভুসুকুর ঘরে স্ত্রী, বাবা-মা, ভাইবোন আছে। চরম দারিদ্র্যের সংসার। স্ত্রী সুলেখা ভুসুকুর অপেক্ষায় শেষ পর্যন্ত থাকতে না পেয়ে গ্রামের পাকা চাষী সুদামের সঙ্গে ঘর বাঁধে। দীর্ঘদিন পর ভুসুকু ঘরে ফিরে স্ত্রীর ঘর ছাড়ার ঘটনায় পাগল প্রায় হয়ে যায়।

কাহ্নু রাজকর্মচারী। রাজ দরবারে পন্ডিতেরা যখন সংস্কৃত ভাষায় শাস্ত্র আলোচনা করে তখন ব্রাহ্মণেরা সবসময় কোণঠাসা করে রাখে ওকে। ও নিজে একজন কবি। সে চায় তার লৌকিক ভাষায় লেখা গীত রাজসভায় পাঠ করতে। তার আকাঙ্ক্ষা হয় যেন তার গীত শুনে রাজা তাকে উপযুক্ত সম্মান দিক। প্রবলভাবে অনুভব করে যে ব্রাহ্মণ পন্ডিতদের রাশভারি সংস্কৃত ভাষার পাশাপাশি ওর লৌকিক ভাষাকে বাঁচিয়ে রাখতে হবে, এ ভাষাতেই কথা বলে ওর মতো শত শত মানুষ। রাজমন্ত্রী দেবল মিত্র কাহ্নুর গীতকে মনে করে ‘ছঁচোর কেত্তন’। কাহ্নু স্বপ্ন দেখে এক স্বাধীন ভূখন্ডের যার দক্ষিণে থাকবে বন এবং যেখানে রাজায় প্রজায় কোনো ভেদ থাকবে না। প্রত্যেকেই নিজের মতো করে তাদের মনের কথা বুকের ভাষা বলতে পারবে।

কাহ্নুর পত্নী শবরী হলেও তার প্রিয়া হল ডোম্বী। সে নদীঘাটে নৌকা পারাপার করে। তার স্বামী তাকে ছেড়ে অন্য সঙ্গিনীর সঙ্গে ঘর বেঁধেছে। তাতে ডোম্বী ভেঙে পড়েনি। নদীই ডোম্বীর মা বাপ। নদীই তার আশ্রয়। কাহ্নু ডোম্বীকে মল্লারী বলে ডাকে। ডোম্বীর বাস গ্রামের বাইরে। এযুগেও ডোমেদের বাস গ্রামের বাইরেই হয়। আমরা এ যুগেও ডোমেদেরকে কাছে টেনে নিতে পারিনি। মল্লারী নিয়ে কাহ্নু গান বাঁধে। মল্লারী কাহ্নুকে বিনে পয়সায় নদী পার করে দেয়। কাহ্নুর লেখা সেই গান কণ্ঠে ধারণ করে পাড়ায় পাড়ায় গেয়ে বেড়ায়। শক্ত সবল ডোম্বীর মধ্যে যে প্রাণোচ্ছলতা আছে তা কাহ্নুর ভালো লাগে। ডোম্বীর মধ্যে আগুন দেখতে পায় কাহ্নু। সে জানে এই ডোম্বী ঠিক একদিন ব্রাহ্মণদের প্রতি ব্রাহ্মণদের যে অপমান তার প্রতিশোধ নেবেই।

রাজার শাসন, শোষণ, নিপীড়ন, অত্যাচারে নিম্নবর্ণের অন্ত্যজ মানুষেরা দিশেহারা। কাহ্নুর গীত তাদের কাছে বাঁচার প্রেরণা জোগায়। রাজা বুদ্ধমিত্র অর্থব। তার মন্ত্রী দেবল মিত্র ব্রাহ্মণ। সে আইন জারি করেছে উচ্চবর্ণের লোকেরা যদি নিম্নবর্ণের মেয়েদের সঙ্গে বউদের সঙ্গে সংসর্গে লিপ্ত হয় তাহলে তা দোষের নয়। এমনকী গর্ভে সন্তান এলেও নয়। তবে তাদেরকে বিয়ে করা নৈব নৈব চ। যদি কোনও মহিলার যমজ সন্তান হয় তবে তাকে ত্যাগ করতে হবে। কারণ সে বহুগামী তাই সে অসতী। নদীর বড়ো মাছ, জমির ফসল, বনের ফলমূল রাজার ঘরে উঠবে। এই নিয়ম অমান্য করলে চরম শাস্তি। এইসব আইন দেশাখ, নিমাইরা মেনে নিতে পারে না। তারা প্রতিরোধের জন্য তৈরি হতে থাকে।

একদিন কাহ্নু তার গীত পাঠের জন্য রাজার অনুমতি আদায় করে। সানন্দে সেই কথা প্রথমে মল্লারীকে বলে কাহ্নু। ডোম্বী আনন্দে নেচে ওঠে। শবরীকেও জানায়। তারা সবাই উৎফুল্ল। সবাইভাবে এতদিনে তাদের কথা রাজার কানে গিয়ে পৌঁছাবে। অনেক কাটাকাটি করে সারারাত জেগে কাহ্নু মনের মতো গীত রচনা করে। পরদিন দরবারে পন্ডিতেরা নানা বিষয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করে। কাহ্নু ডাকের অপেক্ষায় থাকে। রাত নামে। সে গীত পাঠের সুযোগ পায় না। রাজার অনুমতি দানের কথা বললে মন্ত্রী দেবল মিত্র তাকে গলাধাক্কা দিয়ে রাজপুরী থেকে বের করে দেয়। চরম লজ্জায় অপমানে কাহ্নু ভেঙে পড়ে। মল্লারী সব শুনে খেপে ওঠে বলে :

“তুমি কী করলে ?

কিছু করি নি।

মল্লারী তেড়ে ওঠে, কিছু করলে না ? মাথা ফাটিয়ে দিতে পারলে না ?

তাহলে কি আমাকে আন্ত রাখতো ?

না রাখলে মরতে, আমরা সবাই জানতাম তুমি মুখের ভাষার জন্য মরেছো। কুকুরের মতো লেজ

গুটিয়ে পালিয়ে যদি আসবে তবে গেলে কেন ওখানে ? যাকে তুমি প্রাণের চেয়ে

বেশি ভালোবাসা তার জন্য মরতে পারো না ?”^৩

কাহ্নু প্রতিজ্ঞা করে, সে একদিন তার প্রাণপ্রিয় ভাষাকে বাঁচাতে মরতে হলেও মরবে। ডোম্বীও প্রতিজ্ঞা করে কাহ্নুর এই অপমানের প্রতিশোধ সে নেবেই নেবে।

মন্ত্রীর আইনে ডোম্বীর ঘরে ব্রাহ্মণের প্রতি রাতে উপস্থিত হয়। দিনে যাদের ছায়া মাড়াও পাপ, যারা জল, অচল, অচ্ছুৎ -রাতে তাদের কাছে উপগত হতে দোষ নেই। এই বিষয় নিয়ে কাহ্নু পাদ পদ রচনা করে:

নগর বাহিরেরেঁ ডোম্বী তোহোরি কুঁড়িআ।

ছেই ছেই যাইসি ব্রাহ্ম নাড়িআ ।।

গীতটি লিখে কাহ্নু খুব আনন্দ পায়। এমন সরাসরি মনের কথাকে এর আগে কখনো প্রকাশ করতে পারেনি। শবরী শুনে থমকে যায়। শবরী চোঁচিয়ে উঠে বলতে থাকে :

“ঠিকই লিখেছো কানু। ওই এক জয়গায় বামনেরা ছোটোলোকের

শরীরের কথা ভুলে যায়। তখন সব পবিত্র হয়”।^৪

পরদিন সকালে পটহ-মাদল নিয়ে বুনো উল্লাসে মত্ত হয়ে ডোম্বী সমস্ত পাড়া গান করে ঘুড়ে বেড়ায়। সব জয়গাতেই আনন্দের মুহূর্ত। দেশাখও আনন্দঘন মুহূর্তে কানুর প্রশংসা করে। বুকুর ভাষাকে কাহ্নু পাদ এতদিনে মুখের ভাষায় পরিণত করলো। কাহ্নুর স্বপ্নের স্বাধীন ভূখন্ডের শরিক হতে সবাই চায়। বমুনদেরকে নিয়ে কানুর গীত মন্ত্রীর কানে পৌঁছায়। প্রহরীরা কানুকে পিছমোড়া করে দরবারে নিয়ে যায়। মন্ত্রী কানুর কাছে জবাব চায়। কানু চুপ করে থাকে। তাকে মৃত্যুদন্ডের ভয় দেখান হয়। কানু যদি রাজার প্রশস্তি গীত রচনা করে লেখে, রাজা কত দয়ালু, প্রজাদের সুখের জন্য রাজার প্রাণ কাঁদে এইসব কথা তাহলে কানুকে ছেড়ে দেওয়া হবে। কানু রাজি হয় না। তাকে চুন ঘরে বন্দী করা হয়।

এদিকে ডোম্বী কানুর অপমানের প্রতিশোধ নেয়। দেবল ভদ্রের ভাগ্নে একদিন রাতে জোর করে ডোম্বীর শয্যাসঙ্গিনী হলে ডোম্বীর বৈঠা চালানো শক্ত হাতে কোমরের লুকানো ছুরি উঠে এসে দেবল ভদ্রের ভাগ্নের বুক সজোরে ধুকে যায়। চারিদিক রক্তে ভেসে যায়। রাজার কাছে এতবড় খবর গিয়ে পৌঁছয়। রাজপ্রহরী ডোম্বীকে ধরে নিয়ে যায়। ডোম্বী আজ খুব খুশি। সে ভয়ডরশূন্য। বিচারে ডোম্বীর ফাঁসি হয়।

ডোম্বীর খবর কানুর কানে আসে। একমাস চারদিন চুন ঘরে বন্দী কাহ্নু। অভুক্ত থেকে গায়ে বল নেই। মাথা ঝিমঝিম করে। সে তার প্রাণের ভাষার, মুখের ভাষার স্বীকৃতি পাবার জন্য লড়ছে। গ্রামের লোকজন খবর পেয়ে অচেতন্য কাহ্নুকে নিয়ে গিয়ে সুস্থ করে তোলে। রাজার লোকেরা গ্রামের পর গ্রামে,

পল্লিতে পল্লিতে আঙুন লাগিয়ে দেয়। দেশাখ আর তার বাহিনী তীর ধনুক নিয়ে অসম যুদ্ধে হেরে গিয়ে কাহ্নকে নিয়ে বনের মধ্যে আশ্রয় নেয়। এই আশ্রয় আত্মরক্ষার জন্য নয়, নতুন করে শক্তি অর্জনের জন্য। চারিদিকে আঙুনের লেলিহান শিখা আর মানুষের চামড়ার পোড়া গন্ধে চারিদিক ভরে ওঠে। কিন্তু তার মধ্য থেকেও সংগ্রামী মানুষের প্রতিরোধের কণ্ঠস্বর ধ্বনিত হল। কাহ্ন নতুন করে আবার সেই প্রতিবাদের বীজ বপন করে বলে :

“তোরা কেউ দুঃখ করিস না দেশাখ। আমাদের তেমন একটা জায়গা একদিন হবে।

আমরাই রাজা হবো। রাজাপ্রজা সমান হবে। আমাদের ভাষা রাজদরবারের ভাষা হবে।

তেমন দিনের জন্য আমাদের প্রস্তুত হতে হবে দেশাখ”।^৬

জনপ্রিয় কথাসাহিত্যিক সেলিনা হোসেন চর্যাপদের কাহ্নকে নিয়ে এক অসাধারণ বিনির্মাণ ঘটালেন। যার মধ্যে স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশ রাষ্ট্রের জন্মকাহিনি রেখে দিয়েছেন। আমরা জানি, ১৯৪৭ সালে ভারত এবং পাকিস্তান স্বাধীন রাষ্ট্রে পরিণত হল। পূর্ব পাকিস্তান যা বর্তমানে স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশ তারাও পাকিস্তানের অন্তর্গত হল। পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের সমস্ত মানুষের প্রাণের ভাষা বাংলা। কিন্তু জিন্নার সরকার তাদের ওপর চাপিয়ে দিল উর্দু ভাষা। আপামর বাঙালি জাতিসত্ত্বার এই অপমানকে মেনে নিতে পারল না। তারা প্রাণ দিলেন নিজের ভাষাকে প্রতিষ্ঠার লক্ষ্যে। কাহ্নর মতো তারাও স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন এক স্বাধীন ভূখণ্ডের। যার দক্ষিণে থাকবে সুন্দরবন আর সাগর। আর কাহ্নর মতো তারাও স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন রাজাপ্রজায় কোনো ভেদ থাকবে না। সবার মুখের ভাষা হবে রাজদরবারের ভাষা। তার ই ফলশ্রুতি যেন ১৯৭১ এর স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশ। যে দেশের জনগনের ভাষা হবে একমাত্র বাংলা। যে সংগ্রাম প্রাচীনকালে শুরু করেছিলেন কাহ্নরা তারই যেন পরিণতি আধুনিককালের স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশের জন্মের মধ্য দিয়ে। এভাবেই সেলিনা হোসেন তাঁর উপন্যাসে সেকালের কাহিনীকে একাল পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত করে এক নতুন কণ্ঠস্বরকে ধ্বনিত করলেন যার মধ্য দিয়ে চর্যাপদকে জীবনের আখরে পুনর্নির্মাণ করলেন। লেখিকা যথার্থই বলেছেন :

“এমন রক্ত আঙুনের মধ্যে দিয়ে তো কাহ্নপাদের স্বপ্নের ভূখণ্ড বাংলাদেশ হয়ে যায়...”^৭

শিবাশিস মুখোপাধ্যায়ের ‘কাহ্ন’ উপন্যাস

বর্তমান সময়ের উল্লেখযোগ্য কথাসাহিত্যিক শিবাশিস মুখোপাধ্যায়। প্রথম প্রকাশিত বই কবিতা নিয়ে। ১৯৯৯ সালে। পেয়েছেন কৃষ্টিবাস, উৎসব ও বাংলা আকাদেমি পুরস্কার। তাঁর প্রথম রচিত উপন্যাস ‘কাহ্ন’ প্রকাশ ২০১০। চর্যাপদের কবি কাহ্নকে নিয়ে তিনি তাঁর সময়ের বাস্তবে স্থাপন করেছেন। সাধনমার্গের বিভিন্ন গোপনীয়তা বজায় রাখতে, শরীর সাধনার গোপন পথে হাঁটতে গিয়েও উপন্যাসের নাম চরিত্র কাহ্ন বাস্তবজীবন ও সম্পর্কের টানাপোড়েনে জড়িয়ে পড়েছেন। ডোম্বিনী, জ্ঞানবতী কিংবা গুঞ্জরীর মতো নারীদের সঙ্গে তাঁর প্রণয় সম্পর্ক গড়ে উঠেছে। হাজার বছর আগের কবি ‘কাহ্ন’ আধুনিক পাঠকের কাছে হয়ে উঠেছেন এক রক্তমাংসের মানুষ। এই জল হাওয়া ধুলো মাটিরই মানুষ।

উপন্যাসটি ৩২ টি অধ্যায়ে বিভক্ত। চর্যাপদের কবি ছিলেন কাহ্ন। দশম থেকে দ্বাদশ শতাব্দীর মধ্যবর্তী কোনো সময়ে কাহ্ন, ভুসুকুদের মতো বৌদ্ধ সহজিয়ারা সাধারণ মানুষের মুখে মুখে ছড়িয়ে দেওয়ার জন্য এক সাংকেতিক ভাষায় রচনা করেছিলেন চর্যাগীতির পদ। ‘চতুরাশীতি, সিদ্ধ, প্রবৃত্তি’ তে পাওয়া যায়

তাদের অলৌকিক জীবনকাহিনি। কিংবদন্তীর সেই কাহ্নকে নিয়েই এই উপন্যাস লেখা হয়েছে।

উপন্যাস শুরু হয়েছে এইভাবে :

“ডাঙ্গিনীর শরীরের দিকে তাকিয়ে আনন্দিত হয়ে উঠলেন কাহ্ন। শিষ্যশিষ্যা ঘিরে থাকা তাঁর এত বছরের আচার্যের জীবন যেন তছনছ হয়ে ভেঙে পড়ল পায়ের কাছে। ক্ষীণতোয়ার তীরে এই সিঁদুরমাখা বিকেলে পিপুল আর তেঁতুল গাছের নরম আবছায়ায় তখন স্নানের পরে ভিজে বসন ছেড়ে মাটির উপরে যেন খেলার ছলে তার জল ছিটিয়ে দিচ্ছে ডাঙ্গিনী। তার উজ্জ্বল শ্যামা শরীরে তখন কেবল সূর্যালোকের শেষ বেলাকার ঝিকিমিকি।

অবগাহনের পরে তখন অবশিষ্ট জলের ফোঁটগুলো তাদের শেষের অক্ষুট শ্বাসের মতো ঝরে ঝরে পড়ছে ডাঙ্গিনীর শরীর থেকে। স্তনের চূড়াথেকে, উরুর গভীর সন্ধি থেকে, নিতম্বের ঢালু রহস্য থেকে।

কাহ্ন শরীরের প্রত্যেক রোমকূপে যেন বিদ্যুতের স্পর্শ অনুভব করলেন। এ কী মায়া! এই শ্যামাঙ্গিনীর শরীরের প্রতিটি বিভঙ্গই যেন এক অপূর্ব নন্দনস্বাদ অনুভব করছেন তিনি”।^১

ডাঙ্গিনীর শরীরের দিকে তাকিয়ে কাহ্নর অনুভূতিকে ঔপন্যাসিক যোভাবে ফুটিয়ে তুলেছেন তাতে কাহ্নর স্বরূপটি আমাদের কাছে প্রথমেই স্পষ্ট হয়ে ওঠে। সে সিদ্ধ। সহজিয়া। আচার্য। তা সত্ত্বেও সে নিজেকে সংযমের মধ্যে আনতে পারেনি। নিজেকে বোঝানোর চেষ্টা করে এইভাবে :

“নগর গ্রামের প্রান্তে, প্রান্তরে ঘুরে বেড়িয়ে তোমার নিত্যদিনের ধর্মসংকেত প্রচারের কারবার। নির্বাণ আর মহাসুখই তোমার সাধনা”।^২

উপন্যাস যত এগোবে তত পরিস্ফুট হবে কাহ্নর জীবনের দাবি। সাধনপ্রণালী, তত্ত্বকথা সব তো আছেই তা বলে সে জীবনকে অস্বীকার করতে পারেনি। মঠে গিয়ে জীবনযাপনে সে মোটেও অভ্যস্ত নয়। শবরদের সঙ্গে একত্রে বসবাস, নরনারীর প্রেম, ভালোবাসা সে সবসময় চায়।

উপন্যাসের মূল চরিত্র কাহ্ন। এছাড়াও উপন্যাসে যে সব চরিত্র এসেছে তার মধ্যে, ভুসুকু, জ্ঞানবতী, ডাঙ্গিনী, উমা, হরিহর, রাজা বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য। সব চরিত্রগুলিই কাহ্নকে ঘিরে আবর্তিত বিবর্তিত হয়েছে। কাহ্ন শরীর সাধনার গোপন পথে হাটতে গিয়ে সম্পর্কের নানান টানাপোড়েনে জড়িয়ে পড়েছে ডাঙ্গিনী, জ্ঞানবতী ও গুঞ্জরীর মতো নারীদের সঙ্গে। আর তাদের ঘিরে দাঁড়িয়েছে রাজা মনিভদ্র, অমাত্য হরিহর ও তৌলিক সুবন্ধুর মতো মানুষগুলো। প্রেমে আর প্রতিহিংসায়, আসক্তি আর উদাসীনতায়, কল্পনায় আর কবিতায় যেন ক্রমশ নতুন হয়ে উঠেছে তারা। হাজার বছর আগের এক কবি রক্তমাংসে ক্রমশ জীবন্ত হয়ে উঠেছে ঔপন্যাসিকের কলমে।

উপন্যাসের দ্বিতীয় অধ্যায়ে এসেছে শবর পল্লীতে উৎসবের কথা। যেখানে মাটির পায়ে হরিণের মাংস রান্না করা হচ্ছে। মাদল বাজিয়ে নাচতে শুরু করেছে শবর পুরুষের দল। আর মেয়েরাও একে অপরকে জড়িয়ে ধরে কোমর দোলাচ্ছে। শরীরের দোলায় দুলে উঠছে গলার গুঞ্জর মালা। যাদের সঙ্গে এসে মিশেছে কাহ্ন পাদ। ভুসুকুও এসেছে। গুঞ্জরী তার মনের মানুষ কাহ্নকে পেয়ে আবেগাপ্ত হয়ে উঠেছে। ভুসুকু হটাৎ চারপাশের কোলাহলের মধ্যে গুনগুন করে গান ধরেছে :

কাহ্নেরে ঘিণি মেলি অচ্ছ কীস।

বেটিল হাক পড় অ চৌদীস ।।

অপণা মাংসে হরিণা বৈরী ।

খনহ ন ছাড়হ ভুসুকু অহেরী ।।

সকলেই তখন ভুসুকুর গানে মুগ্ধ। মদের গন্ধের সঙ্গে মিশে তখন ভুসুকুর গানের সুর নেশা ধরিয়ে দিয়েছে চাঁদের আলোয় ধোওয়া রাত্রি পরিবেশে। গুঞ্জরী আর কাহ্ন একে অপরের সঙ্গ কামনায় সুখ লাভ করেছে।

তৃতীয় অধ্যায়ে এসেছে কাহ্নর জীবনের কথা। লেখক বলেছেন :

“জীবনের নানারকম অদ্ভুত পরিস্থিতির মুখোমুখি হয়েছেন কাহ্ন। দরিদ্র কৃষক পরিবারে তার জন্ম। কিন্তু এক বৌদ্ধ ভিক্ষুকের সঙ্গ নিয়ে গ্রাম ছেড়ে দিয়ে বেশ কিছুটা কাল তিনি কাটিয়েছেন সংঘ-বিহার, সহজিয়াদের সান্নিধ্যে সাহচর্যে। ফিরে এসে আবার গ্রহণ করেছেন কৃষকের বৃত্তি। যুরেছেন এখানে সেখানে। শ্মশানে-চণ্ডালে, নদীতে-নৌকোয়, শবরে অরণ্যে সর্বত্র। সকলকে বুঝিয়েছেন যাগযজ্ঞ আচারক্রিয়া এসব করে কোনো লাভ নেই। সংসার ছেড়ে দিয়ে কোনো মোক্ষ নেই”।^{১৬}

এখানে কাহ্নর জীবন সত্য ধরা পড়েছে। কাহ্নর দরিদ্র পরিবারে জন্ম। কিন্তু তার চিন্তা ভাবনা স্বচ্ছ। জীবনের চড়াই উৎড়াই পেরিয়ে সে জীবন যুদ্ধে দক্ষ এক সৈনিক। জীবনের রসকে আকর্ষণ পান করেছে সে। সে উপলব্ধি করেছে সংসার ছেড়ে কোনো মুক্তি নেই। সংসার ছেড়ে সে সন্ন্যাসী হতে চায় নি। তার ভালো লাগে নারীর সঙ্গ। প্রকৃতির প্রেম। শবরদের সান্নিধ্য ও ভালোবাসা। এভাবে উপন্যাসের পরিণতির দিকে কাহ্নিনি এগিয়ে গেছে।

কাহ্ন রাজ পরিবারের আতিথ্য গ্রহণ করেছে। তাদের গান শুনিয়েছে। তার গান শুনে রাজার দাসী জ্ঞানবতী কাহ্নর প্রেমে পাগল হয়ে লুকিয়ে পালিয়ে যেতে চেয়েছে। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত পালাতে গিয়ে ধরা পড়েছে হরিহরের হাতে। পরে এই জ্ঞানবতীই তৌলিক সুবন্ধুর স্ত্রী হয়েছে। ঘটনাচক্রে এই সুবন্ধুরই বাড়ির অতিথি হয়েছে কাহ্ন। সেখানে সে গান শুনিয়েছে। মঠের এক ভিক্ষু কাহ্নর গানের সপ্রশংসা করেছেন জ্ঞানবতীর বাড়িতে। ভিক্ষুর কথায় :

“আমি মঠের ভিক্ষু। তত্ত্বের কথায় আপনার সঙ্গে আমার মতে মিলবে না হয়তো। কিন্তু আপনার কাব্যের আমি ভক্ত হয়ে পড়েছি কাহ্নুপাদ। ধ্বনিতে, ব্যঞ্জনাতে, অলংকারে রূপক চয়নে আপনি অতি উচ্চশৈলির সিদ্ধি অর্জন করেছেন”।^{১৭}

কিন্তু পরবর্তী কাহ্নিনিতে ঘটনা অন্যদিকে মোড় নিয়েছে। জ্ঞানবতী কাহ্নকে যে আহার পরিবেশন করে তাতে বিষ মিশিয়ে দেয়। আর সেই বিষ খেয়ে কাহ্নর মৃত্যু ঘটে। কিন্তু এ কেবল তার মরদেহেরই অবসান। তার কবিতার মধ্য দিয়ে সে বেঁচে থাকবে সাধারণের হৃদয় এ। লেখক বলেছেন :

“কাহ্নুপাদ কি তবে সত্যিই চলে গেলেন সকলকে ছেড়ে? নাকি গানের সিরে আর কবিতার অক্ষরে তিনি থেকে গেলেন সকলেরই মধ্যে”।^{১৮}

উপন্যাসের কাহ্নিনির মধ্যে কাহ্নকে ঘিরে প্রধান কাহ্নিনি আবর্তিত হলেও এক দুটো উপকাহ্নিনিও লক্ষ করা যায়। যেমন- উমা অক্ষর উপকাহ্নিনি। যেখানে ঔপন্যাসিক দেখিয়েছেন দুটি হৃদয় এর মিলনে জাতি,

ধর্ম কোনো ভেদ সৃষ্টি করতে পারেনা। সমাজ পরিবেশ তাদের পথে প্রতিবন্ধকতা সৃষ্টি করলেও একে অপরের প্রতি টানই তাদেরকে মিলনে সাহায্য করেছে।

উপন্যাসে নরনারীর জীবনের পরিচয় তুলে ধরতে গিয়ে ঔপন্যাসিক যেমন সমাজ বাস্তবতার কথা বলেছেন তেমনি প্রকৃতির এক অপূর্ব বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন বলেছেন :

“অনেকদিন পরে আজ আকাশ কালো করে বৃষ্টি নেমেছে। গাছের পাতায় ঝরো ঝরো তার সঙ্গীত। নদীর বুকেও উথাল পাতাল ঢেউ”।^{২২}

এভাবে লেখক উপন্যাসের মধ্যে কাহ্ন পাদের জীবন চর্যাকে কেন্দ্র করে নতুন ভাবে বিনির্মাণ করেছেন।

আবুল কাসেমের ‘সরহ পা’ উপন্যাস

আবুল কাসেম বাংলাদেশের বর্তমান সময়ের জীবিত উল্লেখযোগ্য একজন কথাকার। মূলত তিনি কথাশিল্পী। তবে বেশ কিছু কবিতাও লিখেছেন তিনি। ‘সরহ পা’ তাঁর প্রথম উপন্যাস। ২০১৩ সালে উপন্যাসটি প্রকাশিত হয়েছে ঢাকা থেকে। চর্যাপদকর্তাদের অন্যতম সরহ পাদ। চৌরাশি-সিদ্ধার তালিকায় উনি ষষ্ঠতম আচার্য। নাম সরহ বা রাখল ভদ্র। চর্যাপদে মাত্র চারটি পদের পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়। তার নামে বিভিন্ন সংকলন গ্রন্থ প্রচলিত আছে- দোহাকোষগীতি, দোহাকোষচর্যগীতি ইত্যাদি। প্রচলিত পাণ্ডিত্যের প্রতি প্রচ্ছন্ন অবজ্ঞা মিশ্রিত বিনয় বচন ‘পণ্ডিত লোঅছ খুমছ’ সরহের অসাধারণ পাণ্ডিত্যের পরিচয় বহন করে। দোহাকোষ ও টীকার ষড়দর্শনের খণ্ডন করেছেন খুব রুঢ় অথচ যুক্তিপূর্ণ ভাষা।

বাংলা সাহিত্যে বিদ্রোহী কিংবা বিপ্লবী কবি বলতে মধুসূদন, নজরুল বা সুকান্তের নাম প্রথমে মনে আসে। এই সমস্ত কবির নির্যাতিত, শোষিত, বঞ্চিত মানুষের পক্ষে বিদ্রোহের সুর তুললেন কবিতায়। এঁদের পূর্বে একজন কবিকে পাওয়া যায়, যিনি প্রথম বিদ্রোহের কবিতা লিখেছিলেন। তাঁর নাম সরহ পা।

সময়ের দিক থেকে বহুদূরের কবি তিনি। অষ্টম শতক তাঁর সময়। সেই সময় ধর্ম নির্ভর সব সাহিত্য রচিত হয়েছে। তাঁকে আমরা জানি চর্যাপদের কবি হিসেবে। মুহম্মদ শহীদুল্লাহ তাঁর পরিচয় দিয়েছেন দোহাগান রচয়িতা হিসেবে। সরহের আদি নাম রাখল ভদ্র। ব্রাহ্মণ পরিবারে তাঁর জন্ম। নালন্দা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রথমে ছাত্র পরে অধ্যাপক। সে সময় ছাত্রদের সাহিত্য পাঠ এবং নাট্যচর্চা নিষিদ্ধ ছিল। তারপরও রাখল সাংকৃত্যয়ন করেন, রাখল ভদ্র অধ্যয়ন কালেই অশ্বঘোষের বুদ্ধচরিত, সৌন্দর্য নন্দ কাব্য, সারিপুত্র প্রকরণ এবং রাষ্ট্রপাল নাটক পাঠ করেছিলেন। এছাড়াও কালিদাস, দণ্ডী ও ভবভূতির কাব্যও পাঠ করেন।

নালন্দার এই মেধাবী এবং অত্যন্ত দক্ষ তর্কিক ছাত্র একসময় হিন্দু ধর্ম ত্যাগ করে বৌদ্ধ ধর্ম গ্রহণ করেন। নাম বদলে রাখেন সরহ পা। এই নামের গূঢ় অর্থ আছে। তীর ধনুকের রূপক অর্থ। পাণ্ডিত্যেরা সরহের মধ্যে কতগুলো বিদ্রোহের লক্ষণ দেখেছেন। ব্রাহ্মণকুলে জন্মালেও ব্রাহ্মণ্যভাব পরিত্যাগ করে বৌদ্ধধর্ম গ্রহণ করেন। নালন্দার কঠোর অনুশাসনের মধ্যেও কবিতার রস আন্ধান করেন। মহাযানী শিক্ষাকেন্দ্র হলেও নালন্দা অশোকের সময় থেকে প্রচলিত ‘বিনয় পরম্পরা’ মান্য করে ভিক্ষুগণ স্ত্রী বিরত থাকতেন এবং মদ্যপান করতেন না। কিন্তু সরহ এক অস্তুজ রমনীকে সঙ্গিনী রূপে গ্রহণ করেন এবং মদ্যপান ও শিকারে প্রবৃত্ত হন।

সামাজিক বিবেচনায় সরহ বিদ্রোহী। কিন্তু বাংলা সাহিত্য তাঁর স্পর্শে অষ্টম শতকেই পেল বিদ্রোহের চরম বার্তা। তিনি বৌদ্ধধর্ম গ্রহণ করেছেন, নিম্নবর্ণের নারীকে সঙ্গিনী হিসেবে গ্রহণ করেছেন, মদ্যপানে ভুর হয়ে থাকেন—এসব অভিযোগ ছিল রাজার কাছে প্রতিবেশীদের। রাজা নিজে এসে এসব দেখলেন। কঠোর অনুশাসন জারি করলেন। তার জবাবে সরহ দোহা রচনা করলেন। অসাধারণ কবিতা। সেই অষ্টম শতক থেকে এই কবিতা নিয়ে আজ অবধি তিনি বেঁচে আছেন। তিনি সমকালীন ধর্মচর্চার সকল ব্যক্তি ও প্রথার সমালোচনা করেছেন। তাদের ধর্ম সাধনার অন্তসারশূন্যতার প্রতি অংগুলি নির্দেশ করেছেন। এই ভাবে উপন্যাসের মধ্যে লেখক সরহ পার জীবনচর্যা তুলে ধরেছেন।

উপন্যাসের অধ্যায় সংখ্যা ৫২। সরহের কথা বলতে গিয়ে সমকালীন সমাজব্যবস্থার পরিচয় তুলে ধরেছেন। শুধু তাই নয় অন্যান্য পদকর্তাদের কথাও এসেছে। সরহের পাশাপাশি কঙ্গুচিনা এই উপন্যাসের একটি উল্লেখযোগ্য চরিত্র। সে সরহের সঙ্গিনী। জীবনের চড়াই উৎরাই সবকিছুর সাক্ষী সে। উপন্যাসের অন্তিমে দুজনার দুটি পথ দুদিকে বেঁকে গেলেও পরস্পর পরস্পরের আকর্ষণ অনুভব করে। লেখক বলেন:

“সরহ এখন সিদ্ধাচার্য। গেরুয়া পোশাকের এক শ্মশ্রু ও কেশবিহীন দিব্যপুরুষ। সংসার স্ত্রী বিবর্জিত জীবন তার হৃদয় এ প্রচণ্ড তোলপাড় চললেও বাইরে তার আবেগঘন প্রকাশ ঘটতে পারছেন না”।^{১০}

উপন্যাসের সরহ এক হার না মানা পুরুষ। সে বাঁধনছাড়া লাগামহীন। সমস্তকিছু ভেঙে দেয়াতেই তার আনন্দ। এককথায় উপন্যাসটি অসাধারণ। কি বিষয়ের বর্ণনা কি প্রাকৃতিক বর্ণনা। ৫১ অধ্যায়ে নদীর বর্ণনা দিতে গিয়ে বলেছেন:

