

প্রতিধ্বনি the Echo

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Edited by: Dr. Bishwajit Bhattacharjee



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Abstract

Contribution of Madrasa in Historical Perspective

A.H. Monjurul Haque

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In Islamic history Madrasas have played a vital role in building and shaping the fate of Muslim ummah from the very inception of the Islam. These Madrasas have a great contribution to religious education, which helps Muslims to know deeply about Islam. Madrasas not only fulfill religious needs of Muslims providing a great contribution to the field of knowledge and art ; but also try to make them complete human beings from every angle. Madrasas were among the first institutions onto the path of generalization of modern education. The service rendered by Madrasas is an established fact. In India these Madrasas have played an important role in protecting human, Islamic and social values. These institutions have also played an important role in the survival of Islamic practices, publication and dissemination of Islamic literature, protection of Islamic faith and development of culture and civilization besides contributing to the development of the country. These invaluable services rendered by Madrasas can't be ignored and forgotten. In this brief research paper, efforts will be made to highlight the contribution of Madrasas on the basis of historical stand point.

Concept of Madrasa Education: The dictionary meaning of the word Madrasa is school. The word is derived from Arabic word 'darasa' which means to impart lessons. To this word 'darasa' the syllable *ma* is added as a prefix; and as per the Arabic grammar with this addition the word Madrasa implies the place at which the act (of imparting lessons) is performed. In other words, Madrasa means the place of imparting knowledge. In common language, educational institutions like pre-primary and secondary schools and even part time centers of Quranic education attached to mosques and fulltime residential institutions of Islamic education are all called Madrasas. But technically the term Madrasa is used for institutions of Islamic education which are generally full time residential schools which imparts education of Islamic theology & law.

The contribution of Islam and Muslims to the development of education and learning in India both in theory and practice is indeed

worthy of special mention. The impact of the descendents of Islam with their own language and culture on India was also felt on the Indian language. Persian and Arabic forged their healthy influence on Hindi, Gujrati, Punjabi, Bengali, Kashmiri and Marathi. Islam and Muslim also contributed a great deal to various branches of modern civilization i.e. architecture, calligraphy, painting, mathematics, commerce, land and revenue management and natural sciences.

The Madrasa education system itself was complete enough to serve the change in political and socio-economic needs of India for centuries together. Its curriculum was sufficiently liberal in that it covered the fields of traditional or religions sciences together with rational and social science and language and literature. With this curriculum the Madrasa education system catered to the educational needs of the ruling

Class and upper strata of the society and at the same time successfully cared for the educational needs and aspirations of the Slaves and weaker sections of the society in a large portion. So it was through this well-built Madrasa education system only that people were empowered socially and economically and were enabled to adjust themselves in all spheres of human activity. If the Madrasa education system and its methods were faulty, as was rightly questioned by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, (the first Education Minister of free India) how could their products bring about such revolutions and hold the positions of highest officials under the King?

The history of Madrasa education in India began in the 10th century C.E. with the establishment of *Maktabas* and Madrasas in the towns of Sind, Debal, Mansura and Multan through Arab traders and settlers.

Madrasa education also flourished under various provincial kingdoms which had cropped up due to gradual disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate from the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq and Firoz Shah Tughlaq and even during the reign of Lodhis. The founder of Mughal Empire Zahir Uddin Muhammad Babar himself was a man of letters and an erudite poet and writer. During the reign of Babar, the Public Work Department was also entrusted with the task of construction of *Maktabas* and Madrasas, besides its other duties.

During the reign of Humayun; new Madrasas were established in Delhi, Agra and other places. The Humayun's Tomb itself was once used as an important place of instruction. His successor Akbar, though not considered a man of letters, showed remarkable interest in educational and literary activities during his reign. Aurangzeb (1658-1707 C.E.) the last of the great Mughals who himself was a learned scholar, caused establishment of a large number of Madrasas across the country and spread handsome funds for this purpose.

After the fall of the Mughal Empire, it was Shah Waliullah of Delhi who spearheaded the first movement among *Ulema* and launched a powerful campaign to recapture the glory of Islam and regain political power. He established

a Madrasa in Delhi which focused on religious disciplines. Another centre of Muslim learning at Delhi headed by Maulana Khairabadi, which syllabus included secular subjects as well. Luck now was yet another centre of higher education. In the presidencies of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa created by the East India Company; Arabic and Persian schools continued to function as before. With the gradual disintegration of Muslim rule particularly the Mughal empire and its steady replacement by British administration, the Madrasa education had begun to receive its first wave of shocks, as for it the transfer of power did not mean a mere substitution of one political power for another rather it meant the destruction of a particular way of life a particular culture a basic source of empowerment of the Muslim community in social, economic, cultural and emotional domains. The Madrasa education system in vogue at that time was preparing the people for the then prevailing way of life which was now changing and taking a new direction. Madrasas were one of the first few social institutions which received the bitter taste of this change at that time.

The Freedom of India in 1947 initially brought new problems for the Madrasa education system. We know that prior to Independence Madrasas were entirely depending on the meager resources collected by them from the common members of the already economically weak community and so were not placed on sound economic footing by any reckoning. After Independence mass exodus of Muslim to Pakistan including a large number of those who were educationally and economically better off, abolition of Zamindari system, widespread unemployment among Muslims, etc. further crippled the economy of the Madrasas, particularly in the northern and western part of India.

The rigorous campaign for free and compulsory modern elementary education under the constitutional directive, replacement of Urdu as a medium of instruction in some states and similar other developments brought new challenges for Madrasa education system.

The persistent efforts of *Ulema* in the post-Independence period to resuscitate Madrasa

education system ultimately bore fruit to an extent and brought it back on the track and ever since, it is steadily progressive and refurnishing through in a way which can be reckoned as revival of the Madrasas education system which was once in vogue in medieval India until the 18th Century and was serving all the socio-economic needs of the society. On the one hand, the number of Madrasas and *Maktabas* now stands increasing considerably and on the other some new experiments in their curriculum and mode of instruction have been initiated.

It is difficult to provide any reliable figure of the actual number of Madrasas that now exist in India in spite of some surveys having been conducted by the renowned organizations like, Hamdard Education Foundation, Institute of Objective Studies, National Council for Educational Research and Training (N.C.E.R.T.) etc. still from the varying estimates on the number of Madrasas provided by these organizations. One can very easily deduce that during the British period and for some time after Independence the graph of growth of Madrasas in India has been steadily increased. For example, in the Directory of Madrasas in India, published by the Centre for Promotion of Science, established in 1985 at Aligarh Muslim University, a comprehensive list of 2890 Madrasas has been produced. Later in

1990; Manzoor Ahmed in his work 'Islamic Education, Redefinition of Aims and Methodology' presented a rough estimate of these Madrasas of around 30,000. But he has not mentioned as to how he has arrived at this figure. But it is clear that the number of Madrasas increasing day by day.

Thus, it may be concluded by saying that Madrasas can play much greater role in the socio-economic and cultural empowerment of the Muslim community than what a majority of them is doing at present by adopting a more flexible, broad based and dynamic approach towards its curriculum and matters related with the transaction of this curriculum and by favourable considering the demand for a careful synthesis between religious and secular education system. In the opinion of *Allama Yusuf Qardhawi*, Muslims are not backward in modern education due to the reason that they are dedicatedly engaged in religious education and that they are shining in that area of learning. The fact, according to him, is that even in religious education they have faced decadence and ever since they have ignored education in modern or scientific disciplines they have declined in the religious education also.

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Status of Islamic Studies & Madrasa Education in India: An Over View

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Abstract

Madrasas in India, even after Independence of the country, have rendered invaluable services to the development of the community and the country. They have played a silent but significant role in educating millions of Muslim population of the country. The services of Madrasas are not limited to spreading literacy; but also encompass social, political and academic fields. Infact the educational development of Muslim community can't be imagined without the Madrasas and makhtabs. Ulema produced by these Madrasas provide leadership not only in religious matters but also in social & political spheres as well. Starting from Shah Waliullah to the great Ulema like Moulana Abul A'la Maududi, Moulana Quasim Nanatwi, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad and Moulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali al-Nadwi have been the most prominent personalities among Muslim leaders. They were basically the products of Madrasas and they had a close affinity with the Madrasa education. Even then the system as it prevails in India is not free from drawbacks and shortcomings. In this brief research paper efforts have been made to highlight the status of Islamic studies and Madrasa education in India alongside pointing out its major drawbacks and some remedial measures as well.

As per the present status of Muslim education is concerned, undoubtedly, it is an important dimension in the realm of Muslim educational system in India; which requires urgent attention. The new challenges of the 21st century (the century of Knowledge) can not be encountered without considering the problems of Muslim education in India, because Muslims are the biggest minority community of this nation comprising 13.4 Percent of its population. And Madrasa education is a significant part of the History of Muslim education and Islamic studies in India.

The history of Madrasa education in India starts since the arrival of Muslims in India and it began in the 10th century C.E. with the establishment of *Makhtabs* and Madrasas in the towns of Sind, Dabel, Mansura, Multan by the Arab traders and settlers. After the passage of time, this system was gradually developed and hundreds of mosques during this period were flourished. Oudh, Multan, Lahore, Khairabad, Patna, Surat, Delhi, Agra, were the main centers of Madrasa education and Islamic studies. And the number of Madrasas and *Makhtabs* were multiplied during the period of Muhammad Ghouri, Iltutmish,

Allauddin Khilji, Tughloq and Sikandar Lodhi. The Mughal period starting from Babar to Aurangzeb and other emperors was the glorious period of Madrasa education. The structures of various mosques; forts and Madrasas found even today remind us the past of Madrasa education during the time of Mughal period. Sir syeed Ahmed Khan in his famous book *Asar us-sanadid* writes “that there was a network of Madrasas and *Makhtabs* through out the country during the Mughal period. He further writes, “The downfall of Mughal Empire started during the period of Aurangzeb but the establishment of Madrasas and their assistance continued till the last Mughal King.”

The British period is generally considered a period of strong set back to Indian education system. But at the same time; Madrasa education also continued, flourished and saved Indian Muslims from being affected by the western culture. It was during this period the several well-known seminaries were established. They include Durul-Ul-Ulum Deobond (1866) Nadwat-Ul-Ulema Lucknow (1894) and even Jamia Arabia Islamia Nagpur (1938).

After independence; India became a democratic and secular country. There are many persons who believe that due to the influence of secularism in India, the religious educational institutions have lost their relevance. But, in fact; the Madrasa education system is still strong in their own position and has been increasing and progressing by leaps and bounds in the country. Mr. Madhavrao Scindhia, the then Minister of Human Resources Development (HRD) while addressing a muslim education conference held in Delhi on May 7, 1995, stated that there were 125000 Madrassas in India during the time of Mughal reign in India. The report of all India survey by Hamdarad education society published in the June 1996 confirmed the said figure.

Besides the figures, the contribution of Madrasa education in India has been so important that there can't be imagined the educational development of Muslim community by neglecting the Madrasas and *Makhtabs*. *Ulema* produced by these Madrasas provide leadership not only in religious matters but also in social & political spheres as well. Starting from Shah Waliullah to the great *Ulema* Like Moulana Abul A'la Maududi, Moulana Quasim Nanutawi, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad and Moulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi have been the most prominent personalities among Muslim leaders. They were basically the products of Madrasas and they had a close affinity with Madrasa. education.

It is because of this prominent role of Madrasas, the common masses and particularly the intellectual groups call the Madrasas as the castle of Islam and pay respect and honour to these institutions.

Even after accepting and appreciating the hall mark achievements of madrasa education in India; the system is till today not completely free from some hindrances and shortcomings. Some major and important shortcomings of madrasa education system are stated as below:-

1. Absence of definite aims and objectives, though they may be present in the mind of authorities of madrasa education, but they are never clearly spelt out.
2. Unscientific approaches of some of the curricula of Madrasas.
3. Lack of basic facilities like proper building, classroom and especially furniture, black board and other TLM and equipments in some of the Madrasas.
4. Outdated traditional methods and technique of teaching and learning.
5. Isolation from modern developments in the area of natural sciences and social sciences and over emphasis on the

- traditional subjects, with a negative outlook towards modern subjects.
6. Lack of coordination among various Madrasas and *Maktabas*.
 7. Defective system of examination & evaluation.
 8. Poor quality of planning and administration.
 9. Poor financial condition and management.
 10. Low status of teacher in the society.
 11. Lack of innovations, experimentation and researches.

Having presented the shortcomings, some remedial measure may be placed to overcome the drawbacks and shortcomings:-

First of all, the aims and objectives of Madrasa education in this country should be specifically well-defined.

In the light of well-defined objectives for Madrasa education there must be a common curriculum for Madrasa education. It will be however necessary to specify the

objectives at various stages of Madrasa education like Alim, Fazil and Kamil i.e. intermediate, graduation, post-graduation and honours level. Differences among various groups & sects of the Muslim community may prove to be a bottleneck in framing a common curriculum. But the community has to come on a common platform to perform this prominent task as it has done in the case of its personal law by forming All India Muslim Personal Law Board, representing all sects and schools of thoughts. There can be an “All India Madrasa Education Board” to shoulder the responsibilities of Madrasa education. The curriculum must include some basics of modern subjects so as to enable the learners to play a dynamic role in the modern society. But at the same time proper care should be taken to see that.

1. The main zeal or character of Madrasa education is not to be affected at any circumstances.
2. The students should not be overburdened.

There should be a provision of teachers training programme for the teachers who wish to associate with Madrasa education. They should be either accommodated in existing training institutes affiliated with the universities, or there should be a separate system of training for them. A linkage may be established between the Madrasa authorities and the Training Institute of Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. The advantage of separate training institutes will be that the teaching methodologies suitable to teach various subjects of Madrasa education may be taught with due emphasis. Almost 99 percent of teachers associated with Madrasa education are professionally untrained. The training on modern lines may equip them with modern methods; techniques and strategies of teaching learning and evaluation.

Madrasa education seems to be working on old traditional pattern as there is no emphasis on any research. Therefore research projects should be undertaken on various aspects of madrasa education. Scholars associated with Madrasas and *Jamias* as well as with modern Universities should be encouraged to work meaningfully in the area of Madrasa education.

The proposed common platform may act as a coordinating body for various Madrasas and *Maktabas* spread throughout the country.

The above mentioned action plan may not be effectively implemented without raising required funds. The Muslim community should continue patronizing Madrasa education. At the same time it is the responsibilities of the Union and state Government to provide adequate grants for

these Madrasas and *Maktabas* without interfering in their academic & administrative mainstreams, as it has been proposed by Gopal Singh high power panel

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الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسنى الندوي: حياته وأعماله

Muhammad Wadeh Rashid Al- Hasani Al-Nadwi: His Life and Works

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Abstract

Muhammad Wadeh Rashid Nadwi (b. 1935) is an eminent Arabic writer and journalist of contemporary India. He has born in a very well-known and highly educated family of Rai-Bereli, Uttar Pradesh. He got his early education from Ilahia School at Rai-Bereli and studied Islamic sciences and Arabic language and literature at Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow. He obtained his graduation in English honours from Aligarh Muslim University and started his professional life as an Arabic translator and presenter in All India Radio, New Delhi and worked there for twenty years; from 1953-1973 to be exact. In 1973, he joined Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama as a teacher of Arabic Language and literature and was promoted to the post of Dean, school of languages. He became the secretary for education of Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama in 2006 and till date he is doing this prestigious job actively and efficiently. Apart from this, he has been a member of many academic organizations, and educational institutions in India and Abroad. Wadeh Rashid Nadwi is an eminent scholar of Islamic sciences and Arabic language and literature; he has a very good knowledge about English literature and western culture and thus he has established himself as a prominent writer through his skilful writings. He has written many books, articles, research papers on different literary, religious and social issues. He is a famous Arabic journalist as well and presently working as Chief Editor of Al-Raid (a fortnightly Arabic News paper) and Deputy Editor of Al-Basul Islami (a monthly Arabic Magazine), both are published from Darul Ulum Nadwatul Uluma, Lucknow.

هو الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسنى الندوي من جهازة الكتاب المفكرين المعدودين ذوي الاتجاهات السلمية والمنهج الإسلامي الوسط، له نظرات ثاقبة وخبرات واسعة في مجال الفكر والدعوة والتعليم والتربية والأدب العربي ومصادره. هو في وقت واحد كاتب قدير، وأديب ألمعي، وصحافي بارع، ومحلل سياسي كبير، ومترجم قدير، ومؤرخ غير متحيز، ومتضلع من اللغات الثلاث: العربية، والأردية، والإنجليزية.

أسرته:

ولد الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسنى في أسرة عريقة من أسر السادات، المعروفة بأسرة الشاه علم الله، تتصل أصولها إلى السيد عبد الله المحض بن السيد الحسن المثنى بن حسن بن علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنهم. وأول من جاء إلى الهند من هذه الأسرة هو الشيخ السيد قطب الدين محمد المدني (٥٨١هـ - ٦٧٧هـ) عام ٦٠٧هـ. وكان سبب هجرته إلى الهند أنه رأى في المنام أن رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم - يأمره

بالتوجه إلى الهند للجهاد، فتوجه إلى شرق الهند بطريق غزنة مع جماعة كبيرة من المجاهدين، وفي هذه المنطقة كانت عدة إمارات هندوسية، فأغار عليها وفتح قنوج، ثم مانكبور، وكرا، وهنسوه وغيرها من القلاع الحصينة والمتينة وأدخلها في دولة إسلامية، وتشغل مدة طويلة منصب شيخ الإسلام في دلهي في أيام بهرام شاه، وكان موضع إكرام وحب لدى سائر العلماء والسياسيين.¹ ومن دلهي انتقل السيد قطب الدين المدني إلى 'كرا' واس توطنها وتوفي بها في ٣ / رمضان عام ٦٧٧ هـ. كان له ثلاثة أبناء: نظام الدين، وقوام الدين وتاج الدين. ونبغ من ذريته رجال العلم والمعرفة الكثيرون. ومنهم السيد قطب الدين محمد الثاني، انتقل إلى 'جائس' برائ بريلي من 'كرا'. ثم انتقل ابنه السيد علاء الدين مع ابنه محمود من 'جائس' إلى 'نصيرآباد' واستقر هنا، وكذلك أصبحت 'نصيرآباد' مثل 'جائس' مقر أسرة شيخ الإسلام السيد قطب الدين أحمد المدني. وفي 'نصيرآباد' احتل علاء الدين بن قطب الدين محمد الثاني منصب القضاء، وبعده تولى بهذا المنصب رجال كثيرون من ذريته واحدا تلو واحد، وآخر من تولى منصب القضاء هو القاضي السيد فضل الرحمن الحسني وبعده انتهى نظام القضاء في 'نصيرآباد'.

ومن ذرية علاء الدين بن قطب الدين محمد الثاني كان الشاه علم الله بن السيد محمد فضيل، ولد في نصير آباد في ١٢ من ربيع الأول عام ١٠٣٣ هـ. مات أبوه في المدينة المنورة قبل شهرين ونصف من ولادته. فكفله خاله السيد أبو محمد وأحسن تربيته. أخذ العلم من أخيه لعمه السيد أحمد. أدخله خاله في الشرطة لكنه لم يرض عن العمل في الشرطة فتركه وخرج إلى طلب العلم والعرفان حتى لازم السيد آدم البنوري، أكبر تلاميذ ومسترشدي مجدد الألف الثاني الشيخ أحمد بن عبد الأحد السرهندي. وفي مدة قليلة أصبح الشاه علم الله من أقرباء الشيخ البنوري بورعه وزهده واتباع سنة نبيه محمد - صلى الله عليه وسلم - واستفاد منه استفادة تامة. وفي وقت التوديع قدم الشاه علم الله بين أستاذه السيد البنوري إرادة هجرته إلى المدينة. فأجازه البنوري بشرط، وهو إن يطلب منه أحد أن يقيم في الهند فليقم. فخرج الشاه علم الله مع أسرته يريد الهجرة إلى المدينة، ولما وصل إلى رائ بريلي أقام أياما في بيت بعض أقربائه. وذات يوم لقي مع الشيخ عبد الشكور عالم وزاهد كبير الذي التمس منه أن يقيم في رائ بريلي وذكره وصية شيخه البنوري. بآل الشاه علم الله إرادة هجرته وعزم أن يسكن في رائ بريلي واختار موعدا في شاطئ نهر 'س' مقرا له ولأسرته الذي اشتهر بعد باسم زاوية الشاه علم الله ومختصرا بالزاوية الكبرى (تكيا كلان باللغة المحلية). وعلى مر العصور نبغ من ذرية الشاه علم الله عدد كبير من العلماء، والدعاة، والمجاهدين، والمفكرين و من أشهرهم السيد محمد هدى، والسيد أبو سعيد، والسيد نعمان، والسيد أحمد بن عرفان الشهيد، والسيد عبد الحي الحسني، والسيد عبد العلي، والسيد أبو الحسن على الحسني الندوي وغيرهم. وفي العصر الراهن شقيقان من هذه الأسرة يثيران ذكريات سالفى الأسرة، وهما: السيد محمد الرابع الحسني الندوي والسيد محمد واضح رشيد الحسني الندوي حفظهما الله تعالى. وفي الأوراق التالية نبحث عن حياة وأعمال السيد محمد واضح رشيد الحسني الندوي إن شاء الله.

مولده ونسبه

ولد الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسني بن رشيد أحمد الحسني في دائرة الشاه علم الله بقرية تكيا كلان بمديرية راي بريلي في الولاية الشمالية (Uttar Pradesh) بالهند عام ١٩٣٥ م. وهو ابن أخت الشيخ أبي الحسن علي الحسني الندوي، فيصل نسبه من الطرفين إلى السيد عبد الله المحض بن السيد الحسن المثنى بن حسن بن علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنهم. وسلسلة نسبه الذهبية كما: هو الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسني بن السيد رشيد أحمد بن السيد خليل الدين بن رشيد الدين² بن السيد سعيد الدين بن السيد غلام

¹ ذكره الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسني الندوي في كتابه " الإمام أحمد بن عرفان الشهيد " في صفحة ٥٥ أخذا من سيرة السادات (مخطوط) للشيخ فخر الدين بن عبد العلي الحسني.

² شقيق السيد ضياء النبي الحسني، وهو جد أبي الحسن علي الحسني الندوي لأمه.

جیلانی بن السید محمد واضح بن السید محمد صابر بن الشاہ آیۃ اللہ بن الشاہ علم اللہ³ بن الشیخ فضیل بن الشیخ محمد المعظم بن القاضي أحمد بن القاضي محمود بن القاضي علاء الدین بن القاضي قطب الدین محمد الثاني بن صدر الدین بن زین الدین بن أحمد بن علي بن قیام الدین بن صدر الدین بن القاضي رکن الدین بن الأمير نظام الدین بن شیخ الإسلام قطب الدین محمد المدني بن رشید الدین أحمد بن یوسف بن عیسی بن حسن بن أبي الحسن علي بن أبي جعفر محمد بن القاسم بن أبي محمد عبد الله بن الحسن الأعور الجواد نقيب الكوفة بن محمد الثاني بن أبي محمد عبد الله الأشر بن محمد صاحب النفس الزكية بن السید عبد الله المحض بن السید الحسن المثنی بن حسن بن علي بن أبي طالب رضي الله عنهم⁴.

نشأته وتعليمه:

إن للأسرة والبيئة أثرا كبيرا في تشكيل الشخصية الإنسانية. فإذا كانت نشأة إنسان في أسرة مهيبة، وبيئة دينية، وكان تتقيفه بثقافة علمية أدبية؛ يكون هذا الإنسان عادة رجلا متدينا ذا علم وأدب، وفضل وكمال. وهذا القانون العام انعكس في حياة الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسنی، فإنه نشأ في أسرة دينية علمية وكانت تربيته تحت رعاية خاله أبي الحسن علي الحسنی الندوي الذي وهب الله عز وجل قدرات كثيرة متنوعة، فكرية وأدبية ودعوية، فتأثر به وأخذ عنه حتي تكونت عقليته العلمية والفكرية وشخصيته الإسلامية وأصبح من العلماء البارزين في الهند المعاصرة.

تعلم محمد واضح رشيد الحسنی مبادئ القراءة والكتابة في المدرسة الإلهية برائ بريلي ثم التحق بدار العلوم لندوة العلماء حيث درس اللغة العربية وآدابها والعلوم الإسلامية على كبار أساتذة الدار وعينا خاله - أبي الحسن علي الحسنی الندوي - ترعاه؛ فوسع ثقافته الأدبية والإسلامية وحصل على شهادة العالمية والتخصص في الأدب العربي وتخرج فيها عام ١٩٥١م. أكمل دراسته الثانوية العصرية في المدرسة الرسمية عام ١٩٥٣م. ثم التحق بجامعة عليكرة الإسلامية لمزيد من الدراسات، لكن دراسته هنا ليست بصورة منتظمة بل كان يدرس انفراديا ويقعد في الإمتحانات فقط وكذلك نال شهادة الليسانس في اللغة الإنجليزية.

أساتذته:

أخذ الشيخ الندوي العلوم والفنون من كبار علماء عصره وتخصص في الأدب العربي، والتاريخ، والنقد الأدب العربي، والحضارة الغربية، وقضايا الفكر الإسلامي والغزو الفكري. ومن أساتذة الكبار الشيخ أبو الحسن علي الحسنی الندوي، والشيخ حليم عطاء السلوني، والشيخ محمد أسبات، والشيخ عبد الحفيظ البلياوي، والسيد عبد الله عباس الندوي، والشيخ محبوب الرحمن الأزهری، والشيخ محمد عمران خان الندوي الأزهری. ودرس الإنكليزية على الأستاذ عبد السميع الصديقي، والشيخ نور الحسن، والشيخ أحمد الأعظمي، والشيخ محمد اسحاق السنديلوي. وهؤلاء الرجال قد استفاد الشيخ الندوي منهم بصورة نظامية. وقد تأثر واستفاد أيضا من عدد من العلماء الكبار بصورة غير نظامية و من أشهرهم شيخ الإسلام الشيخ حسين أحمد المدني، والعالم الرباني الشيخ عبد القادر الرائي فوري، والعلامة السيد سليمان الندوي، والعلامة السيد أبي الكلام آزاد وغيرهم.

الأوضاع التي نشأ الشيخ الندوي في ظلها:

³ خانوده علم اللہی لمحمد الثاني الحسنی، ص: ٣٤٣

⁴ الإمام أحمد بن عرفان الشهيد للشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسنی الندوي، ص: ٨١

كان عهد الطفولة و الشباب للشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسني الندوي عهد الصراع السياسي للحصول على الاستقلال من الحكم الإنجليزي، وكانت الحركات السياسية ناشطة لتحقيق هذا الفرض، وفي مقدمتها المؤتمر الوطني والعصبة الإسلامية، وكان العلماء وفي مقدمتهم المنتسبون إلى دار العلوم ديوبند، يؤيدون المؤتمر الوطني، والمتخرجون من الجامعات العصرية الذين كانوا يطالبون بإنشاء دولة إسلامية، يؤيدون الحركة التي يقودها محمد على جناح، ولذلك كان الصراع بين العلماء المحافظين وخريجي الجامعات العصرية، وكان الشيخ الندوي لإنتمائه إلى جماعة العلماء والمدارس الإسلامية اشترك في الاجتماعات التي تُعقد من قبل جمعية علماء الهند التي كان يرأسها شيخ الإسلام الشيخ حسين أحمد المدني، والاجتماعات للمؤتمر الوطني كذلك، وقد كان خاله الأكبر الدكتور عبد العلي الحسني من مسترشيدي الشيخ حسين أحمد المدني، وخاله الشيخ أبو الحسن علي الحسني الندوي من محبيه ومؤيديه، ولذلك كان الشيخ الندوي يواجه في بعض المناسبات حملة الكراهية والعداء من قبل المنتسبين إلى العصبة الإسلامية. وقد شكّل الشيخ الندوي وبعض أصدقائه جمعية للطلبة مقابل جمعية الطلبة للعصبة الإسلامية، وكان يعقد الحفلات للدفاع عن القضية ومعارضة فكرة إنشاء باكستان، والدفاع عن العلماء.

وفي نفس العهد كانت معظم البلدان الإسلامية الأخرى تتور للتححر من الاستعمار الغربي، وتواجه إجراءات القمع والكبت والاستبداد من نظم الحكم المحتلة، فنشأ في نفس الشيخ الندوي الامتعاض والاستنكار من الاستعمار الغربي وتصاعد إلى حد الكراهية للغرب، ثم استقلت معظم البلدان التي كانت تترزح تحت نير الاستعمار الغربي البريطاني، إلا الجزائر التي بقيت تحت الاستعمار الفرنسي، واتخذت فرنسا أقصى الإجراءات لإسكات صوت الحرية باختيار وسائل الوحشية والبربرية التي أدت إلى استشهاد مليون شخص، وكان في مقدمتهم العلماء وأصحاب الفكر الإسلامي السليم.

وبعد استقلال بعض البلدان حدثت قضية استيطان اليهود في أرض العرب (فلسطين) من قبل الانتداب البريطاني، ثم تمهيد الطريق لتحقيق وعد بالفور بإنشاء دولة اليهود في فلسطين في أرض العرب، وحدوث حرب بين اليهود والدول العربية المجاورة لفلسطين، وخيانة الحكام العرب في ذلك الوقت إزاء التضحيات التي بذلها المجاهدون المسلمون المنتسبون إلى الإخوان المسلمين.

كان لهذه الأوضاع أثر بالغ في تشكيل ذهن الشيخ الندوي وأفكاره وكان يسترشد في ذلك برأي خاله الشيخ أبي الحسن علي الندوي والأساتذة الآخرين.

حياته العملية:

قد بدأ الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسني الندوي حياته العملية في محطة الإذاعة لعموم الهند في نيو دلهي حيث عمل في القسم العربي عشرين عاما من سنة ١٩٥٣م. إلى ١٩٧٣م.. وخلال هذه المدة احتل الندوي عدة مناصب، منها منصب مساعد رئيس القسم، ثم عينت في منصب مراقب للإذاعة العربية الخارجية، ثم في منصب مذيع و مترجم. وقام الندوي في إقامته في نيو دلهي بنقل عدد من المقالات والبحوث العلمية، والأدبية، والسياسية، والتمثيلات والقصص إلى العربية التي أذيعت من دلهي، وعدد من محطات الإذاعات العربية. وتجدر الإشارة هنا إلى أن القسم العربي في ذلك العهد كان استولى عليه المذيعون المترجمون العرب الذين كانوا منتسبين إلى بلدان مختلفة عربية عريقة مثل العراق، وسورية، ومصر، وفلسطين، وكان منهم أدباء، وقصيصون، وكان منهم صحفيون؛ فاستفاد الشيخ الندوي منهم استفادة تامة وتعززت خبرته في الصحافة والأدب العربي حديثا وقديما. وكذلك من خلال إقامته في نيو دلهي وعمله في الإذاعة لعموم الهند درس الندوي العلوم السياسية، والاجتماعية ووسع ثقافته الإنجليزية ومعرفته عن سياسة الغرب ومجتمعاته وما حدث فيها من ثورات وانقلابات في مجالات الحياة الإنسانية. وهذه الخبرات تنعكس في كتبهم ومقالاتهم القيمة.

في سنة ١٩٧٣م. دعا خاله أبو الحسن علي الحسني الندوي إلى دار العلوم لندوة العلماء، فترك عمله في محطة الإذاعة ولبي دعوة خاله ومربييه ورجع إلى الدار بالثروة الضخمة والتجارب المحكمة حيث عين

أستاذ اللغة العربية وآدابها ثم عين مدير المعهد العالي للفكر الإسلامي والدعوة ثم عين سنة ٢٠٠٠م. عميدا لكلية اللغة العربية. وفي سنة ٢٠٠٦م. انتخب الشيخ الندوي رئيس الشؤون التعليمية لندوة العلماء، وذلك إثر وفاة رئيسها السابق الدكتور عبد الله عباس الندوي.

والجانب الآخر لحياته العملية هو في مجال الصحافة العربية الهندية حيث يعمل رئيس التحرير لجريدة 'الراند' ورئيس التحرير المساعد في مجلة 'البعث الإسلامي' الغراء الصادرتين من ندوة العلماء. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك أن الشيخ الندوي يتولى حاليا عدة مناصب إدارية وعلمية، منها: الأمين العام المساعد لمجلس الأمناء لرابطة الأدب الإسلامي العالمية، وسكرتير المجمع الإسلامي العلمي، ندوة العلماء لكانا، والرئيس العام لمدرسة فلاح المسلمين، أمين نجر، رائى بريلي، وعضو مجمع أبى الكلام آزاد لكانا، وعضو الهيئة الاستشارية لدار العلوم بستي، ونائب رئيس دار عرفات، رائى بريلي.

تلاميذه البارزون:

قد سبق ذكره أن الشيخ الندوي التحق بدار العلوم لندوة العلماء أستاذا في اللغة العربية سنة ١٩٧٣م. ومنذ ذلك الحين وإلى اليوم أي منذ أربعين عاما يكرس حياته لمهمة التدريس والتعليم مع مشغوليته الأخرى. فلهاذا عدد تلاميذه لا يحصى. ومن أشهرهم الأستاذ سلمان الحسني الندوي، و الدكتور علي أحمد الندوي، والدكتور أحمد أيوب، والدكتور ضياء الحسني الندوي، والدكتور شفيق الرحمن الندوي وغيرهم.

رحلاته العلمية:

قد اشترك الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسني الندوي في كثير من الندوات والمؤتمرات حول المناسبات العديدة التي أقيمت في الهند وخارجها، كما في مكة المكرمة، والمدينة المنورة، والرياض، وإستنبول، والقاهرة، وعمان، ولاهور، وتشاكناج، وجامعة أوكسفورد وقدم مقالاته العلمية، والأدبية، والفكرية.

وكذلك قام الشيخ الندوي برحلات علمية وسافر إلى جمهورية مصر العربية، وجمهورية اليمن العربية، والكويت، والإمارات العربية المتحدة، وبريطانيا، والمملكة العربية السعودية، والمملكة الأردنية الهاشمية، وباكستان، وبنجلاديش، ونيبال، وزار فيها الجامعات، والمدارس، وحضر الندوات، واللقاءات الأدبية والعلمية. وتشرف في رحلاته بزيارة الشخصيات العالمية البارزة، منها: الدكتور تقي الدين الهلالي، و الشيخ خليل العربي، ومحمد المبارك، والشيخ طلال الفاسي، والشيخ عبد العزيز بن باز، والشيخ أحمد الشرباصي، والدكتور معروف الدواليبي، والأستاذ محمد قطب، والمفتي أمين الحسيني، والدكتور كامل الشريف، والصحافي البارز مصطفى أمين، والشيخ علي طنطاوي، وبهجة البيطار، والشيخ عمر التلمساني، وشيخ الأزهر عبد الحليم، والشيخ يوسف القرضاوي، وأخذ من مجالستهم العاطفة الإسلامية، والذوق الإسلامي العالي، وسليقة الكتابة لخدمة الدعوة الإسلامية.

عاداته وأخلاقه:

إن الشيخ الندوي قد شرفه الله تعالى بأوصاف عديدة، من أهمها عاداته وأخلاقه الكريمة. قال رحمة الله الندوي⁵ يبين عاداته وأخلاقه النبيلة "لقد وجدته على أخلاق فاضلة نبيلة وعادات حسنة مرضية، فإنه دمث الأخلاق، لئى الجانب، لئى الكلام، وفيه مواسات ومواخات، وشعور بالغ بمسؤوليته، يحفظ الأمر الذي فوض إليه، أو العمل الذي يتعلق به، ولا ينساه، وفيه النصح لكل شخص. لا يخالط الناس كثيرا، بل يعيش منعزلا عنهم في أكثر الأحيان، ويتكلم فيما يعنيه، لا يكون في كلامه فضول ولا تقصير، عادته كالسلف، لا يخالف عاداته اليومية ولا يتخلف عنها، يقوم بكل عمل على الميعاد، ويواظب على الوقت مواظبة كبيرة.

⁵ (أستاذ اللغة العربية والفقه الإسلامي وأصوله في دار العلوم لندوة العلماء).

قال أيضا رأيته متواضعا جدا، يعظم كباره ويحترم أساتذته كثيرا، ويحرم الصغار والضعفاء، وهو كما قال الحسن البصريّ في أخلاق المؤمن وصفاته: "قوله شفاء، وصبره تقي، وسكوته فكرة، ومظهره عبرة، يخالط العلماء ليعلم، ويسكت بينهم ليسلم، ويتكلم ليغنم". لا يؤذى أحدا بقلمه ولا بلسانه، إذا استشاره أحد يشير عليه وبين صحه، وفيه خصال محمودة وصفات مقبولة. وهو صاحب فضل وكمال ونبوغ وبراعة".⁶

الجوائز التقديرية:

وقد تشرف الشيخ الندوي بالحصول على جائزة الرئيس الهندي التقديرية، وذلك تقديرا لجهوده المخلصة في مجال الأدب العربي الهندي واعترافا بشخصيته البارزة. ومنح أيضا عام ٢٠١٢م. جائزة التعليم والتربية لأساتذة دار العلوم لندوة العلماء الأقدمين المسنين، اعترافا بمكانته التعليمية والتربوية في الدار.

أعماله التأليفية:

إن الشيخ الندوي صاحب قلم علمي سلسال، قد نشر له إلى الآن حوالي عشرين كتابا بالعربية، وهذا بالإضافة إلى عدد من المقالات المنشورة في مجلة 'ثقافة الهند' الصادرة عن المجلس الهندي للعلاقات الثقافية بدلهي، وفي مجلة 'البعث الإسلامي' تحت عنوان 'صور وأوضاع'، ومقالات وافتتاحيات لجريدة 'الرائد'. ومن مؤلفاته المشهورة:

- ١- فضائل القرآن الكريم.
- ٢- فضائل الصلاة على النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم.
- (كلاهما للشيخ محمد زكريا الكاندلھوي. ترجمهما الشيخ الندوي من الأردية إلى العربية)
- ٣- الدين والعلوم العقلية.
- (وهو ترجمة كتاب للشيخ عبد الباري الندوي في الأردية. ونالت هذه الترجمة العربية شهرة واسعة بين الأوساط الدينية حتى نشرت مرارا من دار ابن حزم ببغروت).
- ٤- أدب الصحوة الإسلامية.
- ٥- الدعوة الإسلامية ومناهجها في الهند.
- ٦- حركة التعليم الإسلامي في الهند وتطور المنهج.
- ٧- تاريخ الأدب العربي، العسر الجاهلي.
- ٨- من صناعة الموت إلى صناعة القرارات.
- ٩- إلى نظام عالمي جديد.
- ١٠- حركة رسالة الإنسانية.
- ١١- الإمام أحمد بن عرفان الشهيد.
- ١٢- مصادر الأدب العربي.
- ١٣- أدب أهل القلوب.
- ١٤- المسحة الأدبية في كتابات الشيخ أبي الحسن على الحسني الندوي.
- ١٥- الشيخ أبو الحسن قائدًا حكيمًا.
- ١٦- مختصر الشمائل النبوية.
- ١٧- لمحات من السيرة النبوية والأدب النبوي.

⁶ مقابلة شخصية مع رحمة الله الندوي في الساعة التاسعة مساء من المؤرخة ١٩ سبتمبر ٢٠١٢م.

