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Edited by: Bishwajit Bhattacharjee

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Bishwajit Bhattacharjee

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Contents

Advisory Board	4
Editorial Board	5
Guidelines/ Review Process	7
Submission & Publication Fee	8
Copy Right Transfer form	8
List of Reviewers	9
From Chief Editor's Desk	10

Research Articles:

Sl. No	Author's Name	Title of the Paper	Discipline	Language	Page No.
1.	Dr.Hazarat Hasanuzzaman	Arabic Language : Characteristics And Importance	Arabic	English	11
2.	Mahbubur Rahman	Critical study on The Trilogy of Najib Mahfouz	Arabic	English	17
3.	Mizazur Rahman Talukdar	Arabic Migration Literature of America	Arabic	English	20
4.	Mizazur Rahman Talukdar	Lamhatun min hayat-e-Rabindranath Tagorem (A Glimpse of the life of Rabindranath Tagore)	Arabic	Arabic	25
5.	Dr. Paramita Acharjee	Prafulla Royer 'Bhater Gandho' : Pratap-bishwer Antarale Spandito Jibon	Bengali	Bengali	28
6.	Mampi Baidyo	Tapan Bandopadhyayer Uponyase Prantic Ancholer Narira	Bengali	Bengali	38
7.	Sri Shobhan Sen	IFRS Convergence and Applicability in India: Some Issues	Commerce	English	45
8.	Gadapani Sarma	A Case Study On Socio-Economic Condition Of Tea Garden Labourers –Lohpohia Tea Estate Of Jorhat District, Assam.	Economics	English	55
9.	Subhash saha	Challenges of unit cost Control of higher education in B.T.A.D	Economics	English	61
10	Nayan Jyoti Das	The Birth And Death Rituals Among The Santals Of Assam	English	English	66
11	Sumsun Noor Choudhury	Nankar Uprising Of Surma-Barak Valley From 1914 - 1964	History	English	74

12	Kaberi Borah	Entrepreneurship in Small Tea Plantation: A case of Assam	Management	Bengali	79
13	Alit Sen Gupta	Women entrepreneurship: Problems and Prospects in B.T.A.D	Management	English	91
14	Mr. Neelam Prasad Yadav & Dr. M. Gangabhusan	Community Based Flood Management In Assam: Role Of Assam State Disaster Management Authority (Asdma) And Social Worker	Social Work	English	97
15	Sumita Dey	Fashion, Attire and Mughal women: A story behind the purdha	Visual Arts	English	105

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A journal for the publication of one's research related articles or any original literary work is what a researcher or a scholar or a writer seeks for but there is no easy access for many. It is true that there are many academic journals in the print form but of late these journals are facing problems due to the increase in the cost of printing, publication etc. Problems also arise in internationalizing a printed journal because of constraints related to geographical boundaries.

Moreover, throughout the world there are many academic journals published only in English which hinders the process of publication of works conveyed in other languages.

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We will also be glad to receive the reviews of articles published in this online journal. Valuable suggestions for further improvement of the journal from esteemed readers will also be accepted.

We would also like to take the opportunity of thanking the paper presenters, reviewers of papers & other members for whose contribution and support enabled us to publish the previous issue of the journal successfully.

We earnestly hope that with your insightful contributions and valuable suggestions, this humble endeavour on our part will leave a marked imprint in dissemination of knowledge and information across geo-political and socio-cultural frontiers.

With best wishes....

Bishwajit Bhattacharjee

(Bishwajit Bhattacharjee)

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Arabic Language: Characteristics and Importance

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ABSTRACT

Today, Arabic has been one of the richest languages of the world. In the middle ages, it was the leading language of the world and occupied an international position similar to that of English at the present time. Significantly enough that it has left much influence over the languages of Europe, especially, in chemical and astronomical terms. Similarly, in linguistic field, it is to be noted that many Indian languages had developed under the tutelage of Arabic. In addition, it is the holy language of Islam and as such, it has been studied in the four corners of the world as a language of a great religion and civilization. Due to an elaborate system of grammar, words possessing various meaning, numerous synonyms and rich vocabulary, Arabic has been a complicated language. But at the same time, it has provided immense scopes for expressing thoughts in different ways. The study of the Arabic language should not become the monopoly of some people or of one section of the Indian people, but should be studied by all those who are interested in gaining a better knowledge of the social, economic or political conditions of the Arab world today, or want to study its glorious past history and philosophy, or desirous of availing the better placement facility in the Arab world.

ARABIC LANGUAGE: CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPORTANCE

Broadly speaking, language is a means of communication. It is through this means that the interaction between human beings takes place. M. Schlauch regards it as “a fundamental means of preserving, transmuted and continuously enriching achievements of human culture”. In reality, through language we can come to know about the progressive status of a society from its primitive stage to a developed one.

Arabic is the most developed Semitic language today and it is one of the major languages of the world. Although the Arabic language existed long before the emergence of Islam, Islam has had a profound impact on its development. As a cosmopolitan religion, Islam carried Arabic to all peoples who took

shelter under the shadow of Islam. In the middle ages, it was the leading language of the world and occupied an international position similar to that of English at the present time. Muslim scholars of non-Arab origin such as the astronomer and encyclopedic scientist al-Biruni (d.1048), the philosopher and physician Ibn Sina (d.1037), the historian and theologian al-Tabari (d.923), and many others produced their famous works in Arabic. Despite its long history and great geographical spread, Arabic has retained its originality and salient features. It continues to adapt to modernity and to retain its flexibility and adaptability to cope with the pace of change, especially, in areas of complex societal organization

and in specialized scientific and technological disciplines. It contains rich cultural inheritance apart from its excellent ability for expressing the human thoughts in a lucid style. Presently, Arabic is enjoying the status of official language of the 21 countries and a major language in various parts of the world. Above all, it is the holy language of worship for Muslims and as such it has been studied in the four corners of the globe as a language of a great religion and civilization.

As a Semitic language, Arabic possesses some peculiar and unique characteristics like: (a) It is written from right to left. (b) There are three numbers – singular, dual and plural; and two genders – masculine and feminine. (c) In Arabic, words generally are formed from roots, and most of the root words are triconsonantal. (d) In this language, nouns and adjectives possess genders. (e) The masculine nouns accept feminine numerals and vice versa. (f) In the verbal tenses the complete action is indicated by a suffix, and the incomplete action is denoted by a prefix. In Arabic, for example, ‘katabat’ means she wrote but ‘taktubu’ means she writes. (g) The feminine suffix ‘ta’ is used as grammatical gender in common. (h) The general order of words in a sentence is, first comes the verb, then the subject, and lastly the object for predicate. (i) Richness of vocabulary is also another striking feature of Arabic language. For instance, it has 52 synonyms for darkness, 34 for the rain, 16 for the moon, 21 for the light, 164 for short, 91 for long and 50 for the cloud.

The present Arabic has developed out of its two forms. (1) the South Arabic and (2) the North Arabic. Differences in grammar, vocabulary and script are found in these two forms. South Arabic is known today only through inscriptions and North Arabic is known as Arabic language. Hitti observes that about 4,000 inscriptions related to South Arabic language are found at present. Through these inscriptions it has come to light that South Arabic had twenty nine

letters of alphabet. This shows the richness and the standard of progress of the Arabic language in its early stage. But as a result of the decay of Yemenite culture, South Arabic disappeared and North Arabic occupied its place.

It is worth mentioning that the Arabic alphabet, next to Latin, is the most widely used system in the world. Urdu, Persian, Afghan, Malayan and a number of Turkish languages have adopted it. The European languages were influenced to a considerable extent by this language, particularly, in various chemical and astronomical terms like alcohol, elixir, azimuth etc. Likewise, many Indian languages had developed under the tutelage of Arabic. They have borrowed a good number of Arabic vocabulary along with some other linguistic elements. Mention of some purely Arabic rooted words, which have been used in Assamese as well as Bengali languages, may be made here in this respect like bayaan (description), maal (wealth), insaaf (justice), kitaab (book), haadir (present), Qalam (pen), Haakim (judge), khabar (massage), qissah (story), inshaarah (indication), maidaan (field), zaalim (oppressor), badal (exchange), wazan (weight) etc. but it is to be remarked that these words are wrongly pronounced in these languages. For example, haadir (present) is pronounced as hajir, ustaadh (teacher) as ustad, taalibu’ilm (seeker of knowledge) as talbilim, aql (intelligence) as akkel, nuqsan (loss) as loksan, mu’min as momin and so on.

Like all other developed languages, Arabic, too, borrowed numerous foreign terms and expressions in order to make its linguistics treasure rich and capable to cope with the pace of change. For example, many words of Indian origin like narjil (coconut), musk (scent), tambol (betel-nut) etc. entered into the Arabic vocabulary. Similarly, in modern standard Arabic one may find words like barlamaan (parliament), tilfuun (telephone), tilfiziyuun (television) etc, which are directly borrowed from western languages and are assimilated into Arabic.

With common usage, a good number of verbs have been derived from some of the newly Arabicized words such as talfana (to telephone) and talfaza (to televise). We further find participles like mutulfaz (televised) and substantives like tilfaz (television set). This sort of Arabicized vocabulary have been commonly made to agree with the rules of Arabic morphology and phonology. Modern Arab writers and litterateurs, however, prefer to create new words by deriving them from existing Arabic roots whenever possible. For example, the word sayyarah (automobile) is derived from the verb sara (to walk); thallajah (refrigerator) from the noun thalj (snow, ice); mis'ad (elevator) from the verb sa'ada (to ascend); and matar (airport) from the verb tara (to fly). These neologisms are within the boundary of Arabic morphological rules and have been smoothly assimilated into the language. In modern Arabic, derivation of new meanings from old Arabic vocabulary by figurative extension or semantic approximation are too found like qitar (train) in old Arabic meant a string of camels, and jaridah (newspaper) meant a stripped palm branch once used for writing. Modern Arabs also like translating western expressions – for instance, majlis al-nuwwab (chamber of deputies), markaz al-thiqal (center of gravity) and mukayyif al-hawa' (air conditioning). Some western idiomatic expressions have been literally translated in modern Arabic usage, for example, la'iba dawran ("he played a role"), talaba yadaha ("he asked for her hand") and qatala al-waqt ("he killed time"). Also, in the manner of European languages, prefixes are used in some Arabic words like lasilkiy (wireless), lanihayah (infinity), lashu'uriy (unconscious) and lamubalah (indifference), which are now common words. Moreover, the international cultural heritage of greater importance had been translated into this language in the beginning eras, and thus, the Islamic culture proceeded and with it the Muslims reached the peak of progress and glory. In this context, mention may be made that under the sponsorship of the great Caliph Harun al-

Rashid, a number of Sanskrit works like Siddhanta, Panchtantra were translated into Arabic. Some of the renowned translators of the 'Abbasid period who had translated lot of Greek and Persian works into Arabic are al-Hajjaj al-Hasib, Yuhanna bin Batriq (d.815), 'Abd al-Masih Na'ima, Qusta bin Luqa (d.922), Hunain bin Ishaq (809-73), Hubaish bin al-Hasan, Thabit bin Qurrah, (836-901), Isa bin Zur'ah (d-1008) and Ishaq bin Hunain (d.910).

Study of the Arabic language is essential from the viewpoint of socio-historical, cultural, job opportunities as well as Indo-Arab relationship. From cultural point of view learning Arabic to a limited extent is an obligatory duty for every Muslim in order to performing unavoidable religious duty in day to day life. The holy Qur'an, in this sense, has been one of the greatest factors which participated in developing the Arabic language, widening its scopes and strengthening its basic elements. It was by virtue of the Qur'an that Arabic earned the status of an international language. Other remarkable contribution of the Qur'an includes its improvement of Arabic with new terminology and words related to faith such as kufr, shirk, ruku, sujud, salah, sawm, furqan, nifaq, islam, iman, tayamun etc. Above all, it was the Qur'an which polished the Arabic language from uncouth expression and unfamiliar vocabulary. It acquired for the language sweetness, music and elegance, precise rendition, strong logic and rich ideas. With all these qualities it could conquer the hearts of the masses after Arabs conquered their lands. The Muslims assumed the study of Arabic with great importance in order to appreciating the teachings of the divinely messages of the Qur'an.

"Arabic, in India, has been taught in different ways for more that 15 centuries. The relation between India and the Arab world date back to very ancient times, and the professional Arab merchants appear to have played leading part in establishing as well as strengthening commercial and cultural links between the two nations. With

the advent of Islam in the Indian subcontinent, these ties of friendship became stronger than ever before, particularly, for cultural and political reasons. Several Muslim empires were established on the soil of India which lasted for more than 8 centuries. India became enriched with their treasures of various sciences of knowledge, arts, culture and literatures.

India has been one of the most well known non-Arab states where Arabic language and literature grew, developed and flourished on a large scale. During the period of Arab rule in the Indian territory, Arabic continued to be the official language of the Government and administration and the unrivalled medium of sacred knowledge and literary achievement. Moreover, various Arabic madrasahs and cultural institutions of higher learning under the personal guidance and scholarly interest of the Sultans were set up which produced a good number of poets, writers, Islamic thinkers, commentators of the holy Qur'an, scholars of the Hadith etc. Their noble works can be compared to any work of any great Arab scholar¹ like Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-1999 A.D.) the author of the world famous book "Islam and the World", Gulam Ali Azad Bilgrami (1116-1200 A. H.), the greatest Indian Arabic poet and the author of the book "Subhatul Marjan", Siddiq Hasan Khan (1248-1307 A. H), who besides being a poet, was a great scholar of Hadith, and authored a good number of authentic books on Arabic philology like "Abjadul – Uloom" and so on.

"History of Arabic studies in Assam dates back to the pre-colonial period. It is significant to note that Arabic, in this region, has been taught in almost all stages of formal education, in addition to the private madrasahs of higher Islamic learning. The number of Arabic learners especially, in schools, colleges and universities, is the highest in comparison to other states of the country. But unfortunately, due to the prevalent defective syllabi and want of proper methodology in teaching, the output in Arabic studies in north – east India has not been satisfactory at all. Modern facilities of

language teaching and modernization of the syllabi, therefore, are the urgent need of the hour.

1. Hasanuzzaman, Dr. Hazrat, Development of Arabic Studies in India, 'Pratidhwani the Echo' (an online journal) Vol- I, Issue – II, Department of Bengali, Karimganj College, Assam, India, PP. 16-17)

The decline of the position of Arabic language was started under the Usmaniyyah caliphate which continued till the middle of the 20th century. But after the discovery of oil in most of the Arab states and the creation of the state of Israel in the heart of the Arab land, Arabic studies throughout the world got a new impetus because of the political, cultural, strategic and economic importance of this region. India, too, did not lag behind in this respect. Besides the government, tens of thousands of the people irrespective of caste and creed, devoted attention in gaining knowledge in Arabic. At the same time, Arabic was included as one of the important curricular subjects in the syllabi of various educational institutions including university. Above all, some special Arabic learning centers were set up across the country with a view to preparing students for availing the growing job opportunity in the Arab world. In fact, millions of Indians are working in different fields in various Arab states and are sending a huge amount of money to their motherland. Significantly enough that these people have been playing an important role in the growth of Indian economy, culture and foreign policy, and thus in bringing the two nations closer to each other.

So far as the prospects of Arabic language are concerned, now-a-days, in addition to the Arab land, there are many job opportunities in non- Arab countries as well. In India, for example, an increasing number of scopes for the Arabic learners have been created in various private and government educational institutions, foreign ministry, defence ministry, diplomacy, radio, television, internet, journalism, tourism, translation, different multinational companies and in the offices of the

intelligence bureaus in addition to the Arab embassies situated in New Delhi”¹.

1.Hasanuzzaman, Dr. Hazrat, Development of Arabic Studies in India, Pratidhwani the Echo (an online journal) Vol- I, Issue – II, Department of Bengali, Karimganj College, Assam, India, PP. 21-22)

It is to be pointed out here that the spread of the global terrorism especially, Osama bin Laden’s self declared war against the Christian world has created a new impetus in Arabic studies in the western countries, especially, in America and England with a view to coping with the Arab Islamic Jihadi movement. Their ever growing curiosity for Islam as well as diplomatic gain over the Arab world, of course, is another prime cause here in this context. So, it is distinct that for the Arabic learners, there are so many job facilities in different areas in these countries which can easily be availed through various channels and agencies.

It will be better to mention here that in modern times, mere Arabic learning is not sufficient for achieving the economic or financial goal. At the same time, it is of utmost necessary to be skilful in some

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professional courses such as computer, journalism, interpretation etc. along with the sound knowledge in English.

In fine, it can safely be asserted that due to an elaborate system of grammar, words possessing various meaning, numerous synonyms and rich vocabulary, Arabic have been a complicated language. But at the same time, it has provided immense scopes for expressing thoughts in different ways. Secondly, like all other branches of learning, Arabic as a capable vehicle of modern communication , too, has a vast employment area in the field of education, science and technology, trade and commerce, armed forces, radio, television, Cinema etc. Arabic, therefore, should be learned with great zeal not only for cultural or religious purposes but to obtain better placement facility in different fields across the globe as well.

I would like to conclude this paper with a saying of the holy prophet Muhammad (Sm). “Love Arabs for three reasons – I myself an Arab, the holy Quran is in Arabic, and the language of the inhabitants of paradise is too Arabic”.

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Critical study on The Trilogy of Najib Mahfouz Mahbubur Rahman

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Abstract

The Trilogy is the most mature work in the realistic vein of Nobel Laureate Najib Mahfouz (1911-2006) published in 1956-1957 in separate volumes taking their titles from street names in Old Cairo as Bain al Qasrain, Qasr al- Shawq and al- Sukkariyya. In this novel the novelist Najib Mahfouz depicts the 20th centuries burning social issues of Egyptian society like - hypocrisy, patriarchy, polygamy, adultery, drunkenness, poverty, disease, sufferings, hunger, tensions and pretensions, caste politics, inter-racial relations, tradition and modernity, and changing values of the modern civilization. Mahfouz's international fame rests mainly on his Cairo Trilogy. This novel is applauded for its realism, and as Edward Said put it for being "a dutiful sociological mirror of modern Egypt." According to Hamdi Sakkut, it can be ranked as the most significant work in the history of the Arabic novel. For this noble work he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988.

The Trilogy is the most mature work of Nobel Laureate Najib Mahfouz (1911-2006) published in 1956-1957. It describes the story of a Cairene Muslim family of the merchant class over three generations during Britain's occupation of Egypt between the two world wars. In fact, this very novel deal with the 20th centuries burning social issues of Egyptians' society like - hypocrisy, patriarchy, polygamy, adultery, drunkenness, poverty, disease, sufferings, hunger, tensions and pretensions, caste politics, inter-racial relations, tradition and modernity, and changing values of the modern civilization. Mahfouz's international fame was spread out because of his *The Trilogy*. This novel is applauded for its realism, and as Edward Said put it for being "a dutiful sociological mirror of modern Egypt." According to Hamdi Sakkut, it can be ranked as the most significant work in the history of the Arabic novel.

The Trilogy is divided into three books – Bain al- Qasrain (Palace walk), Qasr al- Shawq (Palace of Desire), and al- Sukkariyya (Sugar Street) - covers the period from 1917 to 1944. It is a three-part family saga centered around the patriarchal figure of al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad and his family - his wife Amina, his children (three sons - Yasin, Fahmy and Kamal - and two daughters, Khadija and Aisha), and eventually his grandchildren. Each character in the novel is perceived in a variety of roles and sets of relationships. Ahmad Abdul-Jawwad, for example, is presented through his roles of father, husband, friend, playboy, etc. Amina appears as mother, wife, mother-in-law, etc. Kamal plays the roles of youngest child, son to the father, son to the mother, a brother to male siblings, a brother to female siblings, a friend, an enamoured person, a member of a social class, a maternal uncle, a brother-in-law, a thinker and so forth.

The family's patriarch, Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawwad is respected both by his family - that actually fears him - as well as by his friends. At home, he is very serious and sincere in his prayer who fulfills his religious duties to God like prayer, fasting, or alms giving. However, he frequently visits the shrine of al- Husayn on Friday with his sons believing that visiting the shrine of al-Husayn itself is a blessing and protects him and his family from evil. He also recites the short suras (chapters) of the Holy Quran. These qualities make him faith full Muslim to his friends and at the same time convince his children to think that he is not only gentle and graceful but an upstanding and exemplary man whose moral conduct is impeccable. But the reality is outside of the home he becomes another Ahmad Abd al-Jawwad who cherishes wine, women, and song, seeking sexual pleasure with Jalila and Zubayda, leaders of the folk ensembles. He enjoys his life to the fullest as long as there is life. His conscience is never weighed down by his guilty feelings or anxious scruples rather he congratulates himself for his finesse in managing his two faces. He is the shopkeeper known in Cairo's old neighborhoods for his generosity and honesty who spends most of his days in the shop, returning home only for lunch. Faithful to his routine, he would leave the house again in the afternoon to re-appear only at midnight when he finds Amina waiting for him on top of the stairs, holding a lamp in her hand to light her husband way to his room. Then, Amina would wash his feet in silence, talking only if she is asked to and mainly to share the happenings of the day, choosing the words prudently to avoid enraging her husband. Eventually, she would help him to undress and after folding his cloths on the chair, she would finally retire to her bedroom.

Undoubtedly, duties of Amina make subservient to her husband. She married at the age of 14 and since then she has been serving her husband dutifully. Adored by her children to whom she is a loving and indulgent mother, Amina spends

her days within the four walls of the three-story building, since al-Sayyid Ahmad never allows his wife and daughters to leave the premises. The women of Palace Walk see the world from the openings of the cage of latticework on the balcony, from where they look at the street vendors and admire the tops of the minarets. Occasionally, when Amina is permitted to visit her mother, al-Sayyid Ahmad would escort his wife travelling together in a carriage from where Amina would only catch glimpses of the outside world. The two daughters Khadija and Aisha show very different personalities, but each of them nurture respect and utter obedience to their father and give in to their status, which include no education beyond primary school and fulfillment of women's duties such as devotion to the family and marriage.

Both the husband and the wife remain the main characters throughout *The Trilogy*. It is worth noting that with the passage of time many changes took place in Egypt and it had a profound influence on the family of al- Jawwad. For example when al-Jawwad possessed old age and becomes a weak person then he allow Amina the freedom she never enjoyed before. Now she regularly visits the children and grandchildren who live in Palace of Desire and Sugar Street. She however, frequently used to go the shrine of al- Hussayn praying for her husband's health that she did not get a chance to see. Regarding the patriarch of al- Jawwad, one of the grandchildren namely Ahmad from the Sugar Street complains in this way- "I bet our family's four centuries behind the times." Though the children are disappointed by the father but they decide for themselves. Each one of them has a unique personality and as soon as they grow up the patriarch realizes that he is losing the grip over them and cannot but witness powerlessly to their evolution. Alienated by their choices, al-Sayyid Ahmad fails to understand and fully accept the profound changes that his family, Egypt and Islam are going through.

It is evident from the brief discussion that the children of al- Jawwad

are somehow influenced by the culture and lifestyle they have been brought up in and eventually remain on the threshold of the new era. Kamal, the youngest of al-Sayyid Ahmad's children, in a beautiful passage of the trilogy, says referring to Amina: "Ignorance is your crime, ignorance ... ignorance ... ignorance. My father's the manifestation of ignorant harshness and you of ignorant tenderness. As long as I live, I'll remain the victim of the two opposites." In fact, only al-Sayyid Ahmad's grandchildren will manage to step into the new era and surf the wave of changes to the apex.

Sugar Street marks the climactic end of the trilogy. Readers see through the eyes of the grandchildren who give shape to modern Egypt. Ahmad is a communist

activist, his brother Abd al-Muni'm is a Muslim fundamentalist, and their cousin Ridwan, the only inheritor of the charm and beauty of his father and grandfather, starts a distinguished political career helped by a homosexual affair with a prominent politician.

From the brief analysis of *The Trilogy* clearly reveals that he is a novelist par excellence, with an aim. He wants to mirror the society with its various colours. So far the richness of the story, characters and language are concerned, he is undoubtedly unequalled in the realm of Arabic novel. His truthful reflection on the history of modern Egypt and the poetic portrayal of hypocrisy and patriarchy is worth noticeable.

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Arabic Migration Literature of America

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Abstract

In between 1st and 2nd world wars, a new genre of Arabic literature flourished in North and South America by the Arab origin immigrant community over there. This new form of Arabic literature is known as “Mahjar Literature” or the migration literature. This is a hybrid of both the English as well as Arabic literatures. The Mahjar writers were influenced by the western literature. They brought a new revolution in Arabic poetry advocating the usage of free verses and simple language without much intricacy. In this article efforts have been made to analyze the historical perspective of Lebanese migration to America in late 19th and early 20th century. Some of the characteristics of Migration literature have been dealt with along with a brief introduction to Gibran Khalil Gibran, the most celebrated Mahjar poet and philosopher.

“.....Arab-American literature.....has discovered America and America has discovered Arab American writers.....”

Says Almaz Abinader, a Lebanese origin Arab-American female writer and poet. Like many other literatures of the world, Arabic literature has also undergone some significant developments outside its geographical territory. Many of the revolutionary writers, across the world have been forced to leave their own homeland and settle down over a host country temporarily or permanently. These immigrant writers though they left their mother land but they did not leave their own distinct identity and belongingness to their mother tongue. Migration literally means movement of people from one place to another for various reasons like socio-political, cultural, religious and tourism etc. When a migration is carried out in large number it is dubbed as

exodus. Migration for the purpose of livelihood generally takes place from a weak economy to a relatively stronger economy. Migration influences both the immigrants as well as the local inhabitants. Apart from demographic changes, migration results in a cross-cultural interactions. Generally what happens is that in a new environment the immigrant community finds themselves helpless. They naturally strive hard to earn their livelihood and make their presence visible. The immigrant community makes a significant contribution to the enrichment of art and literature.

Historically migration had long been a part of life of the Arabs in general and of Lebanese people in particular. Lebanese people are known for their adventurous life. In this article efforts would be made to deal with various aspects of Lebanese immigrants in America, the land of opportunity and dollar and their contribution to the

enrichment of Arabic literature in a non-Arab land.

Factors Responsible for Migration:-

Syria (which comprises present Syria, Lebanon and a part of Palestine) in the past was a home to the large Christian followership till shortly before the advent of Islam. Mention may be made here that most of the immigrant poets and writers in from Lebanon were of Christian origin. In the course of history, Lebanon fell under the rule of Ottoman caliph Sultan Abdul Hamid. Being oppressed by the despotic regime of the caliph the oppressed people had no other option but to humbly leave their country. In the last few decades of 19th century and early decades of 20th century, a group of Arab writers especially those of Lebanon migrated to North and South America and produced there a literary form known as Mahjar literature or migration literature. These writers of Arab origin not only wrote in Arabic but also in English, Spanish and Portuguese languages. Gibran Khalil Gibran, Ameen Rihani, Ilya Abu Madi, Mikhail Naimy etc. are the prominent figures of Arabic migration literature.

During late 19th and early 20th centuries, Lebanon witnessed the despotic regime of Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid. His regime was that of oppression, lack of freedom as well as respect for human dignity along with bad economic condition. In such a harsh condition, people were often detained or imprisoned on one pretext or the other. Due to such an unhealthy environment people started migrating to Egypt and other North African countries. But when they felt that in these North African countries also the Ottoman rulers have some sort of dominance they changed the direction of their migration towards Europe and America. The undergoing colonization of African countries at that time was not a favorable situation for the migrants. Coincidentally, the European and American countries, at that time were undergoing the phase of industrial revolution. There were ample opportunities before the migrant community. Peaceful

situation that was prevailing in America and Europe was a reason of attraction. Describing the political factor behind the migration Anees Al Muqdisi, a famous Arabic writer said:

“The greatest factor that led to the emigration (of the Syrians) is the devastating economic situation of the Ottomanic rule characterized by corrupt and autocratic styles to the extent that security arrangement became weak, chaos triumphed, educational pursuance obliterated and life became unbearable.”

Among the economic factors that led to the massive migration of the Lebanese people was heavy taxation on the citizenry by the autocratic regime. There was taxation on farming which compelled people to abandon productive activities. Even one had to pay tax for his/her garments. On the other side there was the lucrative expanding economy of America which attracted the Lebanese folk. Extracting the benefit of this opportunity the emigrant community started business in the host environment and supported their family. Cooperation of the US authority with the immigrant community is something deserves to be mentioned specially. There was unhindered freedom of migration which facilitated the Syrians to travel to America. Actually Syrian migration started in 1854 to be precise. It is reported that in between 1870 and 1900 around 1/3rd of the total Syrian population migrated to the foreign lands. Lion share of the immigrants went to U.S and North America with only a few of them to the African countries for the reasons that have been dealt with in the previous paragraphs.

Mahjar School of Modern Arabic Literature:-

The term “*Mahjar*” is derived from the Arabic root “Hijrah” which means migration. Here in the context of Arabic literature the term mahjar denotes a school of modern Arabic literature that was developed by the migrant Arabs in North and South America in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries. They were predominantly Christians who migrated to America due to socio-political and economic unrest that prevailed in their own country Lebanon. The Lebanese emigrants engaged themselves in literary activities along with their struggle for livelihood. Some of them started working as journalists to raise their voice. By means of literature they tried to play the role of a pressure group which encouraged the freedom fighting movements against the Ottoman dictatorship in their homeland. The Lebanese emigrants founded two literary societies viz. Arrabitatul Qalamiyah or (The Pen League) in North America and Al Usbah Al Andalusia in South America. English and French literature in general and that of Long Fellow, Walt Whitman and Edgar Alan in particular greatly influenced the literary activities of Mahjar writers. Despite large influence of the western literature on Mahjar school, it was equally influenced by the earlier modern Arabic literary schools like the “*Neo Classical School*” pioneered by Mahmud Sami Al Barudi and nurtured and developed upon by Ahmad Shawqi and Hafiz Ibrahim, the “*Diwan School*” of Shukri and Al Mazini and the “*Apollo School*” of Abu Shadi. Actually, this Mahjar, the new school of Arabic literature is a hybrid of both English and Arabic literatures.

Al Rabitah Al Qalamiyah was established on the evening of 20th April, 1920 at the house of two brothers Abdul masih Haddad and Nudrah Haddad. Abdul Masih Haddad was the publisher of periodical Al Sayeh. The main concern behind the formation of this literary group was to lift the Arabic literature from the darkness of stagnation and imitation and to infuse a new life in to it so that the literature plays a greater role in building the Arab nations.

Modernity and the Mahjar:-

Mahjar literature is known for its adoption of modern literary styles. It has been said earlier that the Mahjar literature is greatly influenced by western literary works. There was a sea shift in the approach of

Mahjar writers towards modern Arabic literature. Western ideas got prominence over the traditional values. As we see Gibran Khalil Gibran saying:

“If the meaning of beauty of thought requires the breaking of rules, break it. If there is no known word to express your idea, borrow or invent one. If syntax stands in the way of needed or useful express, away with the syntax.”

Arabic poetry has traditionally been governed by the classical metric measurement styles. The Mahjar poets literally revolted against this literary orthodoxy and adopted free verses in poetry. Verses free from the compulsion of metres, simple as well as easy language, theme and style were employed by the Mahjar writers. They wanted to make Arabic literature more people friendly, fascinating and easily understandable. Members of the literary society Pen league brought a new revolution in Arabic poetry. Simple diction, style and stanzaic form with short metres and techniques of expression borrowed from drama and narratives are the hall marks of Mahjar poetry. Apart from poetry Mahjar writers paid their attention towards journalism as well. By the initiative of the Mahjar scholars the first Arabic newspaper “*Kawkab Amerika*” started its journey in 1892. By 1919, there were nine Arabic newspapers in the land of America. El Huda was one among the most popular Arabic dailies. *Syrian World* played a pivotal role in literary evolution of Arab Americans.

Among the prominent literary giants of mahjar literature is Gibran Khalil Gibran, the author of the “*prophet*”. Gibran is the most celebrated and widely read Arab origin American writer. Gibran’s “*prophet*” remained bestselling for more than half a century. Another Ameen Rihani is considered as the “*Father of Arab American Literature*”. Let me present here a glimpse of the life and works of Gibran Khalil Gibran.

Gibran Khalil Gibran (1883-1931 A.D)

Gibran Khalil Gibran was a

Lebanese-American writer, poet and artist. He was born in Bisharri in Lebanon in 1883. At the age of 12; he immigrated with his family to Boston in 1895 and later settled in New York City. He is chiefly known in the English speaking world for his 1923 book *The Prophet*, a master piece of philosophical essays, written in poetic English prose. The book became extremely popular in 1960's and sold in millions of copies and has been translated into at least 20 languages. Gibran is the third best-selling poet of all time, after Shakespeare and Lao-Tzu, the Chinese philosopher.

His writings and paintings have fascinated peoples of diverse cultures and colors. His belief in humanity, his awareness of spiritual continuity, his call for universal fellowship and the unification of the human race, all stand relevant today, as do the messages of all great people. Khalil Gibran, best known as the author of *The Prophet*, is widely regarded as a man of the East who brought a much needed element of spirituality to the materialistic West.

His English writings, especially *The Prophet*, represent the best of both worlds, a richly harmonious blend of East and West. Khalil Gibran tried to infuse some eastern mysticism into western materialism. He was of the opinion that humanity would be best served by "giving and taking" between both the cultures of the East and the West, by each acknowledging the virtues of other. Gibran, however, was not only a man from the East who brought a much needed element of spirituality to the West. He equally became a man of the West, benefiting from an environment in which freedom, democracy and equality of opportunity opened doors before him as would have been possible nowhere else in the world. He spent only the first twelve years of his life in Bisharri, the village in Lebanon, where he was born in 1883, before immigrating with his family to the United States. Apart from two brief return visits to Lebanon and a two-year studentship in Paris, he lived out the remaining two-thirds of his life entirely on

American soil. It was in New York that he died at the age of 48.

Gibran is considered as the greatest literary personality in Arabic literature during the first three decades of 20th century. In fact he is the writer who invited the attention and interest of the western world to the Arabic literature. This Lebanese origin, America based celebrated prophet was an unparalleled leader of the Mahjar (immigrant) literature, which flourished between the two world wars in North and South America. Prophetic sayings of this spiritual mystic made him popular to the millions of his fans in a dozen of languages.

Gibran Khalil Gibran and Spirituality:-

Spirituality has a strong appeal in Gibranian philosophy. Gibran is called a prophet by his fans and followers because of the fact that his teachings, even in this technocratic 21st century, educate the minds in spirituality, as did the teachings of earlier prophets during their times.

Elements of spirituality are found scattered in the writings of Gibran. For example, in "*Tear and a smile*" (1914) Gibran argues that human existence revolves around two metaphysical conditions viz. joy and suffering. Gibran adopted a mid-way approach of life saying that life is both a "tear" and a "smile". He is of the opinion that pain and joy are complementary and interrelated. For instance, love can never be achieved without some sacrifices; there is no happiness unless the soul has undergone some sort of bitterness. In 1918, at the age of 35, Gibran summed up his meditations in "*The procession*". In this book in a dialogue between a youth and an aged sage Gibran communicates that beauty, love, religion, justice, knowledge; happiness, gentleness etc. are veiled by false pretenses. *The prophet* (1923), a masterpiece of Gibran has become a second Bible for the readers. Gibran had long meditated on "*The prophet*" and rewrote it three times. He was just fifteen years old when he composed its first version. At the age of 20, he revised "The prophet" in Arabic. In between 1917-1922,

he rewrote the book for a third time: finally in 1923 he released it to the press. Basically, all the sermons of the prophet emphasize more on a particular aspect of human reality that is authentic social relations. That's why; we find that, in the prophet, marriage, law, children, friendship, giving etc. social issues have been dealt with extensively. In "*The Earth Gods*", Khalil Gibran explains man's relationship with God. Man desires to be close to the divine. As per Gibran's philosophy, man ascends to God "in," "through" and "with" love only. Love occupies the most important place in Gibran's philosophy. Gibran's theory builds up from the dynamics of love. To him, love

is the core of human life. In his novel "The Broken Wings" Gibran described love as "the law of nature." This Prophet from the Lebanon says:

**Love one another, but make not a bond
Of love;
Let it rather be a moving sea between
The shores of your souls.**

Love in itself is the expression of the spiritual meaning of being. It is a mystical attitude oriented towards the value of being. A vast combination of pain, ambition and hope contributed to Gibran's vision and creativity.