“পলিটা কাব্যিক। কাদা রঙের বয়ে চলা জল নদীটাকে এখনও মহাকাব্যিক করে রেখেছে। নদীর ক্ষয়ে যাওয়া তীর বরাবর তার প্রশস্ত প্রবাহ। ছন্দবদ্ধ গতি”।^{১১}

উপরোক্ত উপন্যাসগুলির আলোচনা করতে গিয়ে আমরা দেখেছি ঔপন্যাসিকগণ অত্যন্ত বিচক্ষণতার সঙ্গে উপন্যাসে এই প্রাচীন কবিদের জীবনচর্যাকে জীবনের আখরে বিনির্মাণ করেছেন। হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রীর ‘বেনের মেয়ে’, সেলিনা হোসেনের ‘নীল ময়ূরের যৌবন’, শিবাশিস মুখোপাধ্যায়ের ‘কাহ্ন’ ও আবুল কাসেমের ‘সরহ পা’ উপন্যাসে সেই পরিচয় ফুটে উঠেছে। ‘নীল ময়ূরের যৌবন’ উপন্যাসে লেখিকা সেলিনা হোসেন দেখিয়েছেন কাহ্নকে ভাষা আন্দোলনের দক্ষ সৈনিক হিসেবে। পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের সমস্ত মানুষের প্রাণের ভাষা বাংলা। কিন্তু জিন্নার সরকার তাদের ওপর চাপিয়ে দিল উর্দু ভাষা। আপামর বাঙালি জাতিসত্ত্বার এই অপমানকে মেনে নিতে পারল না। তারা প্রাণ দিলেন নিজের ভাষাকে প্রতিষ্ঠার লক্ষ্যে। কাহ্নের মতো তারাও স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন এক স্বাধীন ভূখণ্ডের। যার দক্ষিণে থাকবে সুন্দরবন আর সাগর। আর কাহ্নের মতো তারাও স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন রাজপ্রজায় কোনো ভেদ থাকবে না। সবার মুখের ভাষা হবে রাজদরবারের ভাষা। তারই ফলশ্রুতি যেন ১৯৭১ এর স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশ। যে দেশের জনগনের ভাষা হবে একমাত্র বাংলা। যে সংগ্রাম প্রাচীনকালে শুরু করেছিলেন কাহ্নুরা তারই যেন পরিণতি আধুনিককালের স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশের জন্মের মধ্য দিয়ে। এভাবেই সেলিনা হোসেন তাঁর উপন্যাসে সেকালের কাহ্নীকে একাল পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত করে এক নতুন কণ্ঠস্বরকে ধ্বনিত করলেন যার মধ্য দিয়ে চর্যাপদকে জীবনের আখরে

পুনর্নির্মাণ করলেন। ‘কাহ্ন’ উপন্যাসে শিবশিস মুখোপাধ্যায় চর্যাপদের কবি কাহ্নকে নিয়ে তিনি তাঁর সময়ের বাস্তবে স্থাপন করেছেন। সাধনমার্গের বিভিন্ন গোপনীয়তা বজায় রাখতে, শরীর সাধনার গোপন পথে হাঁটতে গিয়েও উপন্যাসের নাম চরিত্র কাহ্ন বাস্তবজীবন ও সম্পর্কের টানা পোড়েনে জড়িয়ে পড়েছেন। ডোম্বিনী, জ্ঞানবতী কিংবা গুঞ্জরীর মতো নারীদের সঙ্গে তাঁর প্রণয় সম্পর্ক গড়ে উঠেছে। হাজার বছর আগের কবি ‘কাহ্ন’ আধুনিক পাঠকের কাছে হয়ে উঠেছেন এক রক্তমাংসের মানুষ। এই জল হাওয়া ধুলো মাটিরই মানুষ। আর ‘সরহ পা’ উপন্যাসে লেখক দেখিয়েছেন সরহ পা একজন আদ্যন্ত কবি মানুষ। বৌদ্ধধর্ম গ্রহণ করেছেন, নিম্নবর্ণের নারীকে সঙ্গিনী হিসেবে গ্রহণ করেছেন, মদ্যপানে ভুর হয়ে থাকেন-এসব অভিযোগ ছিল রাজার কাছে প্রতিবেশীদের। রাজা নিজে এসে এসব দেখলেন। কঠোর অনুশাসন জারি করলেন। তার জবাবে সরহ দোহা রচনা করলেন। অসাধারণ কবিতা। সেই অষ্টম শতক থেকে এই কবিতা নিয়ে আজ অবধি তিনি বেঁচে আছেন। তিনি সমকালীন ধর্মচর্চার সকল ব্যক্তি ও প্রথার সমালোচনা করেছেন। তাদের ধর্ম সাধনার অন্তঃসারশূন্যতার প্রতি অংশুলি নির্দেশ করেছেন। এই ভাবে উপন্যাসের মধ্যে লেখক সরহ পার জীবনচর্যা তুলে ধরেছেন।

তথ্যসূত্র

- ১। ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত, বাংলা উপন্যাসের ইতিহাস, ২য় খন্ড, গ্রন্থ নিলয়, কলকাতা, ২০০৫, পৃষ্ঠা ১৪৬
- ২। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ১৫
- ৩। সেলিনা হোসেন, নীল ময়ূরের যৌবন, কলকাতা, নয়া উদ্যোগ, ২০০৯, পৃষ্ঠা ৩৭
- ৪। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ৫০
- ৫। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ৫৬
- ৬। পূর্বোক্ত, প্রচ্ছদ অংশ দ্রষ্টব্য।
- ৭। শিবশিস মুখোপাধ্যায়, কাহ্ন, কলকাতা, সপ্তর্ষি, ২০১০, পৃষ্ঠা ৭
- ৮। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ৬।
- ৯। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ২১।
- ১০। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ১১৩।
- ১১। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ১২৭।
- ১২। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ৬০
- ১৩। আবুল কাসেম, সরহ পা, ঢাকা, অ্যাডর্ন পাব্লিকেশন, ২০১৩, পৃষ্ঠা ৩০৩
- ১৪। পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা ৩০৫

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর রবীন্দ্র-ভাবনা : একটি আলোচনা

সুলগ্না ব্যানার্জী

কবি হিসাবে আমরা তাঁকে অধিক চিনলেও গল্প, উপন্যাস এমনকি তাঁর কলমের ক্ষুরধার প্রবন্ধ সাহিত্যেও শাণিত পদক্ষেপ ফেলেছে; তিনি রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর নন, রবীন্দ্র-প্রতিভার গুণমুগ্ধ বুদ্ধদেব বসু (১৯০৮-১৯৭৪)। কিন্তু সাহিত্য জগতে প্রবেশ তিনি কবিতা লিখেই করেছিলেন। কবিতাটি ছিল ইংরেজি, মেঘনা নদীকে কেন্দ্র করে, ছেলেবেলায় মামাবাড়ির দক্ষিণের ছোট ঘরে বসে ছয়-সাত স্যানজার কবিতা-

Adieu, adieu, Deloney House dear,
We leave you because the sea is near,
And the sea will swallow you, we fear,
Adieu, adieu.

মেঘনার অপূর্ব রূপ, কিন্তু বন্যায় তা ভয়াবহ রূপ ধারণ করে। তাই মানুষ অনেক সময় গৃহত্যাগী হতো। তারই অসাধারণ কাব্যিক বর্ণনা করেন শিশু বুদ্ধদেব এই ‘বিশুদ্ধ এক দৈব ঘটনা’য়।^১ কোথাও যেন মনে হয়, বুদ্ধদেব বসুর সিদ্ধার্থ থেকে বুদ্ধদেব হয়ে ওঠার কাহিনী সুবিস্তৃত। এই প্রসঙ্গ অনিবার্যভাবে এসে পড়ে বুদ্ধদেবের ‘আমার ছেলেবেলা’ গ্রন্থ পাঠ করলে। কপিলাবস্তুর রাজা শুদ্ধোধনের ঔরসে, পত্নী মায়াদেবীর গর্ভে সিদ্ধার্থের জন্মগ্রহণ এবং তার সাত দিন পর মায়াদেবীর মৃত্যু। কিন্তু মাতৃহীন শিশুর মনোকষ্ট বুদ্ধদেবের জীবনের ত্রিসীমানায় ঢুকতে পারেনি, কারণ তাঁর দিদিমা স্বর্ণলতাদেবী। তিনি ছিলেন বুদ্ধদেবের ‘মা’, ঐ স্নেহধনেই ডাকতেন বুদ্ধদেব। মায়ের মৃত্যুর পর পিতা ভূদেবচন্দ্র পরিব্রজ্যা হলে, বুদ্ধদেবের আশ্রয় হয় মাতামহ-মাতামহীর বাড়িতে। তাঁর বাল্যকাল পরিবৃত ছিল মাতামহ চিন্তাহরণ ও মাতামহী স্বর্ণলতার ছায়াবৃত্তে। তিনি কখনো অনুভব করেন নি তাঁর মা নেই, তিনি বিশ্বাস করতেন, তাঁর মা আছে- এই তাঁর কাছে প্রকৃত ও নিবিড় সত্য। যার স্নেহে, যত্নে, আদরে, আবদারে, অসুখের সময় পরিচর্যায় সেই সত্য প্রকট হয়েছে। বুদ্ধদেবের কাছে তাঁর মৃত মা কোনোদিনই আকর্ষণের কারণ হয়ে ওঠেন নি, কিন্তু তিনি যখন যাটোে বা সেই প্রান্তিক নির্জনতায় তাঁর মনে পড়েছে মৃত মা কে। স্মৃতিচারণায় বলেছেন-

“আমার কৌতূহল মেটাবার জন্য কেউ যখন আর বেঁচে নেই, তখনই আমার জানতে ইচ্ছে করছে সে কেমন ছিলো- আমার নাৎনির বয়সী না- দেখা ঐ মেয়েটি; কেমন ছিলো সে দেখতে, কেমন পছন্দ-অপছন্দ ছিলো তার, বই পড়তে ভালোবাসতো কিনা, আমার মধ্যে তার কোনো একটি অংশ কি কাজ ক’রে যাচ্ছে? মনে হয়, আমাকে জন্ম দেবার পরিশ্রমে যে-মেয়েটির মৃত্যু হয়েছিলো, তার কিছু প্রাপ্য ছিলো আমার কাছে; তা দেবার সময় এখনো হয়তো পেরিয়ে যায়নি।”^২

তাঁর এই বক্তব্য থেকে বোঝা যায়, মা-কে কাছে না পেলেও, মাতৃস্নেহ মা’র থেকে না পেলেও সন্তান-মায়ের সম্পর্কের দৃঢ় বন্ধন যে কোনোকালে শিথিল হয় না, তা স্পষ্ট। ছোট থেকে কখনো *গবেষিকা, বাংলা বিভাগ, রাজা নরেন্দ্রলাল খান মহিলা মহাবিদ্যালয় (স্ব-শাসিত)*

মা'কে না দেখলেও, তার প্রতি কোনো টান অনুভব না করলেও, এমনকি মা'কে দেখার শেষ স্মৃতি-একটা ফটোগ্রাফ, তা হারিয়ে গেলেও কোন দুঃখবোধ জাগেনি; তবু জীবনের শেষ পর্যায়ে এসে তাঁর এমন আত্মোপলব্ধি আমাদের ভাবায়।

দাদামশাই চিন্তাহরণের সঙ্গে বুদ্ধদেব যে মেহবন্ধনে আবদ্ধ ছিলেন তা যেন পিতা-সন্তানের সম্পর্কের চাইতে অনেকটা বেশি। কারণ, দাদামশাই তাঁর জীবনের প্রথম শিক্ষক, বন্ধু ও খেলার সঙ্গীও বটে। অল্প বয়সে স্কুলে ভর্তি করা থেকে ইংরেজি শিক্ষা-সমস্ত ক্ষেত্রে অত্যন্ত যত্নশীল হন দাদামশাই। রবিবারের বিকেল কেটেছে বুদ্ধদেবের ইংরেজি চর্চা করে। সাত বছর বয়স থেকে ইংরেজিতে চিঠিপত্র রচনার ক্ষেত্রেও হাত পাকাতে সহায়তা করেন দাদামশাই। বুদ্ধদেবের ইংরেজি শিক্ষার জন্য দাদামশাই অনেক যত্নশীল ছিলেন। ইংরেজি ভাষা তখন বইয়ের ও স্কুল-কলেজের ভাষা-কিন্তু জীবনের ভাষা বাংলা। যা তিনি শিখেছিলেন যোগীন্দ্রনাথ, উপেন্দ্রকিশোর থেকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ পর্যন্ত। সংস্কৃত শিক্ষাগ্রহণও দাদামশাই-এর কাছ থেকে বুদ্ধদেবের। সংস্কৃতে শব্দরূপ, ধাতুরূপ, চারণ্যশ্লোক, এমনকি দুর্গাশ্তোত্র মুখস্থ করেছিলেন, যাকে তিনি 'বুড়ি ছোঁয়া' বললেও একথা স্বীকার করেছেন ঐ জ্ঞান তাঁর সাহিত্যিক জীবনে কাজে লেগেছিল। বুদ্ধদেবের মানসগঠন ও চারিত্রিক গঠন এই দুই মানুষের সান্নিধ্যে চরমপ্রাপ্তি ঘটেছিল।

এ হেন পরিবেশে ও জ্ঞানশিক্ষাচর্চায় বড়ো হয়ে ওটা বুদ্ধদেবের মধ্যে সাহিত্যিক প্রতিভা বাল্যকাল থেকেই। প্রথম ইংরেজি কবিতা লিখে যে 'পাপটি' করেছেন, তা থেকে তাঁর মুক্তি ঘটেনি। তবে ইংরেজি নয়, বাংলা কবিতা লিখেই সাহিত্য জগতে প্রবেশ করেছিলেন। অনেকে মনে করেন তিনি আসলে কবি; তাই "সাহিত্যের অন্যান্য ক্ষেত্রের তুলনায় তাঁর প্রবন্ধ-সাহিত্য ঈষৎ দুর্বল।"^৩

প্রবন্ধসাহিত্যে বুদ্ধদেব বসুর লেখনী ছিল ক্ষুরধার। কলকাতাতে আসার পর নানা জেলার ভাষা, শব্দ, বুলি শুনে শুনে, নানান জাতের বাংলা বই পড়ে পড়ে, নানা গ্রহণ-বর্জনের মাধ্যমে নিজস্বতাকে ভিত্তিমূল করে যে ভাষা তিনি আয়ত্ত্ব করেছেন- তা তাঁর বই লেখা কবিত্ব শক্তির সঙ্গে প্রবন্ধ সাহিত্যকে অমলিন হতে দেয়নি। তবে প্রবন্ধের সংখ্যা গল্প-উপন্যাসের চেয়ে কম হলেও তিনি মূলত কবি-এ প্রতীতি তাঁর প্রবন্ধ থেকেও স্পষ্ট। তাঁর প্রবন্ধের প্রধান অবলম্বন ও সূত্র, বক্তব্যের সংক্ষিপ্ত অথচ সামগ্রিক পরিচয় গ্রহণ করলে যেমন এ কথা ভাল করে বুঝতে পারা যাবে, তেমনি তাঁর চমকিত মন্তব্য ও আপাতবিরোধিতার উৎসের সন্ধানও পাই।

প্রতিভা, মেধা, বিদ্যা, আত্মবিশ্বাস তাঁর জীবনের সহায়-সম্পদ। বাল্যকাল থেকেই তাঁর ঝাঁক ছিল বইপড়া, কবিতা লেখা, পত্রিকা প্রকাশের লক্ষ্য, সাহিত্যের প্রতি অনুরাগ, বিদ্যার্জনের প্রতি অনুরাগ, ভক্ত পাঠকের উদ্ভেজনা অনুরাগ। জীবনানুশীলনের সূত্রে ও আত্মবিশ্বাসের ব্যাপ্তিতে তিনি হয়ে উঠলেন কবি, সমালোচক, প্রাবন্ধিক ও বাংলা সাহিত্যের নানা শাখাকে সমৃদ্ধ করবার প্রজ্ঞাবান সাহিত্যিক। তাঁর অসংখ্য ধারায় প্রবাহিত সাহিত্যকীর্তির মধ্যে অনন্য ও অন্যতম সংযোজন তাঁর প্রবন্ধ ও সমালোচনা সাহিত্য। বুদ্ধদেব বসুর গল্প, উপন্যাস, ভ্রমণ কাহিনী, আত্মজীবনীমূলক রচনা, পত্র সাহিত্য ও পত্রিকাসম্পাদনা ইত্যাদিতে তাঁর গদ্যের বৈচিত্র্য ও বিকাশের চিহ্ন স্পষ্ট। তাঁর সাহিত্য বিষয়ক প্রবন্ধগুলির মৌলিকতা, শাণিত ক্ষুরধার যুক্তি, ঝকঝকে ভাষা, নিবিড় শব্দবোধ

এককথায় প্রাণস্পন্দিত গদ্যরীতি বাংলা সাহিত্যের চিরন্তন সম্পদ।

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর ‘প্রবন্ধ সংকলন’ প্রকাশিত হয় ১৯৬৬ সালে। বিষয় বিন্যাসের দিক থেকে তাতে ছিল দুটি ভাগ- ‘সমালোচনা’ ও ‘রম্য রচনা ও ভ্রমণ’। পরবর্তীকালে অন্য একটি অংশ সংযোজিত হয়, ‘আত্মজীবনী’। তাঁর সমালোচনাধর্মী প্রবন্ধগুলিকে বেশ কিছু উপবিভাগে ভাগ করা যায়। যেমন, কিছু পুস্তক সমালোচনা, কিছু লেখকদের সার্বিক মূল্যায়ন, কিছু সন্দর্ভতুল্য দীর্ঘ রচনা, কিছু উপস্থাপনার প্রয়োজনে উপক্রমণিকা রচনা করেছেন।

ক) রম্য প্রবন্ধ পুস্তক – ‘হঠাৎ আলোর ঝলকানি’ (১৯৩৫) ও ‘উত্তর তিরিশ’ (১৯৪৫)।

(খ) ভ্রমণ বিবরণী- ‘সমুদ্রতীর’ (১৯৩৭), ‘আমি চঞ্চল হে’ (১৯৩৭), ‘সব-পেয়েছি দেশে’ (১৯৪১), ‘জাপানি জাপান’ (১৯৬২) এবং ‘দেশান্তর’ (১৯৬৬)।

(গ) সমালোচনা সংকলন ও সন্দর্ভ- ‘কালের পুতুল’ (১৯৪৬), ‘সাহিত্যচর্চা’ (১৯৫৪), ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ : কথাসাহিত্য’ (১৯৬৫), ‘কবি রবীন্দ্রনাথ’ (১৯৬৬), মরণোত্তর মহাভারতের কথা (১৯৭৪)।

(ঘ) আত্মজৈবনিক রচনা- ‘আমার ছেলেবেলা’ (১৯৭৩), মরণোত্তর ‘আমার যৌবন’ (১৯৭৬) এবং মরণোত্তর অসমাপ্ত ‘আমাদের কবিতাভবন’ (২০০১)।

(ঙ) সন্দর্ভতুল্য রচনা- ‘পিরানদেল্লোর গল্প’ সংকলনের ভূমিকা (১৯৪৫), ‘আধুনিক বাংলা কবিতা’র ভূমিকা (১৯৫৫), ‘কালিদাসের মেঘদূত’ এর ‘সংস্কৃত কবিতা ও মেঘদূত’ অংশ (১৯৫৭), ‘শার্ল বোদলেয়ার : তাঁর কবিতার শার্ল বোদলেয়ার ও আধুনিক কবিতা (১৯৬১), ‘হোল্ডার্লিন’-এর কবিতা’র ‘ফ্রীডরিশ হোল্ডার্লিন : তাঁর জীবন ও কবিতা’ (১৯৬৭), রাইনের মারিয়া বিলকে-র কবিতার রাইনে মারিয়া বিলকে : তাঁর কবিতা ও তাঁর জীবন (১৯৬৯)।

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর প্রবন্ধ গ্রন্থগুলি একাধারে প্রবন্ধ ও সমালোচনায় সমৃদ্ধ। এসমস্ত রচনাই হয়েছে মৌলিকত্বে ভাস্বর। সেগুলিতে আছে প্রতিভার দীপ্তি, উপলব্ধির গভীরতা, যুক্তির শৃঙ্খলিত বিন্যাস, প্রার্থিত নৈব্যক্তিকতা, কবির অন্তর্দৃষ্টি, অতন্দ্রশিল্পীসত্তা, সংস্কারমুক্ত দৃষ্টি, আধুনিক মন, চিন্তার স্বচ্ছতা, গদ্যের সুঠাম সাবলীলতা ও সহজসৌন্দর্য।

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর প্রথম মুদ্রিত প্রবন্ধ ‘বর্তমান রুশ সাহিত্য’, ‘প্রবাসী’, বৈশাখ ১৩৩২, অগ্রস্থিত। ১৩৩২-এর চৈত্রে দ্বিতীয় মুদ্রিত প্রবন্ধ, ‘কবি সুকুমার রায়’, ‘কল্লোল’-এ, গ্রন্থিত নয়। এই সময় বুদ্ধদেবের বয়স সতেরো - আঠারো। এই বয়সেই প্রবন্ধ রচনার ধারা তাঁর করায়ত্ত হতে শুরু করে। প্রবন্ধের যুক্তি, সংবেদনশীলতা, ভাবনার বিস্তার, মননমুখী গদ্য রচনা- সমস্তই তাঁর কৃতিত্বের অধিকারে এসেছিল। তিনি মনে করতেন প্রতিভাবানের প্রবন্ধ রচনা নিজস্ব উপায় আছে। সেই উপায়ে প্রাবন্ধিক তাঁর মৌলিক অনুভূতি পাঠকহৃদয়ে সংক্রমণ করান। বুদ্ধদেব বসু তাঁর গদ্যে স্বাচ্ছন্দ্য ও সংবেদন-মননের সম্মিলন ঘটিয়েছেন। প্রথমদিকে সংবেদনপ্রবণ প্রবন্ধ রচনা করলেও শেষদিকে মননমূলক রচনাই বেশী লক্ষিত হয়।

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর সমালোচনামূলক প্রবন্ধের সিংহভাগ জুড়ে রয়েছে রবীন্দ্র-সম্পর্কিত আলোচনা। এর প্রমাণ তাঁর ‘সঙ্গ : নিঃসঙ্গতা : রবীন্দ্রনাথ’, ‘কবি রবীন্দ্রনাথ’, ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ : কথাসাহিত্য’ এবং

‘সাহিত্যচর্চা’ গ্রন্থটি।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের সাথে বুদ্ধদেব বসুর প্রথম সাক্ষাৎ ১৯২৫ সালে ঢাকা ইন্টারমিডিয়েট কলেজে পড়াকালীন। সেই সময় রবীন্দ্রনাথও বুদ্ধদেব বসুর কবিতা পড়েছিলেন। সেই কবিতা পাঠের প্রতিক্রিয়ায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ ‘নবীন কবি’ শিরোনামে লেখা ‘বিচিত্রা’র একটি সমালোচনায় এই তরুণ কবি সম্পর্কে লিখেছিলেন, ‘কবিতায় ছন্দ ভাষা এবং ভাব গ্রন্থনের যে পরিচয় পাওয়া গেল’ তাতে তাঁর ‘নিশ্চয় বিশ্বাস হয়েছে কেবল কবিত্বশক্তিমাত্র নয়, এর মধ্যে কবিতায় প্রতিভা রয়েছে, একদিন প্রকাশ পাবে।’

এরপরে জোড়াসাঁকো ঠাকুরবাড়িতে বুদ্ধদেব দেখেছিলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথকে, কল্লোল ও কল্লোল-বিরোধীদের ‘বিবাদভঞ্জনী সভা’য়, সে সভার সভাপতি রবীন্দ্রনাথ সেদিন যা বলেছিলেন, সে বক্তব্য প্রবন্ধাকারে পত্রিকায় প্রকাশ পেলে তার ক্ষুদ্র সমালোচনা বুদ্ধদেব বসু প্রগতির পাতায় করেছিলেন। ১৯৩৫ সালে ‘কবিতা’ পত্রিকা ত্রৈমাসিক হিসেবে আত্মপ্রকাশ করলে বুদ্ধদেব ‘কবিতা’র জন্যে কবিতা চেয়ে বললেন, ‘আগামী সংখ্যার জন্যে আপনার দু’একটি কবিতা প্রার্থনা করি।’ আবার কখনো কখনো ‘কবিতা’র গদ্য সংখ্যার জন্যে ‘একটি প্রবন্ধ আপনার চাই-ই’ এমন দাবি করে বহু চিঠি লিখেছেন। সেইসব চিঠিতে পাওয়া যাবে দু’জনের সম্পর্কের নিবিড়তা, পাওয়া যাবে বুদ্ধদেবের রবীন্দ্রভাবনার নিবিড়তা ও শ্রদ্ধাবিনম্র গভীর আন্তরিকতা।

‘কবিতা’ পত্রিকার বিভিন্ন সংখ্যায় বুদ্ধদেব বসু রবীন্দ্রনাথের একাধিক কাব্যের নানান কবিতা নিয়ে যেমন আলোচনা করলেন তেমনি কাব্যের নানা প্রকরণের দিক নিয়েও বিস্তারিত ব্যাখ্যা-বিশ্লেষণ করলেন। রবীন্দ্রকাব্য সমালোচনার ক্ষেত্রে দেখা যায় তাঁর নিজস্ব ধরন। ‘রোগশয্যায়’, ‘পূরবী’, ‘মহুয়া’, ‘প্রান্তিক’ কাব্যের ভাব ও আঙ্গিকে তিনি স্বতন্ত্রতা দেখলেন। কবিতা সমালোচনায় ও কাব্যকৌশলের আলোচনায় সেখানে দেখা যায় বুদ্ধদেবের সৌন্দর্যবাদী অন্তর্দৃষ্টির পরিচয়। ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথের গান’ শীর্ষক লেখায় বুদ্ধদেব জানিয়েছেন, ‘নিঃসন্দেহে গানের ক্ষেত্রে বিশ্বে অতুলনীয় রবীন্দ্রনাথ।’ গানের ভুবনে রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রেমের কবিতাগুলি আলোচনায় তিনি খুঁজে পেয়েছেন না পাওয়ার অনুভব, পেয়েছেন সত্যকারের বেদনার সুর। রবীন্দ্ররচনাবলীর প্রথম আলোচনায় যেন বুদ্ধদেবের সমালোচনায় উদ্ভাবনী সত্তার প্রকাশক হয়ে গেছে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের লেখকসত্তার অতুলনীয় বিশ্লেষণে রচনাটি যেন হয়েছে বুদ্ধদেবের নিগূঢ়মনের পরিচায়ক। তিনি রবীন্দ্রকাব্যে যেমন খোঁজেন আমাদের স্বদেশের ভাষা ও সাহিত্যের স্রষ্টার শ্রেষ্ঠতম মানুষটিকে।

‘কবিতা’ পত্রিকা ছাড়াও প্রাবন্ধিক বুদ্ধদেবের উজ্জ্বল স্বাক্ষর পাওয়া যায় তাঁর রবীন্দ্র-আলোচনাগুলির পাতায় পাতায়। তাঁর রবীন্দ্র-বিষয়ক গ্রন্থগুলি হয়েছে তাঁর সুগভীর রবীন্দ্রমগ্নতারই অভিজ্ঞান। তবে মনস্বী আলোচকের সঙ্গতভাবে লক্ষ্য করেছেন ‘কবি রবীন্দ্রনাথ’ বা ‘ফলস্ফুঃ : দক্ষশত ক স দক্ষ’ যে আলোচনার পরিসরে ধরে রাখে মানসী থেকে গীতাঞ্জলি পর্যন্তই, এতেই ধরা দেয় তাঁর রবীন্দ্রসমালোচনার বিশিষ্ট প্রবণতাটি।

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর রবীন্দ্র-উপন্যাসগুলির গভীর পর্যালোচনার পরিচায়ক হয়েছে তাঁর ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ : কথা সাহিত্য’ গ্রন্থটি। এই গ্রন্থে আলোচিত ‘চোখের বালি’র সমাপ্তি ঘিরে বুদ্ধদেবের অতৃপ্তির

যৌক্তিকতাকে রবীন্দ্রনাথও মেনে নিয়েছিলেন। ‘নৌকাডুবি’র কৃত্রিমতাকে বুদ্ধদেব বসু ধরতে পেরেছেন। কিন্তু তার কারণ যে মনস্তাত্ত্বিক জটিলতা বর্জন ও বহিমুখী ঘটনার আধিক্য তা তিনি বুঝতে পারেন নি। ‘ঘরে বাইরে’ সম্পর্কে তাঁর বিশ্লেষণ যথার্থ নয়। বুদ্ধদেব বসুর মতে, ‘গোরা’, ‘চতুরঙ্গ’ ও ‘যোগাযোগ’ রবীন্দ্রনাথের শিল্পসফল উপন্যাস। তিনি ‘শেষের কবিতা’, ‘চার অধ্যায়’, ‘দুইবোন’ ও ‘মালঞ্চ’ উপন্যাসে নানা ত্রুটি লক্ষ্য করেছেন।

‘সাহিত্যচর্চা’ গ্রন্থে রয়েছে রবীন্দ্র বিষয়ক দুটি মৌলিক চিন্তাশ্রয়ী প্রবন্ধ- ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’, ‘রবীন্দ্রজীবনী ও রবীন্দ্র সমালোচনা’। ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’ প্রবন্ধে রয়েছে বাংলা কাব্যজগতে রবীন্দ্রনাথের উত্তরকালের কবি-সাধকদের অবস্থান নির্ণয়, রবীন্দ্র-প্রভাবের ব্যাপকতায় সমাচ্ছন্ন কবিকুলের ভূমিকা নির্ণয়, বাংলা কাব্যভুবনে সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের ভূমিকা, নজরুলের কবিতার চরিত্রের উপস্থাপন, কল্লোল গোষ্ঠীর সাহিত্যিক প্রচেষ্টা ব্যাখ্যা, আধুনিক কবিদের থেকে শুরু করে সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায় পর্যন্ত কাব্যধারার আলোচনা। এই প্রবন্ধটিতে যেমন আধুনিক কবিতার গতিপ্রকৃতি তিনি বুদ্ধদেব বিস্তারিত আলোচনা করেছেন, তেমনি ‘আধুনিক কবিতার প্রকৃতি’, ‘মদার্ণ বেঙ্গলি পোয়েট’, নিজের সম্পাদিত ‘আধুনিক বাংলা কবিতা’ (১৯৫৪) সংকলনের ভূমিকা প্রবন্ধ ও সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের কাব্যসংগ্রহের ভূমিকাও আধুনিক বাংলা কবিতার গতি প্রকৃতির যথাযথ বিশ্লেষণ করেছেন।

কবি, শিল্পী, সাহিত্যিক সম্পর্কে বুদ্ধদেব বসু অনুভব গভীর আলোচনা করেছেন। মধুসূদন, নজরুল, যতীন্দ্রনাথ সেনগুপ্ত, জীবনানন্দ, সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত, অমিয় চক্রবর্তী, বিষ্ণু দে, সমর সেন, সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায়, রাজশেখর বসু, শিশিরকুমার ভাদুড়ী এবং সর্বোপরি রবীন্দ্রনাথের সাহিত্যকৃতি সম্পর্কে তিনি আলোচনা করেছেন। তাঁর ‘রাজশেখর বসু’ ও ‘শিশিরকুমার ভাদুড়ী’ প্রবন্ধ দুটি শিল্পের সঙ্গে শিল্পী চরিত্রের আলোচনার বিশেষভাবে সফল, মূলত এ দুটি প্রবন্ধ সমালোচনাশিল্পের বিস্তৃতির পরিচায়ক। মধুসূদন সম্পর্কে তাঁর মূল্যায়ন যদিও সঠিক নয়। মধুসূদন নবজাগ্রত মানবতাবোধের উদ্দীপনাত্মক রাবণ-ইন্দ্রজিৎ-শূর্ণ্যথাকে নতুন তাৎপর্য দিয়েছিলেন। এ বিষয়টি বুদ্ধদেব বসু ঠিকমতো বোঝেন নি। বাংলা ছন্দে ছন্দ ও যদিও অসমতা ভেঙে দিয়ে মধুসূদন প্রবহমানতা এনেছিলেন- এই সত্য বুদ্ধদেব স্বীকার করেছেন। তবে তাঁর মতে, মধুসূদন একাজ সচেতনভাবে করেননি এবং তিনি অপচিত প্রতিভার উদাহরণ।

সাহিত্যের তাত্ত্বিক আলোচনা বুদ্ধদেব বসুকে তেমন উৎসাহিত করেন নি। এ বিষয়ে তাঁর প্রবন্ধের সংখ্যা কম। ‘কবিতার শত্রু ও মিত্র’ তাঁর সাহিত্যতত্ত্বভিত্তিক একমাত্র প্রবন্ধ। ‘দময়ন্তী’ কবিতা সংকলনের প্রথম সংস্করণে (১৯৪৩) কবিতার ভাষা ও ছন্দ সম্পর্কিত একটি আলোচনা ছিল। পরবর্তী সংস্করণে তা বর্জিত হয়। তিনি লেখকের সৃষ্টির উদ্দেশ্য ও প্রস্তুতি নিয়ে দুটি প্রবন্ধ লিখেছিলেন। ‘কিসের জন্য আর্ট’ এবং ‘শিল্পীর স্বাধীনতা’ প্রবন্ধে তিনি লেখকের সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির উদ্দেশ্য যে আত্মপ্রকাশের অনিবার্য প্রেরণা- সেই সত্য প্রতিষ্ঠিত করেছেন। ‘লেখার ইস্কুল’ প্রবন্ধে তিনি লেখকের শিক্ষা, প্রস্তুতি ও শ্রমকে মূল্যবান মনে করেছেন। আবেগ ও তার নিয়ন্ত্রণ সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির ক্ষেত্রে জয়েরই আবশ্যিকতা তিনি প্রমাণ করেছেন।