- ১৮- تاريخ الثقافة الإسلامية.
- ১৯- أعلام الأدب العربي في العصر الحديث.
- ২০- شعر الغيرة الإسلامية. (قيد الطبع)
- ২১- قضايا الفكر الإسلامي. (قيد الطبع)
- ২২- تاريخ النقد العربي. (قيد الطبع)
- ২৩- تاريخ الأدب العربي: العصر العباسي. (قيد الطبع)

منزلته في الصحافة العربية الهندية:

يعتبر الشيخ محمد واضح رشيد الحسني الندوي من رواد الصحافة العربية في الهند المعاصرة. وهو يعمل حالياً رئيس التحرير لجريدة 'الرائد' ورئيس التحرير المساعد في مجلة 'البعث الإسلامي' الغراء الصادرتين من ندوة العلماء. قد اشتهر وارتفع مكانه في الصحافة العربية الهندية بمقالاته المتسمة بعمق الموضوعات، وسلاسة الأسلوب، وسلامة التعبير المنشورة في مجلة 'البعث الإسلامي' تحت عنوان 'صور وأوضاع'، وافتتاحيات هاتفة لجريدة 'الرائد'. إنه يدرس قضايا العالم عامة وقضايا العالم الإسلامي خاصة دراسة عميقة، ونقدية، وتحليلية ويقدم بين القراء كصحافي خبير وغير متحيز أسبابها ثم يبين حلولها في ضوء القرآن والسنة النبوية - صلى الله عليه وسلم -. قد اعترف الدكتور سعيد الرحمن الأعظمي⁷ مكانته الرفيعة قائلاً: "وله براعة كبيرة في مجال الصحافة العربية وتجربة فريدة فيها منذ مدة طويلة، لايدانيه في ذلك أحد في الهند اليوم."⁸ وقال رحمة الله الندوي يبين منزلة الشيخ الندوي في الصحافة العربية الهندية: "إن منزلة الشيخ الندوي في الصحافة العربية الهندية لرفيعة، وهو يحتل على قمة عالية منها، لأن له ذوقاً رائعاً وشغفا زائداً فيها، وله اطلاع واسع، ونظر ثاقب حاد، وخبرة تامة، ودراسة موسعة راسخة للصور والأوضاع العالية، أراه لا مثيل له في لك أو قلماً يوجد له نظير في هذا الصدد."⁹

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⁷ رئيس التحرير لمجلة البعث الإسلامي.

⁸ الصحافة العربية نشئها وتطورها للدكتور سعيد الرحمن الأعظمي، ص: ۶۹.

⁹ مقابلة شخصية مع رحمة الله الندوي في الساعة التاسعة مساءً من المؤرخة ۱۹ سبتمبر ۲۰۱۲م.

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স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী ও নারীশিক্ষার সেকাল

(Swarnakumari Devi o Narisikshar Sekal)

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Abstract

The attempt of this paper is to show the contribution of Swarnakumari for the development and expansion of women education in her time. Being born as fifth daughter in a progressive family Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and elder sister of Rabindranath Tagore she herself knocked by barriers of conservative societies superstitions. Though she was a lady of an enlightened and reputed family yet it was not an easy task for doing something for the society especially for women hood. Despite all societal restrictions the first lady novelist in Bengali literature remarkably contributes for women, which are reflected in her works. She contributed much in almost all the branches of Bengali Literature like fiction, poems, novel, drama etc. In political field also for the benefit of the society especially for women she established a women organization called 'Sakhisamiti', which aimed to educate the poor women and to make them self-dependent by teaching some practical courses like tailoring, painting, embroidery etc.

স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবীর সময়কাল (১৮৫৬-১৯৩২)। সম্পূর্ণ ভারতবর্ষ তখন ব্রিটিশ-শাসনাধীন। ইংরেজদের কড়া শাসনে ভারতবর্ষের শিক্ষাদীক্ষা সমাজ ব্যবস্থায় একটি দাবুণ প্রভাব বিস্তার করেছে। আমাদের শিক্ষা-দীক্ষা, সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতি তখন চূড়ান্তভাবে বিপন্ন, ঠিক এমনই এক যুগসন্ধিক্ষণে উনিশ শতকের শেষার্ধ্বে কলকাতার নারীসমাজের অন্যতম নেত্রীস্থানীয়া স্বর্ণকুমারীর আবির্ভাব। তিনি নারীসমাজের অনেক কল্যাণকর দিকেরই ছিলেন পুরোধা। ১৮৯০ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে অনুষ্ঠিত কলকাতা কংগ্রেসের তিনিই ছিলেন প্রথম মহিলা প্রতিনিধি। ইংরেজিতে দেওয়া তাঁর ভাষণ শ্রোতাদের মুগ্ধ ও বিস্মিত করেছিল।

বস্তুতঃ ঠাকুর পরিবার নব্যবাংলার অভ্যুদয়ের ইতিহাসে এক বিরাট দায়িত্বপালন করেছেন। এই পরিবারের বহু প্রতিভাশালী মনীষী বাংলার শিক্ষা ও

সংস্কৃতির নানাদিক দিয়ে বাঙালিকে স্বাধ ও গৌরবান্বিত করেছেন। এই প্রতিভার পরিচয় এই পরিবারের নারীরাও দিয়েছেন। স্বর্ণকুমারী তাঁদের মধ্যে অন্যতম। তিনি ছিলেন ঋষি-কবি রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের জ্যেষ্ঠা-ভগিনী ও মহর্ষি দেবেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের পঞ্চম কন্যা। ১২৬৩ সালের ১৪ই ভাদ্র (ইং ১৮৫৬, ২৮শে আগষ্ট) তাঁর জন্ম হয়। বাল্যকালে স্বর্ণকুমারীর শিক্ষালাভ পিতৃগৃহেই হয় এবং বাংলা ও সংস্কৃতি ভাষায় বিশেষ ব্যুৎপত্তি লাভ করেন। এই পরিবারের অন্তঃপুরের মাহিলারাও বিশেষ শিক্ষিতা ছিলেন। বস্তুতঃ ঠাকুর পরিবারটিকে একটি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় বললে অতুক্তি হয় না। এই বৃহৎ পরিবারের কেউই সূর্য ছিলেন না। এরূপ পরিবারে জন্ম গ্রহণ করে স্বর্ণকুমারী শিক্ষায় পারদর্শিনী হয়ে উঠবেন তাতে আর বিচিত্র কি? স্বর্ণকুমারীর স্বরচিত 'সাহিত্যস্রোত' গ্রন্থে তৎকালীন সমাজের

একটি সুস্পষ্ট চিত্র ফুটে উঠেছে --- “আহার-বিহার পূজা-অর্চনার ন্যায় সেকালেও আমাদের অন্তঃপুরে (ঠাকুরবাড়ীর) লেখাপড়া মেয়েদের মধ্যে একটা নিয়মিত ক্রিয়ানুষ্ঠান ছিল। প্রতিদিন প্রভাতে গয়লানী যেমন দুগ্ধ লইয়া আসিত, মালিনী ফুল যোগাইত, দৈবঠাকুর পাঁজি পুঁথি হস্তে দৈনিক শুভাশুভ বলিতে থাকিতেন, তেমনি স্নানবিশুদ্ধা শুভবসনা গৌরী বৈষ্ণবী ঠাকুরাণী বিদ্যালোকে বিতরণার্থে অন্তঃপুরে আবির্ভূতা হইতেন। ইনি নিত্য সামান্য বিদ্যাবুদ্ধিসম্পন্না ছিলেন না। সংস্কৃতিবিদ্যা ইহার যথেষ্ট ব্যুৎপত্তি ছিল। অতএব বাংলাভাষা জানিতেন ইহা বলা বাহুল্য। উপরন্তু ইহার চমৎকার বর্ণনাশক্তি ছিল। কথকতা ক্ষমতায় ইনি সকলকে মোহিত করিতেন। যাঁহাদের বিদ্যালোভের ইচ্ছা নাও থাকিত তাঁহারাও বৈষ্ণবী ঠাকুরাণীর দেবদেবী বর্ণনা, প্রভাতবর্ণনা শুনিতো কৌতুহলী হইয়া পাঠগৃহে সমাগত হইতেন। বৈষ্ণবী আসিতেন অন্তঃপুরের চতুঃসীমাবন্ধ মহিলাদের জন্য। বালিকা, নববধূ ও বিবাহিতা বালিকা কন্যারা ইহারা কাছেই শিক্ষালাভ করিতেন। কিন্তু বাড়ীর অবিবাহিতা কন্যাগণ বালকদিগের সহিত একত্র অধ্যয়ন ও গুরুমহাশয়ের পাঠশালায় গমন করিত। ইহাতে আর কিছুই না হউক, বালক-বালিকাদিগের শিক্ষার ভিত্তি সমানভাবেই গঠিত হইত।”

“বৈষ্ণবী ঠাকুরাণীর নিকট প্রথম বাংলা শিক্ষার পর কিছুদিন একজন খ্রীষ্টান মিশনারী মহিলা আসিয়া ইংরেজী পড়াইয়া যাইতেন। মেয়ের শিক্ষা আশানুরূপ ফলপ্রদ বলিয়া পিতৃদেবের মনে হইল না। তারপর একজন অনাত্মীয় পুরুষ অন্তঃপুরে শিক্ষকতার কাজ লইয়া প্রথম প্রবেশ করিলেন। বোঁঠাকুরানী, তিনজন মাতুলানী, দিদি ও আমরা ছোট তিন বোন সকলেই তাঁহার নিকট অন্তঃপুরে পড়িতাম। অঙ্ক, সংস্কৃত, ইতিহাস, ভূগোল প্রভৃতি ইংরেজী স্কুলপাঠ্যপুস্তকই আমাদের পাঠ্য ছিল।”

তবে বাড়ীর পুরুষ সদস্যরা বিশেষ করে পিতা মহর্ষি দেবেন্দ্রনাথ ও ভাইদের নিকটও তিনি যথেষ্ট

উৎসাহ ও সাহায্য পেয়েছেন। তবে সর্বাপেক্ষা বেশি সাহায্য ও বড় প্রেরণা তিনি পেয়েছেন তাঁর স্বামী জনকীনাথ ঘোষালের কাছে। ১৮৬৮ খ্রীষ্টাব্দে নদীয়া জেলার দশমীগ্রামের সম্ভ্রান্ত কুলীন জমিদারবংশীয় জনকী নাথের সঙ্গে তিনি পরিণয়সূত্রে আবদ্ধ হন। দেশহিতৈষী কর্মীরূপে তিনি বিশেষ খ্যাতি অর্জন করেছিলেন। তাঁরই উৎসাহও অনুপ্রেরণায় স্বর্ণকুমারীর সাহিত্য রচনাও বিশেষভাবে বিকশিত হয়।

সঙ্গীতের প্রতিও তাঁর ছিল অত্যন্ত অনুরাগ। শৈশবের এই সঙ্গীতানুরূপই তাঁকে পরবর্তীকালে গান ও কবিতা রচনাতে উদ্বুদ্ধ করেছিল।

স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী আমাদের দেশে সর্বপ্রথম মহিলা ঔপন্যাসিক — যিনি ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীতে দেশজোড়া খ্যাতি লাভ করেছিলেন। উপন্যাস-লেখিকা ও মাসিক পত্রিকার সম্পাদিকা হিসেবে তিনি বাংলা সাহিত্যে যে অসামান্য অবদান রেখে গেছেন তা সত্যিই গৌরবের। তাঁর রচিত প্রথম উপন্যাস ‘দীপ নির্বাণ’।

স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী উপন্যাস, ছোটগল্প, নাটক, কবিতা, গান, বিদ্যালয়-পাঠ্যপুস্তক, প্রবন্ধ প্রভৃতি লিখে বাংলা সাহিত্যকে নানাদিক দিয়ে করেছেন সমৃদ্ধ। উপন্যাসের মধ্যে ‘দীপ নির্বাণ’, ‘স্নেহলতা’, ‘ছিন্নমুকুল’, ফুলের মালা, ‘ইমামবাড়ী’, ‘বিদ্রোহ’, ‘মেবাররাজ’, ‘কাহাকে’, ‘বিচিত্রা’, ‘স্বপ্নবাণী’, ‘মিলনরাত্রি’ প্রভৃতি বিখ্যাত। তাঁর প্রথম উপন্যাস ‘দীপনির্বাণ’ তাঁর আঠারো বৎসর বয়সের রচনা। তাঁর ছোটগল্পের বই ‘নবকাহিনী’, ‘মালতী’। নাটকের বই- ‘রাজকন্যা’, ‘দিব্যকমল’, ‘কনকদল’, ‘পাকচক্র’। কৌতুকনাট্য — ‘দেবকৌতুক’। কবিতাও গানের বই — ‘বসন্ত উৎসব’ ‘উৎসব-গাথা’ ইত্যাদি। বিদ্যালয় পাঠ্যবই — ‘বর্ণবোধ’, ‘ব্যাকরণ’, ‘বৈজ্ঞানিক গ্রন্থ’, ‘পৃথিবী’, ‘গল্পসল্প’, ‘কীর্তিকলাপ’, ‘সাহিত্যস্রোত’, ‘বাল্যবিনোদ’। ‘ফুলের মালা’ ও ‘কাহাকে’ উপন্যাস দুইটির ইংরেজী অনুবাদ প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। ‘দিব্যকমল’ নাটকটির ‘প্রিন্সেস কল্যাণী’ নামে জার্মান ভাষায় অনূদিত হয়েছে। তাঁর ‘সাহিত্যস্রোত’ ১ম খণ্ড

কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কর্তৃক ইন্টারমিডিয়েট পরীক্ষার পাঠ্যপুস্তক হিসেবে মনোনীত হয়। স্বর্ণকুমারীর সমাধিক খ্যাতি ঔপন্যাসিক হিসেবে।

‘ভারতী’ পত্রিকার সম্পাদনা তাঁর জীবনের অন্যতম উল্লেখযোগ্য ঘটনা। বস্তুতঃ মাসিক পত্রিকার সম্পাদনা ও প্রবর্তক হিসেবে যে কয়জন মুষ্টিমেয় প্রতিভাশালী ব্যক্তি এদেশে চিরস্মরণীয় হয়ে আছেন, স্বর্ণকুমারী দেবী তাঁদের অন্যতম। আবার যে কয়েকটি মাসিক পত্রিকা জগতে যশ ও খ্যাতি অর্জন করেছে ‘ভারতী’ তাঁদের অন্যতম। ‘ভারতী’ পত্রিকা দুইবারে দীর্ঘ আঠারো বৎসর কাল তিনি সুনাম ও দক্ষতার সঙ্গে পরিচালনা করেছিলেন। ‘ভারতী’ পত্রিকা থেকে বিদ্যায় গ্রহণকালে তিনি যে কথাগুলি লিখেছিলেন তা চিরস্মরণীয় ---

“পুরাতন চিরস্থায়ী নহে অথচ তাহার মৃত্যুও নাই, সে বর্তমানে নূতন। পিতামাতা সন্তানে জীবিত, পূর্বস্রোত পরবর্তী স্রোতে প্রবাহিত, অতীত ভবিষ্যতে সম্মিলিত। নূতন লীন হইতে না পারিলেই পুরাতনের প্রকৃত মৃত্যু, পুরাতনের প্রধান ধর্ম নূতনকে অনুগামী করা অর্থাৎ পথ দেখান, অন্যকথায় নূতনকে গঠিত করিয়া তোলা, ইহাতে যে সফলতা লাভ করে তাহার জীবন সার্থক। আমার বহুদিনব্যাপী সাহিত্যসেবার যদি এই উদ্দেশ্য কথঞ্চিৎ পরিমাণেও সার্থক হইয়া থাকে তবেই আমি ধন্য।”

স্বর্ণকুমারী জীবনের শেষদিন পর্যন্ত সাহিত্যচর্চা করে গেছেন। মৃত্যুর কিছুদিন পূর্বে তিনি ‘সাহিত্যস্রোত’ পুস্তকটি প্রকাশ করেন।

১৩৩৬ সালে সাহিত্য সম্মেলনের সভানেত্রীরূপে স্বর্ণকুমারী সুচারুরূপে সেই বিরাট সম্মেলনের কার্য পরিচালনা করেছিলেন। বাংলাসাহিত্যে তাঁর অপূর্ব প্রতিভার পুরস্কারস্বরূপ কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় তাঁকে ‘জগন্নারীণী’ স্মৃতিপদকে সম্মানিত করেছিলেন। কিছুকাল তিনি বঙ্গীয় থিয়োসফিকেল সোসাইটির মহিলা বিভাগের সভানেত্রী ছিলেন। ১৮৮৯তে কংগ্রেসের বোম্বাই

অধিবেশনে, ১৮৯০তে কংগ্রেসের কলিকাতা অধিবেশনে তিনি প্রতিনিধিত্ব করেছিলেন। নারীমজ্জালের প্রচেষ্টায়ও স্বর্ণকুমারী অগ্রণী ছিলেন। ১২৯৩ সালের বৈশাখ মাসে কলিকাতায় তিনি ‘সখিসমিতি’ নামে একটি মহিলাসমিতি গঠন করেন যার উদ্দেশ্য ছিল নারীসমাজের সর্বাঙ্গীন কল্যাণ সাধনা। ভারতীয় মহিলাদের মধ্যে বন্ধুভাবে মিলামিশার উৎসাহ প্রদান, তাঁদের মনে দেশের কল্যাণচিন্তা ও হিতৈষণার উদ্রেক, দরিদ্র হিন্দু বালিকাদের জন্য একটি নিকেতন স্থাপন করে তাদেরকে শিক্ষিত করে আত্মনির্ভরশীল ও সমাজসেবায় সমর্থ করা; উপযুক্ত শিক্ষায় শিক্ষিত করে তাদের অন্তঃপুর শিক্ষয়িত্রী নিযুক্ত করে নারীশিক্ষার বিস্তারসাধনে এবং ভারতীয় কলা ও পণ্যশিল্পের উন্নতিসাধনে সাহায্য করা এই সমিতির উদ্দেশ্য ছিল। এই সমিতির শুভপ্রভাবে ও পৃষ্ঠপোষকতায় আগে প্রতিবৎসর মহিলা শিল্পমেলা অনুষ্ঠান হতো। এই মেলা সম্পূর্ণভাবে মহিলারা চালাতেন। কেবল মহিলাদেরই এতে প্রবেশের অধিকার ছিল। সঙ্গীত ও নাট্যাভিনয় দ্বারা তাদের মনোরঞ্জন করা হতো।

নারীশিক্ষাবিস্তারেও সমাজগঠনে এবং সমাজ সংস্কারে এই মহীয়সী মহিলার অসামান্য অবদান কোনওদিনই ভুলার নয়। ১৯৩২এর ৩রা জুলাই ৭৫ বৎসর বয়সে তিনি পরলোকগমন করেন।

তথ্যসূত্র :-

১. বাংলার বিদুষী — শ্রী অনিল চন্দ্র রায়, প্রেসিডেন্সী লাইব্রেরী, কলিকাতা - ১২
২. স্মরণীয় যাঁরা (৫ম খণ্ড) পুনশ্চ ৯এ / নবীন কুণ্ডুলেন, কলিকাতা-৭০০০০৯
৩. বাংলা সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস (আধুনিক যুগ ১৮০০-১৯৬০) ইউনাইটেড বুক এজেন্সী, টি ৩১/বি কলেজ রো/কোলকাতা — ৭০০০০৯

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ভারতীয় সমাজ চেতনায় মনসা নাগিনী না নারী?

(Bharotiyo Somaj Chetonay Manasa Nagini Na Nari?)

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Abstract

In Indian philosophy woman is perceived as a benevolent force, an all-embracing, all enduring presence like the earth herself and is called the other name of sacrifice. Woman who choose to be different from this and is rebellious by nature is consided in the eyes of society, an outcast, a disgrace to her kind.

Manasa in 'Manasamangal Kabya' is one such exception. Hence in the eyes of society, she is cruel, conniving, a venomous being, completely inhuman. But if we go beyond the surface and delve deep into her world, she emerges as the eternal woman before our eyes as we come to meet in her a daughter, a wife, a mother ever so gracious. For she is not venomous by birth, she has been made so by her surroundings and near and dear ones. Life-long strife, torture and exploitation have made her vengeful and vicious. No one gave her space. She had to fight for every inch of the ground beneath her feet.

Had she not been cheated by life, she would have been gracious and kind like many others; she would have been a source of life

ভারতীয় জীবনধারায় নারী সম্পর্কে একটা সাধারণ ধারণা আমাদের মনে গেঁথে দেওয়া হয়েছে যে, নারী হবে সমাজ, পরিবার বা ব্যক্তিজীবনের ক্ষেত্রে মঞ্জালময়ী কল্যাণী, সে হবে ত্যাগের জ্বলন্ত প্রতিমূর্তি। নারী সম্বন্ধে এই ধারণাটি আমরা প্রায় বিশ শতকের মধ্যভাগ পর্যন্ত চলে আসতে দেখেছি। সেক্ষেত্রে নারীর প্রতি যত অন্যায়, অবিচারই হোক না কেন সে কোন প্রতিবাদ করবে না, নতমস্তকে মেনে নেবে সবকিছু। এই ছিল আমাদের সমাজের ভাবনা। কিন্তু কোন নারী যদি বিন্দুমাত্র এর ব্যতিক্রমী হয় অর্থাৎ নারী সম্পর্কে আমাদের প্রচলিত ভাবনাকে আঘাত করে থাকে তাহলে তাকে আমরা 'নারী জাতির কলঙ্ক' এই তকমাটি পরিয়ে দিই। কিন্তু যে মেয়ের জন্মলগ্নই অশ্বকারাচ্ছন্ন এবং বাকি জীবনও যাকে বিরুদ্ধ

পরিস্থিতির সঙ্গে লড়াই করে বাঁচতে হয়, সেই নারীকে নিষ্ঠুরা, ভয়ঙ্করী প্রভৃতি বিশেষণে বিভূষিত করা কতখানি যুক্তিসঙ্গত? আমরা যদি কন্যা, বধূ এবং মাতারূপে তার জীবনের বিভিন্ন পর্বগুলি সহমর্মিতার সঙ্গে পর্যবেক্ষণ করি তাহলে তার সম্পর্কে আমাদের প্রচলিত ধারণা পাটে যেতেও পারে।

দুর্ভাগ্য-পীড়িত নারী চরিত্রের শোভাযাত্রা রয়েছে 'মনসামঞ্জাল' কাব্যে। এই কাব্যের প্রথম নারী চরিত্র গঙ্গা দুর্ভাগা। দুর্ভাগা বেহুলা, সনকা। এমন কি এই কাব্যের নাম ভূমিকায় যিনি সেই মনসাই সবচেয়ে বড় দুর্ভাগা। দেবতাদের জন্যে রান্না করতে গিয়ে নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের মধ্যে ফিরতে না পারায় গঙ্গার স্বামী শাস্তনু তাকে বিনা অপরাধে পরিত্যাগ করেন। নিজের স্ত্রীকে ত্যাগ করার সময় শাস্তনু একবারও ভেবে দেখলেন না

সে কোথায় যাবে। বিবাহের পূর্বেই অকারণে বেহুলার উপর মনসার অভিষাপ বর্ষিত হয়েছে। বিয়ের রাতেই বাসর ঘরে সাপের কামড়ে তার স্বামী লখীন্দরের মৃত্যু ঘটেছে। কলার ভেলায় স্বামীর মৃতদেহ নিয়ে ভেসে গিয়েছে সে অনির্দিষ্টের পথে। মরুভূমিতে পরিণত হয়েছে তার জীবন। সনকা কোন পাপ না করেই তার সাত পুত্রকে হারিয়েছে। পুত্রহারা জননীর চোখের জলের সঙ্গে মিশেছে বিধবা পুত্রবধূদের চোখের জল।

একমাত্র গঙ্গা ছাড়া উপরোক্ত সকলেরই দুর্ভাগ্যের কারণ হ'ল মনসা। তাই 'মনসা' নামটি উচ্চারণের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আমাদের চোখের সামনে ভেসে ওঠে একটি অত্যন্ত ভয়ঙ্কর, হিংস্র, ক্রুর, কুটিল, নিষ্ঠুর, নীচমনা, অমানবিক মেয়ের ছবি। কিন্তু আমরা কি কখনও ভেবে দেখেছি যে, মনসা চরিত্রের এই নীচতা ও অমানবিকতার জন্যে কতখানি সে নিজে দায়ী? জন্ম মুহূর্ত থেকেই কি তার চরিত্র এরকম, না কি তার আত্মীয় পরিজন এবং পরিবেশ-পরিস্থিতিই করে তুলেছে তাকে নিষ্ঠুর এবং ভয়ঙ্কর? মনসার জীবনকে নিছক বাইরে থেকে দেখে বিচার না করে, যদি তার জীবনের একটু গভীরে অনুপ্রবেশ করা যায়; তাহলে হয়তো বা তার নাগিনী রূপের অন্তরালে এক চিরন্তন নারীকে আমরা খুঁজে পেতে পারি।

মনসার জন্মবৃত্তান্ত সম্বন্ধে নানারকম মত প্রচলিত আছে। কেউ কেউ বলেন শিবের তৃতীয় নয়ন থেকে অর্থাৎ তাঁর জ্ঞানবহি বা প্রজ্ঞাবহি থেকে মনসার জন্ম। শিবের মন থেকে জন্ম হয় বলে তার নাম মনসা। অন্যমতে কামোন্মত্ত শিবের ঔরসে তার জন্ম। কামোন্মত্ত শিবের বীর্য পদ্মপাতার উপর পড়ে এবং পদ্মপাতা থেকে তা পড়ে যায়পাতালে বাসুকি নাগের মাথার উপর। সেখানেই তার জন্ম---

মহাদেব পদ্ম তুলে পদ্মবনে বীর্য টলে
তাহা গেল পাতাল স্মগরি।
পাতালে বাসুকি লৈয়া বিধাতার স্থানে গিয়া
নির্ম্মাইল জয় বিষহরি।।

(কেতকাদাস)

পদ্মবনে জন্ম হওয়ায় মনসার অপর নাম পদ্মা। মনসা দেখতে ছিল অপূর্ব সুন্দরী, বাসুকি নাগ তাকে ভগ্নীম্নেহে গ্রহণ করে। আর এক মতে, কেয়াবনে জন্ম হওয়ায় তার নাম হয় কেতকা। এখন প্রশ্ন উঠতে পারে, এগুলির মধ্যে কোন মতটি গ্রহণযোগ্য? কেতকাদাস ক্ষেমানন্দ এবং বিজয়গুপ্ত মনসার জন্মবৃত্তান্তকে সামাজিক পরিপেক্ষিত থেকে ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন। আমাদেরও বাস্তব পরিপেক্ষিত থেকে ব্যাখ্যা করে এ সম্পর্কে সিদ্ধান্তে পৌছতে হবে। শিবের মন থেকে মনসার জন্ম এ ব্যাখ্যা পুরাণের। মনসা সাপের দেবী। সাপ থাকে ঝোপে-ঝাড়ো। সুতরাং কেয়াবন বা পদ্মবনেই মনসার জন্ম হওয়া স্বাভাবিক।

সুতরাং দেখা যাচ্ছে, দেবাদিদেব মহাদেবের সন্তান হ'ল মনসা। কিন্তু দেবতার সন্তান হওয়া সত্ত্বেও তার দেবলোকে স্থান হয় নি। একটা অবিশ্বাস্য বিকার থেকে তার জন্ম। এর মধ্যে কোন মহত্ব নেই। বিনা অপরাধে জন্ম মুহূর্তেই সে পিতা কর্তৃক পরিত্যক্ত হয়েছে। এরপর সে পরের বাড়িতে আশ্রয় পেয়েছে। মাতার স্নেহ সে কোনদিন পায় নি। উপরন্তু তাকে বলা হয় যে, সে যেন পদ্মবনে গিয়ে তার রূপ যৌবন দিয়ে পিতা শিবকে মুগ্ধ করে। তাই বাসুকি তাকে নানা আভরণে অপূর্ব সাজে সজ্জিত করে পদ্মবনে পাঠিয়ে দেয়---

নানা আভরণে যত ফনিগণে
সাজাল্য তাহার কায়া।

(কেতকাদাস, পৃ.৩৯৪)

কিন্তু এ তার পক্ষে আশীর্বাদ নয়, অভিষাপ। এরপর দেখা যায়, জন্মদাতা পিতা তাকে চিনতে পারেন নি। মনসাকে দেখে তার রূপে মুগ্ধ হয়ে শিব তাকে প্রণয় সম্ভাষণ করেছেন ---

শিব বলে কেবা তুমি কহ না সত্বরে।
কামে অচেতন হয়ে ধরিলেক করে।।
একি একি বলে দেবী হৈল এক পাশ।
তুমি পিতা আমি কন্যা ভাল জাতিনাশ।
পিতা হয়ে দুহিতারে হরিবে কেমনে।

কলঙ্ক হৈব সভ দেবতা ভুবনে ।।

(কেতকাদাস, পৃ. ৩৯৫)

‘বাপ হয়ে কন্যাকে প্রণয় সম্ভাষণ’- কি নিদারুণ তার
এই লজ্জা! কি দিয়ে ঢাকবে সে এই লজ্জাকে?

পরিচয় দেওয়ার পর শিব তাকে কন্যা বলে
স্বীকার করেন এবং তাকে ঘরে নিয়ে যেতে রাজি হন।
কিন্তু তাঁর এই স্বীকৃতি প্রকাশ্যে নয়, সকলের সামনে
তিনি মনসাকে কন্যা পরিচয়ে ঘরে নিয়ে যান নি।
লুকিয়ে ফুলের সাজিতে করে তিনি তাকে গৃহে নিয়ে
যান---

ভাবিয়া চিন্তিয়া শিব স্থির করে মতি।

পুষ্পের করভী মধ্যে থুইল পদ্মাবতী ।।

হেটে পুষ্প, উপরে পুষ্প দিয়া চারিভিতে।

মধ্যে লুকাইয়া পদ্মা থুইল অলঙ্কিতে ।।

(বিজয়গুপ্ত, পৃ. ১৫)

কেন এই গোপনীয়তা? কিন্তু এখানেই মনসার
বিড়ম্বনার শেষ নয়। চণ্ডী তাকে দেখে সতীন মনে
করে বিনাদোষে তার উপর অকথ্য অত্যাচার করে ---

খল খল হাসে দেবী হস্তে দিয়া তালি।

পুষ্পবনে গিয়া কার নারী করল চুরি ।।

.....

বুকে পৃষ্ঠে মারে দেবী বজ্র চাপড়।

মারণের ঘায় পদ্মা করে থরথর ।।

(বিজয়গুপ্ত, পৃ. ২৫)

মা (সৎমা) কন্যাকে সতীন সন্দেহ করে। এ
তার কতখানি লজ্জা! শুধু তাই নয়, রূপসী যুবতী
মনসার চোখ জ্বলন্ত অজ্জার দিয়ে চণ্ডী কানা করে
দেয়। নিদারুণ প্রহারের যন্ত্রণায় মনসা ছটফট করতে
থাকে ---

পরম সুন্দরী কন্যা অকুমারী বেশ।

চণ্ডীর প্রহারে তার তনু হইল শেষ ।।

(বিজয়গুপ্ত, পৃ. ২৬)

সম্পূর্ণ নির্দোষ হয়েও এই সমস্ত লাঞ্ছনা সে নতমুখে
সহ্য করেছে। কোন প্রতিবাদ পর্যন্ত করে নি। বারবার
সকাতরে চণ্ডীর কাছে ক্ষমা প্রার্থনা করেছে ---

বিনা অপরাধে সতাই কেন মার আমা।

প্রণতি করিয়া বলি তবু নাহি ক্ষমা ।।

(বিজয়গুপ্ত, পৃ. ২৭)

কিন্তু মনসার কোন আবেদনেই চণ্ডী সাড়া দেয় নাই। এ
হেন অবস্থায় আত্মরক্ষার্থে সে বাধ্য হয়েই চণ্ডীকে
দংশন করেছে। পরে শিব এসে পত্নীর শোকে মুহ্যমান
হয়ে পড়লে মনসা চণ্ডীকে পুনর্জীবন দান করেছে।
কিন্তু সমস্ত বৃত্তান্ত শুনেও শিব কোন প্রতিবাদ করেন
নি, দোষী চণ্ডীকে কোন শাস্তি দেন নি।

অতঃপর একটা বোঝাপড়ার মাধ্যমে মনসা
চণ্ডীর গৃহেই বাস করতে লাগল। বাধ্য হয়ে মনসাকে
ঘরে থাকতে দিলেও ভিতরে ভিতরে তার প্রতি চণ্ডীর
আক্রোশ কিন্তু বাড়তেই থাকে। সে সুযোগের অপেক্ষায়
থাকে। ইতিমধ্যে মনসার সঙ্গে জরৎকারু মূনির বিয়ে
হওয়ায় তার নারী জীবনে সবচেয়ে বড় অভিশাপ নেমে
আসে। দেব সমাজে মনসাকে কেউ বিয়ে করতে রাজি
না হওয়ায় শিব বৃন্দ জরৎকারু মূনির সঙ্গে পূর্ণযৌবনা
মনসার বিয়ে দেন। বিগত যৌবন এবং ব্রহ্মচারী মুনি
মনসার কাম-বাসনাকে পরিতৃপ্ত তো করলেনই না,
উপরন্তু বাসররাত না পোহাতেই তাকে পরিচারিকার
মত আদেশ করতে থাকেন ---

রাত্রি শেষ হইয়া আসে নাহি হয় উষা।

গজাভীর হইতে মোরে আনিয়া দেও কুশা ।।

(বিজয়গুপ্ত, পৃ. ৪১)

বাসররাতে গজাভীরে কুশা আনতে যাওয়া একটি
মেয়ের পক্ষে যে কতখানি লজ্জাজনক, মুনি তা
একবারও ভেবে দেখলেন না। স্বভাবতই মনসা তার
এই আদেশ মানতে অস্বীকৃত হয়। কিন্তু মুনি তখন
তাকে বাপ তুলে গালি দিতে থাকলে মনসা ক্রুদ্ধ হয়ে
তাকে আঘাত করে এবং জরৎকারু মূর্খু হয়ে পড়েন।
কিন্তু স্বামী যতই অত্যাচারী হোক না কেন কোন স্ত্রী-ই
তার স্বামীর মৃত্যু চাইতে পারে না। তাই রাগের মাথায়

একাজ করলেও পরে মনসা তার স্বামীকে বাঁচিয়ে দেয় এবং জরৎকারু তখন মনসাকে মাতা হওয়ার বর দিয়ে তাকে ত্যাগ করে চলে যান। কন্যা হিসেবে তার জীবন পূর্বেই ব্যর্থ হয়েছিল, এখন বধূ এবং মাতা হিসেবেও মনসার জীবন ব্যর্থ হয়ে যায়। কারণ তার সন্তানের জন্মও স্বাভাবিকভাবে নয়।

সুযোগ-সম্প্রদায়ী চণ্ডী এই অজুহাতে মনসাকে ঘর থেকে তাড়াবার জন্যে উঠেপড়ে লেগে গেল। শিবকে সে স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দিল যে, এই স্বামী পরিত্যক্তা মেয়ের সঙ্গে বাস করা তার পক্ষে অসম্ভব। তিনি যদি মনসাকে ত্যাগ না করেন তাহলে সে-ই কার্তিক-গণেশকে নিয়ে বাপের বাড়ি চলে যাবে ---

অতি কোপে কহে দেবী শিবের গোচর।

কন্যা লয়ে থাক তুমি হয়ে স্বতন্তর।।

.....

নাগজাতি কন্যা তব, মোর কন্যা নাই।

দুই পুত্র লইয়া আমি বাপের বাড়ি যাই।।

মোর সঙ্গে কেমনে থাকিবে পদ্মাবতী।

আপন প্রকৃতি-দোষে ছাড়ি গেল পতি।।

(বিজয়গুপ্ত, পৃ.৪৮)

শুধু তাই নয় ---

অযশ না গণে পদ্মা ধর্মে নাহি অঙ্ক।

জরৎকারু মুনি মারিয়া রাখিল কলঙ্ক।।

(বিজয়গুপ্ত, পৃ.৪৯)

সব শুনে শিব চণ্ডীর দাবি মেনে নিলেন, কোন প্রতিবাদ পর্যন্ত করলেন না। কারণ চণ্ডী মুখরা। তাই শান্তি দিলেন নির্দোষ অবলা হতভাগা কন্যাকে---

মনসারে ডাকিয়া বলেন মহেশ্বর।

“বনবাসে দিব তোমা, চলহ সত্বর।।”

(বিজয়গুপ্ত, পৃ.৫০)

বাপের গৃহে তার স্থান হ’ল না। শিব তাকে বিসর্জন দিয়ে এলেন গৃহ থেকে বহু যোজন দূরে জঙ্গলের মধ্যে নির্জন সিঁজুয়া পর্বতে। এমন কি তার আত্মরক্ষার পর্যন্ত কোন ব্যবস্থা করলেন না। একবারও ভেবে দেখলেন

না সুন্দরী যুবতী কন্যা একাকী ঐ নির্জন পর্বতে কি করে থাকবে। তার খাওয়া পরারও কোন ব্যবস্থা তিনি করলেন না। এমন কি বিনাদোষে লাঞ্ছিতা নতমুখী মনসা যখন ঘর থেকে বেরিয়ে আসে তখন চণ্ডী তাকে চরম অপমান করে একখানা একহাত লম্বা গামছা দেয় পরিধান করার জন্যে। তাতেও পিতা নীরব দর্শক হয়ে থাকেন। অগত্যা অসহায় মনসা সিঁজুয়া পর্বতে একাই থাকতে রাজি হ’ল। সে ভাবল অন্তত স্বাধীনতাটুকু তার থাকল এখানে। কিন্তু তাও তার ভাগ্যে সইল না। চণ্ডীর ভয়ে সূর্যাস্তের পূর্বেই শিবকে ঘরে ফিরতে হবে। তাই তিনি দ্রুত পথ হাঁটতে শুরু করলেন। ফলে তাঁর দেহ থেকে ঘাম নির্গত হ’ল এবং সেই ঘাম থেকে জন্ম হ’ল নেতর। জন্মের পর ‘পিতা পিতা’ করে সে শিবের পিছনে ছুটতে লাগল। শিব তখন তার পরিচয় জিজ্ঞাসা করলে সে তার জন্মবৃত্তান্ত বলল। তখন শিব ভাবলেন, এক মেয়েকে এই সিঁজুয়া পর্বতে রেখে এলেন, এখন আর এক মেয়ের দৌরাড্য! মেয়েদের ঝামেলা থেকে কি তাঁর বাঁচার কোন উপায় নেই। অতঃপর নেতকে তিনি আবার সিঁজুয়া পর্বতে মনসার কাছে নিয়ে গেলেন। মনসাকে বললেন, “এ তোমার সহচরী রূপে তোমার কাছে থাকবে। এর কথা তুমি মেনে চলবে।” অর্থাৎ যে অবাধ বিচরণের স্বাধীনতাটুকু সে পাবে ভেবেছিল তাও এখন হরণ করা হ’ল।

আমাদের মনে কি এখন এই প্রশ্ন জাগে না যে, সুকুমার বৃত্তি অনুশীলন করার কোন সুযোগই যার জীবনে ঘটে নাই, সমগ্র জীবনব্যাপী যে বিড়ম্বিত, নরকের মধ্যে যার জন্ম এবং বেড়ে ওঠা; কী করে হবে সে নমনীয়, স্নেহশীল? নিজের বাসরঘর যার ভেঙে গেছে, সে কি করে দেবে অন্যের বাসরঘর সাজিয়ে? যার ভাঙারে শুধু বিষই রয়েছে সে তো বিষই উদ্দীর্ণ করবে। চিরকাল নিজে সে নির্যাতিত হয়েছে বলেই অপরকে নির্যাতিত করেছে। সমগ্র জীবন ধরে আক্রান্ত হতে হতে সে হয়ে উঠেছে ভীষণ, ভয়ঙ্কর। কাজেই এখন যদি সে আগ বাড়িয়ে কাউকে আক্রমণ করে বা তার উপর আজীবনব্যাপী অন্যায়ের প্রতিশোধ নিতে

চায় তবে তা তার চরিত্রের উপযোগীই হবে। তাই দেখা যায়, সমুদ্র মন্থনের বিষপানে মৃত শিবকে বাঁচানোর জন্যে গণেশ যখন তাকে নিতে আসে তখন মনসা তাকে বলে যে পিতা তাকে কন্যা বলে কোন মর্যাদা দেয় নি, তাকে গৃহে স্থান দেয় নি, পিতার কোন কর্তব্য করে নি, এমন কি পিতা হয়ে যে কন্যাকে প্রেম নিবেদন করে সেই পিতার মৃত্যুই তার কাছে শ্রেয়। তাঁকে বাঁচানোর কোন প্রয়োজন তার নেই। সবচেয়ে বড় কথা যে সৎমা চণ্ডী তার জীবনের এই পরিণতির জন্যে দায়ী, শিবের মৃত্যুতে সেই চণ্ডী আজ বিধবা হতে চলেছে ভেবে তার অভিমানী মন বলে উঠেছে ---

বিষপানে মরিল মহেশ মোর বাপ।

চন্ডিকা রঙিকা হৈল ঘুচিল সন্তাপ।।

(কেতকাদাস, পৃ.৩৫)

বাবার মৃত্যুতে মনসার এই আচরণ যদিও খুবই স্বাভাবিক, তথাপি বাবা যত অন্যায়ই করুক না কেন কোন মেয়েই কখনো বাবার মৃত্যু কামনা করতে পারে না। তাই অভিমান করে মুখে যাই বলুক না কেন, শেষ পর্যন্ত মনসা শিবকে ঠিকই বাঁচিয়ে দিয়েছে। শুধু মনসা কেন, মনসার জায়গায় অন্য যে কোন মেয়ে হলেও কি, বা শুধু মেয়ে কেন, যে কোন ছেলে হলেও কি এ হেন পরিস্থিতিতে ঐ একই রকম উক্তি করত না?