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لمحة من حياة رابندرانات طاغور

(Lamhatun min hayat-e-Rabindranath Tagore)

A Glimpse of the life of Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore, the very name itself is more than sufficient and does not require any introduction further. Tagore is all time celebrated writer and poet of this planet Earth. He is one among all those truly global citizens who could successfully break the barrier of the East and the West. His multi-faceted personality, in the quest of expression, did touch almost every genre of Bengali literature. At a very young age of 17 years, Tagore was sent to England to study law. But to Tagore, a born poet, law was not his cup of tea. Instead of studying law he got exposed to the western literature. He studied Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelly etc. and started writing in "Bharti" the magazine published by his elder brother Dwijendranath Tagore.

After getting married with Mrinalini Devi in 1884, Rabindranath Tagore was entrusted to look after his family zamindari in Shilaidaha in East Bengal. This was a turning point in the life of poet Rabindranath. Here in Shilaidaha, Tagore came in close contact with the nature as well as the village life and culture. His close observation of the village life, its toiling masses and their suffering life struggles got amply reflected in Tagore's literature. Very late, I mean in post 70's of his life, Tagore resorted to painting and delivered his best.

Freedom loving boy Rabindranath was very much fed up with the prevailing system of education. Being confined within the four walls of a classroom was unbearable for him. This is the reason that Rabindranath could not complete his institutional education. To him education must be inclusive which covers almost every aspect of an individual's life. To materialize his vision of true education Rabindranath Tagore established Shantiniketan (the brain child of Rabindranath) in 1901.

In this Arabic article entitled "Lamhatun min hayat-e-Rabindranath Tagore" or (A glimpse of the life of Rabindranath Tagore) efforts have been made to deal with various dimensions of the personality of Rabindranath Tagore. This article is my hearty homage to the beloved poet.

لمحة من حياة رابندرانات

طاغور

مزاج الرحمان تعلقدار
باحث في الدكتوراة في جامعة جواهر لال نهرو
بنيودلهي

ولد شاعر الهند العظيم رابندرانات طاغور في مدينة كلكتا في 6 مايو سنة 1861م و توفي في السابع من أغسطس سنة 1941م. كان طاغور أصغر أبناء أبيه ديفندرانات طاغور. كان أبوه ديفندرانات طاغور زعيما روحيا شهيرا في الهند. ماتت أمه و هو في الثالثة عشرة من عمره. و لما بلغ طاغور إلي السابعة عشرة من عمره أرسله أبوه إلي إنجلترا لدراسة القانون. و ما كان له شغف خاص بدراسة القانون و أنه لم يمكث بها طويلا. رغم ذلك كان له شغف خاص بالشعر و الموسيقى. و لذلك إنه ركز أكثر الإهتمام إلي دراسة الأدب الإنجليزي. إن طاغور درس شكسبير و ملتون و بيرون و شلي و غيرهم من الشعراء الكبار. ما عدا ذلك تعرف طاغور علي الآداب الغربية الأخرى. بدأ طاغور يكتب في مجلة "بهارتي" التي كان يصدرها أخوه الأكبر ديفندرانات طاغور. في سلسلة من مقالات طاغور التي تم نشرها في هذه المجلة عرف طاغور قراء الهنود بدانتي و بترارك و هوجو و تينيسون و شلي وغيرهم من الكتاب و المفكرين الغربيين. و نظم طاغور في الثامنة عشرة من عمره قصيدة تحت عنوان "أغاني الغروب" ثم "أغاني الشروق". و من خلال هاتين القصيدتين بلغ طاغور إلي أوج الشهرة في النظم البنغالي الحديث. حسن الأداء و الإجادة في معالجة الموضوع تعد من أهم خصائص شعر طاغور.

إن طاغور لم يكن شاعرا فحسب بل كان ملحنا بالأغاني. إنه كان يلحن أغانيه بنفسه. تعرف طاغور إلي الموسيقى الغربية و قام بدراسة مقارنة بين الموسيقى الغربية

و الموسيقى الهندية و وصل إلي نتيجة أن الأوروبيون يعنون بالصوت و الهنود يعطون الأهمية إلي الأغنية. لم يقم طاغور بانجلترا إلا مدة سنة و لم يدرس شيئا من القانون بل عني عناية كبيرة إلي الشعر. رجع الشاعر إلي كلكتا و اقام مع أخيه جوتيريندرانات طاغور.

بعد زواج رابندرانات مع مرياليني ديبني سنة 1884م وكل إليه أبوه الإشراف علي بعض ممتلكات الأسرة في "شيلاداه" في شرق البنغال. قيل أن قام بتنفيذ هذه العملية سافر طاغور إلي أوروبا مرة ثانية و زار إيطاليا و فرنسا و إنجلترا.

و في شيلاداه وجد طاغور فرصة ذهبية لأن يستشعر الجمال في الطبيعة الريفية. و قد انعكس في أدب طاغور صورة ريفية حية. إنه صور أحسن صورة الريف و القرية و أجاد في وصف صيفها و شتائها و أمطارها و فيضاناتها. إن طاغور طور علاقة و طيدة مع الفلاحين و أحبهم حبا عميقا. حين إقامته في شيلاداه أنتج طاغور كثيرا من أفضل إنتاجه الأدبي.

و في مر الزمان غادر طاغور شيلاداه و بدأ يقيم في "شانتيينيكيتان" (مرقا السلام) و قام بتنفيذ فكرته في التربية. و كان لطاغور خبرة سينة للتربية في أيام طفولته.

حينما التحق طاغور بالمدرسة الإبتدائية إنه عين نظام التعليم القاسي و إنه لم يحب هذا النظام. و قد تلقى طاغور أفضل تعاليمه علي يد أبيه و أفراد أسرته. و قد تعلم طاغور بين احضان الطبيعة في "شانتيينيكيتان". بدأ طاغور مدرسته الصغيرة في "شانتيينيكيتان" سنة 1901م باثنين أو ثلاثة من الطلاب. بعد سنتين كان هناك ثمانية عشر طالبا و في رأس أربع سنوات أصبحت "شانتيينيكيتان" تضم ستين طالبا. و في سنة 1915م كان هناك مأتان من الطلاب.

و في شانتيينيكيتان كتب طاغور مسرحياته مثل "شرادوستاب" (عيد الخريف- 1908م و 1922م) و "الراجا" (1910) و "اشالاياتان" (الحصن الحصين) و "مكتب البريد" (1912) و "فالجوني" (عيد الربيع- 1915 و 1922) و "بارشامنجال" (عيد الأمطار 1922)

و "شيشارشان" (الأمطار الأخيرة 1925) و أشارك في تمثيل بعضها مع طلاب المدرسة. حين إقامته في شانتيينيكيتان كتب طاغور معظم أغاني "جيتجالي" (باقة الأغاني) بين سنتي 1909م و 1910م. و كان طلاب شانتيينيكيتان يتغنون بهؤلاء الاغاني.

و قد بلغت عاطفة طاغور الدينية إلي كمالها من خلال "باقة الأغاني". هذا هو الديوان الذي إشتهر به طاغور و عرفه العالم الغربي لأول مرة. في سنة 1912م قام طاغور برحلة طويلة إلي أوروبا و أمريكا. إن طاغور ذهب إلي أوروبا بمخطوطة إنجليزية من باقة الأغاني التي ترجمها بنفسه. إنه قام في لندن في بيت صديقه الإنجليزي السير وليم روتنشتين الذي قد لقيه الشاعر في الهند. و لما علم السير وليم روتنشتين عن هذه الترجمة و قرأها إنه قدم هذه المخطوطة من "باقة الأغاني" إلي الشاعر الأيرلندي و-ب-بيتس أكبر شعراء زمانه في اللغة الإنجليزية. إن بيتس قام بإصلاحات طفيفة في بعض مواضع من باقة الأغاني و كتب مقدمة لهذا الديوان. و في سنة 1912م قامت جمعية الهند بلندن بطبع هذا الديوان. هذه هي السنة التي زار فيها طاغور الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.

في الحقيقة باقة الأغاني هي مجموعة منتخبات من ثلاثة دواوين طاغور البنغالية : "ناييديا" (قرايين 1902م) و "خيا" (العبور 1905) و "جيتجالي" (باقة الأغاني). إثر نشر جيتجالي ذاعت شهرة الشاعر في جميع أنحاء العالم و إنه منح بجائزة نوبل سنة 1913م و لقب ب"سير" سنة 1914م. و قد إستخدم طاغور قيمة جائزة نوبل (التي كانت تبلغ في ذلك الوقت ثمانية آلاف جنيه) لتطوير مدرسته بشانتيينيكيتان.

و قد عالج طاغور مواضيع شتي في أدبه. من أهمها جمال الكون و حب الطبيعة و إدراك الله و إلتزام البساطة و غير ذلك. إن طاغور لم يقنع نفسه من خلال تعبيره بالأشعار فحسب فلذلك إنه لجأ إلي التصوير painting في أواخر عمره حينما بلغ إلي السبعين. إنه عرض تصاويره الزيتية في المعارض العديدة في موسكو و برلين و ميونخ و باريس و نيويورك.

كان طاغور سياحا. إنه زار كثيرا من البلدان في الشرق و الغرب. و قد سافر طاغور إلي أوروبا مرات عديدة كما قام بزيارة الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية و بلدان أمريكا اللاتينية و اليابان و الصين و إيران.

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প্রতিধ্বনি the Echo

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প্রফুল্ল রায়ের ‘ভাতের গন্ধ’: প্রতাপ-বিশ্বের অন্তরালে স্পন্দিত জীবন

ড. পারমিতা আচার্য

প্রবন্ধা, বিবেকানন্দ জুনিয়র কলেজ, শিলচর, আসাম, ভারত

Life follows its own fragmentary way chequered in light and shade. Embroiled in its own cauldron it reaches the point of vortex when power comes into the fray and raises its ugly head. Bruised and battered, it seems to stumble in its own path. But the milk of the human kindness continues to make its pristine way amidst these changing tides. ‘Bhater Gandha’ by Prafulla Roy captures this slice of life as it sheds light on the subaltern section in Bihar, living on the edge, their endeavor to clutch at a meaning despite all the existing void. This is a review/ critique of the novel.

প্রতাপের বহির্মুখী এবং অন্তর্মুখী — উভয় অভিঘাতেই চলমান জীবনের ক্ষেত্রে রচিত হয় নীরবতার গভীর পরিসর। ফলে বদলে যেতে থাকে সময়ের আবেদন। বদলে যেতে থাকে জীবন। বদলে যায় জীবনের দর্পণ — সাহিত্যের আদলও। সাহিত্যের প্রতিফলিত প্রতিবিম্বে সেই অশ্বিন্দুগুণি তখন অনেকটাই পরিস্ফুট হয়ে উঠতে থাকে। আবিষ্কৃত হতে থাকে অনেক অনালোকিত পরিসর। আমাদের অভ্যস্ত চেতনায় তখন ধরা পড়ে সমাজদেহের পাঁকে পাঁকে জড়িয়ে থাকা আধিপত্যবাদী অক্টোপাসের সাঁড়াশি চাপ। আমরা বুঝতে পারি আধিপত্যপ্রবণ মানসিকতা শুধুমাত্র প্রশাসনিক ক্ষেত্রেই প্রতাপ বিস্তার করে ক্ষান্ত হয় না, উর্গনাভের মতো সেই প্রতাপকে বিস্তৃত করে দেয় রাজনৈতিক-অর্থনৈতিক-সাংস্কৃতিক-বৌদ্ধিক পরিসরেও। ইতালিয় কমিউনিস্ট নেতা ও দার্শনিক আন্তোনিও গ্রামশির চিন্তাসূত্র অনুযায়ী,

“...বুর্জোয়াশ্রেণী কেবল শাসনযন্ত্রে তার প্রভুত্বই প্রতিষ্ঠা করে না, সৃষ্টি করে এক সার্বিক সামাজিক কর্তৃত্ব বা ‘হেগেমনি’। ...সংস্কৃতি ও ভাবাদর্শের জগতে এক আমূল পরিবর্তন ঘটিয়ে ‘হেগেমনিক’ বুর্জোয়াশ্রেণী তার শাসনের নৈতিক

ভিত্তি হিসেবে ‘সাবলটার্ন’ শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর কাছ থেকে সামাজিক সম্মতিও আদায় করে নেয়।”^১

--বুঝতে অসুবিধা হয় না যে শাসন তথা শোষণের বিচিত্র বিভাজ্যে সমৃদ্ধ এই প্রতাপবিশ্ব।

সমাজ গঠনের ঠিক পর পরই এই শাসক তথা শোষক এবং শোষিত’দের মধ্যে গড়ে উঠে এক ভিন্ন স্তর বিভাজন। বর্ণাশ্রয়ী সমাজ কাঠামোয় যেখানে প্রাধান্য অর্জন করে ব্রাহ্মণ সম্প্রদায়, ঋগ্বেদের দশম মন্ডল / নব্বই সূক্ত / একাদশ ও দ্বাদশ ঋক অনুযায়ী যার উৎপত্তি সেই পরম পুরুষের মুখগহ্বর থেকে; সেখানে সমাজের সর্বনিম্নস্তরে স্থান পায় শূদ্র তথা অনার্য তথা ব্রাত্য তথা প্রান্তিকায়িত শ্রেণী, যারা সেই পরম পুরুষের পদদ্বয় থেকে উদ্ভূত হয়েছে। এদেরকে সম্বোধন করা হয়েছে ‘অদীক্ষিত’, ‘ঘৃণ্য’, বা ‘দাস’ বলে। সমাজের এক বিশাল সংখ্যক খেটে খাওয়া শ্রেণী এদের অন্তর্ভুক্ত। আর বলাই বাহুল্য যে এই কোণঠাসা করে দেওয়ার প্রক্রিয়া শুধু বর্ণগত দিক থেকেই নয়, জারি ছিল পেশাগত, বিত্তগত বা অর্থগত, বর্ণগত দিক থেকেও।

যাই হোক, সময়ের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মানবতা-বিরোধী এই প্রথাগুলো কিন্তু তেমন পরিবর্তিত হয় নি। বরং প্রায় একভাবেই, হয়তো একটু ভিন্ন আদলে সমাজে প্রচলিতই রয়ে গেছে। আধিপত্যবাদী বর্ণ নিজে

নিরঙ্কুশ ক্ষমতার যাদুছড়িকে আরও বেশি নিরাপদ রাখার জন্য এরপরেও এই প্রান্তিকায়িত, মেরুদণ্ডহীন বিশাল জনশ্রেণীর অভ্যন্তরে আরেক জটিল রাজনৈতিক অঙ্ক কষে এবং সৃষ্টি করে ‘অচ্ছুৎ’ বা ‘অস্পৃশ্য’ বা ‘জল-অচল’ শ্রেণী! সমাজের অবহেলিত শূদ্রশ্রেণীরও নিম্নপর্যায়ের এক শ্রেণী, যাদের ছুঁলে জাত যায়। যারা স্পর্শেরও অযোগ্য! এমনকি যাদের ছায়া মাড়ানোও পাপ বলে গণ্য হয় এবং,

“...ব্রাহ্মণ্য বর্ণাশ্রম ব্যবস্থার মধ্যে এদের কোন স্থান ছিল না।”^২

লক্ষ করলে দেখব, সর্বকম মানবাধিকার থেকে বঞ্চিত, পদদলিত, সমাজচ্যুত শ্রেণীর এইসব নির্যাতিত মানুষরা প্রাচীন যুগে যেমন ছিল, আজও তেমনই রয়ে গেছে। তাই ‘রামায়ণ’-এ যেমন দেখি,

“রামায়ণে রামচন্দ্রের শুল্কবধের কারণই হল শুল্ক শূদ্রদের জন্য নির্দিষ্ট ধর্ম পালন না করে বেদচর্চায় রত হয়েছিলেন।”^৩

তেমনি, আধুনিক ঔপন্যাসিক ভগীরথ মিশ্রের ‘আড়কাঠি’ (১৯৯৩) উপন্যাসেও দেখি বাঁকুড়া কলেজের অধ্যাপক লোকসংস্কৃতিপ্রেমী রাজীব, ক্ষমতা বিস্তারের ক্ষেত্রে প্রতিদ্বন্দী রঙলালকে বলে,

“অষ্টাদশ শতাব্দীতে তোমরা জঙ্গল টুড়ে টুড়ে যে স্টাইলে স্নেহ-হান্তিৎ করেছ, ঠিক সেই পদ্ধতিতে এখানে অবশ্য দাস-শিকার হয় না এখন। পদ্ধতি তোমরাও বদলেছ, আমরাও বদলেছি।”^৪

--অর্থাৎ মূল বিষয় একই। আমরা দেখে আশ্চর্য হই ‘ছন্দের ভিতরে এত অন্ধকার’ (শঙ্খ ঘোষ)! প্রাচীন সময় থেকে বর্তমানে আসতে আসতে প্রতাপের কৃৎ-কৌশল অর্জন করেছে বহুমানবিক ব্যঞ্জন।

কিন্তু আমরা জানি যে, ক্ষমতায়নের প্রভাবে আক্রান্ত হলেও জীবনের সীমাহীন রহস্য-এষণায় সাহিত্যের অসীম পরিধি কোনো নির্দিষ্ট ঘেরাটোপে বন্দী থাকতে পারে না। সাহিত্য স্বভাবতই শাস্বত-গতিশীল। এবং দ্বিবাচনিক। তাই, প্রতাপের মায়াজাল সামাজিক-সাংস্কৃতিক-বৌদ্ধিক -- সমস্ত স্তরেই চেতনাবিলোপকারী প্রভাব বিস্তার করলেও, সাহিত্য সেই জাল ছিন্ন করে বেরিয়ে আসেই। ঔপনিবেশিক চেতনার বিপরীতে

উপনিবেশোত্তর চেতনায় তাই ঋদ্ধ হয়ে উঠে সাহিত্য। এর সীমানা দ্রুত বিস্তৃত হয়ে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে বহুদূর পর্যন্ত যেখানে আধিপত্যবাদী চেতনার বিপরীতে ধীরে ধীরে জেগে উঠে নিম্নবর্গীয় চেতনা।

এই দিকটিতে আলাদাভাবে আলোকপাত করলে দেখব বাংলা সাহিত্যের বিস্তৃত প্রাঙ্গণে শুরু থেকেই নিম্নবর্গীয় জনসাধারণের মিলিত উপস্থিতি লক্ষ করা যায়। যদিও সে উপস্থিতি একাধিপত্যের কাঠামোকে বিদ্রোহ জানিয়ে নয়। তবুও ধর্মীয় বাতাবরণের মধ্যে হলেও, বিশাল গণজীবনের এক নিখুঁত সার্বিক চিত্রাঙ্কণ আমরা ‘চর্যাপদে’র মধ্যে খুঁজে পাই। আর মধ্যযুগের সাহিত্যে তো মূলত নিম্নবর্গের মানুষদের জীবনাচরণ ধর্মের আড়াল থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে অনেকটাই স্পষ্ট হয়ে উঠে। ‘শ্রীকৃষ্ণকীর্তনে’র পর্ব থেকে মঙ্গলকাব্যের দীর্ঘ পথ পরিক্রমা করে চৈতন্যদেবের ‘মানবধর্মে’ অভিযুক্ত হয়ে লোকসাহিত্যের সপ্তরঙা জীবনের বৈচিত্রে ঋদ্ধ হয়ে সময় ও সমাজের অনিবার্য পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে বাঁক ফেরাতে ফেরাতে আধুনিককালের কাব্য-নাটক-গল্প-উপন্যাসে নিম্নবর্গীয় জীবন অজস্র বিনির্মাণ ও পুনর্নির্মাণের পালা অতিক্রম করে আসে। আজ আধুনিক জীবনের জটিল সময় ও সমাজের প্রেক্ষিতে ব্রাত্যজনের উচ্চারণ আধিপত্যবিরোধি দৃঢ় প্রত্যয়ে ঝলসে উঠে সদর্পে।

আমরা দেখি, ঔপনিবেশিক ভারতে প্রাক-স্বাধীনতাপর্বের সাহিত্যে নিম্নবর্গের উপস্থিতি যতটা সোচ্চার, স্বাধীনতা-উত্তর সময়পর্বে তা আরও প্রবল হয়ে উঠে। করালী (‘হাঁসুলি বাঁকের উপকথা’, ১৯৪৭), চৌড়াই (‘চৌড়াই চরিত মানস’, ১৯৪৯-৫১), লখীন্দর (‘লখীন্দর দিগার’, ১৯৫০), শবলা-পিঙলা (‘নাগিনী কন্যার কাহিনী’, ১৯৫১), মালোদের বাস্তব জীবন (‘তিতাস একটি নদীর নাম’, ১৯৫৬), নিবারণ মালো / বিলাস (‘গঙ্গা’, ১৯৫৭), দাশু ঘরামি (‘শতকিয়া’, ১৯৫৮), মধু কেদার (‘জগদল’, ১৯৬৬), বন্দ্যঘটি গাঞি (‘কবি বন্দ্যঘটি গাঞির জীবন ও মৃত্যু’, ১৯৬৭), বীরসা (‘অরণ্যের অধিকার’, ১৯৭৭), ধর্মা (‘আকাশের নীচে মানুষ’, ১৯৮১) — প্রমুখদের মতো অজস্র চরিত্র/প্রান্তিকায়িত সম্প্রদায় নিম্নবর্গীয় পরিসর থেকে সরাসরি উঠে আসে

পাদপ্রদীপের আলোয়। অন্তর্বদলের জোয়ার খেলে যায় সময়ের খাঁজে খাঁজে।

এরই মাঝখানে ঘটে যায় নকশাল আন্দোলন। বিশ শতকের দ্বিতীয়ার্ধে বিপ্লবের উত্তাল ঢেউয়ে বদলে যায় সময় ও সমাজের দ্বিবাচনিক পটভূমি। যেখানে জীবন অর্জন করে নতুন চেতনা।

আলোচ্য প্রবন্ধে স্বাধীনতা পরবর্তী ঔপন্যাসিক প্রফুল্ল রায়ের ‘ভাতের গন্ধ’ (১৯৮১) উপন্যাসে বিহারের কঠোর জাতিভেদ প্রথা লাঞ্ছিত সমাজ পটভূমিতে নিম্নবর্গের উত্থানের বিষয়টিতে আমরা আলোকপাত করার চেষ্টা করব।

এক্ষেত্রে একটি বিষয় লক্ষণীয় যে উনিশ শতক থেকে বাংলা সাহিত্যে তথা উপন্যাসেও আমরা একটি সর্বভারতীয় প্রেক্ষাপট ধীরে ধীরে ফুটে উঠতে দেখি। তারই ফলশ্রুতিতে, নির্দিষ্ট ভৌগোলিক অঞ্চলভিত্তিক এলাকাকে কিছুটা বিস্তৃতভাবে এনে বাংলা উপন্যাসের পরিসরকে আরও একটু বাড়িয়ে দিতে দেখি সেই সময়ের অন্যান্য ঔপন্যাসিকদের রচনাতেও। যার উদাহরণ হিসেবে আমরা বিশেষ করে তারাজঙ্কর বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের (১৮৯৮-১৯৭১) ‘ধাত্রীদেবতা’ (১৯৩৯), ‘গণদেবতা’ (১৯৪২), ‘আরোগ্য নিকেতন’ (১৯৫৩) প্রভৃতি উপন্যাসের কথা মনে করতে পারি। তাই বাংলার পাশাপাশি বিহারের লোকজীবনের স্বরূপও আমরা খুঁজে পাই এই সময়ের অনেক ঔপন্যাসিকদের মধ্যে। যেমন, কেদারনাথ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় (১৮৬৩-১৯৪৯), প্রভাত কুমার মুখোপাধ্যায় (১৮৭৩-১৯৩১), শরৎচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় (১৮৭৮-১৯৩৮), শশিশেখর বসু (১৮৭৪-১৯৫৪), পরশুরাম (১৮৮০-১৯৬০), বিভূতি ভূষণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় (১৮৯৪-১৯৫০) প্রমুখ। এই ধারাই পরবর্তীতে আরও বেশি বিস্তৃত হয়ে যায় বনফুল (১৮৯৯-১৯৭৯), সতীনাথ ভাদুড়ীর (১৯০৬-১৯৬৫) উপন্যাসে। কেদারনাথ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় থেকে শুরু করে বিভূতি ভূষণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় পর্যন্ত প্রায় সকলের উপন্যাসেই বিহারের প্রাস্তিকায়িতবর্গের শোষিত, লাঞ্ছিত, বঞ্চিত, দারিদ্রপূর্ণ জীবনের চিত্র ফুটে উঠলেও, মনুষ্যত্বের গভীর অপমান ও জীবনের করুণ অসহায়তা ততটা নির্মম ও তীব্রভাবে ফুটে উঠেনি; পরবর্তীতে যা কিছুটা সুবোধ ঘোষ (১৯০৯-১৯৮০), শরদিন্দু

বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় (১৮৯৯-১৯৭০) এবং বিশেষ করে বনফুল ও সতীনাথ ভাদুড়ীর গল্প-উপন্যাসে ফুটে উঠেছে। এই ধারাকেই আরও পুষ্ট, বলিষ্ঠভাবে আকার দান করলেন এবং সময়োপযোগি করে তুললেন স্বাধীনতা পরবর্তী দশকের কথাসাহিত্যিকরা, যাদের মধ্যে উল্লেখযোগ্য হলেন প্রফুল্ল রায়।

বর্ণ-বর্ণ বিভাজিত সামন্ততান্ত্রিক আবহে লালিত বিহারের সমাজব্যবস্থা সম্পর্কে আলোচনা করতে গিয়ে অধ্যাপক এ. কে. লাল বলেছেন,

“Bihar tends to be the most unfortunate repository of the brutalities of the caste system.”^৫

জাতপাতের তীব্র ভেদাভেদ বিহারের আর্থ-সামাজিক এবং রাজনৈতিক প্রেক্ষাপটে এত ভয়ঙ্করভাবে জাঁকিয়ে বসা যে একটা বিরাট সংখ্যক জনসমাজকে শুধুমাত্র ‘অস্পৃশ্য’ তকমা দিয়ে স্বাভাবিক জীবন যাপনের অধিকার থেকে সম্পূর্ণ বঞ্চিত করে রাখা হয়েছে। বেগার খাটার প্রথা সেখানে একটি সাধারণ নিয়মে প্রচলিত হয়েছে। স্বাধীনতার তিন দশক পরেও যে এই অবস্থার বিন্দুমাত্র হেরফের ঘটে না, বরং তা আরও জটিল ও সূক্ষ্মরূপ ধারণ করে তারই প্রমাণ পাওয়া যায় প্রফুল্ল রায়ের বিহারজীবনকেন্দ্রিক উপন্যাস ও গল্পগুলোর মধ্যে।

বিচিত্রমুখী জীবনকে বিভিন্ন দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে দেখতে গিয়ে প্রাস্তিকায়িতদের বাস্তব জীবনচিত্রটিকে নিপুণ আবিষ্কারকের মতো তিনি পর্যবেক্ষণ করেছেন এবং ফুটিয়ে তুলেছেন উপন্যাসে। সেই পর্যবেক্ষণেরই ফসল হিসেবে যখন বেরিয়ে আসে, স্বাধীনতার তিরিশটির দশক কেটে যাওয়ার পরেও শুধুমাত্র একটু ভাত — ‘ভাতের গন্ধ’ (১৯৮১) নেওয়ার জন্য মানুষের অমানুষিক পরিশ্রম — অবশ্যই ‘অচ্ছুৎ’ হওয়ার অপরাধে — তখন লেখকের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে চমকে উঠি আমরাও। মুহূর্তে আমাদের মনে প্রশ্ন জাগে, এই কি স্বাধীন ভারত?

উপন্যাসের নায়কের সঙ্গে আমাদের পরিচয় ঘটে এভাবে,

“ধানোয়ার জাতে গঞ্জু অর্থাৎ জল-অচল
অচ্ছুৎ।...“তবে ধানোয়ার স্বাধীন মানুষ”(পৃঃ
১১)

‘অচ্ছুৎ’, অথচ ‘স্বাধীন’ ধানোয়ারের প্রেক্ষাপটটির
দিকে একটু তাকালে দেখি, বিহারের পটভূমিতে
রক্ষণশীল প্রথানুগামী সামাজিক আবহে জমিমালিকদের
অধীনে ধানোয়ারের পিতা, পিতামহ, প্রপিতামহ অর্থাৎ
বংশানুক্রমিকভাবে তাঁর আগের চার-পাঁচ পুরুষ
‘ভূমিদাস’ হলেও, এই বংশানুক্রমিক ধারাবাহিকতা
থেকে সে আলাদা হয়ে বেরিয়ে আসে। সে কারো
জমিতে ‘বেগার’ দেয় না। সে উপন্যাসে হাজির হয়
প্রতাপের প্রভাবকে সম্পূর্ণ প্রত্যাখ্যান করেই। তাই সে
‘স্বাধীন’।

অর্থাৎ আমরা বলতে পারি উপন্যাসের শুরুরই হয়
নিম্নবর্গীয় চেতনাকে ধারণ করে।

কিন্তু, ‘স্বাধীন’ হলেও এখন অনিশ্চিত হয়ে যায়
তার ক্ষুধার অন্ন। আর এখন থেকেই শুরু হয়
ধানোয়ারের যাত্রা —- অন্নের সংস্থানে, খাদ্যের
সংস্থানে। অর্থাৎ যে ‘স্বাধীন’ জীবন যাপন করতে
গিয়ে তাঁর ক্ষুধার অন্ন অনিশ্চিত হয়ে পড়ে, সেই অন্নের
খোঁজই এবার তাঁর জীবনকে অনিশ্চিত করে তোলে।
খাদ্যের সন্ধানই তাঁর জীবনের একমাত্র ধ্যান-জ্ঞান হয়ে
উঠে। ‘আজ কোনো হাটের চালায়, কাল কোনো
গাছের নিচে, পরশু হয়ত কারুর বাড়ির বারান্দায়। তরশু
বা নরশু সড়কের ধারের খোলা মাঠে। জীবন এইভাবেই
কেটে যাচ্ছে তার’ (পৃঃ ১১-১২) এবং ঠিক এইভাবে
কেটে যাওয়ার ফলেই তার সম্পর্কে লেখক কথিত
দ্বিতীয় পরিচয়টি ছাপিয়ে ধীরে ধীরে প্রকট হয়ে উঠে
প্রথম পরিচয়টি। আর, আমাদের চোখের সামনে ক্রমে
স্পষ্ট হয়ে উঠে প্রান্তিকায়িতদের জীবনের প্রকৃত বাস্তব
ছবিটি; যার অনেক গভীর পর্যন্ত ছড়িয়ে থাকে শোষণের
রাজনীতির অদৃশ্য দীর্ঘ কালো হাত।

এই অন্ধকারের ঘনত্বকে আরও একটু ফুটিয়ে
তুলতেই এরপর পাঠকৃতিতে ক্রমে ক্রমে আবির্ভাব ঘটে
কখনো পঞ্চাশ-ষাট জনের, তো কখনো বিশ-ত্রিশ
জনের তিন-চারটি দল —- যাদের সবাই ‘অচ্ছুৎ’ এবং
যারা ধানোয়ারের মতোই পথযাত্রী —- খাদ্যাধ্বষণের।

এই সমস্ত অস্পৃশ্য মানুষের দল কেউ বিশ দিন, কেউ
দশ দিন, কেউ সাত দিনের পথ অতিক্রম করে
‘ভাতের খোঁজে দক্ষিণে ধানের রাজ্যে চলেছে’ (পৃঃ
১৩) ! সবার উদ্দেশ্য এক —- ভাত খাওয়া। গরম
ভাত এদের কাছে স্বপ্নের বস্তু! জমি মালিকদের গোলায়
ধান সব কেটে উঠিয়ে নেওয়ার পর যে ধানগুলো
জমিতে পড়ে থাকবে ফাঁকে ফোকরে, সেইগুলোই
কুড়িয়ে নিতে হবে ফাঁকা মাঠ থেকে। তাই এরা ছোট
ছোট দলে বিভক্ত হয়ে বিভিন্ন ধানের জমির পাশে
সড়কের ধারে গাছের তলায় অগ্রহায়ন-পৌষের কনকনে
শীত উপেক্ষা করে খোলা আকাশের নিচেই দিন পর
দিন অপেক্ষা করে যায় কবে সব ধান কাটা শেষ হবে,
ওরা মাঠ থেকে ধান তুলে আনবে, তারপর ভাত রান্না
হবে, নতুন চালের ভাতের গন্ধ মাতিয়ে তুলবে
চারদিক।

সত্য কখনো কখনো কল্পনার চেয়েও আশ্চর্য হয়
বটে!