বুদ্ধদেব বসু আধুনিক বাংলা কবিতা বিষয়ক আন্দোলনের সব্যসাচী পুরুষ বলে মুখ্য আধুনিক

কবিদের নিয়ে বিস্তৃত আলোচনা করবেন, এটি অত্যন্ত স্বাভাবিক ব্যাপার। আধুনিক কবিদের সৃষ্টিতুল্য বিশ্লেষণ করেছেন প্রধানত ‘কালের পুতুল’ গ্রন্থে। তবে সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের কাব্য সংগ্রহের ভূমিকা এবং ‘সঙ্গ : নিঃসঙ্গতা ও রবীন্দ্রনাথ’ গ্রন্থের ‘আধুনিক কবিতার প্রকৃতি’, ‘সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত’ এবং ‘সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত : কবি’ প্রবন্ধ সেই সঙ্গে উল্লেখযোগ্য। সামগ্রিকভাবে ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তরসাধক’ প্রবন্ধটি এ বিষয়ে তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। ‘কালের পুতুল’ গ্রন্থের জীবনানন্দ দাশের ‘ধূসর পাণ্ডুলিপি’, ‘বনলতা সেন’, ‘জীবনানন্দ দাশের স্মরণে’, সমর সেনের ‘কয়েকটি কবিতা’, সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের ‘অর্কেস্ট্রা’, ‘ক্রন্দসী’, ‘সুধীন্দ্রনাথের কবিতা’, বিষ্ণু দে-র ‘চোরাবালি’, সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায়ের ‘পদাতিক’, অমিয় চক্রবর্তীর ‘খসড়া’, ‘একমুঠো’, অমিয় চক্রবর্তীর ‘পালাবদল’, অন্নদাশঙ্কর রায়ের ‘নূতনা রাধা’, ‘পুনশ্চ’, ‘নজরুল ইসলাম’, ‘যতীন্দ্রনাথ সেনগুপ্ত’ প্রভৃতি প্রবন্ধ একাধারে কবিকৃতি ও কবিধর্মের তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ আলোচনা।

‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’ প্রবন্ধটি বুদ্ধদেব বসুর সমালোচনামূলক প্রবন্ধের অন্তর্গত। এটি প্রথম লিখিত হয় ১৯৫২ সালে এবং ‘সাহিত্যচর্চা’ (১৩৬১) গ্রন্থের অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়। পরবর্তীকালে প্রকাশিত ‘প্রবন্ধ সংকলন’ (১৯৯৬) গ্রন্থেও প্রবন্ধটি স্থান পায়। আরো পরে এটি কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় প্রকাশিত একালের সমালোচনা সঞ্চয়ন (১৯৮০) গ্রন্থের অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়েছে।

‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তরসাধক’ প্রবন্ধটি চারটি পর্যায়ে বিভক্ত। এই চারটি পর্যায়ে মোট এগারোটি অনুচ্ছেদ আছে; প্রথম পর্যায়ে তিনটি, দ্বিতীয় পর্যায়ে তিনটি, তৃতীয় পর্যায়ে দুটি এবং চতুর্থ পর্যায়ে তিনটি। এই প্রবন্ধটিতে বুদ্ধদেব বসু স্বভাবকবির সংজ্ঞা, বৈশিষ্ট্য, স্বভাবকবি হিসেবে গোবিন্দ চন্দ্র দাসের উল্লেখ এবং ‘নীরব কবির’ প্রসঙ্গ উপস্থাপন। দ্বিতীয়ভাগের আলোচনায় আছে বিশ শতকের সূচনায় আবির্ভূত কবিদের স্বভাবকবিত্বের ঐতিহাসিক কারণ ও তার প্রেক্ষাপট, তৃতীয় ভাগে রয়েছে রবীন্দ্রনাথের পর নজরুলের কবি প্রতিভার ব্যাখ্যা ও তাঁকে প্রথম মৌলিক কবি হিসেবে তুলে ধরা, চতুর্থভাগে আছে কল্লোলের আবির্ভাবের পটভূমিকা, ‘পরিচয়’ (১৯৩১) ও ‘কবিতা’ (১৯৩৫) পত্রিকার প্রকাশ ও জীবনানন্দ, বিষ্ণু দে, অমিয় চক্রবর্তী, প্রেমেন্দ্র মিত্র প্রমুখ উত্তর সাধকদের উপস্থাপন এবং সবশেষে রবীন্দ্রনাথ সম্পর্কে লেখকের সিদ্ধান্ত। আমরা আমাদের আলোচনাকে এই পর্যায়ক্রমিক সূত্রে তুলে ধরবো।

বুদ্ধদেব বসু প্রবন্ধের শুরুতেই স্বভাবকবির সংজ্ঞা ও বৈশিষ্ট্য নির্ণয়ের ক্ষেত্রে গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাসের উল্লেখ করেছেন। তিনি বলেছেন—

“বাংলায় স্বভাবকবি কথাটা বোধহয় প্রথম উচ্চারিত হয় গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাসকে উপলক্ষ ক’রে।”^৪

প্রাথমিক বুদ্ধদেব গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাসকে (১৮৫৫-১৯১৮) স্বভাবকবি কে বলেছিলেন তা না জানলেও তিনি যে বোধা এবং এই আখ্যা দেওয়া যে নির্ভুল তা তিনি দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস করেছিলেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ‘নীরব কবি’র অস্তিত্বকে স্বীকার করেননি, তাই ‘সাহিত্য’ গ্রন্থের ‘সাহিত্যের সামগ্রী’ প্রবন্ধে বলেছেন—

“নীরব কবিত্ব ও আত্মোগত ভাবোচ্ছ্বাস, সাহিত্যে এই দুটো বাজে কথা কোনো কোনো মহলে চলিত আছে। যে কাঠ জ্বলে নাই তাহাকে আগুন নাম দেওয়াও যেমন, যে মানুষ আকাশের দিকে

তাকাইয়া আকাশের মতো নীরব হইয়া থাকে, তাহাকেও কবি বলা সেইরূপ।”^৫

সাহিত্যে এই ‘নীরব কবি’র অস্তিত্ব অস্বীকৃত হলেও ‘স্বভাবকবি’ কথাটি মর্যাদা পেল।

‘স্বভাবকবি’ শব্দটি বিশ্লেষণ করলে দেখা যায় যে, সহজাত শক্তি ব্যতীত কোনো শিল্প রচনাই সম্ভব নয়। তাই সাধারণভাবে কবি মাত্রই স্বভাব কবি। কিন্তু ‘বুদ্ধদেব বসু’র মতে এই সাধারণ অর্থে ‘স্বভাবকবি’ শব্দটি ব্যবহৃত হয় না-

“যিনি একান্তই হৃদয়নির্ভর, প্রেরণার বিশ্বাসী অর্থাৎ যিনি যখন যেমন প্রাণ চায় লিখে যান কিন্তু কখনোই লেখার বিষয়ে চিন্তা করেন না, যাঁর মনের সংসারে হৃদয়ের সঙ্গে বুদ্ধিবৃত্তির সতিন সম্বন্ধ।”^৬

এখানে আত্মপ্রসাদের সাক্ষ্য সংগ্রহ কবির কর্তব্য হবে না, থাকবে না আবেগের অতিরেক। বরং থাকবে মাত্রাজ্ঞান, তত্ত্বয়তা, আবেগের সংযমবোধ। আর থাকবে সমধিক পরিমাণে চিন্তা-চেতনার অপরিপূর্ণ জ্যোতি। তবে আবেগকে পাঠকের হৃদয়পটে উপনীত করানোর জন্য আবেগকে সংযম-শাসিত করতে হবে। যদি কোনো কবির এই শাসনের ও নিয়ন্ত্রণের শক্তি না থাকে তবে তাঁকে ‘স্বভাবকবি’ বলতে হয়। স্বভাবকবির লক্ষণ কবির মধ্যে লক্ষিত হয় কখনো ব্যক্তিগত কারণে, কখনো ঐতিহাসিক কারণে। তাই স্বভাবধর্মের দিক থেকে কেউ কেউ স্বভাবতই স্বভাব কবি হন কিংবা কখনো সাহিত্যের পরিব্যাপ্ত পারিপার্শ্বিক অবস্থার ফলে কোনো কোনো কবি স্বভাবকবি হয়ে যান। তাই গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাস যথার্থ অর্থে ‘স্বভাবকবি’, বুদ্ধদেব বসুর মতে-

“গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাসকে বলা যায় স্বভাবতই স্বভাবকবি, একেবারে খাঁটি অর্থে তা-ই; কেন না, হৃদয়সের প্রাচুর্য সত্ত্বেও অসংযমজনিত পতনের উল্লেখ্য উদাহরণ।”^৭

অর্থাৎ, গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাসের কবিতায় হৃদয়সের প্রাচুর্য, আবেগের অতিরেক ও নিয়ন্ত্রণহীনতা তাঁকে স্বভাবকবিত্বের পর্যায়ভুক্ত করেছে। তিনি রবীন্দ্রনাথের সমসাময়িক হয়েও রবীন্দ্রনাথের অস্তিত্বটুকু অনুভব করেন নি এবং স্বভাবকবিত্বের বৃত্ত থেকে উত্তীর্ণ হতে পারেন নি। এখানেই গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাসের সীমাবদ্ধতা।

গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাসের কবিতায় আছে উন্মত্ত আবেগের অবাধ উচ্ছ্বাস, অনন্দনতাত্ত্বিক বক্তব্য, আছে আবেগের অতিরেক, আছে রচনারীতির শিথিলতা। তাই তিনি আর্টিস্ট-নন, তিনি ‘স্বভাবকবি’। তাঁর কবিতাগুলি সামাজিক দায়বদ্ধতা, শোষণ-বঞ্চনার বিরুদ্ধে রচিত। সামন্তবিরোধী গণতান্ত্রিক ভাবধারা সৃষ্টিতে তিনি বিশেষ ভূমিকা পালন করেন। ভূমিস্বার্থে পরশ্রমজীবী সমাজ যখন নিজেদের স্বার্থচরিতার্থ করতে ব্যস্ত, প্রজা-শোষণ করাকে তারা বিধিদ্ভ অধিকার মনে করত, তখন এই গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাস রাজার প্রাইভেট সেক্রেটারির চাকরি তুচ্ছ মনে করে ছেড়ে সামন্তযন্ত্রে পিষ্ট মানুষগুলোকে বুকে টেনে নিয়েছিলেন। তাদের বেদনাময় জীবনের মর্মবেদনাকে বাণীরূপ দিয়েছেন। তাই তিনি কেবল ‘স্বভাবকবি’ বললে ঠিক বিচার করা হয় না, তিনি জীবনসংগ্রামী, সামন্তবিরোধী জীবনরসের কবি আবার স্বদেশিক কবিও বটে। তাঁর ‘আমরা হরিহর’, ‘স্বদেশ’, ‘স্বাধীনতা’ প্রভৃতি কবিতায় স্বদেশিক চিন্তা, শোষণমুক্তির ভাবনার পাশে ব্যঙ্গ-বিদ্বেষের শাণিত

আঘাতে সমাজশত্রুদের মুখোশ উন্মোচনের আন্তরিক প্রয়াস লক্ষ্য করি। তাঁর মধ্যে ‘স্বভাবকবি’র চেতনা থাকলেও তাঁর রচনায় শৃঙ্খলিত মানবাত্মার মুক্তির আকৃতি বনিত হয়েছে। ‘উনিশ শতকের নিষিদ্ধ গ্রন্থ ও কবি গোবিন্দচন্দ্র দাস’ গ্রন্থের ভূমিকায় কুমুদকুমার ভট্টাচার্য জানিয়েছেন-

“শ্রেণী বিদ্বেষের পরিবর্তে ব্যক্তিগত দ্বেষের প্রকাশ কোনো কোনো ক্ষেত্রে ঘটলেও সামগ্রিকভাবে তাঁর রচনায় শৃঙ্খলিত মানবাত্মার মুক্তির আকৃতি বনিত প্রতি বনিত হয়েছে। অমানিশার অন্ধকারে কবি সূর্যোদয়ের স্বপ্ন দেখেছেন, একাকী ভৈরবী রাগিণীতে নিশাবসানের সঙ্গীত গেয়েছেন।”^৮

সমালোচকগণ তাঁর বিষয়ের দিকে মনোনিবেশ না করে তাঁর কবিতার কারুণ্য আলোচনা করেছেন। কিন্তু কবির বিষয় ভাবনায় সে মানুষের মুক্তির মন্ত্র উচ্চারিত হয়েছে, তাতে সন্দেহ নেই।

বিশ শতকের শুরুর দিকের কিশোর কবিদের কাছে স্বভাবকবিত্ব কেন ঐতিহাসিক, তার কারণ ও ইতিহাসগত পটভূমিকা উদ্ধারে ব্রতী হন বুদ্ধদেব বসু-

“বিশ শতকের আরম্ভ কালে যাঁরা বাংলার কবি-কিশোর ছিলেন, স্বভাবকবিত্ব তাদের পক্ষে ঐতিহাসিক ছিল।”^৯

তবে তাঁদের এই স্বভাবকবিত্বের মূলে রবীন্দ্রনাথ স্বয়ং, তা প্রাবন্ধিক স্বীকার করেছেন। সেই সময় রবীন্দ্র-প্রতিভা মধ্যগগন স্পর্শ করলেও “সেই আলোকে কালো ব’লে প্রমাণ করার জন্য দেশের মধ্যে অধ্যবসায়ের অভাব ছিল না।”^{১০} অর্থাৎ, রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রতিভা বা হয়তো রবীন্দ্রনাথকেই নন্দিত করার পরিবর্তে নিন্দিত, বিকৃত, অপমানিত করার জন্যে দেশের বহুজন অধ্যবসায়ী ছিলেন। তবুও তরুণ কবির অদম্য বেগে রবীন্দ্র-প্রতিভার আকৃষ্ট হয়েছেন। রবীন্দ্র-প্রতিভা বহুমুখী। তাঁকে কেবল আরামে উপভোগ করা যায় না, তাঁর লেখায় আছে ‘শ্রাবণরাত্রির বজ্রনাদ’, ‘কনকের অভ্যর্থনা’, ‘গুপ্ত সর্প গূঢ়ফণা’- যা আমরা অনুভব করি। তাঁর প্রসাদ আমাদের কাছে রুদ্রের প্রসাদ। নিন্দা তাঁর যাত্রাপথে দেয় জয়শঙ্খনাদ। বুদ্ধদেব বসু বলেছেন-

“বাংলাদেশের পক্ষে বড় বেশী বড়ো তিনি, আমাদের মনের মাপজোকের মধ্যে কুলোয় না। তাঁকে, আমাদের সহস্রশক্তির সীমা তিনি ছাড়িয়ে যান।”^{১১}

বুদ্ধদেব বসু তাঁর আরেকটি প্রবন্ধ ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ : বিশ্বকবি ও বাঙালি’-তে আরো বললেন-

“যেন এক দৈব আবির্ভাব-অপর্যাপ্ত, চেষ্টাহীন, ভাস্কর, পৃথিবীর মহত্তম কবিদের অন্যতম; আমার কাছে আমার মতো আরো অনেকের কাছে, এই হলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর। তাঁর তুল্য ক্ষমতা ও উদ্যম ভাষার মধ্য দিয়ে আত্মপ্রকাশ করেছে, এমন ঘটনা ইতিহাসে বিরল।”^{১২}

তাঁর মতো একই সুরে একই কথা বলেছে সুবীন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত, ‘সূর্য্যবর্ত’ প্রবন্ধে-

“রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যে যে দেশ ও কালের প্রতিবিশ্ব পড়ে, তাদের সঙ্গে আজকালকার পরিচয় এত অল্প যে উভয়ের যোগফলকে যদি পরীর রাজ্য বলা যায়, তাহলে বিশ্বয় প্রকাশ অনুচিত।”^{১৩}

আসলে, রবীন্দ্রনাথের স্বভাবেই আছে আলোকের ঝর্ণাধারায় অগ্নিমান। আর এই অগ্নিস্থূলিঙ্গ

সৃষ্টির প্রথম রহস্য থেকে শেষ রহস্যে সঞ্চারিত। আলোকের প্রকাশ থেকে মানবমনের গহনতলে ভালোবাসার অমর্ত-স্বর্গিকলোকেই তাঁর মুক্তপাখা অনায়াসে বিস্তার ও বিচরণ করে চলেছে।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের আবির্ভাবের পূর্বে বাংলা সাহিত্যের সামাজিক অবস্থান ছিল অন্যরকম, পরবর্তী অবস্থাও তাঁকেই কেন্দ্র করে। ঠিক যেমনটা আমরা দেখেছিলাম চৈতন্য আবির্ভাবের পরবর্তী সময়। সমাজ, সাহিত্য, ধর্ম, দর্শন-সমস্তই দুটি পর্যায়ে বিভক্ত; চৈতন্য পূর্ববর্তী ও চৈতন্য পরবর্তী। রবীন্দ্রনাথের আবির্ভাবের পরেও আমরা তাই-ই দেখি সাহিত্যজগতে। এবং তাঁর পূর্ববর্তী ও পরবর্তী বাংলা সাহিত্যের তুলনামূলক আলোচনায় তাঁর প্রতিভার ব্যাপকত্বে আমরা বিস্মিত, বিমুগ্ধ, বিচলিত হই। পূর্ববর্তী দাশরথী বায়ের চাতুরী, রামপ্রসাদের আকুলকরা ভক্তিমূলক কাব্য-মন্তোচ্চারণ, ঈশ্বরগুপ্তের সাংবাদিকতা এবং মধুসূদনের বীররসের তূর্য বনি ছিল। এমন অবস্থাতে বাংলা সাহিত্যের অঙ্গনে রবীন্দ্রনাথের আবির্ভাব। তাঁর আবির্ভাব সাহিত্য জগতের পরিমণ্ডলে বিস্ময়কর হলেও অনেকের পক্ষে রবীন্দ্রনাথকে সহ্য করা অসম্ভব হয়ে উঠেছিল। বুদ্ধদেব বসু এর দুটি দিকের উল্লেখ করেছেন-

“এর প্রমাণ দুটি দিক থেকেই পাওয়া যায় : সমালোচনার মহলে নিন্দার অবিরাম উত্তেজনায়, আর কাব্যের ক্ষেত্রে উত্তরপুরুষের প্রতিরোধহীন আত্মবিলাপে।”^{১৪}

বাংলা কবিতার বিশ শতকের প্রথম দুই দশক বড়ো সংকটের সময়। এই সময়ের কবি- যতীন্দ্রমোহন বাগচী, করুণানিধান বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, কুমুদরঞ্জন মল্লিক, কিরণধন চট্টোপাধ্যায়, কালিদাস রায় প্রমুখেরা জ্ঞাত বা অজ্ঞাতসারে সকলেই ছিলেন রবীন্দ্রানুসারী। এই কবিগোষ্ঠীর কুলপ্রদীপ সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত। একমাত্র তিনি ছাড়া বাকীদের রচনাশৈলী পৃথক করা সম্ভব হয় না, কারণ তাঁদের রচনা সমতলের মতো সরল, ধীরলয়বিশিষ্ট, মৃদু। রবীন্দ্রানুসারী কবিদের কয়েকটি সাধারণ বৈশিষ্ট্য উল্লেখ করলে এর সত্যতা প্রমাণিত হবে-

- ১) বাংলার গ্রামীণ জীবন, লোকসংস্কৃতি ও পুরাণকাহিনীর প্রতি এঁরা ছিলেন শ্রদ্ধাশীল ও ভক্ত।
- ২) রবীন্দ্রনাথের আস্তিক্য চেতনায় বিশ্বাসী, কল্যাণ, মঙ্গল, শান্তি ও সৌন্দর্যের প্রতি এঁরা ছিলেন আস্থাশীল।
- ৩) এঁদের দৃষ্টিতে প্রেমচেতনা রোমান্টিক ও আদর্শায়িত। সেখানে নেই আধুনিক প্রেমের জটিলতার নানাস্তর।
- ৪) সমকালীন সমাজ-অর্থনীতির বাস্তবতা, নাগরিক জীবনের আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষা, বেদনা, ব্যর্থতা, আশাভঙ্গি-জনিত ক্ষোভ, জটিল বাস্তবের সঙ্গে সংগ্রামে ক্ষত-বিক্ষত মানবাত্মার দীর্ঘ হাহাকার এখানে অনুপস্থিত।
- ৫) বাঙালির গার্হস্থ্যজীবন চিত্রাঙ্কনে, আনন্দ-বেদনা-উল্লাস ও মাধুর্যের রূপায়ণে এবং দাম্পত্য-বাৎসল্য সখ্য ও মধুর রসের প্রকাশে এঁদের অভ্যস্ততা বর্তমান ছিল।
- ৬) এঁদের স্বদেশপ্রেম বা দেশপ্রেম জলন্ত প্রেরণা ও সুতীর আলোড়িত অনুভূতিতে পরিণত না হয়ে পুরাণ কাহিনী ও অতীত ইতিহাসপ্ৰীতি রূপে প্রকাশিত।

এঁরা রবীন্দ্রপ্রভাবে প্রভাবিত, অনুপ্রাণিত, কেউ কেউ ভালো কবিতাও লিখতেন, কিন্তু তাঁদের পক্ষে রবীন্দ্রনাথের অনুকরণ অসম্ভব ছিল, যদিও তা অনিবার্য। রবীন্দ্র-সান্নিধ্য পেয়েও তাঁরা রবীন্দ্রনাথের মানসভূবন, জীবনদর্শনের স্বরূপ উপলব্ধি করতে পারেন নি। তাঁরা ভাবতে পারেন নি-

“গুরুদেবের কাব্যকলা মারাত্মকরূপে প্রতারক, সেই মোহিনীমায়ার প্রকৃতি না-বুঝে শুধু বাঁশি শুনে ঘর ছাড়লে ডুবতে হবে চোরাবালিতে।”^{১৫}

যেন ‘সোনারতরী’, ‘চিত্রা’, ‘কথা ও কাহিনী’, ‘কল্পনা’, ক্ষণিকা, গীতাঞ্জলি প্রভৃতি কাব্যের স্বপ্নিল সুরের তৃপ্তিতে বিলীন হলো তাঁদের আত্মচেতনা। রবীন্দ্রনাথকে ধ্যান না করে ব্রত রূপে গ্রহণ করেছেন তাঁরা। রবীন্দ্রানুসারী কবিগণ রবীন্দ্র-মননের অতলস্পর্শী গভীরতা ও অন্তহীন ব্যাপ্তিকে উপলব্ধি করতে পারেন নি। কিন্তু উপলব্ধি করতে পারেন নি রবীন্দ্রনাথের সরলতা জলধর্মী অর্থাৎ জলের উপরিস্তর আপাত শান্ত, স্বচ্ছ, সরল, অনুদ্বৈগধর্মী, কিন্তু তার গভীরতায় রয়েছে অনিশ্চিত কুটিলতার নিত্য আবর্ত, স্রোতে-প্রতিস্রোতে নিত্যমথিত ভয়াবহ ঘূর্ণাবর্ত। মহাকবির জঙ্গমতা তাঁরা লক্ষ না করে তাঁকে ঘিরেই রবীন্দ্র সমুদ্রে নোঙর ফেলে নিশ্চিত হলোও, রবীন্দ্রনাথের নিত্য চলমান যাত্রার মস্ত্রে তাঁরা দীক্ষিত হলেন না। তাই তাঁদের কাব্যে এল ফেনিলতা, অসহায়তা, অসংবৃত উচ্ছ্বাস, তন্দ্রালুতা, শিথিলতা- এসমস্তই হয়ে উঠল ‘স্বভাবকবি’র কুললক্ষণ। অবশ্য তাঁদের কবিকৃতি আমাদের কাছে শ্রদ্ধার আসন অলংকৃত করেছে, কারণ “রবিতাপে আত্মহুতি দিয়ে তাঁরা পরবর্তীদের সতর্ক করে গেছেন।”^{১৬} সেখানেই তাঁদের ঐতিহাসিক ভূমিকাটি স্মরণ্য।

রবীন্দ্রানুসারী কবি সমাজের এই মূল্যায়ন যথার্থ। এই কারণেই যে, সেই সময়ে কবিতার ক্ষেত্রে সেই অবস্থাটা ছিল স্বাভাবিক। রবীন্দ্রনাথের বিশাল বিপুল কাব্যসম্ভার পেয়ে সকলের মনে একটা তৃপ্তিবোধ কাজ করেছিল, তাঁরা মনে করেছিলেন-

“রবীন্দ্রনাথের পরে, কবিতা লেখা কঠিন হওয়া দূরে থাক, সীমাহীনরূপে সহজ হ’য়ে গেল; ছন্দ, মিল, ভাষা, উপমা, বিচিত্ররকমের স্তবকবিন্যাসের নমুনা-সব তৈরি আছে, আর কিছু ভাবতে হবে না; অন্য কোনো দিকে তাকাতে হবে না, এই রকম একটা পৃষ্ঠপোষিত মোলায়েম মনোভাব নিয়ে তাঁদের কবিতা লেখার আরম্ভ এবং শেষ।”^{১৭}

রবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁদের কাছে সুগম, সুন্দর, সুবোধ্য; রবীন্দ্র কাব্যজগতে তাঁরা পেলে পরমরমণীয়ের স্বাদ। সেখানে না আছে দান্তে বা গেটের মতো স্বর্গ-মর্ত্য-নরকব্যাপী বিরাট পরিকল্পনা, না আছে শেক্সপীয়ারের মতো মানবচরিত্রের বিচিত্র চিত্রশালা, না আছে মিল্ল’নের মতো বাক্যবন্ধের ব্যূহরচনা। রবীন্দ্রনাথকে উপলব্ধির জন্যে চিন্তার চাপে ক্লান্ত হতে হয় না, কবিতার অর্থবোধের জন্যে অভিধানের সাহায্য নিতে হয় না, কারণ তাঁর কবিতার সহজবোধ্যতা। তাঁর বিষয়বস্তুতে বিস্ময়কর বহুলতা নেই- এখানেই রবীন্দ্রানুসারী কবি সমাজের মস্ত ভুল হয়েছিল, রবীন্দ্রনাথের ‘মতো’ লিখতে পারার ধারণায় ডুবে গিয়ে তাঁরা রবীন্দ্রনাথের অনুকরণ করে তরলায়িত পদ্য রচনা করলেন।

রবীন্দ্রনাথের কবিতার ভাবসম্পদ হল সাহায্য নিরপেক্ষ উপলব্ধি-এই সহজ প্রত্যয় হয়ে দাঁড়ালো অত্যন্ত বিপজ্জনক। মূলত রবীন্দ্রনাথের কবিতা বাইরে থেকে সংগ্রহ করা নানা রকম পদার্থের

সম্মিপাত নয়, এ হল ভিতর থেকে আপনি হয়ে ওঠা, রবীন্দ্র-অনুসারী কবিসমাজ হয়তো এই ‘হ’য়ে ওঠা’র মূল সূত্রটি উপলব্ধি করতে পারলেন না, সেখানেই তাঁদের সীমাবদ্ধতা। আসলে রবীন্দ্রনাথের কবিতার ভাবসৌন্দর্য উপলব্ধি করতে কোনো সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন নেই। সমালোচনার কলকজা দিয়ে রবীন্দ্র-কবিতার অন্তর্লীন রহস্য বিশ্লেষণ করা সম্ভবপর নয়। প্রকৃতঅর্থে তাঁর কবিতা তাঁর অস্তিত্বের জন্য সার্থক। তাঁর কবিতার হয়ে ওঠার প্রসঙ্গে বুদ্ধদেব বসু যথার্থই বলেছেন-

“চারিদিকের প্রত্যক্ষ এই পৃথিবী দিনে দিনে যেমন ক’রে দেখা দিয়েছে তাঁর চোখের সামনে, নাড়া দিয়েছে তাঁর মনের মধ্যে তাই তিনি অফুরন্ত বার বলেছেন; প্রতিদিনের সুখ-দুঃখের সাড়া, মুহূর্তের বৃন্তের উপর ফুলে-ওঠা পলাতক এক-একটি রঙিন বেদনা-তাই ধরে রেখেছেন তাঁর কবিতায়, আর কবিতার চেয়েও বেশি তাঁর গানে। এইজন্য তার কবিতা এমন দেহহীন, বিশ্লেষণবিমুখ; তার ‘সারাংশ’ বিচ্ছিন্ন করা যায় না, তাকে দেখানো যায় না ভাঁজে-ভাঁজে খুলে; যেটা কবিতা, আর যেটা পাঠকের মনে তার অভিজ্ঞতা, ও দুয়ে কোনো তফাৎটা তাতে নেই যেন; তা আমাদের মনের উপর যা কাজ করবার ক’রে যায়।”^{১৮}

তাঁর কবিতা জীবনের পক্ষে সম্পদ, কিন্তু তাঁর আদর্শ অনবরত চোখের সামনে থাকলে অন্য কবিরা কবিতা রচনাকালে বিপদে পড়েন। এর কারণও আছে- সকল মানুষের অনুভূতি ও ব্যক্তিক সুখ-দুঃখ আছে। যখন দেখা যায় তারই প্রকাশ আয়োজনহীন উপকরণে অত্যশ্চর্যভাবে কবিতা হয়ে ওঠে তখন অন্য কবিরাও সেইভাবে অনুভূতির কাছে, ব্যক্তিগত সুখ-দুঃখের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণ করতে চায়। তখন সেই কবিতা হয়ে ওঠে আবেগাতিশয্যের দৃষ্টান্ত। রবীন্দ্রানুসারী কবিদের কবিতা আবেগের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণ, আর রবীন্দ্রকবিতা তাঁর ব্যক্তিক অনুভূতি ও আয়োজনহীন উপলব্ধি। তবে একথা অবশ্য গ্রহণীয়- রবীন্দ্রসমকালেই তৈরি হয়েছিল রবীন্দ্রবিরোধী কবিসমাজ। এঁরা রবীন্দ্রানুসারী কবি সমাজের শিথিল তরলতা, প্রকৃতির উপস্থাপনার অতিরেক, ভাববিলাসে ব্যঞ্জনাহীন বক্তব্য, পল্লী প্রীতি, ঐতিহ্যের প্রতি আনুগত্য, বাকসর্বস্বতা, নবজীবনের প্রতি বিরাগ, কঠিন-কঠোর বাস্তবের অস্বীকৃতি প্রভৃতিকে বর্জন করেছিলেন। এঁদের মধ্যে উল্লেখ্য-প্রমথ চৌধুরী, দ্বিজেন্দ্রলাল রায়, যতীন্দ্রনাথ সেনগুপ্ত, মোহিতলাল মজুমদার, নজরুল ইসলাম প্রমুখ। এঁদের সময়ে বাংলা কাব্যে প্রাঙ্গণে নির্মূল হয়েছে জগৎ ও জীবন সম্পর্কে পূর্বতন আশা-ভরসা। তিক্ততা-নিরাশা-হতাশা-বেদনাদীর্ঘ জীবন-ছবি, রূঢ় নির্মম বাস্তবতা, বিশ্বদীক্ষা, সংস্কারমুক্তি, নাগরিকতা, জীবনের জটিলতা প্রভৃতি হয়েছে তাঁদের কাছে যুগের সত্যদর্শনের সারকথা।

বুদ্ধদেব বসু রবীন্দ্র-সমকালীন কবিদের রচনাশক্তির ব্যাখ্যার অনুষঙ্গে সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের কবি প্রতিভা ও বাংলা কাব্যে তাঁর ঐতিহাসিক ভূমিকাটিও ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন। তিনি বলেছেন-

“সমসাময়িক, কাছাকাছি বয়সের কবিদের মধ্যে রচনাশক্তিতে শ্রেষ্ঠ তিনি, (সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ) সর্বতোভাবে যুগ প্রতিভূ, এবং রবীন্দ্রনাথের পাশে রেখে দেখলেও তাঁকে চেনা যায়।”^{১৯}

রবীন্দ্র-বৃত্তে থেকে সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ বরণ করেছেন এক চঞ্চলহীন মসৃণ জীবনকে, তিনি রবীন্দ্রনাথের শ্রেয় ও প্রেয় তপস্যাকে সত্য বলে গ্রহণ করেছেন। তিনি লিখেছেন লঘু-তরল খেয়ালী কল্পনামূলক কবিতা, প্রকৃতি বিষয়ক কবিতা। জাতীয় মুক্তি আন্দোলনে জাগ্রত যৌবন শক্তিকে তিনি

স্বাগত জানিয়েছেন। দেশের ভৌগোলিক সৌন্দর্য, ঐতিহাসিক তথ্য ও পুরাণ-ঐতিহ্যের মাহাত্ম্য বর্ণনা, নদী-পাহাড়ের প্রসঙ্গ- সমস্তই তাঁর কবিতার বিষয়বস্তু হয়েছে। তাঁর কাব্যে সমসাময়িক রাজনৈতিক প্রসঙ্গের পাশাপাশি মানবিকবোধের প্রসঙ্গও বর্তমান। বাংলা কবিতা চর্চার ক্ষেত্রে তিনি বিচিত্র বিষয়ের প্রতি মনোনিবেশ করেছিলেন, সচেতন হয়েছিলেন একটি নতুন যুগ আনতে। বাংলা কবিতার বিকাশে তাঁর নাম স্মরণীয় হলেও রবীন্দ্রনাথ পড়া থাকলে সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের কবিতা পাঠের প্রয়োজনীয়তা নেই। যুদ্ধদেব বসুর ভাষায় বলা যায়-

“রবীন্দ্রনাথের বিরাট মহাজনি কারবারের পর খুচরো দোকানদার হওয়াতে লজ্জার কিছু নেই- সেটাকো তো অনিবার্য বলা যায়, কিন্তু সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের মালপত্রও আপাতদৃষ্টিতে এক ব’লে বাংলা কাব্যে তাঁর আসন এমন সংশয়াচ্ছন্ন। তিনি ব্যবহার করেছেন রবীন্দ্রনাথেরই সাজ-সরঞ্জাম- সেই ঋতুরঙ্গ, পল্লীচিত্র, দেশপ্রেম, কিন্তু ফুল, পাখি, চাঁদ, মেঘ, শিশির, এই রকম প্রত্যেকটি শব্দের পিছনে বা বস্তুর পিছনে রবীন্দ্রনাথে যে আবেগের চাপ পাই, যে বিশ্বাসের উত্তাপ, যার জন্য ‘যুথীবনের দীর্ঘশ্বাসে’র শততম পুনরুক্তি আমাদের মনে নতুন করে জাগিয়ে তোলে স্বর্গের বিরহ বেদনা, সেই প্রাণবন্ত প্রবলতার স্পর্শমাত্র সত্যেন্দ্রনাথে পাই না।”^{২০}

সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ পড়লে আমাদের মনে হয়, কবিতা লেখার জন্যেই অনুভূতিকে যেন ফেনিয়ে তোলা হয়; অনুভূতিটাই কৃত্রিম। যা ছিল রবীন্দ্রনাথের দিব্যদৃষ্টি, তা যেন সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের দিবাস্বপ্নে পরিণত হয়েছে। রবীন্দ্রনাথে যে ফুল ছিল বিশ্বস্ততার প্রতীক, তা সত্যেন্দ্রনাথে হলো শৌখিন খেলনা, যা ছিল ভাবুকতা, তা ভাবালুতার পর্যায়ে পৌঁছালো। সাধনা হলো ব্যসন, আবার মানসসুন্দরীর রূপ নিলো লালপরী নীলপরি- আমোদে প্রমোদে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ছন্দের মদিরতা, মধুরতা, অন্তর্লীন শিক্ষা, সংযত, পরিশীলিত রচি-এই সমস্ত কিছুর পরিবর্তে সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের লেখায় এল মিহিসুর, ঠুনকো আওয়াজ। তাঁর ছটপটে ছন্দের তাল যেন উদ্দেশ্যহীন পরিশ্রম, যা মুহূর্তে পাঠকের কানে পৌঁছায়, তাই তিনি সেই সময়ে জনপ্রিয়। তাঁর খ্যাতির চরমসীমায় অনেক অন্তঃসারশূন্য কবিতা পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। অবশ্য কালের সম্মার্জনী ইতিমধ্যে তাদের নিশ্চিহ্ন করে দিয়েছে। এর অর্থ সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের কবিতার অবমূল্যায়ন নয়, বাংলা কবিতার ক্ষেত্রে তাঁর সঠিক অবস্থান নির্ণয়।

রবীন্দ্র-আবরণ ভেঙে বাংলা সাহিত্য জগতে আবির্ভূত হলেন নজরুল ইসলাম। রবিতাপের বন্ধন থেকে বেরিয়ে রাজদ্রোহ ঘোষণা করে নিশানের বজা ওড়ালেন ‘বিদ্রোহী’ কবিতায়। বাংলা ভাষায় রবীন্দ্রনাথের পর তিনিই প্রথম মৌলিক কবি। রবীন্দ্র-প্রতিভার উজ্জ্বলতায় যখন বাংলা সাহিত্যের আকাশে উদ্ভাসিত ঠিক তখন নজরুল ইসলাম অগ্নিবীণা হাতে নিয়ে বিদ্রোহী বেশে হাজির হলেন। রবীন্দ্র-প্রতিভাকে স্বীকার করে, তাঁকে প্রণম্য রেখেই আপন সুরে ও স্বরের বিশিষ্টতায় কাব্যমোদীদের বিভোর করলেন নজরুল। কাব্যরীতি ও ধ্যান ধারণার কোনো কোনো ক্ষেত্রে সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ, মোহিতলাল, যতীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর পূর্বসূরী হলেও প্রথম বিশ্বযুদ্ধের (১৯১৪) পর বাংলা দেশের আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষা, দুঃখ-বেদনা ও বিদ্রোহ-বিক্ষোভের ক্ষেত্রে তিনি শ্রেষ্ঠ প্রতিনিধি। তাঁর বিদ্রোহ মূলক কবিতা উত্তরসূরীদের পাথেয়। বাংলা কাব্যে তিনিই প্রথম বিদ্রোহ, পৌরুষ ও যৌবনের ভাষ্যকার। তাঁর কবিতায় আছে দেশপ্রেম, রাজনীতি, সমাজনীতি, অন্যায়ের প্রতিবাদ, মানবিকবোধ,

ব্যথিত মানুষের জন্যে বেদনার্তি, প্রাণ প্রাচুর্য, তারুণ্য, তেজস্বিতা, পরাধীনতার শৃঙ্খল মোচনের বজ্র-উদগীর্ণ কর্তৃস্বর, হৃদয়ের অকৃত্রিম প্রসারতা, পরিশ্রমজীবীদের প্রতি বেদনা ও তাদের আত্মজাগরণ প্রভৃতি।

নজরুলের কাব্যসাধনায় ভাবগত তারল্য, বয়নগত শিথিলতা, অসংহত সৃষ্টির প্রয়াস দেখা গেলেও তাঁর বিদ্রোহের লক্ষ্য সামাজিক অত্যাচারের অবসান বলেই তিনি হয়েছেন যুগমানসের বিদ্রোহীসত্তার প্রতিভূ। মুক্তিকামী চেতনার তীক্ষ্ণতা তাঁর সৃষ্টির প্রেরণা এবং সেকারণেই স্বদেশিকতার প্রাণসত্তায় তুলেছিলেন ব্যাপক আলোড়ন। যুগচেতনায় এখানেই তাঁর স্বতন্ত্র্য। তাঁর কবিতায় প্রাণ প্রাচুর্য ও উদ্দাম গতিবেগ থাকায় সেখানে স্বাভাবিক নিয়মেই এসেছে ভাব সংহতি ও ঘনবদ্ধতার অভাব। এটিও তাঁর একধরনের প্রাণধর্মের সজীবতা। যুগাভিসারী জীবনবোধের তীব্রতা তাঁকে মৌলিকত্ব দিয়েছে। সেখানেই নির্মিত হয়েছে বাংলা কাব্যে নতুন রীতির প্রবর্তনা। তাই প্রাবন্ধিক বুদ্ধদেব বলেছেন-

“নজরুল ইসলামকে রবীন্দ্রনাথের পরে অন্য একজন কবি-ক্ষুদ্রতর নিশ্চয়ই, কিন্তু নতুন। এই যেন নজরুল, রবিতাপের চরম সময়ে রবীন্দ্রিক বন্ধন ছিঁড়ে বেরোলেন, বলতে গেলে অসাধ্যসাধন করলেন, এটাও খুব সহজেই ঘটেছিল, এর পিছনে সাধনার কোনো ইতিহাস নেই, কতগুলো আকস্মিক কারণেই সম্ভব হয়েছিল এটা। কবিতার যে আদর্শ নিয়ে সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ লিখেছিলেন, নজরুলও তা-ই, কিন্তু নজরুল বৈশিষ্ট্য পেয়েছিলেন তাঁর জীবনের পটভূমিকার ভিন্নতায়। মুসলমান তিনি, ভিন্ন একটা ঐতিহ্যের মধ্যে জন্মেছিলেন, আবার সেই সঙ্গে হিন্দু মানসও আপন করে নিয়েছিলেন চেষ্টার দ্বারা নয়, স্বভাবতই।”^{১১}

আসলে কবির বাল্য ও কৈশোরকাল কেটেছে মফঃস্বলে, ‘ভদ্রলোক’ হবার চেষ্টায় স্কুল-কলেজ না গিয়ে তিনি স্বচ্ছন্দবোধ করেছেন যাত্রাগান-লেটো গানের আসরে, বাড়ি থেকে পালিয়ে হয়েছিলেন সৈনিক। সামাজিক দিক থেকে যা অসুবিধার কারণ হয়ে উঠেছিল, কবিতার মাধ্যমেই তা সহজেই সুবিধার কারণ হয়েছিল। তাঁর পরিবেশ ছিল ভিন্ন-বন্য ধরণের আর তাঁর পরিবেশ তাঁর সহজাত প্রবৃত্তিকে দৃঢ় ও সবল করেছিল। কেবলমাত্র স্বভাবের এই দৃঢ়চেতনার জোরেই কোনোরকম সাহিত্যিক প্রস্তুতি না নিয়ে রবীন্দ্র-ভাবধারা থেকে বেরিয়ে বাংলা কবিতায় স্বতন্ত্র্য এনেছিলেন। নজরুল বাংলা সমাজ-সাহিত্যে জাগিয়ে দিলেন নতুনের আকাঙ্ক্ষা। যে আকাঙ্ক্ষা তিনি জাগিয়ে দিলেন, তার তৃপ্তির চাঞ্চল্য জেগে উঠলো নানা দিকে-

“দেখা দিলো ‘কল্লোল’ গোষ্ঠীর নতুনতর প্রচেষ্টা, বাংলা সাহিত্যের মোড় ফেরার ঘণ্টা বাজল।”^{১২}

নজরুলের রচনায় সামাজিক-রাজনৈতিক বিদ্রোহ আছে, কিন্তু সাহিত্যিক বিদ্রোহ নেই। তিনি নিজের আত্মিক অতৃপ্তিকে অন্যের মনে সংক্রামিত করে দিলেন। তিনি রবীন্দ্রনাথ বা সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের আদর্শ মেনে তৃপ্ত হন নি। এই সংক্রমণের প্রক্রিয়া অচেতনভাবে শুরু হলেও সচেতনস্তরে আসতে বিলম্ব হয় নি। এই সচেতন সাহিত্যিক বিদ্রোহের যুগকেই বলে কল্লোল যুগ।

‘কল্লোল’ একটি স্বতন্ত্র ‘যুগ’ কিনা, সে বিষয়ে বিতর্ক থাকলেও কল্লোল গোষ্ঠী বাংলা সাহিত্যে

এনেছিল পরিবর্তনের ঝড়। রবীন্দ্রনাথ থেকে সরে এসে কল্লোল সঙ্গ নিল অবজ্ঞাত মানুষের জনতায়, নিম্নগত মধ্যবিত্তদের জনতার, কয়লাকুঠিতে, খোলার বস্তিতে, ফুটপাতে, প্রতারিত ও পরিত্যক্ত এলাকায়। নরেশচন্দ্র সেনগুপ্ত, শৈলজানন্দ মুখোপাধ্যায়, অচিন্ত্যকুমার সেনগুপ্ত, প্রেমেন্দ্র মিত্র প্রমুখ স্বকীয়তার পথে হেঁটেছেন। এই স্বকীয়তা কখনোই বিরোধিতা নয়, বরং তা প্রতিভার ও পরিপূর্ণতার। তবে এই নতুনরা রবীন্দ্রনাথের কাব্যকে আক্রমণ করেই তাদের সাহিত্যিক জীবনের সূচনা করেছিলেন।

বুদ্ধদেব বসু সহ অনেকেই রবীন্দ্রনাথকে প্রণাম জানালেও কল্লোল গোষ্ঠী-ই প্রথম তাদের নিজেদের প্রচেষ্টায় বাংলা সাহিত্যের মোড় ফেরানোর ঘণ্টা বাজিয়েছিল। ‘কল্লোল’ তার মাত্র সাত বছরের (১৩৩০-১৩৩৬) আয়ুষ্কাল নিয়েই নবতর অধ্যায়ের পত্তন করেছিল। ফুবেয়ার, জোলা, গোর্কি, গোগল, তুর্গেনেভ, ডস য়ভস্কি, টলস য়কে বাঙালি চিনতে-জানতে পারল কল্লোল-কবিদের মাধ্যমে। কল্লোলের হাত ধরে বাঙালি-মন পেয়েছিল আন্তর্জাতিক সাহিত্যের নানা খবর, বস্তুধর্মী ও জনগণতান্ত্রিক চেতনা, যৌবনসংলগ্নতাবোধ, প্রেমের মনস্তাত্ত্বিক জটিলতা, পারিবারিক ও সামাজিক সম্পর্কের নতুন মূল্যবোধ প্রভৃতি। বাংলা কাব্যে তাঁরা নিয়ে এলেন অরবীন্দ্রিক-দৃষ্টিকোণ। জীবনচর্যায়, মানসিকতায় কল্লোল-কবিরা নিশ্চিত স্থিতাবস্থার বিরুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহ ঘোষণা করে রবীন্দ্র-সুলভ কল্পনার পরিবর্তে তাঁরা বস্তুবাদীর মনোভঙ্গি গ্রহণ করল। তাঁদের প্রাণমন্ত্র হল যৌবনধর্মের অবিবেচনা, বলিষ্ঠ দেহবাদের বাস্তবধর্মী উপস্থাপন, জনচেতনার ঐতিহাসিক ও সাহিত্যিক তাৎপর্য অনুসন্ধান, সমাজের নানা শ্রেণীর মানুষকে যথাযোগ্য স্থান দেওয়া, উনিশ শতকীয় আনন্দ সন্ধানী বিশ্বাসকে ও জীবনমুক্তিবাদের পোষ্টা না হয়ে জীবনের জটিল বাস্তবকে দেখা। ভাষায়, কারুকৃতিতে ও শিল্পকর্মে বাচনিক বলয় রচনা করলেন তাঁরা। যার স্পষ্ট প্রভাব পরবর্তী বাংলা সাহিত্যে লক্ষিত হয়। তাই বাংলা কবিতার আধুনিক পর্যায়ে কল্লোলের ভাবগত ও প্রকরণগত মর্যাদা যথেষ্ট রয়েছে।

বুদ্ধদেব বসু জানিয়েছেন-

“কল্লোলে’র ফেনা কেটে যাবার পরে, চিন্তায় স্থিতিলাভের চেষ্টা দেখা দিলো সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের ‘পরিচয়’ আর ‘কবিতা’ পত্রিকায় নবীনতর কবিদের স্বাক্ষর পড়ল একে একে।”^{২৭}

কল্লোলের আবেগতপ্ত ফেনা কেটে যাওয়ার পর বিদ্রোহের স্বচ্ছ রূপটি প্রকাশিত হলো, চিন্তায় স্থিতিলাভের চেষ্টা দেখা দিল। তাই ‘পরিচয়’ (১৯৩১) ও ‘কবিতা’ (১৯৩৫) পত্রিকা বাংলা কাব্যজগতে নতুন ভূমিকায় অবতীর্ণ হল। সুধীন্দ্রনাথের সমালোচনা বাংলা কাব্য-ভুবনে মননশীল, বুদ্ধিদীপ্ত পরিবেশ সৃষ্টি করলো। নজরুলের চড়া গলার পরে, প্রেমেন্দ্র মিত্রের হৃদ্যগুণের পরে, বাংলা কবিতায় দেখা দিল সংহতি, বুদ্ধিঘনিত ঘনতা, বিষয় ও শব্দগ্রহণে ব্রাত্যধর্ম, গদ্য-পদ্যের মিলনসানধানের সংকেত। আধুনিক কবিদের কাছে পথরুদ্ধ করে থাকা রবীন্দ্রনাথ আর কোনো প্রধানতম সমস্যা না হলেও পারস্পরিক প্রাচুর্যে ও বৈসাদৃশ্যে আবির্ভূত হলেন জীবনানন্দ দাশ, সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত, অমিয় চক্রবর্তী ও বিষ্ণু দে এবং বাংলা কবিতার নাবালক দশার অবসান ঘটল।

রবীন্দ্র-উত্তরসূরীদের যে সকলেই এক পথের পথিক, তা নয়। জীবনানন্দ দাশ ছিলেন দৃশ্যগন্ধস্পর্শময় জগতের কবি, তাঁর কবিতায় আমরা পাই জীবনের বিচিত্র লীলারহস্য, নিসর্গচেতনা,

জগতের পরিব্যাপ্ত রূপের মধ্যে নিজের ইন্দ্রিয়ানুভূতিকে সংলগ্ন করা, ক্লাস্তি চেতনা, প্রেমচেতনা, ভৌগোলিক চেতনা, ইতিহাসচেতনা, অস্তিত্ব চেতনা, কালচেতনা, জীবনের সংশয়-অনিশ্চয়তা, নাগরিক জীবনের ক্লেশময় ছবি ও তার বীভৎস বাস্তবতা, তিমির বিনাশী প্রত্যয়, রূপকল্প চেতনা প্রভৃতি। তিনি যেন বাংলা কাব্যজগতে এক নবতর ঐতিহ্যের জগৎ রচনা করলেন, যা একালের কবিতার অনিঃশেষ গঙ্গোত্রী।

বাংলা সাহিত্যে অবক্ষয় চেতনার কবি সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত। তাঁর জগৎ মনন-চিন্তনের জগৎ। কবিতার জগতে তিনি ‘রূপকারী বিবেক’, কবিতা তাঁর দৃঢ়সংবদ্ধ রূপকল্পের বুদ্ধিঘটিত ঘনত্ব। তাঁর এই কাব্যজগত না জীবনানন্দীয় অনুভূতির জগৎ, না বুদ্ধদেব বসুর মতো তিনি রোমান্টিক, আবার তাঁকে অমিয় চক্রবর্তীর মতো আধ্যাত্মিকতার প্রাণরসে জারিত কবিও বলা যায় না।

প্রেমেন্দ্র মিত্র যেন সমুদ্রপ্রেমিক নাবিকের মতো। তাঁর কবিতা মূলত সামাজিক, বুদ্ধিদীপ্ত, সর্বজনগম্য; তিনি নিজেই—

“আমি কবি যত কামারের আর কাঁসারির আর ছুতোরের

মুটে মজুরের,

— আমি কবি যত ইতরের!”^{২৪}

—রূপেই দেখতে ভালোবেসেছেন। পূর্বসূরী নজরুলের বিদ্রোহী কণ্ঠ, সাম্যবাদ, সর্বহারার প্রতি প্রীতি, কিন্তু তাঁর কবিতায় এসেছে হৃদয় সুরে নতুনত্ব। তিনি স্বপ্ন দেখতে ভালোবেসেছেন, তা বারবার আঘাতপ্রাপ্ত হলেও তিনি বিপ্লবের জন্য আশাবাদী। নগরজীবনের কবি হয়েও শেষ পর্যন্ত তিনি নাগরিক হয়ে ওঠেননি। হুইটম্যান, কার্ল স্যাণ্ডবার্গ প্রমুখ কবিদের প্রভাব সত্ত্বেও স্বকীয়তায় উজ্জ্বল অভিযাত্রী, মানবপ্রেমিক প্রেমেন্দ্র মিত্র পরম যত্নশীলভাবেই প্রাণেশ্বরী করে তোলেন। তাঁর কবিতায় পুরুষ অদৃষ্টের অগ্নিঙ্গাব জমে থাকে।

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর অপার পিপাসা ‘অমৃতের তরে।’ তিনি মূর্ত শরীরী কবি, রোমান্টিকতা তাঁর কবিতার মূলে। তাঁর মধ্যে দেখা গেল শরীর উত্তরিত প্রেমের অশ্বেষণী দৃষ্টি এবং সেই নান্দনিক স্তরে উন্নীত হওয়ার আত্মিক সাধনা। বুদ্ধদেব বসুর কবিতা, তাঁর সাধনা। মূলত—

“কবিতার রূপকর্মে নিয়ত পরীক্ষা। তিনিই প্রথম উত্তররৈবিক যাঁর লেখায় নান্দনিক মর্মান্তরণের বাসনা আভাষিত হয়ে উঠেছিল।”^{২৫}

কল্লোল যুগে রবীন্দ্র-পরিমণ্ডল থেকে মুক্ত হওয়ার প্রচেষ্টায় বুদ্ধদেবের কবিতায় দেহগত প্রেম, বয়ঃসন্ধিকালীন যৌবনোচ্ছ্বাস যেমন পাওয়া যায়, তেমনি শেষপর্যন্ত অমৃত এষণাতেই তৃপ্তির আনন্দ পেতে চাইলেন তিনি।

“শিরায় শিরায় শত সরীসৃপ তোলে শিহরণ,

লোলুপ লালসা করে অন্যমনে রসনালেহন।

তবু আমি অমৃতভিলাষী!”^{২৬}

তবে বুদ্ধদেব নিজে আদ্যন্ত রোম্যান্টিক প্রেমিক কবি, কারণ যে কোনো সামাজিক অবস্থাতেই তিনি প্রেমের কবিতা লিখতে পারেন। তাঁর ‘কোনো মেয়ের প্রতি’ কবিতায় এই গুণের প্রভাব দেখি-

“মোরা কাছাকাছি থাকি, রাস্তাটির এপার-ওপার,

তুমি মোর নাম জানো, আমিও জেনেছি তব নাম।

তুমি মোর নাম শোনো, শুনেছি তোমার ডাক-নাম।

আমারে দেখিলে তুমি-পারিবে না?— চিনিতে পারিবে,”^{২৭}

অসংখ্য বিদেশী ও সংস্কৃত কবিতার সার্থক অনুবাদ করে তিনি রবীন্দ্রোত্তর বাংলা কাব্যকে সমৃদ্ধ করেছেন।

বিষ্ণু দে’র মধ্যে আমরা পেলাম সমকালীন জীবনপ্রবাহ, আধুনিক সময়ের সংকট, বৈশ্বিক কালচেতনা, রাজনৈতিক ভাবনা, মার্কসীয় দর্শন, লোকায়ত চেতনার সঙ্গে কবিতার নান্দনিকতার মিলন, রসজ্ঞানের পরিশীলতা, পাশ্চাত্য শিল্প-সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতি চর্চা, কালের মাত্রায় সত্তার স্বকান, কবি ও ব্যক্তিসত্তার জটিল জিজ্ঞাসায় এক দায়বোধ, জীবনের নানাপ্রকার দ্বন্দ্ব-জটিলতাকে অতিক্রম করে এক প্রত্যয়সিদ্ধ দার্শনিকতার প্রতিষ্ঠা।

অমিয় চক্রবর্তী হলেন ‘বৈজ্ঞানিক মরমিয়াবাদের’ কবি। তিনি রবীন্দ্র সান্নিধ্যন্য, রবীন্দ্র-জীবনদর্শনের পর্যাপ্ত অংশীদার। কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রজগতের অধিবাসী হয়েও কাব্য পরিমণ্ডলে আনলেন বিস্ময়কর প্রকরণগত বৈচিত্র্য, আমদানি করলেন নানারকম গদ্য বিষয়ের। কবিতার মধ্যে কোথাও কোথাও রবীন্দ্রনাথ-নির্ভরতা থাকলেও দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির অনন্যতায় প্রকাশভঙ্গির ব্যাপকতায় তিনি প্রভূত পরিমাণে আত্মনির্ভরশীল ও স্বতন্ত্র পথের পথিক। তাঁর কবিতায় ব্যাপ্ত আছে এক আশ্চর্য বৈদেহিকতা, ‘রক্তমাংসের আক্রমণ’ সেখানে যথেষ্ট কম। জীবনানন্দের সঙ্গে তাঁর বৈপরীত্য মেরু প্রমাণ এবং সুধীন্দ্রনাথের দ্বন্দ্বরক্তিম মানসও তাঁর সুদূরবর্তী।

জীবনানন্দ, বিষ্ণু দে, সুধীন্দ্রনাথ-এঁরা সকলেই রবীন্দ্রনাথকে আত্মীকরণ করলেও তাঁর প্রতি মোহাচ্ছন্ন থাকলেন না। আধুনিক জগৎ ও জীবনের সংশয়, ক্লাস্তি, বিতৃষ্ণা থেকে উপকরণ পেয়েছিলেন, পাশ্চাত্য সাহিত্য ভাণ্ডার থেকেও সৃষ্টির রসদ খুঁজে পেয়েছিলেন, আবার রবীন্দ্রনাথকেও পাথেয় করেছিলেন। আবার বিষ্ণু দে’র কাছে ব্যাপারটা অন্যরকম-

“বিষ্ণু দে ব্যাঙ্গনুকৃতির তির্যক উপায়েই সহ্য ক’রে নিলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথকে;”^{২৮}

আবার কবি সুধীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর জীবনভুক-পিশাচ-প্রমথর অবক্ষয়ী জীবনের কাব্যিক বিন্যাসে রবীন্দ্রিক বাক্যবিন্যাস ব্যবহার করলেন। তাঁর ‘তন্নী’ (১৩৩৭) কাব্যটি রবীন্দ্রনাথের উদ্দেশ্য অর্পিত হয়েছে; ঋণশোধ তাঁর লক্ষ্য নয়, ঋণস্বীকার তাঁর কাম্য। রবীন্দ্রকাব্যজগতের মহান নক্ষত্র অমিয় চক্রবর্তী রবীন্দ্র জ্যোৎস্নায় স্নাত হয়েও প্রকরণগত বৈচিত্র্যে অনন্য স্রষ্টা। প্রকৃতপক্ষে এঁরা কেউই রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রতিভায় আচ্ছন্ন হয়ে, তাঁর মোহনরূপে ভুলে তাঁকে আচ্ছন্ন করলেন না, তাঁকে কাজে লাগালেন, তাঁর ঐতিহ্যকে বাংলা কবিতার খাতে বইয়ে দিয়ে তাঁর প্রভাবকে সার্থক করে তুললেন বাংলা কবিতার পরবর্তী ধারায়।

আমরা এই পর্যায়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথের আক্ষরিক অনুকরণের উপায়ে উৎকৃষ্ট ও মৌলিক একটি কবিতার উদাহরণ দেখতে পাই সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায়ের লেখনীতে। যখন রবীন্দ্রনাথের ‘মানসী’ কাব্যের ‘বধূ’ কবিতার ‘বেলা যে প’ড়ে এল জলকে চল’- এর অনুকরণে লেখেন ‘গলির মোড়ে বেলা যে পড়ে এলো’ আর ‘কলসী কাঁখে লয়ে পথ সে বাঁকা’-র পরিবর্তে ‘কলসি কাঁখে চলছি মৃদু চালে।’ সেই প্রসঙ্গে আমরা স্মরণ করতে পারি বুদ্ধদেব বসুর ‘কালের পুতুল’ গ্রন্থের ‘সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায় : পদাতিক’ প্রবন্ধে উল্লিখিত ‘বধূ’ কবিতা প্রসঙ্গে প্রণিধানযোগ্য মন্তব্য-

“এ-কবিতায় রবীন্দ্রনাথের ‘বধূ’কে ব্যঙ্গ করা হয় নি, তাকে বিশশতকী জীবন পর্যন্ত সম্প্রসারিত করা হয়েছে। বিষয় এক, নামও এক, রবীন্দ্রনাথের কোনো-কোনো বাক্যাংশও ব্যবহৃত হয়েছে, তবু কিংবা সেই জন্যই-এটি সত্যিকার মৌলিক রচনা হ’তে হয়েছে।”^{৯৯}

রবীন্দ্রনাথের কবিতার মর্ম না বুঝেই প্রতি বনি করতেন সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ বা ঐ গোষ্ঠীর কবিরা, তাই তাঁদের পক্ষে এ জাতীয় লেখা সম্ভব ছিল না। আর এই কবিদের সম্যকরূপে ধারণা ছিল, তাঁরা রবীন্দ্রনাথের কাছে কতখানি ঋণী। যদিও পাঠকের কাছে তা স্বীকার করেছেন নির্দিধায়। কখনো আস্ত লাইন তুলে দিয়েছেন আপন পরিকল্পনার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে। তাঁদের চরিত্রে ছিল নিষ্কণ্টতা ও জোরালো সাহস, যা আধুনিক কবিদের কবিতা পরবর্তী সময়ে যথেষ্ট সমাদৃত নয়। কিন্তু তাঁরা বাংলা কবিতার সংকটকালে আবির্ভূত হয়ে মৌল সত্যের পুনরুদ্ধারে ব্রতী হয়েছিলেন, অন্তত এই কারণে তাঁরা বাংলা সাহিত্যের ইতিহাসে স্মরণীয় ও শ্রদ্ধেয় হয়ে থাকবেন। তাঁরা উপলব্ধি করেছিলেন, জীবন দিয়ে সত্য-শিব-সুন্দরের সন্ধান করতে হয়, তাকে তৈরী অবস্থায় গুরুর উত্তরাধিকার সূত্রে লাভ করা যায় না। কাব্যকলাও উত্তরাধিকার সূত্রে লভ্য নয়, তা আপন শ্রমে ও মেধায় উপার্জন করতে হয়। সুবীন্দ্রনাথ তাঁর ‘সূর্যাবর্ত’ প্রবন্ধে বলেছেন এই একই বক্তব্য-

“রবীন্দ্রনাথ হল বাংলার সিদ্ধিদাতা গণেশ। তিনি তো আমাদের উৎসব অনুষ্ঠানের সূত্রধার বটেই, এমন কি তাঁর বাণী ব্যতিরেকে আমাদের ব্যবসা বাণিজ্যেও লাভ নেই। কারণ রবীন্দ্রপ্রতিভা মুখ্যত ভাবয়িত্রী হলেও, কায়য়িত্রী পরিকল্পনাতেও তিনি অদ্বিতীয় এবং শিল্পের সর্ববিধ বিভাগেই তাঁর সাফল্য যেমন বিস্ময়াবহ, তেমনি বাঙালির দৈনন্দিন জীবনেও তাঁর দান সুস্পষ্ট। তাঁর চিন্তাবৃত্তির অনুকরণ যদিও আজ তেমন প্রশংসা পায় না, তবুও অনেকের মতে রাবীন্দ্রিক বিশ্ববীক্ষাই তরুণ সাহিত্যের মূলধন।”^{১০০}

‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তরসাধক’ প্রবন্ধটি চারটি পর্যায়ে বিভক্ত, প্রবন্ধের শেষে যুক্ত আছে একটি সংক্ষিপ্ত কিন্তু যুক্তিময় উপসংহার পর্যায়। তার আগে, বুদ্ধদেবের অভিমতগুলি প্রসঙ্গে যে সামান্য ত্রুটি লক্ষ্য করা যায় সেই বিষয়ে আলোচনা করব।

প্রথম অংশে, বুদ্ধদেব বসুর মনে হয়েছে, ‘গীতাঞ্জলি’ পর্যন্তই রবীন্দ্র-প্রতিভার স্ফূরণ সর্বোচ্চ ঘটেছে। এ মত স্বভাবতই যথার্থ নয়। সমস্ত জীবন রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিজেকে ভেঙেছেন, তৈরী করেছেন নিজে নিজেকে। তাঁর ‘গীতাঞ্জলি’ উত্তরপর্বে কাব্যাদর্শ কতরূপে কতভাবে যে পরিবর্তিত হয়েছে তার সীমা নেই। গদ্যছন্দের সকল প্রয়োগ ‘পুনশ্চ’ বা বলাকার মুক্তক ছন্দ যেমন অভিনব, তেমনি ‘শেষ স্তবক’, ‘পত্রপুট’, ‘প্রান্তিকে’র কবিতাও ছি বিস্ময়করভাবে দ্যুতিময়।

দ্বিতীয় অংশে বুদ্ধদেবের অভিমত রবীন্দ্রনাথের অনিবার্য প্রভাবে অনুজ কবিরা স্বাতন্ত্র্য হারিয়ে রবি-অনুসারী হয়েছিলেন- যারা ‘রবীন্দ্রানুসারী কবিসমাজ’ নামে পরিচিত। তিনি বললেন, নজরুলের হাতেই এল প্রথম নতুনের বার্তা। এই মত আংশিক সত্য। কারণ, কালিদাস রায়, কুমুদরঞ্জন মল্লিক এবং সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত – এঁরা কেবল রবীন্দ্র-ছায়ায় হারিয়ে যাননি কালিদাস রায়ের কবিতায় বৈষ্ণবীয়-ভাব বা শ্যামল বঙ্গভূমির স্নিগ্ধতার পাশাপাশি কবিতার ভাব, চিত্রকল্প, অন্ত্যমিল-এসবে রয়েছে আধুনিকতার স্পর্শ। কবি কুমুদরঞ্জন মল্লিক ছিলেন রূপশিল্পী, তাঁর কবিতা-শরীরে দেশী-বিদেশী সাহিত্যিকের প্রভাব লক্ষ্য করা যায়। ইয়েটসের ‘বঙ শঙ্কশঙ্কু ত্তাঙ কসশনক্ত’-র সঙ্গে তাঁর ‘কাক’ কবিতার মিল রয়েছে, এলিয়টের ‘দি হলো মেন’ কবিতার পাশে কুমুদরঞ্জনের ‘মানুষের মাথা ফাঁকা আর ফাঁপা’, ‘অশরীরী’র সঙ্গে ডিলামিয়ারের ‘দি লিসনাস’-এর সাদৃশ্য-সমস্তই আমাদের লক্ষ্য করার বিষয়। তাই তিনি নিছক রবীন্দ্রানুসারী কবি, তা মেনে নেওয়া ঠিক হবে না। আবার, বুদ্ধদেব বসু যে তাচ্ছিল্যসূচক সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত সম্পর্কে এবং তাঁকে যে শুধুমাত্র রবীন্দ্রনাথের তরল-সরল সংস্করণ ভেবেছেন, তা সমর্থন করা যায় না। কারণ, তিনি কেবল ছন্দ নিয়ে ছেলেখেলা করেন নি, তিনি বাংলা ছন্দে ইংরেজি, সংস্কৃত ও প্রাদেশিক ভাষার ছন্দের বিচিত্র রীতির প্রয়োগ করেছেন। তাই স্বয়ং মোহিতলাল তাঁর তীক্ষ্ণ মেধা, ব্যাপক অধ্যয়ন, শিল্প সাহিত্য অনুশীলনের প্রভূত প্রশংসা করেছেন। সত্যেন্দ্রনাথের কবিতা রবীন্দ্র-ব্যবহৃত প্রকৃতি-প্রেম ছাড়াও ‘জাতের পাঁতি’, ‘মেথর’, ‘সহমরণ’, ‘শূদ্র’ প্রভৃতি অন্যস্বাদের স্বকীয়তায় প্রতিষ্ঠিত। আবার, নারায়ণ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় ‘আদি অনুবাদক’ হিসেবে সম্মানিত করেছেন সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ দত্তকে। সংস্কৃত-ইংরেজি-আরবী-ফারসী-জাপানি-ফরাসি ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন ভাষা থেকে কবিতা অনুবাদের পাশাপাশি বিভিন্ন ভাষার ছন্দ প্রয়োগ করেছেন বাংলা কবিতায়। কীটসের ‘লা বেল্ দম্ সাঁ মিয়াসি’র অনুসরণে ‘নিঠুরা সুন্দরী’ বা মেঘদূতের অনুবাদ ‘যক্ষের নিবেদন’ হাইনের কবিতা প্রভৃতি অনুবাদমূলক বৃত্তস্বরূপ আশ্রয় করে সঠিকভাবে প্রস্তুত হয়েছেন। তাই শুধুমাত্র ঐতিহাসিক কারণেই স্মরণীয় নয়-উত্তরকালে জীবনানন্দ বা সুধীন্দ্রনাথেও তাঁর প্রভাব দেখতে পাওয়া যায়।