বিনাদোষে মনসার নিজের বাসরঘর ভেঙে গেছে। তাই সে নির্দোষ বেহুলার বাসরঘর ভেঙে দিয়েছে। অনুনয়-বিনয়ের মাধ্যমে সে চাঁদসদাগরের পূজা পায় নি। তাই সে চাঁদ সদাগরের উপর অত্যাচার করে তাকে বাধ্য করেছে তার পূজা করতে। একটি অত্যাচারী, নিষ্ঠুর, ভয়ঙ্কর রমণীতে পরিণত হয়েছে সে। মনসার এই ভীষণ, ভয়ঙ্কর স্বভাবের জন্যে ব্যক্তিগতভাবে তাকে শুধু দায়ী করা যায় না। কারণ জন্মসূত্রে সে ভীষণ নয়, নিজের আত্মীয়রাই তাকে করে তুলেছে ভীষণ। যে তার কেউ নয় সেই বাসুকির কাছ থেকে যে ভগ্নীশ্নেহটুকু সে পেয়েছে, নিজের পিতার কাছ থেকে সে তা পায় নি। বিনায়ুন্ধে কেউ তাকে এক ইঞ্চি জায়গাও ছেড়ে দেয় নি। ফলে যুদ্ধ করতে করতে

তার স্বভাব হয়ে উঠেছে আক্রমণাত্মক। তার প্রাকৃতিক পরিবেশ, তার জীবনের পরিস্থিতি, তার আত্মীয়-স্বজনই তাকে নারী থেকে নাগিনী করে তুলেছে। জীবন যদি তার সঙ্গে বিশ্বাসঘাতকতা না করত তাহলে সে আর পাঁচটা মেয়ের মতই স্নেহময়ী নারী হতে পারত, বিষময়ী নাগিনীতে পরিণত হত না। সুতরাং আপাতদৃষ্টিতে মনসাকে ব্যক্তিগতভাবে তার ভয়ঙ্কর স্বভাবের জন্যে দায়ী করা গেলেও প্রকৃত কারণ বিশ্লেষণ করলে দেখা যায় যে এজন্যে সে দায়ী নয়, দায়ী তার বিড়ম্বিত জীবন।

সহায়ক গ্রন্থাবলী :-

১. বাইশ কবির মনসা-মজল বা বাইশা - ড. শ্রী আশুতোষ ভট্টাচার্য সম্পাদিত ও সংকলিত, (পরিবর্ধিত দ্বিতীয় সংস্করণ), কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ১৯৬২।
২. কেতকাদাস ক্ষেমানন্দ রচিত মনসা-মজল, প্রথম খণ্ড, — শ্রী যতীন্দ্রমোহন ভট্টাচার্য সম্পাদিত কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ১৯৪৯।
৩. বিজয়গুপ্তের মনসামজল — প্যারীমোহন দাশগুপ্ত কর্তৃক সংগৃহীত ও সুরেশচন্দ্র ঘোষ কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত, কলিকাতা, ১৩৩৭।
৪. মধ্যযুগের বাংলা কাব্যে নারী চরিত্র — ড. শম্ভুনাথ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়, পুস্তক বিপণি, কলিকাতা — ৯, ১৯৯১।

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বিভূতিভূষণ : ইছামতীর ভিন্নধারা

(Bibhutibhushan: Ichamatir Bhinno Dhara)

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Abstract

Bibhutibhushan Bondopadhyay is a prominent writer of Bengali literature. When India as well as Bengal was going through an unconvy situation owing to the influence of World War-II Bibhutibhushan appeared with new quiet, natural plot of nature. 'Pather Panchali' is the first novel written by Bibhutibhushan. The novel 'Ichhamati' is also widely appreciated by the readers just like his first novel. Some part of this novel was published in the monthly magazine 'Abhyuday' and in the month of January, year 1950 it is published in the book form. In 'Ichhamati' Bibhutibhushan Bondopadhyay has described the quiet, natural landscape and also reflected the socio-economic situation of the villages of Bengal very artistically.

বহু বাংলা কথাসাহিত্য বিশ্বে ‘পথের পাঁচালী’ দিয়ে বিভূতিভূষণ এর উপন্যাস লেখার যাত্রা শুরু। তাঁর সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির মধ্যে ‘পথের পাঁচালীর’ মতো ‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাসটি পাঠক সমাজের কাছে বিশেষ সমাদৃত। উপন্যাসটির কিছু অংশ প্রথমে ‘অভ্যুদয়’ নামে একটি মাসিক পত্রিকায় ধারাবাহিকভাবে প্রকাশিত হবার পর ১৯৫০ সালের জানুয়ারিতে গ্রন্থকারে প্রকাশিত হয়। উপন্যাসটির জন্য বিভূতিভূষণ ‘রবীন্দ্রপুরস্কার’ও পেয়েছিলেন। ‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাসটি বিভূতিভূষণের শেষ জীবনে লেখা। বিভূতিভূষণ দীর্ঘদিন ধরেই ‘ইছামতী’ লেখার পরিকল্পনা তাঁর মনে পোষণ করেছিলেন। ‘স্মৃতির রেখা’ নামক দিনলিপিতে লিখেছেন,

“ঠাণ্ডা জলে নাইতে-নাইতে ভাবছিলাম এ আমাদের গ্রামের ইছামতী নদী। আমি একটা ছবি বেশ মনে করতে পারি — এইরকম ধূ ধূ বালিয়াড়ি, পাহাড় নয়, শান্ত, ছোট ন্মিখ

ইছামতীর দুপাড় ভেঁড়ে ঝোপে-ঝোপে কত বন কুসুম, কত ফুলে ভরা ঘেঁটবন গাছপালা, গাঙশালিকের বাসা, সবুজ তৃণাচ্ছাদিত মাঠ। গাঁয়ে গাঁয়ে গ্রামের ঘাট, আকন্দ ফুল। গত পাঁচশত বৎসর ধরে কত ফুল ঝরে পড়েছে কত পাখি, কত বনঝোপ আসছে যাচ্ছে, ন্মিখ পাটা — শেওলার গন্ধ বার হয়, জেলেরা জাল ফেলে, ধারে ধারে কত গৃহস্থের বাড়ী। কত হাসি-কান্না মেলা। আজ পাঁচশত বছর ধরে কত গৃহস্থ এল, কত বৎসরের পরে বৃন্দাবন্থায় তার শ্মশানযাত্রা হ’ল এ ঠাণ্ডা জলের কিনারাতেই, এ বাঁশবনের খাটের নীচেই। -----এদের গল্প লিখবো, নাম হবে ইছামতী।”

ব্যারাকপুর গ্রামের পাশ দিয়ে প্রবাহিত ইছামতীর দুইতীরে বসতি স্থাপন করা মানুষের সুখ-দুঃখ,

সমাজজীবন এবং নীলকুঠি ও নীলচাষ সংক্রান্ত নানা ঘটনার চিত্র লিপিবদ্ধ ‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাসে।

‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাসে বিভূতিভূষণ মানুষের সত্যিকারের ইতিহাস লিখতে চেয়েছেন। যে ইতিহাস রাজা-রাজড়ার জীবন কাহিনি নয়। যুগ-যুগ ধরে সাধারণ মানুষের সুখ-দুঃখের যে অলিখিত ইতিহাস ইছামতীর মতো বহমান। বিভূতিভূষণ লিখতে চেয়েছেন সে সব ইতিহাস।

“সেই সব বাণী, সেই সব ইতিহাস আমাদের আসল জাতীয় ইতিহাস। মূক জনগণের ইতিহাস, রাজা-রাজড়াদের বিজয় কাহিনি নয়।”

‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাসটি বিভূতিভূষণের জন্মভূমি ও পল্লী প্রকৃতির প্রতি অগাধ ভালোবাসার পরিচায়ক। ‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাসের সঙ্গে দীনবন্ধু মিত্রের ‘নীলদর্পণ’ নাটকের কিছুটা সাদৃশ্য লক্ষিত হয়। সুসাহিত্যিক অন্নদাশংকর রায় ‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাস প্রসঙ্গে “বিভূতিভূষণকে যেমন দেখেছি” নিবন্ধে লিখেছেন ----- “তাঁর শেষ উপন্যাস একপ্রকার কামনাপুর। বহুকালের কামনা জীবনে ও শিল্পে পরিপূর্ণ হয়। বৃন্দ বয়সে সংসার প্রবেশ ও পুত্রলাভ। সে এক পরম উপলব্ধি। সাহিত্য তাকে তিনি পাকা ফসলের মতো গোলায় তুলে রেখেছেন। তাছাড়া ইছামতী নদীকে নিয়ে এপিক উপন্যাস লেখা তাঁর চিরদিনের স্বাদ। নদী এখানে জীবনপ্রবাহের প্রতীক। কাল প্রবাহের প্রতীক। ----- তাছাড়া ইছামতী আর একখানা নীলদর্পণ।”

‘ইছামতী’ ও ‘নীলদর্পণ’ উপন্যাস দুটির পটভূমি একই মোল্লাহাটি নীলকুঠি। দীনবন্ধু মিত্র ও বিভূতিভূষণের গ্রামের কাছে এই মোল্লাহাটি। এই দুটি উপন্যাসে ঘটনা ‘চাষীদের ওপর নীলকর সাহেবদের অত্যাচার’। ভালো জমিতে চাষিরা নীল চাষ করতে রাজী না হলে নীলকর সাহেবদের অত্যাচার প্রত্যক্ষ করেছিলেন তাই তার উপন্যাসে অত্যাচারের তীব্রতা চরমভাবে প্রকাশিত অন্যদিকে বিভূতিভূষণ জন্মের

আগেই নীলকর সাহেবরা ভারতবর্ষ ছেড়ে তাদের দেশে ফিরে যান। তিনি মোল্লাহাটির ধ্বংসাবশেষ দেখেন ও গ্রামের বৃন্দ-বৃন্দাদের মুখ থেকে নীলকর সাহেবদের কাহিনি শুনছিলেন। তাঁর উপন্যাসে ‘নীলদর্পণের’ মতো নীলকর সাহেবদের কাহিনী বিস্তৃতভাবে বর্ণিত নয়। নর-নারীর প্রেম-প্রীতি, গ্রামের বিভিন্ন উৎসব অনুষ্ঠান, তীর্থ যাত্রার বর্ণনা, গৃহস্থের সুখ-দুঃখ মিশ্রিত জীবনলেখ্য, গ্রাম্য-ডাকাতির কাহিনি, আধ্যাত্মিকতা ও নিসর্গপ্রীতি প্রভৃতি দৃকপাত হয় ‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাসে। বিভূতিভূষণ দিনলিপিতে বলেছেন -----

“জগতে অসংখ্য আনন্দের ভাণ্ডার উন্মুক্ত আছে। গাছপালা, ফুল, পাখি, উদার, মাঠঘাট, সময়, নক্ষত্র, সন্ধ্যা, জ্যোৎস্নারাত্রি, অস্ত সূর্যের আলোয় রাঙা নদীতীর, আলোকময়ী উদার শূন্য — এসব থেকে এমন সব বিপুল, অব্যক্ত, আনন্দ, অনন্তের উদার মহিমা প্রাণে আসতে পারে --- সহস্র বৎসর ধরে তুচ্ছ জাগতিক বস্তু নিয়ে মত্ত থাকলেও সে বিরাট অসীম, শান্ত উল্লাসের অস্তিত্ব সম্বন্ধেই কোনো জ্ঞান পৌঁছয় না। জগতের শতকরা নিরানব্বই জন লোক ঐ আনন্দের অস্তিত্ব সম্বন্ধে মৃত্যুদিন পর্যন্ত অনভিজ্ঞই থেকে যায় — শতবর্ষজীবী হলেও পায় না। সাহিত্যিকারের কাজ হচ্ছে এই আনন্দের বার্তা সর্বসাধারণের প্রাণে পৌঁছে দেওয়া।”

বিভূতিভূষণের এ ভাবনার সার্থক প্রকাশ ঘটেছে প্রথম গল্প ‘উপেক্ষিতা’ থেকে আরম্ভ করে শেষপর্বে লেখা ‘ইছামতীতে’ও। ‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাস নদীসংশ্লিষ্ট মানব জীবনের সুখ-দুঃখের কাহিনির সঙ্গে প্রকৃতির মনোগ্রাহী দৃশ্যকে উপস্থাপন করেছেন। উপন্যাসটির প্রারম্ভেই বিভূতিভূষণ বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন ইছামতীর তীরবর্তী অঞ্চল গুলিতে ভগবানের অপূর্ব সৃষ্টি প্রকৃতির মনোহর প্রচ্ছদ। ইছামতীর দুইতীরে বনবনানীতে সবুজের সমারোহ, পক্ষী-কাকলীতে মুখর।

“নৌকা করে চলে যেও চাঁদুড়িয়ার ঘাট পর্যন্ত — দেখতে পাবে দুধারে পলতে মাদার গাছের লালফুল, জলজ বন্যেবুড়োর ঝোপ, পানার দাম, বুনো

তিংপল্লা লতার হলুদে ফুলের শোভা, কোথাও উঁচু পাড়ে প্রাচীন বট-অশ্বথের ছায়াভরা উলুটি-বাঁচড়া বৈঁচি ঝোপ, বাঁশঝাড়, গাঙশালিখের গর্ত, সুকুমার লতাবিতান। গাঙের পাড়ে লোকের বসতি কম, শুধুই দূর্বাঘাসের সবুজ চরভূমি, শুধুই খো বালির ঘাট, বন কুসুমে ভর্তি ঝোপ, বিহঙ্গা-কাকলী-মুখর বনান্তসথলী। গ্রামের ঘাটে কোথাও দু'দশখানা ডিঙি নৌকা বাঁধা রয়েছে। কচিং উঁচু শিমূল গাছের আঁকাবাঁকা শুকনো ডালে শকুনি বসে আছে সমধিস্থ অবস্থায় — ঠিক যেন চীনা চিত্রকারের অঙ্কিত ছবি। -----”

প্রকৃতির এমন অনুপুঙ্খ বর্ণনা অন্য কোথাও পাওয়া সত্যিই দুর্লভ। উপন্যাসের প্রথমে নালুপাল পান-সুপুরির মোঠ মাথায় করে হাটে চলেছে। বিকেলবেলা ফিঙে পাখি বাবলা গাছের ফুলে ভর্তিডালে বসে আছে নীলুপাল সুপুরির মোট নামিয়ে বিশ্রাম নেয় বনপতি স্নিগ্ধ ছায়া বিশাল বটগাছের নীচে। এখানে প্রকৃতিই হয়ে ওঠে পথিক জনের চিরন্তন নিরাপদ আশ্রয়স্থল। এছাড়া উপন্যাসে ইচ্ছামতীর তীরে পাঁচপোতার বাঁওড়ের ধারে লেখক কোলসওয়াদি গ্রাণ্ট সাহেবের ভ্রমণের দৃশ্যের যে বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন তাতে গ্রাম বাংলার নয়ন মনোহর প্রকৃতির রূপকেই উপস্থাপন করেছেন বিভূতিভূষণ। গ্রাণ্ট সাহেব দেখতে পান-----

“বন্ধনহীন উদাস মাঠের ফুল ভর্তি সোঁদালি গাছের রূপ, ফুল ফোটা বন ঝোপে আজান বন-পক্ষীর কাকলী।”

শরৎকালের আগমনে আউশধানের ক্ষেত ফসল কাটার জন্য শূণ্য পড়ে আছে। তিৎপল্লার হলুদ ফুল বনে বনে ফুটে আছে। উপন্যাসের নায়ক ভবানী বাঁড়ুয়াকে প্রকৃতির এই মুক্ত প্রসারতা আকৃষ্ট করে। মত্ৰী, নিলু, বিলুর রসিকতায় ভবানীর মন অপ্রসন্ন হলে বা আধ্যাত্ম সাধনার জন্য সে সব সময়ই আশ্রয় নেয় প্রকৃতি মায়ের কোলে। ভবানী নিলু-বিলুদের রসিকতার পর বাড়ি থেকে বেড়িয়ে যে নিভৃত ছায়াভরা বটতলায় এসে বসে সে গাছে দূর দূরান্ত থেকে যাযাবর পাখি

শামকূট, হাঁস, সিল্লি, চিল শকুন এসে বাসা বাঁধে। উপন্যাসে ভবানী যখন তাঁর খোকাকে মুড়কি খাওয়ানোর জন্য নিয়ে যাচ্ছিলেন নৌকা করে, এখানে বিভূতিভূষণ বর্ষার ইচ্ছামতীর তীরের প্রকৃতির যে বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন তা অত্যন্ত মনোগ্রাহী।

রামকানাই কবিরাজের গ্রন্থের চারপাশে প্রকৃতির অপূর্ণ দৃশ্য দেখা যায়। গ্রীষ্মকালে ঘরের পেছনে সোঁদালি গাছে ফুল দোলতে থাকে। বিকেলবেলা গুরু রামকানাই আর শিষ্য নিমাই চক্রবর্তী যখন অধ্যয়নরত তখন বাঁশবনে পিড়িং পিড়িং করে ফিঙে পাখি ডাকতে থাকে। এছাড়া ইচ্ছামতীর জলে নিস্তারিণীর অবগাহন দৃশ্যে বিভূতিভূষণ গ্রামবাংলার শান্ত প্রকৃতির মনোমোহন রূপকে এঁকেছেন, যেখানে

“কূলে-কূলে ভরা ভাদ্রের নদী, তিৎপল্লার বড় বড় হলুদ ফুল ঝোঁপের মাথা আলো করেছে, ওপারের চরে সাদা কাশের গুচ্ছ দুলছে সোনালী হাওয়ায়, নীল বনকলমীর ফুলে ছেয়ে গিয়েছে সাইবাবলা আর কেঁয়ে কাঁকার জঙ্গাল, জলের ধারে বনকচুর ফুলের শিষ -----”

প্রাকৃতিক উপাদানের নিবিড় বিন্যাসে সমগ্র ‘ইচ্ছামতী’ উপন্যাসটি বিভূতিভূষণের নিসর্গপ্ৰীতির যথার্থ পরিচয় বহন করে। পরিশেষে নারায়ণ গাঙ্গোপাধ্যায় এর ভাষায় বলা যায় --- “আত্মসাহিত্য প্রশান্তিতে এক করুণার স্নিগ্ধতায় বাংলাসাহিত্যে বিভূতিভূষণ ব্যক্তিত্ব স্পষ্ট চিহ্নিত সমুদ্রের মাঝখানে তাঁর দ্বীপটিকে দেখতে এবং চিনতে ভুল হয় না। তাঁর অস্তিবাদী জগতে প্রবেশ করতে পারলে, তাঁর আরণ্যক ধ্যানলোকে মগ্ন হতে পারলে এখনো এমন শান্তি আর সান্ত্বনা মেলে যার সম্মান অন্যত্র দুর্লভ।”

‘ইচ্ছামতী’ উপন্যাসে ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীর শেষ ভাগের পল্লীবাংলার সমাজজীবন ও আর্থসামাজিক অবস্থার নিখুঁত চিত্র পাওয়া যায়। তৎকালীন সমাজে পুরুষরা পড়াশুনা করলেও মেয়েদের জীবন অশিক্ষার অন্ধকারে আচ্ছন্ন ছিল। মেয়েরা সে বধু বা কন্যা যেই

হন না কেন তাঁর ঘর গৃহস্থালীর কাজকর্মেই দিনরাত্রি অতিবাহিত হত। মেয়েদের পড়াশুনাকে সুনজরে দেখা হত না কিন্তু কিছু-কিছু পুরুষদের ঐকান্তিক প্রচেষ্টায় নারীরা শিক্ষার্জন করতে পারে। উপন্যাসের নায়ক ভবানী বাঁড়ুয়ের মধ্যে দেখা যায় স্ত্রীশিক্ষায় প্রবল আগ্রহ। পড়াশুনায় আগ্রহ দেখতে পেয়ে ভবানী বাঁড়ুয়ে স্ত্রী তিলুকে শিক্ষা দিতে শুরু করেন। পড়াশুনায় উৎসাহিত করে তুলতে তিলুকে কলকাতার মেয়েদের পড়বার জন্য বেথুন সাহেবের স্কুলের কথা বলেন। স্ত্রী বিলুও নিলুর পড়াশুনার প্রতি কোনো আগ্রহ না থাকায় তাদের উৎসাহিত করতে ভবানী বলেন ---- “মেয়েদের লেখাপড়া শেখার দরকার, শুধু কাঁঠাল খেলে মানব জীবন বৃথা চলে যাবে। না দেখলে কিছু, না বুঝলে কিছু।”

সে সময় পুরুষরা গ্রাম বাংলার ‘মনসামঙ্গল’, ‘চণ্ডীমঙ্গল’, ‘শিবায়াণ’, ‘রামায়ণ’, ‘মহাভারত’ পড়তেন এছাড়া কখনও এ কাব্যগুলি পালাকারে গাওয়া হলে শুনতেন। তখনও গ্রাম বাংলায় বেদ-উপনিষদের চর্চা হত না। তবে দু-একজন ব্যতিক্রমী পুরুষদের দেখতে পাওয়া যায় রামকানাই কবিরাজের মতো। তিনি তাঁর ছাত্রদের শাস্ত্র সম্পর্কে শিক্ষা দিতেন। তখন পর্যন্তই গ্রামবাংলার মানুষের সাংস্কৃতিক জীবন লোককাব্য বা কাহিনির মধ্যে সীমিত ছিল।

তৎকালীন গ্রামবাংলার অধিকাংশ লোকই কৃষিজীবী ছিল। বিভূতিভূষণ বলেছেন — “চন্দ্র চট্টোয়্যে গ্রামের আর একজন মাতব্বর লোক। সন্তর-বাহান্তর বিঘে ব্রহ্মোত্তর জমির আয় থেকে ভালোভাবেই সংসার চলে যায়।” এছাড়া ফণী চক্রবর্তী, নীলমণি সমাদ্দার, মহরালি মণ্ডল, প্রভৃতির সম্পন্ন গৃহস্থ। তাঁদের বাড়িতে কেউ চাকুরীজীবী নয়। দিনের বেলা তারা চাষাবাদের দেখাশুনা করেন এবং সন্ধ্যাকালে চণ্ডীমণ্ডপে নানা বিষয়ে আলোচনা ও তাস, দাবা খেলে সময় অতিবাহিত করেন। রাজরামের মতো নিষ্ঠুর নীলকুটির দেওয়ানদের দেখা যায় যারা প্রজাপীড়ন, খুন, নিজস্বার্থ সিদ্ধির জন্য নির্ধিধায় প্রজাদের ঘর-বাড়ি

জ্বালিয়ে দিতে সিদ্ধহস্ত এছাড়া নীলকুটির আমীন প্রসন্ন চক্রবর্তীর মতো কিছু ব্যক্তিদেরও চোখে পড়ে যারা নিজের ক্ষমতার অপব্যবহার করে। অন্যদিকে নালুপালের মতো দরিদ্র, কর্মনিষ্ঠ ব্যক্তিদেরও দেখা যায়। আবার দেখা যায় তিলুর মতো কিছু পতিভক্ত পরায়ণা নারী ও নিস্তারিণীর মতো কুলবধু, যে প্রচলিত সংস্কার তথা প্রচলিত অত্যাচারের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদ করে।

গ্রামবাংলায় বিভিন্ন অনুষ্ঠান হতে দেখা যায়। গ্রামের লোকেরা এক অন্যের সহযোগিতায় উৎসবগুলি সুন্দরভাবে পরিচালিত করে। কোন উৎসব উপলক্ষ্যে সাধ্যমত গ্রামের মানুষদের নিমন্ত্রণ করে ভুরিভোজন করানো হয়। উপন্যাসে দেখা যায় ভবানী বাঁড়ুয়ে তার পুত্রের জন্মদিনে গ্রামের লোকদের ভুরিভোজন করান। এছাড়া ভাদ্রমাসে ‘তেরের পালুনি’, নামে তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ নারীদের উৎসব গ্রাম বাংলায় হয়ে থাকে। সেদিন বহুপ্রাচীন জিউলি ও কদম গাছের নীচে বনভোজনে মিলিত হয় গ্রামের নারীরা। বাড়ী থেকে যে যার সাধ্যমত খাওয়ার জিনিষ নিয়ে আসে। আর সেখানে সকলে আদান-প্রদানের মাধ্যমে সকলে একসঙ্গে খায়। উপন্যাসে দেখা যায় নিলুপালের স্ত্রী তুলসী, ভবানী বাঁড়ুয়ের স্ত্রী তিলু-বিলু এছাড়া নিস্তারিণী ও গ্রাম অন্যান্য নারীরা একত্রে বনভোজন করে। বিভূতিভূষণ গ্রাম বাংলার সমাজ জীবন ছাড়াও পরিবর্তমান অর্থনৈতিক জীবনের নিখুঁত চিত্র উপস্থাপন করেছেন আলোচ্য উপন্যাসে। উপন্যাসটিতে দেখা যায় নালুপাল মামার বাড়ীতে মামীদের অবহেলায় বড় হয়েছে। সে তাঁর মাসীদের কাছ থেকে মাত্র সতেরো টাকা নিয়ে আরম্ভ করেছিল পান-সুপুরির ব্যবসা। এখানে ধীরে-ধীরে ব্যবসা মুখীনতার আভাস পাওয়া যায়।

নালুপালের দোকানে একটি মেয়ে দু’পয়সার তেল আর নুন কিনতে আসে। আরেকটি মেয়ে পয়সার বদলে সে কড়ি নেবে। সে সময় পয়সাও কড়ির দুটিরই প্রচলন ছিল। মেয়েটি কড়ি নিতে চায় কারণ সবাইপুরের হাটে সে শাক-সজি কিনবে। তখন এক

পয়সার বদলে ২০টি কড়ি পাওয়া যায়। নালুপালের দোকানের সম্মুখের রাস্তা দিয়ে একটি মেয়ে শাক নিয়ে যেতে দেখে নালুপাল ছ'কড়া দিতে চাইলে মেয়েটি রাজি হয়নি। তারপর দবিরুদ্দি লাউ নিয়ে যেতে দেখে লাউয়ের দাম জিজ্ঞেস করায় জানতে পারে দু'পয়সা এক একটা। শেষপর্যন্ত দরাদরি করে এক পয়সা পাঁচ কড়ায় দুটো লাউ কিনে নেয় নালুপাল। বৃন্দ হরিনাপিত লাউয়ের দাম শুনে বলে মোল্লাহাটির হাটে এধরনের লাউ সে জনসন সাহেবের আমলে ছ'কড়া দিয়ে কিনেছে। এছাড়া হরিনাপিত জানায় পার্শ্বনাথ ঘোষের বড় ছেলের বউভাতের এক টাকা দামে নানা ধরনের একগাড়ি শাকসজি আসে। একথার প্রেক্ষিতে অঙ্কুর জেলে দীর্ঘ নিঃশ্বাস ফেলে বলে ---

“না। মানুষের খাবার দিন চলে যাচ্ছে, আর খাবে কি? এই সবাইপুরের দুধ ছিল ট্যাকায় বাইশ সের চব্বিশ সের। এখন আঠারো সেরের বেশি কেউ দিতে চায় না।”

অঙ্কুর মাঝির ছেলে বড় মাছ ধরেছিল, সে মাছটি বিক্রি করে সাড়ে তিন টাকায়। যারা মাছটি কিনেছে সকলেই অসুখী। কেননা অঙ্কুর মাঝিকে এরা বেশি ঠকাতে পারেনি। এই মাছের দাম হাটে যা তার থেকে কম পেয়েছে আনা আটেক। উপন্যাসে এসব বর্ণনার মধ্যদিয়ে তৎকালীন গ্রামবাংলার নিত্য প্রয়োজনীয় জিনিষ পত্রের দাম সম্পর্কে কিছুটা ধারণা করা যেতে পারে।

গ্রামবাংলার সকলেই কৃষিনির্ভর। গ্রামের দু-একজন চাকুরীজীবী রয়েছে। রূপচাঁদ মুখুয়োর বড় ছেলে যতীন। সে মাইনে পায় ৫.০০ (পাঁচ) টাকা। আর রাজারামের দূর সম্পর্কে ভাইপো শম্ভুরায় আমুটি কোম্পানীতে চাকুরী করে। যদিও তাঁর মাইনে কত জানা যায়নি। সে সময় গ্রাম বাংলায় গৃহস্থ ছাড়া হলো পেকে বা অধরমুচি নামে কিছু দস্যু ডাকাতদের দেখতে পাওয়া যায় যারা গ্রামের ধনীব্যক্তিদের বাড়ি লুণ্ঠ করে প্রাপ্ত অর্থের বিনিময়ে অন্ন যোগায়। তারা খুন, ডাকাতি

করে জেলে যায়। সেখানেই ভাল থাকে তারা। কেননা সেখানে ভাতের চিন্তামুক্ত। অধরমুচি বলেন ----

“গেরামে যা দেখছি, চালের কাঠা দু'আনা দশ পয়সা। তাতে আর কিছুদিন গারদে থাকলি হতো ভাল। খাবো কেমন করে অত আক্ৰাচালের ভাত? ছেলে-পিলেরে বা কি খাওয়াবো।”

কালের পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে গ্রাম বাংলার অর্থনৈতিক জীবনে মুদ্রা ব্যবহারের পরিবর্তন এল। পূর্বের মতো হাটে আর কড়ি চলছে না। তিলু স্বামী ভবানী বাঁড়ুয়াকে বলছে--- “আজকাল আবার কড়ি চলচে না হাটে। বলে, আমার পয়সা দাও।”

এভাবে ‘ইছামতী’ উপন্যাসে বিভূতিভূষণ গ্রামবাংলার প্রত্যেক রূপকে তাঁর তুলিকার কুশলীটানে এঁকেছেন।

সহায়ক গ্রন্থঃ

১. মধ্যাহ্ন থেকে সায়াহ্ন (বিংশ শতাব্দীর বাংলা উপন্যাস) — অরুণকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়, প্রথম প্রকাশ — জুলাই ১৯৯৪, দেজ পাবলিশিং।
২. বাংলা সাহিত্য পরিচয়, ড. পার্থ চট্টোপাধ্যায়, প্রথম প্রকাশ — ২৬শে আগষ্ট ১৯৯৯।
৩. বাংলা সাহিত্যের সম্পূর্ণ ইতিবৃত্ত, ড. অসিত কুমার বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, প্রথম প্রকাশ — ১৯৬৬, মডার্ন বুক এজেন্সী প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড।
৪. বিভূতিভূষণের ইছামতী, অধ্যাপক মদনমোহন সরকার, প্রথম প্রকাশ — ১৩৯৫, প্রজ্ঞা বিকাশের পক্ষে।
৫. শ্রী সৌরেন বিশ্বাস, ‘বিভূতিভূষণের উপন্যাসে শতবর্ষের বাংলাদেশ’, বাংলা একাডেমী, ঢাকা (আষাঢ় ১৩৯৭) জুলাই ১৯৯০।

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অশ্বচরিত : প্রবহমান সময়ের কাহিনি

'Amar Mittrer 'Aswacharita': Probahoman somoyer Kahini'

Rupdatta Roy

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Abstract

For last three decades in the last century modernist sensibility were changing rapidly as the Indian life was opening up to the post modernist tendencies. As a result, Bengali novels were undergoing metamorphic changes. Bengali novelists started to look beyond the established example of novels. Amar Mitra, one of the tactful narrators of this time reconstructed history and tradition in his novels. He introduced the magic present inside the reality and the new dimension of myth from the womb of historical part. In the novel 'Aswacharita' (1979) the rhythm of time and space is entirely distorted when adherence of empty back horse and the charioteer after the great departure of Siddhartha, the prime of Kapilabastu, is connected with the nuclear bombing in Pakistan on the day of Buddha Purnima and this creates a diverse implication of multidimensional time.