কিন্তু বিহারের সমাজ জীবনে এই অদ্ভুত চিত্র নিখাদ
বাস্তব ছাড়া আর কিছুই নয়। আজন্ম এই প্রাকৃতিক
প্রতিকূলতা এবং প্রথা-নিয়মের চাপে নিষ্পেষিত
বিহারের প্রান্তিকায়িত বর্গের জীবন নিতান্ত অভ্যস্ত
গতানুগতিকতার সঙ্গে দিন কাটিয়ে যায়। প্রফুল্ল রায়
এই নিরেট বাস্তবের ভূমিতে দাঁড়িয়েই জীবনের এই
নির্বিকার উষর রূপকে উপন্যাসে তুলে ধরেছেন। এই
‘নিয়ম’ ভাঙার কথা ধানোয়ার’রাও কখনো ভাবতেই
পারে না। বরং তারা ধান কাটাইয়ের কাজে
জমিমালিকদের সাহায্য করার কথা ভাবে।

ওপন্যাসিক নিপুণ সমাজবিশ্লেষকের দৃষ্টিতে
প্রতাপের গভীরতলসঞ্চারী প্রক্রিয়াকে এখানে ভাঁজে
ভাঁজে মেলে ধরেন। তারা যে খেটে-খাওয়া
প্রান্তিকায়িতশ্রেণী — এই বোধ যেমন তাদের চেতনায়
স্পষ্ট, তেমনি ‘অচ্ছুৎ’ বা অস্পৃশ্য হওয়ার কারণে
সমাজে ঘৃণার পাত্র — একথাও এরা জানে। আর
এধরণের পরিস্থিতিতে শুধুমাত্র অস্তিত্বকে টিকিয়ে
রাখার জন্যই তখন প্রতাপের সঙ্গে গাঁটছড়া বাঁধা
একান্ত অপরিহার্য হয়ে উঠে। কেননা তারা জানে
তাদের এই অনিশ্চিত জীবনে শুধুমাত্র ভগবানই নয়,

‘রামজি বিষুণজি আউর বড়ে সরকার ভরোসা-’ (পৃঃ ২১)।

ক্ষমতার কূটনীতিতে স্বেচ্ছাবন্দী মন ও চেতনায় শুধু ঈশ্বরই সর্বশক্তিমান নয়, প্রতাপও ঈশ্বরের মতোই সর্বশক্তিমানরূপে প্রতিভাত হয়। গ্রামশির ভাষায় এরাই সমাজের ‘সাবলটার্ন’ শ্রেণী। এদের সঙ্গে শাসকগোষ্ঠীর তুলনা করলে দেখা যায়, মূলত সমাজের মুষ্টিমেয় শ্রেণীর হাতেই (গ্রামশির ভাষায় ‘হেগেমনিক’ শ্রেণী বা বুর্জোয়া শ্রেণী) কেন্দ্রীভূত হয় ক্ষমতা এবং এক বিশাল সংখ্যক খেটে খাওয়া শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর স্থান হয় ঠিক এদের বিপরীতে, যাদের উপর প্রয়োগ করা হয় এই ক্ষমতা। এই বিশাল জনতাকে সমাজে ‘ওরা’ / ‘অস্ব্যজ’ / ‘প্রান্তিকায়িত’ / ‘ব্রাত্যজন’ — বলে একপাশে সরিয়ে রাখা হয়। গ্রামশির বক্তব্যে আমরা জেনেছি যে আধিপত্যবাদী রাজনীতির জটিল মারপ্যাঁচের মাধ্যমে ‘সংস্কৃতি ও ভাবাদর্শগত’ আমূল পরিবর্তন ঘটিয়ে অর্থাৎ সহজ ভাষায় বৌদ্ধিক আধিপত্য বিস্তারের মাধ্যমে বুর্জোয়া শ্রেণী প্রান্তিকায়িত শ্রেণীর উপর শাসনের তথা শোষণের ‘সামাজিক সম্মতি’টুকু আদায় করে নেয়।

শাসকগোষ্ঠীর পাশে উপন্যাসের প্রান্তিকায়িত কুশীলবদের সামাজিক অবস্থান বা পরিসরকে মনে রেখে প্রতাপের বুনোটটি ছকের আকারে সাজালে দেখব,

ত্রিলোকী সিং
(জাতে রাজপুত ক্ষত্রিয়)

+

ভানচন্দ বা
(মৈথিলী বামহন, বয়স
ষাট-পঁয়ষট্টি, পিপরিয়া
গ্রাম)

+

বজরঙ্গী সহায়
(কায়াথ, নওলপুর)

+

বামরলাল গোয়ার
(যদুবংশীছত্রী, দুধলীগঞ্জ,
উপন্যাসে অনুপস্থিত)

ধানোয়ার, রামনৌসেরা
লাখপতিয়া, টহলরাম,
সোমবারি, রাতুয়া,
মঞ্জেরি, ফিঁতুলাল,
পরসাদী প্রমুখ নির্ভূম
হাভাতের দল

--ঔপন্যাসিক সমাজের অভিজাত শ্রেণীর চারটি ভিন্ন ভিন্ন ধারা থেকে এই চারজনকে প্রতিনিধিস্বরূপ উপস্থিত করে আসলে দেখাতে চেয়েছেন যে, ক্ষমতা দখলের ব্যাপারে এদের প্রত্যেকের অর্থাৎ সমাজের প্রতিটি শ্রেণীর মানসিকতাই সমগোত্রীয়। নরমে গরমে, যে ভাবেই হোক, শোষণ করাটাই এদের মূল লক্ষ্য। এই সম্মিলিত শোষণের বলয়ে ঘূর্ণিত হতে হতে ধানোয়ার’দের জীবন যেমন অনিশ্চিত হয়ে পড়ে, চেতনাও বিলুপ্ত হয়ে যায়। বেঁচে থাকার সমস্ত উৎসাহ, উদ্যম ও উদ্দেশ্য নষ্ট হয়ে গিয়ে একমাত্র প্রধান হয়ে উঠে খাদ্যের সংস্থান করা - হয় ‘গতরচরণ খাটুনি খেটে’ (পৃঃ ৩৪), নয় জঙ্গলে ‘খতরনাক জানবরে’র (পৃঃ ৪২) মোকাবিলা করে। ফলে প্রতাপ অক্ষুণ্ণ থাকে। অক্ষুণ্ণ থাকে ক্ষুধাও। আমাদের মনে পড়ে যায় সেই অবিস্মরণীয় পংক্তিগুলি,

“শব্দের রঙ তারা মুছিয়াছে
মানুষের ভাষা তারা মুছিয়াছে
ভালোবাসিবার ভাষা মুছিয়াছে
এবং যথেষ্টভাবে যাবতীয় রঙ।” ৬

দার্শনিক গ্রামশির আধিপত্যবাদ বিষয়ক তত্ত্ব আলোচনায় ‘একনায়কতন্ত্র’ —এর ধারক ও বাহক হয়ে দেখা দেয় এই চরিত্রগুলি। যেখানে প্রতাপ শুধু মালিকানার মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ থাকে না, এর জটিল রূপ বিন্যস্ত হয়ে ঢাকা পড়ে ধর্মের কোরকে এবং যার মূল কথা হল,

“এক প্রান্তে ব্রাহ্মণ ও শুচিতা আর অন্য প্রান্তে
অচ্ছুৎ ও অশুচিতা।”^৭

-তাই খাদ্যের জন্য হন্যে হয়ে ঘোরা ধানোয়ার’রা যখন মৈথিলী ব্রাহ্মণ ভানচন্দ বা’র কাছে কাজের জন্য আর্জি জানাতে আসে, তখন তাদের বক্তব্য শোনার আগেই তিনি

“দাঁতে দাঁত চেপে বলেন, ‘কী জাত তোদের?’
(পৃঃ ৩৩)

মনুষ্যত্বের অবমাননায় ঝলসে ওঠার বদলে ‘জল-অচল অস্পৃশ্য হবার গ্লানিতে ধানোয়াররা মাথা নিচু করে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকে’ (পৃঃ ৩৩) আর,

“ভানচন্দ্র বা এবার বিস্ফোরণের মতো ফেটে পড়েন, ‘দারবান জানবরগুলোকে লাথ মেরে মেরে এখান থেকে ভাগাও। শূয়ারকা বচ্ছে অচ্ছুতিয়ার পাল!’ ” (পৃঃ ৩৩)

প্রসঙ্গত উল্লেখ্য, সমাজ গঠনের একদম প্রাথমিক পর্যায়ে কোনরকম ভেদাভেদ বা বর্ণবৈষম্যের ব্যাপার ছিল না। কিন্তু, ক্রমে ক্রমে সময় যত এগোতে লাগল বা বলা ভালো সমাজ যত সভ্য হতে থাকল ততই কর্মগত, বর্ণগত, বর্গগত প্রভৃতির উপর ভিত্তি করে সমাজে নানান বিভাজন সৃষ্টি হতে লাগল। সমালোচক রুমা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের আলোচনায়ও আমরা আমাদের বক্তব্যের সমর্থন খুঁজে পাই,

“সম-অধিকারভুক্ত প্রাগৈতিহাসিক জনগোষ্ঠী প্রাকপ্রত্নস্তর যুগ ও মধ্য প্রত্নস্তর যুগ অতিক্রম করে, নব্য প্রস্তর যুগের শেষ দিকে এসে, জীবনধারণের প্রয়োজনে যখন — চাষ আবাদ ও বিভিন্ন ধাতুর ব্যবহার শিখল, তখন সভ্যতার ভিত্তি স্থাপনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে, কর্মবিভাজনের মধ্য দিয়ে সামাজিক অসাম্যের ভিত্তি প্রস্তর গাঁথা হল।”^৮

কালে কালে সময় ও সমাজের দ্বিবাচনিক পটভূমিতে পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে এই বিভাজন আরও বিস্তৃতভাবে ও গভীরভাবে সমাজদেহে ছড়িয়ে পড়তে থাকে। প্রাচীন সমাজব্যবস্থা থেকে শুরু করে হাল-আমল পর্যন্ত প্রতাপের ক্ষমতা দখলের রাজনৈতিক খেলা কয়েক ছিল এবং এখনও রয়েছে। এক্ষেত্রে আধিপত্যহীনদের (গ্রামশি কথিত ‘subaltern’ শ্রেণী, যার বাংলা প্রতিশব্দ হিসেবে ‘নিম্নবর্গ’ শব্দটি প্রথম ব্যবহার করেন রণজিৎ গুহ) চিহ্নিত করতে বাংলার শব্দভান্ডারে কিছু বিশেষ শব্দের সৃষ্টি করা হয়েছে, যা অবজ্ঞাসূচক এবং হীনতাবাচক। আর আমরা তো জানিই, যে শব্দ অর্থাৎ ভাষা অস্তিত্বের তথা চেতনার চিহ্নায়ক; তাই আধিপত্যবাদীদের উচ্চারণে আমরা যখন দেখি,

(ক) হীন অর্থে ‘ব্রাত্য’ অর্থ ‘পতিত’, ‘সংস্কারহীন’, ‘ব্রতভ্রষ্ট’, ‘বর্ণচ্যুত’ ও ‘বৃত্তিত্যাগী’।

(খ) প্রাচীনকালে ‘ব্রাত্য’ শব্দটি নানা অর্থে (বিশেষ সম্প্রদায় বা শ্রেণীরূপে) ব্যবহৃত হয়েছে — যেমন

‘সাবিত্রীপতিত’, ‘গণ’, ‘শ্রমজীবী’, ‘পতিত ক্ষত্রিয়’, ‘অন্ত্যজ’ বা ‘অস্পৃশ্য’, ‘পতিত’।

--প্রভৃতি অজস্র শব্দের বহুব্যবহার, তখন শুধুমাত্র জাতিগত বা বর্ণগত বা কর্মগত বা বিত্তগত বা ধর্মগত দিক থেকেই নয়, মানবিক দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকেও সম্পূর্ণ দূরে ঠেলে সরিয়ে দিয়ে এক অ-মানবিক পরিসরে তাদের নিয়ে আসার কুটিল রাজনৈতিক কৃৎকৌশলটি স্পষ্ট হয়ে ওঠে যেখানে প্রকৃতপক্ষে অস্তিত্বহীনতার বৃত্ত রচিত হয়। শব্দ যেখানে নৈঃশব্দে পরিণত হয়।

এই অস্তিত্বহীনতার ও নৈঃশব্দের পরিসরেই আবর্তিত হতে থাকে ‘অচ্ছুৎ’ তথা ‘অস্পৃশ্য’-দের জীবন। জনজীবনের মূলধারা থেকে যাদের যোজন যোজন দূরত্ব। বর্তমান যুগে একবিংশ শতাব্দীর সময়ে সমাজে বিভিন্ন ভেদাভেদগুলোর মধ্যে অর্থনৈতিক বিভেদটাই সবচেয়ে বেশি প্রকট হয়ে উঠেছে। জল-অচল / জল-চল ‘অচ্ছুৎ’দের উপর এর প্রভেদ সম্পর্কে বলতে গিয়ে সমালোচক রুমা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় বলেছেন,

“অর্থনৈতিক অসাম্যের কারণে বঞ্চিত, শোষণ ও স্বার্থপুষ্ট শ্রমিকনীতির জন্য নিপীড়িত, পক্ষপাতদোষে দুষ্ট, বৈষম্যমূলক শাসনব্যবস্থার বলি হয়ে দলিত, ত্রুটিপূর্ণ শিক্ষাব্যবস্থার শিকার হয়ে, শিক্ষা ও সভ্যতার আলোক থেকে নির্বাসিত, সর্বোপরি কুসংস্কারগ্ৰস্ত ধর্মান্ধতার বলি হয়ে অচ্ছুৎ বা অস্পৃশ্য — এই বিচিত্র শ্রেণী মূলস্রোত (main stream of society) থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে আছে।”^৯

এই ‘বিচ্ছিন্ন’, অবহেলিত, প্রান্তিকায়িতদের উদ্দেশ্যে একবিংশ শতাব্দীর আশির দশকেও, সভ্যতা যখন অনেক উন্নত এবং মানুষ যখন সভ্যজাতি বলে অহঙ্কার করতে পারে, তখন সমাজের পরিশীলিত ও মার্জিত বুদ্ধিসম্পন্ন অভিজাত শ্রেণী সামাজিক প্রতিপত্তির গর্বে গর্বিত হয়ে ‘ভূচ্চরের দল’, ‘গিন্ধড়ের পাল’ (শকুনির পাল), ‘হারামজাদকি ছোয়া’, ‘জানবরের ছোয়া’, ‘চুহার পাল’, শূয়ারকা বচ্ছে’, ‘অচ্ছুতিয়ার পাল’ — প্রভৃতি বিশেষণ প্রয়োগ করে।

কিন্তু ধানোয়ার বা আর কারোর কাছেই এ সমস্ত সম্বোধন অপমানকর বলে মনে হয় না। যাই হোক, যেহেতু, উপন্যাসের

“...প্রতিটি প্রধান অপ্রধান চরিত্র নিছক ব্যক্তি নয়, সময়স্পন্দিত সামাজিক পরিসরের চিহ্নায়ক”^{১০}

--তাই এদের মধ্য দিয়ে প্রতাপের প্রবল জাড্যতায় আচ্ছন্ন সমাজে সময়ের গভীর কৃষ্ণবিবরকে ফুটিয়ে তুলতে ঔপন্যাসিক অবতারণা করেন পরসাদী ও লাখপতিয়ার চুরি করে মাঠ থেকে ধান নিয়ে আসার নেশ-অভিযানকে।

প্রতাপের বিকৃত-বীভৎস রূপ দাঁত-নখ মেলে হিংস্রভাবে আত্মপ্রকাশ করে, যখন দেখি, পরসাদী ও লাখপতিয়া যথাক্রমে নিজেদের ক্ষুধার্ত সন্তান ও শাশুড়ীকে ভাত খাওয়ানোর উদ্দেশ্যে জীবনের ঝুঁকি নিয়ে মধ্য রাতে মাঠ থেকে লুকিয়ে ধান আনতে যায় এবং পাহারাদারদের হাতে ধরা পড়ে; মেয়েমানুষ বলে পাহারাদার'রা তাদের মারপিট করে না বটে, শুধু

“...টান মেরে কাঁথা কঞ্চল আর পরণের কাপড় খুলে লাখপতিয়া এবং পরসাদীকে পুরো উলঙ্গ করে দেয়।” (পৃঃ ৮০)

এবং,

“অন্য পাহারাদাররা খ্যাল খ্যাল করে হাসতে হাসতে পৌষের নির্জন ঘুমন্ত প্রান্তরে হিমার্ত বাতাসকে বিষাক্ত করে তোলে।” (পৃঃ ৮০)

বলা বাহুল্য, প্রতাপের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন যে সমাজে মনুষ্যত্বেরই কোন স্থান নেই, সেখানে নারীর মর্যাদা শুধুমাত্র পণ্যরূপেই স্বীকৃত!

অবচেতনে প্রতাপের গভীরতলসঞ্চারী প্রক্রিয়া যে কতটা জোরালো ছাপ রেখে যায় এবং অবরুদ্ধ করে দেয় চেতনার বিকাশকে অথবা কতদূর অসহায় করে তোলে সত্তাকে ক্ষমতার দুর্নিবার চাপের সম্মুখে, তা বুঝতে পারি, এদের এই অবস্থা দেখেও রামনৌসেরা ও ধানোয়ার থেকে শুরু করে সবাই পাহারাদারদের হাতে-পায়ে ধরে শুধু কাকুতি-মিনতি করতে থাকে যেন তাদের এখান থেকে তাড়িয়ে না দেওয়া হয়। সবাই কথা দেয় ‘সমস্ত ফসল ওঠার আগে কেউ আর জমিতে নামবে না’(পৃঃ ৮০)।

সমাজের প্রগতিশীল ও শূন্যচারী অভিজাতশ্রেণীর স্বচ্ছল ও পবিত্র জীবনের কঠোর নিয়ম-কানূনের বেড়াজালে আবদ্ধ হয়ে জীবনদেবতা অসহনীয় মর্মযন্ত্রণায় গুমরে মরে, তাঁর ‘চোখ থেকে ফোঁটায় ফোঁটায় জল ঝরতে থাকে’ (পৃঃ ৮১)! আর লাখপতিয়া / পরসাদীর অসাড় হৃদয় থেকে যেন অনুচ্চারিত গুঞ্জন ভেসে আসে,

“পাঁজরে দাঁড়ের শব্দ, রক্তে জল ছলছল করে নৌকোর গলুই ভেঙে উঠে আসে কৃষ্ণা প্রতিপদ জলজ গুল্মের ভায়ে ভায়ে আছে সমস্ত শরীর আমার অতীত নেই, ভবিষ্যৎও নেই কোনোখানে।”^{১১}

--একমুঠো ভাতের মূল্য নির্ধারিত হয় এইভাবে!

আসলে সমাজে নারীর স্থান যেখানে এমনিতেই প্রান্তিকায়িত, সেখানে অস্পৃশ্য নারীর জীবন যে এক অদ্ভুত নিরালস্ব স্থানে এসে দাঁড়ায়, সেই সত্যকেই আসলে অনাবৃতভাবে প্রকাশ করেন ঔপন্যাসিক। শোষণ, অত্যাচার, অপমানের সীমাহীন অতল অশ্বকার এবং প্রতাপের দুর্দমনীয় উন্মত্ততায় কী ভয়ঙ্করভাবে ধ্বংস হয়ে যায় সমস্ত মানবিক চেতনা! কী বীভৎস ও বিকৃত হয়ে ওঠে সময়ের অভিব্যক্তি! ভারতবর্ষ স্বাধীন হয়ে গেলেও সে স্বাধীনতার আলো যে একেবারে তৃণমূল স্তর পর্যন্ত মোটেই পৌঁছায় নি, বরং সেখানে অটল-অবিচল হয়ে আছে এবং হয়ে থাকে ঔপনিবেশিক শাসনের মরণথাবা, সময় ও সমাজের দ্বিবাচনিক গ্রন্থনায় প্রফুল্ল রায়ের বিহারকেন্দ্রিক উপন্যাসগুলোর মধ্য দিয়ে এই বাস্তবটুকুই স্পষ্টভাবে ফুটে উঠে।

এই সমাজ কাঠামোর ছকের মধ্যে তাই খাদ্যের খোঁজে যে লছমনকে বাঘের মুখে বেঘোরে প্রাণ হারাতে হবে, এ তো বলাই বাহুল্য। এভাবে পথের ধারে ধানক্ষেতের সামনে ভাতের প্রতীক্ষায় থাকা ধানোয়ারদের সংগ্রামমুখর দিনগুলির বর্ণনাকে সপ্তম পরিচ্ছেদ থেকে ধরলে সতের পরিচ্ছেদের সুদীর্ঘ বিস্তারে আমরা দেখি, বিহারের ‘অচ্ছুৎ’দের প্রতাপের যুপকার্ঠে নিঃশেষ হয়ে যাওয়া গ্লানিময় জীবনের নিদারুণ রূপচিত্রণ। বিহারের লোকজীবনে একেবারে নিচের

স্তরের মানুষদের খাদ্যের জন্য এই করুণ আর্তিকে ঔপন্যাসিক উপন্যাসের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে অনেক ছোটগল্পেও চমৎকারভাবে ফুটিয়ে তুলেছেন। যার মধ্যে ‘ভোজ’ গল্পটি অসাধারণ। বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতার যে চিত্র গল্প বা উপন্যাসের মাধ্যমে উপস্থাপিত করেন লেখক, তার পেছনে ভেসে উঠে বিহারের দারিদ্রক্লিষ্ট ধূলিমলিন জীবনের রেখাচিত্রটি।

আর এর নেপথ্যে জোরালোভাবে ফুটে উঠে শাসক শ্রেণীর অঙ্গুলিহেলনে সমাজজীবনে অর্থনৈতিক পরিসেবার তীব্র বৈষম্যের জটিল নকশা। সমালোচক বিন্দেব্রত রামের ভাষ্য অনুযায়ী যার মূল চাবিকাঠিটি হল,

‘...the key is the overall control of production by a segment of society the upper castes.’^{১২}

--এই চাপ থেকে সহজে বেরিয়ে আসা সম্ভব হয়ে উঠে না এদের পক্ষে। তাই জমি থেকে সব ধান তুলে নেওয়ার পর যখন ফাঁকা মাঠের দিকে তাকিয়ে জমিদারদের পহেলবানেরা তাদের বলে যে এবার থেকে জমির মালিক তারা, তখন ধানোয়ার’রা এতদিন পর ধান কুড়িয়ে এনে ভাত খেতে পারবে বলে আনন্দে উদ্বেল হয়ে উঠে। ঔপনিবেশিক আকল্পের শক্ত বাঁধনে, অভ্যস্ত বঞ্চিত জীবনের ঘেরাটোপ ভেঙে মুক্তির প্রথম পদক্ষেপের ধ্বনি আর শোনা যায় না। বরং,

“আদিগন্ত ফাঁকা মাঠের ভেতর হাঁটতে হাঁটতে আকাশে দু’হাত ছড়িয়ে খুশিতে চাঁচিয়ে ওঠে টহলরাম, ‘হামনিলোগ জমিনকা রাজা বন গিয়া।’” (পৃঃ ৮৫)

অবশেষে, শুবু হয় ধান কুড়োনো।

ঔপনিবেশিক ভাবাদর্শের প্রবল বিষে জর্জরিত সমাজে কোথাও কোন আলোড়ন সৃষ্টি হয় না। বজায় থাকে স্থিতাবস্থা। অক্ষুণ্ণ থাকে প্রতাপের ধ্বজা। শুধু এই সভ্য সমাজের বুক থেকে যেন একটি প্রশ্নচিহ্নের মতো দাঁড়িয়ে থাকে আশির দশক। স্বাধীনতা পরবর্তী সময়। ক্রমাগত কশাঘাত করে যায় আমাদের চেতনায়। নাড়িয়ে দেয় ঔপন্যাসিকেরও ভাবনাবিশ্বকে। নাড়িয়ে দেয় আমাদের চিন্তাবিশ্বকেও। আর এই সমাজ ও সময়ের প্রেক্ষাপটে দাঁড়িয়ে ভাবতে অবাক লাগে, কিছু

সংখ্যক মানুষ ‘অচ্ছুৎ’ বলে ভাত খেতে পায় না! এবং যেদিন খেতে পায়, সেদিন প্রায় উৎসবের মেজাজ বয়ে যায় সবার মধ্যে। ভাত খাওয়াটা এদের কাছে একটা স্বপ্ন! অথচ, এদের ‘অচ্ছুৎ’ বানিয়েছে সমাজপতিরাই। নিজেদের স্বার্থরক্ষার খাতিরে। প্রজন্মের পর প্রজন্ম ধরেই চলতে থাকে শোষণের চাকা। ক্ষুধার আঘাতে জর্জরিত অন্তহীন দিনরাত্রি ধানোয়ার’দের জীবন থেকে মুছে যেতে পারে না। তাই শেষ হয় না খাদ্যের অন্বেষণে জীবনভর হন্যে হয়ে ঘোরাও।

কিন্তু, জীবন তো স্বভাবতই দ্বিবাচনিক। জীবনে কোনো বিষয়েরই একক উপস্থিতি সম্ভব নয়। এই সর্বগ্রাসী প্রতাপের ঘন তমসার বিপরীতেও তাই স্ফূরণ ঘটে মানবতাবোধের। স্পন্দিত হয় জীবন। অভুক্ত, লাঞ্চিত ধানোয়ার বা রামনোসেরাদের কেউই গর্জে উঠতে পারে না এই অন্যায় অত্যাচারের বিরুদ্ধে, শূন্য হাতে জমিমালিকদের করুণার উপর তাদের বেঁচে থাকতে হয় বটে; কিন্তু এই বিশাল শূন্যতা ও অনিশ্চয়তাকে অস্বীকার করে, কুয়াশাচ্ছন্ন হিমের রাতের নৈঃশব্দকে চিরে ভেসে আসে রামনোসেরার হৃদয় থেকে উৎসারিত এক বাঁক সুরের পাখি। হাভাতেদের সংগ্রামক্লান্ত, ক্ষুধার্ত জীবনের কয়েকটি মুহূর্ত যেন এক অপার শান্তির প্রলেপে স্নিগ্ধ হয়ে যায় শিল্পীমনের ঐশ্বর্যময় মূর্ছনার স্পর্শে। (প্রসঙ্গত, রামনোসেরার আগে গান গাওয়ার অভ্যাস ছিল। সে নাটকের দলের গাইয়ে ছিল। কিন্তু খাদ্যের সন্ধানে এবং অসুস্থতার কারণে তাকে দুটোই ছাড়তে হয়।) এছাড়া, ধানক্ষেতের পাশে অপেক্ষারত অবস্থায় অন্য হাভাতের দলের লোকজনদের আসতে দেখে প্রথমটা ধানোয়ার’রা কেউ খুশি হয় না। কিন্তু রামনোসেরা জানে এরাও তাদেরই মতো ক্ষুধারত্ন সংস্থানেই পথে বেরিয়েছে। পরম আতিথেয়তায় সে তাদের বসতে বলে এবং সবার সাথে আলোচনা করে খাদ্যসমস্যার সুরাহার জন্য ছোট ছোট দলে বিভক্ত হয়ে যাওয়ার সহজ সমাধানসূত্র বের করে। মিখায়েল বাখতিনের দ্বিবাচনিকতার তত্ত্বকে অনুসরণ করে আমরা তাই বলতে পারি,

“...self / other is a relation of simultaneity.”^{১৩}

এই স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত ও নিরবচ্ছিন্ন প্রক্রিয়াকেই অত্যন্ত সুন্দরভাবে ফুটে উঠতে দেখি লছমন চরিত্রটির মধ্যে। তারই গ্রামের অসহায়, পঞ্জু, দুঃখী মেয়ে ছনেরিকে, হাঁটতে পারে না বলে কাঁধে করে সাতদিনের পথ হেঁটে সে এখানে নিয়ে আসে। পরবর্তীতে খাদ্যের খোঁজে জঙ্গলে পরসাদীকে বাঁচাতে গিয়ে বাঘের মুখে প্রাণ হারায় লছমন। আবার, কখনও দেখা যায়, রাস্তার পাশে থাকার জায়গা নিয়ে ধানোয়ারদের দলের সঙ্গে ‘সপেরা’ (সাপুড়ে) জগলালদের দলের লোকেদের মধ্যে তুমুল ঝগড়া হয়ে গেলেও মাত্র কয়েকঘণ্টার মধ্যেই সমস্যার মুখে একে অপরের প্রতি নির্দিধায় সহায়তার হাত বাড়িয়ে দেয়।

প্রতাপের উদ্ভত দৃষ্টির সম্মুখে হয়তো ধানোয়ার, মুনোয়ারপ্রসাদ, সাগিয়া, রামনোসেরা, লছমন, পরসাদী, লাখপতিয়া’দের কোনই মানবিক অস্তিত্ব নেই। কিন্তু, সত্য এটাই যে, মনুষ্যত্ব বিচারে প্রতাপ নির্ধারিত মানদণ্ডেরও কোনো মূল্য নেই। মানবতাবোধ চিরকালই শাসকের রক্তচক্ষুকে উপেক্ষা করে প্রসারিত হয়ে গেছে ব্যক্তিগত স্তর থেকে বিশ্বজনীন স্তরে এবং গড়ে তুলেছে এক বিশাল দ্বিবাচনিক পটভূমি। এই দ্বিবাচনিকতার সূত্র ধরেই দেখব, আশির দশকের প্রবল সামন্ততান্ত্রিক সমাজের আঁধারঘন পটভূমিতে দাঁড়িয়ে সেই আঁধারের আবরণকে ছিন্ন-ভিন্ন করে দিতে না পারলেও, ধানোয়ার-লাখপতিয়াদের মতো অচ্ছুৎ, নিম্নশ্রেণীর, দরিদ্র, হাভাতে, প্রান্তিকায়িত স্তরের মানুষদের মধ্যে রচিত হয় এক পারস্পরিক সহানুভূতি ও স্নেহের

পরিমন্ডল। উপন্যাসের শেষ পরিচ্ছেদে তাই দেখি, অন্য সকলের সঙ্গে সারাদিনের অক্লান্ত পরিশ্রমে যে ধান সংগ্রহ করে ধানোয়ার, সন্ধ্যায় সেই নতুন চালের ভাত রান্না করে খেতে যাবার আগে ক্ষুধার্ত ছনেরির অসহায় মুখ দেখে নির্দিধায় নিজের খাদ্য তুলে দেয় ছনেরির মুখে। আর নিজে কয়েকটা পাকা কুল খেয়েই ক্ষুধা নিবারণ করে। অন্যদিকে লাখপতিয়াও তার বৃন্দা শাশুড়িকে পেট ভরে ভাত খাওয়ায় এবং নিজে অভুক্তই থেকে যায়। বরং বৃন্দা শাশুড়িকে ভাল করে ভাত খাওয়াতে পারল বলে আনন্দে সে বলে ‘কত কাল পর তোকে ভাত খাওয়াতে পারলাম। হো ভগোয়ান’ (পৃঃ ৮৮)।

ধানোয়ার, লাখপতিয়া — উভয়েই অপেক্ষা করে ঝলমলে আগামী দিনের। সেদিন তারা ভাত খাবে!

আসলে ধানোয়ার’দের এই লড়াই কিছু সময়ের জন্য নয়, জীবনব্যাপী লড়াই। প্রতাপের লৌহস্তম্ভের নিচে পিষে পিষে শেষ হয়ে যায় তাদের জীবন। খাদ্যের জন্য বা একটু অন্যভাবে ঘুরিয়ে বললে, বেঁচে থাকার জন্য এরা লড়াই করে শুধু জমিমালিকের সঙ্গেই নয়; সাপের সঙ্গে, চিতার সঙ্গে। কিন্তু এইভাবেই তারা জানান দিয়ে যায় তাদের অস্তিত্বের কথাও। প্রতাপের জাল সহজে ছিঁড়ে না বটে, কিন্তু এর বিপরীতে দাঁড়িয়ে এই জাল ছিন্ন করে বেরিয়ে আসার সংগ্রামও থামে না কখনও। চরবেতির অমোঘ ঝকমস্ত্রে এগিয়ে চলে তাদের জীবন।

উল্লেখসূত্র:

- (১) ‘নিম্নবর্গের ইতিহাস’, সম্পাদনা — গৌতম ভদ্র, পার্থ চট্টোপাধ্যায়, আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স, কলকাতা- ০৯, চতুর্থ মুদ্রণ- ২০০৪ পৃঃ ৩।
- (২) ‘শুভশ্রী’ পত্রিকা, তদেব, পৃঃ ২১।
- (৩) ‘শুভশ্রী’ পত্রিকা, নিম্নবর্গের মানুষ বাংলা কথাসাহিত্যে, ৪৫ বর্ষ, মুর্শিদাবাদ- ০৩, ২০০৬-০৭, পৃঃ ২১।
- (৪) ‘আড়কাঠি’, ভগীরথ মিশ্র, দে’জ পাবলিশিং, কলকাতা- ৭৩, প্রথম প্রকাশ- ১৯৯৩, পৃঃ ১৮-১৯।
- (৫) ‘Dalits in Action’, A. K. Lal, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi- 59, First Published- 1997, page no. 18 .

- (৬) 'বাংলা কবিতা সমুচ্চয়', রথীন ভৌমিক : 'শব্দাবলী' কবিতা, পৃঃ ১৯১ ।
- (৭) 'পদমর্যাদা : মূল্যায়ণ ও ক্রমোচ্চ বিন্যাস', আন্দ্রে বেতেই (অনুবাদ — অভিজিৎ দাশগুপ্ত, জাতি বর্ণ ও বাঙালি সমাজ), সম্পাদনা- শেখর বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় ও অভিজিৎ দাশগুপ্ত, নয়া উদ্যোগ, কলকাতা-০৬, প্রথম প্রকাশ- ১৯৯৮, পৃঃ ৫৪ ।
- (৮) 'স্বাধীনতা উত্তর বাংলা উপন্যাসে নিম্নবর্গের অবস্থান', রুমা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলকাতা- ০৯, প্রথম প্রকাশ- ২০০৫, পৃঃ ২৫-২৬ ।
- (৯) 'স্বাধীনতা উত্তর বাংলা উপন্যাসে নিম্নবর্গের অবস্থান', তদেব, পৃঃ ৩১ ।
- (১০) 'উপন্যাসের সময়', তপোধীর ভট্টাচার্য, এবং মুশায়েরা, কলকাতা- ৯০, প্রথম প্রকাশ- ১৯৯৯, পৃঃ ৩২ ।
- (১১) 'কবিতা সংগ্রহ ২', শঙ্খা ঘোষ, 'পাঁজরে দাঁড়ের শব্দ' কবিতা, দে'জ পাবলিশিং, কলকাতা- ৭৩, প্রথম প্রকাশ- ১৩৯৭, পৃঃ ১৯ ।
- (১২) 'Land and Society in India: Agrarian Relations In Colonial North Bihar', Bindeshwar Ram, Orient Longman Limited, Chennai- 600002, First Publish- 1997, page no.11 .
- (১৩) 'Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World', Ibid, page no.19.

প্রতিধ্বনি the Echo

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তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের উপন্যাসে প্রান্তিক অঞ্চলের নারীরা মাম্পী বৈদ্য

গবেষিকা, বাংলা বিভাগ, আসাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, আসাম, ভারত

Abstract

Tapan Bandyopadhyaya is one of the most contemporary authors of today's crucial period. He has been writing unlimited poems, stories, novels, suspense stories, detective stories etc. 'Taand Bangla' got particular space in his writings. 'Taand Bangla' has been neglected for a long period of time in Bengali literary composition. Although 'Taand Bangla' is incomparable not only for its geographical position but also for its social, political, economical even the study of living of these people reveals that they are independent from others in Bengal. the plot has chosen by the author is Medinipur which is a district hearby West Bengal adjoin with Orissa, Bihar, and Jharkhand. as a fusion of these three states. 'Taand Bangla' is unfertile with forests and red soil which has been being the habitat for saotal, Munda, Shaabar, Lodha, Khedia etc. undoubtedly, the scenario of recent Indian village life has reflected in 'Taand Bangla'r Upakkhayan' (2000), 'Taand Bangla'r Rupakkhayan, (2003) 'Taand Bangla'r Ritikatha' (2005)

During the last two decades of 20th century i.e, the time period of 'Taand Bangla' there has been revolutionary changes due to profuse Land reforming and changed panchayet system in dictatorship which led to end of landlordship with the arrival of party system.

In modern era, women are equally & participating in social, political, economical issues which in a sign of a developed country. But before this, women were being exploited and pushed back in every field, more precisely, and day to day life duties.

But with the changing of time and growing society although women from High and Royel class are enjoying a few facilities but the women from Lower class have always been neglected and exploited in every field. It has been seen that women from schedule cast and schedule tribe are representing the today's society after the three tier Panchayet Election, 1992. In accordance with this, Tapan Bandyopadhyaya successful enough to cite the role and position of lower class women in political, social, economical and in panchayet to municipality in front of the reader group.

তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় -য ভা-ব মানুষ-ক ঘি-র কাহিনি গ-ড় তু-ল-ছন তার -পছ-ন আ-ছ -লখ-কর জীব-নর ইতিহাস। প্রশাসনিক কাজের সূত্রেই তিনি নানা -জলায় গ্রামীণ মানুষ-দর সমাজ, সংস্কৃতি-ক বু-ঝ উঠার এই সু-যোগ -প-য়ছি-লন। 'টাড়বাংলার উপাখ্যান' (২০০০), 'টাড়বাংলার রূপাখ্যান' (২০০৩), 'টাড়বাংলার

রীতিকথা' (২০০৫) ট্রিলজি তারই অভিজ্ঞতালব্ধ ফসল।

টাড়বাংলা দীর্ঘদিন ধ-র অব-হলিত ছিল বাংলা কথাসাহিত্যে অথচ বৈচিত্রের দিক থেকে টাড়ভূমি তুলনারহিত। শুধুমাত্র এর ভৌগলিক অবস্থান নয়, সামাজিক-রাজনৈতিক-অর্থনৈতিক তথা সমগ্র মানুষজ-নর জীবন-যাপন চর্চা বাংলার অন্যান্য

অঞ্চলের থেকে স্বতন্ত্র। লেখকের বেছে নেওয়া পটভূমি হল পশ্চিমবঙ্গের সীমান্তবর্তী জেলা মেদিনীপুর। এই জেলার সঙ্গে সংলগ্ন হয়ে আছে উড়িষ্যা, বিহার ও ঝাড়খন্ড। তিনটি প্র-দ-শর মিলনভূমি এই টাড়াবাংলা জঙ্গল আর লালমাটির ছোঁয়ায় বেশ রক্ষা। সাঁত্তাল-মুন্ডা-শবর--লাধা--খড়িয়া প্রভৃতি আদিম জন-গাষ্ঠীর বসবাস এই -জলা-তই। বলাবাহুল্য, ‘টাড়াবাংলার উপাখ্যান’, ‘টাড়াবাংলার রূপাখ্যান’ ‘টাড়াবাংলার রীতিকথা’-এই তিনটি উপন্যাসে মূর্ত হয়েছে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের সাম্প্রতিককালের গ্রামীণ চালচ্চিত্র। গ্রামীণ ভারতবর্ষ।

টাড়াবাংলার ট্রিলজির সময়কাল বিশ শতকের শেষ দুই দশক পশ্চিমবঙ্গের গ্রামগুলিতে বৈপ্লবিক পরিবর্তন ঘ-ট-গ-ছ। ব্যাপকহারে ভূমিসংস্কার ও পঞ্চায়েত ব্যবস্থার পরিবর্তন-র ফ-ল গ্রা-ম -শাষ-কর -চহারাটাই -গ-ছ বদ-লাজমিদা-রর প্রতাপ আর -নই। জমিদারত-ন্ত্রর জায়গায় এ-স-ছ পাটিতন্ত্র। লক্ষণীয় -য, উপন্যাসত্রয়ীতে বর্ণিত পঞ্চায়েতি ব্যবস্থায় গ্রামের নারী সমা-জর ক্ষমতায়ন ও রাজনীতি-ত তা-দর বেশিমাাত্রায় সক্রিয় অংশ গ্রহণ স্পষ্ট রূ-প -দখান হ-য়-ছ। এই তিনটি উপন্যাস-র সময়কালটি -লখক নি-জই ব-ল-ছন-

“প্রথমখ-ন্ড আ-ছ আশির দশ-কর -গাড়ার দি-কর গ্রামবাংলার জীবনযাপন। দ্বিতীয়খ-ন্ড আ-ছ আশির দশ-কর মাঝামাঝি -থ-ক নব্বই-য়র দশ-কর মাঝামাঝি সম-য়র গ্রামবাংলা। তৃতীয়খ-ন্ড আ-ছ নব্বই দশ-কর মাঝামাঝি -থ-ক গত সাত-আট বছ-রর পঞ্চায়েতি ব্যবস্থায় গ্রামের নারী সমাজের ক্ষমতায়ন ও রাজনীতিতে তাদের বেশিমাাত্রায়

সক্রিয় অংশ গ্রহণের ইতিহাস।”^১

এ রা-জ্যর গ্রামবাংলার এক তৃতীয়াংশ রাজ্যপাট সামলা-নার ভার এখন মহিলা-দর হা-ত, ফ-ল রাজ্যের পঞ্চায়েত প্রশাসনেও এখন উল্লেখযোগ্য পালাবদল।

আজ-কর হাই-ট-কর যু-গ নারীরা ঘ-র বাই-র সমানতা-ল এগি-য় চ-ল-ছন-এমন নারীবাদী কথা প্রসঙ্গক্রমে উঠে আসলেও প্রকৃত চিত্রটা কি তাই। মহিলাদের একাংশ আলোকবৃত্তের মধ্যে এলেও ছায়াবৃত্তের উল্টোদিকে এক বৃহৎ অংশের বঞ্চনার -য কাহিনি র-য়-ছ তা আমরা অস্বীকার কর-ত পারিনা। ইতিহা-সর নিরি-খ -দখায় নারী মাতৃতান্ত্রিক

সমাজ ব্যবস্থায় পুরু-ষর সমান ছিল। ধর্ম উৎপাদন ও বন্টন-ক -কন্দ্র ক-র এক সময় নারী তার এই মর্যাদা হারায়। চ-ল যায় স্বাধীন আ-লাকিত জগ-তর অপরপৃ-ষ্ঠাশৃঙ্খলিত হয় নারীর স্বাধীনতা। পুরু-ষর হা-ত ধনতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থার উপর দাঁড়ি-য় শ্রমবিভাজনের রূপটি লিঙ্গভিত্তিক হয়ে যায়। পুরু-ষরা -নয় বাই-রর জগ-তর উৎপাদনমুখি ভূমিকা আর -ম-য়রা তার পরিপূরক হিসা-ব -পল প্রজননমুখি ভূমিকা। সন্তান পালন, পরিচর্যা ও দৈনন্দিন সংসার জীব-নর ভারবহন। এই হল নারীর সামাজিক ভূমিকা। কিন্তু, -লখক ‘টাড়াবাংলার উপাখ্যান’, ‘টাড়াবাংলার রূপাখ্যান’, ‘টাড়াবাংলার রীতিকথা’ উপন্যাসত্রয়ীতে একটি বিশেষ সময়ের পটভূমিকায় সমসাময়িক সমাজ-পরি-বশ, আচার-আচরণ-সংস্কার, বিচার-বুদ্ধি পুঞ্জনাপুঞ্জতা-ব বি-শ্লষণ ক-র -দখি-য়-ছন -কাথায় -ম-য়-দর আসন এবং -কাথায় তা-দর আসল পরিসর।

জহরলাল -ন-হর একসময় ব-লছি-লন-

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.”^২

অর্থাৎ, তুমি একটি জাতির অবস্থা বল-ত পা-রা -সই জাতির নারীর অবস্থা -দ-খামূলত: -লখা তপন ব-ন্দ্যাপাধ্যায় টাড়াবাংলার ম-তা অব-হলিত স্ত্র-নর সামাজিক-অর্থনৈতিক পরিস্থিতি-ক আধুনিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিতে আবিষ্কার করতে উদ্যোগী হয়েছিলেন পাঠক সমা-জর কা-ছাতিনি নি-জই ব-ল-ছন-

“নারী সমা-জর ভাগ্য জয় করার ইতিহাস খুব মসৃণ নয়, তা ঝাঁরাই ইদানিংকার গ্রামবাংলা সম্প-ক অবহিত তাঁরা

ওয়াকিবহালা।”^৩

উপন্যাসত্রয়ীতে দেখতে পাই নারীরা অর্থ উপার্জনের ক্ষেত্রে পুরুষদের পাশে এসে দাঁড়ায়। তারা নিজেদের আর্থিক স্বাধীনতার আকাঙ্ক্ষা নি-য় স্বপ্ন -দ-খ সমা-জ প্রতিষ্ঠার। এমনকী, সমা-জ কল্যাণ সাধ-নর সা-থ সা-থ নিজস্ব প্রতিষ্ঠার লড়াই-য় তারা আত্মাহুতি দি-তও প্রস্তুত।

উনিশ শত-ক নারী স্বাধীনতার প্রতিষ্ঠার আ-য়াজন শুরু হয় এবং বিশ শত-ক নারী পায় ভিন্নমাত্রা। সামাজিক-অর্থনৈতিক পরিস্থিতি-ত এগি-য় এল নারী। এতদিন জায়া ও জননী হি-স-ব পরিচিতা

নারী বর্তমান দীর্ঘকালের সংস্কারের নিগড় -ভঙ্গে
-যত উদগ্রীব-সর্বক্ষেত্রে সমপর্যায়ের অধিকারে পাশে
দাঁড়া-ত ইচ্ছুক-সক্ষম।

উপন্যাসত্রয়ের কেন্দ্রীয় চরিত্র দোপাটির
জীবন খুবই ঘটনাবহুল। প্রথম জীবন তার এক
সম্পর্কিত দাদার সঙ্গে সহবাসে সে অন্তঃসত্তা হয়ে
পড়ো-সেই লজ্জা লুকোনোর জন্য তার বাবা তাকে
বি-য় দি-য় -দয় এক অতি-প্রী-টর
সঙ্গে-সেখা-ন, দশবছর অসুখী, অপুত্রক বাস করার
পর -স তার -চ-য় বয়-স দুবছ-রর -ছাট অর্জুন
দাসের সঙ্গে পালিয়ে আসে ষড়রঙের শ্যামের চক
গ্রা-মা-ত-ব,-দাপাটি সাধারণ নারী নয়, ক্রমে সে বুদ্ধির
জোরে ছিঁক্কারে লজ্জা কাটিয়ে ধীরে ধীরে নিজস্ব
পরিসর অর্জন ক-র নি-ত থা-ক সমাজ-
রাজনীতি-তাপ-র তা-দরই উন্নতির সিঁড়ি হিসাব
ব্যবহার ক-র গ্রাম প্রধান নির্বাচিত হয়। কিন্তু, নারীর
হা-ত ক্ষমতা যাওয়া মা-ন পুরুষতান্ত্রিক সমা-জ তার
প্রতিক্রিয়া হয় ভিন্নতর, তার লড়াই তখন থেকেই
শুরু।

উপন্যাস (টাড়বাংলার রূপাখ্যান) -দখ-ত
পাই,রা-তর অন্ধকা-র -দাপাটি দ-লর হ-য় পাট
জমির ধান কাট-ত গি-য় -স দু-র্যধন কর্তৃক ধর্ষিতা
হয়। পুলি-শর ভ-য় -দাপাটির দ-লর -কউ -নই
তখন।

“-দাপাটি -দখল তার চরিত্র-র তখন তা-দর
বহুমানুষ তারাসব -দাপাটির -হ-নস্থা -দ-খ
হাস-ছা-কিছুদু-র দাঁড়ি-য় ক’জন পুলি-শ।
তারাও নীরব দর্শক। -দাপাটি বিস্ময়িত
-চা-খ -দখছিল সমস্ত পৃথিবী ইতিহাস
পুনরাবৃত্তি করে দেখছে এয়ু-গর -দাপাটির
-দ্রীপদী হওয়া।”^৪

তারপর -থ-ক ধু-লামাটি মাখা এ-লাচুল বাঁ-ধনি
-দাপাটি।-সও এয়ু-গর -দ্রীপদী হ-য় ব-ল-ছ এই
অপমা-নর প্রতি-শাধ না -নওয়া পর্যন্ত এ-লাচুল -স
বাঁধ-ব না। পুলি-শর মা-রর -চা-ট দু-র্যধন-র উরু
-ভ-ঙ যায়। আমৃত্যু খুড়ি-য় হা-ট -স।

পরবর্তী-ত -দখি, পঞ্চায়েতের প্রধান
হওয়ার পর তার লড়াই হ-য় ও-ঠ আ-রা তীর।
পুরুষসমাজের পক্ষে একজন নারীকে গ্রামপঞ্চায়েতের
প্রধান হি-স-ব -ম-ন -নওয়া খুব সহজ কাজ
নয়। তাই, তৃতীয়খন্ড ‘টাড়বাংলার রীতিকথা’-ত -দখ-ত
পাই পরস্পর বি-রাধী দুই রাজনৈতিক দ-লর
সংঘাতই শুধু নয়, একই দ-লর -গাষ্ঠীদ্বন্দ্ব, -নতায়

-নতায় সংঘাতও মারাত্মক আকার ধারণ
করে। ষড়রং থানার রাসুলডাঙা গ্রাম পঞ্চায়েত শাসক
প-ক্ষর সমাজ সহ-জ -ম-ন নি-ত পা-রনা নারীর
শাসনা। অথচ পঞ্চায়েত ব্যবস্থার নিয়ম অনুযায়ী এখন
এক তৃতীয়াংশ আসন নারী-দর জনা
সংরক্ষিত। শাসকদ-লর বর্ষীয়ান -নতা ভীমদাস ও
পূর্বতন গ্রাম প্রধান নকুলবেরার সঙ্গে দোপাটি ও
তার রাজনৈতিক অভিভাবক পঞ্চায়েত সমিতির
সভাপতি পান্ডব দন্দুপা-টর লড়াই আদালত পর্যন্ত
চ-ল-গ-ছ বারবার। অবশ্য -শষ পর্যন্ত জয় হ-য়-ছ
দোপাটির। পঞ্চায়েত ভোটে দুর্যোগ্য বরকে হারিয়েছে
সর বিজয় মিছ-ল যাওয়ার সময় ভ্যান রিকশায়
দাঁড়িয়ে এতোদিনের এলোচুল গুছিয়ে
-বাঁ-ধ-ছা-নি-জ-ক তার একজন -দ্রীপদী ম-ন
হ-য়-ছ-য কিনা প্রতি-শাধ নি-ত -প-র-ছ তার
অপমা-নর এবং -শষ পর্যন্ত রা-তর অন্ধকা-র
পঞ্চায়েত অফিস থেকে ফেরা সময় দুর্যোগ্যের হাত
-থ-ক নি-জ-ক বাঁচা-ত -ক-লঘাই এর বাঁধ -থ-ক
পক্ষ দুর্যোগ্যকে টেনে ফেলে দেয় জোয়ার ভরা
নদী-ত। দু-র্যধন হত্যার -কানও সাক্ষীই থা-কনা।

-লখ-কর ম-ত রাজনীতি এক জটিল
বস্তু। -সই ঘূর্ণাব-র্ত প-ড় জীবন একদি-ক -যমন
স-চ-তন, অন্যদিকে তেমনি ক্রমশ জটিল হয়ে
প-ড়-ছ। -দাপাটি নামক বুদ্ধিমতী -ম-য়টি তার
শিকার। তবু তার ম-ধ্য -স দক্ষ -খ-লায়া-ড়র ম-তা
উ-ঠ আস-ত চায়া। তাই তার বিরু-দ্ধ, -য সমস্ত এ-কর
পর এক মামলা অপসারণ করার জন্য অনাস্থা
প্রস্তাব আনা, তার চরিত্র নিয়ে কলঙ্গ রটনা ইত্যাদি
যাবতীয় অস্ত্র শানি-য়ও কিন্তু তা-ক নিরস্ত্র করা
যায়নি।

একটি অঞ্চলের দু একটি ঘটনার
মাধ্য-ম গ্রামজীব-নর সামগ্রিক ধারণা করা যায়না।
আ-রা জটিল তার -চহারা, আ-রা ঘটনাবহুল গ্রাম
জীবন। টাড়বাংলার বিস্তৃত ক্যানভাস এ-স-ছ বহু
বিচিত্র ঘটনা ও উপকাহিনি। যদি আমরা প্রথমখন্ড
‘টাড়বাংলার উপাখ্যান’-ক অল্পবিস্তর আ-লাচনা
করি দেখব পঞ্চরং এর প্রসঙ্গ। -সখা-ন বালক নন্দী
নামের এক জঙ্গি বামপন্থী নেতার নেতৃত্বে চূড়ান্ত
সাফল্য -প-য়-ছ ‘অপা-রশন বর্গা’। জমিদার
রাজকিশোরের সঙ্গে বালকনন্দীর সংঘাত উপন্যাসের
সব-চ-য় দ্বন্দ্বময় অংশ। -বনা-ম সিলিং বহিভূত
জমিরাখা, চাষ করা জমি-ত, -খাকা -দওয়া, ফসল কাটা
নি-য় মারামারি-খু-নাখুনি, বর্গাসংক্রান্ত আইনজটিলতা

ইত্যাদি অনুসঙ্গ যেভাবে তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় এ উপন্যাস এ-ন-ছ তাহ-য় উ-ঠ-ছ আশির দশ-কর উত্তাল গ্রামজীবনের ডকুমেন্টেশন। এই পঞ্চরংপর্বেই এ-স-ছ সাঁওতাল, গুঁরাও, -লাধা প্রভৃতি আদিবাসি সম্প্রদায়ের প্রসঙ্গ।

আমাদের চেনা সময়, ঘটনাক্রম ও চরিত্রগুলিও অচেনা নয়। বিশেষত মেদিনীপুর জেলার যারা মানুষ তারা অনায়াসে চিন-নি-ত পার-বন উপন্যাসে বহু চরিত্রকে। এরকম একটা চেনা আবহে একই সম-য় দাঁড়ি-য় সাহিত্য রচনা করা সত্যি চ্যালেঞ্জিং। এই চ্যালেঞ্জ নিয়েছেন তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। উপন্যাসটি-ত -দখি, ভারতব-র্ষর প্রথম -লাধা -গ্রজু-য়ট অকাল প্রয়াত চুনি -কাটাল-ক। এই উপন্যাস পাল্লা -কাটাল। এই পাল্লার সুত্রে লোখা জীব-নর ডি-টলিং উপন্যাস এ-স-ছ। পাল্লা -কাটাল না-ম -লাধা পরিবা-রর গরীব -ম-য়, তা-ক জীব-নর প্রতিটি প-দ বাধা-বিপত্তির সম্মুখীন হতে হয়। সামাজিক বিধি অনুযায়ী -যখা-ন -ম-য়-দর -লখাপড়া ছিল অসম্ভব। সেক্ষেত্রে লোখাসমাজের অতি সাধারণ -ম-য়-দর পড়াশুনার কথা ভাবাই যায় না। উপন্যাস-

“-লাধা -ম-য়-দর -লখাপড়া করার সমস্যা আ-রা -বশি-লাধা -ম-য়-রা চার-পাঁচ বছর বয়স হ-য় -গ-লই তা-ক তখন -দখাশুনা কর-ত হয় তার প-রর ভাই-বান হ-ল তা-দর। তা-ক ম্লান করা-না, খাওয়া-না, ঘুম পাড়ানো থেকে শুরু করে মলমূত্র পরিষ্কার করা-সবই কর-ত হয় ওই পাঁচবছ-রর মেয়েগুলোকে। সেইসঙ্গে মায়ের সাথে সাথে কর-ত হয় সংসা-রর অ-নক কাজ।”^৫

তাই সমা-জর সা-থ সংগ্রাম ক-র স্কুল-ক-ল-জর গন্ডি -পরি-য় পাল্লা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় পর্যন্ত -পাঁছায়।

পরবর্তী-ত সরকারি অফি-স আদিবাসী -কাটা থ-ক -স একটা -ছাট চাকরি -প-য় তার কিছুটা আর্থিক অনটন ক-ম আস-লও পুরুষতান্ত্রিক সমা-জ তার অস্তিত্ব-ক রক্ষা কর-ত তা-ক লড়াই ক-র -য-ত হ-য়-ছ। এমনকী সমাজ কল্যা-ণর জন্য সেয়েন দৃঢ় প্রতিজ্ঞাবদ্ধ-

“-লাধা -ছ-ল-ম-য়-রা পড়াশুনা চায়না, তা-দর মাথায় -মখা বল-ত কিছু -নই, এখর-ণর মিথ ভাঙ্গতেই পাল্লার ভেতর এহেন জেহাদ।”^৬

অনিল ভট্টাচার্য, প্রাইমারি মাস্টারমশাই লক্ষীকা-ন্তর ম-তা পুরি-ষ-দর-ক প্রতিবা-দর মাধ্য-ম -স বুঝি-য় দিতে চেয়েছে পুরুষতন্ত্রের অর্থাৎ সমাজের অঙ্গুলি -হলনই তা-দর জীবন নয়। -স চায় নি-জর স্বা-ত-ন্ত্রর অধিকার, আপন অস্তিত্ব। ‘-যখা-ন পীড়ন -সখা-নই প্রতিবাদ’-তাই সমা-জর গভী-র নারীরা -ক্ষাভ-যন্ত্রণা প্রতিরোধের অন্ধকার ভেদ করে ক্রমশ উচ্চা-ণর আ-লায় উ-ঠ আস-ছ। ফ-ল, -দখা যা-ছ দ্বন্দ্ব ও সংঘর্ষ, চাতুর্য ও নিপীড়নের বিরুদ্ধে বিচিত্র বিন্যাস। ধা-প প্রতিবাদিনী নারী বিরূপ বি-শ্ব নি-জর অবস্থান খুঁ-জ নি-ত চাই-ছ।

নারীর মানসিকতা -যখা-ন পু-রাপুরি পুরুষতন্ত্র দ্বারা অধিকৃত, সামন্ততান্ত্রিক সমাজ ব্যবস্থায় যেখানে নারী ব্যক্তি হতে পারে না, সমাজ তাকে ব্যক্তি হতে দেয় না; -সখা-ন নারী -চতনাবা-দর কাজ হ-ছ ‘Apriory’, অর্থাৎ পূর্বনির্ধারিত জগৎও জীবন-ক বিনির্মাণ করা। কিন্তু, নারীরা পুরুষতান্ত্রিক সমা-জ তার পরিসর খুঁ-জ-ত -ঘার-ফরা কর-ত থা-ক কখ-না -দাপাটি, আবার কখ-না বা পাল্লা -কাটাল না-ম। তাবু তা-দর ম-তা প্রান্তিকায়িত নারীরা একদি-ক ধনতান্ত্রিক প্রতাপ আর অন্যদি-ক পুরুষতান্ত্রিক প্রতা-পের বিরূ-দ্ধ লড়াই ক-র যায় অহরহ। তিনি খুব নিখুঁতভা-ব টাড়াবাংলার ম-তা অব-হলিত স্ত্র-নর আদিবাসী নারী-দর ম-ধ্য নারী স্বা-তন্ত্র, নারী জাগরণ ও তা-দর আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠা স্বয়ংসম্পূর্ণ ক-র -তালার প্র-চেষ্টা চালি-য়-ছন। তাই -দখি, রা-জ্যর এক তৃতীয়াংশ নারী শক্তির হাতে শাসিত এবং এই নতুন শাসকের প্রশাসনের সঙ্গে যুক্ত হওয়ায় গ্রামবাংলার -চহারা এখন কীরূপ ধারণ ক-র। তার আজন্ম লালিত সংস্কার, তার মূল্য-বাধ ও বিশ্বাস পুর-না কাঠা-মা অটুট -র-খও তার কী বিবর্তন।

উপন্যাস -দখি জমিদারত-ন্ত্রর জয়গায় এ-স-ছ পাটিত-ন্ত্রর প্রতাপ। মূলত: বিশ শত-কর -শষ তিনদশ-কর সময়সীমার উ-ল্লখ পাওয়া যায়। নতুন পঞ্চায়েত ব্যবস্থার ফলে জমি সংস্কারের -ঠলায় -যমন ভূমিহীন জমি পাচ্ছি -তমনি ভূস্বামীর জমির পরিমাণ ক-মর দি-ক। তারফ-ল, পরি-বশ উত্তপ্ত হয়ে ওঠে গরিব মানুষগুলির মধ্যে, লড়াইটা -জারদার হ-ছ। তা-ত ইন্ধন -জাগা-ছ রাজনীতি। ধান চাষ -ফ-র তার এ গ্রামটি-ক প্রতীক হিসা-ব ধরে নিলে বলা যায় সর্বত্র এখন এই অসুখ। -লখক গুট ক্ষয়িষ্ণু -সই অসু-খর দিকটা -চা-খ আঙুল দি-য় দেখিয়েছেন উপন্যাসত্রয়ীর ভিতর দিয়ে। তাছাড়া,

প্র-ত্যকসু-রর প্রধা-নর -মাট আস-নর এক তৃতীয়াংশ নারীদের জন্য সংরক্ষিত থাকা সত্ত্বেও সে তার অধিকার ব্যবহা-র তা-ক পুরুষজাতির বৈষম্যমূলক আচরণ সহ্য কর-ত হয়।

পাঠক হি-স-ব আমরা জানি, পশ্চিমবঙ্গের পঞ্চায়েত আইনে গ্রাম্যস্থানীয় স্বয়ংশাসনের প্রধান দুটিরূপে ব্যাখ্যাত হয় গ্রামপঞ্চায়েত ও অঞ্চলপঞ্চায়েতে আকারে। যদিও স্বয়ংশাসন ঐতিহ্য গ্রামসমা-জ সুদূর অতীতকাল -খ-কই চ-ল আসছিল। প্রসঙ্গক্রমে উল্লেখ্য, স্বাধীনতা পূর্বকা-লর গ্রাম্য স্বয়ংশাসন ব্যবস্থার প্রতি গান্ধীজী একাধিকবার গুরুত্ব দিয়ে তিনি বলেছেন-

“প্র-ত্যক গ্রাম-ক হয় একটি সাধারণত-ন্ত্র পরিণত কর-ত হ-ব, আর নয় পূর্ণ ক্ষমতাসম্পন্ন এক একটি পঞ্চায়েত সেখানে

স্থাপন কর-ত হ-বা’^৭

গান্ধীজীর মৃত্যুর পর স্বাধীন ভার-তর সংবিধা-নর স্থানীয় স্বয়ংশাস-নর -কা-না উ-ল্লখ ছিলনা।

১৯৭৭ সা-ল ক্ষমতার বি-কন্দীকরণ এবং প্রশাস-নর জনঅংশ গ্রহ-নর দায়বদ্ধতা -ঘাষণা ক-র পশ্চিমবঙ্গে ক্ষমতায় এসেছিল সিপিআই (এম) এর -নত-ত্ব বামফ্রন্ট। ১৯৭৮ সা-ল রাজনৈতিক দলগুলির সক্রিয় অংশগ্রহণের মাধ্যমে প্রথম পঞ্চায়েত নির্বাচন অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। এরপর -খ-ক বামফ্রন্টের শাসনকালে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে প্রতি পাঁচ বছর অন্তর নিয়মিত পঞ্চায়েত নির্বাচন অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। ১৯৭৩ সালে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ পঞ্চায়েত আইনটিকে মূল আইন হি-স-ব -র-খ বামফ্রন্ট সরকার প্র-য়াজন অনুযায়ী একাধিকবার এই আইনটি-ক সং-শোধন ক-রা। ৭৩তম সংবিধান সং-শোধনীর -প্রক্ষাপ-ট মহিলা, তপশিলি জাতি ও উপজাতির জন্য আসন সংরক্ষন এবং গ্রামসভা, গ্রামসংসদ এবং গ্রা-মান্বয়ন সমিতি গঠনের মধ্যদিয়ে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ পঞ্চায়েত ব্যবস্থা কাঠা-মাগতদিক -খ-ক গণতান্ত্রিক হ-য় উঠেছিল। প্রত্যেক স্তরের পঞ্চায়েত প্রধানের মোট আস-নর এক তৃতীয়াংশ নারী-দর জন্য (তপশিলি জাতি/উপজাতি নারীসহ) সংরক্ষিত ছিল। এমনকী, গ্রাম ও ব্লকসু-র সাধারণ সদ্যস ও প্রধা-নর আসন সংরক্ষ-ণর বাই-রও নির্বাচ-ন নারী-দর প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতা করার অধিকার ছিল।

তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় তাঁর ত্রয়ী উপন্যা-সর মাধ্য-ম সময় ও সমাজ-ক এক সমগ্রতায় ধ-র রাখ-ত -প-র-ছন। ঔপন্যাসিক বল-ত তিনি

শুধুমাত্র সময়ের ভাষ্যকর নন, তিনি ইঙ্গিত সম-য়র প্রস্তাবকও। অর্থাৎ আমরা -যভা-ব সময়-ক বু-ঝনি-য় থাকি ঔপন্যাসিক তা-ক মান্যতা -দওয়ার জন্য শুধু উপন্যাস -ল-খন না বরং তিনি আমা-দর -দখা-ত -শখান যা আমরা -দখিনি বা -দখ-লও ভুল -দ-খছি। তিনি জগৎ ও জীবন-ক -দখ-ত -শখান রূপ ও রূপান্ত-রর মধ্য দি-য়, ক্ষয় ও বিস্তা-রর মধ্য দি-য় এমনকী বিবরণ ও বি-শ্লষ-ণর মধ্যদি-য়।

তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় উত্তরাধিকার সূত্রে যে দু-তিনটি অগ্রবর্তী দশক-ক -প-য়-ছন,-সই সময় বাংলাগ-ল্পর শরী-র -য পরিবর্তন ঘটছিল, বলাবাহুল্য, এই পরিবর্ত-নর -পছ-ন ছিল অ-নক ভাঙাগড়ার পর্ব এবং প্রতিটি প-র্বর উৎস ছিল তৎকালীন আর্থসামাজিকতার গর্ভগৃহ। -দশবিভাগ, অসমপূর্ণ স্বাধীনতা, স্বাধীনতার উত্তরকালের স্বপ্নভঙ্গ, স্বপ্নভঙ্গের অনিবার্য ফসল, সামাজিক জীব-নর অস্থিরতা, নতুন ক-র সামাজিক বিন্যা-সর -মরু-করণ, রাজনৈতিক মানচিত্রের দ্রুত রং বদল-এইসব আর্থসামাজিক উপাদানগুলিকে ঘিরে ব্যক্তি এবং সমষ্টির বিপন্নতা, সংগ্রাম উদাসীনতা এই সম-য়র গল্পকার-দর হা-ত গ-ল্পর শরী-র ঘট-ত যায় ব্যাপক ভাঙচুর। প্রায়শই গ-ল্পর -প্রক্ষি-ত এবং বিস্তার ঘট-ত থাকে ব্যক্তিকে ঘিরেই। সমষ্টিকে পেছনে রেখে গল্পের সীমিত পরিসরে ব্যক্তির মাধ্যমেই সমগ্র -প্রক্ষাপণ ঘট-ত থা-কাফ-ল গ-ল্পর ম-ধ্য উপস্থিত খুবই ক্ষীণ হ-ত শুরু ক-রা। -দ-বশ রায় -খ-ক শ্যামল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় বা সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যা-য়র প্রথম দিকের গল্পে ব্যক্তি মানসের যে প্রোজেকশন পাই, তা অ-নকটাই সমষ্টির -চতনার একটি খন্ডিত প্রকাশ। এরপ-র আ-স ‘হাথরি আ-ন্দালন’ ‘নিম সাহিত্য আ-ন্দালন’ ‘শাস্ত্রবি-রাধী গণআ-ন্দালন’ এসব মিলি-য় মিশি-য় এবং নানা দ্বন্দ্বিক সমাহা-র -য ক্ষেত্রভূমি রচিত হয়েছিল, সেই ক্ষেত্রভূমিকে উত্তরাধিকার হিসেবে লাভ ক-র-ছন তপন ব-ন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় ও তাঁর সম-য়র গল্পকা-ররা।

চূড়ান্ত বিচা-র রাজনীতি হ-চ্ছ -শ্রীদ্বন্দ্ব কিস্তি বাংলা উপন্যা-সর সূচনাকা-ল ও পরবর্তী সম-য়ও আমরা -য রাজনীতির চর্চা -দখি তা -শ্রীদ্বন্দ্ব-ক তু-ল ধ-রনা। -স রাজনীতি মূলত -শ্রীদ্বন্দ্ব-র্থর। ঔপন্যাসিকরা সক-লই মধ্য -শ্রীর কা-জই তাঁ-দর রাজনৈতিক চিন্তায় তাঁদেরই শ্রেণীস্বার্থের প্রতিফলন। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র উ-ল্লখ ক-রছি-লন -য-

“আধুনিক ভারতবর্ষ উচ্চ-শীল-লা-কর
অবনতি ঘটায়-ছ, শূদ্র অর্থাৎ প্রজার একটু
উন্নতি ঘটায়-ছ।”^৮

তাঁর বক্তব্যের সত্যাসত্য বিচার আবশ্যিক কিন্তু বুঝা
-গল, এই অনুভূতি বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র যে শ্রেণীর অন্তর্গত
-সই -শ্রেণীর জন্য সত্য।

রাজনীতির ক্ষেত্রে একটা বড় প্রশ্ন হচ্ছে
-নতৃত্ব,কার -নতৃত্ব আ-ন্দালন হ-ব? -দখা যায়
বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র বিশেষভাবে বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র ব্যক্তির সুশিক্ষিত
-নতৃত্ব বিশ্বাস -র-খ-ছনারবীন্দ্রনাথ -নতৃত্ব তুলে
দিতে চেয়েছেন উচ্চশিক্ষিত ও উচ্চবিত্তের
হাতে,শরৎচন্দ্র যেন বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের পথের
পথিকাতারশঙ্কর প্রথমদিকে সাম্যবাদের প্রভাবে
নেতৃত্ব অর্পন করেছিলেন নিম্নবিত্তের হাতে ভার তুলে
দি-য় নিশ্চিত হ-য়-ছনা।ভিন্নপ-ক্ষ,মানিক ব-ন্দ্যাপাধ্যায়
ব্যক্তি নেতৃত্বে বিশ্বাস করেননা। কারণ, তাঁর ম-ত
ব্যক্তি ক্ষমতাহীন এবং মধ্যবিত্ত শ্রেণীর অবক্ষয়
অনিবার্য।তাঁর কা-ছ -নতৃত্ব আ-পক্ষিক,প্র-য়াজন
অনুসা-র -নতার উদ্ভব হয় ব-ল তাঁর বিশ্বাস।এই
-নতা শ্রমজীবীও হ-ত পা-রা। মানিক ব-ন্দ্যাপাধ্যায়
মতে,শিক্ষিত মধ্যবিত্তের পক্ষেও নেতৃত্ব দেওয়া
সম্ভবপর।কিন্তু তার সঠিক -নতৃত্ব দা-নর পূর্বশর্ত
হল -শীলচূতি।

ঔপন্যাসিক তপন ব-ন্দ্যাপাধ্যায়
রাজনীতি সম্বন্ধে স-চতন ছি-লন। কারণ, তিনি
হ-লন বাস্তবাদী লেখক।তাঁর টাঁড়বাংলার ত্রয়ী
উপন্যাস বর্তমান সম-য়র গ্রামবাংলার
সমাজচিত্র।গ্রামজীবনের রঞ্জে রঞ্জে রাজনীতির
-খাঁটা।সাধারণ মানুষ-দের ম-ধ্যও রাজনীতির -মরু-করণ
ঘ-ট-ছা-লখ-কর উপন্যাস রাজনীতি সম্প-র্ক,
রাজনৈতিক দল সম্প-র্ক উদাসীন হ-য় -বঁ-চ থাকা
যায়না।

অন্যদি-ক যাঁরা রাজনৈতিক বাস্তবতা -থ-ক
দূ-র স-র থাক-ত -চ-য়-ছন তাঁ-দের ম-ধ্য কাব্য
প্রবণতা অধিক পরিমা-ন -দখ-ত পাওয়া যায়।-যমন-
সৈয়দ ওয়ালীউল্লাহ, শামসুদ্দীন আবুল কালাম-

উল্লেখসূত্র:

১. তপন ব-ন্দ্যাপাধ্যায়, সাহিত্য,চলচ্চিত্র এবং.....জ্ঞানপীঠ পাবলিকেশন, ২০১০, কলকাতা, পৃ:৩৭
২. Shanta K in adohli Chandra;A study of women in administration:A Situational Analysis,1997,delhi,voll-xiii,p-231
৩. তপন ব-ন্দ্যাপাধ্যায়, সাহিত্য, চলচ্চিত্র এবং.....অনুরূপ পৃ:৩৭
৪. তপন ব-ন্দ্যাপাধ্যায়, ‘টাঁড়বাংলার রূপাখ্যান’, -দ’জ পাবলিশিং, ২০০৩, কলকাতা, পৃ:১০৮-১০৯

রাজনীতি সম্প-র্ক উদাসীন ছি-লননা।তাঁর প্রধানত
গ্রামজীবন নি-য় লি-খ-ছন কিন্তু গ্রামজীবন-র -য
সামাজিক চিত্র দিয়েছেন তা রাজনীতি
বিবর্জিত।ভগীরথ মিশ্র একদি-ক সময় ও পরিস-রর
উপস্থিতি এবং অন্যদি-ক মানুষ-র বিবর্তনশীল
-প্রক্ষিত ও প্রয়োগভূমি -দখি-য়-ছন। তাঁর উপন্যাস
অন্তর্গত ‘নীল-স্রাত’ (১৯৯০) -থ-ক
‘জানগুরু’(১৯৯৪) পর্যন্ত শেকড় -থ-ক বিচ্ছিন্ন
মানু-ষর গন্তব্যহীন মিছিল -দখা
যায়না।উদাহরণস্বরূপ‘তঙ্কর’(১৯৯২)-ত -দখ-ত
পাই,গ্রামীণ অর্থনীতির নিয়ন্তারা কিভা-ব -শ্রেণীস্বার্থ
অটুট রাখার জ-ন্য রাষ্ট্রীয় প্রতা-পর পতাকাবাহী
রাজনীতির শরিক থা-ক চিরকাল, ভগীরথ মিশ্র এই
রাজনৈতিক বার্তা ছড়ি-য় দি-ত -চ-য়-ছন তাঁর
রচনায়। ‘মৃগয়া’ (১মখন্ড-১৯৯৬, ২য়খন্ড-১৯৯৭,
৩য়খন্ড-১৯৯৮) অন্যতম উদাহরণ।

যু-গর বদল ঘ-ট-ছ, নারী সমা-জর
উন্নতি,সমা-জর সাধারণ উন্নতি -থ-ক বিচ্ছিন্ন -কা-না
ব্যাপার নয়। বস্তুতপ-ক্ষ, নারী-দের
রাজনীতি,অর্থনীতি-ত অংশগ্রহ-ণ -দ-শর কতটা
অগ্রগতি হ-চ্ছ তা দি-য়ই -দ-শর সামগ্রিক অগ্রগতি
পরিমাপ করা যায়।ত-ব,যু-গর বদ-লর সা-থ সা-থ
সমাজ বিকা-শর ফ-ল আভিজাত্যপূর্ণ বা উচ্চ
সম্প্রদা-য়র নারীরা কিছুটা সু-যোগ সুবিধা -ভাগ
কর-লও নিম্ন সম্প্রদা-য়র নারীরা অব-হলা ও
অবজ্ঞার শিকার হয়েছে চিরকাল।১৯৯২ সালের পরে
যে সমস্ত রাজ্যে নারীদের জন্য ত্রিস্তরী পঞ্চায়েত
নির্বাচন সংঘটিত হয় -সখা-ন তপসিলী
জাতি/উপজাতি নারীসামা-জর প্রতিনিধি।তার মধ্য
দি-য়ই তপন ব-ন্দ্যাপাধ্যায় এই অব-হলিত নারী
সমা-জর চিরাচরিত পর্দাসীন প্রথা -থ-ক সামাজিক,
রাজনৈতিক, অর্থনৈতিক সেইসঙ্গে পঞ্চায়েত থেকে
-পীরসভা প্রভৃতি স্মৃ-ন তা-দের স্বাধিকা-রর তথা
ক্ষমতার অধিকা-রর কথা তুলে ধ-র-ছন পাঠক
মহ-লর সাম-ন।

৫. তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়; 'টাঁড়বাংলার উপাখ্যান' -দ'জ পাবলিশিং, ২০০০, কলকাতা, পৃ: ১১৬

৬. তপন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়; 'টাঁড়বাংলার উপাখ্যান', অনুরূপ পৃ: ১১৪

৭. আমার খ্যা-নর ভারত, অনুবাদ: শৈ-লশ কুমার, অক্ষর বিন্যাস, কলকাতা, দ্বিতীয় সংস্করণ, ২০০৯, পৃ: ২৭

৮. ভারতব-র্ষর স্বাধীনতা এবং পরাধীনতা, বঙ্কিম রচনাবলী, দ্বিতীয় খন্ড, ১৩৮৫, কলকাতা, পৃ: ২৪৫

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IFRS Convergence and Applicability in India: Some Issues **Shobhan Sen**

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ABSTRACT

Standardisation of Accounts has been a constant effort and concern to the various professional accounting bodies both national and international. Standards are a set of rules that are aimed at making accounts more consistent, comparable and thereby bringing in a harmonisation of accounting policies and principles and practices that, in turn, are expected to enhance corporate governance and responsibility. One of the recent developments in the field of standard setting is the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). At the wake of globalisation, an attempt to bring in parity in the reporting of Financial Statements before the users has been made by the professional accounting bodies by trying to formulate a single set of accounting standards to be followed by the world. Since many countries including India have their own set of national Accounting Standards that are different on many counts especially on the socio-economic, cultural and legal norms, following of a set of common standards that are altogether different in practice will require some compromise between the prevailing standard norm and the new provisions. The present paper mainly attempts to focus on the steps adopted in India and problems being faced in the convergence of IFRS with Indian Accounting Standards and thereby to throw light on the convergence issue by highlighting the convergence attempts taken by the IASB and the FASB on the international front.