তৃতীয় অংশটি মূলত নজরুল ইসলামকে কেন্দ্র করে। নজরুল যথার্থই অসংযমের মধ্যেই শিল্প প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছিলেন; কিন্তু তিনি অসংবৃত, শিথিল, প্রগলভ্-এই সমস্ত মন্তব্য একপেশে। তাঁর ‘বিদ্রোহী’, ‘সব্যসাচী’, ‘আমার কৈফিয়ৎ’, ‘সর্বহারী’ কাব্যগুলি একশ্রেণীর, আবার ‘আজ সৃষ্টি সুখের উল্লাসে’, ‘বিজয়িনী’, ‘বাতায়ন পাশে গুবাক তরুর সারি’-এই সমস্ত প্রেমের কবিতা অন্য শ্রেণীর। তবে এইসব কাব্য-কবিতাগুলি কখনোই কেবলমাত্র তাঁর স্বভাব কবিত্বের দৃষ্টান্ত নয়। “আমার নয়ন/আমারি সুন্দরে করে অগ্নিবরিষণ”- এই বেদনাবোধ তাঁকে করেছে নীলকণ্ঠ প্রেমিক। তিনি সুন্দরের হাতে বীণা ও পদ্ম যেমন দেখেছেন, তেমনই দেখেছেন তাঁর চোখুড়া জল তাই এমন কবিকে ‘তেমন কাজে লাগলো না’ বলাটা অপ্রাসঙ্গিক। আধুনিকতার প্রধান কাণ্ঠারী জীবনানন্দের প্রথম জীবনের কবিতাতে সমসাময়িক কবি নজরুলের সুদূরপ্রসারী প্রভাব ও গুরুত্ব আজও স্মরণীয়।

শেষ অংশে এসে বুদ্ধদেব বসু খুব যত্নসহকারে তাঁর বক্তব্যসমূহ পেশ করেছেন। কিন্তু সেখানে ‘কল্লোল’ নিয়ে গভীর আলোচনা থাকলেও সেই সময়ের শক্তিশালী পত্রিকা সমূহ, যেমন ‘কালিকলম’ (১৯২৬), ‘প্রগতি’ (১৯৩৭), পূর্বাশা (১৯৩৯)। শনিবারের চিঠি (১৯২৪) উল্লিখিত প্রবন্ধে স্থান

পায়নি। জীবনানন্দ নিয়ে আলোচনাও যেন এক খণ্ড দর্শন। জীবনানন্দ দাশ যেন রবীন্দ্রনাথের পর আরেকটি নতুন আকাল-যিনি তাঁর কবিতায় জীবন ও সমাজের সমগ্র রূপকে স্থান দিয়েছিলেন। তাই তো উত্তর-রবীন্দ্র বাংলা কবিতায় শ্রেষ্ঠ কবি হিসেবে জীবনানন্দই সর্বাধিক সমাদৃত।

নজরুল ইসলাম থেকে সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায় পর্যন্ত দুই মহাযুদ্ধের মধ্যবর্তীকালে রবীন্দ্রাশ্রিত বাংলা কবিতার নাবালক দশার অবসান হলেও ইতিমধ্যে বাংলা কবিতায় কিছু সমস্যা প্রকট হয়েছে। জীবনানন্দ, বিষ্ণু দে বা অন্য কারো আবর্ত থেকে বাংলা কবিতা নিজেকে মুক্ত করতে পারছেন না। রবীন্দ্রানুসরণের ফাঁড়া পূর্ববর্তী কবিরা কাটিয়ে উঠলেও নবাগতদের কাছে এক নবতর সমস্যা এসে দাঁড়িয়েছে, যদিও তা খুব স্বাভাবিক। কারণ, পুনরাবৃত্তির অভ্যাসের চাপে পুরোনো খোসা ফেটে গিয়ে ভিতর থেকে নতুন বীজের আবির্ভাব হয়। একালের কবিতার ক্ষেত্রে ‘টেকনিক সর্বস্বতা’ মারাত্মক ব্যাধি হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে। বুদ্ধদেব বসু একে কবিতার দুর্লক্ষণ বলে মনে করেছেন। যদিও একসময় তিনি তার সমর্থন করেছিলেন। আবার বিষ্ণু দে তাঁর ‘চোরাবালি’ কাব্যে ও অমিয় চক্রবর্তী ‘খসড়া’ কাব্যে যে প্রকৌশল অবলম্বন করেছেন, তা বর্তমানে গ্রহণীয় নয়। অনেকসময় কাব্যের কলাকৌশল মুদ্রাদোষে পরিণত হয়েছে। তাই কলাকৌশলকে কবিতার একমাত্র মানদণ্ড হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা উচিত নয়। প্রকরণ সর্বস্বতা কখনোই কবিতার মুখ্য প্রাণধর্ম হবেনা, যদি বক্তব্য মহৎ ও মহোচ্চ হয়। তবে একথায় অর্থ এই নয় যে, কবিতা প্রকরণ কৌশল বর্জিত হবে। বুদ্ধদেব বসুর মতে-

“এখন বাংলা কবিতায় স্বাচ্ছন্দ্য-সাধনার সময় এসেছে নতুন ক’রে, প্রয়োজন হয়েছে স্বতঃস্ফূর্তিকে ফিরে পাবার।”^{৩১}

এ বিষয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর অবশ্য সহায়ক। রবীন্দ্রনাথের চরণতলাশ্রয়ছিল্ন হয়ে বাংলা কবিতা বেরিয়ে এসেছিল, তাই বাংলা কবিতায় পরিণতির চিহ্ন প্রকাশমান। বাংলা সাহিত্যের আদিগন্ত ব্যাপ্ত হয়ে আছে রবীন্দ্রনাথ, তিনি মিশে আছেন বাংলা ভাষার রক্তের প্রতি অনুতে। তাঁর ঋণ স্বতঃসিদ্ধ। কেবল বর্তমানকালেই নয়, যুগে যুগে বাঙালি লেখকরা স্বাভাবিকভাবেই ঋণী হয়ে থাকবেন। প্রবন্ধের শেষে এসে বুদ্ধদেব বসু মন্তব্য করেন-

“রবীন্দ্রনাথের উপযোগিতা, ব্যবহার্যতা ক্রমশই বিস্তৃত হ’য়ে, বিচিত্র হ’য়ে প্রকাশ পাবে বাংলা সাহিত্যে। তাঁরই ভিত্তির উপর বেড়ে উঠতে হবে আগামী কালের বাঙালি কবিকে, বাংলা কবিতার বিবর্তনের পরবর্তী ধাপেরও ইঙ্গিত আছে এইখানে।”^{৩২}

রবীন্দ্রনাথকে ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে, আত্মীকরণের দ্বারা, তাঁর ঐতিহ্যের যথার্থ রূপায়ণের মধ্য দিয়ে বাংলা সাহিত্যের প্রকৃত প্রাণের মুক্তি। রবীন্দ্রনাথকে নানাবিধ উপায়ে প্রাপ্তির স্বীকৃতিতেই প্রবন্ধের পরিসমাপ্তি ঘটেছে।

বুদ্ধদেব বসু আধুনিক কবিদের মানস দৃষ্টির উন্মোচন করে, তাঁদের আধুনিক কাব্যসৃষ্টির, কাব্যকৃতির পরিচয় দিয়েছেন। এই প্রবন্ধের সমগ্র অংশ জুড়ে রয়েছে প্রাবন্ধিকের বিশ্লেষণী ও সমালোচক অন্তর্দৃষ্টির নিদর্শন। প্রবন্ধটিতে কাব্যে রবীন্দ্রনাথের অবদান, উত্তরকালের কীর্তমান কবিরা তাঁর কাছে কতখানি ঋণস্বীকার করেছেন এবং তাঁর থেকে নতুন ভাবনা ও প্রকরণে উত্তরকালের

কবির কীভাবে স্নাতকোত্তর নিজেদের প্রতিষ্ঠিত করালেন তার ব্যাখ্যা দিয়েছেন। পাশাপাশি রবীন্দ্রনাথের থেকে গ্রহণ-বর্জন যোগ্যতার পরিমাণ অকুণ্ঠভাবে স্বীকার করেছেন। আধুনিক কাব্যধারার পাঠ গ্রহণে রচনাটি এক মহতী প্রয়াস, যা বুদ্ধদেব বসুর সমালোচক দৃষ্টি ও সৃষ্টিশীল ক্ষমতা বিরল ব্যতিক্রমী ফলশ্রুতি।

অনুভূতির গভীরতাবোধ ও মননের আলো বিচ্ছুরিত না হলে কবিতা তো হয়ে উঠবেই নিরাশ্রয় শব্দের কঙ্কাল। আলোচ্য প্রবন্ধটি সমালোচনাধর্মী হলেও রচনাটি হয়েছে বুদ্ধদেবীয় সৃজনী কল্পনার প্রতিশ্রুতি। বিষয়ের উপস্থাপনায় তিনি কখনো রচনাটিকে যেমন তথ্যভারাক্রান্ত হতে দেন নি, তেমনি তাতে বজায় রেখেছেন একটা প্রবহমান বেগ ও একটি মনোহারী গদ্যের ধারা, যা হয়েছে লেখকের নিজস্ব চেতনার অনাবিল ক্রমনিঃসরণ।

তথ্যসূত্র :

- ১। ‘আমার ছেলেবেলা’, প্রথম প্রকাশ, মার্চ ১৯৭৩, এম.সি.সরকার এণ্ড সন্স প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৬।
- ২। ‘আমার ছেলেবেলা’, ‘বুদ্ধদেব বসুর প্রবন্ধ সংগ্রহ’, প্রথম প্রকাশ, ২০ মে ২০০৫, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ বাংলা আকাদেমি, পৃষ্ঠা-১০-১১।
- ৩। ‘আমার কালের কয়েকজন কবি : বুদ্ধদেব বসু : জগদীশ ভট্টাচার্য’, ভারবি, আগস্ট-২০০৪, পৃষ্ঠা-১৫৩।
- ৪। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, ‘সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৫।
- ৫। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর, ‘সাহিত্য’, ‘সাহিত্যের সামগ্রী’, বিশ্বভারতী প্রকাশিত, চতুর্থ সংস্করণ, শ্রাবণ ১৩৮৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১৩।
- ৬। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, ‘সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৫।
- ৭। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, ‘সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৫।
- ৮। ‘উনিশ শতকের নিষিদ্ধ গ্রন্থ ও কবি গোবিন্দ চন্দ্র দাস’, কুমুদ কুমার ভট্টাচার্য, ভূমিকা অংশ।
- ৯। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, ‘সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৬।
- ১০। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, ‘সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৬।
- ১১। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, ‘সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক’, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৬।
- ১২। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, ‘সঙ্গ : নিসঙ্গতা : রবীন্দ্রনাথ’, ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ : বিশ্বকবি ও বাঙালি’, এম.সি.সরকার এণ্ড সন্স প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড, তৃতীয় সংস্করণ, জানুয়ারি ১৯৯১, পৃষ্ঠা-২০৬।
- ১৩। ‘সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের প্রবন্ধ সংগ্রহ’, ‘সূর্যাবর্ত’, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, প্রথম সংস্করণ, কার্তিক ১৩৯০, পৃষ্ঠা-২৬৫।

- ১৪। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৬।
- ১৫। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৭।
- ১৬। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৭।
- ১৭। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১০৮।
- ১৮। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১০।
- ১৯। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১০।
- ২০। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১০।
- ২১। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১৩।
- ২২। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১৩।
- ২৩। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১৫।
- ২৪। 'কবি', 'প্রথমা' কাব্যগ্রন্থ, প্রেমেন্দ্র মিত্র, ইণ্ডিয়ান অ্যাসোসিয়েটেড পাবলিশিং কোং লিমিটেড, নতুন সংস্করণ, ৭ ই আষাঢ়, ১৩৬১, পৃষ্ঠা-৬।
- ২৫। 'বাংলা সাহিত্যের রেখালেখ্য', আলোকরঞ্জন দাশগুপ্ত, দেবীপ্রসাদ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, পৃষ্ঠা-৪৬৩।
- ২৬। 'বন্দীর বন্দনা', বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'বুদ্ধদেব বসুর শ্রেষ্ঠ কবিতা', নাভানা প্রিন্টিং ওয়ার্কস্ লিমিটেড, প্রথম মুদ্রণ, ফাল্গুন ১৩৫৯, পৃষ্ঠা-১৫।
- ২৭। 'কোনো মেয়ের প্রতি', বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'বুদ্ধদেব বসুর শ্রেষ্ঠ কবিতা', নাভানা প্রিন্টিং ওয়ার্কস্ লিমিটেড, প্রথম মুদ্রণ, ফাল্গুন ১৩৫৯, পৃষ্ঠা-২৪।
- ২৮। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১৬।
- ২৯। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'কালের পুতুল', 'সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায়: পদাতিক', নিউ এজ পাবলিশার্স প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড, দ্বিতীয় সংস্করণ, জুলাই ১৯৮৪, পৃষ্ঠা-৯৮।
- ৩০। 'সুবীন্দ্রনাথ দত্তের প্রবন্ধ সংগ্রহ', 'সূর্যাবর্ত', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, প্রথম সংস্করণ, কার্তিক ১৩৯০, পৃষ্ঠা-২৫৫।
- ৩১। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১৭।
- ৩২। বুদ্ধদেব বসু, 'সাহিত্য চর্চা, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও উত্তর সাধক', দে'জ পাবলিশিং, নবম সংস্করণ, এপ্রিল ২০১৮, পৃষ্ঠা-১১৭।

বাঙালি বিবাহের লোকাচার : ঐতিহ্য না ইতিহাস ?

ড. অমিত কুমার নন্দী

সারসংক্ষেপ : অবাধ যৌনতাকে নিয়মাবদ্ধ করতে এবং ভবিষ্যৎ প্রজন্মকে সুরক্ষিত করে মানবসমাজের অগ্রগতিকে অব্যাহত ও সুশৃঙ্খল করে রাখার জন্য সামাজিক প্রতিষ্ঠানস্বরূপ বিবাহ প্রথার উদ্ভব এবং তাকে কেন্দ্র করে সৃষ্টি হয়েছে নানা লৌকিক আচার ও সংস্কার, যেগুলি বর্তমানে বিবাহের কৃত্যানুষ্ঠান নামে পরিচিত। সেগুলি কখনো লোকাচার বা দেশাচার, আবার কখনো বা শাস্ত্রাচারের নামে পরিগণিত হয়ে এসেছে। বাঙালি বিবাহের মধ্যেও কিছু কৃত্যানুষ্ঠান প্রাচীন কাল থেকে আজও সমানভাবে পালিত হয়ে আসছে। সময় পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে সেগুলিতেও বেশকিছু পরিবর্তন হয়েছে। এই গবেষণা প্রবন্ধ বাঙালি বিবাহের বহমান লোকাচারের কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানগুলি কী ঐতিহ্য, না ইতিহাস, সে বিষয়ে অনুসন্ধান প্রবৃত্ত হবে।

সূচক শব্দ: বাঙালি, বিবাহ, লোকাচার, ইতিহাস, ঐতিহ্য, কৃত্যানুষ্ঠান, পরম্পরা।

মূল আলোচনা

‘ইতিহাস’ শব্দটির আভিধানিক অর্থ হল ইতি-হ-আস অর্থাৎ যা ইতিপূর্বে ঘটেছে অর্থাৎ যেটি বা যে ঘটনা অতীতে ঘটেছে। এই ‘ইতিহাস’ শব্দের তুইংরেজি প্রতিশব্দ হল ‘History’ যা গ্রীক ভাষার শব্দ ‘Historia’ থেকে উৎপত্তি লাভ করেছে। এর আভিধানিক অর্থ হল “An inquiry designed to illicit truth” অর্থাৎ সত্য প্রকাশ করার উদ্দেশ্যে একটি পরিকল্পিত অনুসন্ধান। সংক্ষেপে গবেষণা বা সত্যানুসন্ধান। আবার ‘ইতিহাস’ শব্দটি সংস্কৃত ‘ইতিহ’ শব্দ থেকে এসেছে, যার আভিধানিক অর্থ ঐতিহ্য। কিন্তু ‘ঐতিহ্য’ শব্দের আভিধানিক অর্থ পরম্পরাগত উপদেশ এবং যার নির্দিষ্ট কোনো বক্তা নাই। অর্থাৎ যেটার ঘটনা, কার্য, উপদেশ, আদেশ, নির্দেশ, কর্ম ইত্যাদি মানুষের বংশ-পরম্পরায় বাহিত হয়ে এসেছে এবং যেটা ‘অলিখিত’ ও মানুষের মুখে মুখে প্রচারিত বা বাহিত। অর্থাৎ পারম্পরিক ভাবে দেখলে ‘ইতিহাস’ ও ‘ঐতিহ্য’ শব্দদুটির একই অর্থ প্রতিভাত হয়। কিন্তু একটু অর্থের গভীরে পর্যালোচনা করলে দেখা যায়, ইতিহাস মূলত দুই প্রকার একটি লিখিত ও অন্যটি হল মৌখিক। এই ‘লিখিত’ ইতিহাস ইতিপূর্বে ঘটে যাওয়া ঘটনার নথিভুক্তিকরণ বা লিপিবদ্ধকরণ বা সংরক্ষণ যেটি যে কোনো ভাষাকে আশ্রয় করে রচিত হয় এবং এই নথিভুক্তিকরণ বা লিপিবদ্ধকরণের মাধ্যমে পরবর্তী প্রজন্ম পূর্ববর্তী অতীতের ঘটনাবলী জানতে পারে। আর মৌখিক ইতিহাস মূলত মানুষের মুখে মুখে প্রজন্ম থেকে প্রজন্মান্তরে বাহিত হয়ে আসে। সেদিক থেকে ‘ঐতিহ্য’-এর সঙ্গে ‘মৌখিক ইতিহাস’-এর মিল আছে। কারণ ‘ঐতিহ্য’ ও মূলত মৌখিক; সেটি মানুষের মুখে মুখে বাহিত হয়ে আসে, বেশিরভাগ ক্ষেত্রেই তার কোন ‘লিখিত’ তথ্য থাকে না বা সেই ভাষাগতভাবে সেটির কোথাও নথিভুক্তি থাকে না। সুতরাং দেখা যাচ্ছে ‘ঐতিহ্য’ ও একপ্রকার ইতিহাস এবং সেটিকে মৌখিক ইতিহাস বলা যেতে পারে। কিন্তু ইতিহাসের মধ্যে যদি ঐতিহ্য খুঁজতে হয়, তাহলে সেই ‘ইতিহাস’ একরৈখিক বা ব্যক্তিকেন্দ্রিক হয়ে উঠতে পারে, কারণ ইতিহাস রচনা করেন ইতিহাসবিদ বা ঐতিহাসিক। আর সেই ইতিহাস রচনার মধ্যে যদি ‘ঐতিহ্য’ রক্ষা করতে হয় তাহলে ইতিহাস পক্ষপাত দোষে দুষ্ট হতে পারে। আবার ‘ঐতিহ্য’-এর মধ্যেও ইতিহাস লুকিয়ে থাকতে পারে; আর সেটা তথ্য ও ঘটনা পরম্পরায় লিপিবদ্ধ ও লিখিত হলেই ‘ইতিহাস’ এবং অলিখিত ভাবে পরবর্তী

শিক্ষক, বাংলা বিভাগ, ডিরোজিও মেমোরিয়াল কলেজ, রাজারহাট রোড, কলকাতা, ৭০০১৩৬, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ

প্রজন্মের কাছে মৌখিক ভাবে বাহিত হয়ে এলেই সেটি ‘মৌখিক ইতিহাস’ হয়ে ওঠে; এই মৌখিক ইতিহাসের মধ্যে ‘ঐতিহ্য’ লুকিয়ে থাকে, তবে সেটি লিখিত না হওয়ার জন্য সেই ঐতিহ্য যখন প্রজন্ম থেকে প্রজন্মান্তরে বাহিত হয়, তখন সময়, স্থান, কাল, পাত্র ও ঘটনা বিশেষে সেই মৌখিক পরম্পরা বা ঐতিহ্যের কিয়দংশের বদলও ঘটেতে পারে। ফলে ঐতিহ্যের মধ্যে কোহরেন্স তত্ত্ব অনুযায়ী ইতিহাসের সম্পূর্ণতা না থাকলেও তার কিয়দংশের মধ্যে মানুষের পূর্বলব্ধ কার্যকলাপের একটি ধারণা মেলে। সুতরাং বলা যেতে পারে ‘ইতিহাস’ ও ‘ঐতিহ্য’ পারস্পরিক সংবদ্ধতার সূত্রে আবদ্ধ হলেও ঐতিহ্যের মধ্যে স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই ইতিহাসের পদচিহ্ন থেকে যায় কিন্তু ‘ইতিহাস’-এর মধ্যে কোনো ঐতিহ্য না থাকাটাই বাঞ্ছনীয়। এই গবেষণাপত্রে বাঙালি বিবাহের লোকাচারগুলি ইতিহাস না ঐতিহ্য সে বিষয়ে আলোকপাত করবার চেষ্টা করা হবে। এই প্রসঙ্গে বলা যায় বাঙালি বিবাহের অসংখ্য লোকাচার বর্তমান, তাই গবেষণাপত্রের স্বল্প পরিধির মধ্যে নির্বাচিত ও উল্লেখযোগ্য কয়েকটি লোকাচারই পর্যালোচিত হবে।

এই গবেষণা প্রবন্ধের আলোচনায় প্রথমেই যে প্রশ্ন উঠে আসে তা হল এই ‘বাঙালি’ কারা? এই প্রশ্নের উত্তরে সংক্ষেপে বলা যায় বাঙালি একটি জাতি (ঋদ্রদ্বন্দ্ব-হুঁ)। কিন্তু এই ‘জাতি’ পরিচিতি নির্দিষ্ট করার আগে এই ‘জাতি’-র ভৌগোলিক অবস্থান নির্দিষ্ট করা জরুরী। কারণ ভৌগোলিক অবস্থানও অনেক সময় কোনো জাতির ইতিহাস ও ঐতিহ্যকে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করে। অবিভক্ত ভারতবর্ষের এই জাতি অধ্যুষিত অঞ্চল বৃহৎ অর্থে ‘বাংলা’, ‘বঙ্গদেশ’ বা সর্বোপরি বলা ভালো ‘বৃহৎবঙ্গ’ নামে পরিচিত ছিল। কিন্তু এই বৃহৎবঙ্গের সীমানা নির্দেশ করা বেশ কঠিন কাজ। এ প্রসঙ্গে দীনেশচন্দ্র সেন মহাশয় তাঁর বৃহৎবঙ্গ গ্রন্থে বলেছেন, “প্রাচীনকালে কতবার যে এ দেশের রাষ্ট্রীয় সীমার পরিবর্তন হইয়াছে, তাহা নির্ণয় করা সহজ নহে। পুরাকালে চীন, ব্রহ্ম, কলিঙ্গ, প্রাগজ্যোতিষপুর, আরাকান, ত্রিপুরা প্রভৃতি নানাদেশ এই ভূভাগের ভিন্ন ভিন্ন অংশের উপর আধিপত্য স্থাপন করিয়া এ দেশের রাষ্ট্রীয় কলেবরকে যুগে যুগে বৃদ্ধা-বিভক্ত ও বিচিত্র বর্ণে লাঞ্ছিত করিয়াছে।..... বঙ্গদেশ বলিতে ‘দ্বাদশ বঙ্গ’ অর্থাৎ বার খণ্ডে বিভক্ত বাঙ্গলা, - পূর্বের রেস্‌সুনের পশ্চিম সীমা হইতে ছোটনাগপুরের সীমা, উত্তরে প্রাগজ্যোতিষপুর ও দক্ষিণে তমলুক ও সুন্দরবন, - এই সমস্ত অঞ্চলটাই এক রাজ্যের অন্তর্গত বলিয়া বিবেচিত হইত।” সুতরাং উক্ত সীমানার মধ্যে যে মনুষ্যবর্গ বসবাস করে তারা ‘বাঙালি’ জাতি (Community) নামে পরিচিত। বিস্তারিত ভাবে বললে বলা যায়, উক্ত ভৌগোলিক সীমানার মধ্যে বসবাসকারী যে মনুষ্য সম্প্রদায় প্রায় হাজার বছরেরও বেশি সময় ধরে মূলত বাংলা ভাষা-সংস্কৃতিকে বহন করে নিয়ে চলেছে তাদেরকেই ‘বাঙালি’ জাতি নামে অভিহিত করা যেতে পারে।

বাঙালি বিবাহের লোকাচারগুলি ‘ইতিহাস’ না ‘ঐতিহ্য’-এর অন্তর্গত, সে আলোচনায় যাবার আগে যে প্রশ্নটি উঠে আসে, তা হল লোকাচার কী? লোকাচার শব্দটিকেও বিশ্লেষণ করলে দু’টি শব্দ পাওয়া যায়, একটি হল ‘লোক’ এবং অন্যটি ‘আচার’। সাধারণ ভাবে দেখতে গেলে ‘লোক’ শব্দটির সাধারণ অর্থ হল, জনসাধারণ বা মানুষ বা বহু ব্যক্তি। কিন্তু একটু বিস্তারিত ভাবে বলতে গেলে বলতে হয়, একই ধরনের প্রাকৃতিক বা ভৌগোলিক পরিবেশের মধ্যে বসবাসকারী এবং একই ঐতিহ্যের অনুরণসাকারী জনগোষ্ঠীকে লোক বলা যেতে পারে। আর এই জনগোষ্ঠী অক্ষরজ্ঞানসম্পন্ন বা নিরক্ষর, বৃহৎ বা ক্ষুদ্র এবং গ্রামীণ বা শহুরে দুইই হতে পারে। অর্থাৎ বলা যেতে পারে, লোকাচার হল লোক, মানুষ বা জনসাধারণে দ্বারা নির্মিত এবং পালিত প্রথাগত নিয়ম, পদ্ধতি বা রীতিনীতি যেগুলি আদিমকাল থেকে নানা শুভ অনুষ্ঠানে

পালন করা হয় সমাজের ব্যক্তি বা ব্যক্তির মঙ্গলের জন্য।

বিবাহের লোকাচারগুলিকে যদি ভালোভাবে পর্যবেক্ষণ ও পর্যালোচনা করা যায়, তাহলে দেখা যাবে পৃথিবীর সমস্ত দেশের, সমস্ত জাতি-সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে ব্যবহৃত লোকাচারগুলির মধ্যে যাদু ও দৈব সংস্কারবাহী অনুষ্ণ লুকিয়ে আছে। বিবাহের উদ্ভব মানবসভ্যতার সেই আদিমকাল থেকেই। তাই পৃথিবীতে মানবসভ্যতার গোড়াপত্তনের পর থেকে যখন বিবাহ প্রথার সূচনা হল তখন থেকে শুরু করে বর্তমান সময়ে এসে এটি একটি সামাজিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের মহীরাহে পরিণত হয়েছে। সূচনালগ্ন থেকে প্রতিষ্ঠানের রূপ পরিগ্রহের যাত্রাপথের দীর্ঘ সময়ে এই বিবাহ নামক প্রথার সঙ্গে যুক্ত হয়েছে নানান ধরনের রীতি-নীতি, নিয়ম-কানুন, আচার-বিচার-সংস্কার, বিশ্বাস, অনুষ্ঠান প্রভৃতি। পরবর্তী সময়ে বিবাহের এই আচার-সংস্কার-নিয়মনীতি নানা ধর্মীয় নিয়মের বেড়াজালে আবদ্ধ হয়েছে। ফলে সেই প্রাচীনকাল থেকে বর্তমান সময় পর্যন্ত বিবাহের যে রূপ দেখতে পাওয়া যায়, তার মধ্যে আছে একদিকে ধর্মীয় অনুষ্ণ ও অন্যদিকে আছে বিভিন্ন চিরায়ত দেশজ প্রথা ও বিশ্বাস। এই ধর্মীয় অনুষ্ণ আন্তে আন্তে শাস্ত্রীয় প্রথা রূপে প্রতিভাত এবং চিরায়ত দেশজ প্রথা ও বিশ্বাস প্রভৃতি লৌকিক প্রথা রূপে পরিগণিত। বাঙালি জাতি-সমাজও বহু প্রাচীন ও মিশ্রিত। তাই বাঙালি সমাজ-মানুষের মধ্যেও আদিমকাল থেকে চলে আসছে নানা আচার ও সংস্কার। বাঙালিদের মধ্যেও বিবাহের কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানের দুটি দিক - একটি হল শাস্ত্রাচার বা ধর্মীয় আচার এবং অন্যটি হল লোকাচার যেটিকে অনেক ক্ষেত্রে দেশাচার বা স্ত্রী-আচার নামেও অভিহিত করা হয়। এই গবেষণা প্রবন্ধে বাঙালি বিবাহের এই অজস্র লোকাচারগুলির মধ্যে কয়েকটিকে বেছে নিয়ে সেগুলি 'ইতিহাস' না 'ঐতিহ্য', সে বিষয়ে আলোকপাত করবার চেষ্টা করা হবে।

বাঙালি বিবাহের আচার-অনুষ্ঠানগুলির মধ্যে দুটি দিক লক্ষ্য করা যায়, একটি হল এর মধ্যে নিহিত প্রাচীনকাল থেকে চলে আসা সংস্কার ও বিশ্বাসের দিক; অন্যটি হল এর আনন্দ অনুষ্ঠানের দিক। সেই জন্য বিবাহের পাকাদেখা থেকে থেকে শুরু করে বিবাহের শেষ পর্যন্ত বিভিন্ন আচার-অনুষ্ঠান, নিয়ম-কানুন প্রভৃতি চলতেই থাকে। বাঙালি বিবাহের লোকাচারগুলিও যেহেতু ওই প্রাচীন আদিম সমাজের ঐতিহ্যবাহিত হয়ে এসেছে এবং সেজন্যই অঞ্চলভেদে বা এমনকি পরিবারভেদেও বিবাহের লোকাচারগুলির অল্প-বিস্তর ভিন্নতা-অভিন্নতা দেখা যায়। এই ভিন্নতা বা অভিন্নতা কখনো অঞ্চলভেদে, বর্ণভেদে (Caste), সামাজিক শ্রেণীভেদে, অর্থনৈতিকভেদে, কৃষ্টি বা সাংস্কৃতিক পরিমণ্ডলের দিক থেকে; এমনকি পরিবারভেদেও দেখা যায়। সুতরাং লোকাচারের মধ্যে যেহেতু অজস্র খুঁটিনাটি বৈচিত্র্য বর্তমান সেহেতু বিবাহে লোকাচারগুলির পালনের সময় নিয়েও ভিন্নতা থাকতে পারে। অর্থাৎ, কোনো লোকাচার হয়তো কোনো অঞ্চল বা পরিবারে বিবাহের আগের দিন পালিত হয়, আবার অন্য কোনো স্থান বা সময়ে ওই একই লোকাচার বিবাহের দিন পালিত হয়। তাই অনেকক্ষেত্রে কিছু লোকাচারের মূল কাঠামো এক থাকলেও, বাঙালি বিবাহের লোকাচারগুলির কিছু কিছু কৃত্যানুষ্ঠান অঞ্চলভেদে বদলে যাওয়ার কারণেই লোকাচারগুলিকে 'ইতিহাস' বলার থেকে 'ঐতিহ্য' বলাই বোধহয় সমীচীন হবে। কেননা লোকাচার যদি ইতিহাস হত, তাহলে সেগুলি স্থান-কাল-পাত্র ভেদে তার আচারিত কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানগুলি পরিবর্তিত হত না। কিন্তু লোকাচারগুলি মৌখিক পরম্পরায় বংশগতভাবে বাহিত হয়ে আসার ফলেই এগুলি ঐতিহ্য হয়ে উঠছে। কয়েকটি লোকাচারের উদাহরণ দিয়ে বিষয়টি স্পষ্ট করা যেতে পারে।

যেমন ঘটক বিবাহের সম্বন্ধ স্থির করে দিলে বিবাহের পাকাদেখার সময় উভয়পক্ষের কথাবার্তা পাকা