উপন্যাসের বিষয় ও শৈলী নিয়ে নানা সময়ে নানা পরীক্ষা নিরীক্ষা হয়েছে। বিশেষতঃ, বিশ শতকের শেষ তিন দশক থেকে এই প্রবণতা বৃদ্ধি পেয়েছে। কারণ বলাবাহুল্য যে, সময় যখন চূড়ান্ত অস্থির তখন স্বাভাবিকভাবেই সেই অস্থির সময়কে আত্মস্থ করতে গিয়ে উপন্যাসিকদের গ্রহণ করতে হয়েছে ভিন্ন ভিন্ন পথ ও পাথেয়। তাই পূর্ব-নির্ধারিত উপন্যাসের সংজ্ঞা আজ আর যথাযথ থাকছে না। তবে একটি যথার্থ উপন্যাসের ক্ষেত্রে যে বিষয়টি অপরিবর্তনীয়, তা আজকের বিশিষ্ট তাত্ত্বিক তপোধীর ভট্টাচার্যের ভাষায় বলা যায় -----

“.....এ সম্পর্কে সম্ভবত দ্বিমত নাই যে প্রতিপাদ্য বিষয় ও প্রকরণ জুড়ে থাকবে সমকালীন সমাজের বয়ান। এই বয়ানে আলো পড়বে চারদিক থেকে। তবু বর্তমান নিছক বর্তমান থাকবে না উপন্যাসে, হয়ে উঠবে

ভবিষ্যৎ অতীতের সন্দর্ভ। ঘটনা হবে এমন যাকে সময়ের চিহ্নায়ক বলে আমরা অনায়াসে বুঝে নিতে পারব।”

(পৃঃ ১৩২-১৩৩/আখ্যানের স্বরাস্তর)

২০০১ সালের বঙ্কিম পুরস্কারজয়ী অমর মিত্রের ‘অশ্বচরিত’ (১৯৯৯) নামক উপন্যাসটি সমালোচক কথিত এই বাক্যগুলি যথার্থ নিদর্শন। খণ্ডসময়ের সামাজিক বয়ান থেকে উঠে আসা চিহ্নায়কগুলি যেমন আখ্যানে স্থান খুঁজে নেয়, তেমনি যে সময় অতীত বর্তমান ছুঁয়ে ভবিষ্যৎ পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত সেই মহাসময়ের সুরটিও আখ্যানটি আত্মস্থ করে। বুদ্ধপূর্ণিমার রাতে হারিয়ে যাওয়া এক হোটেলওয়ালার ঘোড়ার অনুসন্ধানের সূত্রে উঠে আসে বিভিন্ন মানুষের জীবন কথা, আসে বর্তমান থেকে ইতিহাস হয়ে প্রাগৈতিহাসিক সময়ের কথা, বাদ যায় না ভবিষ্যৎও। প্রত্নকথা, আদিকল্প, কিংবদন্তী, ধূপদী সাহিত্য, কল্পনা,

প্রতীক সব গ্রথিত হয়ে যায় উপন্যাসটির কোষে কোষে। উপন্যাসটির প্রচ্ছদপটে আভাস দেওয়া হয় খণ্ডসময় ও মহাসময়ের এই দ্বিরালাপ সম্বন্ধে ----

“কপিলাবস্তুর রাজপুত্রের মহানিষ্ক্রমণের পর শূন্যপৃষ্ঠ ঘোড়া কণ্ঠক আর শূন্য হৃদয় সারথী ছন্দক পাশাপাশি বেঁচেছিল এতকাল। বুদ্ধপূর্ণিমার রাতে ঘোড়াটি নিরুদ্দেশে গেল সারথীকে ফেলে। সারথী সেই ঘোড়াকে খুঁজতে খুঁজতে চলে যায় কিংবদন্তীর জাহাজঘাটা থেকে রকেট উৎক্ষেপন কেন্দ্রে, সেখান থেকে সুবর্ণরেখা আর বজ্রোপসাগরের মিলনস্থলে জেগে ওঠা চরভূমিতে, যেখানে পলাতক ঘোড়ারা যায় স্বপ্নতাড়িত হয়ে। শূন্যপৃষ্ঠ সেই অশ্ব যেন অশ্বমেধের ঘোড়া, তাকে অনুসরণ করছে নিঃশব্দ হত্যাকারী, নিশ্চপে। নিরুদ্দিষ্ট সেই ঘোড়া অতিক্রম করে ভারতবর্ষ, তেজস্ক্রিয় বাতাসে ঢাকা মরুপ্রান্তর, নদীতীর অরণ্য, পাহাড়। ‘অশ্বচরিত’ সেই বিরল গোত্রের ধ্রুবদী উপন্যাস যার চালচিত্র সমকালীন এই ভারতবর্ষ। এই উপন্যাস জীবন এবং মৃত্যুর। প্রেমের এবং অপ্রেমের। অমর মিত্র তাঁর উপন্যাসে সমকালের কথা বলেন, চিরকালের কথা বলেন। এই উপন্যাসে বিপন্ন এই উপমহাদেশ তার ছায়া ফেলেছে দীর্ঘ।”

(অশ্বচরিত/প্রচ্ছদপট)

তিনশ বিয়াল্লিশ পৃষ্ঠার এই বিশালকার উপন্যাসটির বীজ ১৯৮২ সালে লিখিত আরেকটি উপন্যাসে রয়ে গেছে। ‘শিলাদিত্য’ পত্রিকায় ‘বিভ্রম’ নামে একটি উপন্যাসে প্রকাশিত হয়েছিল, যার বিষয়বস্তু ছিল সমুদ্রতীর আর একটি নিরুদ্দিষ্ট ঘোড়া। একটি সাক্ষাৎকারে তিনি জানিয়েছেন যে কর্মসূত্রে দীর্ঘ প্রায় একবছর ১৯৮০ সালে তাঁকে থাকতে হয়। সেই সময় সে হোটেলের তিনি ছিলেন সেই হোটেলওয়ালার ঘোড়া হারিয়ে যায়। ভানুদাস নামের একটি লোক সেই ঘোড়ার খোঁজ করে বেড়াচ্ছিল, লেখক নিজেও মাঝে

মাঝে তার সঙ্গে বেরিয়ে পড়তেন। কিন্তু ‘বিভ্রম’কে নিয়ে আখ্যানকারের একটু দ্বিধা ছিল তাই দীর্ঘদিন উপন্যাসটি দুই মলাটের ভিতর প্রকাশের অপেক্ষায় রয়ে যায়। হয়তো এভাবেই রয়ে যেত। কিন্তু ১৯৯৮ সালে ঘটে যায় একটা বড়ো ঘটনা। ঘটনাটি ছিল বুদ্ধপূর্ণিমার রাতে পোখরানে পরমাণু বোমার সফল পরীক্ষা এবং সেই ঘটনাকে কেন্দ্র করে দক্ষিণপন্থী গোঁড়া জাতীয়তাবাদ উস্কে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা, ক্ষমতাসীন রাজনৈতিক গোষ্ঠীর সম্পূর্ণ নিজেদের স্বার্থে। লেখককে এ ঘটনা নাড়া দিয়েছিল প্রচণ্ড। এই ঘটনা ‘বিভ্রম’কে কীভাবে ‘অশ্বচরিত’-এ পরিণত করল তা জানিয়ে লেখক এভাবে -----

“বিভ্রম’ নিয়ে আমি নিজেই বিভ্রমে ছিলাম তাই এটিকে দুই মলাটে আনতে পারিনি। ...আমি মাঝে মধ্যে ছাপা অংশটি নেড়েচেড়ে দেখতাম। কীভাবে লেখাটি সম্পূর্ণ করে তোলা যায়। ১৯৯৮-এ পরমাণু বিস্ফোরণ হয়। ভারত এবং পাকিস্তান দুই দেশের রাষ্ট্রনায়করা খেলনার মতো পাঁচটি আর সাতটি পরমাণু বোমা ফাটিয়ে নিজেদের জাহির করলেন। যেন এ পাড়ার মাস্তান পাঁচটি বোমা ফেলল। মাসল্ দেখাল, ও পাড়ার তা দেখে সাতটি বোমা ফাটিয়ে মাসল্ দেখাল। ‘অশ্বচরিত’ লেখা শুরু করি সেই মে-মাসে।”(পৃঃ ৩৩৫/অমৃতলোক/মার্চ ২০০৩)

আঠারো বছর আগের সেই পলাতক ঘোড়ার সঙ্গে মিশে গেল সমসাময়িক ঘটনা, আর তাকে লেখক উপস্থাপিত করলেন মহাসময়ের কাঠামোতে। সেই সময় ‘ধ্রুবপুত্র’ লেখার জন্যে সংস্কৃত সাহিত্যের অধ্যয়ন করেছিলেন কথাকার। অশ্ব ঘোষের ‘বুদ্ধচরিত’ থেকে রাজকুমার গৌতমের ঘোড়া কণ্ঠক আর সারথী ছন্দক চলে এল আখ্যানে। বাস্তব ও পরাবাস্তব মিশে গিয়ে সময় ও পরিসরের সীমানা, ভূগোল ও ইতিহাসের কাঁটাতারের বেড়া ভেঙে দিল। বাস্তবের নির্দিষ্ট পরিসর ভেঙে দিল ইন্দ্রজাল -----

“ছিল পক্ষিরাজ, হয়ে গেল কণ্ঠক। ছিল
ভানুচরণ, ভানুদাস হয়ে গেল ছন্দক।” (পৃঃ
১/অশ্চরিত)

ঔপন্যাসিক কেবলমাত্র যথাপ্রাপ্ত সময়ের
লিপিকার নন। তাঁর কাজ যেভাবে সাধারণ মানুষের
সামনে প্রতীয়মান হচ্ছে তাকে লিপিবদ্ধ করাও নয়।
ঔপন্যাসিক আমাদের দেখিয়ে দেন সময় ও সমাজের
এই দিকটা, যা আমরা দেখিনি বা দেখলেও সেই
দেখায় রয়েছে একদেশদর্শিতার ভুল। যেহেতু, অনেক
ক্ষেত্রেই প্রতাপ, বিশ্বপুঞ্জিবাদ নিজেদের সুবিধার্থে
ছদ্মসত্য তৈরী করে, ফলে অনেকক্ষেত্রেই সেই
ছদ্মমায়াজ ভুলে থাকার সম্ভাবনারয়ে যায়। দ্রষ্টাচক্ষু
সম্পন্ন সৎ ঔপন্যাসিকের কাজ সময়ের মধ্যে থাকা
ইতি ও নেতি পাঠকের সামনে তুলে ধরা। মুখ থেকে
বিজ্ঞাপনের মুখোশ খুলে দেওয়া। অমর মিত্র একজন
যথার্থ ঔপন্যাসিক হিসেবে তাই করেন। জীবন যে বহু
বিপ্রতীপের আশ্চর্য সমাহার তা জানান তিনি তাঁর
পাঠকদের। হোটেলওয়ালা শ্রীপতি মাইতির নিরুদ্দিষ্ট
ঘোড়ার অনুসন্ধানের প্রয়াসে আবিষ্কৃত হতে থাকে
জীবনের নানা দিক, উদ্ঘাটিত হতে থাকে সময়ের
নানা বিভজ্জা।

বন্ধ হয়ে যাওয়া পাটকলের শ্রমিক ঘোড়াটির
তত্ত্বাবধায়ক ভানুদাস ঘোড়াটির খোঁজে ঘুরতে থাকে
নানা জায়গা, সেই জায়গার মানুষগুলো উঠে আসে
আখ্যানে এই অনুসন্ধানের সূত্রে উঠে আসে নানা তথ্য।
ভানুদাস যে ছিল নিতান্তই এক জুটমিলের শ্রমিক, সে
নানা মানুষের জীবন দেখতে দেখতে আর সেই
তথ্যগুলোকে জুড়তে জুড়তে যেন হয়ে ওঠে দার্শনিক।
সে নিজেকে বলে ছন্দক আর শ্রীপতি মাইতির
ঘোড়াটিকে বলে কণ্ঠক। তার কল্পনার সূত্রে আখ্যানে
গ্রথিত হয় সেই মহামানবের কথা যিনি আড়াই হাজার
বছর আগে সর্ব মানবের চির শান্তি, চির আনন্দের পথ
সন্ধান করার উদ্দেশ্যে ত্যাগ করেছিলেন পরিবার
পরিজন, সিংহাসন রাজ্য। ‘অশ্চরিত’ শুরু হয়েছে
‘বুন্ধচরিত’-এর অষ্টমসর্গের চতুর্দশ শ্লোক দিয়ে।

কুমার ফিরে এসেছেন ভেবে সন নারীরা জানালা দিয়ে
বাইরে তাকিয়ে শূন্যপৃষ্ঠ ঘোড়াকে ফিরে আসতে দেখে
জানালা বন্ধ করে বিলাপ করতে লাগল। এই অর্থ
সম্বলিত শ্লোকটি ‘অশ্চরিত’ —এর প্রারম্ভে ব্যবহৃত
হলেও, তা আখ্যানভাগ থেকে আলাদাই রয়ে যেত যদি
না ভানুদাসের মাধ্যমে তা তৎকালীন
সময়োপযোগীভাবে ব্যবহৃত হত। লেখক বিষয়টিকে
বিস্তৃত করে জানান -----

“ভানুচরণ নিজের পরিচয় দেয় ছন্দক বলে।
বলে বেড়ায় হারানো ঘোড়াটি কণ্ঠক। ...
উপন্যাসে সে একটি বন্ধ কারখানার শ্রমিক। ...
আসলে ভানুদাসের স্মৃতি এই সভ্যতার স্মৃতি।
তার বয়স আড়াই হাজার বছর। সে যেন বৃদ্ধ
প্রপিতামহ। আরও পূর্বপুরুষের কেউ। এ
উপন্যাসে প্রাচীন ভারত এসেছে ভানুদাসের
স্মৃতিতে।”

(ছন্দক আর কণ্ঠকের কথা/সুন্দর বৈশাখ ১৪০৭)

কিন্তু এ আখ্যান কেবল স্মৃতির আখ্যান হয়েও
থাকে না, মহাসময়ের স্রোতে খণ্ডসময়ের
উপলব্ধিকে ধৌত করে। বুদ্ধের প্রসঙ্গ অত্যন্ত
প্রাসঙ্গিক হয়ে পড়ে যখন পরমাণু বোমার পরীক্ষামূলক
বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানো হয় বুদ্ধপূর্ণিমার রাতে। আর
রাষ্ট্রপ্রভুরা পরমাণু প্রকল্পের সাফল্যকে চিহ্নিত করে
Buddha Smiles বলে। যে মহামানব মৃত্যুর অন্ত
খুঁজতে চেয়েছিলেন, তাঁর জন্ম ও নির্বাণ লাভের দিন
এবং তাঁর নাম ব্যবহৃত হয় মারণ যজ্ঞের পরীক্ষণের
দিন ও নাম হিসেবে। পক্ষীরাজ কণ্ঠকও পালায়
সেদিন। ভানু তার দীর্ঘ মানস ও ভৌগোলিক যাত্রার
অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে বলে যায় ----

“বলতে বলতে আচমকা থামে, থেমে যেতে
তার কণ্ঠ হতে জেগে ওঠে অন্য এক স্বর।
আসলে কণ্ঠক তো জানতো মৃত্যুকে জয় করতে
বেরিয়েছেন কুমার, রাজপুত্র মৃত্যুকে নিঃশেষ
করতে তাঁর অশ্চটিকে শূন্যপৃষ্ঠ করে রেখে
গিয়েছিলেন, এখন মরণের ছায়া দেখে সে কি

কুমারের সন্ধানে গেল, তা না হলে কোথায়, এ মরণে কি কুমারেরও নিস্তার নেই?”

(পৃঃ ২০৯/অস্ফটিক)

সত্যিই তো কুমারেরও নিস্তার নেই, তাই তো তাঁর নাম এভাবে ব্যবহৃত হয় দক্ষিণপন্থী ক্ষমতাসীন প্রভুদের হাতে। ছড়িয়ে পড়তে থাকে যুদ্ধের বাতাবরণ। ছড়িয়ে দেওয়া হয় সাম্প্রদায়িক বিষ।

ভারতবর্ষে গণতন্ত্র স্থাপিত হয়েছিল এক কল্যাণকামী রাষ্ট্র নির্মাণের লক্ষ্যে। স্বাধীনতা এবং গণতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠার কিছুদিনের মধ্যেই এক ক্রান্তদর্শী কবি লিখেছিলেন---

“কিন্তু সেই শুভ রাষ্ট্র ঢের দূরে আজ।

চারিদিকে বিকলাঙ্গা অন্ধ ভিড়---অলীক প্রয়ান।

মহন্তর শেষ হলে পুনরায় নব মহন্তর;

যুদ্ধ শেষ হয়ে গেলে নতুন যুদ্ধের নান্দীরোল;

মানুষের লালসার শেষ নেই;”

(এই সব দিনরাত্রি/জীবনানন্দ দাশের শ্রেষ্ঠ কবিতা / পৃঃ ১১০)

অনেক বছর পেরিয়ে গিয়েও এই অবস্থার খুব পরিবর্তন হয়নি। দারিদ্র্য, বেকারত্ব, অশিক্ষা, শিশুমৃত্যু, শিশুশ্রম কোনোটিই এখন পর্যন্ত দেশ থেকে সম্পূর্ণ দূরীকরণ সম্ভব হয়নি। লঙ্কায় গেলে যেমন সবাই রাবণ হয়ে যায়, তেমনি যেন যেই ক্ষমতায় বসছে সেই নিজের আখের গোছাতে ব্যস্ত হয়ে পড়েছে। দেশের আপামর জনসাধারণের কথা ভাবার সময় তাদের কোথায়। যখন সাধারণ মানুষ নিজেদের সমস্যা নিয়ে সোচ্চার হয়ে প্রতিবাদ করে তখনই কোনো না কোনোভাবে সেই সুস্থ আন্দোলনকে প্রতিহত করার চেষ্টা করা হয়। হিটলার বলেছিলেন,

“Vehemence, passion, fanaticism, these are great magnitude forces which along attract the great masses.”

(তুলি থেকে বেয়নেট/পৃঃ ৪৭)

প্রতাপ সেই প্রচণ্ডতা, আবেগ আর ধর্মীয় উন্মাদনাকে কাজে লাগায় মানুষের বোধকে দমিয়ে রাখার জন্যে। তাই কখনো সীমান্তে বেধে যাওয়া যুদ্ধ, কখনো পরমাণু

বোমার পরীক্ষা আবার কখনো ভিন্ন ধর্মাবলম্বী দুই পক্ষকে সাম্প্রদায়িকতার সুড়সুড়ি দিয়ে ক্ষেপিয়ে তোলে মানুষের দৃষ্টি জীবন সমস্যার থেকে অন্যদিকে ফিরিয়ে দেওয়া হয়। জাতীয়তাবাদের স্লোগান তোলে কী হতে পারে তাও তো আমাদের হাতে কলমে পরীক্ষা করে দেখিয়ে গেছেন হিটলার-মুসোলিনীর মতো ফ্যাসিস্টরা। তবু আমরা ভুলি, ফাঁদে পা দিই, কারণ ---

“Men are not wise when they hear the call of Nationalism.” (তদেব/পৃঃ ৭৬)

আর একথা তো জানাই যে দুর্বলতম জায়গাকেই প্রতিপক্ষ নিজের সুবিধা অনুযায়ী ব্যবহার করে। একদিকে জীবন যাপনের অহেতুক কুহকী আমাদের আয়োজন, অন্যদিকে শোষণ দেখে বিশিষ্ট ফরাসি তাত্ত্বিক জাঁ বদ্রিলার তাঁর “Call Memories” — এ লিখেছেন ----

“Anyway we are condemned to social coma, political coma, and historical coma. We are condemned to an anaesthetized disappearance, to a fading away under anaesthesia.” (Cool Memories / Page — 6)

এই উচ্চারণ নব্বই-এর দশকের ভারতবর্ষ সম্বন্ধে যথাযথ। ইতিহাস : বিছানায় মৃতপ্রায় মুগ্ধা অন্তঃসত্তার মতন’ (পৃঃ ৭৬৪ / আকাশ রাত / কাব্যসংগ্রহ)। আর ভোটবাক্স কায়ম রাখার জন্যে চলছে নানা রাজনৈতিক খেলা। একদিকে দেশীয় সংস্কৃতির দ্বজা বহন করার নামে হচ্ছে স্বদেশি জাগরণ মঞ্চ আর অন্যদিকে রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব ক্ষেত্রগুলির বেসরকারিকরণ আর বিদেশি লগ্নিকারীদের ডেকে এনে পুঁজিবাদ ও নয়া উপনিবেশবাদের জন্যে ক্ষেত্র প্রস্তুত করা চলছে। আবার পুঁজিবাদ ও সামন্ততন্ত্রের বিচিত্র সহাবস্থানকে আয়ুধ হিসেবে ব্যবহার করে ছড়িয়ে দেওয়া হচ্ছে ধর্মান্ধতা, মৌলবাদের বিষ।

তাই কখনো কারগিল, কখনো ‘বুদ্ধের হাসি’ আড়াল করে অশিক্ষা, অপুষ্টি, দারিদ্র্য, বেকারত্ব। সমস্যা আরো সঞ্জীন হয়ে যখন এ সবার উপর

চাপানো হয় সাম্প্রদায়িক রঙ। যখন তৈরি হয় সহজ সমীকরণ পরমাণু বোমা পরীক্ষা = প্রতিবেশি (মুসলিম) দেশের বিরুদ্ধে শক্তি সঞ্চার = দেশপ্রেম = হিন্দুত্বের পুনরুত্থান = মুসলমান বিরোধিতা। এ সবার বিরুদ্ধে সচেতন বুদ্ধিজীবী হিসেবে অমর মিত্রের সাহিত্যিক প্রতিবাদ ‘অশ্বচরিত’। তিনি জানান -----

“যে দম্ভ প্রকাশ পেয়েছিল তখন, তার বিপরীতে যে দম্ভ দেখিয়েছে প্রতিবেশী দেশের শাসককুল, তাতে দুই দেশের সাধারণ মানুষ শঙ্কিত, ভীত। তারপর তো দীর্ঘস্থায়ী এক দাঙ্গায় এসে তার চেহারা আরো ভয়ানক হয়ে উঠল। দাঙ্গা নয়, এক সম্প্রদায়ের প্রতি সংখ্যাগুরু ভীষণ হিংস্রতা প্রদর্শন। ফ্যাসিবাদ ক্রমশ ছেয়ে ফেলেছে আমার এই বাসভূমিকে। তার বিরুদ্ধেই তো কথা বলেছে ‘অশ্বচরিত’।” (পৃঃ ৪২১ / অমৃতলোক / বিশেষ সংখ্যা ২০০৩ (৯৭))

এভাবে আখ্যানটিতে ছায়া ফেলে রাজনৈতিক সময়। আর তাই সমালোচক শুভময় মণ্ডল যখন ‘অমর মিত্রের গদ্য ও গদ্যের দায়’ প্রবন্ধে ‘অশ্বচরিত’ —কে রাজনৈতিক উপন্যাস হিসেবে আখ্যায়িত করেন, তখন আমরা তা স্বীকার করে নিই। আমরা জানি প্রতিটি অনেকার্থদ্যোতক উপন্যাসেই রাজনৈতিক সময় কমবেশি তার ছাপ ফেলে। কিন্তু ‘অশ্বচরিত’ —এ রাজনৈতিক সময় কেবলমাত্র তার ছায়া ফেলেছে বললেই বোধ হয় বলা সম্পূর্ণ হয়না। এ আখ্যানের মাধ্যমে অমর মিত্র সভ্যতার পক্ষে থাকা রাজনীতির হয়ে সভ্যতার বিপক্ষে থাকা রাজনীতির বিরুদ্ধে সংগ্রামে নেমে পড়েন।

কম্বকের খোঁজে চলতে চলতে ভানু ওরফে হৃন্দক দেখে সাময়িক প্রয়োজনে অধিগ্রহণ করেছে সরকার মহাপাত্রপুর, দেপাল, কুসমাড়—এর জমি। কিছু মানুষ বাস্তুচ্যুত হয়েছে, জমি হারিয়েছে এমনকি প্রতিবাদ করার ফলে ইজ্জত হারিয়েছে। সুভদ্রা তেমনি একটি মানুষ, যে ভিটা, সংসার ইজ্জত হারিয়ে ক্ষণিকের আশ্রয় পেয়েছে শ্রীপতি মাইতি খামারে নায়েব

রামচন্দ্রের সহমর্মিতায়। ভানু ও রামচন্দ্রের সঙ্গে তার কথোপকথন হয়ে ওঠে গভীর রাজনৈতিক চেতনায় নিম্নাত ----

“মোদের সব গেল, মোরা তো ভারতের লক।

তা তো বটে। ভানু সমর্থন করে।

ভারতের লক, তবু মোদের ধান, পান, সব
লিয়ে মোদের উচ্ছেদ করিছিল।

ভানু বলল, ইরকম হয়।

কী হয়?

মানুষের জমি নেয় গরমেন।

কেনে নেয়? সুভদ্রা আচমকা চিৎকার করে
ওঠে, কেনে নেয় কহ দেখি ভানুবাবু, আকাশ-
পুড়ানোয় মোদের কী লাভ?

ভানু আত্মরক্ষা করতে পারে না। সত্যি কেন নেয় সরকার? কী হয় এতে নিজে যেন সরকারের পক্ষে কথা বলছিল। পক্ষে তো কথা আছে। ওই রকেট করে সরকার বোমা পাঠাবে শত্রুর দেশে। শত্রুর দেশ কোনটা? পাকিস্তান হবে। চীন হবে। ভারত ছাড়া সবই ভারতের শত্রু। তার মানে ভারতের লোক ছাড়া সবাই ভারতের লোকের শত্রু। তাই বা কী করে হয়? ভারতের লোকের ভিতরেই কত শত্রুতা, কত শয়তানি! এই যে বসে আছে সুভদ্রা, একে নষ্ট করেছে কে? ধ্বংস করেছে কে? ঠিকাদারের লোক। সে কি অন্য দেশের লোক?” (পৃঃ ১১৯ / অশ্বচরিত)

অত্যন্ত সচেতনভাবে কথাকার সেই সাধারণ সমীকরণটিকে যেন ভাঙতে চাইছেন যেখানে দেশপ্রেম থেকে পৌঁছে যায় সাম্প্রদায়িক বিরোধিতায় বা সামরিক শক্তিবৃদ্ধি মানে দেশ সমৃদ্ধ হওয়ার সহজ অঙ্ক কষা হয়। আর যে রাজনৈতিক চক্রান্ত এমন ভাবে সাধারণ মানুষকে প্ররোচিত করে তার বিরুদ্ধে তিনি দাঁড়ান, তাঁর শাণিত লেখনী নিয়ে।

সত্তর-পরবর্তী লেখকেরা আখ্যানে কাহিনির বাঁধাধরা ছাঁচে নিজেদের বুদ্ধ রাখেন না যেমন, তেমনি একমাত্রিক আখ্যানও তাঁদের অধিষ্ট নয়। অমর মিত্র তার ব্যতিক্রম নন। ‘অশ্বচরিত’ উপন্যাসটিকে কেবল

মাত্র ‘রাজনৈতিক উপন্যাস’ হিসেবে দেখলে আখ্যানটির অন্যান্য মাত্রা আমাদের নজর এড়িয়ে যাওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়ে যায়। যেভাবে নানা মানুষের জীবনচরিত অমর মিত্র এই আখ্যানে এনেছেন, তাদের সঙ্গেও তো জড়িয়ে আছে নানা জীবনসমস্যা। সমাজের বাস্তব মুখ ও মুখোশ আর সব মিলিয়ে সমকালীন ভারতবর্ষ। ভানু তার যাত্রা পথে ছুঁইয়ে ছুঁইয়ে গেছে কত অসংখ্য মানুষকে, তাদের ছোট বড়ো কাহিনি এসেছে আখ্যানে, আবার তারা হারিয়ে গেছে। শ্রীপতি মাইতি, ভারতী চৌধুরী, মধুমিতা মাইতি, কুন্তি, অনন্ত নুনমারা, সরস্বতী, পঞ্চম ঠাকুর, প্রেম মদনানি, কোকিলা, গৌরমোহন, শিবরাম উষা, ফ্রেদরিক, পরী, বেঞ্জা, রামচন্দ্র, সুভদ্রা, পাণ্ডবকুমার, নগেন গিরি, সতীশ গিরি, সুরেন কুণ্ডু, বিষ্ণুপদ পাতর --- কত মানুষ আর তাদের কাহিনি, আর এই কাহিনিগুলোর মাধ্যমে প্রকাশ পেয়েছে রাষ্ট্রীয় প্রতাপের চেহারা, অর্থের অসম বন্টনের কুফল, পুরুষতন্ত্রের বিপ্রতীপে প্রান্তিকায়িত নারীর অবস্থান। আর্থ-রাজনৈতিক ও সামাজিক বাস্তবতা কীভাবে ব্যক্তি-পরিসরকে দুমড়ে মুচড়ে দেয় তা এই জীবনগুলি অধ্যয়ন করলে আমাদের কাছে খুব স্পষ্ট হয়ে ওঠে।

গণতন্ত্রের সাফল্যের একটি শর্ত হল বিচারব্যবস্থা, শাসন বিভাগ আর প্রণয়নকারী পরিষদ একে অপরের কাছে হস্তক্ষেপ না করে পরস্পরের সহযোগিতায় স্ব স্ব কার্য সম্পন্ন করবে। কিন্তু ভারতবর্ষের জনগণের দুর্ভাগ্য হল, এই দেশ পৃথিবীর সর্ববৃহৎ গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্র হওয়া সত্ত্বেও গণতন্ত্রের সফলতার প্রাথমিক শর্তের অনেকগুলি এখানে যথাযথভাবে পালিত হয়না। ক্ষমতাসীন দলের অঙ্গুলি নির্দেশে পুলিশ কাজ করে, কখনো বা অর্থবান ব্যক্তিদের নির্দেশে। আবার পুলিশের কুকর্মের সাজা ৯৯.৯৯ শতাংশ ক্ষেত্রেই হয়না। ফলে সাধারণ লোকের পক্ষে পুলিশ বিভীষিকা হয়ে দাঁড়ায় প্রায় ক্ষেত্রেই। সরকারি জমি অধিগ্রহণের সময় পুলিশি অত্যাচার কী ভয়ানক হতে পারে তা আমরা কিছুদিন

আগেই প্রত্যক্ষ করেছি লালগড়ে। ‘অশ্বচরিত’-এ ওড়িয়ার বালিয়াপাল ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র উৎক্ষেপণ কেন্দ্র গড়ে তোলার জন্যে জমি অধিগ্রহণের এক নৃশংস চিত্র ফুটিয়ে তোলেছেন অমর মিত্র দেপাল গ্রামের কাহিনির মাধ্যমে, সুভদ্রার কাহিনির মাধ্যমে।

পঁয়ত্রিশ বছর আগে মহাপাত্রপুর, দেপাল, কুসমাড়-এর জমি সরকারি প্রয়োজনে অধিগ্রহণের নোটিশ দেওয়া হয়। কিন্তু তখন সেসব জমির খানিকটা নিয়ে বাকিটা ভবিষ্যতে নেওয়ার অপেক্ষায় রয়ে যায়। দীর্ঘ সময়ের ব্যবধানে সেখানকার বাসিন্দারা ভেবেছিল সরকার নেবে না জমি, কোনো কারণে পূর্বের সিদ্ধান্ত বাতিল হয়েছে। কিন্তু পঁয়ত্রিশ বছর পরে আবার নোটিশ পড়ল। যারা জমির ক্ষতিপূরণ আগে নেয়নি, তারা নিতে পারে তাও জানিয়ে দেওয়া হল। অথচ পঁয়ত্রিশ বছর আগে যে জমি বালিয়াড়ি, অনাবাদী জমি ছিল, তা কৃষিজমিতে পরিণত হয়েছে। এককালের কেয়াবন আর বন্যগুল্মে ভর্তি জমিতে লাগানো হয়েছে ধান, পান, তরমুজ, চিনেবাদাম, নারকেল গাছ। তারা বেশ কয়েকবার সরকারি সেই খাস জমি লিজ নেওয়ার জন্যেও আবেদন করে, কিন্তু তা নামমঞ্জুর হয়। রেভিনিউ অফিসার বলে, তাদের উচ্ছেদ যখন করা হচ্ছে না তখন লিজ নেওয়ার প্রয়োজন কী? কিন্তু যখন উচ্ছেদের নোটিশ এল, তখন আর সময় ছিল না। দেপালের লোক নিজেদের পরিশ্রমের ফসল, মাথা গোঁজার ঠাঁই বাঁচানোর জন্য সার্ভেয়ার দলকে তাদের কাছে বাধা দিল।

“খানার পুলিশ চোখ রাঙিয়ে নারকেলের কাদি ভেঙে তরমুজের খেত তছনছ করে, চিনেবাদাম ক্ষেত মাড়িয়ে দখল নিতে লাগল। জমি যখন সরকারের, তখন জমির ফসলে তো সরকারী লোকের অধিকার। গ্রামের মানুষ লাঠি সোঠা নিয়ে তাড়া করল সার্ভেয়ার দল আর পুলিশকে। পুলিশ সাময়িক পালালেও, রাঙিরে সেজে গুজে এল গ্রামে। বন্দুক উঁচিয়ে ঘরে ঘরে টর্চ মারতে লাগল। পছন্দ মতো

মেয়েমানুষ খুঁজতে লাগল। - পুলিশ জানত, পুরুষগুলো ভয় পেতে পারে তাদের ঘরের মেয়েদের বে-আবু করে দিল। কিন্তু বেয়াবু সত্যিই পুলিশ করেছিল কিনা মেয়েদের, ধর্ষণ করেছিল কিনা পুলিশ এবং কাঁটাতার বসানোর ঠিকেদারের মাস্তান বাহিনী সে কথা বলার মতো কেউ ছিল না। কোন মেয়ে তার লাঞ্চার কথা বলে? বলে না, বলতে পারে না বলেই ধর্ষণ, লাঞ্ছনাই পুলিশের হাতের সবচেয়ে বড়ো অস্ত্র।” (পৃঃ ১০৪ / অশ্চরিত)

মেয়েদের তো বলাই হয় ‘বুক ফাটে তবু মুখ ফোটে না’ আর তার উপর ধর্ষিতা মেয়েদের সামাজিক গ্রহণযোগ্যতা নেই বলেই মেয়েরা লাঞ্ছনা সহ্য করে যায়। তবু সুভদ্রার মতো দু-একজন মুখ খোলে। কিন্তু যেখানে দুষ্কৃতিকারীরা স্বয়ং পুলিশের লোক বা তাদের মদতপুষ্ট তখন বিচার কোথায়? মানবাধিকার সমিতির প্রচেষ্টার পরেও অর্থের হাতে বিকিয়ে যাওয়া স্বামীর অসহযোগিতা এবং ষড়যন্ত্রে দোষী তো শাস্তি পেলই না, উপরন্তু এবার দফায় দফায় চলে তার উপর ধর্ষণ।

“-শেষবার পুলুশে, থানায়। - পুলুশ কহিছিলো, যদি ফের শোরগোল তুলে সুভদ্রা, আবার উহাকে নষ্ট করিবে উহার, তখন সুভদ্রা চুপ করি রহিল।” (পৃঃ ১১৬ / অশ্চরিত)

গণতান্ত্রিক শাসন ব্যবস্থায় যেখানে জনগণের দ্বারা, জনগণের জন্য, জনগণের সরকার, যেখানে সরকারি কাজের জন্য গৃহহীন হয় কত মানুষ, ধর্ষিত হয় কত নারী --- তার হিসেব কে রাখে? কখনো সামরিক প্রয়োজনে, কখনো বড়ো কারখানা খোলার জন্যে, তো কখনো নদী বাঁধ তৈরির নামে দেশের বিভিন্ন স্থানে সরকার জমি অধিগ্রহণ করে আর তার নেপথ্যের কাহিনি, অস্বীকার করার উপায় নেই যে, কমবেশি এই-ই। যে কোনো প্রতিবাদী কণ্ঠকে চুপ করানোর জন্যে পুলিশের সাধারণ উপায় হল, নারী হলে ধর্ষণ আর পুরুষ হলে বেধড়ক মার। প্রায়সময়ই

রক্ষক ভক্ষকের ভূমিকায় অবতীর্ণ হয়। অমর মিত্র এই বিষয়টিকে আরো বিস্তৃত করেছেন ২০০১ সালে প্রকাশিত ‘নিরুদ্দিষ্টের উপাখ্যান’ উপন্যাসে। পুলিশি অত্যাচারের কালো অধ্যায় ছাড়াও দেপাল, বালিমুন্ডার জমি অধিগ্রহণের কাহিনিতে আরো একটি উল্লেখযোগ্য বিষয় হল, যে দেশের অর্ধেক-এর চেয়েও বেশি মানুষ অপুষ্টিতে ভোগে, এক বৃহৎ সংখ্যক লোক দুবেলা পেট পুরে খেতে পায় না সেখানে জমির ফসল দুপায়ে মাড়িয়ে তছনছ করে দেওয়া হয় সামরিক অস্ত্রশস্ত্র পরীক্ষা নিরীক্ষার উদ্দেশ্যে।

এই আখ্যানে রাষ্ট্রীয় আধিপত্যবাদী প্রতাপের বিরুদ্ধে এক সোচ্চার প্রতিবাদ নিঃসন্দেহে। উন্নয়নের নামে প্রাকৃতিক পরিবেশের ভারসাম্য নষ্ট করা অথবা মানুষের আর্থিক ভারসাম্য নষ্ট করার বিরুদ্ধে কথাশিল্পী অমর মিত্রের সোচ্চার প্রতিবাদ ‘অশ্চরিত’। পরমাণু বোমার মতো বিধ্বংসী অস্ত্র নিয়ে ছেলেখেলায় বিপক্ষে যেমন শৈল্পিক প্রতিবাদ তেমনি রাষ্ট্রের ফ্যাসিবাদী চরিত্রের বিরুদ্ধে কথা বলে এ আখ্যান। সতীশ গিরির মতো চরিত্রের মাধ্যমে অমর মিত্র রাজনৈতিক সময়ের একটা চিত্র ফুটিয়ে তোলেন, যখন ক্ষমতাসীন দলের উস্কানিতে দক্ষিণপন্থী উগ্র জাতীয়তাবাদ যুবসমাজকে গ্রাস করছে। ছড়িয়ে পড়ছে সাম্প্রদায়িকতার বিষ। প্রাচীন ইতিহাসকে অস্বীকার করে যে ক্ষমতাসীন দল নিজস্ব নির্মিত ইতিহাস ছড়িয়ে দিচ্ছিল সবার মধ্যে তারই যেন প্রতিনিধি সতীশ। কিন্নর রায় ‘বালিঘড়ি’ নামক উপন্যাসটিতে দেখিয়েছেন কীভাবে একটু একটু করে বদলে দেওয়া হচ্ছে সত্য ইতিহাস। কাশী বারানসী হিন্দুদের তীর্থস্থান। তাকে গড়ে তোলার মুসলমান নবাবদের অবদান মৌলবাদীদের হজম হয়না, তাই ইতিহাস বদলে দেওয়ার প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয় আসলেও তো তাই হচ্ছিল। স্কুলের ইতিহাসের বই বদলে যাচ্ছিল। বিবেকবান বুদ্ধিজীবীরা কি তা দেখে এবং বুঝেও অন্ধ সেজে বসে থাকতে পারেন! তাঁরা তো জানেন অন্ধ হলেও প্রলয় বন্ধ হয় না। তাই তাঁরা তাঁদের সাহিত্যকৃতির মাধ্যমে চেষ্টা করেন

জনসাধারণের সুপ্ত বোধ জাগ্রত করতে। স্থিতধী নগেন গিরির ছেলে অর্ধোন্মাদ সতীশ গিরি সংক্রামিত হয় সাম্প্রদায়িকরাত বিষে। সে তার পিতাকে শিক্ষা দেওয়ার জন্যে হত্যা করে নির্দোষ ঘুড়ীকে, যেটির গর্ভে কন্থক জন্ম দিয়েছিল সন্তান। সে বিশ্বাস করে, যুদ্ধ না হলে উপায় নেই, মানুষের মরা দরকার, মরণ চাই। সে বদলে দিতে চায় ইতিহাস। সে কন্থক আর নগেন গিরির ঘুড়ির সন্তান ঘোটনের পূর্বপুরুষের দেহে কোন দেশের ঘোড়ার রক্ত খোঁজে না, সে বলে কোনো রূপকথার পক্ষীরাজের উত্তরপুরুষ ঘোটন। সে কন্থকের হারিয়ে যাওয়ার ব্যাখ্যা দেয় তার মতো করে। অর্ধোন্মাদ সতীশ বলে -----

“... হা ভগবান, সিই ঘুড়ারে তুমি খুঁজি বেড়াচ্ছ, তুমি ধরতি পারনি, সি ঘুড়া কুথায় গেল, ইতো পাক্সার ঘটনা, তুমার অশ্বের ডানা ফুটি গিইছে।” (পৃঃ ২৮৮ / অশ্বচরিত)

ঘোড়ার হত্যা যে কেবল একটি প্রাণীর নিধন নয়, তা কথাকার বারবার ইঙ্গিত করেছেন। সতীশ গিরি একবার বলেছে ‘ইটা প্রতীকী’। আর তার পিতা নগেন গিরি কেবল বর্তমান নয়, অতীতের ছায়া দেখেন এসব ঘটনার মধ্যে। তিনি বলেন ----

“... ইতিহাস যদি জানতে তুমি, টের পেতে কী হইছিল একদিন এতো ঘুড়ী মরিছে, দাঙ্গায় মানুষ কি কম মরিছে, আবার মানুষ মারার ইঙ্গিত ছিল ঘুড়ীটির মরণ, কতখানি রোষ কতখানি হিংসা মাথার ভিতর ঢুকি গিইছে কহো দেখি, দিনাদিনা তা আরো বাড়বে ভানুবাবু, যত অভাব তত হিংসা, অভাবী মানুষের ভিতর হিংসা জাগানোর খেলা চলিছে।” (পৃঃ ২৯২)

কিন্তু নগর পুড়লে তো দেবালয় রক্ষা পায় না। হিংসা, সাম্প্রদায়িকতার বিষ যার ছড়িয়ে দিচ্ছে চারিদিকে, তারা যে সেই বিষ থেকে রক্ষা পাবে তাও তো হয়। অমর মিত্র যেন এই সহজ কথাটাই আবার আমাদের মনে করিয়ে দিতে চান সতীশের অসুস্থতার মাধ্যমে -----

“... শালা মোরা কী কাণ্ড করছি জাননি, বোমা ফাটল হিলা, আরো কত কী হবে, দেহ চর্চা হচ্ছে, ঘুড়ীটারে মারা হিলা, আগে অযোধ্যা কিঙ হিলা ...। বলতে বলতে পেট চেপে বসে পড়ে সতীশ গিরি। গ্যাসের ব্যথা, এক ঘটি পানি লিয়ে এস ভানুবাবু। দুটি চোখ স্ফীত হয়ে বেরিয়ে পড়েছে প্রায়। জিভ বেরিয়ে পড়েছে সতীশের।” (পৃঃ ২৯৫/ অশ্বচরিত)

আর এও তো সত্য, পাঁচজন দাঙ্গাবাজ হলে পাঁচশ জন থাকে দাঙ্গাবিরোধী, অশুভ বুদ্ধিসম্পন্ন লোকের বিপরীতে চিরকাল থেকে যায় কিছু শুভ বুদ্ধিসম্পন্ন লোক, তাই তো পৃথিবী আজও বাসযোগ্য। তাই সতীশের মতো যারা পরমাণু বোমার বিস্ফোরণের ফলে কন্থকের ডানা বেরিয়ে সে উড়ে গেছে-ধরণের সুবিধাবাদী গল্প বোনে, মানুষকে ভুল পথে চালিত করে তাদের বিপরীতে কোকিলা জানাতে চায় আসল কাহিনিটা তার দৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে। কোকিলা শিল্পী। সে প্রথমে যে ঘোড়ার ছবি মদরঞ্জিতে ঐঁকেছিল তা দেখে ভানুর মনে হয়েছিল এই তার কন্থক। কিন্তু সেটি বিক্রি হয়ে যায় কলকাতায়। ভানুর অনুরোধে সে আবার আঁকতে বসে। কিন্তু যে ঘোড়ার ছবি প্রথমে সে ঐঁকেছিল সহজেই, তা এবার আর হতে চায় না। সে শুনে পোখরানের কথা, হিরোসিমা নাগাসাকির কথা। সে জানতে পারে পোখরানে পরমাণু বোমা ফাটিয়ে চতুর্দিকে যে তেজস্ক্রিয় বিষবাস্প ছড়িয়ে দেওয়া হল, তা দেশে শক্তি বৃদ্ধির জন্য। কিন্তু সে বুঝতে পারে না দেশ যদি মানুষ নিয়ে হয়, তাহলে পেটে ভাত না থাকলে কী করে শক্তি বাড়ে। অবশেষে সে আঁকে। এবার আর আশ্বিনের নীল আকাশের চালচিত্রে কেশর ফোলানো শাদা ঘোড়া নয়, এবার পৃথিবীর বুক ফেটে কালো ধোঁইয়া উঠে যাচ্ছে আকাশ পর্যন্ত আর ঘোড়া তা থেকে বাঁচার চেষ্টায় পালাচ্ছে। ঘোড়াটার চোখ বিস্ফোরিত, নাসারন্ধ্র ফুলে উঠেছে, কেশরপুঞ্জ ঘাড়ের উপর দাঁড়িয়ে গেছে। কথা ছিল শ্রীপতি এই মগরঞ্জিটি কিনে নেবে, কিন্তু সে তো নিলই না, উপরন্তু সে