Key words: IFRS, Accounting Standards, IASC, FASB, Convergence, GAAP, ICAI.

Introduction:

Accounting Standards are certain guidelines that direct the manner of proper application of a particular accounting principle in the preparation and presentation of the accounts of an entity. Many such standards are available throughout the world. Each country is having its own set of accounting standards on one hand and International Accounting Standards [as given

by the International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC)] on the other and accounts are being prepared and presented applying the standards that suits to the country economically, socially and in legal terms. This is because business is the part of a society and it reflects the social, cultural, economic and legal norms of the place it belongs to.

Of late, the globalisation factor has brought about a sea change in the world of

business and it is observed that many countries (e.g. India) have been trying to or have made changes in the laws governing business to bring in global adaptability. Once a business enters into global platform, it needs to prepare and present its accounts in a manner that is understandable to the world since accounts are regarded as the language through which a business communicates with the people, known as users of accounts. Hence, application of the country-specific accounting standards is not enough to make the accounts globally understandable.

Keeping this into view, standardisation of accounts has now become a routine work and a matter of serious concern to the various professional accounting bodies. This is also because, standards are known to be a set of rules that aim at making accounts more consistent, comparable and thereby bringing in a harmonisation of accounting policies and principles. A set of prudent accounting standards is expected to enhance corporate governance and responsibility that is a much talked-about topic as of now.

One of the recent developments in the field of standard setting is the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). These are principles-based Standards, Interpretations and Framework adopted by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) since its inception in April 2001 [earlier known as International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC)]. The IASC from 1973 (the year of its formation) till 2001 have pronounced as many as 41 International Accounting Standards (IAS) and the IASB has added eight new standards. These are collectively known as the present IFRS.

India has got its own set of national Accounting Standards [as given by the Accounting Standard Board (ASB)] that are different on many counts especially on the socio-economic, cultural and legal norms. Accounts and Financial Statements are being prepared in India by applying these standards. The present era of globalisation needs application of some common standards

so that the accounts of each country are globally understandable and acceptable. It is worth mentioning here that, following of a set of common standards that are altogether different in practice will require some compromise between the prevailing standard norm and the new provisions. The standards given by the two authorities (IASB and ASB), although aim at better reporting practices, yet there are differences in the methodology and applicability of the standards. Hence convergence of the standards is sought for.

Objectives of the Study:

The present paper mainly attempts to focus on the steps adopted in India in the convergence of IFRS with Indian Accounting Standards and thereby to throw light on the convergence issue by highlighting the convergence attempts taken by the IASB and the Financial Accounting Standard Board, USA (FASB) on the international front.

Convergence: Meaning and Necessities:

Convergence means alignment of the standards of different standard setters with a certain rate of compromise, by adopting the requirements of the standards either fully or partially. The Wall Street crash (1929) in the past and other corporate failures during recent times like bankruptcy of Enron Corporation (2001), fall of the Lehman Brothers and the American Insurance Group (AIG) (2008) and the Satyam Scandal (2009), all have pointed towards a bad corporate governance resulting in the non-reliance of the investors on the corporate business in particular and the loss of faith on the corporate by the society at large. Moreover, at the advent of globalisation, business activities of the corporate sector in particular have increased manifold. In a globalised economy, the business has to keep itself updated with facts which demands standardisation of accounting and reporting in a manner that the accounts of different countries become harmonised and hence understandable to all its users. More

precisely, the accounting and reporting should be in a manner that could be easily understood by the present stakeholders and the prospective investors for taking appropriate decisions. This requires that the different accounting standards be bent towards formulating a set of Global Accounting Standards (GAS). The Securities and Exchange Commission, US (SEC) also has recommended formulating a High Power standard that can serve the purpose of disclosure on global terms. Convergence of accounting standards has now become a necessary step to make the accounting reports more reliable.

Convergence of IFRS and US-GAAP

In the year 2002, with a view to converging of the standards, the IASB and the FASB have signed a MoU to adopt various initiatives, popularly known as the Norwalk Agreement. In that agreement both the boards have pledged to put their efforts to make the standards more compatible and practicable. In April and October 2005 they reaffirmed of their priority in making a set of high quality global standards. Again in February 2006 both the standard setting boards signed a MoU on three main points of principles to be reached by the year 2008. These principles are, (i) convergence of the accounting standards by bringing in a set of high quality common standards, (ii) instead of eliminating differences between the two standards, a set of new common standards be issued for the benefit of the investors and (iii) replacement of the old standards to bring in convergence. The SEC, by this time has loosened some of its restrictions that they had imposed on the operation of the non-US listed companies in the US earlier and has welcomed the idea of common set of standards. Since then, in a bid to make a compromise, these professional accounting bodies have engaged themselves in a toilsome work towards convergence.

By this time, many long term joint projects have been undertaken by the above

two standard setting bodies. Some of the projects undertaken are:

1. Designing of Conceptual Framework
2. Fair value measurement guidance
3. Valuation and Disclosure of Financial Instruments
4. Presentation of Financial Statement.
5. Accounting for and presentation of Intangible assets.
6. Accounting for Leases
7. Presentation of Liabilities and Equity.
8. Revenue recognition, etc.

Convergence of IFRS and India:

In India, the process of convergence has made the take-off with the initiatives taken by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) in the pronouncement of new accounting standards. At present there are in total 32 Indian Accounting Standards, and the last one, i.e. the 32nd relates to IFRS 7 the Financial Instruments: Disclosure. In regard to better reporting practice, the National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards (NACAS) was formed in the year 2001 to render advisory service regarding accounting standards to the Government.

The ICAI affirms India's adoption of the IFRS from April 1, 2011 onwards for large sized companies, i.e. those having Net worth of INR 1000 crores or more, turnover more than INR 100 crores and borrowings more than INR 25 crores. In this attempt, some distinct phases for adoption of IFRS with Indian Standards have been proposed by the ICAI. In the First Phase, Companies which are part of NSE Index – Nifty 50, Companies which are part of BSE Sensex – BSE 30, Companies whose shares and other securities are listed on a stock exchange outside India and Companies whether listed or not, having a net worth of INR 1000 crores or more are required to prepare Opening Balance Sheet as at April 1, 2011. Similarly, Companies not covered in Phase I and having Net worth exceeding INR 1000 crores will require preparing Opening Balance Sheet as at April 1, 2012 under Phase II, while Listed Companies not covered in earlier phases will

have to prepare their Opening Balance Sheet under IFRS as at April 1, 2014 under Phase III.

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). These authorities are constantly working in bringing up a successful convergence.

Besides ICAI, the other players in the field of convergence of IFRS and Indian Accounting Standards are National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards (NACAS), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), the Government in remodelling of Income Tax laws and the

Adoption of IFRS will need a well-knit standards having international appearance with Indian flavour. The table below (Saxena, 2009) displays certain differences between IFRS and Indian Accounting Standards:-

Subject	IFRS	Indian GAAP
Components of Financial Statements	Comprises of _ Statement of Financial Position, _ *Statement of Comprehensive Income _ Statement of Cash flow _ Notes to Accounts _ Statement of Changes in Equity (Note * - Also includes items of other comprehensive income such as revaluation gains, foreign exchange fluctuations, etc)	Comprises of _ Balance sheet _ Profit and Loss A/c _ Cash flow statement and _ Notes to Accounts
Format of SOFP	No particular format prescribed. However IAS prescribes disclosure on the basis of current and non-current assets and liabilities.	According to the format prescribed in Schedule VI to the Companies Act 1956, Banking Regulation Act for Banks etc.
Format of Income Statement	IAS 1 prescribes the format of income statement.	According to the format prescribed in Schedule VI to the Companies Act 1956, Banking Regulation Act for Banks etc.
Statement of Cash Flows	Mandatory for all entities	Exempted for Level 3 entities as prescribed by ICAI.

Presentation of extraordinary items	IFRS prohibits the presentation of extraordinary items in the statement of comprehensive income or in the notes.	Indian GAAP requires extraordinary items to be presented in the profit and loss statement of the entity distinct from the ordinary income and expenses for the period. As a result, extraordinary items are considered to determine the profit / loss for the period.
Dividends proposed after the end of the reporting period	Dividends declared after the end of the reporting period but before the financial statements are authorised for issue are not recorded as liability in the financial	Dividends declared after the end of the reporting period but before the financial statements are approved are recorded as liability in the financial statements.
Depreciation rates	Allocated on a systematic basis to each accounting period during the useful life of the asset.	Depreciation is based on the higher estimate of useful life of the asset, or the rates prescribed by Schedule VI of The Companies Act 1956.
Change in the depreciation Method	Treated as a change in the accounting estimate and hence is accounted for prospectively.	Treated as a change in the accounting policy and is accounted for retrospectively (i.e. for all the relevant previous years). Any excess / deficit in the case of this kind of recalculation must be adjusted in the period in which the change is effected.
Entire class to be revalued	If an item of property, plant and equipment is revalued, the entire class of assets to which that asset belongs should be revalued.	An entire class of assets can be revalued, or selection of assets for revaluation can be made on a systematic basis.
Component accounting	Mandates component accounting.	Recommends component accounting.
Functional and foreign Currency	Functional currency is the currency of the primary economic environment in which the entity operates. Functional and presentation currencies	No concept of functional currency.

may be different.
The standard contains
detailed guidance on this.

Goodwill	Goodwill is not amortised under IAS 38 but is subject to annual impairment test under IAS 36.	AS 14 provides that goodwill arising on amalgamation in the nature of purchase is amortised over a period of 5 years.
Measurement of intangible assets	Can be measured at cost or revalued amount.	Are measured at cost only.
Actuarial gain or loss	IAS 19 gives three choices for the treatment of actuarial gains or losses arising on measurement of employee benefits.	Actuarial gains and losses should be recognised immediately in the statement of profit and loss as an income or expense.
Contingent asset disclosure	Contingent assets are disclosed in the financial statements only if the inflow of economic benefit is probable. (Para 37)	Contingent assets are disclosed as part of the director's report (approving authority) and are not disclosed in the financial statement.
Entities operating in hyper inflationary economies	IAS 29 – Financial Reporting in Hyper Inflationary Economies prescribes reporting requirement for entities operating in hyperinflationary economies.	There is no equivalent standard.

The above table shows that there are many points on which the IFRS and Indian GAAP are different, especially regarding presentation of financial statements, treatment of goodwill, inflation accounting and contingent assets disclosure. Hence, in order to ensure transparency of accounts

under global platform, convergence becomes an essential task.

Expectations from convergence:

Convergence is expected to ensure the following:

- a) Same language of business

- b) Cross border flow of investments leading to economic growth
- c) Comparability of the financial statements on global parlance becoming possible
- d) Globalisation of economy and world trade. Harmonisation along with convergence in accounting practice will ensure better world trade.
- e) Advantageous to multinational companies as convergence will help bringing in a common accounting practice.
- f) The work of the standard setters and the governments of the developing countries becoming easier.
- g) The work of the tax authorities made easier by converging accounting practice for taxation.
- h) Saving of time and money in planning and executing of accounting and auditing.
- i) Costs involved in the access to the capital market are expected to reduce.

An Insight into the Convergence Process:

(A) Attempts made so far:

Attempts are being made in institutional capacity by the ICAI and the Government for legal back-up in India to bring about IFRS convergence. The activities done till now in India regarding convergence can be highlighted in brief as below:-

The ICAI

1. The ICAI has been playing active role in remodelling the Accounting Standards in India that can be globally accepted. Since the year 2000, the beginning of the convergence era, it has either pronounced new standards or has revised the existing ones. To speak of a few such standards, AS 7 Construction Contracts has been revised to become valid on and from 1st April 2003, similarly, AS 11, The Effects of Changes in Foreign Exchange Rates has been revised and operative from 1st April 2004.

Moreover, seventeen standards were newly issued in between 2000 and 2009, of which AS 30, 31 and 32 deals with Financial Instruments, conforming to IFRS 7.

2. In the matter of extending training and cooperation regarding convergence work, the ICAI has been putting its best efforts.

The Government

3. As regards the legal framework, the Government has been keen enough to remodel some laws to suit the convergence process.

(i) The Department of Corporate Affairs has designed a new company law contained in the Company Bill 2009 to be implemented soon.

(ii) The taxation laws have also been rationalised into the Direct Tax Code Bill and the Goods and Services Tax that are expected to become operative soon.

(B) Some obvious problems ahead:

Fair Valuation:

One of the most talked about point that appears to be vexed at present is the concept of Fair Value in the valuation of the assets, particularly the intangibles, goodwill and the financial instruments. This problem arises as Indian standards require historical cost as the basis of valuation in most cases. Moreover, fears are expressed from many quarters that the fair value concept would reduce the assets value of an Indian company sharply. For instance, Companies like Tata Steel, [Tata Motors](#) and Hindalco, that acquired big companies overseas through borrowed funds, paid additional amounts above the enterprise value for the goodwill of the foreign companies, that typically reflects the extra amount for synergy benefits, [research and](#)

[development](#) and other off-balance sheet items would get reduced if these are valued under the norms of IFRS.

Concept of Substance over Form:

Indian Accounting practice considers the written contract and the form of the transaction rather than the substance. Adoption of IFRS norms would cause difficulty in the revenue recognition process following substance over form.

Disclosures in Financial Statements:

The Companies Act 1956 under Schedule VI prescribes a detailed form for disclosure and lays great emphasis on the quantitative aspect of information such as, sales, amount of transaction with related parties, production capacities, etc. On the other hand, the IFRS gives more stress upon the qualitative aspect of information such as, qualitative information of the stakeholders, terms of related party transactions, risk management policies, sensitivity analysis of the currency, etc. Further, IFRS requires segregation of all assets and liabilities into current and non-current, which is not appropriately reported by Indian companies. This is because, under the Indian GAAP, even some long term deposits and advances are reported under 'current assets, loans and advances'.

Proposed Dividend:

Another important problem is related to the treatment of proposed dividend. Under the Indian GAAP, provision is required to be made for proposed dividend that may be declared by the entity and approved by the shareholders after the Balance Sheet date. On the other hand, under the IFRS dividends proposed or declared after the balance sheet date is not regarded as a liability. According to the IFRS, proposed dividend is a non-adjusting event and should be recorded as a liability in the period in which it is declared and approved. This is another problem area where a compromise needs be made.

Recent Up-dates on Applicability of IFRS in India:

The new Company Bill gives a renewed format for presenting Profit and Loss

Account while the form of Balance Sheet is drawn under vertical method taking into considerations of the ruling under IFRS. The Direct Tax Code 2012 also attempts to simplify Indian Income Tax and Wealth Tax provisions. These attempts indicate a positive march towards convergence process, though in a slow pace.

It is being observed that some countries for instance, South Africa, Hong Kong, Australia, Montenegro, etc. (Wikipedia) could adopt IFRS so far. India, on the other hand, failed to adopt IFRS-converged standards till date although it announced of the adoption by 1st April, 2011. Some of the obvious reasons of non-adoption might be:

- a) Non-recognition of Accounting Standards by the Indian Income Tax Law
- b) Hurdles in shifting to Fair Value Accounting from the present Historical Cost Accounting system
- c) Lack of proper guiding rules towards convergence
- d) Lack of consensus among the Stakeholders, Directors, Accountants, Auditors, etc. relating to convergence matter
- e) Lack of properly trained personnel to help in the process of convergence.

In recently published news (2012, Nov), it is known that some of the IFRS-converged standards (known as Ind Accounting Standards or Ind- AS) have been designed and made available at the website of the MCA (Ministry of Corporate Affairs) Government of India to help the stakeholders in getting familiar to the standards and in deciding upon the date of its adoption.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

In the process of adoption of IFRS, difficulties have cropped up particularly relating to the differences lying in between the prevalent standards and the IFRS norms. The applicability of IFRS in India in particular needs be made keeping such difficulties in sight. The process of convergence has been making a slow but steady progress till now. It can be expected

to have a common set of IFRS-converged standards within a short span of time.

As the convergence work is still going on, the practical application of IFRS-converged standards are yet to come up. As such, threat of problems in the post-application periods cannot be denied and moreover, the types of such problems cannot be forecasted for certain at this point of time.

Hence, preparation of IFRS-converged standards is a challenge before the preparers both in India and outside.

Suggestions:

Following points can be suggested at this point of time in regard to convergence:

1. Convergence should mean only compromise between the norms of the standards. It should in no way distort the cultural, socio-economic and legal identity of an entity. Hence, the preparers of IFRS-converged standards should be careful in this regard.

2. More number of trainers should be engaged to help the preparers.
3. The stakeholders must be properly educated in this line so that they can understand the IFRS-converged reports properly and can take their decisions.
4. Necessary modifications need be made in the laws governing business so that minimum hurdles are faced to apply IFRS-converged standards.
5. The idea of convergence of IFRS with other national standards and US GAAP should be publicised through Seminars, Workshops and Symposiums, etc. and later on the same may be put in the syllabi in the subject of Accountancy in the degree level courses of Universities in India in particular so that graduates become compatible to the new guidelines of accounting.

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A Case Study on Socio-Economic Condition of Tea Garden Labourers –Lohpohia Tea Estate of Jorhat District, Assam.

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Abstract

Tea Estate labourers play an important role in our society. Our society will never be complete without their involvement and contribution. Therefore, it is essential to study the socio-economic condition of this particular section. In our proposed study, I want to highlight the socio-economic conditions of this section not in general but specifically in connection with Lohpohia Tea Estate of Jorhat district. Accordingly, we have framed some objectives to study the socio-economic condition of labourers of that particular Tea Estate.

Key Words: Socio-economic, Labourer, Tea Estate.

Introduction: From time immemorial tea has been eulogized in so many ways. According to eighteenth century English poet William Cowper, “It is the cup that cheers but not inebriates”. And it is this very fact that has made tea such a wonderful beverage popularity of which never seems to diminish. To add to that it is also one of the cheapest beverages in the world. People right from the intellectuals, down to the ordinary manual workers in different fields of activities feel pleasure while sipping tea and get relief, relaxed and refreshed. In many a country like in India a day can only begin with a sip of tea. A survey conducted by the Indian tea board reveals that 89% of the people take tea as their habit, 8% for refreshing their minds and 3% for appeasing hunger.

Tea is a labour oriented enterprise as it is agro-based. It requires labour at every stage of its work right from clearance of

jungle, making the land suitable for plantation, work for the nursery, giving manure both in the nursery and in the plantation area, spraying of pesticides, drain cutting, path making, plucking, manufacturing and then finally dispatching it to different destinations. Hence labour is the heart and soul of tea plantation. Without labour not a single tea plant can survive as no baby can survive without mother.

But, unfortunately as far as life situation of the tea labourers are concerned, things are not as ideal as it should be in our country and especially in Assam. Here a tea labourer hardly gets a chance to lead a good life let alone a rosy one. As described by Wikipedia, the tea tribes of Assam are among the backward and most exploited tribes in India. Though their newer generation is comparatively educated and now it has intellectual and professionals in

various fields. The tea tribes, being basically labourers, live in village inside tea estates. These estates are located in interior places and this contributes to the backwardness and exploitation of them by the tea planters. The workers devoid of the basic amenities of life live in impoverishment and die in obscurity. The tea planters usually exploit the tea tribes in every possible way; Agitation of labor against the management is common. Non-education, poverty, addiction of male and some part of females to country beer, poor standard of living and health facilities are the immutable problems in their live. There are instances when tea-planters don't even supply the life saving drugs when workers are dying out of epidemics. 'Welfare officer' appointed in every tea-estate due to compulsion from govt. of India, are mostly showpiece than of any good.

Objectives of the study:

The proposed study is primarily concerned with an assessment of the socio-economic condition of the tea garden laborers in the Lohpohia tea estate in the Jorhat district of Assam. The main objectives of the study are:

- To study the causes of poverty , ignorance and illiteracy of labourers in our proposed tea garden (Lohpohia Tea Estate)
- To study the socio-economic backwardness of labourers of our proposed tea garden.
- To study the awareness and involvement of the laborers in common social and political aspects.

The study area:

Jorhat is one of the districts of Assam and which is known as the 'Tea capital of the World'. For our study we select the Lohpohia tea estate of Jorhat district, which is 7 k. m. away from Jorhat District.

Methodology:

Not much information is available from secondary sources to prove or disprove as to indifference or difference of the community in the study area.

The proposed study therefore would build upon the information collected from the primary sources, although it would use secondary information wherever available. The primary data will be also collected from the structured questioners' administrated at the household level.

Delimitation of the study:

In our study we select only a single tea garden and we take only twenty samples randomly from the labourers. This is very much complicated to draw a conclusion from these limited sources. Apart from this we consider the socio-economic condition only of the tea garden laborers. In spite of these delimitations we try our level best to draw some conclusions of socio-economic condition of tea garden laborers in general and particular in the Lohpohia tea estate of Jorhat district by our limited samples.

Findings and Analysis:

FINDINGS FROM THE GARDEN

Name of the Tea Estate: -
Lohpohia Tea Estate

- Total Area:- 337.34 (Hector)
- Total Number Of Labourers:- 449
- Where 260 is the number of male labourers.
- 189 is the number of female labourers.
- Economical status: - Medium
- Daily Wage for the labourers:- Rs 66.50 Per labour (Male or Female)
- There is a good relation of the labourers with their managerial staff.
- The Garden has its Own Factory.
- Having their own factory they still collect raw material, i.e., green leaves from other Tea Estate.
- The other factory charges them for their green leaves at an increasing rate of price which was Rs 15 at 2008. Rs 17 at 2009 and Rs 20 at 2010.
- The garden has a labour union.
- It has also a primary health center.
- Children's were properly vaccinated.
- There's no facility of pharmacy in the garden.
- Ambulance, Nurse/Doctor facility is provided.
- For the better treatment the labourers has to travel 7 kms away from the garden to Jorhat Town.
- There's a proper electricity facility in the garden and it is provided to all the household residing in the garden.
- There's a primary school situated inside the garden with 2 total numbers of

teachers, where mid-day meal is provided.

- For further study the labourers has to move 4 kms away from the garden for middle and high schools.
- The student's studying at college travel 7 kms away from the garden to the Jorhat Town.
- In the garden labors are facilitated by :-

Anganwadi Center, Club, Community Hall, Playground.

- Distance from the national highway :- 1 km.
- Distance From Railway Station:- 2 km.
- Festival arranged by the laborers:-
Durga Puja, Jhumur, Charak Puja, Bihu, Kali Puja, etc.
- Steps Taken By the managerial staffs For Welfare:-
D.D.T, Free Medicine, Umbrella, Aprons, Blanket, Shoe, Chappal, etc.
- Approx Budget for different welfare schemes is 2 Lacs.

Findings and analysis from the households of the Tea Estate.

As human society is dynamic, its socio-economic and political landscape go on changing constantly, due to physical, socio-cultural and political forces.

- In our randomly selected 20 household samples, altogether there are 110 family members. Out of which 57 males and 53 females.
- Tea Garden labourers enjoy most of the puja festivals. Durga Puja, Manasa Puja (Bishashari Puja) are the most common ones in all the tea Estates. In our proposed tea garden they also enjoy the common puja festivals held in Assam. Each festival in the tea garden is celebrated with dance and music. Jhumur is the most outstanding tune of tribal culture in the tea estate. Though the income is very much limited but they spend Rs 3000(Three Thousand) on an average per annum for various festivals.
- Among the sports and games, football, cricket and kabaddi are the most common games in the Tea Estates. Apart from these outdoor games, carom and cards are mostly played in common places. Sometimes they play cards for recreations, but sometimes with cards they are deep into gambling.
- From the data available it is clear that the general living conditions of the labourers are poor and unhygienic. Most of them are living inside their huts. They also use open space for toilet in the present economic reforms era. At the same time they also use river water for drinking. On one side they are very poor but on the other side they are using or purchasing liquor and intoxicants. They are, infect, victims of their own habit.
- Most of them have their saving habits. For save their money they

basically use Bank, LIC and Provident Fund. For the permanent labourers Provident Fund is almost compulsory. At the same time on emergency they take loans from Provident Funds, shopkeepers or from relatives. But, they suffer because of a very high rate of interest when they take loans from shopkeepers. In spite of this high rate of interest they can't ignore these. Because, these types of loans they have easy access to.

- In our proposed study Tea Estate Public Distribution System(PDS) is available. Basically kerosene, rice, sugar are distributed under the system.
- From our survey we find that electricity is available almost all the households.
- For fuel they use wood and kerosene; only three families have LPG connections.
- In our limited sample of the proposed Tea Estate there is no maternity death or infant mortality. This is very much welcoming. Child labour also not found in our samples.
- Literacy can be considered as acid test of socio-economic and cultural improvement of a society. Education is considered as the major component of human resource development and socio-economic and political development of the society. In our limited sample out of 120 persons almost 40 are illiterate, i.e., around 34% are illiterate. This is not a very bad sign. Most of the illiterate are aged persons. But in the present generations,

the number of illiterate decreases. Among the present generations schooling habit increases. Some factors like mid-day meal, Sarva-Siksha are to some extent effective in this regard. But, in the present situation there are also some drop outs.

- Most of the households are living below the poverty line. From our field study we have seen that the root cause of poverty is basically inheritant in nature. As their parents are poor the next generations also face the same problem of poverty. Apart from this inheritant cause, some other causes, like, low wages, lack of job opportunity and work culture of the people are highly responsible for their poverty.

- If we study their political awareness and their involvement in politics most of them are not aware of it. None of them from our sample directly involved in any political party. Only three females are the members of local Mahila Samiti. But, all the persons who have their voting rights

they usually use their voting rights in different elections. This is a very good sign in respect of political participation.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion it may be said that, the Tea community are highly deprived in all respects of socio-economic and political aspects. Therefore, it is a high time for the government as well as the owners and management to come forward and uplift this particular society. Otherwise this section of our society remains static. Now a days, though some facilities are provided by the government and as well as by the management, but, this is not enough for all round development of the society. Some undesirable incidents are taking place in different Tea Estate in the state in present situation. Therefore, it is highly essential to create a good relationship among owners, managerial staff and labourers. For this, owners, managerial staff and labour union must come forward and through proper negotiations they must solve their problems. Otherwise some bad incidents will continuously affect the Tea Estate.

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Challenges of unit cost Control of higher education in B.T.A.D

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Abstract

The paper tries to evaluate the problem of unit cost control for graduating a student in BTAD. The study conducted in the various higher education institute in the 4 district of B.T.A.D(Bodoland territorial area districts) brought to light various cause and reasons for increasing of cost of educating a student in the institute of BTAD area. The study evaluated that the cost of higher education is higher in BTAD because of various factor and lack of management ability of the institute to impart education in the area.

Introduction

B.T.A.D always has been in one or other crisis. The educational upliftment is in going process in the four districts under B.T.A.D. The level of education in the area as compared to level of country is still long way to go. The higher educational institute in B.T.A.D is limited and the entire populations depend on the few available in the area. The cost incurred by an institute for graduating a student is unstable and largely high, because of the low number of successful student as compared to the student enrolment. The institutions calculate unit cost considering the factor such as infrastructural cost, teaching staff salary, nonteaching staff salary, development expenses. The institution of B.T.A.D is under construction so for the last few years the infrastructure cost has raised to its height, which has lead to the increasing in the unit cost along with the development activities as funded by central, state or other authority for development of the area.

The unit cost is calculated with a formula as under

Total expenses

Total successful candidate

Unit cost control in B.T.A.D is the challenge for the entire education system as the strategy adopted for the purpose is not able to bring out the success so far. B.T.A.D education system has not been able to fulfill the necessity of the area, for the various problems influencing it. Unit cost measurement with the factor determining in the area is not only a challenge but a move towards the dark without any route further on. The study so conducted brought to light the pro and con of the cause of the failure of the B.T.A.D education system.

The finding of the study indicated that the cause of the increasing of unit cost of various institute vary with the time and reason. If B.T.A.D are to cut of “the unit cost of higher education” the strategies are to be designed studying the problem prevailing in the area.

Objective

1. To determine cause of high unit cost
2. To determine factor influencing the unit cost

Position of higher education of B.T.A.D area

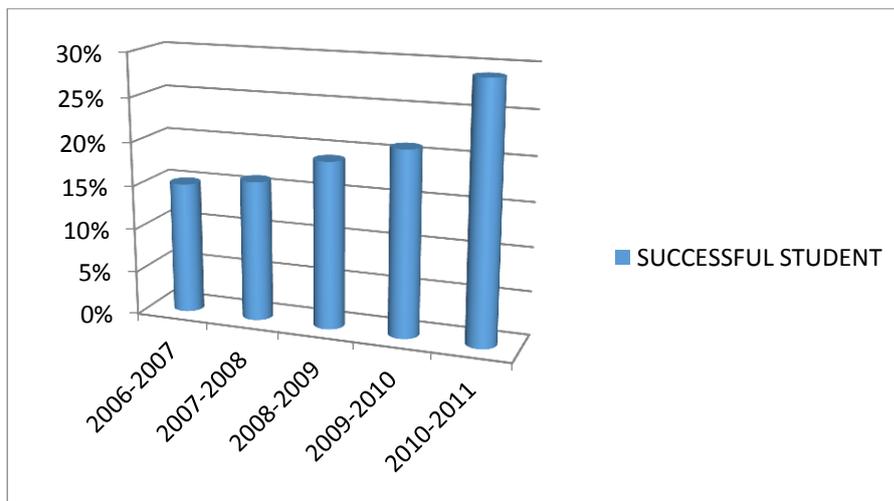
B.T.A.D area is economically backward near about 95% of people lives under village, cut off from all the basic facilities as needed. Education is lagging behind as number of institution as needed is not available or the

facilities need to be provided is not equally distributed. The number of college imparting education in B.T.A.D is less than 35 in number. The higher education institution in BTAD are under various status like government, private, provincialised and deficit grant-in –aid system. So, the benefit enjoyed by all the institution is not same at a time. At the same time the institutional cost or cost incurred for salary or development activity are also not same.

The average percentage of successful student for the last five years is highlighted in the table below:-

Serial number	Period	Successful Student
1	2006-2007	15%
2	2007-2008	16%
3	2008-2009	19%
4	2009-2010	21%
5	2010-2011	29%

Chart showing successful student (for five year period) in BTAD.



Source: field survey (institution report of B.T.A.D) Considering the total pass student in the five year period successful candidate percentage is determined.

The low percentage of successful student is for various causes such as

1. Weak education system
2. Lack of trained staff
3. Lack of environment for education
4. Weak development facilities

Education environment is still to be developed if the successful number is increase, the study viewed that along with the system of education prevailing in B.T.A.D. the facilities to be provided for staff and student is always not available so if the turn over is needed to be developed the promotional step are to be designed in among the system in education.

unit cost is by increasing number of successful student. For increasing the number of successful student both student as well as staff needs to be aware of the problem, so that it can be controlled. Cost included for calculating unit cost of higher education is never been same it changes with the environment and the factors of the system in education and the external part of education in B.T.A.D. The controlling factor is to be designed according to the necessity of the area as the present scenario of education in the area is much backward to that of the countries education position.