হয়ে গেলে “বিয়ের লগ্ন তারিখ ইত্যাদি দেখে একটি কাগজে লাল কালিতে যে পত্র লেখা হয়”, তাকে লগ্নপত্র বলা হয়। এই লগ্নপত্র কে পাটিপত্রও বলা হয়ে থাকে। “যে দিন বরকর্তা কনের বাড়িতে গিয়ে কনেকে আশীর্বাদ করে বিবাহ পাকাকরণ অনুষ্ঠান করে, সেই দিনই পাত্রপক্ষের পাত্রের নাম, পিতার নাম, বিবাহের দিনক্ষণ, লগ্ন ইত্যাদি লিখে স্বাক্ষর করে বরকর্তা কনেকর্তার হাতে দেন। শীতলপাটি শুভ বলে এই অনুষ্ঠান নতুন পাটির উপর বসে করারই নিয়ম। পাটিতে বসে এই পত্রকরণ অনুষ্ঠানটি হত বলে এই নামকরণ।” এই অনুষ্ঠানের পর উভয়পক্ষ পরস্পরকে নিমন্ত্রণ করে পান ও চিনি দিয়ে। একে পানচিনি বলা হয়। এই পানচিনির অনুষ্ঠান ঠিক লোকাচার নয়, তবে এর মধ্যে একটি সৌজন্যতা বোধ বা লৌকিকতা কাজ করে। এই অনুষ্ঠানটি পানখিলি, পানখিল, পানদেওয়া, পানলওয়া নামেও পরিচিত বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলে। তবে এই রীতিটি মূলত পূর্ববঙ্গীয়দের বিবাহরীতিতে দেখা যায়। “ময়মনসিংহ, ত্রিপুরা, শ্রীহট্ট প্রভৃতি অঞ্চলে আশীর্বাদ বা লগ্নপত্রের কয়েক দিন পর প্রথমে বরের বাড়িতে এবং পরে কনের বাড়িতে সমাজের এয়োগণ একত্র হইয়া ‘পানাখল’, ‘পানখিলি’ বা ‘পানভাঙ্গনি’ নামে এক আচার পালন করেন। এয়োগণকে পূর্বেই যথারীতি নিমন্ত্রণ করা হয়। তাঁহারা আসিয়া কেহ আলপনা দেন, কেহ মঙ্গলঘট বসান, কেহ বা ধূপ-দীপ জ্বালেন। তারপর সকলে বসিয়া একটি গোটা পান হাতে লন এবং উহাতে খিলি দেন (পানটি ভাঁজ করিয়া খড়িকা দিয়া গাঁথিয়া রাখেন)। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে গীত, জোকাব, আমোদ-আহ্লাদ চলতে থাকে। গৃহকর্তী সকলকে পান-সুপারি ও মিষ্টি দিয়ে আপ্যায়িত করেন, বলিতে কি, ‘দধুগলে ‘পানখিলি’ হইতেই বিবাহোৎসব আরম্ভ হয়।’ পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বাঙালিদের মধ্যে এই নামে এই ধরনের অনুষ্ঠান প্রায় অমিল। তবে পাকাদেখায় পান-সুপারি এবং মিষ্টি নিয়ে যাবার প্রথা বাঙালি সমাজে এখনো আছে। বাঙালিদের প্রায় সবধরনের আচার-অনুষ্ঠানে পান-এর একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা আছে। একটা সময় শুধু বিবাহের ক্ষেত্রে নয়, অন্য অনেক ক্ষেত্রেই পান-সুপারি দিয়ে নিমন্ত্রণ করার প্রথা বাঙালি সমাজে যথেষ্ট পরিমাণে বিদ্যমান ছিল। তাই এখনো বিবাহের পাকাদেখার অনুষ্ঠানে এবং তার পরে নিমন্ত্রণের ক্ষেত্রেও পানের ব্যবহার দেখা যায়। বিবাহের লোকাচারের প্রায় প্রতিটি পর্বে যেসমস্ত উপকরণগুলি ব্যবহার করা হয়, তার মধ্যে পান অন্যতম। এই পান ব্যবহারের পিছনে সম্ভবত অন্য একটি কারণ কাজ করে। কেননা পান স্ত্রীজননাসঙ্গের প্রতীক, ফলে উর্বরতার প্রতীক বলেই ধরা হয়ে থাকে; তাছাড়া পানের ভেষজগুণের দিকটির দিকে লক্ষ্য রেখে প্রাচীনকাল থেকেই হয়তো বিবাহের মত অনুষ্ঠানে পানের ব্যবহার প্রচলিত হয়েছে। আর এই পাকাদেখা যেটা শাস্ত্রমতে বাগদান নামে পরিচিত, সেই অনুষ্ঠানেই প্রথমে পাত্রীপক্ষের গুরুজন পাত্রকে এবং তারপর পাত্রপক্ষের গুরুজন পাত্রীকে সাধ্য অনুযায়ী উপটোকন দিয়ে আশীর্বাদ করে তাদের ভবিষ্যৎ জীবনে সুখ ও সমৃদ্ধি কামনা করে। তবে প্রথমে পাত্রের আশীর্বাদ ও পরে পাত্রীর আশীর্বাদ সম্ভবত দীর্ঘদিন ধরে চলে আসা পুরুষশাসিত সমাজের পুরুষ প্রাধান্যের রূপটিকেই সূচিত করে। আর এই আশীর্বাদ স্বরূপ কখনো অঙ্গুরীয় বিনিময় হয়, কখনো বা কর্ণহার বা অন্য কোনো অলংকার দিয়েও আশীর্বাদপর্ব সারা হয়। কিন্তু উভয়পক্ষের ক্ষেত্রেই সেই অর্থনৈতিক সক্ষমতা না থাকলে শুধু ধান এবং দুর্বা দিয়েও আশীর্বাদী পর্ব সারা হয়। এই ধান এবং দুর্বাও বাঙালি হিন্দু প্রায় সমস্ত পূজা-পার্বণ ও লৌকিক অনুষ্ঠানে প্রাচীনকাল থেকেই ব্যবহার করার রীতি আছে। বিবাহের অনেক আচারেও এই ধান ও দুর্বা ব্যবহৃত হয়। কারণ ধান ও দুর্বা-কে প্রাচীনকাল থেকে সমৃদ্ধি-সম্পদ ও উর্বরতার প্রতীক বলে ধরা হয়। কারণ ভারতবর্ষের মত দেশে তথা বঙ্গদেশের মত অঞ্চলের প্রধান কৃষিজাত ফসল ধান; এবং বাঙালিদের প্রধান খাদ্য ভাত

যেটা এই ধান থেকেই আসে। ফলে ধান সম্পদ ও সমৃদ্ধির প্রতীক; এবং দুর্বাঘাসের বৃদ্ধি এবং বিস্তার খুব দ্রুত হয়, তাই এটি উর্বরতার প্রতীক। বিবাহে এই দুটি জিনিস দিয়ে আশীর্বাদের ফলে নারী-পুরুষের দাম্পত্য জীবনের সম্পদ-সমৃদ্ধি ও বংশবিস্তারের কামনা করা হয়। তবে অনেক জায়গায় বা অনেক ক্ষেত্রে এই আশীর্বাদী পর্ব পাকাদেখার সময়ে না করে বিবাহের দিনে বর কন্যাপক্ষের বাড়িতে পৌঁছালে বিয়েতে বসার আগে এই পর্বটি পালন করা হয়। আর এই আশীর্বাদী অনুষ্ঠানে আংটির ব্যবহার সম্ভবত নারী-পুরুষের যৌনমিলনকে প্রতীকায়িত করে বলেই মনে হয়। অর্থাৎ দেখা যাচ্ছে এই ‘লগ্নপত্র’ নামক কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানটি লিখিত হলেও সেটা ঐ মৌখিক ঐতিহ্য বাহিত হয়ে প্রজন্মান্তরে বাহিত হয়ে এসেছে। আর ‘পানখিলি’, ‘আশীর্বাদ’ প্রভৃতি কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানগুলির মধ্যে ইতিহাসের থেকে ঐতিহ্যই বেশি ফুটে ওঠে। আর সেই ঐতিহ্য হলো সাংস্কৃতিক ঐতিহ্য। সেজন্যই এই কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানগুলি স্থান-কাল-পাত্র ভেদে অল্পবিস্তর বদল ঘটে বা এর নামেও বদল ঘটে। এটি যদি লিখিত ইতিহাস হত, তাহলে সব জায়গায়, সব পরিবারে একই ধরনের রীতিনীতি অনুসরণ করা হত। যেমন বিবাহের শাস্ত্রাচারের ক্ষেত্রে যেটি ঘটে থাকে। এখানে কিন্তু বাস্তবে তা ঘটে না।

আবার বিবাহের দিন ঘনিয়ে এলে বিবাহের পূর্বের দিন বা বিবাহের কয়েকদিন আগেই ছেলে ও মেয়েকে তাদের বাড়ির লোকেরা বা অনেকক্ষেত্রে ছেলে বা মেয়ের স্বজন-বান্ধবেরাও আইবুড়ো ভাত খাওয়ায়। এই আচারটিতে বিবাহের পাত্র-পাত্রীর অবিবাহিত অবস্থায় থাকাকালীন বাড়ির শেষ অন্ন খাওয়াটাকে প্রতীকী ভাবে পালন করা হয়। কারণ হিসেবে বলা যায়, বিয়ের পর ছেলে বা মেয়ের নিজস্ব সংসার হয় এবং সেই সংসারজীবন কেমন হবে তার কোনো পূর্বাভাস থাকে না। তাই মায়েরা বা স্বজন-বান্ধবেরা ছেলে বা মেয়েকে নিজের মনের মত করে পঞ্চব্যঞ্জন ও অন্যান্য চব্য-চুম্ব্য-লেখ্য-পেয় দিয়ে ভাত খাওয়ায়। এই সমস্ত খাদ্যদ্রব্যের মধ্যে আবশ্যিকভাবে পায়সান্ন উপস্থিত থাকে। তবে এই আইবুড়ো ভাত খাওয়ানোর রীতি মূলত পূর্ববঙ্গীদের মধ্যেই বেশি প্রচলিত। পশ্চিমবঙ্গীয় বাঙালিদের মধ্যে সকল অঞ্চলে সমানভাবে প্রচলিত নেই, কিয়দংশে এই রীতি দেখা যায়। এক্ষেত্রেও ‘আইবুড়ো ভাত’ খাওয়ার কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানটিকে ইতিহাসের আঙ্গিকে দেখার থেকে ঐতিহ্যের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীতে দেখাই বাঞ্ছনীয়।

বিবাহের সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ও অন্যতম প্রধান বিবাহাচারটি হল গাত্রহরিদ্রা বা গায়েহলুদ প্রথা। অনেক জায়গায় এই অনুষ্ঠানটি বিবাহের দু-এক দিন বা কয়েকদিন পূর্বে একটি শুভ দিনক্ষণ দেখে; আবার অনেক জায়গায় বিবাহের পূর্বে পাকাদেখা বা আশীর্বাদীর সময় পালিত হতে দেখা যায়। তবে বেশিরভাগ জায়গাতে এই আচারটি বিবাহের দিন সকালবেলায় পালিত হয়। বিবাহের দিন সকালে দুই পক্ষের বাড়িতেই বর ও কনেকে নতুন বস্ত্র পরিয়ে আলপনা দেওয়া কাঠের পিঁড়ি বা নতুন মাদুর বা নতুন শেতলপাটির উপর বসিয়ে পাঁচ/সাত/নয় জন এয়োস্ত্রী গায়ে তেল ও হলুদ মাখিয়ে দেয়। এই গায়ে হলুদের অনুষ্ঠানের উপকরণ হিসেবে একটি বরণডালাও সাজানো হয়। একছড়া বিজোড় কলা, ধান, দুর্বা, দুধ, দই, পান, সুপারি, কড়ি, জাঁতি, দর্পণ, সিঁদুর কৌটো, পাঁচ রকম ধাতু, চন্দন প্রভৃতি উপকরণ দিয়ে এই বরণডালা সাজানো হয়। এর সঙ্গে একটি কুলোতে করে চাল, হলুদ, তেল ও আশ্রপল্লব সহ ঘট ও বর/কনের সামনে রাখা হয়। বেশিরভাগ ক্ষেত্রে এই আচারটি প্রথমে পাত্রপক্ষের বাড়িতে অর্থাৎ পাত্রের গায়ে হলুদ দেওয়া হয়। পাত্রের গায়েহলুদ পর্ব সারা হয়ে গেলে পাত্রের গায়ের কিয়দংশ হলুদ এবং তার সঙ্গে অন্যান্য জিনিসপত্র নিয়ে কনের বাড়িতে কনের গায়েহলুদ অনুষ্ঠানের জন্য কিছুদ্রব্যসামগ্রী পাঠানোর একটা রেওয়াজ

গ্রামবাংলার হিন্দু বিবাহের লোকাচারে দেখতে পাওয়া যায়। একে গায়েহলুদের তত্ত্ব বলা হয়। এই দ্রব্যসামগ্রীর মধ্যে কনের জন্য বস্ত্রালংকার এবং বিভিন্ন তৈজসপত্রের সঙ্গে তেল, সিন্দুর, আলতা, পান, সুপারি, হলুদ, মাছ, দই ও সন্দেশ বা মিষ্টি পাঠানোর রেওয়াজ আছে। এ প্রসঙ্গে উল্লেখযোগ্য যে বিবাহ থেকে শুরু করে বিভিন্ন আচার-অনুষ্ঠানে এই মাছ, দই প্রভৃতির ব্যবহারের মধ্যে দিয়ে বিবাহের একটি উদ্দেশ্য যে বংশবিস্তার, সেই দিকটি প্রতীকীভাবে জড়িয়ে আছে। কেননা, মাছের বংশবিস্তার খুব দ্রুত হয়। তাই হয়তো এইরকম প্রতীকী ব্যবহার করা হয়। গায়ে হলুদের বরণডালা সাজানোর উপকরণগুলির মধ্যে প্রাচীনকাল থেকে চলে আসা নরনারীর যৌনতাবোধ, উর্বরতার বোধ লুকিয়ে আছে। বরণডালায় কড়ি, পান স্ত্রী জননাস্পের প্রতীকী হিসেবে; আলতা, সিন্দুর রজঃর প্রতীক হিসেবে; দই, সুপারি বীর্ষশক্তির প্রতীক; এবং কলা গাছ খুব দ্রুত বংশবিস্তার করে সেজন্য প্রজনন শক্তির প্রতীক হিসেবে - এই সমস্ত উপকরণ রাখা হয়। এছাড়াও ঐ বরণডালার সঙ্গে রাখা জাঁতি বর বিয়ের শেষ পর্যন্ত এবং সিন্দুর কৌটোটি কনে বিয়ের শেষ পর্যন্ত সঙ্গে রাখে। এই লোহার জাঁতি একদিকে যেমন অশুভশক্তি নাশক হিসেবে ব্যবহার করা হয়; তেমনি অপরদিকে এটি একটি অস্ত্রের প্রতীকী হিসেবেও ব্যবহার করা হয়ে থাকে। কারণ হিসেবে বলা যায়, একটা সময় বলপূর্বক বা অপহরণপূর্বক বা ছিনতাই বিবাহের কথা মানুষের নৃতাত্ত্বিক ইতিহাসের ধারায় পাওয়া যায়। ড. ওয়েস্টারমার্ক তাঁর বিবাহের ইতিহাস গ্রন্থে পৃথিবীর এবং ভারতবর্ষের নানা প্রাচীন জনজাতির মধ্যে (যেমন ওড়িশার ভুইয়া জাতির মধ্যে বা বাংলার হো জাতির মধ্যে) প্রচলিত এই ধরনের বিবাহের কথা উল্লেখ করেছেন। এখনও ভারতের এবং বঙ্গদেশের বেশ কিছু আদিম জনজাতির মধ্য এই বলপূর্বক অপহরণ কর বিয়ের রীতিটি রূপকার্থে প্রচলিত। মূলত পুরুষের বিবাহের জন্য নারীকে বলপূর্বক বা ছিনতাই করে নিয়ে আসত। হিন্দুশাস্ত্রের মনুসংহিতা-র রাক্ষস বিবাহ, বা পুরাণ ও গল্পকথায় এইরকম অপহরণ বা ছিনতাই বিবাহের উদাহরণ দেখতে পাওয়া যায়। তাই বিবাহে যখনই বলের প্রয়োগ হয়, তখনই তাকে বাধা দেবার জন্য প্রতিপক্ষও তৈরি থাকে। তার ফলেই একটা যুদ্ধের বা রক্তারক্তি কাণ্ডের সৃষ্টি হয়। বরের হাতে ব্যবহৃত জাঁতি সম্ভবত সেই যুদ্ধের অস্ত্রশস্ত্রের প্রতীকী হিসেবে ব্যবহৃত হয়। আর হলুদ বা হরিদ্রা প্রাচীনকাল থেকেই জীবাণু প্রতিষেধক হিসেবে এবং সৌন্দর্য্যচর্চায় ভারতবর্ষীয় সমাজে ব্যবহৃত হয়ে এসেছে। সুতরাং এখানে দেখা যাচ্ছে এই ‘গায়েহলুদ’ নামক কৃত্যানুষ্ঠান ও তার সঙ্গে ব্যবহৃত আনুষঙ্গিক উপকরণগুলির মধ্যে যেমন মানুষের ইতিহাস চেতনার পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়, তেমনি মানুষের সংস্কৃতি ও সৌন্দর্য্য প্রিয়তা ও ঐতিহ্যকে বহন করে নিয়ে চলার একটা প্রচেষ্টা দেখা যায়।

এই আচারের পর বর/কনের বাড়িতে আর তেমন কিছু আচার পালিত হতে সচরাচর দেখা যায় না। এরপর কনের বাড়িতে কনের সাজগোজ ও বরের বাড়িতে বরের সাজগোজ চলে। তারপর বর ও তার সঙ্গে বরের আত্মীয়-বন্ধুজন যাঁরা ‘বরযাত্রী’ নামে পরিচিত, এমন সবাই মিলে বিয়ের উদ্দেশ্যে রওনা দেয়। এই বরযাত্রীর সাধারণত বিয়ের অনুষ্ঠানের সাক্ষীর কাজ করে। কেননা বিবাহের মাধ্যমেই নারী-পুরুষের যৌনতাকে সামাজিক স্বীকৃতি দেওয়া হয়, তাই সাক্ষীর প্রয়োজন আছে। এ প্রসঙ্গে ড. ওয়েস্টারমার্ক তাঁর বিবাহের ইতিহাস গ্রন্থে বলেছেন, “বিয়ের অনুষ্ঠানে আর একটা সর্বপ্রচলিত উৎসব হল সাক্ষীদের সঙ্গে নিয়ে একত্রে খাওয়াদাওয়া করা। এটা প্রায় সব দেশের সব ধরনের জনজাতির মধ্যেই প্রচলিত আছে। বিয়ের অনুষ্ঠানটা যেহেতু কনের বাবার ঘরে হয়, তাই এই খাওয়াদাওয়ার ব্যাপারটাও সেখানেই হয়। তবে বরের ঘরেও একদফা খাওয়ার অনুষ্ঠানের আয়োজন কর হয়। এখানে বর ও কনের পরিবারকে একত্রে

এনে তাদের বন্ধুত্বকে দৃঢ় করা হয়।” এই কনের বাড়িতে থেকে বরের বাড়িতে খাওয়াদাওয়ার পর্বটি বাঙালি হিন্দু সমাজে বিবাহের তৃতীয় দিন অর্থাৎ ফুলশয্যার দিন হয়। কনের বাড়ি থেকে আসা ব্যক্তিগণকে কন্যাত্রী বলা হয়ে থাকে। এই বরযাত্রী ও কন্যাত্রী আগমনের মধ্যে দিয়ে মানুষ তার সাংস্কৃতিক ঐতিহ্যকেই ধরে রাখতে চেষ্টা করে।

এছাড়াও বাঙালি হিন্দু বিবাহের কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানের ক্ষেত্রে অনুষ্ঠানের আর একটি অঙ্গকে অস্বীকার করা যায় না। সেটি হল বিবাহের গান, ছড়া ও পদ্য। একটা সময় পর্যন্ত বাঙালি বিবাহের লোকাচারের প্রায় প্রত্যেকটি অনুষ্ঠানের সঙ্গে আবশ্যিক অঙ্গ হিসেবে বিয়ের গান গাওয়া হত এবং এখনো কোনো কোনো জায়গায়, কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্রে এই গান শুনতে পাওয়া যায়। এই গান মূলত বাড়ির এয়োর গাইতেন। অধিবাস, জলভরা, গায়েহলুদ, বাসরঘর, বধূবরণ প্রভৃতি আচারের সঙ্গে গান অপরিহার্য ছিল। শুভদৃষ্টি অনুষ্ঠানে নাপিতের ছড়া, বাসরঘরে প্রাচীনা ও নবীনাদের মধ্যে ছড়ার প্রচলন বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠানটিকে আনন্দময় করে তুলত। এছাড়াও বিবাহের নিমন্ত্রণপত্রে ব্যবহৃত বিভিন্ন পদ্যগুলির মধ্যেও সমাজ পরিচয়ের ক্ষেত্রে সমকালীন ইতিহাসের পরিচয়ও উঠে আসে।

বাঙালি সমাজের বিবাহের লোকাচারের পরিধি জটিল ও বহুধাবিস্তৃত। যুগ যুগ ধরে চলে আসা বা পালিত হওয়া এত অজস্র লোকাচার বাঙালি বিবাহে পরিলক্ষিত হয় যে সেগুলির আদি-অন্ত নির্ধারণ করা কঠিন কাজ। তাছাড়া অঞ্চল, পরিবার, জাতি, সামাজিক অবস্থান, সীমানা ইত্যাদির প্রেক্ষিতে এই লোকাচারগুলি এতো বৈচিত্র্যময় ও বিস্তৃত যে এগুলিকে ভালভাবে পর্যবেক্ষণ করলে বিস্মিত হতে হয়। এই লোকাচারগুলির মধ্যেই কখনো মানুষের ইতিহাসপ্রিয়তা আবার কখনো বা ঐতিহ্যপ্রিয়তাকে খুঁজে পাওয়া যায়। লোকাচারের কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানগুলির মধ্যে যেমন ইতিহাসের উপাদান পাওয়া যায়, তেমনি অনেক কৃত্যানুষ্ঠানের মধ্যে ঐতিহ্যের উপাদানও দৃষ্টিগোচর হয়। তাই বাঙালি বিবাহের লোকাচারগুলি কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্রে একদিকে ইতিহাস ও অন্যদিকে কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্রে ঐতিহ্য। আবার কখনো শুধুই ইতিহাস বা শুধুই ঐতিহ্য।

তথ্যসূত্র:

- ১। বাহার, হাবিবউল্লাহ। *ইতিহাস ও ঐতিহাসিক*, ঢাকা: আগামী, ফেব্রুয়ারী ২০১৭, পৃ. ১৩।
- ২। সেন, দীনেশচন্দ্র। *বৃহৎবঙ্গ, সুপ্রাচীন কাল হইতে পলাশীর যুদ্ধ পর্যন্ত* (১ম খণ্ড), কলকাতা: দেজ পাবলিশিং, মার্চ ২০০৬, ৪র্থ মুদ্রণ, পৃ. ১২।
- ৩। ভৌমিক, হরিপদ। *বিয়ের শব্দকোষ*, কলকাতা: গাঙচিল, জানুয়ারী ২০১২, পৃ. ৭৮।
- ৪। ভৌমিক, হরিপদ। *বিয়ের শব্দকোষ*, কলকাতা: গাঙচিল, জানুয়ারী ২০১২, পৃ. ৪১।
- ৫। রায়, শ্রী কামিনীকুমার। *লৌকিক শব্দকোষ*, কলকাতা: ইন্ডিয়ান পাবলিকেশনস্, অক্টোবর ১৯৬০, পৃ. ২১০।
- ৬। ওয়েস্টারমার্ক, এডওয়ার্ড। *বিবাহের ইতিহাস*, কাজল রায় ত্রিবেদী (অনু.), কলকাতা: দীপায়ন, জুন ২০১১, পৃ. ১৪৩।

মহাশ্বেতা দেবীর ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ : একটি পর্যালোচনা

দুলালী সরেন

সারসংক্ষেপ : ‘অপারেশন ? বসাই টুডু’র নভেলেট লেখক মহাশ্বেতা দেবী ছিলেন ইতিহাস, রাজনীতি ও গণসংস্কৃতির পথের একজন যথার্থ পরিব্রাজক। মহাশ্বেতাদেবী রাজনীতিবিদ ছিলেন না। কিন্তু সাহিত্য ও রাজনীতির সমান্তরাল যাত্রাপথে তিনি প্রত্যক্ষ করেছেন সামন্ততান্ত্রিক পূঁজিবাদী মানসিকতার সঙ্গে শ্রমজীবী, কৃষিজীবী মানসিকতার দ্বন্দ্ব। প্রত্যক্ষ করেছেন, উত্তাল সত্তরের দশকের রাজনৈতিক অস্থিরতা, ভারতবর্ষের জরুরি অবস্থা, সমকালীন রাষ্ট্রচিন্তা, প্রশাসনিক ব্যবস্থার গলদ। তিনি দেখেছেন রাষ্ট্র ও রাজনীতির চিরপেষণ যন্ত্রণায় দক্ষ হয়ে যাওয়া জনজীবনের অভিমুখকে বদলে যেতে। তারই জলন্ত দলিলরূপে অগ্নিগর্ভকে লেখক আমাদের সামনে তুলে ধরেছেন। মেহনতি মানুষের অনিশ্চিত প্রত্যাশাকে সুনিশ্চিত করতে কৃষক-শ্রমিক-ক্ষেতমজুর শ্রেণীর প্রতিনিধি হিসেবে নির্বাচন করে নিলেন এক সাঁওতাল কম্যুনিস্ট বসাই টুডুকে। বসাই বিকল্প পথের সন্ধানী। রাজনীতির তুরঙ্গের তাস সে আর হতে চায় না। নিজের অস্তিত্ব রক্ষার সংগ্রাম করেছে সে নিজের পদ্ধতিতে। লেখক মহাশ্বেতা স্বপ্নসন্ধানী নকশাল পন্থীদের প্রতি সংবেদনশীল হয়ে প্রচলিত ভোগবাদী, অধঃপতিত সামন্ততান্ত্রিক ধনতান্ত্রিক সমাজব্যবস্থার বিরুদ্ধে প্রবল পরাক্রমশালী প্রতিবাদী চরিত্র হিসেবে বসাই চরিত্রকে নির্মাণ করেছেন। অগ্নিময় আন্দোলনই পারে প্রাতিষ্ঠানিকতার বিরুদ্ধে সোচ্চার হতে। এই অভিপ্রায়েই তাঁর কাহিনীবৃত্ত, চরিত্রায়ণ এবং সার্বিক গঠন কৌশল নির্মিত হয়েছে।

সূচক শব্দ : অন্বেষণ, অস্তিত্বগত, স মাক-রিপড ওপেন, স্বপ্নদর্শী, পৈশাচিক নিষ্ঠায়, আত্মতৃপ্ত, সংগুপ্ত, ভেদবমিগ্ৰস্ত, নঙর্থক, হৃদবৈকল্য, কৌম সমাজ, কম্যুনিস্ট, লেভিপ্রথা, অনতিক্রমণীয়, নজরানা, নাচার, ধুরন্ধর, অন্তঃসলিলা, দাবান্নি, রক্তক্ষয়ী, অগ্নিময়।

মহাশ্বেতা দেবীর রচনা সমগ্র’এর অষ্টম খণ্ড (দেজ পাবলিশিং প্রকাশিত, আগস্ট, ২০১৬) মধ্যে সংকলিত অন্যতম গল্প সংকলন ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’। ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ গল্প সংকলন প্রথম প্রকাশিত হয় করুণা প্রকাশনী থেকে, জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৩৮৫/১৯৭৮ খ্রিঃ। ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ মোট চারটি গল্পের সংকলন। এই সংকলনের প্রথম কাহিনী ‘অপারেশন ? বসাই টুডু’ প্রথম প্রকাশ কৃষ্ণিবাস, পৌষ-মাঘ, ১৩৮৪/১৯৭৭ এর আলোচনায় আমরা প্রবেশ করবো। কাহিনীর সময়কাল ১৯৭০-১৯৭৭ সাল। সূত্রাং নকশাল আন্দোলন ও সমকালীন রাজনৈতিক প্রেক্ষিত প্রসঙ্গ সূত্রে এসেছে। আমরা সেই বিষয়টিকেই এবার খোঁজার চেষ্টা করবো।

অপারেশন ? বসাই টুডু- নাম শুনেই বোঝা যায় যে, এই কাহিনির সঙ্গে জড়িয়ে আছে চরম হিংস্রতা। কারণ সাতের দশক নকশাল আন্দোলনের সময় ‘অপারেশন’ শব্দটি বহুল পরিমাণে ব্যবহৃত হত। কাহিনির সূচনায় বসাইয়ের মৃত্যুর খবর শোনানোর পরেই মহাশ্বেতা দেবী বসাই টুডুর বীরত্বের কাহিনী বলেছেন। তাঁর বর্ণনা অনুযায়ী প্রায় অলৌকিক মানুষ বসাই টুডু। কাহিনিতে পুলিশের কাছে বসাই টুডুর চারবার মৃত্যুর সংবাদ এসেছে। প্রত্যেকবারই কালী সাঁতরা দেহ সনাক্ত

গবেষক, বাংলা বিভাগ, রাজা নরেন্দ্রলাল খান মহিলা মহাবিদ্যালয় (স্ব-শাসিত)

করেছে। কিন্তু তাঁর মৃত্যুর খবর আসার কিছুদিন পরেই কোনো না কোনো জোতদারদের বিরুদ্ধে আবারও লড়াই করেছে বসাই। ভারতবর্ষের রাজনৈতিক ইতিহাসকে পরিলক্ষিত করলে দেখা যায় (১৯৭০-৭৭) প্রধানমন্ত্রী ইন্দিরাগান্ধী এই সময় জরুরীকালীন অবস্থার ঘোষণা করেছিলেন। এমার্জেন্সির শ্বাসরুদ্ধ পঞ্চাশের সাল কেটে গেলে আসে ১৯৭৬ সাল। এই বছর সরকারি তরফ থেকে মিনিমাম ওয়েজ বা এম.ডব্লু ঘোষণা করা হয়। এটি ক্ষেতমজুরদের পারিশ্রমিক সুনির্দিষ্ট করার জন্য একটি সরকারি নির্দেশিকা। এই নির্দেশিকা অনুযায়ী ক্ষেত-মজুরদের দৈনিক পারিশ্রমিক নির্দিষ্ট করে দিয়েছিল সরকার। কিন্তু গ্রামের জোতদাররা কম মজুরিতে তাদের খাটিয়ে নিতেন। কারণ নেতা-মন্ত্রী থেকে পুলিশ সবাই ছিল গ্রামের জোতদারদের হাতে। জরুরি অবস্থার সুযোগে গ্রামের জোতদাররা ‘মিসা’ প্রয়োগ করে গ্রামের আন্দোলনকারী নেতাদের গ্রেপ্তার করে তাদের ওপর অত্যাচার চালাতেন এবং কম মজুরিতে ক্ষেত মজুরদের খাটতে বাধ্য করতেন।

এইভাবে জরুরি অবস্থার সময় ক্ষেতমজুরদের ন্যূনতম মজুরিকে কেন্দ্র করে গ্রাম্য রাজনীতি হয়ে উঠেছিল উত্তাল। মূলত সামাজিক-রাজনৈতিক-অর্থনৈতিক অসাম্যের বিরুদ্ধে শুরু হয়েছিল বসাইদের আন্দোলন। তাই প্রত্যক্ষভাবে নকশালকর্মী না হয়েও নিজেদের দাবি মেটাতে এই হিংস্র পথকেই বেছে নিয়েছিল বসাই। যদিও বসাইয়ের কাছে এই হিংস্র পথকেই বেছে নিয়েছিল বসাই। যদিও বসাইয়ের কাছে এই পথ সম্পূর্ণ তাঁর একার। বসাই টুডুর ভাষায়-

‘সি.পি.এম. লয়, সি.পি.আই. লয়, লকশাল ? ই পথ বসাই টুডু পথ।’

আসলে এই উত্তাল সময়ের মধ্যে দাঁড়িয়ে প্রতিবাদের ভাষাকে ছড়িয়ে দিতে ঔপন্যাসিক মহাশ্বেতা দেবী ছিলেন বন্ধপরিকর। তাই বসাইটুডুর পথকেই তিনি বেছে নিয়েছিলেন। তাঁর মতে বসাই টুডুর পথেই দেশের ক্ষেতমজুরদের সকল সমস্যার সমাধান মিটেতে পারে। তারাই দেশের একমাত্র শক্তি। তাই লেখার মধ্য তিনি বসাই টুডুদের প্রতিবাদকে তুলে ধরেছেন।

২

মহাশ্বেতা দেবীর ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ গ্রন্থ সংকলনের ‘অপারেশন ? বসাই টুডু’ প্রথম কাহিনী। এই কাহিনীর কেন্দ্রীয় চরিত্র বসাইটুডু। জন্মসূত্রে বসাই টুডু একজন সাধারণ আদিবাসী। জাতিতে সাঁওতাল। সাধারণ হলেও বসাই অসাধারণ বুদ্ধির অধিকারী। সে অনায়াসে বাম রাজনীতির জটিল তত্ত্বের মধ্যে বিচরণ করতে পারে। বসাইকে এক আশ্চর্য রহস্যময় পুরুষও বলা যেতে পারে। আশ্চর্য এই কারণে যে, সে অন্ধকার রাত্রির দিগন্ত জুড়ে গেয়ে গেছে বিদ্রোহের গান, পাথর ফাটিয়ে এনেছে সে তৃষ্ণার জল, রক্ষ রাঢ়ভূমির খোয়াই প্রান্তরে, চারিদিকের শুষ্ক ঝামা পাথরে জাগিয়েছে সে মহাপ্রাণ।

বসাই টুডুর গ্রাম চরসা। বসাই টুডুর বয়স ৫১, উচ্চতা ৫ ফুট ৫ ইঞ্চি। পাশ দিয়ে বয়ে চলেছে চরসা নদী। বর্ষায় এ নদী বানভাসি হলেও বছরের আর বাকি সময় জল থাকে না। শুকনো খরা এ অঞ্চলেই বসাইয়ের জন্ম। বসাই টুডুর পঞ্চম মৃত্যুর সংবাদে আখ্যানের সূচনা। এর আগে বসাই চারবার মারা যায়। প্রত্যেকবারই লাশ শনাক্তকরণের জন্য প্রশাসন কালী সাঁতরাকে নিয়ে যায়। বসাই টুডু ও কালী সাঁতরা একসময় তারা একসঙ্গে কৃষক আন্দোলন করেছে। দুজনেই তারা

কমিউনিস্ট কর্মী ছিলেন। কালী বসাইয়ের থেকে বয়সে দশ বছরের বড়। তবে ১৯৬৮ পর থেকে তাদের মত ও পথ ভিন্ন হয়ে যায়। ভিন্ন হবার ও কারণ রয়েছে। “বসাইয়ের সমস্ত মনোভঙ্গির কারণ ক্ষেত্রমজুরদের ওপর অবিচার।”^১ বিচ্ছিন্ন বসাইকে সকলেই সন্দেহ করে। সকলের সন্দেহ বসাই নকশাল হচ্ছে। একই সন্দেহ কালীরও। কেননা সে জানে, বসাই নকশাল বীরু পাঠকের সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠ হয়েছে।

কিন্তু কেন মহাশ্বেতা দেবী বসাইকে জন্মসূত্রে সাঁওতাল জাতিভুক্ত নকশাল করলেন? বসাইকে তিনি নকশাল আদিবাসী করলেও কেন তাকে পাহাড়িয়া, লোথা, শবর, মুণ্ডা, ওরাঁও আরো অন্যান্য সকল যে ভারতীয় উপজাতি রয়েছে তাদের মধ্য থেকে দেখালেন না? কেন তাকে সাঁওতাল আদিবাসী নকশাল হিসেবেই দেখালেন লেখক? যেখানে লেখক একজন বিশিষ্ট সমাজকর্মী হওয়ার সুবাদে বিভিন্ন লোথা, শবর, ভূমিজ, সহিস মুণ্ডা কল্যাণ সমিতির সঙ্গে ওতপ্রোতভাবে যুক্ত ছিলেন। সেই কারণে বসাইয়ের লোথা কিংবা শবর হওয়াই তো ছিল স্বাভাবিক। তাও যদি না হয়ে থাকে— অসাধারণ ভারত প্রেমিক কোনো অ-আদিবাসী নেতার আদলেও বানাতে পারতেন। ইতিপূর্বে তো নানান প্রকার কৃষক আন্দোলনের দৃষ্টান্ত আমরা পেয়েই গেছি। সেটা বৈচিত্র্যময় ভারতবর্ষের সংস্কৃতির দিক থেকে অনেক বেশি তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ হতো। কিন্তু মহাশ্বেতা দেবী তা করেন নি। প্রশ্ন এসে যায়, ক্ষেত্রমজুর যারা তারা কি শুধুই সাঁওতাল?