জানতে চাইল এমনটা কেন। আধিপত্যবাদের পৃষ্ঠপোষক শ্রীপতির মতে এমনটা আঁকা ঠিক হয়নি। কিন্তু কোকিলা জানে এটাই সত্য, জানে সুভদ্রাও আর কেবল জানা নয়, এ তো তার প্রত্যক্ষ অভিজ্ঞতা। রুঢ় সত্য যখন তার নখদন্ত নিয়ে প্রকাশিত হল তখন শ্রীপতি ভয় পেয়ে যায়। মায়ার চাদর যেন সরে যেতে থাকে, কোকিলার প্রতি মোহ আর থাকে না। সুভদ্রাকে সে যে ক্ষমতায় রামচন্দ্রের সঙ্গে যেতে না দিয়ে নিজের মুঠোয় রেখেছিল সেই ক্ষমতাও হঠাৎ করে যেন সে খুঁজে পায় না। সে রাষ্ট্রের বিরুদ্ধাচার করার ক্ষমতা রাখে না, এ সত্য বলার বা জানানোর সাহস সে করে না। কিন্তু কোকিলা সে সাহস রাখে। সে বলে -----

“..... এটি লিয়ে তুমার গৌরদাদা হাটে হাটে ঘুরবে, না বিকোক, লক কেন পলাইছিল পংখিরাজ।” (পৃঃ ৩২৭-৩২৮ / অশ্বচরিত)

আর সুভদ্রা সাহস পায় ‘মদরঞ্জির উপর আঁকা দেখে’ অথবা কোকিলের দেখে। রামচন্দ্র পারেনি শ্রীপতির বিরুদ্ধাচারণ করার কিন্তু এবার সুভদ্রা করে। সে চলে যায় রাতের অন্ধকারে শ্রীপতির হোটেল ছেড়ে। এভাবে ঘোষিত হয় আধিপত্যবাদের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদ। কোকিলা পরোয়া করে না দক্ষিণপন্থী উগ্র জাতীয়তাবাদের নেশায় উন্মাদ মানুষদের। সে স্বেচ্ছায় কাঁধে তুলে নেয় সত্য কথনের দায়িত্ব। সুভদ্রা পুরুষতন্ত্র আর পুলিশি অত্যাচারের যাতাকলে নিষ্পেষিত হতে হতেও ঘুরে দাঁড়াতে চায় বারবার। শেষ পর্যন্ত সে ভালোবাসার বন্ধন থেকে ছাড়া আর কোনো বাঁধনে বাঁধা থাকতে চায়নি। তাই সে বেরিয়ে যায় অজানার উদ্দেশ্যে।

মরণ ছড়িয়ে পড়ছে চতুর্দিকে। বাতাস ভাসছে মরণের গন্ধ। তাই বলে জীবন কি থেমে থাকতে পারে! তাই কুস্তি বিক্রি হয়ে যাওয়ার পরও তার বাবা মা আবার স্বপ্ন দেখে, আবার সন্তানের আগমন সংবাদে শিহরিত হয়, সংসার সাজায়। দুঃসময়ে বসে সময়ের যথার্থ স্বরূপ উদ্ঘাটন করেও মানুষকে নিরাশার ঘোরে নিমজ্জিত না করে কথাকার দেখান আশার আলো।

তিনি তাঁর এ উপন্যাসে বিশ্বব্যাপ্ত উন্মায়ন, সমুদ্রের তেল গাদ, পরমাণুর তেজস্ক্রিয়তার কথা বলেন, বলেন সাম্প্রদায়িক দাঙ্গার কথাও, কিন্তু আশার কিরণ রয়ে যায়।

আখ্যানের আপাত উপসংহারে এসে সব মানুষকে সরিয়ে দিয়ে মনুষ্যতর অশ্বই হয়ে উঠেছে প্রধান আকল্প। এবার কন্থকের কাহিনি পেনাম কন্থকেরই জবানিতে। বৈশাখের প্রচণ্ড রোদের পর এক পশলা বৃষ্টি আর পূর্ণিমার জ্যোৎস্না-স্নাত আকাশ তার মনে বিভ্রম জাগিয়েছিল। একই দিনে দুই ঋতু পেরিয়ে যাওয়ার বিভ্রম তাকে ঘোড়া ছিল না। ভুল বুঝতে পেরে সে ফেরে দীঘার পথে। কিন্তু পথ ভুল হল এবার। জনপদে পৌঁছে সে নিশ্চিত হয়েছিল, এবার কোনো না কোনোভাবে পৌঁছে যাবে গন্তব্যে। কিন্তু তার পেছনে জুটল কিছু যুদ্ধবাজ মানুষ। যাদের চোখে সে অশ্বমেধের ঘোড়া অথবা যবনের ঘোড়া। তবে যাই হোক না বধ্য এবং যুদ্ধের অজুহাত। তাদের হাত থেকে বাঁচার জন্যে সে ছুটতে থাকে। ছুটতে ছুটতে সে হয়তো বা পৌঁছে যায় মরুভূমিতে --- পোখরানে। সে অশ্ব হয়ে যায়, তার গায়ের রোম খসে পড়তে থাকে, কেশর-পুচ্ছ ঝরে যেতে থাকে। রক্ত বেরোতে থাকে নাক মুখ দিয়ে। অশ্ব দুচোখ দিয়ে ঝরে পড়তে থাকে জল। আখ্যানের এই সমাপ্তি অংশটুকু সম্বন্ধে তাত্ত্বিক সমালোচক তপোধীর ভট্টাচার্য লেখেন ---

“উপন্যাসে সমাপ্তি বিহীন উপসংহারে অশ্ব ঘোড়া যেন হয়ে ওঠে কেন্দ্রীয় কুশীলব। মহাসময় ও খণ্ড-সময়ের ব্যবধান মুছে যাওয়াতে ভাষায় ছড়িয়ে পড়ে পরাবাচনের দ্যুতি। বৈদিক যুগ এবং হিরোশিমা-পোখরানের অগ্নিবলয় মিলে মিশে এককার হয়ে যায়। বয়ানের শেষ পাঁচটি পৃষ্ঠা যেন উপন্যাস নামক শিল্প মাধ্যমের সম্পূর্ণ বিনির্মাণের দৃষ্টান্ত। আমাদের ঘুমন্ত বিবেককে পর্যন্ত জাগিয়ে দেয় অশ্বচরিত-এর কেন্দ্রীয় আধেয়, তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ভাবে উপন্যাসের মানুষেরা সরে যায় পেছনে। যেন বয়ন শিল্পের পরিসর

মঞ্চে রূপান্তরিত এবং পাদপ্রদীপের সমস্ত আলো কেন্দ্রীভূত হয়েছে ভূগোল ও ইতিহাসের বিভিন্ন পরিসরে উপস্থিত কণ্ঠকের উপর। আত্মবিস্মৃত সময়ের দাহ তার গায়ের চামড়াকে ঝলসে দেয়। কালো বৃষ্টি ঝরে পড়ে সেই কালো মেঘ থেকে যা “এখনো মাথার ভেতরে বহন করে চলেছে মানুষ, হিরোশিমার মানুষ” (পৃঃ ৩৪১)। তার অন্ধ চোখের জল ছাড়া অন্য কোথাও জল ছিল না। আত্মবিস্মৃতির অন্ধকার সমস্ত কিছুকে কালো করে দিলেও অমর এই আশ্চর্য্য অনবদ্য মুক্ত উপসংহারে পৌঁছেছেন যে অন্ধ ঘোড়া তবু জ্যোৎস্না, আশ্বিন ও কাশফুলের কথা ভাবে।” (পৃঃ ১৪১ / আখ্যানের স্বরাস্তর)

সে অন্ধ হয়ে গেছে তবু তার চলা বন্ধ হয়নি। প্রাগৈতিহাসিক কাল থেকে তার চলা তেজস্ক্রিয় বিষবাপ্পে ভরা এই সময় হয়ে ভবিষ্যতের দিকে। জেগে থাকে উত্তরণের আকাঙ্ক্ষা। আর্থ-রাজনৈতিক শোষণ, সানাজিক নানা সংকট, রাষ্ট্রের ফ্যাসিবাদী চরিত্র বিভিন্নভাবে মানুষের জীবনে তৈরি করেছে সংকট। মৃত্যু-হিংসা-শোকে ভরা এই পৃথিবীতে বেঁচে থাকাও এক সমস্যা। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও কী মায়া এই পৃথিবীতে। জন্ম জন্মান্তরে মানুষ ফিরে আসতে চায় এই ধরিত্রীর বুকেই। আর সেজন্যেই বোধ হয় সমস্ত সন্দেহ, অবিশ্বাস, আত্মহননের তেজস্ক্রিয় পেরিয়েও অন্ধ ঘোড়ার অনুভব থেকে জেগে ওঠা আলো ---

“শুধু তার মাথার ভিতরে বুদ্ধদেবের মতো প্রেমময় চাঁদ ছিল। আলো ছিল, চাঁদ আর আলোর স্মৃতি ছিল। সমুদ্র ছিল, বাতাস ছিল, সবুজ তৃণভূমি ছিল। ছিল সেই রাজপুত্র যার মাথায় মাথায় চলত সোনালি রঙের মেঘ, শ্বেত কবুতর উড়ত যে মেঘে, সেই মেঘের দিনগুলি স্মৃতিতে আছে।” (পৃঃ ৩৪২ / অশ্বচরিত)

জীবনের অনতিক্রম্য ভবিষ্যৎ মৃত্যু। জীবনের ভিতরেও মৃত্যু, সুতরাং মৃত্যুর ভিতরেও মৃত্যুই। প্রকৃতি যেমন মৃত্যুর ফাঁদ তৈরি করে, মানুষ তেমনি

অন্যের জন্যে মরণ ফাঁদ তৈরী করতে গিয়ে নিজের জন্যেই বানায় বিনাশক অস্ত্র। বিশ্বযুদ্ধ ও হিরোশিমা-নাগাসাকির হিংস্রতা দেখে জীবনানন্দ দাশ লিখেছিলেন ----

“দুশ্চর সমুদ্র ঘিরে বধির বদীপ — ইতস্ততঃ —
নিষ্পৃহ ভূখণ্ড নিয়ে
এক-এক জন
আজ এই পৃথিবীর
স্তুপীকৃত-অন্ধ-নির্বান্দব
লোহার শকট ভরা আবিষ্ট মানব।”
(পৃঃ ৫১৩/ কাব্য সংগ্রহ)

এখন চোখের সামনে ঘটে চলেছে ইরাক-বসনিয়া-চেচেনিয়া-অযোধ্যা-কারগিল আর আমরা এ সব কিছু দেখেও প্রত্যেকে বাস করছি বোকা বাস্ক, বিশ্বজাল আর প্রযুক্তি সমৃদ্ধ নিজস্ব নিষ্পৃহ ভূখণ্ডে। তাই দেখি শ্রীপতি নিজের ঘরের অন্ধকার কোণায় সুরক্ষা খোঁজে, অথবা দেখে-শুনে বুঝেও না দেখা, না শোনা আর না বোঝার ভান করে। কিন্তু সবাই তো শ্রীপতির মতো অন্ধ হয়ে প্রলয় বন্ধ করার বোকামিতে বিশ্বাসী নয়। কিছু কিছু মানুষ তো জানে অপারেশন টেবিলে শায়িত রোগীর মতো ধীরে ধীরে মহাসুষুপ্তির দোরগোড়ায় পৌঁছানোর চেয়ে -----

“.... better to feel ourselves dying, even in the convulsions of terrorism, than to disappear like ectoplasms which no one, even desensitized, will want to conjure up later to give themselves a fright.” (Coll Memories / Page – 4)

তাই তো দেখি ক্ষয়ে শেষ হয়ে যাওয়ার চেয়ে সংগ্রামকেই বেছে নিয়েছে সুভদ্রা, কোকিলা। তাই তো মৃত্যুর মাঝে দাঁড়িয়েও স্বপ্ন দেখে আলোর আর মরে যেতে যেতেও চেষ্টা করে উঠে দাঁড়ানোর। আর তাই তো কবি বলেন, “মানুষের মৃত্যু হলে তবুও মানব থেকে যায়” (পৃঃ ১২১ / জীবনানন্দ দাশের শ্রেষ্ঠ কবিতা) অথবা ----

“পৃথিবীর পুরনো সে পথ
মুছে ফেলে রেখা তার ---
কিন্তু এই স্বপ্নের জগৎ
চিরদিন রয় !

সময়ের হাত এসে মুছে ফেলে আর সব ---

নক্ষত্রেরা আলো শেষ হয়!”
(পৃঃ ৪১ / স্বপ্নের হাত / শ্রেষ্ঠ কবিতা)

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বহুস্বরিক উপন্যাস — ‘অরণ্য-বহ্নি’

(Bohuswarik Uponyas: 'Aranya-banni')

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Abstract

‘Aranya Banhi’ a famous novel of Tara Sankar Bandopadhyaya was published in the year 1966. The novelist established his linguistic architect of art which is completely new and exceptional in nature in the field of literature. The main objective of the novel is a psychological effect of the lower class of people in the society who were being oppressed by the comparatively higher Section of people and the British Administrator. At the same time it reflected the atmosphere of opposition and helplessness of this class. In the context of novel Nayan Pal a spokesperson sometimes interacted with the novelist, history and himself. But the members of the revolutionary party of Sauntals. Interacted themselves in a different manner. Thus the novel Aranya Banhi is became a polipheric novel (Bahuswar). Tarasanker Bandapadhyaya was always against colonialism. The novel itself represented the opinion and ideas of the downtrodden community. The main theme of Aranya Banhi is the activity of revolutionary association and their necessary rules and regulations of Sauntals. If we go through the novel we came to know the life style, Behavior and culture of the Sauntal community of that period. The novelist who was aware of historical background of this people wanted to focus the motto of mutiny of the Sauntalis. At the same time he tried to describe the exclamatory environment associated with Japanese people of 1645 and Sauntals of 1854. At the end we can conclude that the novel is the mirror of the Sauntalis who are still fighting for their freedom.

শ্রীকুমার বন্দোপাধ্যায় আয়োজিত নলহাটির সাহিত্য সভায় অতুল গুপ্ত সেই সভার সভাপতি তারাশঙ্করের উদ্দেশ্যে বলেছিলেন — ‘বঙ্গ সন্ন্যাসীর খাস তালুকের মণ্ডল প্রজা’। এই উক্তি যথার্থ। কেননা শরৎচন্দ্র পরবর্তী বাংলা কথাসাহিত্যে তারাশঙ্কর বন্দোপাধ্যায় এক অনন্য ব্যক্তিত্ব। তিনি আমাদের অস্থির, সংশয়-বিক্ষুব্ধ-অবিশ্বাসী যুগের প্রধান কথাশিল্পী। রবীন্দ্রোত্তর পর্বে তারাশঙ্কর একজন যথার্থ শিল্পী। অর্ধশতাব্দী কালসীমায় কথাসাহিত্যের সমস্ত তরঙ্গ বিক্ষোভ তারাশঙ্করের গল্প-উপন্যাসকে স্পর্শ

করেছে কিন্তু সমকালীনতার গভী অতিক্রম করে লেখক হয়ে উঠেছেন সর্বকালের। তারাশঙ্কর মনে করতেন — মানুষের উপর বিশ্বাস হারানো পাপ। এই ঘোষণা তার উপন্যাস, ছোটগল্পে রক্ত-মাংস-মজ্জা, তাঁর মন-প্রাণ-আত্মা, তাঁর শিল্পের দলিল। এককথায় সুস্থ জীবনের মৌরসীপাট। রাঢ় বাংলার চলমান জীবনের বিশ্বস্ত রূপকার তারাশঙ্কর তাই কালান্তরের কথাকার। যৌবনে তারাশঙ্কর প্রভাবিত হলেন বিবেকানন্দ, বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র ও রবীন্দ্রনাথের দ্বারা। তাই জমিদারী

অত্যাচার, জাতিগত, ভেদাভেদ-এর প্রতি তিনি সোচ্চার হলেন।

তারাশঙ্করের আগে বাংলা সাহিত্যের তিন জ্যোতিষ্ক — বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, শরৎচন্দ্র। এই তিন ব্যক্তিত্বই তারাশঙ্করের মধ্যে ওতপ্রোত হয়ে আছেন। তাই তারাশঙ্কর পূর্ব-সাহিত্যের ও পূর্বসূরি সাহিত্যিকদের থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন নয়। কল্লোল পর্বের তরুণ লেখকদের রচনায় প্রথম বিশ্বযুদ্ধোত্তর সংশয় ও অস্থিরতা, চাঞ্চল্য ও নাগরিক মনোভাব, নেতিবাদী ও নাস্তিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি প্রভৃতি থেকে এক নিবিড় জীবন প্রত্যয়ে সরে এসেছিলেন তারাশঙ্কর ও বিভূতিভূষণ। তারাশঙ্কর তাঁর জীবনে দেখেছেন সম্ভ্রাসবাদী আন্দোলন, অহিংস আন্দোলন, সাম্যবাদী আন্দোলন, আইন-অমান্য আন্দোলন, ৪২—এর সংগ্রাম, ভারতবর্ষের স্বাধীনতা ও দেশবিভাগ, পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের ভাষা আন্দোলন এবং পাকিস্তান ভেঙে বাংলাদেশের অভ্যুদয়। সেই সঙ্গে প্রথম বিশ্বযুদ্ধ, দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ, দুর্ভিক্ষ, মহামারী, মন্বন্তর, উদ্বাস্ত সমস্যা, অর্থনৈতিক বিপর্যয় এবং নীতিবোধের পশ্চাদপসরণ। তারাশঙ্করের মানসিকতা এই পটভূমিতে গড়ে উঠেছিল।

তারাশঙ্কর বন্দোপাধ্যায়ের ‘অরণ্য-বহি’ উপন্যাসটি প্রথম প্রকাশিত হয়েছিল ১৯৬৬ সালে। অর্থাৎ পশ্চিমবঙ্গের প্রথম যুক্তফ্রন্ট সরকার ক্ষমতার আসার একবছর আগে। নকশাল আন্দোলন তো তারও পরের ঘটনা। সুতরাং ‘অরণ্য-বহি’ সাতের দশকের প্রবল রাজনৈতিক উত্থানপতনের প্রভাবে লেখা হয়েছিল — এমন কথা কোনো অবস্থাতেই বলা চলে না। এই উপন্যাসে তারাশঙ্কর শিল্পরূপের যে স্থাপত্য নির্মাণ করেন তা তার আগের উপন্যাসগুলির তুলনায় অনেক স্বতন্ত্র ও অভিনব। তারাশঙ্করের বাল্যকালেও বাংলা-বিহার-উড়িষ্যা একই প্রদেশের অন্তর্গত ছিল। সাঁওতাল পরগণা ছিল বীরভূম জেলার অংশ। তিনি সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের কাহিনি শুনছিলেন তাঁর বিধবা পিসিমার কাছে। পিসিমা শুনছিলেন তাঁর দিদিমার কাছে। মৌখিক ইতিহাস বা ওরাল হিস্ট্রি পাশাপাশি তিনি

লিখিত উপাদান হিসেবে ডিস্ট্রিক্ট গেজেটিয়ার, হ্যাণ্ডবুক, ও হান্টার সাহেবের বইকেও ব্যবহার করেছিলেন। শিবরতন মিত্রের সংগ্রহশালায় সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের ছড়া বা পাঁচালী পড়েছিলেন তারাশঙ্কর। মামুদবাজার থানার কুলকুড়ি গ্রামের কায়স্থসন্তান রাইকৃষ্ণ দাশ সেই পাঁচালী লিখেছিলেন। ‘সংবাদ প্রভাকর’ থেকেও তারাশঙ্কর সংগ্রহ করেছেন কিছু কিছু তথ্য।

এই উপন্যাসের নির্মাণকৌশলটি অভিনব। উপন্যাসের শুরুতেই প্রায় ১৪/১৫ পৃষ্ঠার একটি প্রস্তাবনা অংশে তিনি পাঠককে জানিয়ে দেন — কেমনভাবে তিনি এই উপন্যাস লেখার অনুপ্রেরণা পেলেন ও কেমনভাবে তিনি এই উপন্যাসের একটি চরিত্র নয়ন পালের কাছে পৌঁছালেন। মৌখিক ইতিহাস বা ওরাল হিস্ট্রি গবেষকরা যেভাবে পায়ে হাঁটে ঘুরে ঘুরে সাধারণ মানুষের মুখ থেকে শুনেন শুনেন ইতিহাসের উপাদান সংগ্রহ করেন — তারাশঙ্করও সেইভাবে ময়ুরাক্ষীর উত্তর দিক থেকে শুরু ক’রে ওদিকে দুমকা, এদিকে পাকুড়-সাহেবগঞ্জ পর্যন্ত ঘুরে বেড়িয়েছেন। ঘুরতে ঘুরতে পঁচাশি বছরের বৃদ্ধা ধ্বজু মল্লিকের কাছ থেকে হিরণপুরের ঘাটের কাছে রামচন্দ্রপুরে হরিশ ভট্টাচার্যের পরিবারের স্থান পান। হরিশ ভট্টাচার্যর পিতামহের দাদা ছিলেন ত্রিভুবন ভট্টাচার্য। সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের সময়ে তাঁকে সিধু কানুর দল নিয়ে গিয়েছিল দুর্গাপূজা করাবার জন্য। ভট্টাচার্য পরিবারের কাছে তিনি চরণপুরের নয়ন পালের স্থান পান। নয়ন পালের পিতামহের হাতে নির্মিত হয়েছিল সাঁওতালদের দুর্গাপূজার প্রতিমা। ঐ প্রতিমাকেই পূজা করেছিলেন ত্রিভুবন ভট্টাচার্য। নয়ন পালের বাড়িতে ছিল অনেক পুরানো পট। ঐসব পটে আঁকা ছিল সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের বিবরণ। নয়ন পালের জ্যাঠামশাই নফর পাল সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের অংশগ্রহণ ক’রে সাত বছর জেল খেটেছিলেন। সেই প্রাচীন পটগুলি দেখিয়ে নয়ন পাল সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের বিবরণ দিতে থাকে গোটা উপন্যাস জুড়ে। গোটা উপন্যাসের বয়ন ও বুনন আমাদের চৈতন্যে স্পষ্ট ক’রে তোলে ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্যবাদ ও

দেশীয় উচ্চবর্গের মানুষদের অত্যাচার আক্রমণ ও হিংস্রতার মনস্তত্ত্বকে। এবং তার পাশাপাশি নিম্নবর্গের মানুষদের অসহায়তা ক্রন্দন ও প্রতিরোধের পরিমণ্ডলকেও। উপন্যাসের কাঠামোতে কথক নয়ন পাল কখনও কথা বলে উপন্যাসিকের সঙ্গে, কখনও ইতিহাসের সঙ্গে, আবার নিজের সঙ্গেও। পাশাপাশি উপন্যাসিক তারাশঙ্কর নায়ক-নায়িকার যখন নিজেদের মধ্যে কথা বলেন তখন আবার ভিন্নতর কণ্ঠস্বরকে উপন্যাসের শরীর ধারণ করে। এইভাবেই তারাশঙ্করের ‘অরণ্য-বহি’ হয়ে ওঠে একটি পলিফোনিক বা বহুস্বরিক উপন্যাস। তারাশঙ্করের নির্মাণকৌশলের অভিনবত্বের কারণেই প্রতিটি কণ্ঠস্বরের স্বাভাবিক স্পষ্টভাবে চিহ্নিত করা যায়।

এই উপন্যাসে তারাশঙ্কর ঔপনিবেশিকতাকে প্রত্যাখ্যানের মতাদর্শগত বিশ্বাসে স্থিত থাকেন। শিল্পের নিজস্ব নিয়মকে অনুসরণ করতে করতে, সামাজিক সন্দর্ভের পাশাপাশি একটি সাহিত্যিক সন্দর্ভ নির্মাণ করতে করতে, শিল্পের স্বায়ত্তশাসিত বাস্তবে দাঁড়িয়ে তারাশঙ্কর ১৯৬৬-তেও আবার একটি প্রতিবাদী পরিসর নির্মাণ ক’রে তোলেন। আর তা করতে গিয়ে তাঁকে উপন্যাস নামক শিল্পমাধ্যমটির অভ্যন্তরে ঐতিহাসিক তথ্য ও অভিজ্ঞতা, নির্দিষ্ট একটি অঞ্চলের ভৌগোলিক বৈশিষ্ট্য, আঞ্চলিক ভাষা, নিম্নবর্গের মনস্তত্ত্ব, কথকতা-পাঁচালী, রিপোর্টাজ, সমাজতাত্ত্বিক গবেষণার প্রাপ্তিসমূহ ইত্যাদি অনেক উপাদানকে সমন্বিত ক’রে তুলতে হয়। এই উপন্যাসে তারাশঙ্করের ভাষাগত বয়ন ও বুনন — সামাজিক ও ঐতিহাসিক পরিপ্রেক্ষিতের সঙ্গে এবং সংযোগের মৌলিক ভূমিকার সঙ্গে অবিচ্ছিন্ন থাকে। তার ফলে নিম্নবর্গের ভাষা, আকাঙ্ক্ষা, ও মনস্তত্ত্ব এই উপন্যাসের শরীরে মূর্ত হয়ে থাকে। নিম্নবর্গের সামাজিক ও মতাদর্শগত কণ্ঠস্বরের প্রতিনিধিত্ব করে ‘অরণ্য-বহি’।

তারাশঙ্কর ‘অরণ্য-বহি’ উপন্যাস রচনার সময়ে ইতিহাসের লিখিত উপাদানের ওপর নির্ভর করলেও প্রধানত মৌখিক ইতিহাস বা ওরাল হিস্ট্রি

ওপরেই নির্ভর করেছিলেন। নয়ন পাল পট দেখিয়ে ইতিহাস বর্ণনা করবার সময়ে, একই চিন্তা বারবার স্মরণ করার সুবিধার্থে, ছন্দ-সূত্র-প্যাটার্ন-নির্ভর হয়ে ওঠে। ‘অরণ্য-বহি’তে দিকু/হিন্দু/উচ্চবর্গের সঙ্গে সাম্রাজ্যবাদী শক্তির বোঝাপড়ার দিকটি তুলে ধরার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে সাঁওতাল/নিম্নবর্গের সঙ্গে তাদের বিরোধিতার কারণ-প্রেক্ষাপটকেও উন্মোচিত করা হয়েছে। শাসকশ্রেণীর চেতনার বিপরীত বিন্দুতে দাঁড়িয়ে নিম্নবর্গের চেতনা কীভাবে তার স্বায়ত্তকে বাঁচিয়ে রাখে তাও দেখানো হয়েছে। এই স্বায়ত্তের কারণেই যে বিরুদ্ধতার জন্ম হয় তার বাস্তব প্রকাশ ইতিহাসে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা পালন করতে পারে। সাঁওতাল লোকমানসে কিছু কিছু দেশজ উপাদান আশ্চর্য রকমের শক্তি নিয়ে বেঁচে থাকে। ঔপনিবেশিক শক্তির নানা ধরনের আক্রমণ এইসব দেশজ উপাদানকে, তৃতীয় দুনিয়ার প্রকৃতির মতোই, ধ্বংস করতে পারে না। তাদের যৌথ চেতন্যের গভীরে এমন এক স্বাভাবিক নীতিবোধ অকম্পিত থাকে — যা প্রতিষ্ঠানিক ধর্ম, ঔপনিবেশিক ন্যায়শাস্ত্র, বা আইনের তুলনায় অত্যন্ত সহজ ও সরল অথচ গভীর ও দীর্ঘস্থায়ী। ঔপনিবেশিক শাসনের প্রভাবে তাদের দৈনন্দিন জীবনযাপনে নানা ধরনের পরিবর্তন ঘটলেও তাদের এই স্বাভাবিক ন্যায়-অন্যায় বোধ অক্ষুণ্ণ থাকে। এমন—কি ঔপনিবেশিক পরিস্থিতিতে নানা ধরনের অন্যায়ের বিরুদ্ধে বিভিন্ন ধরনের সৃজনশীল ও অভিনব প্রতিরোধ-পন্থার জন্ম হয় এই ন্যায়-অন্যায় বোধের সূত্রেই।

আপাতদৃষ্টিতে সিধু-কানুর সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহকে আকস্মিক মনে হ’লেও, কিছু অবাস্তব পৌরাণিক কল্পনা দ্বারা চালিত ব’লে মনে হ’লেও — প্রচলিত অর্থে তা কিন্তু আদৌ স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত ছিল না। তার পিছনে ছিল প্রস্তুতি সাঁওতালচেতন্যের স্বাভাবিক ও অভিনবত্ব। ‘অরণ্য-বহি’র প্রধান অংশ জুড়ে বিবৃত করা হয়েছে সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের প্রস্তুতি ও সংগঠন বিষয়ক পদক্ষেপগুলি। আর এই বর্ণনার মধ্যেই ধরা

আছে সাঁওতালদের তখনকার আচার-আচরণ ও ভাবাদর্শ। সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহ ঔপনিবেশিক অর্থনীতি ও রাজনীতির সীমানাকে অস্বীকার ক’রে, ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্যের ক্ষমতা-বিন্যাস সম্পর্কেও বেশ কিছু মৌলিক প্রশ্ন উত্থাপন করেছিল। ঔপনিবেশিক ক্ষমতা-বিন্যাসকে কোনোভাবেই অবলম্বন না ক’রে নিজেদের স্বাধীনতা ও মুক্তির কথা তারা ভেবেছিল। পল্টন সাহেবকে প্রত্যাখ্যানের সূত্রেই এই ভাবনা স্পষ্ট হয়। আবার সিধু, বিশু ও কানুর নিম্নলিখিত কথোপকথনের সূত্রেও ঔপনিবেশিক ক্ষমতা-বিন্যাসের সম্পূর্ণ বাইরে দাঁড়িয়ে ঔপনিবেশিকতাকে পুরোপুরি প্রত্যাখ্যানের আবেগে কম্পমান কণ্ঠস্বরই উচ্চকিত হয়ে ওঠে।

নিম্নবর্গের নিজস্ব রাজনৈতিক চেতনা নির্মিত হয়ে উঠেছিল অধীনতার অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে। দৈনন্দিন দাসত্ব শোষণ আর বঞ্চার মধ্যেও স্বঅস্তিত্বকে বাঁচিয়ে রাখার লড়াই-এর মাধ্যমে। বিদ্রোহের আগে স্বাভাবিক অবস্থায় সাহেব ও দিকুরা নিম্নবর্গের সাঁওতালদের অনুগত প্রজা হিসেবেই ভাবতে অভ্যস্ত ছিল। একমাত্র বিদ্রোহের মুহূর্তেই সাঁওতাল ও নিম্নবর্গের যে নিজস্ব চেতনা আছে, নিজস্ব স্বার্থ আছে, উদ্দেশ্য আছে, কর্মপদ্ধতি আছে, সংগঠন আছে — তা তাদের কাছে স্পষ্ট হয়ে উঠেছিল।

কিন্তু তা থেকে আবার এই সিদ্ধান্তেও পৌঁছানো যাবে না যে, সাঁওতাল বিদ্রোহের কোনো সীমাবদ্ধতা ছিল না। সিধু ও কানু বোজাবাবার নির্দেশে বিদ্রোহের নেতৃত্ব হাতে তুলে নিয়েছিল। সাঁওতাল সমাজও একথা বিশ্বাস ক’রে তাদের নেতৃত্ব মেনে নিয়েছি। নিম্নবর্গের চেতনায় উপস্থিত এই ধর্মবিশ্বাস, অলৌকিকতা, মিথ, দৈবশক্তিতে আস্থা, অলীক কল্পনা ইত্যাদিকে যুক্তিবাদী ও দীপায়নের সামান্যতম প্রভাব ছাড়াই বেঁচেবর্তে ছিল, জীবনযাপন করছিল — তাদের চেতনার স্বাভাবিক ও বৈশিষ্ট্যকে তন্নিষ্ঠভাবে বুঝতে চাইলে ধর্ম, মিথ, অলৌকিকতা ইত্যাদিকে বাদ দিয়ে বোঝা সম্ভব নয়। জ্বরদস্তি সে চেষ্টা করলে নিম্নবর্গের নিজস্ব রাজনীতিকে উচ্চবর্গের ছকে ফেলে মতাদর্শগত

আধিপত্যের সীমানার মধ্যে বন্দী ক’রে ফেলা হয়। তাহলে ইতিহাসে নিম্নবর্গের কীর্তির স্বাক্ষর হারিয়ে যায়। তাদের মহান ঐতিহাসিক কীর্তি শাসকশ্রেণীর মতাদর্শগত আধিপত্যের পরিসীমার মধ্যে আত্মীকৃত হয়ে যায়।

তাদের সীমাবদ্ধতার কথাও বলতে গিয়ে তারাজঙ্কর চমৎকার বলেন, “ইতিহাসের অধিষ্ঠাত্রী দেবতা জ্ঞান। পূজক তার রাজনৈতিক নেতৃত্ব, পুরোহিত তার কূটবুদ্ধি। সেখানে আজও ন্যায় নেই, পাপ নেই, অন্যায় নেই।” সাম্রাজ্যবাদী যুদ্ধের কৌশলে বিভ্রান্ত হয়ে সাঁওতালরা যখন পাহাড় থেকে সমতলে নেমে আসে ও বন্দুকের গুলিতে অসহায়ভাবে মৃত্যুবরণ করে — তখন তারা অপার বিস্ময়ে স্তম্ভ হয়ে গিয়েছি। “বোজাৱা মরছে, গুলি দেখা যাচ্ছে না, প’ড়ে হাত-পা খিঁচে ম’রে যাচ্ছে, দেখে হাঁ গেল কানু।” এরপরেই তারাজঙ্করের মনে পড়ে হিরোশিমাৱ কথা। “সেদিন আধুনিক বিজ্ঞানের অন্যতম শ্রেষ্ঠ অগ্রসর জাপানী জাত এমনিভাবে অবাক হয়ে গিয়েছিল।” তারাজঙ্কর তার নিজস্ব ইতিহাসবোধের ওপর দাঁড়িয়ে, ঔপনিবেশিকতাকে প্রত্যাখ্যানের সূত্রে, ১৮৫৪-তে সাঁওতালদের বিস্ময়ে আর ১৯৪৫-এ জাপানীদের অবাক হওয়াকে শিল্পসম্মতভাবেই অধিত ক’রে তোলেন।

দ্বিবাচনিকতার মধ্যে দিয়ে ঔপন্যাসিকের সাহিত্যিক-ভাষা ও নিম্নবর্গের কথ্যভাষার বিরোধের প্রাচীর ভেঙে যায়-প্রকৃতি সমাজ ও ব্যক্তিমানুষের পারস্পরিক সম্পর্কসমূহের দ্বন্দ্বিক সমগ্রতা এক নান্দনিক নির্মাণ-প্রক্রিয়ার ভিতরে অধিত হয়ে ওঠে। সেইসঙ্গে একথাও স্মর্তব্য যে, এই অধিত-প্রক্রিয়ার মধ্যে সামাজিক স্তরসমূহ, সামাজিক গোষ্ঠীসমূহ, ও পেশাগত জার্গানসমূহের সঙ্গে সজাতি রেখেই ঔপন্যাসিকের স্থাপত্য ও ভাষাসমূহের অভ্যন্তরীণ স্তর নির্মিত হয়ে ওঠে। এইভাবে ‘অরণ্য-বহি’ একটি বিদ্রোহের যুগের ভাষার বহুরূপতাকে ও সেই যুগের বিভিন্ন তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ সামাজিক ও মতাদর্শগত কণ্ঠস্বরের

ক্রিয়া-প্রতিক্রিয়াকে ধারণ করে। সেই কারণেই, ‘অরণ্য-বহি’ বিভিন্ন বিরোধিতার পূর্ণ কণ্ঠস্বরকে ও তাদের আশা-আকাঙ্ক্ষার সংঘাতকে স্পষ্ট ক’রে তোলে। চৈতন্য-বিন্দুগুলির বহুত্ব ও কণ্ঠস্বরের বহুত্ব এই উপন্যাসের বয়ানে স্পষ্ট। আবার তার পাশাপাশি নায়ক সিধুর চরিত্র ও কণ্ঠস্বর একজন ব্যক্তিমানুষের চেতনার পরিধির মধ্যে আবদ্ধ থাকে না। এই উপন্যাসের নায়ক শেষপর্যন্ত স্বাধীন, অশেষ ও অনির্ধারিত থেকে যাবার কারণেই উপন্যাসটিও হয়ে ওঠে ওপেন-এন্ডেড। ‘অরণ্য-বহি’ আমাদের জানিয়ে দেয় যে সমস্ত ইউরোকেট্রিক ভাবনা-জগতের বাইরে যে আবহমান ভারতীয় সিভিল সোসাইটি বা জনসমাজ ঔপনিবেশিকতার সমস্ত আক্রমণকে প্রত্যাখ্যান ক’রে আপন জগতে স্থিত থেকেছে-সেই জগৎও অশ্কারাচ্ছন্ন নয়, গ্লানিকর নয়, একমাত্রিক নয়। ঔপনিবেশিকতার প্রভাবমুক্ত ভারতীয় জনসমাজের মহুমাত্রিক অনুপুঙ্খের সঙ্গে তারাজঙ্করের নিবিড় পরিচয় ছিল ব’লে এ তার জ্ঞান ও অনুভূতি অনন্যসম্পৃক্ত হয়ে থাকে এই উপন্যাসে। আবার সমাজ ও ব্যক্তির অস্তিত্ব সম্পর্কিত গভীর জিজ্ঞাসার সূত্রে জ্ঞানতাত্ত্বিক স্থান আর শিল্পগত টেকনিক অবিচ্ছিন্ন থাকে।

উপন্যাসের একেবারে শেষ পারাগ্রাফে তারাজঙ্কর লেখেন, “.....সিধু আজও মুক্তি পায়নি, ইতিহাস ওকে মুক্তি দেয়নি। আজও সে বুকে হাত দিয়ে ছায়ায় মিশে সেই ফাঁসি যাওয়া মনুয়া গাছটায় ঠেস দিয়ে ভাবে।” ইতিহাস যে এখনও নিম্নবর্গকে মুক্তি দেয়নি — ১৯৬৬ তেও তারাজঙ্করের এই ভাবনা অতীত মুহূর্তের পায়ের ছাপের সঙ্গে অস্থিত ক’রে তোলে বর্তমানের বন্দীত্ব আর আগামী সম্ভাবনার ইশারাকে। এভাবেও এই উপন্যাসের বয়ানে এসে যায় দ্বিবাচনিক আবহ। অতীতের অপরতার দর্পণে আমরা বুঝে নিই বর্তমান অস্তিত্ব আর ভবিষ্যৎ সম্ভাবনাকে। এই উপন্যাসে সিধুর কণ্ঠস্বর এক যৌথ আকাঙ্ক্ষা-চাহিদার কথা উচ্চারণ করে। তাই ঔপন্যাসিকের কল্পনাদৃষ্টিতে