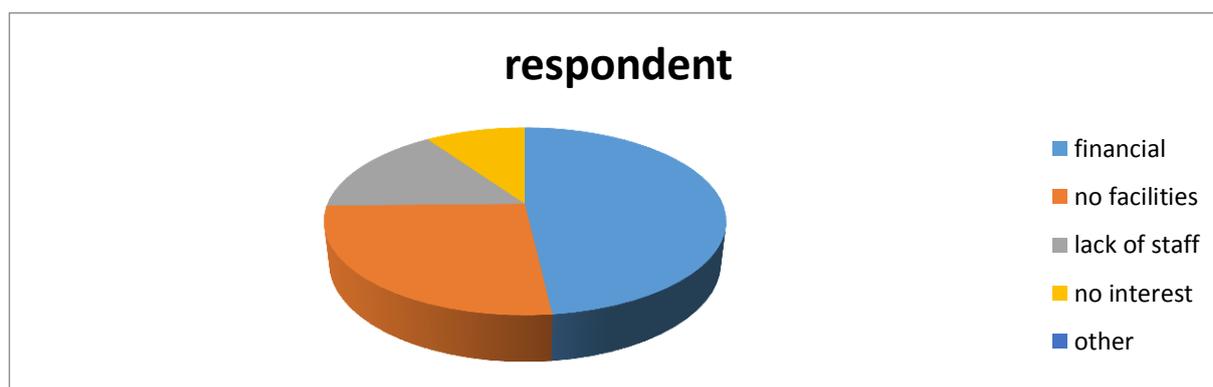
Control of higher education unit cost

The cost incurred cannot be deducted as expense incurred for infrastructural development is must for providing facilities for the student. The only means to cut off

The problem as estimated during the study from the respondent are

Serial number	Problem	Respondent in percentage
1	Financial	40
2	No facilities	22
3	Lack of staff	13
4	No interest	8
5	Other	17

Chart showing the problem of higher education:-



Source: field survey

Finding

The region is economically poor. So, most of the student had to put emphasis on earning then learning, which lead to drop out or unsuccessfulness.

Causes behind high unit cost of higher education in BTAD are

1. Low successful candidate
2. Weak management ability

As shown in the above table it's very clear that the student successfully passing out degree from the institute of B.T.A.D is very low. Management ability also comes to question as even after huge investment for institutional cost the expected result is not outlet. As responded most of the institute has a high expense for development and

even some of the institute keep no proper record of their expense. So, it turns us to think that if unit cost of higher education is high, institution inefficiency is one of the main causes.

Suggestion

The education needs instant improvement, if B.T.A.D is to develop all other sector of the area.

1. Quality based education from elementary level should be encouraged
2. Development and awareness program must be conducted to encourage student
3. Training to staff must be conducted to understand the student better
4. Government must take initiative to set up more educational institute
5. Development facilities should be provided
6. Security of earning after learning must be taken care of by the government.

The study so undertaken is just a step to point out the real picture of B.T.A.D, increasing cost of educating student. The above suggestion can be a step that can be taken by government as well as the administrative body to control the unit cost of higher education in B.T.A.D.

Conclusion

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The higher educational institutes in B.T.A.D are in need of quick growth. For better performance of the higher education, the elementary level of the education system needed to be developed, as because the weak categories of student turn over towards the college cannot be expected to bring out the best result in higher education. Lacking of awareness was seen among the B.T.A.D student in the matter of importance of education or the improvement criteria for better result. So it becomes absolutely necessary to take a step for development through encouragement of student. The unit cost is higher as investment on infrastructural cost has increase recently but it could have been much lesser if the vast difference prevailing in between enrolment and successful student would not be higher. On the part of all people engaged in higher educational program in BTAD it became compulsory to think innovatively to create an atmosphere of learning in among the student. Along with all step possible to be taken for student development management of the institute must be efficient enough to utilise the resource without wastage.

BTAD education system need quick look, and to develop the system necessary facilities needed to be developed by institute or by government interference. Problem of dropout or disturbance can be seen in among the student continuing in higher education for financial crisis or for lack of security after study. Immediate step to secure them needed to be taken by government to prepare the student mentally to get successful in higher education.

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THE BIRTH AND DEATH RITUALS AMONG THE SANTALS OF ASSAM

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Abstract

Santal is the largest homogenous tribe of India. They entered Assam as the labourers of the tea gardens established by the British and as a part of the Resettlement after the Santal Revolution during 1885-87 more than a century ago. Though they came into contact with their Aryan, Dravidian and Mongolian neighbours since time immemorial, most of their traditional customs and rituals along with religious practises have been unaffected by the influence of their neighbour. The life cycle of a Santal is marked with birth, initiation, marriage and death. Where birth in a Santal society is regarded as the most important and crucial event, death, to them, indicate that the soul, after leaving the body, becomes a bonga (spirit) joining the abode of its deceased ancestors.

INTRODUCTION

The life-cycle of an individual Santal is marked by several different rites and ceremonies connected with various stages of life. These rites are mainly concerned with Santal traditional beliefs and practices concerning both the benevolent and the malevolent spirits. The rites and ceremonies are performed to secure the active help of the benevolent spirits and the passive forbearance of the malevolent ones so as to ensure the safety, well-being and prosperity of the individual and his family at different stages in the life-cycle. The turning points, in the life cycle of an individual Santal, are the critical occasions of birth (*Janam Chatiar* or *Nim dakmandi*), initiation (*Caco Chatiar*), marriage (*Bapla*) and death (*Moron*). As O' Dea (1969) points out, 'In such crises men are potentially exposed to the dangers involved in the contingency and powerlessness inherent in the human

condition'⁽¹⁾ and to control these dangers and to have emotional need of restoring hope and confidence, these life crises moments are set off by various socio- religious rituals and festivals.

Shift from one stage to another e.g. from pregnancy to child birth, from birth to initiation, from initiation to marriage, from marriage to funerals etc. disturb both the life of the individual and the life of the society. Danger always lies in transition. The person who passes from one stage to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others and the functions of these celebrations are to reduce the harmful effects of the disturbances.

JANAM CHATIAI (BIRTH)

The birth of a child is a great event among the Santals. The birth of a child imposes on the family a new set of rights and duties. The child becomes a fresh claimant to family property⁽²⁾. At the birth of a child,

both the village and the family are considered unclean. As a matter of fact, no sacrifice or other religious ceremony is performed. The purification ceremony after childbirth is called *Janam Chatiar*. *Janam* means 'birth' and *Chatiar*, a word connected with the Hindi word *chut* which means 'polluting' ⁽³⁾. Until this ceremony takes place, no one is even allowed to eat or drink with the family. The cleansing ceremony in which the whole village community as well as the relatives and friends of the family participate usually takes place five days after the birth of a boy and three days after the birth of a girl. In the cleansing ceremony, the child is given a name ⁽⁴⁾. The name-giving ceremony is the essential part of the *Janam Chatiar* ceremony because in giving the child a name, the father recognizes the child as his own and the child acquires a definite status in the village and among its kinsfolk. In fact, the child is recognized to be a Santal. The name-giving also imparts the social obligations of the household to the newly born child. This cleansing ceremony has mainly a three-fold function: 1) to purify the house and the village from the defilement caused by the birth of a child; 2) to name the child, thus formally admitting him/her into the father's clan and sub-clan and giving the protection of father's spirits and 3) to incorporate the child into the 'outer fringes of the tribe'.

One of the greatest things that a Santal couple fears is to have no offspring. A man can legally divorce his wife for not having child and the vice versa. And he can even have a second wife with prior consent from his former one. If a couple cannot get any child, they first consult a Raranic' (medicine man) who prescribe medicine. If this is unsuccessful recourse is made to supernatural aids. The woman approaches an *Ojha* (medicine man) who devinises whether Bongas are obstructing the way. If so, a fowl is sacrificed in the name of the Bonga responsible. The Santals believe that human beings are more exposed to the supernatural evils when they are in their mother's womb

and at birth. As such various precautions are to be observed by the mother for the protection of her womb.

She is not allowed to take any life nor is she allowed to see or touch a human corpse. She must not weep when a death occurs. She must not go near a river or stream where curins are believed to dwell. She must not walk over the straw rope used for binding *bandis* (bundles of storing grains). She would not be allowed to lie down in the courtyard or any other open space lest Bongas and a particular type of bird called *Puni-cere* might fly across her body. She must not put a flower of Jackfruit in her hair otherwise the child in the womb would shrivel as the jackfruit flower does when it dries. There are some other precautions also to be strictly observed. At the time of thunderstorm a pregnant woman should stay indoors and put her fingers in her ears so that the child does not hear the sound otherwise the child would be born coward. She is not allowed to make bread herself because it may wrinkle the child's ear. She, in any circumstance, be allowed to plant or break a turmeric root, lest the fingers of her child be forked, or the child might get an extra finger. She cannot make leaf cup; if she does so, her child will be born with split lip. If she looks upon an elephant during pregnancy her child's tongue would be very long and the ears would be large and flappy. Certain restrictions are imposed on the father also. He must not take any life and should not come into contact with dead bodies. He should restrict himself for eating the flesh of the head of an animal sacrificed or slain in the hunt.

The Santals believe that if all the precautions are observed carefully, the birth of the child become easy and in case of any difficulty, the *Ojha* is called for to find out which bonga is offended. And once it is found, a vow is made to make proper sacrifice for a speedy delivery. When the child is born, the umbilical cord is cut off by the midwife with the help of a sharp iron arrow. At the time of delivery though elderly women of the village gather at the house, no

male is allowed to attend the same. The placenta and the afterbirths are buried near the main door of the room where the delivery took place. Santals believe that if it is not buried and eaten by dog or any other animal, the mother may fall sick. It is also believed that if afterbirth is buried deep so that the next birth is delayed. And if it is buried near the surface, it will bring the next child soon. The Santal do not tell their birth place but refers only to the village where his/her after birth is buried.

After the birth is taken place, the father is informed by the womenfolk present there and he, with a large stick, beats the roof of the house to drive away the *bhuts* or *curins*. Villagers on hearing the birth ask for whether the child is *dipil* or *bharia* means girl or boy.

A ceremony called *Met' halan* is held on the same day of the birth. The mother and the midwife sit on the floor facing each other. The mother fills a leaf cup with rice beer and gives it to the midwife who throws away its content on the left hand side. The process is repeated thrice. By doing so both the child and the mother become immune from any imminent danger as per belief.

If the child delivered is a dead one, the child's body is buried under the ground and not burnt in fire to ashes. On the other hand if the mother dies during the pregnancy or during child birth it is believed that her spirit will turn into a *curin*. Hence such women are buried deep into the ground after inserting iron nails on the sole of the feet to stop its escaping.

As said before, the ceremony is usually observed five days after the birth of a boy and three days after the birth of a girl. But in some special cases this time rule is not strictly followed and the ceremony is anticipated if a festival is imminent. If the birth is taken place on the eve of a wedding or on the day before the new moon then also the ceremony is anticipated because the Santals believe that it is not good for the child to be named in a different month than that of his birth month.

Paternal blood relatives are invited for the Janam Chatiar ceremony. The villagers also gather at the courtyard of the house of the new born baby on the fixed day. The menfolk so gathered get shaved by a barber starting from the Naeke and ending with the father of the new born. The midwife brings the new born baby to the courtyard where the barber cuts some locks of the child's hair and put in a leaf cup. There he pours some oil in the leaf cup and gives it back to the midwife who after mixing the same with turmeric rub the child's head. Then the males present there left for taking bath. In their absence the midwife winds two pieces of cotton thread around the arrow used to cut the umbilical cord and collects the child's hair in a small bundle. On the return of the menfolk, the midwife carrying the child leads the women folk along with the mother of the baby to take bath. Reaching the spot, the midwife unwound one of the string around the arrow, ties the bundle of the hair with that thread and invoking Maran Buru and the ancestral spirit of the child's father to take care of the child let the bundle of the hair float in the water.

On returning home the child's mother is made to sit at the veranda with the baby. The midwife unwound the other string from the arrow, soaked in turmeric oil and ties around the child's waist as loin string. She mixes some rice powder with water and let it trickle into the left hand palm of the child's mother who rubbed it on her forehead and sips a little. Then the midwife takes the baby on the *parkom* (bedstead) where the child was born. The midwife sprinkles *adwa caole* flour mixture with water on four legs of the bedstead and also on the child. Then she sprinkles the *adwa caole* flour water mixture to child's mother and the assembled people. Once it is over, the midwife takes out the baby to the courtyard and announces the name of the child. Giving the name is very important to the Santal community because it formally admits the child into his/her father's clan and sub-clan thus protecting the child by the father's Bonga. In this way the father removes all the traces of illegitimacy, if any,

by recognizing the child as his own. Thus the child is considered to be a Santali.

Traditional systems are there to assign the name of a child. The first born child is named after the paternal grandfather, the second after maternal grandfather, third paternal grandfather's eldest brother and fourth maternal grandfather's eldest brother and so on. Daughters receive the names of equivalent female relatives in the same order. In the case of the father being a *ghar jawae* and *ghardi jawae*, names of the maternal side come first. In the case of twins the names are normally borrowed from Hindu mythology. E.g. If both the child are male they are named as Ram and Lokhon. If both the child are girls, they would be named as Chita and Khapra and if one child is boy and the other is girl, they would be named as Ram and Chita etc.

The Santal do have two names, one *cetan nutun* (outer name) and the other *bhitri nutum* (inner name). The inner name corresponds to the relative after whom the child is named and normally the child is not called by that name. The *cetan nutun* is a kind of nick name which is replaceable.

The ceremony is concluded with the drinking of gruel made of rice boiled in water with Nim leaves. That is why the Janam Chatiar is sometime called as *Nim dak'mandi* ceremony. The household offers some some rice gruel to Maran Buru and ancestors' spirit invoking them to give the baby long and progressive future life. After taking *Nim dak'mandi* the villagers as well as the relatives return to their home.

When a child is born to a Santal girl out of a wedlock, the girl's household is temporarily outcasted (*pante beggar*) till arranging a father for the child. This is done in two ways. First, if a person is proved to be the genitor whether he accepts the paternity or not, he either has to marry the girl or pay for a husband. Second, if the village cannot prove who the real father is then a suitable father is arranged. In both the cases *Nim dak'mandi* ceremony removes the traces of illegitimacy and the child takes the Bongas of his father.

DEATH RITUALS

The Santals believe that when a person dies, his social personality is not annihilated but rather transformed. Some of the expressions used to denote the death of a person indicate that the soul, after leaving the body, becomes a *bonga* (spirit) joining the abode of its deceased ancestors. Thus they have the expression: *nitok' doe hapramena*, meaning 'he has become ancestor'. The belief in the soul of a person becoming *bonga* and joining the abode of his ancestors is explicitly evident in all the rituals and ceremonies connected with death. The Santals' notion of death may be summed up by the following passage of W. G. Archer (1974):

"Death is a victory for all those anti-Santal forces which are represented by hostile *bongas*. It is as if the dead Santal has betrayed his trust, has failed in his main duty-to go on living. To die is therefore to pollute and for the moment the whole village is bereft of its tribal guardians and deprived of ghostly care. At the same time death subjects a man to violent unnatural change. He remains a Santal. He is still a member of his family but until he has safely reached the country of the dead, he is a man with a grievance. He can no longer do the things which Santals value most for he is abruptly deprived of sex and the company of his children. He is 'out of position'. He no longer 'belongs' and only the most careful conduct by his family can ensure his due demission. He is now much more a *bonga* than a man - a ghostly force invisible but intimately real. The danger which killed him still infects his person and until the funerary process is over, he must remain a source of menace to all the members of the family. When he has achieved the final status of ancestor, he has still a *bonga* nature and can

on no account be ignored. He is not as obvious as living Santals but he is something to be reckoned with, a power with whom it is even more necessary to be on good terms that when he worked and went about the village”⁽⁵⁾

The Santals do not recognize the possibilities of natural death. They opine that the death is never due to accident but it is caused due to enmity of certain *bongas*, impersonal powers and withcrafts. They believe that an individual has to fight throughout his life against malignant agencies that have put an end to his life. They also believe that on the death of an individual his social personality is not destroyed but transformed. A Santal become a hapram bonga only when all the funerary rites have been performed in respect of the deceased. Full rites are not performed in case of an unnatural death of a person or in the case of a woman dying in pregnancy or child birth. They believe that their ghost souls hover around the world as *bhuts* and curins.

The Santals believe that their future life is decided by the deeds performed in his earthly life. A good man will be rewarded while a bad man will be punished by *Jom Raja* along with the *Hudur Raja* who governs the nether world. It is believed if a man, while living in this world, called *naopuri* has treated others unjustly, after death, in the place called *hanapuri*, he is made to carry rotten meat on his head, fight with huge worms or sit emerged in excrement. Same fate will happen to those defying the tribal code of morality and also those who fail to show the traditional tribal mark of *sika* and *khoda* in their body. On the other hand a person who leads an honest life in this world will be rewarded in *hanapuri*.

On death of a person his house and his village becomes polluted. The village *bongas* lift their protection and the household is also deprived of their *Orak bonga*. No marriage, festival, or public worship can take place in the village till the funerary rites have been performed. Besides these, as long as the funerary rites are not

performed, the soul of the departed person will remain as manace to the living members of the family. Hence on death of a person in the village, family members and village community co-operate in performing the funerary rites.

On death occurring in the village the *Godet* inform all the villagers starting with the *Manjhi*. The relatives of the deceased persons who live in a reasonable distance are also informed. They all gather in the house of the deceased. The body is then prepared for cremation or burial.

The body is anointed with oil and turmeric, dressed in new clothes and laid in a *parkom* brought out to the courtyard. In case of a woman whose husband is still alive vermilion is put on her forehead by a female relative. A piece of cloth containing some money, a brass plate, drinking vessel and other gifts donated by relatives as token of mourning is placed on the bedstead. The cot on which the deadbody is placed is carried thereafter by four relatives or friends on their shoulders to the junction of roads at the end of the village street; here the *parkom* is downed for a while and all the women of the house and of the village anoint the body with oil and turmeric, and they put a sindur mark on his/her forehead and the roasted cotton seeds and paddy they drop down in small heaps at the four bedstead legs. Thereupon an *ojha* exorcizes the dead one with a fowl waving round over him. From this junction, no woman is allowed to accompany the dead body. And the man folk carry the dead one on their shoulder to the burial place.

On reaching the outskirts of the village, the cremation pyre is prepared by the villagers in North-South direction fixing four poles in the ground. Offered materials on the cot are removed and auctioned to be purchased by the villagers. But in case of a death by T.B, Small Pox or Leprosy, the offered materials are not auctioned and therefore these are buried. The nails of both hands and feet and forehead hair are cut and enveloped in a new small piece of cloth which is called *Jan baha*. The dead body is taken around the cremation pyre three times

anti-clockwise direction and then put in the pyre keeping the head towards south. In the head side west pole a fowl is tied. The chief mourner then puts burning fire with the help of a *nol* stick in the mouth of the deceased three times and then the dead body is burnt into ashes.

BURIAL

On reaching the outskirts of the village a grave is dug in the North- South direction deep into the ground by the villagers. The dead body on the *parkom* is taken around the grave three times in anti-clockwise direction. The nails of both hands and feet and forehead hair are cut and enveloped in a new small piece of cloth which is called Jan Baha. The chief mourner then put fire three times into the mouth of the deceased. A cloth is laid into the grave and the dead body is lowered in the grave with its head towards the South. The *parkom* is broken. The chief mourner followed by others throws water into the grave till filled up and a mound is then raised on the grave. An earthen ware pot filled with water and a winnowing fan containing some paddy is placed beside the grave after purifying by sprinkling of water mixed with cowdung.

In either case the mourners go for purifying bath after which they anoint themselves with oil mixed with turmeric. The chief mourner has to save his head completely.

As per community rule the eldest son is the chief mourner in case the deceased being a man. If the deceased does not have any male children then the right of placing the burning ember into the mouth of the corpse is given either to father, brother or a senior kinsman on the male side. In case of a woman, it is the husband who carries out the rituals. If she is a widow her eldest son does the ritual.

The funerary ceremony known as *Jan Baha Um* or 'oil washing' which is also known as *Umul ader* or 'bringing in the shadow' is most important and is performed on the fifth day after the death. It is believed that the death body of the person's soul will remain in the clutches of hostile agencies

which is a manace to the household and the village till this ceremony is performed. Through this ceremony the villagers are guarded against any dangers while the soul of the deceased is get released from the clutches of evil agencies who caused his death.

It is believed that by *Tel Nahan* ceremony performance the village bongas become clean, the village is purified and festival and other worship can take place once again. The deceased's immediate family members still remain 'in the shadow' but other relatives are free to perform wedding and other sacrifices.

For *Jan Baha um* ceremony the chief mourner after collecting a handful of earth from the grave mixing with *Jan baha* burnt it and put into a leaf cup. On returning with the villagers to the deceased's house *Jan baha* is purified by sprinkling of turmeric water by the women gathered there. The chief mourner carrying the *Jan baha* followed by the relatives and villagers go to bath. There the chief mourner is completely get shaved and few others get shaved their beards only and have bath and oiled. The chief mourner in presence of all offers oil cakes and *sal* twigs to *Maran Buru*, *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Budhi* and to the departed soul. He implores *Maran Buru* to lodge the soul of the deceased in the shadow of the house while he invokes the departed soul to accept his new temporary abode.

Every one then return to the deceased house for *Umul ader* ceremony. Two persons are possessed; one by *Maran Buru* and second by the spirit of the deceased. After taking rice beer and water, one of the relatives ask the spirit of the dead person the cause of his death. Once the villagers are satisfied with the replies, the impersonate person return to normal. The sacrificial animals are offered to the soul of the deceased by blowing on the back of the head and the flesh after cooking with rice is fed to the assembled. Rice beer is also given. The head's flesh of the slain animal is kept reserved for the deceased's family.

It is believed that the departed soul

has been released from the clutches of the underworld through the *Tel Nahan* ceremony and is on the way to his final abode. Through a ceremony called *Bhandan* the deceased's relative bid their final farewell to the dead. By performing the *Bhandan* the deceased's immediate family member once again is free to offer sacrifice to their Bongas, attend festivals and celebrate marriages.

BHANDAN

On the Bhandan day the deceased's relatives and villagers once again gather at the deceased's house. The chief mourner's head is once again completely shaved while the beards of the villagers present are also shaved and all of them go for purificatory bath. On their return, they are fed with *taben khajari* and rice beer. Three persons are possessed again by the spirit of the deceased, the founder of the village and Maran Buru respectively. The dead man is made to identify himself. The three spirits are asked whether they are satisfied with the ceremony performed already in honour of the deceased. On assenting, the three men emerge from their roles.

A goat, given by the chief mourner, is made to eat rice of the *khond* prepared. He invokes the dead man's spirit to protect his relatives and to keep away any misfortune. The animal is slain by heating on the back of the head by the Jogmanjhi with the help of the blunt end of an axe. The side on which the animal falls is retained by the deceased family while the other side is used by the

villagers. Rice beer libation is also offered to the deceased. The fowls are offered to the ancestors mentioning each one of them by name followed by rice beer libation. After the beer libation the assembled drink rice beer.

Thereafter the sacrificial offerings brought by the relatives are offered mentioning the giver's name. The lower side of the slain animals's flesh is retained by the deceased family and his relatives while the upper side of the flesh is divided into two parts, one part to be cooked while the second part is divided among the villagers who take their share to their homes. Before the food is served the chief mourner offers some food to the departed soul invoking to accept it and to purify the household completely. The whole night is spent feasting, dancing and singing.

Thus the funerary ceremony comes to an end. The dead man's family is now free to resume relation with the world of human beings and of spirits.

If an infant die before the performance of *Janam Chatiar* or *Caco Chatiar*, he or she is not cremated but buried. The last rite called *bhandan* is also not performed. In case of a woman died of pregnancy, the foetus is cut out and buried separately. The woman is not cremated but buried with the soles of the feet being pinned with iron nails. In case of an accidental death the dead body is not cremated but buried and *bhandan* ceremony is performed.

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1. C.f... O' Dea, Thomast., 1969, *The Sociology of religion*, Prentice- Hall of India Pvt. LTD, New Delhi, P.40
2. Cf. W. G. ARCHER, *Tribal Law and Justice ...* ,p.363
3. *Janam Chatiar* or Birth ceremony has a very critical importance because it bestows social parentage and clan status on the new-born child. It also brings the child into relation with a particular set of family spirits and deities
4. According to an immemorial custom, the first son is named after the paternal grandfather and the first daughter after the grandmother. The second child takes the

name of the maternal parents. Every child bears two names: *bhitri n'utum* (inner name) which is never pronounced in the family and *cetan n'utum* (outer name). The outer name is given to prevent *bongas* (evil spirits) from knowing the inner name due to the belief that such knowledge would tempt evil spirits to harm the child.

5. W. G. ARCHER, *The Hill of Flutes* ..., pp. 328-329.

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NANKAR UPRISING OF SURMA-BARAK VALLEY FROM 1914 – 64

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ABSTRACT

The Nankar uprising of Sylhet District now in Bangladesh and present Karimganj District of India was a purely subaltern uprising, a series of which took place at different places of pre portioned Sylhet of erstwhile Surmavalley. At the time of British rule the permanent settlement was extended over the District, but in a peculiar form.

One features of the Zamindary or Mirashdary system of Sylhet was that the Mirashdars or land holders possessed Nankar Proza (tenants). They cultivated the land and enjoyed the product of land without paying any revenue to the landlords. But they had to render free services in houses or agricultural fields of Mirashdars or Zamindars, whatever might be case. The term Nankar is derived from Persian words Nan and kar. The Nan means Bread and Kar means service. So the term Nankar means earning of bread in exchange of service. Actually the Nankar Proza or subject was such a wretched person who has no land of his own for cultivation and even constructing his home and hearth. Again, the person was a saleable commodity along with landed property.

The revenue system which prevalent in medieval sylhet gave the shape of Nankar system which continued to British period with modification. Socio- economic condition of the Nankar was beggar's description. However, this group of mankind once mustered courage to rise against their Masters which developed the Nankar uprising in different places of present Surma – Barak Valley and Sylhet division of Bangladesh.

The present Sylhet division of Bangladesh and Karimganj District of India formed the District of Sylhet, during the British period. This District was bounded on the North by the District of Khasi and Jaintia Hills (present Meghalaya); on the East by the Jaintia Hills, for a short distance and by Cachar and Hailakandi Districts as far as Lusai Hills (Mizoram); on the South by the semi independent state of Hill Tipperah (present Tripura state); on the West by the District of Maimansing (Bangladesh). The

Boundary of this District was for the first time fixed by Todar Mall's famous assessment at the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar, and during the colonial period, it again came under assessment by the Notification of British government, dated 18th June 1874.

Within this boundary, there was a peculiar system connected with Zamindary system that the Mirashdars and the land holders would possess Nankar subjects, whose conditions were not better than

bonded laborers. The Nankars cultivated the land and enjoyed the product of land without paying any revenue to the Zamindars or Mirashdars. But they had to render free services in the house of Zamindars or Mirashdars, whatever might be the case. The term Nankar is derived from Persian words *Nan* and *Kar*. *Nan* means bread and *Kar* means service. Actually the Nankar *proza* (Tenant) was such a wretched person who had no land of his own for cultivation and for constructing his home and hearth. Again, the person was a saleable commodity along with landed property. So the Nankar *Proza* (Tenant) may be called landless labourers and partial bonded labourers, because they had to render free services in the houses of Zamindars or Mirashdars or their family members.

The early history of Surma valley (present Sylhet Division of Bangladesh and Karimganj District of India) is hazy and not clear, due to absence of available source materials and evidence. Only a broad outline with major gaps can be attempted. The traces of the Nankar system are also found in the early ages, which are evident from the land grants issued by different ancient rulers of Sylhet. R.S. Sharma, on the basis of *Purana* comments that villages with agricultural peasants (*khetaka*) should be transferred to the Brahmanas. It also advises that Temples and Mathas should be provided with lands and slaves and given facilities for dance and music, which would imply the gift of dancers and musicians. From the *Nidanpur* Copper inscription issued by king Vaskarbarmana it is learned that the region had been within Kamrup kingdom for about a hundred years since sixth century A.D. The Aryanisation of the region under the leadership of the pioneer immigrant Brahmanas with plough based agriculture as economic basis had its beginning during this period. From the *Kalapur* Copper plate issued by Samatata king on the eastern Bengal incorporated the entire region within his Banga kingdom. During this period, the Chandrapura Matha or Monastery situated at Panchakanda

became a very reputed centre for learning. From two *Bhatara* inscription of Govindakeshaba Deva and Ishand Devas it has founded 375 *hales* of land grant given to the Brahmanas in Sylhet region for the purpose of serving the Lord Shiva. The Lord Shiva was also endowed with many attendances such as Bellmetal workers, Washermen, Baotmen etc. In the early days, most of the lands of Sylhet were waste lands and Irfan Habib in his work “Agrarian System of Mughal India” mentioned that Sylhet was a dense forest area in early days.

Most of the land grants given to the Brahmanas in Sylhet were waste lands and widely granted mainly for two reasons:-

Firstly, to serve the Temples and Mathas by the society and Brahmanas were in the top of the social pyramid. The Brahmanas were assisted by other classes of the society such as Washer men, Cobbler, Boatmen, Barber etc. In return of services, other classes of the society of Sylhet received lands from Brahmanas for their livelihood by cultivating the allotted land. Secondly, to make the waste lands fruitful for agriculture.

So the basic features of the Nankar System had been found in the early land grants of Sylhet. In the Sultanate period the prevalent land grant was continuing but different kinds of tax were imposed on the people of lower section of Sylhet and the Mughals kept the said system with modification. As the Mughal administration was highly centralized and during the reign of Akbar entire Sylhet came under a Sarkar. The Sylhet was ruled by Amil, locally called Fouzder. In the Mughal period, in spite of giving salary to the royal employees, land grants were often made to them and the allotted land was called Nan Land.

The continuation of the early land grants and land tenure system of the Mughal times, the Nankar system was a particularly debilitating and anachronistic one, which the British rule supported for their own interest. The practice of having wage less labours in exchange of food formed a favorable climate in Sylhet district of Surma valley where

landlessness and poverty stricken people were widespread, and where small or medium size landlords called Mirishdars out-numbered Zamindars.

According to the permanent settlement 1793, in Sylhet district the Choudhuries were the prime land holders but there had been small land holders like Tapadars and Talukdars. In the social system, the Britishers had adopted a peculiar policy i.e. the landholders who paid revenue more than (pancha-satta) Rupees five hundred to the British Govt. they were termed as Zamindars. The land holders who paid revenue more than Rupees fifty only and less than Rupees five hundred were called Mirishdars and those landholders who paid less than Rupees fifty they were termed as Tapaders and Talukdars.

Under the Mughal rule the Mughal official's maintained local army who were assisted by the royal army as and when called by the Mughal Emperor. But In Sylhet, under the permanent settlement system, the land holders possessed Nankar Proza (subject). They cultivated the land and enjoyed the product of land without paying any tax. But they had to render free services in the houses of land holders and this system was locally called *HOD-BAGARI*. In Sylhet, the Nankar Tenants not only provided free services in the houses of land holders but also they protected the entire area of land lords from internal and external forces.

In the slave system, the Master is responsible for providing cloth, food, houses to his slave, but in Nankar system nothing was provided to Nankar except some cultivable land. The land holders provided only a small piece of rent free land from his Khas tract locally called *KHANA-BARI* and in return the Nankar had to surrender his entire life and freedom to the hands of land holders. On failure or denial of the orders of Mirashdars the Nankar tenants were inflicted with vigorous physical punishment. So the condition of the Nankar tenants was more deplorable than the house hold servants.

However, the Nankar tenents were classified according to their occupation as fallows:-

- i) Kiran : The word comes from Kissan (Peasant) and their occupation was to work in the agricultural fields of self (allotted land by land lord landlord) and landholders. They were also providing free-services at the houses of landholders and most of the Latieales (gaurds) were selected from Kiran community.
- ii) Bhandari : This section of people were working as cook at the houses of land holders.
- iii) Namasudra : They were fishing in the lakes of landholders and making bamboo articles and also involved in cultivating.
- iv) Patni : Their main occupation was Boating and fishing.
- v) Maimal : Fisherman and their occupation was to keep fish in the khas land or bil (lake) of the landholders and they had to give major portion of fish to the landholders.
- vi) Malaker : Their work was to carry palanquin locally called Palki of landholders and their family members.
- vii) Napit or Hazam :- Napit belongs to Hindu barber community and Hazam represented the Muslim barber community. The duty of the both were cutting the hair, nail etc of the land holders and their family members.
- viii) Duli or Bajani :- Duli means Hindu musician and Bajani means muslim musician. The works of the both were to

presenting entertainment through their musical instrument at the time of functions of the house of land holders.

- ix) Dhupa : Dhupa means laundrymen. Their work was to wash the cloths of land holders and their family members.
- x) Mutchi : Muchi means cobbler and their main occupation was making shoes. They had to make the shoes of land holders and their family members.
- xi) Khasai : They slaughtered the animals specially in the time of ceremonial functions of the houses of land holders or other places.
- xii) Patikar : These people were making mats and by sailing the mats they earned their living and presented mats to the landholders from time to time.

The Nankar uprising of Sylhet District now in Bangladesh and present Karimganj District of India was a purely subaltern uprising, a series of which took place at different places of pre portioned Sylhet of erstwhile Surmavalley. However, this group of mankind once mustered courage to rise against their Masters which developed the Nankar uprising in different places of present Surma – Barak Valley. With the out break of the First World War (1914) the Nankar uprising was started. During this period many Nankar uprisings against Zamindars and Mirashdars took place. But all these were suppressed by the Zamindars and Mirashdars, as the Nankars were not organized and not led by any able person. However, the Churkhai Nankar uprising 1922, (now in Bangladesh), the Kulahura Nankar uprising 1931, (now in

Bangladesh), left great impact on future Nankar uprising of Surma-Barak valley.

The second phase of Nankar uprising started in an organized way in 1937. From 1937 to 1946 number of Nankar uprisings had taken place. Some uprisings were suppressed and some uprisings compelled the government to rethink about the pattern of land revenue system. The Badeshwer uprising of 1938, (now in Bangladesh), the Ronykholi uprising 1938-39, (now in Bangladesh), Nankar uprising of Lauta Bahadurpur 1945, (now in Bangladesh), the Batarashi uprising of 1946, (now in Karimganj district of Assam), the Mohakol uprising of 1946, (now in Karimganj district of Assam), and Kuna-Saleshwar uprising of 1946, (now in Bangladesh), brought a great inspiration among the Nankar tenants of Surma-Barak valley.

The third phase was begun with the independence of India and emerged with two Nations i.e India and Pakistan. The Sylhet District of Surma valley was also divided in to two parts, Sylhet (Pakistan) and Karimganj (India). Though the partition took place but the Nankar revolt was continuing in both sides. During the third phase the Nankar uprising continued along with the Peasants movement of the district of Sylhet and Karimganj sub-division of Cachar district. In this period the Nankar uprising reached in its pick. In 1949, the Uluree (Saneswar) movement took place and six Nankar tenants had been killed in police firing and the famous daroga, Korom Ali who had earned notoriously of murdering immigrant Muslims in Nowagaon, Assam was given the responsibility of Saneswar police post for suppressing of the on going Nankar Movement.. Able Peasant leaders like Ajoy Bhattacharjee, Ismail Ali, Aparna Paul Choudhury, and Shusma Dey along with others volunteered to lead the uprising. As a result the Nankar uprising along with the Peasant movement turned in to a mass movement. The Pakistan Government arrested the Nankar leaders like Mr. Ajoy Bhattacharjee, Sishir Bhattacharjee, Ismail

Ali and Sudhanya and put them in to jail for long time.