বসাইকে একজন আদিবাসী নকশাল, জাতিতে সাঁওতাল করার কারণ অন্বেষণ করতে গেলে প্রথমেই লেখকের পারিবারিক দিক ব্যক্তিগত, সামাজিক, রাজনৈতিক দিক, সাংস্কৃতিক এবং সমাজ অর্থনীতির দিক জেনে রাখা দরকার। লেখক মহাশ্বেতার পিতা মনীশ ঘটক ছিলেন খ্যাতনামা সাহিত্যিক। তিনি কল্লোলের প্রথম দিককার বিশিষ্ট শিল্পী ছিলেন মাতা ধরিত্রীদেবী সমাজসেবী ও সাহিত্যপ্রেমী হিসেবে পরিচিত ছিলেন। মহাশ্বেতা দেবীর এক মাতুল শচীন চৌধুরী ছিলেন ‘দিকোনমিক অ্যাণ্ড পলিটিক্যাল উইকলি অফ ইণ্ডিয়া’ পত্রিকার প্রতিষ্ঠাতা সম্পাদক। পারিবারিক উত্তরাধিকার সূত্রে মহাশ্বেতাদেবী সমাজ চিন্তনের দায় নিয়েই জন্মলাভ করেছিলেন। মানবাধিকার কমিশনের আন্দোলনকর্মী ও সমাজকর্মী মহাশ্বেতা সামাজিক দায়বদ্ধতা থেকে আদিবাসী সমাজের মুখপত্র ‘বর্তিকা’ (১৯৮০) পত্রিকা সম্পাদনা করেছেন।

সামাজিক দায়বদ্ধতার সঙ্গে পরিবেশের সংযোগ অবিচ্ছেদ্য। প্রকৃতির প্রতি সচেতনতা ও পূর্বাপর ইতিহাসের অভিজ্ঞতা, তাঁকে টেনে নিয়ে যায় আদিবাসী জনজীবনে। আদিবাসী ও প্রকৃতি সমান্তরাল। তিনি যুক্ত হলেন আদিবাসী সংগঠনের সঙ্গে। প্রায় ২০টি সংগঠনের সদস্য হওয়ায়। প্রায়ই ছুটতে হয়েছে বাঁকুড়া থেকে বান্দোয়ান, পুরুলিয়া থেকে পালামৌ, মেদিনীপুর থেকে বীরভূম, ঝাড়গ্রাম থেকে ঝাড়খণ্ড উল্লিখিত অঞ্চলগুলি আদিবাসী অধ্যুষিত। প্রাচীন এই সভ্যতার টান তাকে অনাদি অনন্ত পৃথিবীর সঙ্গে যুক্ত করেছে। তৈরি হলো সংযোগপত্র। আদিমের প্রশান্তি বুক নিয়ে তাঁর উপলব্ধ হয়েছে আমরা কাদের হারিয়েছি?

মহাশ্বেতা দেবীর গল্প ও উপন্যাসের আপাত সরল স্পষ্ট উচ্চরণের অন্তরালে একটি জটিল বুনন থাকে, থাকে এক সতর্ক নির্মাণ। তবে রিপোর্টার্জধর্মী লেখাকেই মূল লক্ষ্য বলে মনে করেছেন। এমনও হতে পারে আদিবাসী উপজাতি ক্ষেত্রমজুরদের অসহ জীবনচর্যা তাদের আবহমান অস্তিত্বগত

সংকট মোচনের কোন সম্ভাবনা না দেখে তিনি সরাসরি উজ্জ্বল আঘাতকেই প্রয়োজন বোধ করেছেন। ১৯৮০ দশকের প্রথম কয়েক বছর পর্যন্ত মহাশ্বেতা দেবী অভিজ্ঞতাকে এমন নির্মাণে রূপান্তরে বাঁধছিলেন, যাতে তাঁর গল্প, কোনও কোনও উপন্যাসও এক বহুমাত্রিক ব্যঞ্জনা পেয়ে যাচ্ছিল। গল্প-উপন্যাসগুলির বহিস্তর, উপরিস্তরের আড়ালে এমন সব স্তর ভূ-গর্ভের নানা স্তরের মতোই স্থির ছিল, যাতে এই সব টেক্ট সমাজ-সভ্যতাগত প্রশ্নই তুলছিল। তিনি যে আদিবাসী, উপজাতি। ক্ষেতমজুরদের বেছে নিচ্ছিলেন, তারা এক অর্থে প্রকৃতিবাসী প্রকৃতিগ্ন। এই প্রকৃতি তাই মহাশ্বেতার একাধিক গল্প-উপন্যাসের একটি প্রধান বিষয়। তাঁর মানুষরা যে প্রতিবাদ করে, তা ঔপনিবেশিক সভ্যতার খণ্ড মানুষের বিরুদ্ধে। যে শোষণ-অত্যাচারের চিত্র মহাশ্বেতা আঁকেন তা নিশ্চয়ই শ্রেণীগত ও অর্থনৈতিক কিন্তু তার সঙ্গে ঐ প্রকৃতিরও যোগ নিবিড়। ঐ মানুষেরা প্রকৃতির মত মরণজয়ী। উপমান ও উপমেয়, দুইই প্রকৃতি। পশ্চিমা বার্জোয়া জগতের সংকট আজকের দিনে আবার সবুজের অভিমানকে অনেকে বাঁচবার উপায় ভাবছে। কিন্তু তাদের মধ্যে বড় অংশ এই সবুজকে শ্রেণী সংঘাত বিপ্লব-এসব থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন করে দেখতে চায়। প্রকৃতিকে ইতিহাস হীনভাবে। এরা মার্কস যে সেই তিনি বলেছিলেন, মানবের প্রকৃতিআয়ন ও প্রকৃতির মানবায়ন সভ্যতার অনন্য থেকে মুক্তির উপায়, এটা বুঝতে চান না। একজন মানুষের একটি নির্দিষ্ট পরিবেশের সঙ্গে সংযোগ ছিন্নতায় একজন শ্রমিকের মতই ঐ আদিবাসী উপজাতি objectless < naked in his subjectivity হয়ে ওঠে। মহাশ্বেতা দেবীর গল্প-উপন্যাসে প্রকৃতি শ্রেণী চেতনা ও প্রতিবাদের সূত্রে আসে, আবার একটি তার সত্তায় যাতে উলঙ্গ হয়ে যায়, বিষয়হীন হয়ে না পড়ে তার প্রতিবাদে আসে। প্রকৃতি ও মানুষ এখানে সমানভাবে বাদী এক উৎপীড়ক কাঠামোয়, তাদের বাঁচা ও মরা এক সূত্রে গাঁথা।

৩

মহাশ্বেতা দেবী যখন ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ গ্রন্থ রচনা করছেন তখন ছিল নকশাল আন্দোলন পর্ব। এই পর্বে রাষ্ট্রীয় সন্ত্রাসের একটা হিমশীতল দৃশ্য আমাদের চোখের সামনে ভেসে ওঠে। রাষ্ট্রশাসনের আবহে স্বাভাবিক ভাবে চলে আসবে পুলিশি নির্যাতন, জেলখানা, ভূয়ো সংঘর্ষে হত্যার ঘটনাগুলি। একে একে ব্রিটিশ প্রশাসনের গৃহীত বিভিন্ন পীড়নমূলক পদক্ষেপের সমান্তরালতা লক্ষ করা যায়। সত্তরের রাষ্ট্রীয় সন্ত্রাসের কালো অধ্যায় সকলের সুবিদিত। আধুনিক কবি সৃজন সেনের ‘থানা গারদ থেকে মাকে’ কবিতায় এমনই এক নির্যাতনের ছবি আঁকা রয়েছে—

“থানা গারদের অহিংসার প্রেমে ওরা

উৎপাটিত করেছে আমার দু’হাতের প্রতিটি নখ

আঙুলগুলোকে বিষাক্ত করেছে

রাইফেলের কুঁদোয় খেঁতলে খেঁতলে।”^২

১৯৭৩ সাল বসাইয়ের তৃতীয় মৃত্যুর শনাক্তকরণে কালী এমন দৃশ্য দেখে শিউরে উঠেছিল। মুখ বলতে কিছুই ছিল না। সারা শরীর জুড়ে গুলি আর গুলি। স মাক রিপড ওপেন। নাড়ী বুলে বেরিয়ে গেছে। একদিক পিষ্ট, ডিপ্রেসড। সম্ভবত বুট দিয়ে যখন দেহটিকে দলন করা হয় তখনও সে বেঁচেছিল। বসাই ফিনিক্সের মতো মৃত্যুর পর বারবার বেঁচে উঠেছে।

বসাই টুডুর মধ্য দিয়ে লেখিকা অবমানিত জনগোষ্ঠীর সমাজ সংশ্লেষ ও জীবনসংগ্রামের গদ্যকথা রচনা করেছেন। বসাই টুডু নকশাল আন্দোলনকেও ছাড়িয়ে যায়। শোষিত মানুষের প্রতি সংবেদী মানুষই মহাশ্বেতার উপন্যাসে মাথা চাড়া দিয়ে উঠেছে। বসাই টুডু সত্তরের দশকের যন্ত্রণাদীর্ঘ সময়ের বাস্তবতার প্রতিনিধি।

মহাশ্বেতাদেবী সর্বতোভাবেই ভিন্ন পথযাত্রী। ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ উপন্যাসের ভূমিকায় তাঁর মন্তব্য বাংলা উপন্যাসের প্রেক্ষিতে স্পষ্ট করে তোলে শুধু গন্তব্যের ভিন্নতা নয়, যাত্রাপথের ও ভিন্নতা এবং অবশ্যই সেই সঙ্গে, যাত্রার মূল প্রয়োজনের ভিন্নতা, বসাই টুডু দ্রৌপদিরা এসব ঘটনারই আপাত ফললাভ। যদিও সংগ্রামে তারাই সমাজ বদল ঘটায়। এবং পরিণামে নাম ও স্থানিক অবস্থান ছাড়িয়ে হয়ে ওঠে দেশ ও কালের প্রতীক সংগ্রামের অরেক নাম বসাই। বসাই টুডু পরিণত হয়েছে প্রতীকী নায়কে। ক্ষেত্রমজুর আন্দোলনের মৃত্যুঞ্জয় নায়ক বহুদিনের পোড় খাওয়া কমরেট, রক্ষ সূক্ষ্ম লালমাটির বুকে, বিস্তীর্ণ খোয়াইয়ের জ্যোৎস্নার গভীরে যে সাঁওতাল মজুরদের মনে স্বপ্নের লাল রঙ বুলে দেয় সেই বসাই কতখানি নকশাল কতখানি সে স্বপ্নদর্শী? গসগসত তস ককুৎহসকদ, সক্রতকপ সজ্জতপ সপগ সজ্জতপ স্বপ্ন-স্বপ্নদর্শীর কখনো মৃত্যু হয় না। শোষণের দিনকাল ছেঁড়ার কৌশলে বসাই প্রশিক্ষণ দিয়েছে গ্রাম সমাজের তরণদের। সাঁওতাল ক্ষেত্রমজুররা জেগে ওঠে, তাদের নিজেদের ভাষায় বিদ্রোহের কথা ভাবে। বেতুলের মুখে কালী বসাইয়ের কীর্তিকাহিনী শুনে বসাইয়ের প্রতি শ্রদ্ধাশীল হয়েছে। বসাই তার উদ্দেশ্য পূরণে সমর্থ হয়েছে। বসাইয়ের কর্মসঞ্চালনে গেরিলা যুদ্ধের দুটি শর্ত ও পূরিত হয়েছে।

(১) বসাই স্বপক্ষ ভুক্তদের প্রোটেকশন দিয়েছে।

(২) তার কর্মসঞ্চালনের ভিত্তিকেন্দ্রের (Base Area) পাশ্চবর্তী গ্রামবাসীদের পক্ষে রেখেছে। ক্রমশ বসাই যেন ইতিহাসের চালক থেকে পরিণত হয়েছে জীবন্ত ইতিহাসে।

বসাই টুডু আসলে একটা কিংবদন্তী যার মানে কোন ব্যক্তি নয়। যার মানে ভূমিহীন চাষিদের সংগ্রামের প্রাণকেন্দ্র। যে বসাইয়ের মৃত্যু নেই, যে বসাই অজস্র মৃত্যুর মধ্য দিয়ে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে বীরভূম, সাঁওতাল পরগণার গ্রাম-গ্রামান্তরে। প্রশাসন ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়ে তার পৈশাচিক নিষ্ঠায়, রাইটার্স বিল্ডিং এ নেমপ্লেট পালায় প্রশাসন লড়ে যায়- বসাই মরে, বসাই বেঁচে ওঠে ক্ষেত্রমজুরদের আন্দোলনে।

অগ্নিগর্ভের মর্মে আছে ঝঞ্জা বিক্ষুব্ধ সত্তরের দশকের মুক্তিসংগ্রাম, স্বপ্ন ও স্বপ্নভঙ্গ, আশা ও হতাশা এক বিশেষ সময়ের রাজনৈতিক ও আর্থসামাজিক পটভূমি ধরা পড়েছে উপন্যাসের ব্যাখ্যানে। নকশালবাহীর আগে লাভা ঠিকরে বেরিয়ে ভারতবর্ষের গোটা আকাশকে টকটকে লালে লাল করে ঢেকে রেখেছিল। গ্রাম থেকে শহরে, ক্ষেত্রমজুর থেকে বুদ্ধিজীবী, ছাত্রযুবক-শিক্ষক সকলকে বিচলিত করেছিল উত্তাল সত্তর। মধ্যবিত্ত পরিবার শিক্ষিত ভদ্রলোক বিপর্যয়ের উত্তাল সমুদ্রে হাবুডুবু খেতে খেতে খেই হারিয়ে ফেলছিল। তখন রাজ্যে বাম জামানা। সি. পি. এম. পরিচালিত রাজ্যে তাঁরই এক বিক্ষিপ্ত শাখা স্বতন্ত্র দল গঠন করেছিল। এই বিকল্প পথই নকশাল নামে পরিচিত হয়।

১৯৪৭ খ্রিঃ স্বাধীনতা লাভের পূর্বে ভারতীয় কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি তার জন্মলগ্ন থেকে একটা দীর্ঘ

সময় পর্যন্ত আদর্শ ও দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীগত দিক থেকে একান্তভাবেই কংগ্রেস অনুসারী ছিল। ১৯৪৫ কংগ্রেসের বিভিন্ন কর্মসূচীর সঙ্গে আদর্শগত মতান্তর তৈরি হলে সি. পি. আই. কংগ্রেস ছেড়ে বেরিয়ে আসে।

প্রসঙ্গত আলোচনার বিষয় ক্ষেতমজুর-সাঁওতাল-নকশাল। অর্থাৎ বসাই কেন নকশাল? সি. পি. এম. দলের কর্মনিষ্ঠ সদস্য বসাই। তার সাহস, নিষ্ঠা, পার্টির প্রতি বিশ্বস্ততা তাকে মেহনতি মানুষের নিকটজন করে তোলে। মার্কস সাম্যবাদে বিশ্বাসী বসাই লক্ষ্য করেছে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে স্বাধীনতা-উত্তরকালে এমনকি যুক্তফ্রন্টের আমলে খেতমজুরদের অবস্থার কোন উন্নয়ন ঘটেনি। কৃষকসভা অন্যান্যদের (বড়, মাঝারি চাষি, বর্গাদার) স্বার্থ যতটা দেখেছে খেতমজুরদের উন্নয়নের জন্য সেই অর্থে কোন চেষ্টা বা শ্রেণীসংগ্রাম গড়ে তোলেনি। কৃষক সভার পক্ষপাতিত্বপূর্ণ এই আচরণে ক্ষুব্ধ কর্মী বসাই ১৯৬৮ তে কৃষক সভা থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে একান্ত নিজস্ব পদ্ধতিতে ক্ষেতমজুরদের স্বার্থরক্ষায় ১৯৭১-৭৬ এ শ্রেণী সংগ্রাম গড়ে তোলে।

একথা অনস্বীকার্য যে সমগ্র ভারতবর্ষে খেতমজুরদের সংখ্যা ক্রমবর্ধমান। ১৯৬১ থেকে ১৯৯১ সালের মধ্যে শ্রমশক্তির মধ্যে এদের অনুপাত ১৮ শতাংশ থেকে বেড়ে ২৬.৫ শতাংশে উঠেছে। এই সংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি ব্যাপারে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে ষাট-সত্তরের দশকে যুক্তফ্রন্ট সরকারের উদাসীনতায় ক্ষুব্ধ বসাই প্রতিবাদী হয়ে ওঠে। তার মতানুসারে “ক্ষেতমজুর কিষণ হতে আলাদা নয়। আজ সি কিষণ, মহাজনের জমি বানধা নিলে কাল সি খেতমজুর...”^৩ রাঢ়ের আবহমানকালবাহিত সামন্ততান্ত্রিক সমাজ শাসনের এটাই স্বাভাবিক ঘটনা বলা যেতে পারে। পঞ্চাশের দশকে ভূমিসংস্কার, ষাট সত্তরের দশকে প্রশাসনিক ব্যবস্থার পরিবর্তন বাস্তবিক রাঢ়ের ক্ষেতমজুরদের অবস্থার পরিবর্তন ঘটাতে অগ্রণী ভূমিকা পালন করতে পেরেছে সেটাই বিচার্য বিষয়। অর্থাৎ বিচার্য বিষয় বসাইয়ের অভিযোগের ভিত্তিতে তার ভিন্ন পথ যাত্রা কতখানি সংগত তা চিনে নেওয়া।

প্রথমেই আলোচ্য ক্ষেতমজুর প্রসঙ্গ। কারা ক্ষেতমজুর হয়ে থাকলো? যারা ভূমিহীন, অন্যের জমিতে কোন না কোন পদ্ধতিতে শ্রম বিক্রয় করে দিনাতিপাত করে তারাই ক্ষেতমজুর নামে পরিচিত। বাঁকুড়ায় ১৯৬১ সালের আদমসুমারী রিপোর্ট অনুসারে কৃষিতে নিযুক্ত জনসংখ্যার পরিমাণ ছিল ৭৭%। ১৯৭১ রে রিপোর্টে দাঁড়িয়েছে ৭৯.০৪%। অর্থাৎ অকৃষি পেশায় বিশেষ করে শিল্পের ক্ষেত্রে নিয়োগের বৃদ্ধি; জনসংখ্যার সঙ্গে তাল রাখতে পারছে না। কুটিরশিল্পের নিয়োগের হার কমছে। ফলস্বরূপ জমির উপর চাপ বাড়ছে। অল্প বিস্তার জমি আছে এমন লোকের হার ১৯৬১ সালে ছিল মোট কর্মনিযুক্ত জনসংখ্যার ৫২.৪%। ১৯৭১ সালে এই হার দাঁড়িয়েছে ৪০.৪৫%। এ থেকে বোঝা যাচ্ছে তথাকথিত সামন্ততান্ত্রিক অর্থনীতি দরিদ্র কৃষকদের হাত থেকে জমি কিভাবে ছিনিয়ে নিচ্ছে। খেতমজুরদের মজুরি খুবই কম। তাদের কাজের দিনের সংখ্যা একশত দিনের কিছু বেশী অর্থাৎ মরসুমি বেকারি খেতমজুরদের মধ্যে প্রবল।

স্বাধীনতার পর এ দেশে যে অর্থনৈতিক অগ্রগতি ঘটেছে তার ফলভোগী হয়নি কোন মধ্যবিত্ত শ্রমিক ও ক্ষেতমজুর। একদিকে ধনিক শ্রেণি আরো বিস্তারিত হয়েছে, সৃষ্ট হয়েছে এক আত্মতৃপ্ত অশিক্ষিত বর্বর নতুন ধনিকশ্রেণী। অন্যদিকে সাধারণ মধ্যবিত্ত সামান্য সম্বল হারিয়ে দরিদ্রতর নিম্নবিত্ত নিম্নমধ্যবিত্ত আজ সম্পূর্ণ বিলুপ্তির পথে। ধনী চাষি আরো ধনী হয়েছে। সামান্য জমির মালিক তার শেষ সম্বল জমিটুকু জোতদার মহাজনকে তুলে দিয়ে ক্ষেতমজুরের সংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি করেছে।

বসাই একজন কমিউনিষ্ট। যে কমিউনিজম ভুখা, মেহনতি মজদুরদের কথা বলে, যে কমিউনিজম গণতান্ত্রিক পদ্ধতিতে সাম্যবাদকে প্রতিষ্ঠা করার প্রতিশ্রুতি দেয়, যে কমিউনিজম শ্রমজীবী মানুষের বৃকের ওপর জগদল পাথরের মতো চেপে থাকা জমিদার, সামন্তশ্রেণীর, আমলাতান্ত্রিক বৃজোয়াদের পাহাড়প্রমাণ শক্তির ভার লাঘবে তৎপর ছিল বসাই সেই কমিউনিজমের আদর্শ আত্মস্ব করে সংগ্রামে, আন্দোলনে शामिल হয়েছিল। দীর্ঘদিন কৃষক আন্দোলনে কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির বিশ্বস্ত কর্মী হিসেবে কাজ করেছে সে, তারপর একদিন ভোটসর্বস্ব পার্টি আর বাবু নেতৃত্বের সাহচর্য ছেড়ে চলে আসে বসাই গড়ে তোলে নিজস্ব সংগ্রাম। বসাই টুডু একজন ক্ষেতমজুর। ক্ষেতমজুর শব্দটি বৃহৎরূপ বোঝালেও বসাইয়ের উপলব্ধি সে একজন আদিবাসী ক্ষেতমজুর। একজন সাঁওতাল ক্ষেতমজুর। কৃষক সভার আন্দোলনে থাকাকালীন সে যা অনুভব করেছে তার নিষ্কর্ষ এই পৃথক শ্রেণী সংগঠন গড়ে তোলার উদ্দেশ্যে ১৯৪৩ সালে ময়মনসিংহের নালিতাবাড়ি কনফারেন্সের ন্যূনতম মজুরির ডাক পুঞ্জীভূত হয় ১৯৪৫ এর হাট গোবিন্দপুরে (বর্ধমান) কৃষক সভার প্রাদেশিক সম্মেলনে। তারপর বর্ধমানে, মেদিনীপুরে, খেতমজুর পার্টি গঠনের কথা বলা হয়। কিন্তু হতাশা বেদনাবিদ্ধ বসাইয়ের উচ্চারণ-

“কিন্তু যখন দেখলু কিষণসভা ক্ষেতমজুর দলরে ফেলে দিলু পাপগর্ভের ছেলার মত, কুন অ সময়ে মদত দিল নাই, তখন হখে নিজের কথা ভাবতে লাগলাম।”^৪ এই লিজের কথা, শব্দ যুগ্মের ব্যাখ্যা ও দেয় বসাই। সে বলে, “লিজের কথা মানে” খেতমজুর সমাজের কথা’^৫

মিশনে শিক্ষিত বসাই এখন দলছুট। সাঁওতাল জন্মের অনেক সংস্কার বাদ দিয়ে চাঁচা ছোলা বিপ্লবী কর্মী। মধ্যবর্তী বাবু বিপ্লবীদের শো পিস্ কিন্তু সর্বহারা সাঁওতাল বসাই বর্তমানে ক্ষেতমজুর আন্দোলনের পাঁচিশ বছরের লড়াকু সংগ্রামী। ৬৭ র টালমাটালের পর সে এবং তার সহকর্মীর একই আত্মপোলকি যা যেমন ছিল তেমনি আছে কিছই পাশ্ যিনি শুধু তাদের জীবনের সংগ্রাম অনাহক বাজে খরচ হয়ে গেছে। কালীবাবু তার মধ্যবিত্ত গণ্ডী থেকে বেরিয়ে আসতে বা পারলেও বসাই পেরেছিল। কারণ বসাই পার্টির ভণ্ডামিটা পুরো ধরে ফেলে এবং তীর আত্মবিপ্লবাসে বলে-

“আমি বলছু কালীবাবু; আমু একটা লতুন পথ ভাবছু। পথটো পুরানা বলেই লতুন। তবে তুমরা যা ভাবছু তা লয়। লক শাল আমু হয় নাই।”^৬

আমাদের বুঝে নিতে হবে স্বাধীনতার পর থেকে নক্সাল আন্দোলন পর্যন্ত দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ, মন্বন্তর, সাম্প্রদায়িক দাঙ্গা, দেশভাগজনিত খণ্ডিত স্বাধীনতা ও তজ্জনিত উদ্বাস্ত সমস্যা, খাদ্য আন্দোলন নানান ঘটনাপ্রবাহ আমাদের রাজ্যের দুর্বীর গতিতে প্রবাহিত হলে রাজ্য ক্রমশই হতদরিদ্র ও দুর্বল পড়ে। স্বাভাবিক কারণেই আদিবাসী জনজীবনের মেরুদণ্ডকে ভেঙে দেবে এ এমন কি আশ্চর্য ঘটনা।

গ্রামীণ ভারতের মুখ, ক্ষুধা মহাশ্বেতা বলেন, অগ্নি গল্পের শ্মশানের সাদৃশ্য রয়েছে। এটি মোটেও আশ্চর্যের নয়। এই সত্যটি বিবেচনা করে যে ভারতের উল্লেখযোগ্য অংশ বিশ্বাস করতে শুরু করেছে এবং বলতে শুরু করেছে যে ভারত তখনই একটি শক্তিশালী বিশ্বায়কর জায়গা হয়ে উঠবে

যদি কোনও ভাবে ৬৫ থেকে ৭৫% জনগণকে বিলুপ্ত হতে প্ররোচিত করা যায়। জি আই এম (মহান ভারতীয় অর্থ) এমনকি অনেকেই এই মনের অবস্থা জাহির করেন না, তবে তা সামঞ্জস্যপূর্ণ না হলেও ইচ্ছার একটা অংশ এই বিশালতার সাথে। ভারতবর্ষের পরিসংখ্যান অনুযায়ী অনেক ভারতীয় উপজাতি নিজের অস্তিত্ব রক্ষা করতে পারেন নি। অনেকে আবার বিলুপ্ত হয়ে গেছে।

মানবাধিকারকর্মী মহাশ্বেতা দেবীরও ওই এক প্রশ্ন—“বসাইদের অবস্থা কি হবে? আমেরিকার আদিম আদিবাসী না ভোজা ও অন্যান্য রেড ইণ্ডিয়ানদের মতো? কনজার্ড। সংরক্ষণ। ম্যুনিয়াম এসো। দেখে যাও। সংরক্ষিত বসতিতে এরা হল মুণ্ডা, এরা সাঁওতাল, এরা মারিয়া।”^৭

তারা আগাছা বা বিকৃতির মতো আলোকিত আদিবাসীদের নিশ্চিহ্ন করতে সর্বাত্মক চেষ্টা করে। তবুও তারা নতুন করে অঙ্কুরিত হতে থাকে। না, রক্তবীজের বংশ বলবো না, ফিনিঞ্জ বলবো। কারণ ফিনিঞ্জ নিজে মরলেও অপরকে রক্ষা করার ক্ষমতা রাখে। যে জন্য একজন বসাইকে বারবার হত্যা করতে হবে।

‘লকশাল আমু হয় নাই’^৮— মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক থেকে বসাই বিকৃত বিপথগামী নয়। বসাই সচেতন। তার চেতনায় সে নকশাল নয়। অস্তিত্বের সংকটের দিনে অস্তিত্ব রক্ষার তাড়নায় সে কেবল ভিন্ন পথযাত্রী। বসাই ও নকশাল বীরু পাঠকের ঘনিষ্ঠতা কালীর মনে সংশয় সৃষ্টি করলেও কালীকে অবাক করে দিয়ে বসাই তার প্রয়োজনের ভিন্ন পথকে প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে চেয়েছে। ‘পুরোন অথচ নতুন পথ’^৯ তাকে মধ্যবিন্ত রাজনীতির নিঙড় ভেঙে বহুদূরে নিয়ে যায় ...।

বসাইয়ের দ্বিতীয় অভিযোগ বর্ণাশ্রম সমাজ প্রথার বিভেদের বিরুদ্ধে। সুতীক্ষ্ণ শ্রেণীবোধে আত্মস্থ বসাই। তাই পরিবেষ্টনীর কোনকিছুই তার বোধ-বিশ্লেষণের দর্পণকে এড়িয়ে থাকে না। পুরনো কংগ্রেসী গোকুলবাবুর উন্নাসিক শ্রেণীদন্ডের সঙ্গে বসাইয়ের মনোদর্পণে একাকার হয়ে যায় নতুন জমানার পার্টি বাবুদের আচরিত স্বভাব যাপন—

“লতুন জমানায়, পার্টির বাবুরা সানতাল কাওরা তিওররে ভাই ভাণা ভাবে? আঁ? তাখে সামন্তবাবুর বাসায় তুমরা পিয়লায় চা খেতা, আমু মাটির ভাণ্ডে?”^{১০} এই বহমান ব্যবধান ও বৈষম্য দৃষ্টেই বসাইয়ের সিদ্ধান্ত “বাবু একটো জাতা” বাগদী কায়োর মত জা ত একটো।” কালী সাঁতারার পরিপ্রশ্ন—বসাই কি তার স্বজাত্য বোধের হীনমন্যতা থেকেই পার্টি থেকে সরে এসেছে? প্রতি পদে পার্টির লোকেরাও তাকে প্রকারান্তরে বৃষ্টিয়ে দিয়েছে, “তু বসাইটো, সানতালটো, তুর সমাজের মানুষ লেংটি পরো, আকালে হঁদুর সাপ খায়। জমি আছু এমন সানতাল নয় যে জাতে উঠছু, খেতমজুর তু।”^{১১} এই পদভারানত হীনমন্যতাই কি বসাইয়ের পার্টি থেকে বিবিক্ত-ব্যবচ্ছিন্ন হবার প্রেরণা? কালীর এই মর্মে জিজ্ঞাসাতেও বসাই নগুর্থক উত্তর দেয়। কেননা বসাই জানে এমন ছেঁড়া কথা নিয়ে ধূলা ওড়ায় বাবু-কমরেডরা। বসাইয়ের প্রতি প্রশ্ন, সূক্ষ্ম কারণ সংগুপ্ত রেখে সে যদি এমন ছেঁড়া কথাই জিজ্ঞাসা করে, তবুও কী কালীর উত্তর আছে? পরমুহূর্তে বসাই একথাও অকপটে ব্যক্ত করে যে, তার জাতিসত্তা ভোলানোর মত কাজ তো পার্টি করেনি। বসাইয়ের উখিত প্রশ্নমালা: “সাঁওতালরে ভুলায়ে দিবু সি সানতাল, সি কেমন করে পারবু তুমরা? ... সাঁতালি কাওরা- তিওর কেমনে ভুলে সি কে? ভুলাবার কাজ তুমাদের ছিল, লয়? সি কাজ করোছ?”^{১২} পরিবর্তিত দেশকালে

বসাইয়ের অসন্তোষের ভিত্তি বিশ্লেষণে উপন্যাস বিবৃতিকারেরও অসহিষ্ণুতা ঝরে পড়ে সালিতার ভোটের মিটিঙে ভেদবমিগ্রস্ত সামন্তকে ‘বড় কমরেট’ সম্মান চিহ্নিত করে বাস ড্রাইভারকে ভয় দেখিয়ে দ্রুত হাসপাতালে নিয়ে যাবার ঘটনানুশঙ্গে। কিন্তু বড় কমরেটরাও তা আজকাল মনে রাখেন না। ভোটের সময় ছাড়া দেখা দেন না। গ্রাম বাংলার বিষয়ে, গ্রাম থেকে সুদূরে বসে তাঁদেরও সাফাই, বাংলার মুখ তারা দেখিয়াছেন তাই এখন পৃথিবীর রূপ খুঁজিতে যান। পরিণাম রক্তচাপ হৃদবৈকল্য বা বহুমূত্র জাতীয় ধনী অসুখে অকালমৃত্যু ও বসাই টুডুকে খোয়ানো।

৫

সত্তরের দশকে বসাই শ্রেণী সংগ্রামে উজ্জীবিত করে সমগ্র জাতিকে। কিন্তু এ রাজ্যে বামফ্রন্টের রাজত্বের তিরিশ বছর পরেও রাঢ়ের প্রত্যন্ত গ্রামগুলিতে সমরূপতার প্রতিফলন আমরা দেখতে পাই না। বাঁকুড়ার বীরভানপুরে উপজাতি মহিলা প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ে মিড ডে মিলের খাবার রান্না করায় উচ্চবর্ণীয় ব্রাহ্মণ স্কুল পড়ুয়ারা অভিভাবকদের নির্দেশে সেই খাদ্য ‘বয়কট’ করে। অশিক্ষিত সমাজের এই লজ্জাকর পরিস্থিতিতে পার্টির ভাবমূর্তি বজায় রাখতে সিপি আই এম নেতা বিমান বসু গণভোজনের আয়োজন করেন। এই গণভোজের আসরে “এলাকায় ব্রাহ্মণদের প্রতিনিধি হিসেবে পরিচিত দুর্গাদাস ত্রিপাঠী, ফণিভূষণ ধর, বিমল ত্রিপাঠীরা সকলেই এসেছিলেন।”^{১৩} এর ফলে বিমানবাবুর দাবী, “এমন কাজ করার ‘সাহস’ আর কেউ দেখাবো না।”^{১৪} কিন্তু প্রায় এক মাস পরেই আর এক প্রতিবেদন থেকে জানা যায় যে স্বয়ং প্রাক্তন স্বাস্থ্যমন্ত্রী সূর্যকান্ত মিশ্রের বিধানসভা এলাকাতেই উচ্চবর্ণীয় মানুষেরা, যারা বীরভানপুরে “কখনও সভায় দাঁড়িয়ে মাইকে, কখনও একান্তে বিমান বাবুকে বলেছেন, ‘কাজটা ভুল হয়েছিল এমন আর হবে না’ তারাই পুনরায় প্রতিশ্রুতি ভঙ্গ করে দুঃসাহসিক (বিমান বসুর দাবী অনুযায়ী) কাজ করে বসে।”^{১৫} ২৮.১২.২০০৪ তারিখে ‘আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা’য় রাঘব বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের দেওয়া এক প্রতিবেদন ঐ একই সমাজ রূপের প্রতিফলন দেখা যায়। তিনি বর্ধমানে আর বোলপুরের কয়েকটি গ্রাম ঘুরে গ্রামীণ সমাজ গঠনের নির্ধারিত মাপকাঠি।^{১৬}