ভর ক’রে পাঠকও যখন মনুয়াগাছে ঠেস দিয়ে ভাবুক স্বপ্নময় সিধুকে দ্যাখে, উপন্যাসের অন্তর্বয়ন তাকে নিয়ে যায় পরিধি থেকে কেন্দ্রের দিকে, বহির্বৃত্ত থেকে অন্তর্বৃত্ত অবস্থানের দিকে। বয়ন ও বুননের বহুকৌণিকতা ও বৈচিত্র্য পাঠকের চৈতন্যে আনে এক ঘনত্বের বোধ, এক সাবলাইম অনুভূতি। এই বোধ-অনুভূতিপুঞ্জের কোনো স্থির অবয়ব না থাকলেও তা একান্তভাবে মানবিক ব’লেই নির্মাণ ক’রে তুলতে পারে এক প্রতিবাদী পরিসর।

অরণ্যের নিম্ন শ্রেণীর কুশিলবদের নিয়ে বাংলা সাহিত্য আজ ভরপুর। তার মধ্যে উল্লেখযোগ্য কয়েক জনের সাহিত্য সৃষ্টি তুলে ধরেছি। তারমধ্যে অন্যতম বীজন ভট্টাচার্যের নাটক ‘দেবীগর্জন’ ১৯৬৬ তে লিখিত হলেও গ্রন্থাকারে তা প্রকাশিত হয় ১৯৬৯ এ। কাহিনির মূলে রয়েছে ‘কৃষক আন্দোলনের পটভূমি’। গ্রামের কৃষক নির্যাতন ও শোষণের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদ এই নাটকে সংঘটিত হয়েছে। উষর লাল মাটির দেশ বীরভূমের পটভূমিতে আদিবাসী ও সাঁওতাল চাষীদের কৃষক আন্দোলনের ভিত্তিতে এই নাটকটির নামকরণ। এই নাটকে প্রভঞ্জন বেনামীতে সমস্ত জমি নিজের দখলে নিয়ে এসে পঞ্চায়েতি ব্যবস্থার সুখকে পিছনে রেখে সামন্ততান্ত্রিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিতে তাকে আয়ত্ত করার চেষ্টা করেছে। শোষিত কৃষকেরা বঞ্চিত ও শোষিত হতে হতে শুধু ঘর ছেড়ে চলে যায় নি, তারা ঘরে ফিরে এসে আবার নিজ নিজ অধিকার ছিনিয়ে নিয়েছে। দারিদ্র্য ও দুর্দিনের মোকাবিলায় গঠিত হয়েছে ধর্মগোলা। শেষ দৃশ্যে তাই মংলার হাতের উদ্যত টাঙ্গি গিয়ে পড়ে প্রভঞ্জনের মাথার উপর ও প্রভঞ্জনের শাসন-শোষণ থেকে মুক্তি পায় সাধারণ মানুষ। রক্তার মৃত্যু ট্রাজিক রসকে ঘনীভূত করেছে। অরণ্যের অধিকার (১৯৭৭) উপন্যাসে মহাশ্বেতা দেবী ১৮৯৭ এবং ১৮৯৯-১৯০০ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ কালীন মুণ্ডাবিদ্রোহের প্রস্তুতি, পট, বিস্তার, সীমাবদ্ধতা, মুণ্ডাদের স্বপ্ন দেখা এবং বার্থতার কথা তুলে ধরতে চেয়েছেন। কেন্দ্রীয় চরিত্র বিরসা। ১৮৯৭-তে তার মুক্তিতে মুণ্ডাদের

আনন্দ উল্লাস, মুন্ডাদের ওপর দীর্ঘকালীন শোষণ, মুন্ডা সর্দার হয়ে ভগবান রূপে আত্মসোষণ, তার প্রেমজীবন, তার কর্মধারা, বিরসার গ্রেণ্ডার, বিদ্রোহের ধূমায়িত বহি, বিরসার গ্রেণ্ডার নিয়ে প্রশাসনের টানাটানি, বিরসা ভক্তদের ভাবোদ্বেল কর্মপ্রয়াস, রাঁচী, সিংভূম, ছোটনাগপুরে আন্দোলন, বিরসার পলাতক জীবন, পীড়নে দুর্দশাগ্রস্ত সমাজের কথা জানতে পারা, বিরসার মৃত্যু ও বিনাশহীন লড়াই — এ সবকিছুই এই দীর্ঘ উপন্যাসে বর্ণিত। বিরসার আন্দোলনের প্রথম পর্যায় ধর্মান্ধিত, যদিও মিশনারিদের ধর্মান্ধিত শিক্ষাই বিরসাকে ইংরেজ বিরোধী আন্দোলনে প্রবুদ্ধ করে। ইংরেজ সাম্রাজ্যবাদের বিরুদ্ধে তার লড়াই ১৮৯৫-১৯০০ সালে। উপন্যাসের এক জায়গায় তার চিৎকার — ‘অরণ্যের অধিকার ক’ল ভারতের আদি অধিকার’ আর লেখিকা বলেন, সব কালো মানুষ যেন তাকে দিয়ে কথাটা বলিয়ে নেয়।

তারশঙ্করের দেশ-কাল-চেতনাটি ছিল ঐকান্তিক — তাঁর জীবনবোধ এবং জীবনবিন্যাসে তাই মহাকাব্যের ব্যাপ্তি এবং অমোঘতা। বীরভূম জেলার ব্রাহ্মণ জমিদার চালিত গ্রামে ক্ষয়িস্থ জমিদার পরিবারে জন্মে গ্রামজোড়া, তথা পারিপার্শ্বগত দরিদ্র-অশিক্ষিত আদিবাসী মানুষের জীবনের সঙ্গে খুঁজে পেয়েছিলেন অন্তরের যোগ। আর একদিকে প্রত্যক্ষ করছিলেন, জমিদারি আভিজাত্যের সামাজিক বনিয়াদ ভেঙে গিয়ে চারপাশে গড়ে উঠেছিল অর্থগুণ্ডু আত্মসর্বস্ব ধনতান্ত্রিক জীবন-ব্যবস্থা-সমাজ ভেঙেই যার জন্ম। সেই সঙ্গে শিল্পী আকৃষ্ট হয়েছিলেন গান্ধীপন্থী আন্দোলনে। সমাজে আর্থ-রাজনৈতিক বিপত্তির ঐতিহাসিক তরঙ্গটির সঙ্গেও যোগ তাঁর ছিল আন্তরিক। প্রধানত গ্রাম্যজীবনের প্রত্যক্ষ অভিজ্ঞতার অমেয় পুঁজির সংযোগে গল্প-উপন্যাসের থীম গড়েছেন তারশঙ্কর।

তার সঙ্গে কালের ওঠাপড়াকে নিবিড়ভাবে জড়িয়ে নিয়ে জীবনের একটা পরিব্যাপ্ত সামগ্রিক রূপ গড়ে তুলতে চেয়েছেন উপন্যাসে।

অচিন্ত্য কুমার সেনগুপ্ত বলেছেন, তাঁর সাহিত্যের দুই প্রধান উপজীব্য — মাটি আর মানুষ। মাটির মমত্ব আর মানুষের মহিমা। একথা যথার্থ। তারশঙ্কর বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় আমাদের অস্থির সংশয়, বিক্ষুব্ধ অবিশ্বাসী যুগের প্রধান কথাশিল্পী। তিনি যে সময়ের শিল্পী সে সময় পুরানো বিশ্বাস ও মূল্যবোধের অবসানের সময়। এই অর্ধশতাব্দীর সমস্ত তরঙ্গ বিক্ষুব্ধ অবসান ঘটছিল, উদ্ভব হচ্ছিল নতুন বিশ্বাস ও মূল্যবোধের। তাঁর উপন্যাসেই মানবচরিত্র ও প্রকৃতির অজ্ঞাজ্ঞী যোগ ঘটেছে। ভৌগোলিক সত্তা এখানে পটভূমি নয়, স্বতন্ত্র সত্তা নিয়ে দেখা দিয়েছে। চারপাশের ভূ-প্রকৃতি, বিচিত্র জনজীবন এবং তার সাংস্কৃতিক পরিমণ্ডল জীবন্ত প্রত্যক্ষরূপে তাঁর সাহিত্যে এসে উপস্থিত হয়েছে। ফলে তিনি হয়েছেন আঞ্চলিক জীবনের অন্তরঙ্গ রূপনির্মাতা।

তিনি তাঁর সাহিত্য সাধনায় খুঁজেছেন এক সমগ্র অখণ্ড মানুষকে, মানুষ ও প্রকৃতিকে, মাটির সঙ্গে মানুষের সম্পর্ককে। বর্তমান সমাজে ঐতিহ্য, সভ্যতা ও সংস্কৃতি থেকে ছিন্নমূল জীবনের বিচ্যুত এক ক্ষেত্রে তারশঙ্করের চিন্তা ও ভাবনা তথা আন্তিক্যবোধ মানুষকে পৌঁছে দিতে পারে তাঁদের কাঙ্ক্ষিত লক্ষ্য — একথা ভেবে দেখবার অবকাশ বোধ হয় এসেছে। বলাবাহুল্য তারশঙ্করের শিল্পীমানস দেশ-কাল-সমাজের পটভূমিকায় বিচিত্র নরনারীর যে চিত্রশালা নির্মাণ করেছেন তা দেশকাল নিরপেক্ষ রূপলাভ করেছে, আর এখানেই কালান্তরের কথাবার তারশঙ্করের শ্রেষ্ঠত্ব।

সহায়ক গ্রন্থপঞ্জিঃ

১. ভারতীয় রাজনৈতিক উপন্যাসঃ প্রাক্-স্বাধীনতাপর্ব, শিশিরকুমার দাশ, অনুষ্টুপ, শারদীয় ১৯৮৬।
২. সরোজ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, বাংলা রাজনৈতিক উপন্যাস, উত্তরপ্রসঙ্গ (১৯৮৬)।
৩. অশোক রুদ্র, বাংলা উপন্যাসে রাজনীতি, সমাজে নারী পুরুষ ও অন্যান্য প্রবন্ধ।
৪. কার্তিক লাহিড়ী, রাজনীতি উপন্যাস সতীনাথ ভাদুড়ী, বাস্তবতা ও বাংলা উপন্যাস, ১৯৭৮।
৫. সরোজ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, বাংলা উপন্যাসঃ দ্বন্দ্বিক দর্পণ।
৬. সরোজ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, বিপন্ন সীমান্তঃ উদ্ভিন্ন সৈনিক, দেশ।
৭. ড. দেবেশ কুমার আচার্য, বাংলা সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস, ইউনাইটেড বুক এজেন্সি, কলকাতা — ৯।
৮. ড. সত্যবতী গিরি, ড. সমরেশ মজুমদার, প্রবন্ধ সঙ্কলন, রত্নাবলী, কলকাতা -৯।
৯. গৌতম চৌধুরি, উবুদশ, বর্ষ ১৫ সংখ্যা ১-৩, জানুয়ারি-সেপ্টেম্বর ২০০২।

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সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় : কিছু কথা কিছু স্মৃতি

' Sunil Ganguly: Kichu katha Kichu Smriti (

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Abstract

In the era of Bengali literature Sunil Ganguly (1934 – 2012) is an unforgettable name. His sudden departure has emotionally moved both the Bengals. Irrespective of political and non-political regions, people have attended his cremation. In reality behind Sunil, a litterateur, there remained ever friendly and charitable heart. He could win the hearts with ease. His literary sensibility took its shape from his intensity to express his inner self. He was not a born artist but moulded himself as an artist through deep devotion to literature. He never wrote to earn his bread but to quench the thirst of his heart. His contribution to Bengali literature is not a new matter. Some undiscovered fields about the person Sunil behind a litterateur Sunil have been tried to point out in the writing "Sunil Ganguly: Kichu katha Kichu Smriti".

আধুনিক বঙ্গ-সাহিত্যের আ-লাড়ন জগা-না নাম সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় (১৯৩৪ - ২০১২)। অবিভক্ত বাংলার অধুনা ফরিদপুর-জলার আমগ্রাম (আমগাঁ, মায়ের মামার বাড়ি) সুনীল গঙ্গুলীর জন্ম হয়।-সদিন ছিল ৭-স-প্টেম্বর, ১৯৩৪ সাল (বাং ২১ ভাদ্র, ১৩৪১)। পিতার নাম কালীপদ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়, মাতার নাম মীরা-দেবী। সুনীল ছি-লন ভাই-বা-ন-দর জ্যেষ্ঠ্য। সুনী-লর অন্য দুই ভাই-য়র নাম অনিল ও অ-শাক এবং-বা-নর নাম কনিকা।

জীব-নর প্রথম-থ-কই সুনীল ছি-লন বই পিপাসু বি-শষ ক-র সাহিত্য অনুরাগী। তাঁর বই পড়ার-নশা জা-গ মা মীরা-দেবীর পড়ার অদম্য ইচ্ছা-দ-খা।-ছাট-বলা-থ-কই ব্যাপক গল্প বই পড়ার-নশা ছিল সুনী-লর। মা মীরা-দেবী পার্শ্ববর্তী 'ব-য়জ অন লাই-ব্ররি'-থ-ক দুটি ক-র বই নি-য় এলে সুনীল সেগুলি মায়ের অজান্তে কখন পড়ে-ফল-তন।-ছাট-বলা-ত তাঁর বাবা-টনিস-নর

কবিতা অনুবাদ কর-ত দি-ল তিনি নি-জই কবিতা লেখার কথা ভাবতেন। মাত্র ১০-১১ বছর বয়-স বঙ্কিম রচনাবলী শেষ করেছেন, ক্লাস সেভেনে 'শ-ষর কবিতা' প-ড়-ফ-ল-ছন। অস্কার ওয়াই-ল্ডর "Picture of Dorian Gray" নামক উপন্যাসটিও প-ড়-ফ-ল-ছন।

সুনী-লর বয়স যখন বা-রা তখন বাংলার বুকো ভয়ংকর দাঙ্গা (১৯৪৬) শুরু হয়েছিল। ১৯৪৭-এ ভারত ভাগ হ-য়-গল। এপার-ওপার বাংলার পারাপার বন্ধ হ-য়-গল। মানুষের বাড়ি সব হারি-য়-গল। পিতা কালীপদবাবুর মাথার উপর অসম্ভব-বাঝা-ন-ম এল। পরিবা-র জ্যেষ্ঠ্য সন্তান হিসা-ব সুনীল বাধ্য হ-য় বিদ্যালয়-থ-ক-ফরার প-থ টিউশন কর-ত লাগ-লন। চরম অর্থনৈতিক দুরাবস্থার ম-ধ্যও তিনি পড়াশুনা চালি-য়-গ-ছন। সিটি ক-ল-জ অর্থনীতি-ত অনার্স নি-য় ভর্তি হ-য়-ছন। ১৯৫৪ সা-ল অনার্স নি-য় বি.এ. পাশ

ক-রনা চার বছর পর ১৯৫৮ সা-ল প্রাই-ভট -থ-ক বাংলায় এম.এ. পাশ ক-রনা জীব-ন স্থিরতা পাননি। ছু-ট -বড়ি-য়-ছন এখা-ন ওখা-ন। -কানখা-ন নির্দিষ্ট ঠাই -ম-লনি। টিউশনি ক-র-ছন, কখ-না হাবড়ায় করণিকের কাজ, কখনো ‘জনসেবক’ পত্রিকায় পাট টাই-মর কাজ ক-র-ছন। পয়সা এ-স-ছ, -শষ হ-য় -গ-ছ, আবার -বকার আবার টিউশনি এভা-বই জীবন চলেছিল সুনীলের। গ্রে স্ট্রিটের একটি চঞ্চলা কিশোরী-ক -দ-খ ‘একটি চিঠি’ কবিতা -ল-খন যা ১৯৫২ সালের মার্চ মাসে ‘দেশ’ পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত হ-য়ছিল। এরপর আর -থ-ম থা-কননি সাহিত্যিক সুনীল। ১৯৫৮ সা-ল প্রকাশিত হয় ‘একা এবং ক-য়জন’ নামক কাব্যগ্রন্থটি। পরবর্তীকা-ল ঐ না-ম তিনি একটি উপন্যাসও রচনা ক-র-ছন।

সদা হাস্যমু-খর এই মানুষটি ছি-লন -বশ সদালাপী। যখন -যখা-ন -যভা-ব -প-র-ছন মানুষ-ক ভা-লা-ব-স-ছন। আর তাই মানুষ সুনী-লর নানাদিক সমানভাবে পত্র-পত্রিকায় আলোড়িত হয়েছে। দু একটি উদাহরণ দি-লই তা সুপরিষ্কৃতিত হ-ব :

ক. ‘দপ্ত-র ঢু-কই -সই আ-গর ম-তা সবাই-ক কুশল জিজ্ঞাসা করতেন, যাওয়ার সময় যাদের -চয়া-র -দখ-ত -প-তন তা-দরই ব-ল -য-তন। -চা-খ পড়ার ম-তা রঙ-বর-ঙর জামা পরা বিরাট মানুষটির উপস্থিতিই দপ্ত-রর বাতাবরণটি-ক -যন বদ-ল দিত। ঔঁর হাসিমুখ, ঔঁর ধীর পদ-ক্ষপ, ঔঁর কথাবার্তা - সব কিছুতেই এমন এক ব্যক্তিত্ব আর আপনজন-ক -ছাঁয়া’।^১

খ. ‘সুনীলদা-ক কখনও আমার -সলিব্রিটি ম-ন হয়নি। -সলিব্রিটি তা-কই ব-ল যিনি তাঁর য-শর জন্য ক-ঠার পরিশ্রম ক-র-ছন প্রায় শ্রমি-কর ম-তা। সফলতা এ-ল -চা-খ কা-লা -রাদ চশমা প-র -নন সাধারণ মানুষ-ক এড়ি-য় চলার জন্য। যখনই তার সাম-ন দাঁড়ি-য়ছি হাসিমু-খ অভ্যর্থনা ক-র-ছন সবসময়।’^২

গ. ‘সুনী-লর বন্ধু-বাৎসল্য ছিল কিংবদন্তীর ম-তা। বন্ধু-দর আবদার -ফল-ত পারত না ব-ল নি-জর জরুরী কাজ ফেলে তাদের সঙ্গে দিয়েছে, তা-দর -লখা ছাপি-য় -দবার ব্যবস্থা ক-র-ছ, যখন ইচ্ছে নেই তখনও সুরা পান করেছে তাদের সঙ্গে

ব-সা। প্রায় প্রতি রা-তই থাকত তার -কানও না -কানও বন্ধুর বাড়ি-ত পান-ভাজ-নর -নমন্তরা’।^৩ সুনী-লর বন্ধু-বাৎস-ল্যর কথা বল-ত গি-য় আমা-দর ম-ন প-ড় যায়, হাথরি আ-ন্দাল-নর কথা। সুনীল এই আ-ন্দালন-ক শুরু -থ-কই সমর্থন ক-রননি। কিন্তু আদাল-ত মামলা গড়া-ল -সদিন হাথরি আ-ন্দালনকারী-দর পা-শই দাঁড়ি-য়ছি-লন সুনীল। তাঁ-দর হ-য় আদাল-ত সাক্ষী দি-য়ছি-লন তিনি। তিনি জানি-য়ছি-লন, হাথরি -লখক-দর -লখা উগ্র কিন্তু অশ্লীল নয়। এ-ত সাহিত্য দুষ-ণর -কান কারণ নেই। শক্তি চাটুজ্যে প্রমুখরা ছাড়া -প-য়ছি-লন। অকৃপণ হৃদ-য়র অধিকারী সুনীল -বকার -ছ-ল-ম-য়-দর অকাত-র জাহাজভাড়া ও এক হাজার ক-র টাকা দান ক-রছি-লন আন্দামা-ন গি-য় চাকরি -খাঁজার জন্য। গাঁ-য়র গরীব -ম-য়-দর সাহায্যার্থ বনগাঁ-ত ‘প-থর পাঁচালী’ নামক একটি সংস্থা খু-লছি-লন। প্রচা-রর আ-লায় না এ-স আড়া-ল আবডা-ল বহু মানুষ-ক সাহায্য ক-রছি-লন সুনীল গাঙ্গুলী।

সদালাপী এই মানুষটি অন্যায়ের সঙ্গে কখ-না আ-পাষ ক-রননি। -তাষা-মাদ ক-র চল-ত -শ-খননি। -যখা-ন যা বলা প্র-য়াজন ম-ন ক-র-ছন তা ব-ল-ছন। একদা টাটা -কাম্পানীর -পাগ্রা-ম গি-য় ‘খরা’ গল্পটি পাঠ করাতে মঞ্চের সামনে উপবিষ্ট -কষ্ট-বিষ্ট-দর মুখ থমথ-ম হ-য় গি-য়ছিল। -সদিন-র সেই অভিজ্ঞতা বর্ণনা করতে গিয়ে সুরত নিয়োগী জানি-য়-ছন -

‘গল্প পা-ঠর -শ-ষ একটাও হাততালি পড়ল না -কাথাও। আমি সামান্য বিরত। সারা দর্শকাসন স্তব্ধ। এ-কবা-র যা-ক ব-ল পিনড্রপ নিস্তব্ধতা।.....এদি-ক প-রর দিন সকা-ল অফিস -য-তই আমার ডাক পড়ল উদ্ধতন কর্তার ঘ-র। -কাম্পানির সি.ই.ও আমা-ক তলব ক-র-ছন।.....যা-ক তা-ক নি-য় আসছ আমা-দর অফিসে। বিনা অভিজ্ঞতাতেই লেখক এসব লি-খ-ছন।’^৪

শুক-না হাততালি পাবার প্রত্যাশায় সুনীল কখ-না -ল-খননি। জীব-ন বহুবার সমা-লাচিত হ-য়-ছন তবু -থ-ম থা-কননি। এ প্রসঙ্গে মনে পড়ে যায় সুনীলের প্রয়াণে ‘দেশ’ পত্রিকার ‘সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়’ বিশেষ

সংখ্যায় সম্পাদক তাঁর সম্পাদকীয় কলাম লিখছেন -

‘.....বঙ্গজ বামপন্থীদের চোখে সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় তখন স্রেফ সি আই এ-র একজন দালাল বই কিছু নন। তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে চরবৃত্তির প্রত্যক্ষ বা পরোক্ষ প্রমাণ না মিললেও তাঁক ও তাঁর সৃষ্টিক নিয়মিত গালমন্দ ক-র গিয়েছেন বামপন্থীরা। তাতে অবশ্য বিন্দুমাত্র বিচলিত হননি কবি।.....আবার ঘাষিতভা-বই তিনি পরিবর্তনপন্থী ছিলেন না। বরং সুনীল লিখছিলেন, বাম জমানার প-র যারা এরা-জ্য ক্ষমতায় আস-ত পা-র, তা-দের কথা ভাব-ত এ-ল তাঁর বিবমিষা হয়।.....সুনী-লর সমা-লাচনায় গাভ্রদাহের কারণ ঘটেছিল বলেই তাঁকে শিশু-কি-শার একা-দমির সহসভাপতির পদ থ-ক সরি-য় দি-ত সৌজন্য-শিষ্টাচার-র বা-ধনি পরিবর্তনপন্থী সরকা-ররা।’^৬

তবু সুনীল ছিলেন নিশ্চুপ। কারণ তিনি জান-তন তিনি রাজনীতির কারবারি নন, তিনি কল-মর কারবারি।

সুনী-লর অমায়িক স্বভা-বর কথা বল-ত গি-য় কবি শঙ্খ ঘোষের সঙ্গে তাঁর এক চিঠির কথা বলতেই হয়। ‘কৃত্তিবাস’ পত্রিকার লেখা যোগাড় করতে গিয়ে কবি শঙ্খ ঘোষ-ক এক চিঠি-ত জানান - ‘লেখা আন-ত আপনার বাড়ি য-ত হ-ব। এর ম-ধ্যই একদিন যতাম। কিন্তু বি-লত ঘু-র এস আমি খানিকটা সা-হব হ-য় গছি - ম-ন হল, আপনার বাড়ি-ত আমি অ-নকবার গছি, এবার আপনার একবার আসা উচিত আমা-দের বাড়ি-ত - রিটার্ন ভিজিট হিসেবে। অকিঞ্চিৎকর মানুষের পক্ষেও এরকম আশা করা অবৈধ নয়।’^৭ কবি শঙ্খ ঘোষ না গি-য় সদিন থাক-ত পা-রননি। তিনি নি-জই জানি-য়-ছেন, ‘না গি-য় কি থাক-ত পারা যায়?’^৮ বন্ধুর এমন আ-বদন অগ্রাহ্য করার শক্তি কারোর নই। এই -তা-সদিন ‘সুনীল স্মরণ’ সভায় এস তাঁর অত্যন্ত ঘনিষ্ঠ বন্ধু শী-র্ষন্দু মু-খাপাধ্যায় সুনী-লর স্মৃতিকথন কর-ত গি-য় যা বল-গ-লেন তা-ত অমায়িক সুনী-লর প্রতি আমা-দের শ্রদ্ধা বা-ড় বই ক-ম না। ঘটনাটি ঘ-টছিল -কান এক

স-ন্ধ্য-বলায়। এক জায়গা-ত ব-স আড্ডা দিচ্ছি-লেন সুনীল ও শী-র্ষন্দু মু-খাপাধ্যায়। -স সময় সুনী-লর এক বন্ধুর আগমন ঘ-ট। তিনি এ-সছি-লেন একটি কবিতা -দখা-ত, -সটি ছাপার -যাগ্য কিনা তা বিচার করা-ত। -য বন্ধুটি এ-সছিল তার বন্ধুর -ছ-ল লি-খছিল ঐ কবিতাটি। সুনীল যথারীতি কলম নি-য় কাটাকাটি কর-ত কর-ত এমন একটি জায়গায় কবিতাটি দাঁড় করা-লেন যে ঐ কবির মাত্র দু’লাইন র-য়-ছ। বাকিটা সুনী-লর। সং-শাধ-নর পর সুনীল ভদ্র-লাক-ক -ফরং দি-য় -দন। তখন শী-র্ষন্দু জানান কবির নামটিও সং-শাধন ক-র তার না-মর সা-থ ‘সুনীল’ শব্দটি -যাগ ক-র -দবার জন্য। একথা শু-ন সুনীল -হা -হা ক-র তার -হ-স ওঠ-ন। এভা-ব -বনা-ম বহু কবিতা সুনীল লি-খ দি-য়-ছেন। -স সমস্ত উদ্ধার কর-ল সুনী-লর রচনার সম্ভার আরও বাড়-ব।

মিশুক সুনী-লর আর একপ্রস্থ পরিচয় আমরা -প-য় থাকি মাসিক ‘বসুমতী’ পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত একটি নিবন্ধ :

“সুনীলদার সঙ্গে মেদিনীপুর যাচ্ছি। সঙ্গে মা, শংকর আ-রা -কউ -কউ। অ্যাসাসাডর ছুট-ছ, -পাগ্রাম আ-ছ। হঠাৎ সুনীলদা বল-লেন - ‘ইন্দ্রাণী গান ধ-রা’। আমি চুপ। মুড না থাক-ল আমি গাই-ত চাই না বরাবরই। ও-ত আমার ধারণা গান যথাযথ সম্মান পায় না। সবাই চাপাচাপি কর-ত থা-ক। আমি -বশি কথা -কানদিনই বলিনা। বি-শষ ক-র বাই-রর -লাকজ-নর সাম-না। কিছুই বললাম না। গানও গাইলাম না। হঠাৎ সুনীলদা গান ধর-লেন - ‘জগতের আনন্দযজ্ঞে আমার নিমন্ত্রণ।’ সঞ্চরীতে -য-তই অস্থির হ-য় বললাম, ‘নাঃ! সুর হল না।’ এবং আমি পু-রা গানটা গাইলাম। গান -শষ হ-ল সুনীলদা বল-লেন - ‘দ-খছ -কন ভুল সুর ক-রছিলাম?’ সবাই -হ-স উঠল।”^৯ এমনই প্রাঞ্জল ব্যক্তিত্ব ছিলেন সুনীল।

রবীন্দ্রনাথ সম্পর্কিত অ-নক কথায় উ-ঠ এ-স-ছ তাঁর -লখনি-ত। সুনী-লর জীব-ন স্বতঃস্ফূর্তভা-বই এ-স-ছেন বিশ্বকবি। তাঁক সরাসরি অস্বীকার ক-র-ছেন আবার কথ-না পুনরাবিষ্কার ক-র-ছেন। গ্রহণ ও

বর্জনের মধ্য দিয়েই রবীন্দ্রনাথ এ-সিঁ-লন সুনীল গাঙ্গুলীর জীবনো। রবীন্দ্রনাথকে ‘গুরুদেব’ হিসাবে স-স্বাধন, শান্তি-কত-ন তাঁর প্রতিষ্ঠিত বিদ্যালয়-বর্ণাশ্রম প্রথার অক্ষ-র অক্ষ-র পালন ইত্যাদি নানা ঘটনা সম্প-র্ক তাঁর স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত বি-রা-ধর কথা তিনি প্রকাশ্যে জানিয়েছেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ‘গুরুদেব’ হয়ে ওঠা সম্প-র্ক সুনীল জানি-য়-ছেন -

‘গুরুদেব শুনলেই ধর্মীয় গুরুদের কথা মনে প-ড়, যারা আধ্যাত্মসাধনার নির্জন বাস -ছ-ড় মা-ঝ মা-ঝই সমা-জ বিচরণ কর-ত আ-সন এবং এমন কিছু ক-র -ফ-লন যা অসংযমী এবং সাধারণ নীতিহীন মানুষ-দরও ছাড়ি-য় যায়।’^৯

আবার শান্তিনিকেতনে বিদ্যালয় গড়ে তোলা প্রসঙ্গে বল-ছেন -

‘ইং-রজ প্রবর্তিত -করানি তৈরির শিক্ষা ব্যবস্থার প্রতিবা-দ তিনি একটি আদর্শ বিদ্যালয় স্থাপন কর-তই পার-তন, কিন্তু তা প্রাচীন ভার-তর আদ-র্শ ব্রহ্ম বিদ্যালয় হ-ত যা-ব -কন ?.....শান্তি-কত-নর বিদ্যালয়টি-ত বর্ণাশ্রমপ্রথা অক্ষ-র অক্ষ-র পালিত হ-য়-ছ, এমন কি ব্রাহ্মণ-কায়স্থ-বৈশ্য ছাত্রদের পোশাকের রং পর্যন্ত আলাদা আলাদা.....।’^{১০}

বি-রাধিতা কর-বন বল আস-র অবতীর্ণ হন সুনীল। ম-ন ম-ন রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রতি গভীর শ্রদ্ধা -পাষণ কর-তন তিনি। যিনি বল-ত পা-রন ‘তিন-

-জাড়া লাথির ঘা-য় রবীন্দ্র-রচনাবলী লু-টায় পা-পা-শ’। তিনিই আবার দরাজ ক-ঠ বল-ছেন -

‘-কান নবীন -লখক যদি সূচনাপ-র্ব রবীন্দ্রনাথ-ক অস্বীকার ক-র নিজস্ব ভাষা সন্ধা-নর -চষ্টা না ক-র রবীন্দ্রনাথ-ই আপ্নত থা-ক -স অতি মুখ্য। পরিণত বয়-সও যদি -কান -লখক রবীন্দ্রনাথ-র -থ-ক দূ-র সরে থাকে, তাঁকে জীবনযাপনের সঙ্গী করে না নেয় তাহ-ল -স আরও বড় মুখ্য !’^{১১}

যাই-হোক সব-শ-ষ বলা যায়, ভারতীয় সাহিত্য-জগ-ত সুনী-লর মৃত্যু-ত একটি বিরাট অধ্যা-য়র অবসান হল। মহাশ্বেতীর গভীর রা-ত তিনি চ-ল -গ-লন আমা-দর -ছ-ড়। কলকাতার রাজপথ সদালাপী এই মানুষটার মর-দহটি একবার -চা-খ -দখার আশায় অজস্র মানুষ ভীড় জমি-য়ছিল, বিদেশ থেকেও প্রচুর মানুষ এসেছিল। অগুপ্তি সুনীল ভক্ত ফেসবুকে তাদের প্রোফাইল কালো করে দি-য়ছিল। একজন লি-খছি-লন -

‘একসা-থ অ-নক আত্মী-য়র বিদায় ঘটল, -যন একই পরিবা-রর অ-নক -লাক একসা-থ চ-ল -গ-লন। কাকাবাবু, সন্তু, জোজো, নীলমানুষ, গুটুলি, নীরা, অসীম, সঞ্জয়, হরি, নরেন্দ্র ভার্মা.....এবং আ-রা অ-ন-ক।’^{১২}

সুনীল অমর। সুনী-লর ম-তা মানুষ-দর মৃত্যু হয় না। সাহিত্যিক ইন্দ্রনীল সান্যাল যথার্থই বল-ছেন - ‘সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় : Never born, never died, just visited our planet from 1934 to 2012’

তথ্যসূত্র :

১. "প্রিয় 'দশ', প্রিয় মানুষ", হর্ষ দত্ত, 'দশ' পত্রিকা, 'সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়' সংখ্যা, নভেম্বর ২, ২০১২, পৃষ্ঠা ৪২।
২. 'চনা সুনীল', সুব্রত নি-য়াগী, 'কারুকথা এই সময়', পৃষ্ঠা ৭১, শারদীয়া ১৪১৯।
৩. 'চল গি-য়ও সুনীল র-য় -গ-লন', শীর্ষন্দু মুখাপাধ্যায়, 'দশ' পত্রিকা, নভেম্বর ২, ২০১২, পৃষ্ঠা ২৪।
৪. 'চনা সুনীল', সুব্রত নি-য়াগী, 'কারুকথা এই সময়', শারদীয়া ১৪১৯, পৃষ্ঠা ৬৯।
৫. 'দশ', সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় সংখ্যা, সম্পাদকীয়, ২ নভেম্বর, ২০১২।
৬. "কুড়িবাস -এর টানা-পা-ড়ন", শঙ্খ ঘাষ, 'দশ', নভেম্বর ২, ২০১২, পৃষ্ঠা ৩৪।
৭. ত-দব।
৮. 'ল-খা পার-ব - সুনীলদা ব-লছি-লন', মাসিক 'বসুমতী', -ফব্রুয়ারি ২০১৩, পৃষ্ঠা ৬১।
৯. 'রবীন্দ্রনাথ-ক অস্বীকার এবং পুনরাবিষ্কার', সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়, দেজ প্রকাশনী, জানুয়ারি ২০১১, পৃষ্ঠা ১৫।
১০. ত-দব।
১১. 'রবীন্দ্রনাথ-ক অস্বীকার এবং পুনরাবিষ্কার', সুনীল গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়, দেজ প্রকাশনী, জানুয়ারি ২০১১, পৃষ্ঠা ২৫।
১২. 'বিদায় সুনীল গাঙ্গুলী', অনন্যা দাশ, পরবাস সংখ্যা - ৫২, অক্টোবর, ২০১২।

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Industrial Accidents of Bricks Industry: A Case Study in Karimganj District of Assam

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Abstract

The article focuses on nature of accidents in brick industry. Safety and security lapses are resulting in accidents and injuries in industries and hence they need to be prevented. Govt. of India has been taking various measures in order to prevent accidents. Factories Act, 1948 provides some guidelines for the prevention of industrial accidents. The various provisions relating to safety are mentioned from Sec.21 (fencing of machinery) to Sec.41 –H (Right of workers to warn about imminent danger). For this write up, the author of this paper discusses few of the sections of provisions regarding the safety of workers which are relevant for bricks industry; such as section 34,35,36 38 40A, &40B. Workmen's Compensation Act 1923(was known as Employee's Compensation Act 1923) makes it obligatory for the employers, brought within the ambit of the Act, to furnish to the State Governments/Union Territory Administration annual returns containing statistics relating to the average number of workers covered under the Act, number of compensated accidents and the amount of compensation paid. In this paper, the author has tried to highlight a picture of the accidents in bricks industry of Karimganj District. The author mentions various statutory provisions of safety measures prescribed in the Factories Act 1948. Some of which are relevant and applicable in bricks industry that are explained in section-IV of this paper. Training and awareness are the proactive development of knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skill of the workers. Safe attitude, behaviour and skill evolved by the safety education contribute to the overall accident reduction programme in the brick industry. The present paper aims to study the availability of provisions and the implementation of these provisions in brick industry of Karimganj District.

Keywords: Industrial accident, Brick Unit, Compensation, Training Programme, Skilled Workers, Fireman, Fired Bricks, Sun- fired Bricks, Kiln, Emission, Chimney, First- Aid, and Clay.

Introduction: A brick is a block of clay or other similar material, usually in the shape of a rectangle that is baked so that it becomes hard enough to be used for building houses and other structures. Bricks are one of the oldest types of building

blocks. They are an ideal building material because they are relatively cheap to make, very durable, and require little maintenance. Bricks are usually made of kiln-baked mixtures of clay. People who work with brick are called brick masons or bricklayers.

In ancient times, bricks were made of mud and dried in the sun. Modern bricks are made from concrete, sand and lime, and glass. The physical and chemical characteristics of the raw materials used to make bricks, along with the temperature at which they are baked, determine the colour and hardness of the finished product. Burnt bricks are the most popular building material in India.



The Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia (2004): A brick is a block of ceramic material used in masonry construction, laid using mortar. Brick is made by pressing clay into blocks and firing them to the requisite hardness in a kiln. Bricks in their most primitive form were not fired but were hardened by being dried in the sun.

Brick making is a traditional but important industry in India and other developing countries. Based on the limited information available on the brick industry in India, it is estimated that more than 100,000 kilns produce about 80 to 100 billion bricks per year. The present demand is estimated as 120 billion bricks per year. This is due to increasing demand for construction of houses, roads and bridges and for which establishment of more and more brick firms are coming up in future and large number of brick-workers will be employed. **There are two categories of issues in brick making industry: environmental and social.** The choice of technology for firing of bricks depends

generally on factors such as scale of production, soil and fuel availability, availability of skilled manpower and business considerations such as profitability and availability of finance. The popular brick making technologies are clamps, movable chimney and more recently fixed chimney kilns. The small scale brick entrepreneurs are confronted with environmental regulation and face numerous challenges for survival, considering the situation that there are very limited options for them to adopt for their brick business. The workers in the brick industry are subject to bad working conditions and poor remuneration. The brick moulder families are contracted through middlemen and earlier most of them came from the different districts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh and Orissa. Both male and female member of the families are engaged in brick making. Children are not employed as such, but usually they accompany their parents to the work place. There is an arrangement for toilets and drinking water facilities. The work force is paid on basis of quantum of work and against completion of certain tasks. Operations are mostly manual and under present conditions the working schedule for the workers is mainly for dry season in between the months from November to April.