On 18th August 1949, under the leadership of Aparna Paul Choudhury, Ashita Paul Choudhury and Susma Dey a meeting was held and about thousands of peasants gathered to protest against police atrocities and demanded release of the leaders of Nankar Movement from jail but the Pakistani Government suppressed the move by arresting the said leaders and the judge of the Sylhet court awarded them six month imprisonment. In 1950, the Govt. of the then East Pakistan and in 1951, the govt. of Assam passed an Act. In which the peasants or Royats were given "Joth right" (occupancy right) over land they cultivated but the Nankar tradition was continuing in both sides.

In 1956 the Nankar tenants of Banugash (Sylhet) rose against their Zamindar who tried to suppress the revolt by using police force but the move killed a police officer on the spot. Finally the

government could realize that the problems of the Nankar peasants and in 1956 the govt. abolished the total Mirishdari or Zamindary system in Bangladesh. In 1958-59 the Nankar tenants of Nalua, Bagon and Medol village of Karimganj sub-division (India) rose against the traditional Nankar system with the help of Kishan Sabha. The landlords of said area tried to suppress the move by filing theft case against the Nankar leaders but the movement could not be stopped. Ultimately by the Act. of 1961, 1962, 1963 and 1964 the government of Assam abolished the Mirishdari or Zamindary system in (Karimganj) Assam.

However, the governments of both side abolished the total Mirishdari or Zamindary system and with the abolition of this system, the Nankar system disappeared from Sylhet district of Bangladesh and Karimganj district of India. But there is still tension among ex-Mirishdars. Ex-tenants and other social classes in both sides i.e. India and Bangladesh.

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Entrepreneurship in Small Tea Plantation: A case of Assam

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Abstract

The tea industry of Assam is more than 180 years old by now. The cultivation of tea on small holding is comparatively a recent development. This Small tea cultivation is an integral component of large scale tea industry of the entire state by producing nearly 25 per cent of total tea production of the state. It provides ample avenues for self employment of educated unemployed youth besides engaging family members. The high profitability coupled with the prospect of getting steady income with minimum effort have attracted a large number of educational youth both rural urban. In many empirical researches, it has been observed that small scale tea cultivation was widely recognized as an integral part of economic development of many countries and region of the world.

There is a large scope for entrepreneurial involvement as it provides employment, generates income, wealth and act as a key force for economic growth of a region. It has also been found that there are 68,465 Small Tea Growers in Assam contributing nearly 5 lakh families associated with small tea plantation. It has the potentiality of the transform of socio-economic condition of rural Assam. The cultivation of tea on small holding is the green revolution of Assam which empowering many people for the first time and rejuvenating the state's economy. These private initiatives taken up by small tea growers may cultivate the spirit of entrepreneurship and would strengthen the backbone of the rural economy of Assam.

Present paper will try to explore the opportunity of tea entrepreneurship and its impact on the rural economy of the state.

Key Words: Entrepreneurship, Small Tea cultivation, Small Tea Growers, Socio-economic development.

INTRODUCTION:

The typical plantation economies an outcome of Colonial era could be witnessed in different sectors and across the globe. In Brazil and Malaysia it was *rubber*, in West Indies it was *sugar* and in India it is *tea*. The

tea industry of India is one of the oldest and perhaps the most efficiently organized agricultural enterprises in the country. The credit for the growth of tea industry goes to the British entrepreneurs who invested large capital during the initial days of plantation. After the Yandabo Treaty (1826), British had

acquired full control over the entire territory of Assam; which has given incentives to the British traders to expand their area under tea plantation by acquiring Government land at a very favourable term. After losing legal monopoly of the tea trade between China and Britain (1833), the East India Company began to look for other sources of supply in the newly conquered regions. Assam was selected as the most accepted region for tea cultivation because in the early 19th century tea was discovered growing wild at many places of Brahmaputra valley. The first experimental tea cultivation in Assam was started in 1836. In 1839, and first made tea was sent to London Auction and received a very positive feedback. This important development was the starting point of the tea industry of Assam.

In tea plantation, the regulations enacted by the then colonial rulers were extremely favourable to the European entrepreneurs. Due to lack of capital and knowledge over tea cultivation, local entrepreneurs have taken little initiatives in tea cultivation during the initial days. Even after the independence, the situation has not change much as British companies were taken over by the private parties/companies who belong to main land of India. Therefore it is rightly said that “the plantation sector in Assam thieved on alien interest, employed capital, labours from outside the region and catered to the needs of external market” (Nath,1997).

From the modest beginning, Tea Industry of India at present has a total business of Rs.19000 crore and expected to reach Rs 33000 crore by the year 2015 (estimated by

Table 1: Tea Industry in India at a glance (2011)

	Number of gardens	Area under production (in hectare)	Total production (million k.g)	Employment
Small Tea Garden	157504	1.62 lakh	260 mkg	1 million
Big Estates	1686	4.18 lakh	728 mkg	2 million

Source: Tea Board of India

ASSOCHAM, 2011). It is the second largest producer in the world (988.32 mkg) after China and fourth in world export. Tea (*chai*) has become a common beverage for the country which consumes around 90 per cent of her total production. It is one of the oldest industries and among the largest employers in organised sector. Over 12 lakh permanent and almost same numbers of casual and seasonal workers are employed by the industry (Gothoskar, 2012). The growth of this industry in India was responsible for the development of infrastructure and the regional economy of many backward regions like- Assam. Tea is produced mainly North and South India. Assam dominates the country’s tea map by producing more than half (51.48 per cent) of total tea production.

In recent year, tea industry of India has witnessed many structural changes, which includes emergence of tea cultivation on small holding, rising competition in domestic market, introduction of Bought Leaf factories(BLFs), (Das,2009). Now, production of tea in India takes place in both large and small scale. Cultivation of tea on small holding of land is a new concept in India. According to Tea Board of India (TBI), Small Tea Growers (STGs) has been defined, as a person or group having plantation area up to 10.12 hectares .At present STGs are became a very important constituent of tea production as it produces nearly 24 per cent of the total tea production of the country and nearly 1.58 lakh small cultivators are directly engaged in tea cultivation.

SMALL TEA PLANTATION:

Traditionally, tea is best known as plantation crop. Tea plantation is often called tea estates/gardens. Plantation comprises a large area, producing a single agricultural product as a commercial venture. This model (plantation) was introduced in Indian tea industry during the colonial period by the British planters. Until 1950's, it was thought to be the only way to produce tea on commercial basis where production to sale was controlled by the tea planters themselves. Tea cultivation on small holding belongs to a farm or production unit that allocates its labour, land or other resources for subsistence or semi subsistence income from it. Thus, a small grower is the owner and worker as well (Ahammed, 2007). The growers produce only green leaves; manufacturing and distribution parts are managed by different persons or groups. Cultivation of tea on a small holding is a usual practice in many major tea producing countries like- China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, etc.

The concept of small tea cultivation came into existence when Kenya in 1950's, had decided to produce tea for export. The Kenyan successful experience had created a model of small tea growers in developing and underdeveloped countries. Since then, there has been a steady shift in tea cultivation from big plantation to small holdings (CDPA, 2008). Today, in most of the tea producing countries, tea cultivation on small holding significantly contributes to

the country's total tea production along with the large estates. Inspired by the contribution of STGs in leading tea producing countries, many developing countries like Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, etc. are also utilising their unexplored vacant lands in the vicinity of traditional tea growing areas for plantation of tea on small holding.

Small Tea Growers (STGs) In India:

Tea cultivation on small holding is a recent development in Indian tea sector. This concept was initiated in 1930's, beyond the traditional tracts of cultivation in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu (Chai Time, 2007). It was only late 1980's or early 1990's, the cultivation spread to the other tea producing states of India like - Assam and West Bengal. After independence, during the successive five year plans the TBI has spent all its resources in trying to mobilise big tea estates/plantations to increase production or expand area under tea. Most of its efforts borne little result (Bhowmik, 1991). Even with the Government investment through TBI and other agencies, there has been a marginal increase in production. From the 8th Five year plan (1992-1997) TBI has laid down some emphasis on the promotion of STGs. It has decided on this scheme because all other attempts to increase area under tea have failed. Therefore, it is proposed to encourage landless labourers and unemployed youths to take up tea cultivation in the tea growing areas of India.

Table 2: Distribution of Small Tea Growers in India

<i>State</i>	<i>Number of STGs (2008)</i>	<i>Registered with TBI (2010)</i>	<i>Area in Hact (2005)</i>
Assam	64597	4561	41,249
West Bengal	9990	1032	9500
others	9354	8865	7355
Total North India	83941	14458	58104
Tamil Nadu	68147	10404	43,157
Kerala	5402	7412	4,810
Karnataka	14	14	83

Total South India	73563	17830	48050
Total India	157504	32288	106,154

Source: Source: Tea Board, 2010 and All Assam Small Tea Growers Association

Growth of STGs in Assam:

The tea industry of Assam is more than 180 years old, but cultivation of tea in small scale is a new development. During the initial days, tea cultivation was quite colonial in nature without the involvement of native people. Few initiatives were taken by the end of 19th century by the local entrepreneurs. This was limited within the influential classes and not permissible to common people (Gogoi, 2011). The local people never got prime land for tea cultivation (Deka, 2008). After positive feedback of London Auction (1839), the Government encouraged British entrepreneurs to invest in tea cultivation. The investors were given land on easy terms and the policy of Colonial rulers was to favour their own people. Labourers also hired from outside the state like- Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and other parts of the country. There was a dearth of indigenous labour and capital and the commodity market did not evolve within the region (Nath, 1997). Besides, tea cultivation was a new concept for the local people; they might have lack of knowledge and interest to take tea cultivation. Having their own land, they did not want to work as a tea labourer in the gardens. This stigma remained with local people more than 150 years. The mistake they have committed during the initial days of tea cultivation deprived the whole indigenous community from the industry and became the silent observers of the growth and development of tea industry of Assam.

After independence, certain restrictions were imposed on cultivation of tea to keep control on quantity and quality of tea produce in India. Under Plantation and Labour Act (PLA) 1951, restrictions were imposed on tenure system, land holding, land transfer, minimum wage, etc. and PLA-1953, which necessitates a prior approval from Tea Board

of India for tea cultivation. Tea Board of India is responsible to regulate output, quality and marketing of tea. It gives approval on cultivation of tea on virgin soil, subject to fulfillment of certain conditions such as proof of ownership of land and size of the holding on which plantation of tea is proposed, proof of suitability of soil for cultivation of tea, proof of financial soundness etc. All these restrictions stood as hurdles to the growth of tea cultivation on small holding.

Traditionally agriculture sector of Assam was underdeveloped and subsistence in nature due to lack of irrigation and investment, small holding, difficult terrain, insufficient Government intervention. It compelled the agriculturists to look for alternative livelihood. Tea cultivation on small holding was one of the alternatives for the agriculturists to sustain their livelihood in the long run as cultivation of tea provides works and income throughout the year. This can be termed as the beginning of an Indian entrepreneurship in the tea sector (Deka, 2008). In the present context, in India there are limited scopes for the growth of big tea gardens as after independence a lot of changes have taken place in the Government legislations to improve the socio-economic framework of the country. So, the alternative for the growth of tea industry in India is left only setting up of small tea gardens (Baruah, 2008). Finally, the Government of India as well as Assam Government allowed the local people to open small tea gardens by abolishing all the barriers relating to the growth of this sector (Saikia, 2008).

The first effort to popularise tea cultivation in small holding in Assam was made in 1978 by Late Soneswar Bora (the then Agriculture Minister of Assam)¹. His intention was to utilise available fallow land and attract

young generation to agriculture sector and thereby to solve unemployment problem (Baruah, 2011). The abundance of uplands, suitable climate, availability of agro-technology services, skilled surplus labours from nearby big tea estates, ready market to sell the green leaves in the estates factories, the advantage of plantation crop over the seasonal agricultural crops were the factors that encouraged the small and marginal farmers who were engaged in other economic activities to take up tea plantation (Das, 2010). The initial success was

phenomenal. At present there are 70000² (approx) STGs in Assam with a land coverage of 1, 18,000 acre; contributing nearly 30 per cent of the total tea production of the state. On the other hand, the acreage under big tea estates declined from 4,09,684 hectares to 4, 01,512 hectares (1.99 per cent) during 1991-2006. According to a survey conducted by the Government of Assam, the major concentration of STGs (94 per cent) is found in Upper Assam districts (*Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivsagar, Golaghat and Jorhat*).

Table 3: Growth of STGs in Assam

Year	No of Growers	Area (in hectare)
1978	16	60.836
1983	279	1154.871
1988	875	3359.637
1993	4594	14051.838
1998	16759	41423.303
2003	45444	89334.217
2008	67463	118058.304
2011*	68465	NA

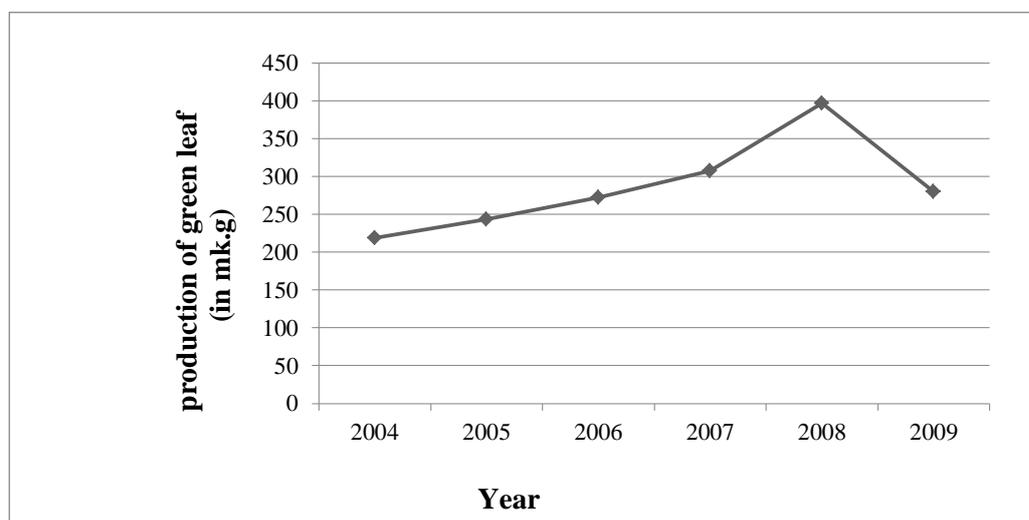
Source: E- directory of Small Tea Growers Department of Ministry of Commerce Govt. of Assam

*Small Tea Growers Data Bank, Published by Govt. Of Assam based on the survey on 14 districts of Upper Assam.

From the table: 3, it is observed that the growth rate of STGs over the years is phenomenal. It has grown from mere 16 small tea gardens in the year 1978, increased to 68,465 in 2011. Figure: 2, shows the trend

of green leaf production (mkg) from the year 2004-2009. In the year 2004 production of green leaf was 218.41mkg and it rose to 396.574 mkg in the year 2009.

Fig 1: Growth of green leaf production by STGs (in mill k.g)



Source: Economic survey, Assam and All Assam Small Tea Growers Association

ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SMALL TEA CULTIVATION:

The economic importance of small business in a developing country like India is much more than innovative and invention; they have been a vital source of absorbing unaccountable no of person at place in semi rural areas (Maurya, 2001). It requires low capital and low level of barriers to entry. In India, besides unemployment the economy is facing many other problems like poverty, illiteracy, poor health, etc. To overcome some of the basic unsolved problems like unemployment and income generation, country may encourage entrepreneurship through small business. They are characterized by the relatively labour intensive choice of production, which contribute to the society by enhancing the employment capabilities of skilled and unskilled, educated and uneducated labour force which may otherwise remained unutilized. The opportunity to enter into this business venture may cultivate the spirit of entrepreneurship which will empower the economic growth of the society as well as the economy.

Entrepreneur is an economic agent who plays an important role in the economic development of country. It is very old concept according to which, anyone who runs business is called an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is basically concerned with creating wealth through production of goods and services, which in turn helps in the growth of per capita income of a country. It speeds up the process of activating factors of production leading to a higher rate of economic growth, dispersal of economic activities and development of backward regions. Entrepreneur looks for innovative ideas and puts them into effect for economic development. Therefore entrepreneurship occupies a crucial part of economic development by triggering the economic activities for the development of a region. The relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development is very simple

i.e. entrepreneurship creates new business; new businesses on the other hand create new jobs, intensify competition and may increase productivity. As a result, entrepreneurship will lead economic growth (Acs, 2006). Both empirically and theoretically it has been proved that entrepreneurs are the key force for the economic growth of a country (Karlsson, Friis, Paulson, 2004). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) also supports this view and observed that there is no country in the world with higher level of entrepreneurship and low level of economic growth (UNCTAD, 2004).

In order to know how entrepreneurship is good for development, it is necessary to aware the types of entrepreneurial activity in a region or a country is actually involved. According to GEM, Entrepreneurship may be divided into two:

- (a) Necessity based
- (b) Opportunity based

It is observed that in every country, there is some level of necessity and opportunity entrepreneurship. When a person becomes an entrepreneur because he has no better option is called necessity entrepreneurship. On the other hand, opportunity entrepreneurship is an active choice to start a new enterprise based on the perception that an unexploited or underexploited business opportunity exists. Opportunity entrepreneurship is one of the important factors for employment creation and acceleration of economic growth. It is possible that necessity entrepreneurship may not lead to economic development because being pushed into entrepreneurship (self employed) as all other option for work either absent or unsatisfactory can lead to underdevelopment. On the other hand opportunity entrepreneurship represents the voluntary nature of participation and therefore entrepreneurs expect their venture to produce more growth firms and provide more jobs (Acs, 2006).

Therefore, it can be said that entrepreneurship plays an important role in the economic growth and development of a nation. It is purposeful activity which includes initiation, promotion and distribution of wealth and services. An entrepreneur is a crucial factor in economic development and an integral part of socio-economic transformation. It is a risk bearing activity and challenging task, needs utmost devotion, total commitment with fullest involvement for his personal growth and prosperity (Baruah, 2009). Entrepreneurs undertake business activities, employ themselves in that business and open up employment avenues for the others. Therefore, it plays a fundamental role in a country like India. It is now widely accepted the fact that the active and enthusiastic entrepreneurs can explore the potential and available resources of country such as labour capital and technology. Entrepreneurship helps in the process of economic development through increase in income, mobilizing the available resources, creating wealth, generation of employment, etc.

Cultivation of tea on small holding can be one of the most convenient sectors for developing entrepreneurship culture among the rural people of Assam. Tea growing in any scale, either big or small is an enterprise since it encompasses all elements of production viz. land, labour, capital and organization (Taparia, 2003). Many studies (Mwaura and Muku, 2007; Amartunge and Shiratake, 2002), has highlighted the fact that small tea enterprises are playing a major role in reduction of poverty, generation of employment etc., more effectively than their large counterparts in many developing and under developed countries. In Assam, the cultivation of tea in small scale is an outcome of the entrepreneurial ability of a group of local youth in the latter part of 1970's (Goswami, 2006). Active participation of the indigenous people since its inception provides

sustainable livelihood opportunity to large number of rural population. It provides avenues for self employment to educated unemployed youths, generating additional sources of income to the farmers and engaging family members directly with this enterprise.

Assam has been experiencing a social revolution in the field of tea cultivation on small holding for the last 30 years. It is an active choice of the farmers because, Assam is one of the finest places of producing tea in the world. Tea, as a commercial cash crop, has an increasing demand in and outside the country. Natural factors like -soil, weather is highly favorable for tea cultivation in Assam. Infrastructural facilities like factories for tea processing, auction market for made tea, available land for tea cultivation, cheap labour in and around tea growing areas, technical and other necessary technical knowhow, incentives provided by the State for small tea cultivation are the biggest advantages available for the local entrepreneurs. These opportunities act as a big push- factor to many rural unemployed youths to take tea cultivation on small holdings.

Tea cultivation on small holding is a family run enterprise. Family members are actively involved in maintaining the garden; only seasonal labours on temporary basis are engaged in these gardens. Small tea gardens are not coming under the domain of PLA, 1951 which gives an advantage to the STGs and thereby reduces the cost of production³. Initial Investment for tea cultivation on small holding is very less as investment requires only for plantation. Crop failure in agricultural sector is a regular phenomenon in Assam due to lack of irrigation, flood, lack of technology in production, etc. But in tea cultivation, crop failure is limited very occasional pest attack and natural calamities (Banerjee, 2011).

Tea cultivators have used suitable areas which were either un-utilised or under-utilised. It is estimated that nearly 20 million

hectare of land in upper Assam has been brought under tea cultivation by the small growers in the last decade.

According to All Assam Small Tea Growers Association (AASTGA), at least five workers are employed in each small tea

garden. It is estimated that about 2.40 lakh people are directly employed in this sector out of which 1.45 lakh is ex-tea garden labour or excess number of workers from the nearby big tea estates, specifically women pluckers.

Table 4: Estimated Engagement of workers in Small tea sector

Category	No. of Workers
Engagement of family member	81792
Additional workers (extra of neighbouring tea estates)	145692
Engagement of sub staff categories	11520
Total direct employment	239004

Source: Statistical Hand Book Assam, 2006

Engagement of tea cultivation by the STGs also contribute additional income to the total income. The average income of the STGs is Rs.49,598.26⁴, which is much higher than the per capita income of the state (Rs. 27,197) at current price in 2009-10.

With the increase in the production of green leaf in the state, manufacturing facilities like Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs) has been set up to help processing the green leaf in the tea cluster. There are 220 BLFs in Assam with average employment ranges between 20-25 workers and producing nearly 29 per cent of the total made tea production of the state. Many new business opportunities and services like- supply of garden implements, transportation of green leaf and retailed outlets of agro chemical and manures, leaf agents, packaging, etc.

Additional output of tea coming from STGs will help to meet the national and international demand for tea and also support in maintaining exportable surplus which will help in earning foreign exchange for the country. Average production of green leaf at STGs is 3500 k.g per hectare; which is much higher than the average productivity of the big estates (i.e. 1690 kg per hectare). Price of green leaf has also an important motivator in taking up tea cultivation in Assam. In the last decade the price of one k.g green leaf was

sold in the range between Rs.8 to Rs.24 per k.g. It also gives positive attitude for utilising their available lands suitable for tea cultivation. Involvement of local youth in tea cultivation will create some role models in the rural area which will encourage the future growth of entrepreneurship in tea sector. Establishment of tea gardens in new areas will improve the local and regional environment. It will help to check soil erosion and destruction of natural vegetation since tea plantations would cover land.

MAJOR CONSTRAINTS:

Tea small holdings are never expected to assume the mode of dominant producers. They are seen only as a means for providing some additional earnings to the peasantry, and thus absorbing of rural surplus labours (Das, 2012). In Assam tea cultivation on small holding is still in nascent stage. There are some hindrances for the growth and developments of this sector which include – ownership of land, lack of finance, low price realisation of green leaf, unorganised nature of cultivation, etc. Most of the growers are cultivating tea on Government ceiling land without having formal ownership. The Land Act of Assam restricts the transfer of ownership right to the growers. This restricts the growers to qualify for registration under Tea Board, unable to take the advantages of various schemes of Government, financial intermediaries. Whatever the growth has

been taken place in small tea cultivation in Assam, the credit goes to the private initiatives of individual growers. Since, STGs do not possess their own processing unit; and have to sell their produce to the big estates or BLFs. being placed in the situation of dependent subcontractors, tea small holding remain in a stage of disadvantaged. Tea small holding have just become a convenient source for outsourcing by the estate sector, which set price for raw tea leaves. Sometimes these factories simply return raw leaves, citing inferior quality or compel small holders to accept the unremunerative price (Das, 2012). Therefore they are bound to sale their produce at whatever the prices, offered by the estates or the BLFs. the deceleration of the price of green leaf so rapid in recent years that the price offered by the large tea estates /BLFs has come down from Rs 21/k.g (in August) to Rs.4/k.g (in October),2011. BLFs enter into agreement for green leaf mostly with intermediaries like leaf agents or growers for volume of supply of green leaves. As the STGs are un-organised and un- unionised, they have the little bargaining powers with the factories. Lack of market information, absence of proper storage facilities, transportation problem, etc., ultimately bring down the price of green leaf. Moreover, the Government imposes cess like leaf cess (0.20 paisa/k.g), land cess (Rs.22/k.g) on the growers. Other than, this they have to pay a fine of Rs 200/ bighas if they put the tea under government fellow land. Unregulated growth of this sector in Assam has given raise the problem of price fluctuation of green leaf in the market. Without going through the marketing and economic holding etc. many small tea growers started cultivation of tea in the remote areas of Assam enthusiastically without technical knowledge; which ultimately leads to the uneven development of this sector.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION:

- It is observed that small tea plantation may rebuild the socio-economic structure of the rural

indigenous people of Assam. The problems which are highlighted like land ownership problem; can be shorted out by the Government taking example from other states.⁵ The only thing needed here is the sincere effort from the Government side and look this small tea gardens a new development initiative for the state.

- If we can solve the land ownership problem in Assam, we can also minimize the problem of finance to some extent of this sector; which is one of the most important factors for the growth of an industry. The institutional finance and financial assistance from Tea Board of India is totally based on land ownership of the cultivator in Assam.

- In case of marketing, the All Assam Small Tea Growers Association (AASTGA) can set up co-operative form of cultivation and a standard for production of green leaf and their price before every tea-growing season. For proper price, Government can come to rescue the small tea grower with a minimum support price concept, which is applicable with other agricultural products. Regulation such as adoption of a formula for fixing the price of the tea leaf to the STGs would suffice.

- Looking into the technical problems of the small tea growers, the Tea Board of India, Tea Research Authority and corporate tea producers should take the responsibility to train different aspect of tea cultivation to the small tea growers. This will improve the technical knowhow of the cultivators.

- To restrict the unregulated growth of small tea gardens, Tea Board of India or the Government of India should set up a *regulatory authority* to look into the uneven

growth of this sector. In a liberal economy, a regulator is must for the proper development of a particular sector, who will guide the development process. Recently, the State Government proposes the idea of separate Tea Board for STGs to ensure institutional supports for the growers.

CONCLUSION:

The emerging regime of small holding by the growers could be considered a bonus for Indian tea sector. Establishment of small units of production would provide fruitful opportunities for self expression and increasing their material wellbeing of the local rural youths. In Assam, younger generation feel frustrated because they do not have assurance that their education and other skills and talent would be fully utilized. Therefore encouraging these youths in taking up small/ medium level tea cultivation would

strengthen the backbone of the rural economy and will also curb social unrest. Economic benefits from the tea industry enjoyed by the British before independence and people from outside the state (Assam) after independence. Native people did not get their due share from the development of tea industry. Tea industry of Assam can be termed as oasis in a desert. The first generation cultivators who have taken up commercial cropping of tea are a radical step towards a new social system in Assam. This will empower the people of Assam with dignity. This silent economic revolution by small tea growers in the rural areas across Assam has helped to tackle unemployment problem apart from using unproductive land in an environment friendly manner. Therefore support should come from every quarter to sustain this socio economic revolution.

Notes:

1. In the year 1978 the Agriculture minister of Assam made an announcement in the state Assembly that there was no bar in the cultivation of tea in a land measuring 10 bighas i.e. 1.35 hectare.
2. According to the first official survey on STGs conducted by the Government of Assam covering 14 districts found that there are 68,465 STGs in Assam. It may be noted that in upper Assam districts, the growers has gone for large scale conversion of homestead land in to tea plantation in recent times.
3. Tea production involves three different costs - cost of cultivation, manufacturing and social costs. STGs are involved with cultivation only, the manufacturing and social costs like education, health, housing, subsidised food, fuel, pension, etc. for the labourers (under PLA, 1951) are not coming under their cost production.
4. According to the estimates of All Assam Small Tea Growers Association (2010), there are 68465 STGs; producing 279715417(000k.g) of green leaf. The average price of green leaf is Rs.12.14; therefore the average income of the grower is [(279715417* Rs.12.14)/68465] Rs.49598.26.
5. The individual registration of STGs with TBI is linked with the availability of proper land documents. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the Village Administrative Officer certifies and issues of land possession to an individual grower. Only with land possession certificate they can apply for Tea Board registration. In West Bengal, a No Objection Certificate from the Land Reforms Department, Government of West Bengal is the prerequisite for registration.

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Women entrepreneurship: Problems and Prospects in

B.T.A.D

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ABSTRACT

The paper tries to focus on the women entrepreneur development prospect in BTAD. The survey and the study brought to light the capacity of the women who came forward with the ability to use the unutilized resource. The sample survey of the various district of BTAD clarify that though immense prospect prevail in BTAD the zeal of the women to start something new has been crushed down with the on going problem prevailing in the area. The objective of the study was to explore the hidden prospect of women entrepreneurship and to find technique to up lift anxiety for leadership in women while tracking to reach the expected objective the methodology so adopted was a sample convenient method for various district of BTAD. Mostly it was seen that Problems are many but to bring out the entire population out of the grip of prejudice, mentally the women should get themselves prepared to change with the changing environment.

Key words: entrepreneur, prejudice, zeal, opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is point of changes in developing countries. It not only reflects the possibilities to be which will lift high the economy but create the uniqueness of any economy. Women entrepreneurship aims at raising awareness of problem of women entrepreneur, enhancing dialogue, promoting the exchange of best practices and recommendation policies supporting the development of women run companies. Women now participate in all activities as all women are guarantees equality by Indian constitution. Assam-women excelled in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion. Assam no way backward to other state of India but in spite of land full of

resource it has not been able to utilize the human resource at the height. What may be the cause we are to move a long way. It's the time not for the 50% of the population to join hand but to built a team jointly taking even the female by the by with male as they are almost 50% of the entire counting of the country. Under either scenario, in order to meet the new challenges, a key course of action for reinventing the public sector is to assess its human resources capacities and to generate appropriate strategies for human resources development. Women entrepreneur developed encompasses an array of activities that enhances the ability of women to reach their highest potential. In every nation, attention to entrepreneurship

has always been a key element in its development agenda. As fundamentally man is the key to all problems not money, so time has arrived to take initiative to develop not the 50% but the entire 100% of countries population. The initiative can work miracles even with small resources and draw wealth out of a barren land. B.T.A.D which consisting of four district Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska, Udalguri consisting of about 31.55 Lakhs (as per 2011 census) of population and about 48 % is women but a negligible contribution towards economy can be seen from the category. Various factors have always been an obstacle for the women to come forward in an underdeveloped economy. The study was under taken to bring out the real picture of the entrepreneur development and the prospect for it.

Objective

1. To explore the hidden prospect of women Entrepreneurship .
2. Find technique to up lift anxiety for leadership in Women.

Methodology of the study

The present study is to find out the women empowerment impact in B.T.A.D area. The economic condition has been studied and data from various sources has been collected to bring to conclusion the cause and problem. The respondent was selected from various districts through convenient sampling method. Various books, journal and information from government and NGO

Literacy rate

B.T.A.D with an area of 8795 Km² has a very limited number of schools distributed through-out the region providing preliminary education. Higher education is up hold by various statues instituted such as government, deficit, provincilised, private college but could only create a literacy of 67%. Women total educated level is much lower to that of men that is only 62% of

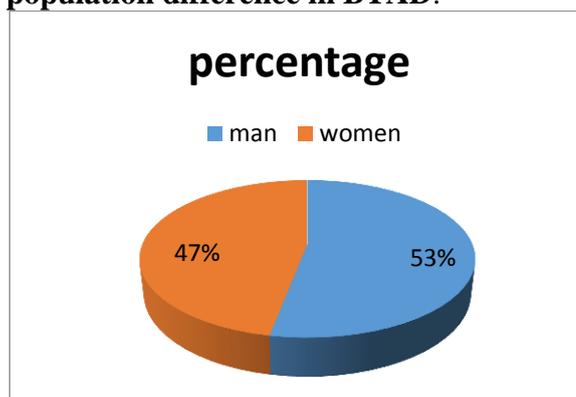
reports were also collected as secondary data for determining the prospect of women entrepreneurship and to develop a tool to uplift women of the area.

Analysis of women position in B.T.A.D

Population

About 47 % of total population of BTAD consists of women only 5 % inhabit in town still with a tradition as a main base keep them self confined to a boundary created by society. The willingness to come forward is still to be developed. Initiative has to be taken by local government with the support of state and central government by creating facilities of education, by financial support, employment reservation, etc. Problems are many but to bring out the entire population out of the grip of prejudice, mentally the women should get themselves prepared to change with the changing environment.

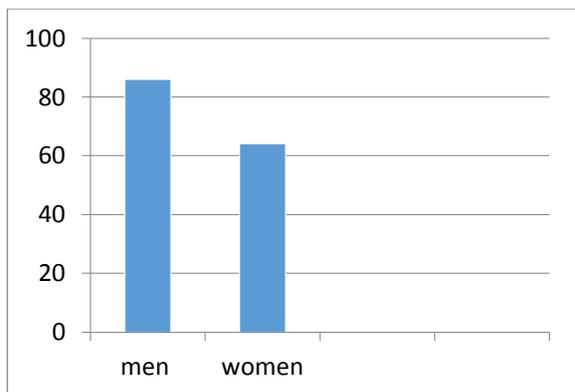
Chart showing men and women population difference in BTAD.



Source: population census of Assam

total literate in B.T.A.D. Reason for low literacy rate for women as found through-out the study is many some of that is social barrier, lack of school in locality, poor financial condition, dropout from school etc.

Difference in literacy rate between men and women



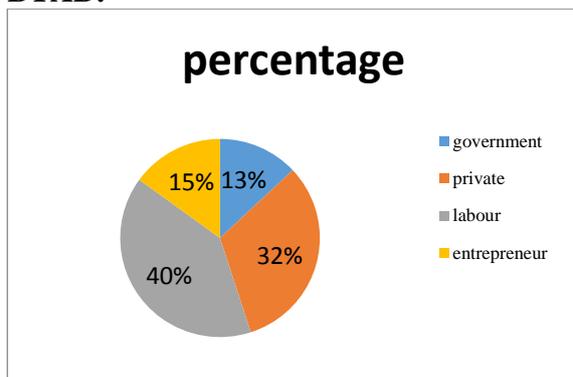
Source: government investigation on literacy rate, India 2011

Employed

The study investigated the women employed under BTAD. The employment opportunity for women is less in government sector. So, women tried to engage themselves in earning from the economy through other possible sources. It has already been viewed for the respondent that there are various reason for engaging themselves as an earner. The women employed in BTAD are subdivided as:-

1. Government employed include 13% of total employed
2. Private employed include 32% of the total employed
3. Labour include 40% of total women employed in B.T.A.D
4. Entrepreneur include on 15% of the women employment

Chart showing women employment in BTAD.



SOURCE: Primary survey of B.T.A.D and employment exchange.

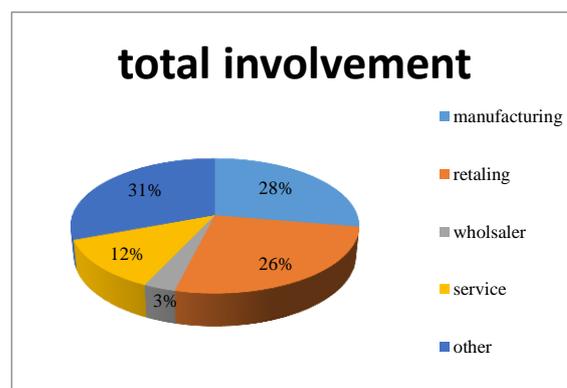
Entrepreneur

That India is underdeveloped can be easily identified if area like BTAD is studied as because women of the area is unaware or entrepreneurship. They have the concept that if they need to earn, their source of income is cultivation or working under Mahajans. The population having the knowledge of entrepreneurship is negligible. Only 16% of population was seen struggling to set up their own business or source of income under own leadership. Cause of unawareness is not the fault of population but it's the failure of government that the situation has not been created even when employment opportunity is not possible to be generated by government.