স্বাধীনতার ৭৫ বছর পরেও বিভিন্ন জেলার অন্তর্গত গ্রাম পরিদর্শন করলে দেখা যায় সেই নিয়মের কোন রূপান্তর ঘটেনি। “ব্রাহ্মণ-পাড়া, সদগোপ পাড়া বা মোড়ল পাড়া, ডোম বাগদিদের পাড়া আলাদা আলাদা। পাড়াগুলোর মধ্যে ফাঁক, দূরত্বও আছে। ... উচ্চবর্ণ বলতে শুধু বামন কায়েত নয়, উগ্রক্ষত্রিয়, বেনে সদগোপ ময়রা, তেলি, কামারের সঙ্গে ডোম-বাগদি-মুচির তফাত ও চের।”^{১৭}

বৃহদ্ধর্মপূর্ণ, ব্রহ্মবৈবর্তপুরাণ-এই সমস্ত স্মৃতি ও ধর্মশাস্ত্রকে আশ্রয় করেই ব্রাহ্মণ সমাজের রক্ষণশীল মনোভাবের প্রকাশ। এই সমাজ শ্রমিকরা কিন্তু প্রায় অধিকাংশই অন্ত্যজ সম্প্রদায়ের বা ক্লেচ্ছ পর্যায়ে, বর্ণাশ্রমের বাইরে তাহাদের স্থান। বর্ণাশ্রমে চারটি ভাগ-ব্রাহ্মণ, ক্ষত্রিয়, বৈশ্য, শূদ্র তাহলে বর্ণাশ্রমের বাইরে বারো থাকল ? আদিবাসী যারা আর্যদের বশ্যতা স্বীকার করল না। সমাজের একেবারে নিম্নস্তরে না থেকে নিজেদেরই স্বতন্ত্র একটি কৌমসমাজ গঠন করেছিল, যারা কলহ বিবাদ থেকে দূরে গিয়ে পার্বত্য অরণ্যময় জীবন বেছে নিয়েছিল তারা বর্ণাশ্রমের বাইরে। আদিবাসী শান্তিপ্ৰিয়। সৌন্দর্যপ্রিয় তারা ফুল ভালবাসে অথচ এই নিরীহ মানুষকে সময়ে সময়ে অঙ্গ তুলে নিতে হয়েছিল কেন ? সে প্রশ্নের উত্তর বিদ্বৎজনেরা আলবাত জানেন।

বসাইয়ের অপর এক অভিযোগ হল “খেতমজুর লড়ায়ে ল্যেমে দেখলু এম.ডবলু. হচ্ছে বছরকে বছর লেবার ডিপার্ট এম. ডবলু বাড়ায়ে দিছে, কিন্তু মোরা একো পয়সা পাই নাই। স্বাধীনতার পর আইন তো মন্দ কথা বলে নাই? ভাগচাষীদের দুভাগ দিবার সুবিধা ছিল। কিষণ সভা সিদিকে দেখে নাই। তখন কিষণ সভার লড়াই করল, তেভাগা ভাসি গেলু।”^{১৮} আর এক অভিযোগ “উনিশশো তিপাল্লে এম ডবলু। উনষাটে রিভিশন। এখন সত্তর শাল। আটষটের রিভিশন এখনো চালু-সায়ত্রিশ লাখের বেশি খেতমজুর সরকারে ঘোষিত রেট পায় না। ... ই ভাল কুমনিস তুমরা হে। জোতদারের কিছু বলথে পার নাই। লা কি তুমরা জোতদারের হক বুঝ বেশি? আইন পাস করাও, চালু করো না?”^{১৯} তেভাগা আন্দোলনে অংশগ্রহণকারী খেতমজুরদের আদায়ীকৃত ফসলের কোন অংশই যে দেওয়া হয়নি, সে কথা কৃষক সভা অকপটে স্বীকার করেছে। এ ব্যাপারে কৃষক সভার দিক থেকে কোন সাংগঠনিক ব্যবস্থা না নেওয়ার ফলে ক্ষেতমজুরদের অভিযোগ যে ন্যায়সংগত সে কথাও স্বীকার করেছে। এই কারণেই পরবর্তী সরকারী লেভি প্রথার বিরুদ্ধে অংশগ্রহণ করতে খেতমজুরদের অনীহা দেখা গেছে অতএব তেভাগা আন্দোলনে অংশগ্রহণকারী খেতমজুরদের প্রতিনিধি বসাইয়ের অভিযোগ সত্য।

বসাইয়ের বকলমে শিল্পীর আর এক অভিযোগ সত্তর সালে বিপ্লবের উপযুক্ত ক্ষেত্র এ রাজ্যে প্রস্তুত থাকা সত্ত্বেও কেবলমাত্র রাজনৈতিক তৎপরতার অভাবেই তা জ্বলে ওঠেনি। ‘গরম ছিল লোহা’^{২০} ... কিন্তু হাতুড়ি মারতে চাইল না কেউ। রেজাল বসাই টুডু। বসাইয়ের নকশালরা। নকশালদের আত্মত্যাগে বসাই শ্রদ্ধাবনত হলেও নিজে কে নকশালী মনে করে না। বসাই তার দীর্ঘ কর্মজীবনের সঙ্গী কালী সাঁতারার কাছে স্বীকারোক্তি করেছে বসাই টুডু নকশালপন্থী নয়, নক্সালপন্থীরা যে ভুল করেছিল তা করতে সে রাজী নয়। তবু তার পথ স্বতন্ত্র। স্বতন্ত্র সংগ্রামী বসাইয়ের ভাবনা বাস্তবিক নকশাল নেতা চারু মজুমদারের উক্তির সঙ্গে মিলে যায়। তিনি লিখেছিলেন- “কমরেড রক্তঝরা পথই তো একমাত্র বিপ্লবের পথ।”^{২১} এই একমাত্র পথই তাকে পথের দিশা দেখায়। এ পথ মুক্তির বিকল্প পথ।

“পথেই এবার নামো সাথী-পথেই হবে পথ চেনা।”^{২২} মাসারসাবের যাত্রা যেখানে শেষ, বসাইয়ের পথ শুরু সেখান থেকেই কারণ মাসার সাবের জীবনাবসান ঘটে, ১৯৭১ এর প্রারম্ভেই। আর বসাই ১৯৭০-৭৬ এর মধ্যে সম্পূর্ণ নিজস্ব পদ্ধতিতে অবহেলিত পদদলিত ভূমিহীন খেতমজুরদের অধিকার আদায়ের জন্য শ্রেণি সংগ্রাম গড়ে তোলে।

একথা আসল সত্য যে বাস্তবের রূঢ় আঘাতই রাষ্ট্রের আসল চরিত্রকে চিনিয়ে দিয়েছিল। নকশালদের নিয়ে কাঁদুনি গাওয়া নয়, তাদের আন্দোলনের কারণ ও মর্ম বস্তুই বাস্তবকে চিনতে শেখাল। চিনতে শেখাল নিজ অধিকার। মনে পড়ে গণকবি বীরেন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায়-এর কবিতার লাইন- “রক্ত শুধু রক্ত দেখতে দেখতে দুই চোখ অন্ধ হয়ে যায়।”^{২৩} আবার কখনো নবারণ ভট্টাচার্যের লেখা পঙক্তি তীরের মতো এসে বুকের মাঝখানে গেঁথে যায় “আমি আমার দেশকে ফিরে কেড়ে নেবো।”^{২৪} লক্ষণীয় পঙক্তিটির ‘আমার দেশকে’ শব্দদ্বয়। প্রশ্ন আসতে পারে, এত বলিষ্ঠ কণ্ঠে কে দাবী জানায় ‘আমার দেশ’। দেশ তো কারো ব্যক্তিগত নয় তবুও দাবী আসে। জননীর বধিগত সন্তান ফিরে পেতে চায়। ব্যাকুল আর্তি তীব্রতার রূপ ধারণ করেছে। কোন আপোস

নয়, কোন সমঝোতা নয়। ‘আমার’ শব্দ দিয়ে অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠিত করে। ফিরিয়ে দেয় নি যারা তাদের কাছ কেড়ে নেওয়ার সোচ্চার ঘোষণা।

“অরণ্যের অধিকার কৃষ্ণ ভারতের আদি অধিকার। যখন সাদা মানুষের দেশ সমুদ্রের অতলে ঘুমোচ্ছিল তখন থেকেই কৃষ্ণ ভারতের কালো মানুষরা জঙ্গলকে মা বলে জানে।”^{২৫}

History shows the future path....

বর্তমানকে বুঝতে আমাদের ফিরে যেতে হয় ফ্ল্যাশব্যাকে। যেমন করে মহাশ্বেতা দেবী দেখিয়েছেন অন্য এক জীবন, তাঁর লেখনীর স্তরে স্তরে উন্মোচন করেছেন মানুষের অন্য এক অস্তিত্বের আঙনের আঁচ ঠিক তেমন ভাবেই অতীতের পর্দা সরিয়ে দেখে নেবো সংগ্রামী-সাঁওতালদের ইতিকথা। একবার ডাক দিতে হয় সুবা বাংলায়। তারপর উন্মোচিত হোক ইস-ইণ্ডিয়া কোম্পানীর ভারত শাসন পর্ব। নক্সাল বিপ্লবজাত বীর বিক্রমী জনতার প্রবল ক্রোধান্বিত গোটা বাংলা সহ ভারতের বিস্তীর্ণ এলাকা, এমনকী আন্তর্জাতিক দুনিয়াতেও দাবানলের মতো অতি দ্রুতহারে বিস্তৃতি লাভ করেছিল সেই ধুমায়িত অগ্নি সঞ্চিত হয়েছিল যে অগ্নিগর্ভে তার কতখানি গভীরতা? খুঁড়তে খুঁড়তে নিশ্চয় আমরা পেয়ে যাবো, সে সময়ের আর্থসামাজিক, রাজনৈতিক পরিবেশ পরিস্থিতি। যে পরিবেশ পরিস্থিতি অরণ্যজননীর নিতান্ত সহজ সরল ভাবেভোলা ভূমিপুত্রকে নক্সাল বিদ্রোহের অমোঘ ও অনতিক্রমণীয় প্রেক্ষাপট তিল তিল করে প্রস্তুত করে দিয়েছিল এক সশস্ত্র সংগ্রামী যোদ্ধা। যাকে নকশাল বলা হচ্ছে।

৬

মোগল সম্রাট আকবরের আমলে (১৫৫৬-১৬০৫) এই বাংলাদেশ সুবা বাংলা নামে পরিচিত ছিল। মুর্শিদকুলি খাঁ পর্যন্ত বাংলার আয়তন আরো উত্তরোত্তর বৃদ্ধি পায়। মুর্শিদকুলির পুত্র সুজাউদ্দিন শাসন কার্যের সুবিধার্থে বাংলার শাসনভারকে দ্বিখণ্ডিত করেন। (১৭৩৯-৪০) সুজাউদ্দিন পুত্র সরফরাজ খাঁকে হত্যা করে বাংলার নবাব পদে অধিষ্ঠিত হন আলীবর্দী খাঁ। তাঁর সময়কাল (১৭৪০-১৭৫৬) মাত্র ১৬ বছর আলীবর্দীর কর্মোক্ষ্যম ও বিচক্ষণতা সত্ত্বেও পশ্চিমবাংলা ছারখার হয়ে যায়। ১৭৪২ খ্রিঃ মারাঠারা বাংলাকে জয় করে তারা কাটোয়াকে প্রধান কেন্দ্রে পরিণত করে। এবং মারাঠাশক্তি ভাগীরথীর পশ্চিম তীরে নিজ অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠা করে। ফলস্বরূপ রাজমহল থেকে মেদিনীপুর ও উড়িষ্যার জলেশ্বর পর্যন্ত বিস্তীর্ণ ভূ-ভাগ মারাঠারা দখল করে নেয়। ১৭৪২-১৭৫১ পর্যন্ত প্রায় দশ বছর ধরে মারাঠা ও আলীবর্দীর যুদ্ধ জারি থাকে। শেষ পর্যন্ত আলীবর্দী খাঁ পরাজয় স্বীকার করে এবং মারাঠাদের সঙ্গে সন্ধিস্থাপন করেন। এই সময়ের মধ্যেই ১১ ই ফেব্রুয়ারি ১৭৫০ গ্রাম প্রধান চূনার মুর্শুর ঘর আলো করে জন্ম হয় তিলকা মাঝি। তিলকা ভারতবর্ষের প্রথম আদিবাসী সংগ্রামী। ভাগলপুর জেলায় রাজমহলে পার্বত্যময় অরণ্যপ্রকৃতির দামিন-ই-কোহ তে বাস করতো মুক্ত স্বাধীন সাঁওতাল। অতঃপর ঘটনার ঘনঘটায়ে সেখানে একে একে অনুপ্রবেশ করে মারাঠা, শেঠ, ব্যবসায়ী আড়কাঠি জমিদার জোতদার সকল উচ্চবিত্ত শ্রেণী। যারা এল সভ্যতার লোভের ঝুলি নিয়ে তারা প্রতি পদে পদে সাঁওতালদের প্রতারিত করে যেতে লাগল। বিদ্বিত হলো নিরাপদ যাপিত জীবন।

আলীবর্দীর মৃত্যুর পর ১৭৫৬ সালে বাংলার নবাব হন সিরাজদ্দৌলা। খুব অল্পদিনের মধ্যেই

মীরজাফর-মীরকাশীম, রাজবল্লভদের মতো সভাসদ ও সেনাপতিদের বিশ্বাসঘাতকতায় সিরাজদৌলা পলাশীর প্রান্তরে অসহায় পরাজয়ের মালা বরণ করে নেয়।

শুরু হয় বাণিজ্য সফর। সুকৌশলী দক্ষ নাবিকরা গোটা ভারতবর্ষ কবজা করে সমুদ্র বন্দরে ঘাঁটি স্থাপন করে। তারপর ধীরে ধীরে রাজকীয় বেশ ধারণ করতে থাকে। দেশবাসী পরাধীন হলো। অল্প দূর এগোতে না এগোতে বনিকরা ভারতবর্ষের সোনার হরিণে চোখ রাখল। লুণ্ঠায়িত নখদন্ত থাবার ভেতর থেকে নিগত হয়ে দেশীয় মানুষের জীবন্তেশিকারী বাঘের মতো সুযোগ বুঝে থাবা বসাতে লাগলো।

১৭৬৫ সালে এলাহাবাদ চুক্তির মাধ্যমে রাজস্ব আদায়ের ক্ষমতা মুঘল সম্রাট দ্বিতীয় শাহ আলমের হাত থেকে চলে এলো ইস ইণ্ডিয়া কোম্পানির হাতে। বিদ্রোহের ভয়ে তাদের এই রাজস্ব আদায়কে লোক দেখানোর জন্য নাম দিলেন ‘নজরানা’ আর মুঘল আমলের রাজস্ব বাবদ ১০-১৫ শতাংশের হারকে রাতারাতি বাড়িয়ে তুললেন পঞ্চাংশ শতাংশ। অথচ অর্থের এই হাত বদলের খবর কিন্তু সাধারণ কৃষকরা জানতে পারলেন না। তাঁরা নবাবের নামেই এই পাহাড় প্রমাণ রাজস্ব দিয়ে যেতে লাগলেন।

গোদের ওপর বিষফোড়া স্বরূপ ১৭৬৯ সালের অনাবৃষ্টি অদূর ভবিষ্যতের অশনি সংকেত রূপে দেখা দিতে লাগলো। দুর্ভিক্ষের প্রাথমিক প্রকোপ আজকের পশ্চিমবঙ্গ ও বিহারের উপর পড়লেও ওড়িশা, ঝাড়খণ্ড এবং বাংলাদেশ ও এই সর্বগ্রাসী মৃত্যুদূতের হাত থেকে বাদ যায়নি। তবে বাংলাতেই এর প্রভাব ছিল সবচেয়ে প্রাণঘাতী। ক্ষয়ক্ষতির বিচারে বাংলায় বীরভূম ও মুর্শিদাবাদ জেলা ছিল সকলের উর্বে। হাজার হাজার মানুষ অনাহারে মৃত্যুর মুখে পড়তে লাগলেন। মাইলের পর মাইল চাষের জমি পড়ে রইলো শূন্য খাঁ খাঁ।

যদিও বাংলার হতভাগ্য মানুষ তখনও জানতেন না যে তাদের ভাগ্যকাশে আরও কত দুর্ভিক্ষ ও মহামারীর কালো মেঘ ঘনিয়ে আসছে যার একমাত্র কারণ ইংরেজের লালসা। আর সে লালসার ফলে গোটা গ্রাম বাংলায় নেমে এল মৃত্যুর মিছিল ও শ্মশানের নিস্তরতা। যদিও এই প্রত্যেকটি দুর্ভিক্ষই ছিল ভয়াবহ। তবে ১৭৭১ সালের পর সবচেয়ে প্রাণঘাতী মহামারীটি ঘটে ১৯৪৩ সালে। এক লপ্তে প্রায় ৩০ লক্ষ মানুষ মৃত্যুর মুখে পতিত হন। অনাহার ক্লিষ্ট মানুষকে প্রাণের তাগিদে ঘাসপাতা, এমনকী মৃত মানুষের মাংসে ক্ষুধা নিবৃত্ত করতে হয়েছিল।

এ হেন পরিস্থিতি যেখানে বাঘ বাঘের মাংস খায় না, সেখানে মানুষকে মানুষের মাংস খেয়ে বেঁচে থাকতে হয়। ইংরেজ সরকার নির্ধারিত নীতি যে সকল মধ্যস্বত্বভোগীর উদ্ভব ঘটিয়েছিলেন তাদের রীতি প্রয়োগের কৌশল ছিল আরো ভয়ংকর। অত্যাচারের প্রাবল্যে জর্জরিত Mass People. দুর্ভিক্ষের সঙ্গে শাসকের পীড়নে যে পরিমাণ দুর্গতি জনগণকে যাপন করতে হয়েছিল তা অকল্পনীয়। এসবের মধ্যে সীমাহীন দুর্গতি ভোগ করতে হয়েছিল আদিবাসীদের। অরণ্যবাসী জনগোষ্ঠী সরকারের নতুন ব্যবস্থাকে বুঝে উঠতে পারেনি। পূর্বের অনেক অভিজ্ঞতার সঙ্গে এই অভিজ্ঞতার ছিল ভিন্ন প্রকৃতির। দিন যত অতিক্রান্ত হয়েছে তারা ক্রমশ নাচার জাতি রূপে পরিণত হয়েছে। উল্লেখ্য, আদিবাসী এক স্বতন্ত্র জাতি। তাদের নিজস্ব ভাষা, সংস্কৃতি ঐতিহ্যময় ইতিহাস রয়েছে।

কোন রকম বিবাদ বিতর্ক না চাওয়া এক স্বতন্ত্র মানব গোষ্ঠী। তা সত্ত্বেও অপমান আর অবমাননা যুক্ত হয়ে যায় জীবনের সঙ্গে। জমিদার, জোতদার, ঠিকাদার, ব্যবসায়ী আড়কাঠি আদিবাসী সাঁওতাল, মুণ্ডাদের জীবনকে পর্যুদস্ত করেছিল। এই অভিঘাত তাদের পাজর ভেঙেছিল ঠিক কিন্তু চেতনার স্তরকে দারুণভাবে জাগিয়ে ছিল। স্বাভাবিক নিয়মেই প্রকৃতিও সবসময় সহণশীল হয় না। তার অসম্ভব শক্তি জমতে থাকে আকাশের মেঘে। সমুদ্রের গর্ভে, ভূ-অভ্যন্তরে। সাঁওতালদের যজ্ঞা, শক্তিতে পরিণত হয়। সঞ্চিত হয় অগ্নিগর্ভে। সেই অগ্নিগর্ভ সময়ে বিস্ফোরিত হবে এটাই স্বাভাবিক।

সংকট যখন ঘনীভূত হয়, অন্ধকার নেমে আসে জীবনের মর্মে মর্মে তখন মানব কল্যাণের দাবিতে ঈশ্বর দূত প্রেরণ করেন যুগে যুগে। ১৭৭০ এ যখন প্রবল শস্যহানি ঘটেছিল এবং খাদ্যসংকটে রাঢ়ভূমির জনজীবন চরম বিপন্ন হয়ে পড়েছিল তখন যে ভারতীয় আদিবাসী নেতা সম্পদ দখল ইংরেজ শোষণের বিরুদ্ধে সশস্ত্র সংগ্রাম চালান তিনি আর কেউ নন একজন সাঁওতাল নাম তিলকা মাকি বা তিলকা মুর্সু। আদিবাসী বিদ্রোহের (১৭৮৪) প্রথম যুগের নেতা হিসেবে পরিচিত। মঙ্গলপাণ্ডের ৭০ বছর আগেই তিনি ব্রিটিশ বিরোধী আন্দোলন গড়ে তোলেন এবং শহীদ হন।

তিলকা মাকির ফাঁসি হয়ে যাবার ঠিক ৭০ বছর পর ১৮৫৫-৫৬ তে আবার সংঘটিত সাঁওতালদের বিদ্রোহ। ইংরেজ শাসনের ১০০ বছরের মধ্যে দু'দুবার সাঁওতালদের বিদ্রোহ ইতিহাসে বিশেষ তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ঘটনা। স্বত্বাধিকার ফিরে পেতে দেশ দেশান্তরে ছড়িয়ে থাকা সাঁওতালদের শালগিরার ডাক দিয়েছিলেন সিধু-কানু ভাতৃদ্বয়। সাড়া দিয়েছিলেন হাজার হাজার সাঁওতাল। এই আন্দোলনে যোগ দিয়েছিলেন প্রান্তিক জনজাতি ও কামার মেথর, বাগদি-মুচি, ডোম মুসলমান মোমিন। এ আন্দোলন ছিল কৃষক, ভূমিহীন চাষি ও ক্ষেতমজুরদের। পরের দিকে এই আন্দোলন চরম রূপ ধারণ করলে ব্রিটিশ বাহিনী ও প্রশাসন সাঁওতালদের কড়া হাতে দমন করেছে। প্রায় তিরিশ হাজার সাঁওতালকে গুলি করে হত্যা করা হয়। বলা বাহুল্য সাঁওতালরা খাজনা দিতে ও রাজী হয়েছিল। তারা শুধু চেয়েছিল জমিদারী শোষণকে যেন ব্যাহত করা হয়। ইংরেজ সরকার এই সামান্য দাবি, এই প্রস্তাব গ্রহণ করলে সাঁওতালদের দুর্দশা অনেকাংশে লাঘব হতে পারতো প্রসঙ্গত মনে রাখা দরকার বাংলায় দুই বছরের অনাবৃষ্টিতে যে দুর্ভিক্ষ দেখা দিয়েছিল সেক্ষেত্রেও শাসক ইংরেজরা দুর্ভিক্ষ পীড়িতদের বাঁচানোর কোনো চেষ্টা করেনি। ইংরেজ প্রশাসক এসব কাজ করেন নি রাজনৈতিক কারণেই।

ব্রিটিশ শাসনাধীন ভারতবর্ষের সাঁওতালরা দীর্ঘকাল ধরেই সংগ্রাম করেছে ব্রিটিশ অধীনতা থেকে মুক্তির জন্য। সাঁওতালদের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের ইতিহাস অবশ্য ভারতবর্ষের স্বাধীনতার ইতিহাস থেকে অনেক পুরোনো। ভারতবর্ষের বৃক শক হুন দল পাঠান মোগল কত বিজিত জাতি ভারত বর্ষকে শাসন করে গেল। কিন্তু ইংরেজরা ছিল বুদ্ধিতে প্রখর ও ধুরন্ধর। তাদের শাসন পদ্ধতির নিষ্ঠুরতা প্রাথমিক অবস্থায় আঁচ না করতে পারলেও মাটির সঙ্গে যাদের প্রাণের যোগ শেকড়ের সঙ্গে যাদের অন্তর অবিচ্ছেদ্য তারা চিনে নিয়েছিল ভারতবর্ষের শত্রুকে। এক এবং একমাত্র সাঁওতাল শ্রেণী অনুমান করেছিল ইংরেজ শক্তির ভয়ংকরতা। শুধু ইংরেজ নয় জাহাজ বোঝাই হয়ে এসেছিল খ্রিষ্টান মিশনারী। যারা মিথ্যা প্রলোভনের জাল বিছিয়ে আদিবাসীদের ধর্মান্তরকরণে উদ্যোগী হয়েছিলেন।

প্রসঙ্গক্রমে বলতে হয়, ইংরেজী শিক্ষায় শিক্ষিত ঐতিহাসিকরা, সুশিক্ষিত বাঙালি বুদ্ধিজীবীরা সাঁওতালদের বিদ্রোহ নিয়ে কোন কথা বললেন না। সম্ভবত সংবাদ প্রভাকর একবার এই সাঁওতাল জাতির দুরবস্থা উল্লেখ করেছিলেন। আর নয়। অথচ তখন কলকাতা রমরম করছে। কত সভা, কত সমিতি গঠন চলছে। আরো দুঃখের বিষয় কলকাতার মানুষজন জানতেন না সাঁওতাল নামক কোন জাতি আছে বলে। লজ্জা ঢাকাবার বন্ধ আমাদের কাছে কম পড়ে যায়। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী ইতিহাসের এই সংগ্রামী জাতির প্রতি শ্রদ্ধাশীল হয়েছেন।

পরাদীনতার বেদনা মহাশ্বেতা দেবীকে স্পর্শ করেছিল গভীরভাবে। ইংরেজ রাজশক্তির নানা অন্যায় ও উৎপীড়ন, দমনমূলক নীতি নিয়ম মহাশ্বেতা দেবীকে ভিতরে ভিতরে একই সঙ্গে ব্যথিত ও বিদ্রোহী করে তুলেছিল। পরাদীন ভারতে ব্রিটিশ অত্যাচারে ক্ষুব্ধ কবি গুরুর লেখনীতেও পরিলক্ষিত ব্যথা-দ্রোহের ভাবনা-

“কত কোটি কোটি লোক অন্ধ কারাগারে
অধীনতা শৃঙ্খলেতে আবদ্ধ হইয়া
ভরিছে স্বর্গের কর্ণকাতর ক্রন্দণে
কোটি কোটি মানবের শান্তি স্বাধীনতা
রক্তময় পদাঘাতে দিতেছে ভাঙিয়া।”^{২৬} (কবিকাহিনী)

ব্রিটিশ প্রশাসন দমননীতি প্রয়োগকরে স্বাধীন সাঁওতালদের Identity ছিনিয়ে নিতে চেয়েছে। বিচারের নামে প্রহসন, কারারুদ্ধ করে ফাঁসিকাঠে ঝোলানো নিত্যনূতন পীড়নমূলক নীতি নির্ধারণ করা ছিল তাদের শাসনক্রিয়ার অঙ্গ। প্রকৃতির গর্ভে সঞ্চিত লাভার মতো অন্তঃসলিলা হয়ে বয়ে আসে তিলকা থেকে সিধু-কানু-চাঁদ ভৈরবে। তারা অপেক্ষা করেছে নির্দেশের। ইশারা পেলেই দারুণ বিস্ফোরণে জ্বালিয়ে দেবে ব্রিটিশ তকত। সেই দাবান্নিই সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের নামে জঙ্গল অরণ্য ছাড়িয়ে গোটা ভারতবর্ষ জুড়ে তাণ্ডব সৃষ্টি করেছিল অতীতে। মানুষের যা যা হারিয়েছে সব ফেরত চাইতে জীবন ফেরত চাইতে রক্তক্ষয়ী আন্দোলনের আগ্নেয় অনুভূতি নিয়ে ‘বসাই কক্ষ হস্কন করবে এটাই তো হওয়া বাঞ্ছনীয়। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী এই সাঁওতালকেই অগ্নিময় নায়ক রূপে নির্বাচন করবেন এ বিষয়ে সন্দেহের অবকাশ থাকে না।

ভারতবর্ষের ইতিহাসের অনিবার্য দাবিতেই, সময়ের অগ্রসরণের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে অতীতের বিস্ফোভ বিদ্রোহের সরণি বেয়ে শেষ পর্যন্ত নকশাল বাড়িতে এসে বিপ্লবের রূপ ধারণ করলো।

ভূমিহীন কৃষক ও ক্ষেতমজুরদের ওপর ব্রিটিশদের এই সব নির্যাতন মূলক ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ এবং বর্তমানে স্বাধীনতা-উত্তর ভারতে প্রশাসনিক অবিচার মনস্তাত্ত্বিক দিক থেকে অনেকটা কাছাকাছি এনে দিয়েছিল সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহ ও নকশাল আন্দোলনকে। আমরা যদি আরেকটু এগিয়ে বলি তাহলে দেখবো নকশাল নেতা জঙ্গল সাঁওতাল যেভাবে ক্ষেতমজুর সমস্যাকে আত্মবোধ করেছিলেন একই রকমভাবে বসাই ক্ষেতমজুরদের সঙ্গে প্রাণের যোগ অনুভব করেছিলেন। সেজন্য ক্ষেতমজুরদের দাবীতে বসাই নকশালদের মদত গ্রহণ করেছিল। নকশাল ও বসাইকে ছল ও মত গঠন করে তুলতে সর্বতো সহযোগিতা করেছিলো। এ সবার পরে বসাইয়ের নকশাল হয়ে ওঠা অনেকটা অনিবার্য ছিল মনে হয়।

তথ্যসূত্র:

- ১। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’, দেজ পাবলিশিং, দ্বিতীয় সংস্করণ, আগস’, ২০১৬ ‘অপারেশন ? বসাই টুডু’ পৃষ্ঠা-৩৪৫
- ২। ‘থানা গারদ থেকে মাকে’ কাব্যগ্রন্থ সৃজন সেন <https://www.bongodorshon.com/contributor/Srijan-Sen>
- ৩। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা সংখ্যা-৩৩৯
- ৪। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৩৯
- ৫। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৩৯
- ৬। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৩৮
- ৭। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৯২
- ৮। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৩৮
- ৯। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৩৮
- ১০। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৩৯
- ১১। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৩৯
- ১২। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র, অষ্টম খণ্ড, ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৪০
- ১৩। ‘আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা’, ৯.১২.২০০৪
- ১৪। ‘আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা’, ৯.১২.২০০৪
- ১৫। ‘আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা’, ৯.১২.২০০৪
- ১৬। ‘আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা’, ৯.১২.২০০৪
- ১৭। “বিমান বসুর টোটিকায় জটিল রোগ সারবেনা” রাঘব বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, ‘আনন্দবাজার পত্রিকা’ ২৮.১২.২০০৪
- ১৮। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র অষ্টম খণ্ড ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৫০
- ১৯। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র অষ্টম খণ্ড ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’ পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৫১
- ২০। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র অষ্টম খণ্ড ‘অগ্নিগর্ভ’, পূর্বোক্ত, পৃষ্ঠা-৩৫৩
- ২১। জেলখানায় লেখা সত্তর, ঠিক ঠিকানা-২০১৭, পোস’, ঋতুপর্ণ বসু, সাদা, কালো ও কিছু ধূসর প্রসঙ্গ (তৃতীয় পর্ব) <https://m.facebook.com.groups/19...>
- ২২। গণসংগীত ‘পথে এবার নামো সাথী’ কথা ও সুর সলিল চৌধুরী
<https://marxbadipath.org/article/on-Mass-culture/3>
- ২৩। গণকবি বীরেন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় উত্তর পাড়া : কলেজ হাসপাতাল / ওরা যতই রক্ষু রাঙায়...
<https://duniyadaari.com>
- ২৪। ‘এই মৃত্যু উপত্যকা আমার দেশ না’- নবারুণ ভট্টাচার্য
<https://banglakobita.com.bd>
- ২৫। মহাশ্বেতা দেবী রচনা সমগ্র অষ্টম খণ্ড ‘অরণ্যের অধিকার, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, দ্বিতীয় সংস্করণ, আগস’- ২০১৬, পৃষ্ঠা সংখ্যা ১২০
- ২৬। রবীন্দ্র-রচনাবলী (তৃতীয় খণ্ড), পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকার, অগ্রহায়ণ ১৩৯০, নভেম্বর ১৯৮৩, পৃষ্ঠা ৯৪৪-৪৫

Anudhyan An International Journal of Social Sciences

Volume 8 • Issue 1 • August 2023

For all Editorial Communications

Dr. Rina Pal

Associate Professor, Department of History, RNLK Women's College (Autonomous)

Gope Palace, Midnapore, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, India, PIN: 721102

Website: www.rnlkwc.ac.in

e-mail: rinapal_history@rnlkwc.ac.in

ISSN 2455-6319



9 772455 631009

Owner-Raja Narendra Lal Khan Women's College, Printer-Shreelipi, Publisher-Dr. Jayasree Laha,
Published from Raja Narendra Lal Khan Women's College, Midnapore, Paschim Medinipur, PIN: 721102, West Bengal, India
and Printed from Shreelipi, B-78, Minimarket, Midnapore, Paschim Medinipur, PIN: 721101, West Bengal, India

Editor- Dr. Rina Pal