The life of industrial workers is full of risks and hazards. Every year lakhs of employees are injured in factories, mines, railways, ports and docks, leading to acute ailments or permanent handicaps. World Health Organization (1997) estimated that 10 to 30 percent of workers in developed countries and up to 30 percent of the workers in developing countries are exposed to physical hazards and found that accidents in industries can be reduced by 50 percent with the adoption of safety system and changes in behavioral and management practices. It has been estimated that 250

million occupational injuries and 330000 fatalities occur each year.

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Review of Literature: A good number of studies has been conducted on industrial accidents and the implementation of different social security measures as prescribed by Social Security Acts.;

Stout et al (1990) analysed the accidents and found that despite differences in data acquisition methods, the traumatic work related fatalities are the same in United States of America and Australia.

Ball (1975) studied the vapour cloud explosion of cyclo hexane in Nypro (UK) Limited works at Flixborough, England and found that this accident had killed twenty eight people and injured eighty one due to lack of safety.

Kwon (2006) revealed that the ultimate goal of process safety management is to prevent process related catastrophic accidents from occurrence. The reduction of accident and fatality rates and asset damage caused by accident were used as an effectiveness measure of process safety management regulation in Korea.

Knegtering et al (2009) highlighted that accidents are low probability high consequence incidents. The fact that process safety management has evolved to a mature level over the last decade, serious accidents still happen.

Fullarton et al. (2007) indicated that work place injury remains a significant job related concern. While worker injury has been increasingly addressed through safety training and survey, worker injury continues to present major expenses both emotionally and financially.

Choi (2006) mentioned that direct cost of workplace injuries include the medical and legal expenses. The largest associated costs are the indirect costs of worker injury.

Brown (1995) why accidents has occurred? One has to be aware of the theories of accident causation and theories of human error. Accident investigation stops at a premature level but should be required to be firmly based on theories of accident causation and human error.

Grimaldi et al. (1989) mentioned that the economic effects of occupational safety from a business perspective occupational accidents interrupt the production process, generating on the one hand both financial and opportunity costs.

Kurzman (1987) investigated the Bhopal gas leak accident due to the release of methyl isocyanine gas and found that the lack of safety was the reason for this accident which killed around twenty five hundred people and injured to two hundred thousand people.

Cardillo et al. (1984) studied the saves case which liberated dioxin into air and found that safety problems had caused this accident and subsequently contaminated the air due to dioxin which killed birds, animals and injured many people on its path.

Ashford (1976) found that work accidents kill more than 12,000 persons annually and permanently impaired more than 80,000 workers and also estimated that work place death occurs every 42 minutes and injury occurs every 4 seconds.

Sebastian Gilbert (2009) while discussing various legislations on labour welfare also mentioned the need for reviewing the existing labour laws in the organised sector, and suggesting comprehensive legislative measures to ensure a basic level of protection to workers in the unorganised sector.

Environment Systems Branch, New Delhi (2005) studied on Environmental & Social Report for Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln (VSBK) and found that use of internal fuel increases efficiency and reduces emission and also suggested that to ensure

improvement in the living conditions of worker community, several measures will be undertaken in this project.

Mazumder (2009) researched on a study of Brick Industry in Barkhola Development Block of Cachar District of Assam and found that people are becoming conscious of the evil effects of pollution. Different environmental conscious NGOs, committees constituted by Government and other agencies have given much stress on pollution free technology. In this situation there is an urgent need for technological up gradation of brick industry to make it pollution free and more safety oriented for the brick workers.

From the above review of literature, it is clear that though there are a good number available of studies on industrial accidents, labour legislation and its implementation and also the studies on brick industry. Therefore, the author of this paper feels that a study needs to be undertaken with reference to the use and implementation of provisions regarding the safety of workers in brick units of Karimganj District. The present study is a primary attempt to examine the above mentioned objectives of brick industry of Karimganj District. However, so far this author after his review found that such study has not been conducted in karimganj District for which author aims to conduct a study on brick industry of karimganj District on workers safety provisions and their implementation.

Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the present paper are:

1. To discuss the nature of accidents in Brick Industry of Karimganj District.
2. To identify the different categories of workers of Brick Industry.
3. To find out the number of accidents and payment of compensation to

workers of Brick Industry of Karimganj District.

Methodology of the study:

The study proposes to be carried on with the help of both primary and secondary data. The secondary data, proposed to be used, may be in the form of different books, journals, periodicals, Government and Non-Government reports, statistical information, data available in different handbooks published by Government of Assam and India etc. as well as by searching relevant websites.

The primary data, on the other hand, were collected in the form of the opinions of the sample workers, and employers/managers through schedule, specially developed for these two categories of the selected brick units of Karimganj District.

According to District Industry and Commerce Centre (DICC) of Karimganj District, there are 12 registered brick units in Karimganj District. Out of these 08 were selected by using simple random sampling, for the study purpose. It covered 75% of the total registered brick units of Karimganj District. (Source: DICC, Karimganj, Feb, 2012)

The perception and awareness of the workers and employers/managers were studied by collecting relevant information by canvassing schedule among the sample workers of the total workers and employers and/or managers of the selected bricks units of Karimganj District. Thus, it covered approximately 100 respondents from both the employers/managers and workers/employees of the selected brick units of Karimganj District for this study.

Moreover, interview was conducted with the Officers of District Industry and Commerce Centre and Labour Officers of karimganj District to gather the information regarding the industrial

accidents and payment of compensation of brick industry. Data and information were also collected by arranging interviews with the knowledgeable persons like employers, dealers, technical experts and other related persons of the selected brick units of karimganj District.
(Source: Field Survey, Feb, 2013)

For the sake of simplicity of the analysis, the paper is divided into four sections: Section -I deals with the first objective of the present study. The identification of the different categories of workers of brick industry is included in section-II. The number of accidents and payment of compensation to workers of brick industry are discussed in section-III. The section-IV concentrates observation and conclusion.

Section -I

The concept of different terms related to industrial accidents may be available from Factories Act, 1948 and Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923 and other documents.

Industrial Accidents:

According to the Factories Act of 1948, an industrial accident is defined as "an occurrence in an industrial establishment causing bodily injury to a person which makes him unfit to resume his duties in the next 48 hours." In other words, it is an unexpected event which is neither anticipated nor designed to occur. It is always sudden for a gradual process does not constitute an accident.

Moreover, the event or occurrence should be something to which a definite time, date and place can be assigned. It must arise in the course of employment in a factory or an industrial establishment. However, self inflicted injuries or injuries

inflicted with the consent of a person cannot be regarded as accidents.

Thus, an accident is an unplanned and uncontrolled event in which an action or reaction of an object, a substance, a person, or a radiation results in personal injury.

Industrial Injury:

An industrial injury has been defined in Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923 as, "a personal injury to an employee which has been caused by an accident or an occupational disease, and which arises out of, or in the course of, employment, and which would entitle such employee to compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923."

The injuries of the accidents may be fatal or non -fatal. Fatal injury means injury resulting from industrial accident which caused death of the worker. Non- fatal injury means injury resulting from an industrial accident, which prevented injured worker from attending to the work for a period of 48 hours or more immediately following Factories Act.

Nature and Types of Accidents (Mamoria: 1996):

The nature of an accident may vary from industry to industry. An employee may fall from a height while engaged on a particular assignment or he may be caught in a machine while working on it, or he may fall against a machine, or parts of a machine having a horizontal protruding motion may strike against him or explosives used carelessly may explode, and injure an employee. Such accidents may result in disablement or death.

Accidents may be of different types depending upon the severity, durability and degree of the injury. An accident causing death or permanent or prolonged disability to the injured employee is called 'major' accident. A cut that does not render the employee disabled is termed as 'minor'

accident. When an employee gets injury with external signs of it, it is external injury.

Injury without showing external signs such as a fractured bone is called an internal one. When an injury renders an injured employee disabled for a short period, say, a day or a week, it is a temporary accident. On the contrary, making injured employee disabled forever is called permanent accident. Disability caused by accident may be partial or total, fatal or non-fatal. No accident occurs automatically. Instead, certain factors cause accidents. It has been noticed that an accident does not have a single cause but a multiplicity of causes, which are often closely related.

The manufacturing of brick industry uses coal, fire, clay, kiln and chimney to convert kucha soil (raw soil) into hard dry fired bricks. As the bricks industry using fire and coal through chimney kiln and work is done by workers manually, so there may be a possibility of causing accident/injury to workers. Therefore, the author intends to study the happening of accidents, safety measures available and implemented by the employers/managers for safety and security at work place for the workers in brick industry. An idea is also mooted to know the compliance of the employers' attitude towards the payment of compensation as per Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923. It has been observed from the field study that accidents/injuries occurred in the brick industry for which employer/manager maintains provisions of first-aid treatment within the campus of the brick firm. It is also noted that the workers expressed their views that there is an arrangement from the part of the employer to provide medical treatment to the workers, if necessary during the working season. If the accidents /injuries are more fatal they send the workers to govt. hospital and the cost of the medical treatment is provided by the employer.

(Source: Field survey of bricks units of Karimganj District, Feb, 2013)

In general, health and safety in the workplace has improved in most industrialized countries over the past 20 to 30 years, however, the situation in developing countries is relatively unclear largely because of inadequate accidents and disease recognition, record-keeping and reporting mechanisms.

Section-II

There are different sections of brick industry. All the sections of brick industry are equally important for production of bricks. It has been studied that the following sections are very vital for bricks unit for its manufacturing:

- 1. kiln-baked mixtures of clay;**
- 2. Bricks making section;**
- 3. Unfired bricks carrying section;**
- 4. Unfired bricks loading & setting in the kiln;**
- 5. Fire section;**
- 6. Coal section;**
- 7. Fired bricks unloading section;**
- 8. Stock-at storage piles and bins;**
- 9. despatch -loading & unloading of fired bricks;**
- 10. Rubbish section;**
- 11. Management section;**

(Source: Field survey of bricks units of Karimganj District, Feb, 2013)

According to the survey, it is clear that the maximum numbers of workers/labourers are required in the making of bricks of the brick industry. In other sections, less number of workers is required. Workers are engaged on the basis of their skill and the requirement of the owner of the bricks unit. Of course, it is true that the workers of fire section, loading of unfired bricks in the kiln and unloading of

fired bricks from the kiln are always skilled and efficient. They are aware about their assignment and also supervised properly.



In this contest, workers are identified as well as classified as per their assignment and task. Workers are employed in the bricks firm according to the scale of production of the firm. The following table-1 highlights the present position of the various categories of workers of the selected brick industry of karimganj District.

Table-1

Workers strength of various categories of selected brick- units of karimganj district:

Name of bricks unit	Permanent workers	Temporary workers	Casual workers	Total workers
National bricks industry	50	10	nil	60
Singh company	02	65	20	87
Roy &co.	04	60	07	71
New Barak bricks industry	30	10	10	50
Mammon bricks industry	01	30	05	36
Happy bricks industry	03	30	04	37
Cachar bricks industry	50	15	02	67
Valley bricks industry	45	10	05	60
Total -8 industry	185	230	53	468

(Source: Field survey of the above selected bricks units of karimganj District, Feb, 2013)

Section -III

It is estimated that at least 250 million occupational accidents occur every year worldwide. 335,000 of these accidents are fatal (result in death). (Since many countries do not have accurate record-keeping and reporting mechanisms, it can be assumed that the real figures are much higher than this) .The number of fatal accidents is much higher in developing countries than in industrialized ones.

In India due to late reporting or non-reporting of the accidents, the exact number of persons affected by accidents are not available. However, on the basis of the report submitted by different State Governments, Ministry of Labour, Government of India publishes some statistical information regarding the number of fatal and non-fatal accidents, incidence and frequency rates of accidents in India. The following table-II focuses that the respondents are employer/ managers and

workers/employees of the selected brick units of Karimganj District regarding the

accidents/injuries and the payment of compensation to workers.

Table -II

Respondents of both employers and workers of selected brick units of karimganj District regarding accidents and payment of compensation to workers:

S l . n o .	Name of brick units	No. of respondents employer/managers	No. of respondents workers/employees	No. of Accidents Occurred	Compen Sation payments	total no. of respondeents
1	National bricks industry	02	11	nil	nil	13
2	Signh company	01	12	nil	nil	13
3	Roy &co.	02	11	nil	nil	13
4	New Barak Bricks Industry	01	10	nil	nil	11
5	Mamon Bricks Industry	02	09	Twice workers' house fired	Restructured house of workers twice.	11
6	Happy Bricks Industry	02	10	nil	nil	12
7	Cachar Bricks Industry	03	11	nil	nil	14
8	Valley Bricks Industry	02	10	nil	nil	12
	Total -08 industry	15	84			99

(Source: Field survey of the above mentioned bricks units of karimganj District)

But the figures may not be strictly comparable due to differences in area covered, varying response or non-response from employer/management and employees/workers of brick industry. Table-II provides some information relating to industrial accidents and the amount of payment of compensation to workers/ employees of brick firms of karimganj District on the basis of the report collected through the schedule from the employers and/or managers as well as employees/workers of selected brick units of karimganj District. This table reveals that there is a significant response from both the employers and workers regarding the accidents occurred as

well as the amount of compensation paid to workers in brick industry of karimganj District.

Table-II shows the incidence rate of injuries (injuries number of persons) and compensation payment to workers of selected brick firms. The table also highlights that the rate of accidents is very few. But one incident has been occurred that the workers' house in the campus of the brick firm was fired twice. The employer of that brick firm had restructured the workers' house and provided to the workers cloth & other accessories for their survival. Obviously, it seems that the employers/ management of brick industry are very much

cautious and aware regarding the accidents/injuries of workers during the working hours of the firm. Of course, it is true that the opinions expressed from both employers/management and employees/workers regarding the accidents/injuries in the brick industry of Karimganj District are significantly similar. So, it is focused from the respondents of the selected brick units of Karimganj District that close supervision, awareness and proper instructions are safety and security of the workers and also reducing/eliminating the injuries or accidents of the workers. This leads to the workers to enrich their knowledge, attitude, behavior, skill and efficiency for their safety at work.

Section- IV

Government of India has taken various measures for the prevention of industrial accidents. Factories Act, 1948 provides some guidelines for the prevention of industrial accidents. The various provisions relating to safety are mentioned in Sec.21 (fencing of machinery) to Sec.41 –H (Right of workers to warn about imminent danger). Workmen’s Compensation Act 1923(was known as Employee’s Compensation Act 1923) makes it obligatory for the employers, brought within the ambit of the Act, to furnish to the State Governments/Union Territory Administration annual returns containing statistics relating to the average number of workers covered under the Act, number of compensated accidents and the amount of compensation paid.

As per Factories Act 1948, Sec.34 deals with excessive weights which are applicable in brick industry and Sec. 35 deals with protection of eyes that is related to workers of bricks unit. Sec. 36 of the Act has relevance for precautions against dangerous fumes as brick industry using coal & chimney kiln and it is dangerous to

workers. Sec.38 of the Act is very relevant for bricks industry as it is related to precaution in case of fire. Hence, bricks industry uses sufficient coal and fire wood for its production. So workers should be protected from any fire that may act as a danger to the life of workers.Sec.40A deals with maintenance of building which is necessary for health and welfare of the workers of the brick industry and Sec.40B deals with safety officers. It is mandatory from the part of the Government that safety officers must visit and inspect the safety measures of brick industry. In this regard, State Government has the rules to ensure the safety and security of the workers of the brick industry.

The brick industry is also within the purview of Environment Protection Act 1986, and it is mandatory for this industry to follow the rules enacted by the State Pollution Control Board.

Prevention of Accidents in the industry is the joint responsibility of all concerned viz management, employees, trade unions and government human error of accidents can be minimized by imparting safety education, training, etc. Many companies have circulated Accident Prevention Programme (APP) among all concerned. They inform to workers regarding how and when to report of injuries, where first- aid facilities are available, how to report unsafe conditions and practices, how to do in an emergency; say fire emergency, earth quake emergency, to include how to work in an emergent situation, use and care of required personal protective equipment. They have constituted safety committee and employees safety meeting are held regularly.

From the above discussion, it is clearly observed that there is no comparable and reliable industrial accidents statistics in

brick industry of karimganj District. Brick industry is an unorganized sector which is directly involved for production and manufacturing of bricks in our country. Workers are engaged in large scale in the brick firms because of the manufacturing process of this industry is basically based on manual and seasonal. Hence, workers/labourers are aware and sincere for their work. At the same time, they are also supervised properly. Thus, it is found that the employers/ management of brick industry are very much cautious and aware

regarding the accidents/injuries of workers during the working hours of the industry. The employer/manager provides medical facility to their workers. In case of payment of compensation to workers regarding injury/accident of bricks unit is mandatory. Therefore, accidents may not rise in the firm. From the legal point of view, if any accidents occurred, accident affected families must be provided all types of help if necessary in order to save themselves from the exploitation of the employers.

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Micro-Finance and its Inter-State Disparities in North-East India

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Abstract

Microfinance refers to the provision of various financial services like savings, credit, money transfers, insurance etc. in small doses for the poor to enable them to raise their income levels and improve living standards. The North-East Region is one of the back-ward regions of India characterized by low per-capita income, low capital formation, in-adequate infrastructure facilities, geographical isolation and communication bottleneck, inadequate exploitation of natural resources like mineral resources, hydro power potential, forests etc. Present paper highlights the microfinance programme in North-East India and its inter-state variation regarding various aspects like volume of savings, loan disbursement and loans outstanding. The Microfinance programme in India started near about two decades back. But its progresses are not uniform throughout various region and states. Assam is the leader state of North-Eastern region shows relatively better performance compare to the other states of North-East. On the other hand, Sikkim shows relatively poor performance. The differences in the progress of scheme in the North-eastern states are mainly due to differences in communication facility, literacy, geographical positions and moreover the differences between the activities and availability of the banking agencies. In the light of the above observation the present paper would highlight the issues & causes of inter-state variation of microfinance programme in N.E. India.

JEL Classification: G21

Keywords: Microfinance, Self-help Groups, North-East and Inter-state Disparities.

1. Introduction:

Northeast India refers to the easternmost region of [India](#) consisting of the contiguous [eight Sister States](#). The region accounts for 7.9 percent of the total land space of the country. The North-East Region is one of the back-ward regions of India characterized by low per-capita income, low capital formation, in-adequate infrastructure

facilities, geographical isolation and communication bottleneck, inadequate exploitation of natural resources like mineral resources, hydro power potential, forests etc. Apart from these, there are inter-state differences with respect to their resource endowments, level of industrialisation as well as infrastructural facilities. The Microfinance programme started its bank

linkage programme in North-East India with lots of hopes that it will improve the lives of the poor because finance is one of the most crucial inputs for economic wellbeing. In India, there are strong inadequacies of rural access to formal finance. As a result rural poor depends on informal sector for financing their emergent needs. Dependent on informal financial services, the poor often find themselves, at usurious rates of interest, spiraling into a vicious cycle of impoverishment and debt. Access to credit is positively correlated with the decline in rural poverty and an increase in secondary and tertiary output (Burgess and Pande, 2003). Majority of rural population, however, still does not appear to have access to finance from a formal source and the poor face particularly severe problems in getting finance (Basu, 2008). The banks and other formal financial institutions more or less stay away from banking with the poor due to the high risk involved in repayment of loan. Microfinance here emerged as a noble substitute for informal credit and an effective and powerful instrument for poverty reduction among people who are economically active but financially constrained and vulnerable in various countries (Morduch and Haley, 2002). Many studies (Latif, 2001; Khandekar, 2000; Mahendra Varman, P, 2005) have revealed that increased availability of micro-credit to the poor through micro financing SHGs will enable rural households to develop banking habits, to take up larger productive activities. The need to improve financial accesses of India's poor, the over whelming majority of whom are concentrated in rural areas, motivated the establishment time to time to launch many innovative programmes in the country. One such innovative approach to serve the financial needs of India's rural poor is the concept of the formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs). It is

a small, economically homogeneous and affinity groups of rural/urban poor, voluntarily formed to save and contribute to a common fund to be lent to the members as per group decision and for working together for social and economic uplift of their families and community. This microfinance approach permits members of SHGs to translate 'small pay- ins' in to 'large take outs' when needed (Rutherford, 2002). The programme of SHG formation has started in North-East India in the year 1997-98. Majority of the SHGs in North-East India are concentrated in Assam. Assam alone contributes a bulk of SHG savings, loan disbursement and outstanding bank loan. The present study is therefore, a modest attempt to examine the inter-state disparities of microfinance programme in North-East India and identify the factors which responsible for such disparities. The study also tries to have a look on growth of microfinance programme in Assam and India.

1. Review of Literature:

The purpose of the literature review is to summarize perspectives that might have a direct or indirect bearing on the conceptual design dealt with in this study and to prepare to frame work through which one could have a better understanding of the problem. The components of the various frame works covered by the review and their analysis are subsequently used for supplementing the findings of the study. The following literature review presents a scenario of microfinance activities in India. The literature also reported Inter-Regional and Inter-State Disparities among the various regions and states.

Micro finance programs are important institutional devices for providing small credit to the rural poor in order to alleviate poverty. Micro financing programmes

through SHGs, introduced the expanded by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in several parts of India, have the potential to minimize the problem of inadequate access of banking services to the poor (Rajasekhar 2000).

The role of SHGs in providing access to savings and credit facilities, the study revealed some of the potential strengths as well as the constraints of SHGs. Despite many economic disadvantages of the members, SHGs have been able to inculcate a regular savings habit among them, leading to the mobilization of a fair amount of savings, both individually and collectively. (Shylendra et. al, 2010) A most notable milestone in the SHG movement was achieved when NABARD launched a pilot phase of the SHG-Bank linkage program in February, 1992. The study pointed out vast credit variation among the states and regions. Southern region is the best region which shows 52,421.42 million rupees distributed among SHGs compared to other regions like Central region, Eastern region, Western region and North-Eastern region, where the credit distributed are Rs- 5,014.56, 5,183.16, 2,950.77 and 4,53.58 million respectively. (Dr. P. Loganathan and R. Asokan, 2006).

M.S Sriram (2005) pointed out that, Around seven lakhs groups were linked to the banks and around five lakhs groups were refinanced by NABARD by 2003, the cumulative disbursement of loans to these SHGs stood at Rs- 2048 crore. However, the linkage programme is skewed in favour of the southern states, particularly Andhra Pradesh. This state alone account for 39% of the total linkage, while the Northern and North-Eastern region together account for only 5% of the total programme. The success of SHG bank linkage programme in state like Andhra Pradesh is attributed to the existence of strong institutions involved in

social intermediation, which helps in the formation of SHGs.

Bansal (2004) have dealt with issue of explanation of such differences in spread of the SHG-linkage programme across regions. She tried to probe whether the spread of the programme across India has a systematic pattern. To investigate this she calculated the coefficient of correlation of the number of SHGs linked with the population, Human Development Index (HDI), incidence of poverty and spread of NGOs across Indian states. The results indicate that at the macro level the SHGs have moved away from poorer states and are mainly following the presence of NGOs in various states. Swain and Varghese (2009) further emphasizes the importance of NGOs by finding out that training by NGOs have positive effects on SHG members in helping them to productively use the loans. But they also find that this effect is higher for states with better infrastructural facilities. Thus complementary facilities are required to make such programmes more attractive for the intended clientele.

Sriram and Kumar (2005) while identifying the causes for regional variation in the spread of SBLP pointed out three factors that may have led to the growth of the program in states with higher penetration rates. These are incidence of poverty, population density and number of outlets of formal financial institutions. Other factors that may affect outreach are higher density of population, large number of formal financial institution outlets, active state government intervention and presence of enterprising MFIs.

According to Dr. Abhijit Sharma (2006), microfinance has become an important tool or instrument to reduce poverty or promote micro and small enterprise development. However, despite the massive physical

expansion, the out reach to the people has still not been commensurate. As on 2001, only 35.5% households availed of banking services. In the North-East region only 20.4% households availed of banking service and in Manipur it was 8.7%. Reji (2010) revealed that the effective functioning of groups is influenced by a host of factors involving: Quality of group meeting, saving habit, adequacy and accessibility to resources, repayment behavior, group cohesion, group leadership, group interaction, autonomy, sense of self, equity, accountability and transparency.

The crucial variables influencing the economic performance of SHGs are education and training received as social capital variables and dairying as economic capital variable. Thus, the SHGs can be empowered and strengthened to offer training to its members, provide opportunities for education and facilitate adoption of dairy, in order to enhance their economic performance. (Nagaraj et.al. 2009). Fouillet and Augsburg (2007) uses district level data on SLBP to show that a considerable disparity remains in the outreach of the programme. They have also identified the need to find out the factors that have influenced the outreach of the programme. As we can see there are a variety of factors that the literature has identified as having influence on the microfinance outreach.

2. Objective:

- To examine the inter-state variations among the North-eastern states in case of savings, loan disbursements, and loan outstanding to SHGs.
- To analyse the Agency-wise position of Assam regarding savings, loan disbursements, and loan outstanding to SHGs, the leader state in North-east India.

3. Methodology:

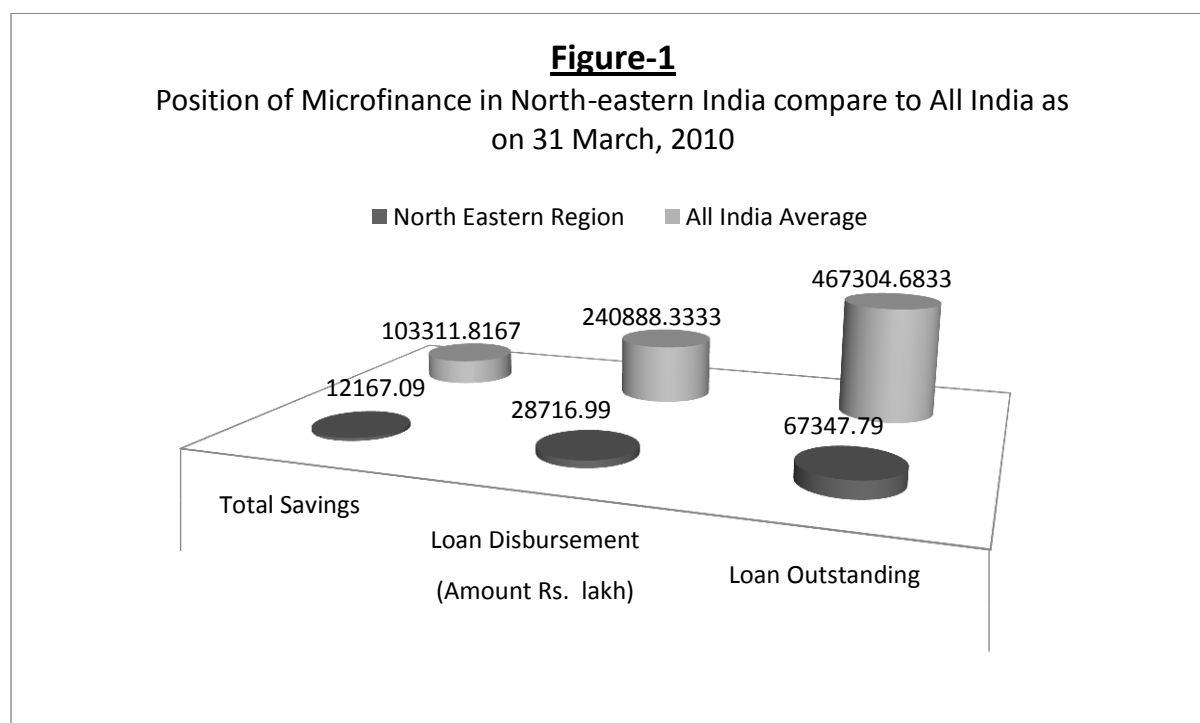
The study is based on secondary data collected from sources like NABARD, Statistical Hand Book of Assam, govt publications, official website of Assam, various books and articles. The data has been analysed using simple statistical tables and graphs.

4. Analysis of the Study:

The Microfinance programme in India started near about two decades back. But its progresses are not uniform throughout various region and states. The programme has made a tremendous progress in southern region compare to the other regions of the country. This is mainly due to the well-functioning of the NGOs and sound institutional facilities the programme is successful in southern region. Despite of many efforts, development of SHG programme in the North Eastern region has lagged behind the rest of the country. Moreover, the progresses of SHG programme among the North-Eastern states are also not uniform. Assam has done quite well whereas the performance of Sikkim is relatively poor.

4.1. Position of Micro-Finance in North-Eastern Region:

The North-eastern region is a back-ward region of India in all respects. This is mainly due to poor performance of Govt. Institution, poor infrastructural facilities, poor banking services and so on. In case of Microfinance also we have seen very poor performance in North-eastern India. In the North-east India, the programme launched in 1997-98 but still the programme is in its infant stage. The figure-1 shows the relative performance of microfinance in North-east India compare to all India average.



Source: STATEMENT 2-A, 2-B and 2-C, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD.

The figure-1 highlights the relative position of North-east India in case saving, loan disbursement and loan outstanding compare to all India average. In case of savings with banks, the North-eastern region recorded total saving Rs. 12167.09 lakh as on 31march, 2010. On the other hand, all India average is much higher i.e. Rs. 103311.8 lakh. Again, in case of loan disbursement and loan outstanding, the North-eastern region recorded Rs. 28716.99 lakh and Rs. 67347.79 lakh which are much low compare to the all India average (region-wise) of loan disbursement Rs. 240888.33 lakh and loan outstanding Rs. 467304.68.

This is mainly because of lack of concentrated effects by banks, the inability of banks to identify NGOs with savings and credit groups, lack of motivation among bankers, lack of large size NGOs with previous background of working with SHGs and the social configurations prevailing in the region. Moreover, poor performance of

microfinance in the North-Eastern Region is also due to the late start of SHG-Bank linkage programme in the region.

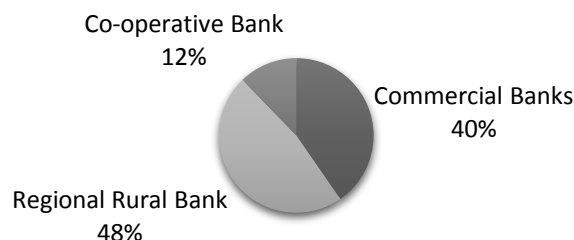
The programme of Microfinance have a great success in Southern region, the region alone enjoys all most half of the microfinance benefits. As a result, southern region captures the top position in all aspects of micro-financing facilities.

4.2.Agency-wise Performance of SHG Savings, Loan Disbursement and Loan Outstanding in North-Eastern Region:

The following figures explain the agency-wise performance of Microfinance in North-Eastern region regarding savings with banks, loan disbursement and loan outstanding. The percentage values of the respective figures show relative position of Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Co-operative Banks with each other.

Figure-2

Agency-wise Position of SHG Savings with Banks in North Eastern Region up to 31st March, 2010



Source: STATEMENT 2-A, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

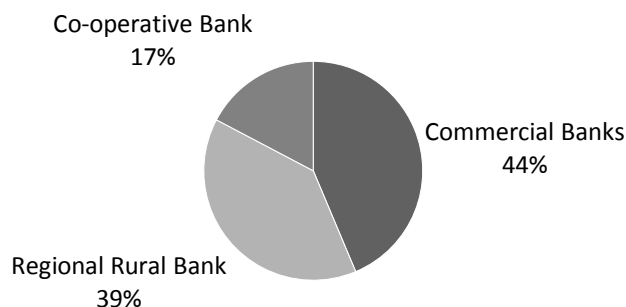
The figure-2 explains the agency-wise performance of savings with banks in North-Eastern region. Here, we have seen that Regional Rural Banks has the largest share

of 48 percent SHG savings followed by Commercial Banks 40 percent and Co-operative Banks with only 12 percent SHG savings.

In the Figure-3, we highlight the relative share of Loan Disbursement among the Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Co-operative Banks in the North-Eastern region.

Figure-3

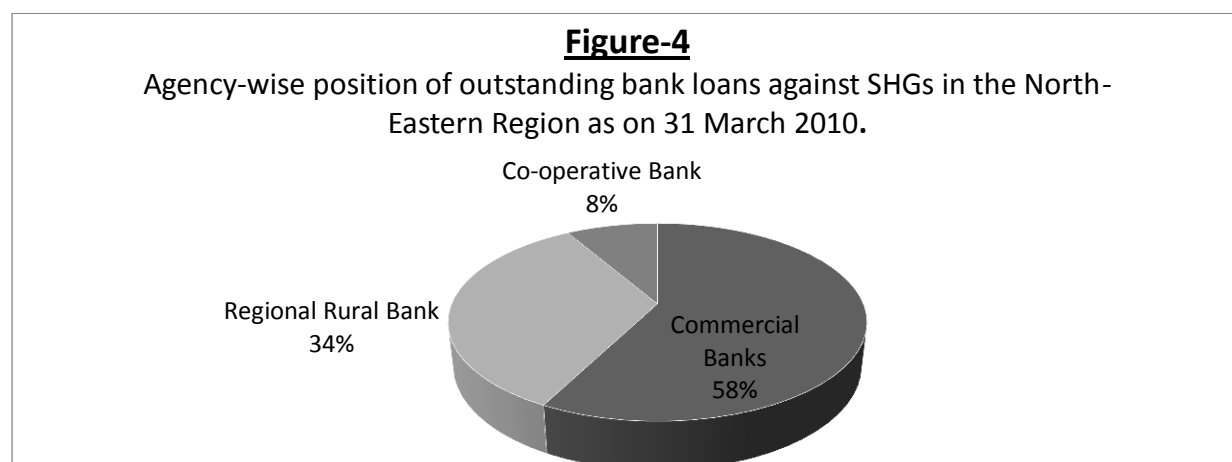
Agency-wise Position of Bank Loans disbursement among the North-Eastern Region during 2009 – 2010



Source: STATEMENT 2-B, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

It is shown in the figures that, though the Regional Rural Banks has the largest share in case of SHG savings with banks, here Commercial Banks has the largest share (i.e. 44 percent) in case of bank loan disbursement compare to 39 percent in Regional Rural Banks and 17 percent in Co-operative Banks in the North-Eastern region.

The outstanding bank loans against SHGs are also one of the important aspects of microfinance programme. Figure-4 explains the agency-wise outstanding bank loans against SHGs in North-Eastern Region. Here, again we find the same picture like loan disbursement; Commercial Banks has the largest share of 58 percent compare to the 34 percent of Regional Rural Banks and 8 percent of the Co-operative Banks.



Source: STATEMENT 2-C, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

The relative share of the Co-operative banks in all aspects seems to very poor mainly because of poor setup of Co-operative Banks network in the North-Eastern Region of India.

4.3. Region-wise progress/trend in the SHG-Bank linkage programme:

There exists no uniformity with regard to the progress of SHG-Bank Linkage Programme across the regions. It has had good success in southern regions where as in the northeast and northern region, its progress is very low.

It is also very low in case of the central region. The growth of the program has been overwhelming in the south. The southern region continues to lead in terms of share in client outreach as well as loan disbursement and outstanding. Calculation from the absolute data in Table-1 shows that the share of the southern region was 68.59 per cent in 1990-00 and still it has a larger share of 55.01 per cent in 2008-09 whereas for North-Eastern region it was 0.17 and 2.84 percent respectively

Table-1
SHG-Bank Linkage Programme-Regional Spread of Physical Progress (Cumulative)

Region	Northern Region	North Eastern Region	Eastern Region	Central Region	Western Region	Southern Region	All India
1999-00	3222 (2.81)	196 (0.17)	9398 (8.19)	15256 (13.29)	7983 (6.96)	78720 (68.59)	114775 (100)
2000-01	9012 (3.42)	447 (0.17)	22258 (8.45)	28581 (10.85)	15543 (5.9)	187690 (71.22)	263531 (100)
2001-02	19321 (4.19)	1490 (0.32)	45892 (9.94)	48181 (10.44)	29318 (6.35)	317262 (68.75)	461464 (100)
2002-03	34923 (4.87)	4069 (0.57)	90893 (12.67)	81583 (11.37)	42180 (5.88)	463712 (64.64)	717360 (100)
2003-04	52396 (4.48)	12278 (1.05)	158237 (13.54)	217009 (18.56)	54815 (4.69)	674356 (57.68)	1169091 (100)

2004-05	86018 (5.33)	34238 (2.12)	265628 (16.45)	197365 (12.22)	92266 (5.71)	938941 (58.16)	1614456 (100)
2005-06	133097 (5.95)	62517 (2.79)	394351 (17.62)	267915 (11.97)	166254 (7.43)	1214431 (54.25)	2238565 (100)
2006-07	182018 (6.22)	91754 (3.14)	525881 (17.98)	332729 (11.38)	270447 (9.25)	1522144 (52.04)	2924973 (100)
2007-08	134783 (3.72)	103424 (2.85)	753048 (20.77)	326763 (9.01)	446550 (12.32)	1861373 (51.33)	3625941 (100)
2008-09	166087 (4.01)	117609 (2.84)	893126 (21.55)	326602 (7.88)	357775 (8.63)	2283992 (55.1)	4145191 (100)

Source: SHG-Bank Linkage, Status of Microfinance, Various years, NABARD.

Note: The figures in the parenthesis are the percentage value.

The top five states in terms of loans outstanding accounted for 74 per cent of total loans in the country. Andhra Pradesh with 36 per cent share and Tamil Nadu with 14 per cent share of total loans indicate little left for other states. In terms of average loans outstanding, Karnataka occupied the top position with Rs. 1,10,300 per group which was 88 percent more than the national average of Rs.58,370 per group . In recent years, NABARD has initiated special measures to stimulate the low growth states.

4.4. State-Wise performance of Microfinance in North-East India

In the North- east region of India, the SHG-Bank linkage programme started at around

1997-98. Since then the number of SHGs linked to the banks have increased considerably especially during the last few years. The growth rate of SHGs linked to banks has been nearly 200 percent from 2001-02 onwards compared to only 50 percent for all India. Similarly the amount of loan has also registered a jump for the last few years in the region to more than 200 percent compared to all India figure of only 90 percent or so (Sharma, A, 2006). In north-east, the state Assam is the leader in the area of the number of SHGs linked to banks and amount of bank loan received. In the initial years, the SHG-Bank-Linkage Programme (SBLP) did not register much headway in Assam and other North-Eastern States.

a) State wise Position of Savings of SHGs with banks in North-East India:

Now the state wise position of SHG savings with banks in the North-Eastern Region is depicted in the following Table-2.

Table-2			
State wise Position of Savings of SHGs with banks among the North-Eastern states up to 31st March, 2010			
(Amount Rs. lakh)			
States	No. of SHGs	Saving Amount	Saving per SHG
Assam	218352	7359.94	0.03371
Meghalaya	11787	360.25	0.03056
Nagaland	5926	334.37	0.05642

Tripura	31349	3335.7	0.10641
Arunachal Pradesh	6418	164.89	0.02569
Mizoram	5097	251.4	0.04932
Manipur	10831	218.56	0.02018
Sikkim	2428	141.98	0.05848
TOTAL	292188	12167.09	0.04164

Source: STATEMENT 2-A, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

Table-2 depicts that compared to the other North-Eastern States, Assam is much better placed in respect of number of SHGs having bank account and the total amount of group savings. As on 31st March, 2010, a total of 292188 SHGs had their bank accounts in the North-Eastern Region with the savings amount of Rs. 12167.09 lakh. Out of these 292188 SHGs 218352 were existing in Assam and thus Assam was having a lion share of 74.7% SHGs with bank account in the North-East. Besides this, Assam also had

the highest share of SHG savings (60.5%) in the entire region.