Analysis of women involvement in B.T.A.D

Women of B.T.A.D have contributed towards the economy by engaging themselves in various activities taking measures to create a position for themselves as an entrepreneur. The table below shows the role played by women in generating income by their effort.

1	manufacturer	18
2	retailer	17
3	wholesaler	2
4	Service	8
5	other	20
6	total	65



Source: field survey of B.T.A.D

Amid the obstacle, the women of B.T.A.D stepped forward to be an earner for the reason as shown in the table

Serial no	Reason	No of respondent	Percentage
1	Hobby	11	16%
2	Money	13	24%
3	Need	25	38%
4	Self dependent	5	7%
5	Leadership	2	3%
6	Family support	9	13%
7	Total	65	100%

Source: field survey in BTC area.

Analysis of prospect of women in B.T.A.D

Out of total women population only 10% has engaged in earning. If the area in which the women of BTAD are skilled, is to be developed and necessary initiative need to be taken for proper training, providing equipments, creating market for the product, facilitating fund and then the unutilized resource can be brought to use at its height. Women in BTAD are coming forward with new prospect in the following field as an innovator

1. Weaving
2. Sericulture
3. Agro based industry
4. Designing clothes

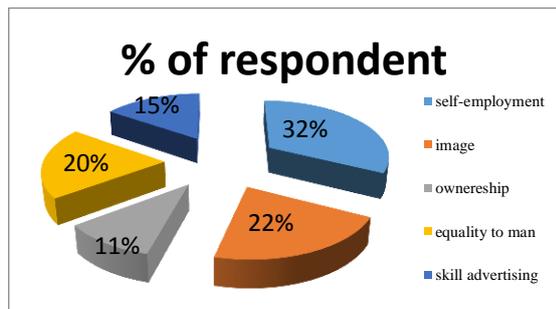
Serial No	Reason	respondent	Percentages
1	Self-employment	21	32.5
2	Image	14	21.5
3	Ownership	7	10.7
4	Equality to man	13	20
5	Skill advertising	10	15.3

5. Clay and colour works

Reason for being a women entrepreneur

Throughout the study, various working woman has been queried with questionnaires and analysis showed the various reason for thinking innovatively in an underdeveloped economy like B.T.A.D area. Source may be what but women took a step forward to tackle the barrier of all and be a part of earner of the economy. B.T.A.D is in unrest, in between economic growth has reached at a best level unexpectedly. The region is neither develop in education, nor industry development is possible in nearby days, keeping in mind the theme women started engaging various work possible to their capacity. As a blessing of nature the area has been endured with various natural resources locally. The women of the area taking the advantage came a step forward to utilize it to make it a finished product or sale it as a raw-material for other. Enough steps have not been taken to promote agro-based farming including poultry, dairy farm for milk and other product.

Table Showing Woman of B.T.A.D. for being a Entrepreneur



Source: Field investigation of B.T.C

Problem analyzing of women entrepreneurship in B.T.A.D

1. Women have fewer opportunities to start their own business due to gender barriers.
2. Lack of fund
3. Fluctuating market condition
4. Prevailing of competition

Reason for un-successfulness

1. Lack of support from government and other source.
2. High rate of Illiteracy
3. No marketing scope
4. No financing facilities
5. No risk division possibility
6. Traditional tool for work
7. Social barriers

Like many other B.T.A.D is in grip of prejudice. Its stagnancy towards upliftment of women which is almost half of the population is still behind and the system will remain the same till when they will not be able to be a part of earner. Society has no doubt came forward to educate the female child but the defect with the system till the date, is unable to forget the gender variation. The word is sufficient enough to create a binding for the category.

Result of influencing women entrepreneurship

Very limited step has been taken to inspire the entrepreneur. The step taken by local authority to develop the entrepreneurship among women section of the area has influenced them to come forward to bring out the innovative idea in among themselves. In last five year statistic shows

that B.T.A.D has developed its economy section and women contribution was about 25% of the total income of the region. The turn over seems to be increasing yearly enrolling thousand of women in various works utilizing local resource available. The demand for the local product has increased in the neighboring state and women are now thinking to renovate to move with their product towards international market.

Suggestions

1. Development of unique forum for activating and facilitating contacts for
2. Networking women business association
3. Workshop and seminars
4. Restructuring process has to be developed from agricultural to industry and service.
5. Labour marketing policies need to be design to support women's entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Numerous statistical studies tell the story there is room for improvement in women entrepreneurship, with vastly more room as one goes up the scale to think innovative. If economy needed to be brought up one need to keep up the pace to height utilizing the human as well as the natural resource to optimum level. Problem of financing was seen in among the entrepreneur along with resource availability and proper marketing channel, government keen eye towards the problem should be taken. Women should create strength in their mind thinking differently to be a part of the economy standing by the by of men to take forward the economy of the country. Area like B.T.A.D has a low % of employment opportunity by government sector so entrepreneur upliftment will be a pulley to bring up the downfall in the condition of the area. The enthusiasm in women made them to be an entrepreneur using the talent and the locally available resources, possible to be collected in around their locality. The product produced by the entrepreneur in B.T.A.D is nature-based and traditional

tools are used for producing it. But the product has a quality which makes it to capture its market in around the county along with demand it has been generating in foreign countries also. Women entrepreneur deals in products made of sericulture, bamboo craft, cotton work, leather work, natural herbs etc. The step taken by them is

appreciable but lack of encouragement may kill the ethos seen among the female section growing in the recent days. Possible initiative must be taken to keep the section engage in their field by government and other helping hand.

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A Study on the Role of Assam State Disaster Management Authority (Asdma) and Social Worker: Some Aspects of Community Based Flood Management in Assam

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Abstract

The world community now stands committed to reduce impact of disasters by minimizing the loss of life and property, preventing environmental damage and socio- economic disruption caused by extreme natural events. The process of building disaster resilient communities is the most significant step towards achieving the objectives. In recent times there has been marked changes in the approach towards Disaster Management. Now topmost priority is given to disaster risk management instead of confining all our efforts to post – disaster emergency response. This new approach calls for proactive disaster management initiative in which local communities have been assigned a key role. The Communities and their response play a vital role in minimizing the damages caused by the disasters.

In this approach, an attempt has been made here to focus certain salient features of community based disaster preparedness in Cachar district. The paper highlights the role played by ASDMA community based disaster management activities and the role of and Social Worker in this aspect.

Key Words: *Community Based Flood Management, Disaster Management, Coping Strategies, Social Work Intervention*

INTRODUCTION:

Flood has been mankind's constant though inconvenient companion since time immemorial. The fury of nature can be as disastrously beautiful as the gifts of nature received gratis. Natural disasters continue to

strike unabated and without notice and are perceived to be on the increase in their magnitude, complexity, frequency and economic impact. These hazards pose to threat to people, structures and economic assets and assume disastrous proportions

when they occur in areas of dense human habitations. Increasing population and various other socio-politico-economic considerations have forced people to live in areas that are considered uninhabitable like flood prone areas of major river systems and the low lying areas along the sea and islands, which are often inundated. Thus flood is recognized as major disaster due to its frequency and devastating nature.

Disaster can be defined as serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using its own resources. The United Nations defines disaster as “The occurrence of a sudden or major misfortune which disrupts the basic fabric and normal functioning of a society (community). It is an event or a series of events which gives rise to casualties and / or damage or loss of property, infrastructure, essential services or means of livelihood on a scale that is beyond the normal capacity of the affected communities to cope with unaided.” Thus a disaster has the following main features: - Unpredictability, Unfamiliarity, Speed, Urgency, Uncertainty and Threat.

Disasters can broadly be classified as Natural and Man-made disasters. Natural disasters includes famines, storms, epidemics Drought, Hurricanes, Cyclones, Tornadoes, Cold wave, Avalanches, Heat wave, Earthquakes Landslides and Mudflows, Dam Failures / Dam Bursts, cloud bursts etc, whereas man made disasters can be described as Air, Rail and Sea disasters, Fire Explosions, Building Collapse disaster, Industrial accident, Terrorism and communal violence. Further for better account of the classification of disasters we may further classify disaster as Water and Climate Related such as Man-made, Geological, Chemical, Biological Disaster Such as Bacterial Related, Food Contamination, Other Fungal, Virus Related. Chemical Disasters such as Toxic Gases and Nuclear Radiation, Food Contamination, Soil

Contamination and pesticides & water contamination.

FLOODS- AN OVERVIEW:

Floods have been a recurrent phenomenon in India and cause huge losses to lives, properties, livelihood systems, infrastructure and public utilities. India’s high risk and vulnerability is highlighted by the fact that 40 million hectares out of a geographical area of 3290 lakh hectares is prone to floods. On an average every year, 75 lakh hectares of land is affected, 1600 lives are lost and the damage caused to crops, houses and public utilities is Rs. 1805 crores due to floods. The maximum number of lives (11,316) was lost in the year 1977. The frequency of major floods is more than once in five years. Floods have also occurred in areas, which were earlier not considered flood prone. An effort has been made to cover the entire gamut of Flood Management. Eighty percent of the precipitation takes place in the monsoon months from June to September. The rivers bring heavy sediment load from the catchments. These, coupled with inadequate carrying capacity of the rivers are responsible for causing floods, drainage congestion and erosion of river-banks. Cyclones, cyclonic circulations and cloud bursts cause flash floods and lead to huge losses. The fact that some of the rivers are causing damage in India originate in neighboring countries, adds another complex dimension to the problem. Thus the problem relating to floods getting more vulnerability day by day. Continuing and large-scale loss of lives and damage to public and private property due to floods indicate that we are still to develop an effective response to floods and as such there is a need of an comprehensive study which will not only bring the effectiveness in the relief delivery service strategies of the Government but will further widen the structured method of CBFM.

DISASTERS AND FLOOD IN INDIAN CONTEXT:

The unique geo-climatic conditions of India make this region particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. Disasters occur with unfailing regularity and despite better preparedness to meet all such contingencies, the economic and the social costs on account of losses caused by the natural disasters continue to mound year after year. India is the worst disaster prone country. 59% of the land area is prone to Earthquakes, 12% to Floods 8% to Cyclones 70% of the cultivable land is prone to drought 85% of the land area is vulnerable to number of natural hazards 22 states are prone to multi hazards

Damage due to Natural Disasters in India includes 3663 loss of life on an average per year during the last decade. It is due to the floods that cause highest numbers of deaths from 1992-2001. A total of 63 % of reported numbers of disaster affected people is only due to floods.

Thus, India has a history of recurring natural disasters. While the coastal districts of India are exposed to flood and cyclones, India is prone to acute droughts and a large section of the state is also prone to earthquakes. In addition the state is also affected by disasters like heat waves, epidemics forest fire, road accidents etc. The two successive cyclones in October 1999 in Ganjam and the super cyclone that hit the 14 coastal districts of the state of Orissa damaged the infrastructure and disrupted public life. The 1999 Super Cyclone change people's respective. Government policies and approaches towards management of Disasters. The vulnerability of the state to disaster necessitates the preparation of comprehensive disaster management plans, the history of Disasters substantiates the fact that about 80% of the State is prone to one or more forms of natural disasters. (MHA, GoI-2002)

The State of Assam is thus known as multi disaster prone area where the flood and cyclone are recurring phenomena. The state is situated in the seismic zone V which is recognized as most vulnerable zone in the seismic map. On 15th August, 1950, Assam witnessed a major earthquake with 8 on Richter scale. It caused havoc among the

people of Assam. The people of Assam witnessed heavy losses to life and property.

The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) has made an effort to mitigate disaster worldwide. Recognizing the rapid rising world wide toll of human and economic losses due to natural disasters, the UN General Assembly in 1989 took a decision to launch a far reaching global understanding during the nineties to save human lives and reduce the impact of natural disasters. With this aim in mind, the decade 1990-2000 was declared as the 'International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction' [IDNDR]. The main objective of the [IDNDR] is to reduce the vulnerability of disasters through concerted international action especially in the developing countries. Thus it envisaged to mitigate the loss of life and property. Social and economic disruptions caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes floods, Cyclones etc were given due importance due its frequency and severity. The IDNDR workshop in Yokohama in May 1994. a plan of action for disaster reduction called the Yokohama Strategy was evolved. The Yokohama Strategy gave guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation Shifting the focus and emphasis from disaster management to disaster prevention and preparedness. Thus disaster management has shifted its focus from response centric approach to prevention and preparedness approach and thereby widening the scope of community based disaster management.

Over the years, many authors have called for more coordinated community emergency planning to mitigate against the devastating humanitarian catastrophe that can follow naturally occurring disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes (Banerjee and Gillespie, 1994; Gandevia 2000; Kasapoglu et al., 2004). Social Workers' skills in communication, networking for community planning, stress management and therapeutic listening (Newburn, 1993) are key in both immediate and longer term responses to disasters. There is also a wider role that social worker can

play in the context of disaster management. A growing body of literature supports the notion of community based disaster management is a useful instrument in sustaining communities from the menace of disasters (Dynes, 2006; Halpern, 2005; kwok, 2003) and social worker can be instrumental in the community based disaster management.

The increasing frequency of the disasters and their severe impact on individuals, communities, society, economy and environment in the last few years, the subject of disaster management has received greater attention for the Community based disaster preparedness (CBDP/CBDM) in India at all levels (UNDP Report, 2003).

Community participation has been recognized as a necessary element to reverse the worldwide trend of the increase in disaster occurrence, particularly small and medium scale disasters (Srivastava, H N 2004). The experiences and practices in community based disaster management show the positive impact of the participatory approach to disaster preparedness, disaster mitigation and disaster risk reduction.

There is paradigm shift from relief of Government side to preparedness at the level of Community. The initiatives taken under community based disaster preparedness is receiving support of the central and state governments to strengthen the disaster management capacities for nearly a decade (Kumar, A, 2006).

The local community is the main focus of community based disaster preparedness programme because of is the community which is adversely affected by a disaster and, more importantly, it is the first responder to the event. In the absence of specialized skill, people use their traditional coping and survival strategies to respond to the event long before outside help reaches them. The more effective coping strategies help the communities to survive from the disasters without any outside help, The best example is flood in Assam. The people of Assam are so well versed with the traditional coping mechanism that the numbers of

casualties are very low as compare to Maharashtra and Gujrat. With the change in approach from post- disaster emergency response to disaster risk reduction, emphasis is laid on proactive pre-disaster interventions such as prevention, mitigation and preparedness. While natural hazards can not be prevented, measures can be initiated for preventing hazards from turning into disasters by strengthening the coping capacities of the communities (Singh R.B 2006). The literature on Community based disaster preparedness focuses extensively on the coping strategies of the individuals, groups and communities to deal with disasters before the arrival of Government or external help. The studies also show how the traditional coping strategies are very much helpful in minimizing the loose of the nations. The communities which have weak coping capacities the loss in terms man and material are more as compare to those who have well structured coping capacities. My study will be focusing on community based disaster management in Assam with special reference to Cachar District.

It is by community preparatory methods that the most significant impact of flood damage and loss of potential can be made. Such preparations currently include basic research, development and implementation of building codes and other structural measures, land use zoning, the provision of information, disaster planning at the level of communities, insurance and rehabilitation planning and budgeting. Prospects for future may include some degree of prediction and control and thereby warnings. (Singh S K, 1998). In Assam the shift from response centric approach to preparedness approach is a new phenomenon, as such there is a need of comprehensive study with will further widen the scope of Community Based Disaster Management.

The Disaster Management Cycle: It is the range of activities designed to mitigate the effects of disaster and emergency situations and to provide a framework for helping people at risk to avoid or recover from the

impact of the disaster. Managing disasters includes steps to be taken prior to during and after the disaster and involve preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. It is further closely associated with the risk, hazard and vulnerability. The Disaster Management Cycle consists of the following broad stages:

- a.) **The Disaster Event:** This refers to the real time event of the hazard occurring and affecting elements at risk. The damage is directly proportional to duration of the event.
- b.) **Response and Relief:** This refers to the first stage after the calamity. Relief materials like food, clothing, medicines and other necessities are distributed to bring life to normalcy.
- c.) **Recovery (Rehabilitation and Reconstruction):** It is used to describe the activities that encompass the three overlapping phases of emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
 - I. **Emergency Relief:** Activities undertaken during and immediately after the disaster strikes, which includes immediate relief, rescue damage and need assessment etc.
 - II. **Rehabilitation:** It includes the provision of temporary public utilities and housing as interim measures to assist long term recovery.
 - III. **Reconstruction:** It is an attempt to return communities to improve pre-disaster functioning.
- d.) **Development:** It is an ongoing activity for evolving economy .Long-term prevention, disaster reduction measures like construction of embankments against flooding, increasing plantation for reducing the occurrence of landslides etc. are some of the activities that can be taken up as a part of development plans.
- e.) **Prevention and Mitigation:** Reduction of risk in disasters involves activities, which either reduces or modify the scale and intensity of the

threat faced or by improving the elements at risk. Mitigation too aims at reducing the physical, economical and social vulnerability to threats and the underlying cause for this vulnerability.

- f.) **Preparedness:** The process embraces measures that enable governments, community and individuals to respond rapidly to disaster situation to cope with them effectively. Preparedness includes the formulation of viable emergency plans, the development of warning systems, the maintenance of inventories and the training of personnel. It may also embrace search and rescue measures as well as evacuation plans for areas that may be 'at risk' for a recurring disaster. All preparedness plans needs to be supported by appropriate rules and regulations with clear allocation of responsibilities and budgetary provisions.

COMMUNITY BASED DISASTER MANAGEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FLOOD:

Community Based Disaster Management is a disaster recovery technique that attends to the important role of community healing and participation in disaster management (Victoria, 2001).This method attempts to correct the top-down approach that has failed to meet the needs of vulnerable populations and has ignored the potential of local resources and capacities(Victoria, 2001).Advocates of these community based approaches believe that these are suitable mechanisms for grasping the dynamics and complexity of vulnerability, as manifested at the local level for addressing vulnerability and strengthening local capacities (Van den Eynde and Veno, 1999:).

Further Community Based Disaster Management can be divided into pre, during and post disaster contexts. This sequence embraces pre, during and post disaster actions that are concerned with the six stages of the following:

- i. Inception of Disaster Planning
- ii. Risk Assessment
- iii. Defining levels of Acceptable Risk
- iv. Preparedness and mitigation planning
- v. Testing the plan
- vi. Feedback from lessons learnt.

Each grows out of the stage before it and leads to further action. Together the sequence can build up a planning and implementation system which can become a powerful risk reduction tool for the communities. If disaster planning is restricted to only preparedness plan then the full benefits of community based disaster planning may not constitute the sequence for disaster management planning.

Importance of Community in disaster management:

- ❖ Community- First Responder
- ❖ Community- Ultimate sufferer
- ❖ To prevent hazards from becoming disasters
- ❖ To minimize human suffering, socio-economic and environmental loss by reducing vulnerabilities and risk
- ❖ To hasten post – event recovery
- ❖ To make community-at-risk disaster resilient
- ❖ Better preparedness leads to better response from Govt., community and people.

ROLE OF ASDMA AND SOCIAL WORKER IN COMMUNITY BASED FLOOD MANAGEMENT

Assam is rich in natural resources and has a wealth of valuable flora, fauna, cultures and heritage. It has a complex socio-economic, political and cultural history. The British adopted the principle of non-interference and seclusion in matters of administration in the region. The customary rules and laws prevail till date. Assam have autonomous district councils in Karbi Anglong , Dima Hasao, Bodo etc to manage their affairs, resulting in even greater diversity of law and policy level bodies in thi Our focus is on sustainable

development and flood defence systems, which require people efforts to manage the flood at zero operational cost by Government or Assam State Disaster Management Authority. It does not only reduce the impact of flooding but provide a permanent solution for flooding. Thus Social Worker and ASDMA are playing their role in making the CBFM more effective and structured. Out of my personal experience I can say that the catastrophic results of extreme flood in Assam is only due to the geographical condition. Floods continue to have major damaging effects in both the Valleys of Assam i.e Barak and Brahmaputra due to its geographical locations. The incidents of floods are more due to the hilly terrain covers both the valleys and heavy rainfall in hills result in heavy flood and great loss to the people. The incidence of flash flood more in Brahmaputra Valley as compare to Barak Valley, but both the vallies are equally by long terms flood every year due to its geographical locations. Thus people are bound to develop coping mechanisms which is equally applicable for the entire developing world. CBFM, with the world's most comprehensive range of flood defence systems, offers flood protection solutions for every eventuality. As per the present trend in community based flood management, Government of Assam is giving due importance to make the technique and mechanisms of CBFM more structured and systematic. The international Agencies like United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNV, and USAID etc are also contributing sincerely in these efforts. The formation of Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) and Disaster Management Teams (DMT) at the Village and GP level (VDMC and GPDMC) is one of the major steps which can give the structured shape of community mechanisms. The villagers through Gram Sabhas form the Disaster Management Committees (DMC) at their village and assign the responsibilities to the members. Generally the DMC are formed for advisory purposes and Disaster Management Teams (DMT) are for action.

The DMTs are of different types like Search & Rescue, First Aid, Patrolling, Carcass Disposal, Damage Assessment, Early Warning, Relief Coordination, Trauma Counselling Etc. The community people with the use of available local resources equip their concerned teams members. For example for early warning they use the mike of Temple or Mosque, for search & rescue they make banana raft and bamboo raft, for trauma counselling of the affected farmers who have lost their cattle/ livestock and crop they give religious which is generally done by Temple Priest or Mullas. For patrolling they deploy the local youths who are generally trained by Village Defence Party (VDP) and they work on rotation basis. So keeping in view the expertise available in the local villagers the DMTs are formed and moved to work during the time of flood. But there is a long way to go in making these steps more transparent. Till date the efforts received from Government are found to be in-sufficient. Community people also sometimes, show their unwillingness and apathy in making this very important flood management techniques more effective, transparent and systematic. Thus these are some of the problem which needs to be addressed both by the Social Worker and Assam State Disaster Management Authority.

Assam is surrounded of eastern part of the great Himalayan are comprising the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, and the eastern hill ranges comprising of the Patkai Manipur Mizoram-Arakan-Chittagong hill tracts and the Shillong-Mikir Plateau. Scenic blue hills and numerous meandering streams surround the entire region. Dominating the geography of the region is the Brahmaputra River providing the largest drainage network in the entire eastern region of the country.

In Assam Barak and Brahmaputra are the main source of water. Like other parts India, Assam is also a multi hazard prone area. Flood and cyclones affects the State almost every year and cause heavy losses to life and property. The people of the valley have their own coping mechanism to deal with disasters

and as such the loss of human life due to flood is comparatively less in this part of India as compare to other parts . Besides flood, Assam also comes under seismic zone V which is recognized as high risk zone as per as the occurrence of earthquake is concerned but from last 60 years it has not witnessed any major earthquake thus the level of community preparedness is not known and the scope of the ASDMA becomes widened .

There are a number of concerns that are either not attended or partially attended in respect of disaster management in general and community based disaster management in particular. Communities across the globe now stand committed to reducing the impact of natural and man made calamities on communities by minimizing the loss of life and property, preventing environmental damage and socio-economic disruption caused by extreme natural events. Thus the importance of ASDMA on Community Based Disaster Preparedness is very important as the communities of the region face the disasters especially floods almost every year and people are equipped to face the floods which needs to be given a structured shape by ASDMA Team. Unlike Maharashtra and Gujrat the loss of human life is comparatively less in this region due to the indigenous coping strategies which the community people have developed to reduce the impact of floods. Thus lot needs to be done by ASDMA on the coping of the people of Assam which will further widen the scope of community based disaster preparedness.

For development of the region it is important to address the issues relating to proper management of natural resources and minimizing loss of infrastructure and property due to recurring natural disasters like floods, landslides, erosions and earthquakes. The focus of ASDMA today has shifted from post disaster relief to disaster preparedness. The GOI-UNDP programme on Disaster Risk Management also did a lot on these lines and established the base for disaster preparedness and mitigation. ASDMA with full of enthusiasm

is widening this motive of disaster management in Assam.

Due to increasing frequency of the natural disasters and their severe impact on individuals, communities, society, economy and environment in the last few years, the subject of disaster management has received greater attention in India at all levels. UNDP,

USAID, IRG, WHO, UNICEF, FAO and like some other National and International Agencies has been supporting the initiatives of the central and state governments to strengthen the disaster management capacities of the communities for nearly a decade. (UNDP Report, 2003).

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Fashion, Attire and Mughal women: A story behind the *pardha*

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Abstract

This study is focused on the attire and fashion of the Mughal women. The heram life of Mughal women is always a prime centre of attraction. The life inside the heam and within the pardha is taken into special consideration in this article. This article tried to highlight the life style of Mughal women especially in the field of fashion and the concept of beauty. The heram women also played a vital role for cultural amalgamation. They belong from different religion and culture. Due to the Cosmo culture, inside the heram they were easily shared their views, thought and interest .The art and archicture of Mughal period also reveals this fact. The activities of Mughal women, within the four walls of heram and their contribution in the field of aesthetics were taken into special consideration.

Introduction:

By the early period of Mughal Dynasty the *pardha* was compulsory for women. It was an accepted way of life for royal and aristocratic families and in Muslim court. It had come to be a sign of strict adherence of Islam .Lots of romantic stories were written during those period based on the life in the *heram* .Many royal Mughal women played a dominant role in political arena. Akber`s mother Hamada Bano Begam was a capable advisor to both her husband and her son. Akber`s wife Salima Sultana Begum was also an intelligent women who was respected for her natural political ability. Jahangir`s mother Jodha Bai was very influential at court and was a major driving force behind Akber`s promotion of secularism.The increased wealth of Mughal court brought great prosperity to the women in the Zenena

(woman`s quarter in the place) All live together in the enclosure surrounded by high walls and beautiful water gardens. (Kumar, 2006) It is always said that behind a successful men there is a women, but it would rather say that there is a women behind the development of every culture. In support of this the spotlight can be turn to the mother goddess of Indus Valley where women was treated as a goddess .She not only played a vital role for the up liftman of her child but also played a dominant role in the development of a society. So, how they contributed in the Mughal society, especially in the field of fashion inside the Mughal harem is taken into consideration in this article.

The concept of fashion and attire in Mughal women:

Self adornment became natural phenomena for women since from ancient time. They used various methods for beautifying themselves. This is evident from various carving of khajuraho and paintings like those of Ajanta. The Mughal women`s were not behind in the use of cosmetics to beautifying themselves.(Mukharjee,2001) Jewellery being an important aspect of dressing was deeply patronised by the women of the Mughal harem.

According to Abul Fazl there are sixteen constituents by which a woman is adorned. Bathing, anointing with oil, riding the hair, decking the crown of her head with jewels, anointing with sandalwood unguent ,wearing various kind of dresses ,sectarial marks of caste and often decked with pearls and golden ornaments ,tinting with lampblack like collyrium ,wearing ear rings ,adorning with nose rings of pearls and gold, wearing ornaments round the neck, decking with garlands of flowers or pearls, staining the hands, eating pan and finally the artfulness. (Fazl ,1977)

The jewels of the Mughal women also reflected their status of men .All the Mughal princes had six to eight sets of jewels. The goldsmiths were continuously busy with making of ornaments in the fort, the best and the most costly of their production were for the king`s person the queens and princes. The princes usually wore necklace of jewels like scarves on both shoulders, added to three strings of pearls on each side. They had three to five rows of pearls hanging from their neck. Upon the middle of the head was a cluster of pearls which hung down as far as the centre of the forehead, with valuable ornaments of costly stone formed into the shape of the sun or moon or some star or at times imitating different flowers on the right side they had a little round ornament in which a small ruby was inserted between two pearls.(smith H.clifford,2002)

The Fashion outfits of the Mughal Women:

The clothes worn by Muslim women during the Mughal rule were not much different to the men`s. They wore long, loose *jama* like ribs, which had full sleeves and opened at the front. Underneath, an ankle length vest was worn and the ensemble was completed with a veil which covered the hair and most of the face .During the cold season, *qabas* (coat) made of Kashmir shawl cloth was worn as overcoats .Outside the *harem* they were usually clothed in the *burqa* ,which covered the body from head to feet leaving only a slit around the eyes. The women staying inside the Mughal *zenana* were usually clothed in the *burqa* , which covered the body from head to foot leaving only a slit around the eyes. The women staying inside the Mughal *zenana* were independently wealthy and had ample leisure time .Many of them conducted overseas trade. Nurjahan for example traded in indigo. She wrote poetry, blended perfumes and designed clothes and fabrics, dresses in a style all of her own that established the fashions for many years to come. She introduced the delicate art of white embroidery. The renound chikankari. (Fig 1) now associated with Lucknow, to the Mughal court, where it becomes the height of fashion.

Mughal women were very much fond of perfume. Detailed account of various kinds of scent and oil and their price is given by Abul fazl in Ain -i-Akberi. There were special perfume department by Akber known as *khusbukhana*. Jahangir writes in his memories about a new kind of perfume prepared from rose patels by Nurjahan`s mother Asmat Banu Begam who called it as *itr-i-jahangir*. Meena Bazaar an event institute established by Akbar for enjoyment of the women of *zenana* and for himself. The intermingling within the harem culture and races from different parts of the world creates a diversity of sartorial style. Every queen has a separate apartment for herself .Each has a regular monthly allowance for her expenditure, jewels and clothes. Paintings of royal women are rare only two paintings depict the royal women in a more

candid style. The first is a miniature painting of Birth of Jahangir,(Fig 2) comes from a page of Jahangirnama. This painting is an unique record of fashions within the *zenana*.It gives a description of women clothing during those time. It is not possible to match any given description to the specific garment but a great variety of Hindu and Persian origin is in evidence. And a second painting depicts the wife of Jahangir, Nurjahan on hunting.(Fig 3) As her hunting costume suggest, the women of the court were often identically dressed to the men. Her ensemble is made up of a fine cotton *jama*, a roughed *pajama*. A *patka*, a turban and embroidered shoes.

The Fashion Jewellery of Mughal Women:

Women had a natural love for jewellery in all ages. The purpose of using jewellery is not to attract the attention of others but it becomes a statement of status also. In India also both Hindus and Muslims have given a religious significance to the uses of jewellery. Hindus consider gold ornaments auspicious where as Muslims believed on holy armlets and ornaments with stone setting. A large number of evidence were found from the various accounts of foreign travellers and Mughal paintings regarding the uses of ornaments by the Mughal ladies.

Head ornaments

The Mughal ladies love to decorate each part of their body with different type of ornaments. They use thirty seven types of ornaments. Among them there is five type of *Sis-Phul*, which was a raised belt shaped piece of gold and silver, hollow and embellished from inside with attachments fastened to the hair over the crown of the head.(Fazl,1977).Upon the middle of the head is a bunch of pearls which hangs down as far as the centre of the forehead with a valuable ornaments of costly stones formed into the shape of the sun ,moon ,star or at

times imitating different flowers.(Manucci,1986)

Ear ornaments

A large number of ornaments were made out of gold , silver and copper which hung down from the ears almost touching the shoulders .Abul Fazl speaks of certain ear ornaments like *karna phul* (ear flower)with various motifs. The motifs of papal-patti, the motifs of peacock were popular among the royal lady.(Fazl,1977)

Nose ornaments

The fashion of wearing nose ornaments was brought into India probably by the Muslims invaders from the North West. However nose ornaments were popular in Mughal Haram. The reference of nose ornaments named *Besar* in Ain -i-Akbari.Which was a broad piece of gold to the upper ends of which a pearl was attached and at the other a golden wire which is clasped on to pearl and hung from the nose by gold wire.

Necklaces

Various kinds of necklaces made of gold and silver studded with gems and pearls were worn by Mughal women. *Golaband* consisted of five or seven rose shaped buttons of gold strung on to silk and worn round the neck. Mughals women were fond of using five to seven strings of gold beads and pearls hanging from the neck, coming down as far as lower part of stomach.

Hand ornaments

Arms without ornaments were not considered a good omen. The upper part of the arms above the elbows were ornamented with armlets called *Bajuband* usually two inches wide inlaid with precious stone. In Abul Fazl`s list of bracelets e have *kangan* which were of different design. Sometimes the bracelets were in form of pearl bands which went round the wrist nine or twelve times.(Mukharjee,2001)

The impact of religion upon the fashion and attire of Mughal women

Throughout the development of every civilization, religion played a very sensitive and passionate issue for all tribes. And it is not surprising that the Mughals were not far

behind that, they brought their own culture which is largely depends on their religious beliefs. As the law of Islam they preferred to keep their lady under cover. The women were not allowed to reveal any part of their bodies. They were forced to use *burqa*. Manucci also observes that among the Mohammedans women it was a great dishonour for a family when a wife was compelled to uncover herself. According to the laws of Islam a man can marry as many times as he wanted. This leads towards the development of harem culture. Where at one point of time 5000 women can lived together.(Fazal,1977)

The word Harem means a holly place or a sanctuary.(Ansari,1960).In times to come the word Harem acquired sanctity and respect. th term was evoked to denote a place where the women folk of the Royal Household lived.(Layden.1924).The women inside the Mughal Harem leads a luxurious life.(Fig 4) They spent their time to adorn themselves magnificently. The only purpose of their life is to please the lord of the Harem. so all of their activity was entered to attract him in various way. While describing the life inside the Harem, Manucci mentioned that the princess wore the turbans with the permission of the king. These turbans were highly fashioned along with various precious stones and pearls. The Mughal harem becomes the centre for the development of

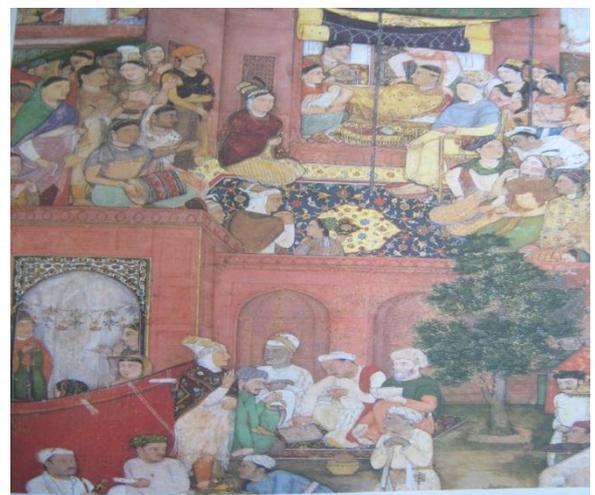


(Fig 1) chikankari work, discovered by Nurjahan Begam wife of emperor Jahangir.

Mughal culture, dress, .manners, dance and music. Thousands of women in Harem remained busy in weaving cloths and designing dress and ornaments. They spent a good time in embroidery, knitting and stitching. Nurjahan developed some new fashion of embroidery. She was so skilled in embroidery and knitting that she herself prepared *jhuls* for the personal elephant of the emperor. The other women too showed interest in these craft. Jahanara had directed and monitored the designing and tailoring of the special dresses of the bride during the marriage of *Dara* and *Suja* and appreciated by the shah jahan .

Conclusion

The harem women were very intelligent, beautiful as well as creative. The policy of most of the Mughal rulers was to encourage and patronized creativity. It was because of the leisure lifestyle they got lots of time for experiment. Only motto was to please the king with something new and innovative, which gave rise to some very pleasant discoveries. For example Itr-i-Jahangir the finest perfume was created during these periods. Although the only purpose of harem women was to please the emperor but somehow these harem life help the Mughal women to develop their skill and creativity to enrich the culture of Mughal dynasty.



(Fig 2) Birth Of Jahangir, miniature painting from Jahangirnama



(Fig 3) Nurjahan Begum in Hunting costume.



(Fig4) Miniature painting of Nurjahan .Patna Musuam.Bihar.

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