Among the North-Eastern States, Sikkim reported lowest number of SHGs having bank account and the total amount of group savings. Only 2428 SHGs having total saving 141.98 lakh has reported by Sikkim as on as on 31st March, 2010. Saving amount per SHG among the North-Eastern states was highest in Tripura (0.10641 lakh) and lowest in Manipur (0.02018 lakh).

Table-3				
Agency-wise Position of Savings with banks among the North-Eastern States up to 31st March, 2010				
(Amount Rs. lakh)				
States	Commercial Banks	Regional Rural Bank	Co-operative Bank	Total
	Saving Amount	Saving Amount	Saving Amount	Saving Amount
Assam	3662.24 (49.76)	2637.95 (35.84)	1059.75 (14.4)	7359.94 (100)
Meghalaya	193.06 (53.59)	132.51 (36.78)	34.68 (9.63)	360.25 (100)
Nagaland	151.37 (45.27)	NA	183 (54.73)	334.37 (100)
Tripura	574.34 (17.22)	2660.6 (79.76)	100.76 (3.02)	3335.7 (100)
Arunachal Pradesh	71.51 (43.37)	77.85 (47.21)	15.53 (9.42)	164.89 (100)
Mizoram	44.23 (17.59)	176.97 (70.39)	30.2 (12.02)	251.4 (100)
Manipur	118.44 (54.19)	80 (36.60)	20.12 (9.21)	218.56 (100)
Sikkim	96.74 (68.14)	NA	45.24 (31.86)	141.98 (100)
Overall	4911.93 (40.37)	5765.88 (47.39)	1489.28 (12.24)	12167.09 (100)

Source: STATEMENT 2-A, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

Note: The figures in the parenthesis are the percentage value. NA means not available and total amount consists of the data available from other agencies.

Table-3 indicates the agency-wise performance of SHG savings with banks among the North-Eastern states. In Assam

almost half of the SHG savings are contributed by the Commercial Banks, whereas the performances of Regional Rural Banks and Co-operative are relatively poor. The Commercial Banks contributes more than half of the SHG savings in case of

Meghalaya, Manipur and Sikkim. In case of Mizoram and Tripura the largest shares of SHG saving are contributed by the Regional Rural Banks i.e. 70.39 percent and 79.76 percent respectively. In Nagaland, the Co-

operative Banks contributes the SHG savings of 54.73 percent compare to Commercial Banks only 45.27 percent.

b) State-wise position of Bank Loans disbursed to SHGs in North-Eastern Region:

The state wise position of bank loan disbursed to SHGs in the North-East during the year 2009-10 is shown in the following table.

Table-4			
State-wise position of Bank Loans disbursement in North-Eastern Region during 2009 – 2010			
(Amount Rs. Lakh)			
	No. of SHGs	Loan Amount	Loan per SHG
Assam	39058	19573.61	0.501142
Meghalaya	1895	884.18	0.466586
Nagaland	603	637.83	1.057761
Tripura	5424	6270.72	1.156106
Arunachal Pradesh	919	318.13	0.34617
Mizoram	417	466.87	1.119592
Manipur	538	301.14	0.55974
Sikkim	453	264.51	0.583907
Overall	49307	28716.99	0.582412

Source: STATEMENT 2-B, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

The total number of SHGs had bank loan disbursed in North-east was 49307 having total amount Rs. 28716.99 lakh during 2009-10. Assam accounts for more than 79 percent of the total SHGs and in case of loan disbursed Assam alone accounts Rs.19573.61 lakh i.e. more than half of the total loan disbursed in the N.E region during 2009-10. Among the other states, Mizoram contributes less number SHGs linked to bank loan disbursed i.e. 417 SHGs and Sikkim contributes less amount of bank loan disbursed i.e. Rs.264.51 lakh during the 2009-10. But the amount of loan per SHG was highest for Tripura (1.156106 lakh) and lowest for Arunachal Pradesh (0.34617 lakh). In case of Mizoram and Nagaland the amount of loan per SHG was also not

negligible (Mizoram-1.119592 and Nagaland-1.057761).

The differences in the progress of SHGs scheme in the North-eastern states are mainly due to lack of proper communication, literacy, geographical positions and moreover the differences between the activities and availability of the banking agencies.

Like the SHG savings with bank, the Commercial Banks contributes larger share of 46.36 percent loan disbursement in Assam followed by 33.90 percent by Regional Rural Banks and 19.74 percent by Co-operative Banks. In the Nagaland as per data available the entire bank loan disbursed to SHGs are contributed by the Commercial banks.

Table-5				
Agency-wise position of Bank Loans disbursement among the North-Eastern States during 2009 – 2010				
(Amount Rs. Lakh)				
States	Commercial Banks	Regional Rural Bank	Co-operative Bank	Total
	Loan Amount	Loan Amount	Loan Amount	Loan Amount
Assam	9075.23 (46.36)	6635.28 (33.90)	3863.1 (19.74)	19573.61 (100)
Meghalaya	672.32 (76.04)	145.05 (16.41)	66.81 (7.56)	884.18 (100)
Nagaland	637.83 (100)	NA	NA	637.83 (100)
Tripura	1368.67 (21.83)	3958.03 (63.12)	944.02 (15.05)	6270.72 (100)
Arunachal Pradesh	312.13 (98.11)	6 (1.89)	NA	318.13 (100)
Mizoram	98.52 (21.10)	363.95 (77.96)	4.4 (0.94)	466.87 (100)
Manipur	174.23 (57.86)	106.91 (35.50)	20 (6.64)	301.14 (100)
Sikkim	198.32 (74.98)	66.19 (25.02)	NA	264.51 (100)
Overall	12537.25 (43.66)	11215.22 (39.05)	4964.52 (17.29)	28716.99 (100)

Source: STATEMENT 2-B, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

Note: The figures in the parenthesis are the percentage value. NA means not available and total amount consists of the data available from other agencies.

The Commercial banks contributed 98.11 percent bank loan disbursement to SHGs in Arunachal Pradesh, 74.98 percent to Sikkim, 76.04 percent to Meghalaya and 57.86 percent to Manipur. The Regional Rural Banks has also good share of bank loan disbursement to SHGs in case of Tripura and Mizoram and less shares in Arunachal Pradesh i.e. only 1.89 percent of bank loan disbursed to the state. The positions of bank loan disbursement by the Co-operative Banks are very negligible compare to the Commercial Banks and Regional Rural Banks.

c) The state wise position of outstanding bank loans against SHGs in the North-Eastern Region:

The state wise position of outstanding bank loans against SHGs in the Northeast is depicted in the following table.

In the table-6, again it is shown that Assam contributes maximum share of outstanding bank loan against SHGs among the North-eastern states. Out of total outstanding bank loan in the North-eastern states Rs.67347.79 Assam alone contributes Rs.49123.37. whereas Sikkim again shows lowest no. of SHGs as well as amount of loan outstanding compare to the other North-eastern states.

Table-6			
The state wise position of outstanding bank loans against SHGs in the North-Eastern Region as on 31 March 2010.			
(Amount Rs. lakh)			
States	No. of SHGs	Loan Outstanding	Loan Outstanding per SHG

Assam	100422	49123.37	0.489169
Meghalaya	3191	1339.83	0.419878
Nagaland	4236	1450.16	0.342342
Tripura	14580	9687.29	0.664423
Arunachal Pradesh	3203	1068.49	0.33359
Mizoram	2097	2325.9	1.109156
Manipur	4452	1878.58	0.421963
Sikkim	1604	474.17	0.295617
Overall	133785	67347.79	0.503403

Source: STATEMENT 2-C, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

As per loan outstanding per SHG among the North-eastern states is concerned Mizoram stand first with the value of 1.109156 lakh and Sikkim stand last with 0.295617 lakh per SHG. Except Mizoram and Tripura, loan outstanding per SHG in all other North-

Eastern states was lower than the average of 0.503403 lakh.

The Table-7 highlights the position of outstanding bank loan against SHGs among the North-Eastern States.

Table-7				
Agency-wise position of outstanding bank loans against SHGs among the North-Eastern States as on 31 March 2010.				
(Amount Rs. lakh)				
States	Commercial Banks	Regional Rural Bank	Co-operative Bank	Total
	Loan Outstanding	Loan Outstanding	Loan Outstanding	Loan Outstanding
Assam	30216.34 (61.51)	14534.45 (29.59)	4372.58 (8.90)	49123.37 (100)
Meghalaya	845.98 (63.14)	347.12 (25.91)	146.73 (10.95)	1339.83 (100)
Nagaland	1450.16 (100)	NA	NA	1450.16 (100)
Tripura	2755.37 (28.44)	6008.5 (62.02)	923.42 (9.53)	9687.29 (100)
Arunachal Pradesh	797.99 (74.68)	91.5 (8.56)	179 (16.75)	1068.49 (100)
Mizoram	799.33 (34.37)	1522.17 (65.44)	4.4 (0.19)	2325.9 (100)
Manipur	1528.35 (81.36)	350.23 (18.64)	NA	1878.58 (100)
Sikkim	432.58 (91.23)	NA	41.59 (8.77)	474.17 (100)
TOTAL	38826.1 (57.65)	22853.97 (33.93)	5667.72 (8.42)	67347.79 (100)

Source: STATEMENT 2-C, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

Note: The figures in the parenthesis are the percentage value. NA means not available and total amount consists of the data available from other agencies.

Here, like the earlier cases the relative position of Commercial Banks are much better for outstanding bank loans against SHGs among the North-Eastern States. But Tripura and Mizoram reports poor

performance of Commercial Banks in case of outstanding bank loan. The Regional Rural Banks are done well in the states Tripura and Mizoram.

Thus from the above tables and discussions, it is understood that though SBL Programme started its journey very slowly in Assam, in course of time it got its momentum. In the North-Eastern Region, Assam has experienced the maximum share of SHGs with bank accounts, group savings, loan

4.5. Agency-wise position of SHGs in Assam:

The agency wise position of savings of SHGs with banks in Assam from 2008-09 to 2009-2010 is shown in the Table-8.

Table-8 Agency wise position of savings of SHGs with banks in Assam from 2008-09 to 2009-2010. (Amount Rs. Lakh)									
Sl. No.	Year	Details of SHGs Saving Linkage							
		Commercial Banks		Regional Rural Banks		Co-operative Banks		Total	
		No. of SHGs	Savings Amount	No. of SHGs	Savings Amount	No. of SHGs	Savings Amount	No. of SHGs	Savings Amount
1	2008-09	64122	3634.35	101239	2363.94	15635	298.63	180996	6296.92
2	2009-2010	77036	3662.24	121298	2637.95	20018	1059.75	218352	7359.94
3	% Growth	20.14	0.77	19.81	11.59	28.03	254.87	20.64	16.88

Source: STATEMENT 11-A, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

From the table-8 it is seen that RRBs have the maximum share in case of no. of SHGs having saving account both in the year 2008-09 and 2009-10. But in case of amount of savings, Commercial Banks have major share i.e. Rs.3634.35 lakh and Rs.3662.24 lakh out of total savings 6296.92 lakh and 7359.94 lakh respectively during the 2008-09 and 2009-10. Co-operative Banks here again shows poor performance compare to CBs and RRBs.

The overall growth of no. of SHGs having saving account from 2008-09 to 2009-10 is 20.64 percent. The growth rate of SHGs for saving accounts in CBs are 20.14 percent, RRBs and Co-operative Banks has respectively 19.81 and 28.03 percent from 2008-09 to 2009-10. So Co-operative Banks reported highest growth rate of SHGs for saving account during this period. On the

disbursement and outstanding of loans. However it is evidenced from the above discussion that still Assam has to go a long way to make a significant progress in the SBL Programme in the all India level.

other hand, in case of growth of saving amount Co-operative Banks again shows highest growth rate i.e. 254.87 percent and Commercial Banks reported very poor growth rate of saving amount from 2008-09 to 2009-10. This is mainly because of expanding the network of Co-operative Banks in rural Assam during the last a few years.

The agency wise position regarding no. of SHGs credit linked with banks with the total amount of loan disbursement along with their growth rate from 2008-09 to 2009-10 are given in the following Table-9.

Table-9 The agency wise position of SHGs credit linked with banks in Assam from 2008-09 to 2009-2010. (Amount Rs. Lakh)									
Sl. No.	Year	Details of Loans disbursed to SHGs							
		Commercial Banks		Regional Rural Banks		Co-operative Banks		Total	
		No. of SHGs	Loan Amount	No. of SHGs	Loan Amount	No. of SHGs	Loan Amount	No. of SHGs	Loan Amount
1	2008-09	11775	8300.78	13417	5647.83	1256	1747.59	26448	15696.20
2	2009-2010	11760	9075.23	17486	6635.28	9812	3863.10	39058	19573.61
3	% Growth	-0.13	9.33	30.33	17.48	681.21	121.05	47.68	24.70

Source: STATEMENT 11-B, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

During the period 2008-09, the total amount of bank loan disbursed to the SHGs in the Assam was recorded at Rs.15696.20 lakh. Out of this Commercial Bank alone contributes Rs.8300.78 lakh and Co-operative Banks contribute lowest amount i.e. Rs.1747.59. Again the scenario of loan disbursement is almost same during the 2009-10. The total no. of SHGs had loan disbursed and loan amount has increased from 2008-09 to 2009-10.

Here again Co-operative Banks contributes the highest growth rate in case of no. of

SHGs as well as amount of bank loan disbursed. Commercial Banks shows negative growth in case of no. of SHGs having loan disbursement and very poor growth in loan amount from the year 2008-09 to 2009-10. The overall picture highlights growth of SHGs is much high compare to the growth of loan amount from the year 2008-09 to 2009-10. The record simple mean that growth of per SHGs has reduced during the last two years.

The agency wise position of bank loans outstanding against SHGs in Assam from 2008-09 to 2009-2010 is depicted in table-10

Table-10 The agency wise position of bank loans outstanding against SHGs in Assam from 2008-09 to 2009-2010. (Amount Rs. Lakh)									
Sl. No.	Year	Details of Loans Outstanding of SHGs with Banks							
		Commercial Banks		Regional Rural Banks		Co-operative Banks		Total	
		No. of SHGs	Loan O/s	No. of SHGs	Loan O/s	No. of SHGs	Loan O/s	No. of SHGs	Loan O/s
1	2008-09	47557	18296.28	33844	11015.32	7477	3543.82	88878	32855.42
2	2009-2010	49925	30216.34	38656	14534.45	11841	4372.58	100422	49123.37
3	% Growth	4.98	65.15	14.22	31.95	58.37	23.39	12.99	49.51

Source: STATEMENT 11-C, Status of Micro Finance in India, 2009-10, NABARD

From the table-10, it is observed that Commercial Banks had the maximum share of outstanding bank loans to the SHGs with the amount of Rs. 18296.28 lakh followed by RRBs with the amount of Rs. 11015.32 lakh and the Co-operative Banks with Rs. 3543.82 lakh during the 2008-09. Again during the year 2009-10, Commercial Banks contributes the amount of Rs. 30216.34 lakh followed by RRBs with the amount of Rs. 14534.45lakh and the Co-operative Banks with Rs. 4372.58 lakh.

On the other hand, the growth rate of SHGs having outstanding bank loan is poor compare to RRBs and Co-operative Banks. But in case of growth amount of outstanding bank loans to the SHGs, Commercial Banks again shows highest growth rate compare to the other agencies. This is mainly because of vast network of the Commercial Banks in Assam.

The Assam has witnessed a rapid growth of SHGs and its linkage programme during the last 10 years. Majority of them was facilitated by Commercial Banks.

for self-employment. In India it has grown at a tremendous pace in recent years, but the major concentration is in the Southern states. The performance of North-Eastern Region was worst. Moreover, there are huge inter-state variations among the North-Eastern states. Assam as a leader of the North-Eastern states has done well in all respect like amount of saving with bank, loan disbursement, and outstanding bank loans compare to other North-Eastern states. On the other hand, Sikkim shows very poor performance in all aspects of micro-financing programme. The differences in the progress of SHGs scheme in the North-eastern states are mainly due to lack of proper communication, literacy, geographical positions and moreover the differences between the activities and availability of the banking agencies. A greater concentration of micro finance is possibly owing to the already well-developed banking infrastructure in the states but it further reinforces the existing inequality between states in the development of banking infrastructure.

6. Conclusions:

The Microfinance programme becomes a very popular concept of financing the poor

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The Unheard Voices- Empowerment of Women through Participation Socially, Economically, and Politically in India

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Abstract

The discrimination and exploitation of women is seen all over the world. Empowerment is an aid to help women to achieve equality with men or, at least, to reduce gender gap considerably. Women play a very strategic role in the development of society in particular and development of economy in general. Since empowerment is considered a multidimensional concept, it is determined by many socio-economic factors and cultural norms. In this paper, an attempt is made to explore the possible determinants of women empowerment using the data from secondary sources. Empowering women is the urgent need of the time. Her potential hidden power is to be utilized for which, her status in the society must be improved and economically she should be strengthened. True empowerment of the women is only when all these three factors i.e. social, economic and political are simultaneously addressed and made compatible with each other therefore for holistic development of women to happen the impact of all these three factors should be covered effectively. Thus, the paper sheds light on the role of key indicators in the empowerment of women by participating socially, economically and politically. It also argues for a programme that enhances the autonomy of women.

Key words: empowerment, holistic development, compatible, potential presence

1. Introduction:

What is Empowerment?

The term 'women empowerment' has become popular in the development field since the 1980s. It is vividly recognized that women empowerment is essential for sustainable economic growth and reduction in poverty in developing countries. (Chaudhary, 2009). 'Empowering' women

has become a frequently cited goal of development interventions. However, while there is now a significant body of literature discussing how women's empowerment has been or might be evaluated, there are still major difficulties in so doing. (Mosedale, 2005). Women empowerment is central to human development. Human development as a process of enlarging people's choices of

half of the humanity is restricted. Targeted actions aimed at empowering the women and righting the gender inequalities in the social and economic share, as well as in terms of social and political rights, must be taken alongside effort to en-gender the development process. The extent of women empowerment in the country is largely determined by three factors economic, social and political identity. (A.Sangamithra, 2008).

Women in India are divided in caste , class, rural , urban , educational , occupational, and linguistic groups ; but marginalization is the common thread of uniformity among them and it begins with the non-recognition of women's work (kumar, 2005). One has to recognize the fact that women works at two level , at the private one and the public level. She forms network with the family of her birth and the one she is married into. Women also had a focal importance in contributing the livelihood of the family. Proverbially as the weaker sex, women in reality has proved to be the weaker sex women In reality have proved to be tougher biologically and not inferior psychologically and culturally. Without the work done by the women everyday life could not be managed. (Chakrapani, 2005).

Empowering women is the only solution for all questions. Her potential hidden power is to be utilized for which, her status in the society must be improved and economically she should be strengthened. The poverty is the main cause for her low bargaining power hence poverty should be removed. Empowering women and removal of poverty go hand in hand. Woman if is educated and empowered, her potential power can be utilized for the economic development. Mahatma Gandhi says, "You educate a man, you educate an individual. You educate a woman, you educate an entire family". (Kadam, 2012)

Gender subordination is a strategy of a tradition-bound society , fact remains that majority of the women even today live in a mirage brainwashed by the custodians of the traditions , customs and patriarchs, sacrificing their owner , dignity and pride and even their identity with no reference in the human history whatsoever. Consequently women's multi-faced personality are little or seldom known, they still continue to live as an extensions of their male counterparts (Arunachalam, 2005)

2. Need and Importance of the Study:

Women play an important role in all the fields of development. Socially economically if she is strengthened then she will create wonders. Women contribute directly and indirectly for the economic development. Over the years women has been treated as the soul property of husband, father, brother not given any choice or freedom of her own. The present scenario were women are been subjected to violence, and it includes even the increasing number of rape cases in the country were the recent example is the Delhi gang rap case of 2012, this current situation raises the questions not only on the empowerment but also on the security of women , it seems that the dignity of women which was there in the ancient Indian society is lost in the fog of wild human urges , and our ultra-modern Indian society. Empowering women is the only solution for all questions. Hence it is essential to study the past and present position of women and suggest measures for their upliftment

3. Objective of the study:

- To study the current status of women empowerment and transformation - socially, politically and economically.
- To study the reasons for the increase insecurity of women in India.

- To study the necessity of empowerment of women.
- To access the basic problem for women empowerment.
- To suggest the better policy for women empowerment

4. Date and Methodology:

An adequate and reliable source of literature is very important for the theoretical analysis. In this study secondary data is used for the preparation of the paper.

5. Women in Ancient India:

The status of women is changing from time to time. The history of women in India has been exciting. Over the past few millennia, the status of women in India has been subject to many changes. Women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields of life in ancient days of India. Works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana point out that, women were educated in the early Vedic period.

The Rigvedic verses tell that, the women married at a mature age and were free to select their life partner. Rig Veda and Upanishads, the holy books mention that, There were many women sages and seers, like Gari and Maitreyi. Stri. Dharma Paddhati, the text of Tryambakayajvan reflects the role of women and tells that, „women were enjoined to be of service to their husbands“. In some kingdoms of ancient India, tradition like Nagar Vadhu i.e bride of the city was practiced. Amrapali was the famous Nagar Vadhu. Women were competing to win the popular title of the „Nagar Vadhu“. (Kadam, 2012)

During the early Vedic Period women enjoyed equal position and rights. Later around 500 B.C the position of women started to decline with the Manusmiti and with the Mughal invasion of Babur and the Mughal empire and later Christianity cut the

freedom and rights of women. Even though penitentiary movements like Jainism allowed women to be admitted to the religious order by and large, the women in India faced captivity and restrictions. Around sixth century, the practice of child marriages started. (Kadam, 2012)

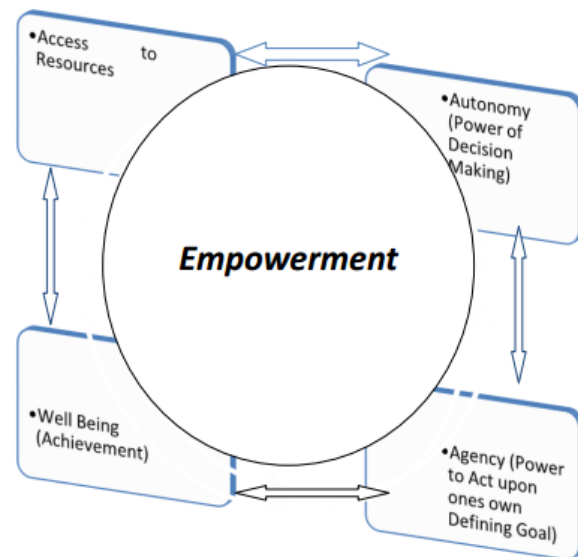
5.1. Medieval Period

During the medieval period, the position of Indian woman in the society further deteriorated. Among some communities in India, practice of Sati, Child Marriages and a ban on remarriages of widows became part of social life. The Muslim conquest brought the purdah practice in the Indian society. The Jauhar was practiced among the Rajputs of Rajasthan. The practices of temple women (Devadasi) was in practice and were sexually exploited in some parts of India. Among Hindu Kshatriya rulers polygamy was widely practiced. Women were restricted to Zenana areas in many Muslim families. During and after British rule the condition of women is not very good. The women are not viewed with equal status. In India, woman herself doesn't feel equal and many times she ill-treats herself. (Kadam, 2012)

6. Women empowerment in India:

Women constitute about 46 percent of total population of the country, As per the 2011 census; They suffer many disadvantages as compared to men in terms of literacy rates, labor participation rates and earnings. In order to address issues relating to social and economic advancement of women, the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) under the Ministry of Human Resource Development has been implementing various schemes. The national policy of employment of women was adopted in the country in 2001 with the ultimate objective of ensuring women of their rights. (Prof.M.D.Pujari, 2012)

Social empowerment of women is designed to create an enabling environment by adopting various affirmative policies and programs for development of women, besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services to enable them to realize their full potential. Educations, being an important tool for social empowerment of women, Specific schemes to provide incentive to promote education, especially amongst girl children and reduce the school dropout rates are being implemented. In addition, the Department Of Women and Child Development implements the schemes of „condensed courses for educated and vocational training and Distance Education Programme for Women“ supplementing the efforts of Department of Education (Prof.M.D.Pujari, 2012)



6.1 Importance of empowerment:

While empowerment literally means 'to invest with power', in the context of women's empowerment the term has come to denote women's increased control over their own lives, bodies, and environment. In discussions of women's empowerment, emphasis is often placed on women's decision-making roles, their economic self-reliance, and their legal rights to equal treatment, inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination. (Sunita kishor, 2004). Women's empowerment is a flow rather than a stock variable manifesting into various outcomes and well being is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the former, i.e. well-being going through various pathways like gaining resources, autonomy and agency. These pathways denote expansion in capabilities in a way which brings changes in the lives of individuals; people who are previously denied power are now being empowered. (Tripathi, 2005)

6.2 Constitutional provisions:

As per Census 2011, the population of India is **1210.19** million comprising

586.47 million (**48.5%**) females and **623.72** million (**51.5%**) males. Females have a share of **48.1%** in the urban population and of **48.6%** in the rural population. (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012) . The importance of women as an important human resource was recognized by the Constitution of India which not only accorded equality to women but also empowered the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in their favor. (India, 2006)

The Constitution of India guarantees:

- The right to equality (Article 14, 16)
- To secure all citizens men and women equally the right to means of livelihood [Article 39(a)]
- Right to life (Article 21)
- Right to equality and equal protection before the law (Article 15)
- Provides for discrimination in favor of women [Article 15 (3)]
- To make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief
- (Article 42)

- To renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women [Article 51(A)(e)]. (development, 2007)

6.3 Levels of women empowerment:

6.3.1. Social empowerment: There are different indicators of women empowerment like health, education, violence against women, Nutrition, drinking water, sanitation, housing, etc.

- **Education:** We need to accept the fact that gender inequality and discrimination has been the norm of the society and in this regard it touches all aspects of the life of women. Education and training for women is one of the major goals of social empowerment of women which need to be universally made applicable to all parts of the world. (kali, 2005). As per Census 2011, **74.0%** of the population is literate comprising **65.5%** females and **82.1%** males.

The incremental increase over Census 2001 of **11.8%** for females is higher than **6.8%** for males. The main reasons of females never attending school are 'expensive cost of education', 'not interested in studies', 'education is not considered necessary' and 'required for household work'. (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012) The **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** for females at the primary level stood at **115.39** compared with **115.55** for males in 2009-10 indicating parity in GER. At the middle classes level, the GER for females was **78.30** while that for males was **84.53**. The **Drop-out Rates** were observed to be **27.25** and **30.25** for females and males respectively in the classes I-V in **2009-10**. These were **44.39** and **40.59** in classes I-VIII and **51.97** and **53.38** in classes I-X for females and

males respectively. (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012).

Indian women are as capable as any women in any part of the world, but unlike women in any western countries Indian women are denied equal opportunities for working with men, in many spheres of life. Constitutionally Indian women have been granted equal rights with men but practically speaking they are kept much behind men in various activities of life. Co-education should be permitted but for the secondary education many separate schools should be opened as many parents does not like their girl child to be in co-education, so women should be trained in many professional courses because India requires a large number of professional teachers for working at secondary level (Sharma, 2004)

- **Health:** Women and girls in India face a crisis of growing, yet un-addressed, health needs. From the moment of conception to the end of life, the challenges to the female sex are enormous, especially poor women who have limited access to health care. Despite the alarming health crisis of women and girls, the national policy focus prioritizes family planning and reproductive health without addressing underlying issues such as women's low participation in decision-making, which adversely affects her health status. Another important point to note is that the leading killer of women in India is tuberculosis. Yet due to the focus on maternal and reproductive health this fact is not little known nor are there any gender specific policies or programs in place with regard to this disease. (India,

2006). The **female Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)** was **49** compared with the male IMR of **46** and the overall **IMR of 47** in 2010. Among the major States, the highest overall IMR of **62** was observed in Madhya Pradesh and the lowest of **13** in Kerala in 2010 (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012)

- **III treatment:** In India violence against women is common evil. Not just in remote parts but in cities also women bear the brunt. They are subjected to physical and mental violence. They are the one who work most but are not given their due. The woman is not safe anywhere neither at home nor at workplace. (Prof.M.D.Pujari, 2012). It seems to be simply up to the men to perpetrate violence and for women to safeguard themselves as best as they can. These crimes against women are part of a wider change where reactionary forces are becoming dominant. (Krishnan, 2012).Cruelty by husband and relatives continues to occupy the highest share (**43.4%**) among the crimes committed against women in **2011** followed by molestation (**18.8%**). **15.6%** cases are that of kidnapping and abduction, **10.6%** of rape, **3.8%** of dowry deaths and **3.7%** of sexual harassment (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012). In **2011**, of the total Juvenile Delinquency, **5.8%** were girls. Also, the rate of incidence of the crime per lakh population was **2.1**. India ranks **134** in **2011** among **187** countries in terms of the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII). (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012)

Crimes against women have been increasing over the years. The reported crimes against women in

2008 were **195,856** (under IPC and SLL) compared to **185,312** during **2007**, recording a marginal increase of **5.7%** in **2008**. Andhra Pradesh accounted for **12.3%** of the total incidents of crime against women, and Uttar Pradesh accounted for **12.0%** of the total crimes against women. About **95.3%** of the crimes were IPC crimes and **4.7%** were crimes under special and local laws (SLL). Although women may be victims of many crimes but rape is one of the most heinous crimes. Rape is defined under **Section 375** of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) as the unlawful and carnal knowledge by a man of a woman (a) against her will, (b) without her consent, (c) consent obtained by putting her in fear of hurt, (d) obtaining her consent by making her believe that she is lawfully married wife, and (e) with or without her consent when she is under 16 years of age. (Vasudevan, 2010)

One of the positive consequences of the public protests in the aftermath of the 16 December 2012 gang-rape in Delhi has been the intense public focus on rape and sexual violence in India. For long buried by the patriarchal establishment and its state, this issue has now become impossible to ignore anymore and even the most reactionary parts of India's political establishment are forced to demonstrate that they are going to act on sexual violence. The report of the committee headed by the retired chief justice of India, J S Verma has been a major achievement in putting forth a framework for a progressive law on this issue, a structure that addresses the many different aspects

of sexual violence and provides sensible measures which will help plug loopholes and provide justice to victims of sexual violence. (Marriage and Rape, 2013)

6.3.2. Economic empowerment:

Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth. Achieving women's economic empowerment requires sound public policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment and gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming. Women must have more equitable access to assets and services; infrastructure programmes should be designed to benefit the poor, both men and women, and employment opportunities must be improved while increasing recognition of women's vast unpaid work. (Gendernet, 2012).

The workforce participation rate of females in rural sector was **26.1** in **2009- 10 (NSS 64th Round)** while that for males was **54.7**. In Urban sector, it was **13.8** for females and **54.3** for males. Among the States/UTs, workforce participation rate of females in the rural sector was the highest in Himachal Pradesh at **46.8%** and in the urban sector it was the highest in Mizoram at **28.8%** (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012) The unemployment rate for women of all ages was **2.4** compared with **2.0** for men in the rural areas in **2009-10**. It was **7.0** for women and **3.1** for men in urban areas during the same period. Among the States/UTs, the highest unemployment rate for women in rural sector was observed in Chandigarh (**51.1%**) and in the urban sector in Dadra and Nagar Haveli (**60.0%**) in **2009-10**.

In the rural sector, **55.7%** females were self-employed, **4.4%** females had regular wage/salaried employment and **39.9%** females were casual labours compared with **53.5%**, **8.5%** and **38.0%**

males in the same categories respectively. (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012) In **2011-12**, the share of women swarojgaris in the total swarojgaris assisted under the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgaar Yojna (SGSY) stood at **69.4%**. (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012)

6.3.3. Political empowerment:

Much of the country's governance has been left to the hands of elected representatives and the official machinery. Notable Constitutional, legislative and policy reforms within the last decade, including the 73rd. and 74th amendments and the continued administrative decentralization through programs like NRHM, have demonstrated the Government of India's commitment to increasing the political participation of marginalized groups, especially poor women. (India, 2006). In **2012**, women occupied only **8** out of **74** Ministerial positions in the Central Council of Ministers. There were **2** women judges out of **26** judges in the Supreme Court and there were only **54** women judges out of **634** judges in different High Courts. (S. Jeyalakshmi, 2012)

The present membership of the women in loksabha from **1991 to 2011** has increased comparatively from **7.17%** to **11.02%** respectively (see Table 1), but in as far as the membership of Rajyasabha is concerned the membership of the women has decreased considerably from **1991 to 2011** from **15.51 % to 10.78%** (see Table 2). From the given statistics we can say that as far as the political empowerment is concerned it is only up to the level of loksabha and we can't find such a satisfactory picture in the case of Rajyasabha because in loksabha the membership of women have been increased by **3.85%** from **1991 to 2011**, while in the case of Rajyasabha the membership of women have considerably decreased by **4.73%** from **1991 to 2011**. The bureaucratic structure of India is very complex and messy

and because of that we find lot of departmentalization in ministries and various administrative posts.

Women here can play an very effective role and in fact the women have been doing so but the level of participation has decreased . From the statistics (see Table

3) ,we find that since **2002 to 2007** the participation of women have been considerably decreased in the ministries and at the higher administrative level from **2002 to 2007** the level of participation was from **10.95% to 10.52%** so there is an decreased of **0.43%** .

Position of women in Loksabha

Year	Total seats	Seats held by women	% of female members in total
1991	544	39	7.17
1996	543	39	7.18
1999	543	49	9.02
2004	544	45	9
2007	544	47	8.63
2009	545	49	8.99
2011	544	60	11.02

Source: Loksabha secretariat

Position of women in Rajyasabha

Year	Total seats	Seats held by women	% of female members in total
1991	245	38	15.51
1996	233	19	8.52
1999	245	19	7.75
2004	250	28	11.2
2007	250	25	10
2009	234	21	8.97
2011	241	26	10.78

Source: Rajyasabha secretariat

Position of Women in National Council of Ministers

Year	Total number of ministers	Number of women ministers	% of female minister in total
2002	73	8	10.95
1996	68	7	10.29
1999	87	6	6.89
2004	78	7	8.87
2007	76	8	10.52

Source: Parliament of India.

7. Conclusion:

Women empowerment is one of the momentous issues of contemporary development policies in developing countries. A woman is different by nature yet this difference does not mean inferiority. The empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerned in the 21st century not only at the national level but also at an international level. Society must take initiative to create climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with the sense of equality.

The status of women in India is not even in all the times. In ancient period they enjoyed equal status with men, in the medieval period, the position of Indian women deteriorated. During British rule and after independence many efforts are being made for improving the status of women in India. The government of India, by passing timely and essential Acts and implementing rules and regulations trying to empower and strengthen the women. As society maintains double standards in the case of education, marriage, spousal relationships, domestic violence, laws of patriarchal society,

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property laws, dowry system, sexual harassment as well as discriminatory social stigma and because of this double standards of the society only there is less recognition and respect for women's work.

Education can play a vital role in bringing about the desirable behavioral changes among the women and make them well equipped In terms of knowledge, competence and capacity to deal with different socio-economic problems. The popular UNESCO slogan should be considered as an ideal for not only empowerment but also development of women:

“Educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a Woman and you educate a family.”

At the end, it is concluded that women empowerment which is declared as Millennium Development Goal by UNDP, could be achieved only when all concerned bodies will work in cooperation and understanding the factors analyzed in this paper. Empowering Women is an important end in itself not only as human right issue but also as having the potential to enhance Human wellbeing.

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Trend and Performance of Major Food grain Production

(A Study of Central Brahmaputra Valley Zone of Assam during 1971-2010)

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Abstract

In the 21st century also, agriculture continues to be a fundamental instrument for sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing countries. Population of the developing world overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas. Assam is one of the states of North Eastern India with a total geographical area of 78438 square km. About 86 percent of its total population lives in the rural areas (2011 census) with 70 percent directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture and 55 per cent of the workforce actually engaged in agricultural activities. Yet Assam's agriculture has made very little headway towards modernisation. Agriculture in Assam is still characterised by small holdings, low crop intensity, low productivity, low level of technology, meagre irrigation facilities. Central Brahmaputra Valley zone is situated in the centre of the state Assam occupying 7.04 percent of its total geographical area. Food grain is the predominant crop of the zone accounting for more than three fourths of the gross cropped area since the early 1970's. The decade-wise annual average growth rate of area, production and yield of major foodgrain crops in Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam has been calculated for five periods, 1971-80, 1981-90, 1991-2000, 2001-10 and 1971-2010. The growth rate of production of total foodgrains during all the sub periods till 2000 was higher for Central Brahmaputra Valley than the state as a whole and the difference became more prominent during 1991-2000. It was only during 2001-10, Assam attained higher growth rate of production of total food grains.

Keywords: Annual Growth rate, Performance of agriculture and productivity of food grain.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Agricultural development is an indispensable prerequisite for the general economic development of a country. This is more so in case of developing or less developed countries. In the 21st century

also, agriculture continues to be a fundamental instrument for sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing countries. Moreover population of the developing world overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas. Three out of

every four poor people in developing countries live in rural areas (Yila and Thapa, 2008). Assam is one of the states of North Eastern India with a total geographical area of 78438 square km. About 86 percent of its total population live in the rural areas (2011 census) with 70 percent directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture and 55 per cent of the workforce actually engaged in agricultural activities. Even though the state is richly endowed in natural resources, such as abundant rainfall, alluvial soil, rich and diverse plant and animal genetic base, development of agriculture in Assam has not been satisfactory over the decades. In Assam, area allocation among various crops has shown a measure of structural rigidity that reflects the traditional character of Indian agriculture wherein foodgrains have remained the predominant crop accounting for more than three fourths of the gross cropped area since the early 1970's. Keeping in mind the importance of agriculture mainly of the foodgrain sector in rural based economy of Assam, the present study is made to find out the performance of major foodgrain crops in Central Brahmaputra Valley zone of Assam.

The purpose of the literature review is to summarize perspectives that might have a direct or indirect bearing on the conceptual design dealt with in this study. Here, we will consider some of standard literature which are related with the present study rather closely. Das (1984), quoted that Assam has been suffering from the lack of technological innovation. Whatever yield of crops it has achieved, is solely contributed by the natural fertility of the soil and hard labour of the peasants.

Agarwala and Hazarika (2004) found that out of six agroclimatic zones, only two zones namely "Central Brahmaputra valley" and "Lower Brahmaputra valley" can be classified as developed relatively or moderately. Roy and Bezbaruah (2002)

stated that in comparison to all India standards, the Barak valley region as well as the state Assam continues to lag far behind.

2. OBJECTIVE:

The objective of the present study is to analyse the growth pattern of area, production and productivity of major foodgrain crops of Central Brahmaputra valley vis a vis Assam.

3. METHODOLOGY:

3.1 **Study area:** The study is carried out in the Central Brahmaputra Valley zone of Assam, situated in the center of the state Assam covering an area of 5524 sq. km. The valley occupied 7.04 percent of geographical area of the state. Administratively, the zone is comprised of two districts, namely, Nagaon and Morigaon. With a total population of 3783859 (in 2011) and a total land area of 5524 Sq.Km., the density stands at 685 persons per sq.km. The figure far outstrips the corresponding state figure of 397 and the national figure of 382. The rural population in the zone is 88.33 (2011 census) percent of the total population. About 62 percent of the total workers of Central Brahmaputra Valley are engaged in agricultural sector.

3.2 **Study design:** The present study is based on data collected from secondary sources, collected from the publications of government agencies like, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Economics and Statistics, the Government of Assam, Assam Agricultural University (Jorhat), District Agricultural Offices (Nagaon, Morigaon), Regional

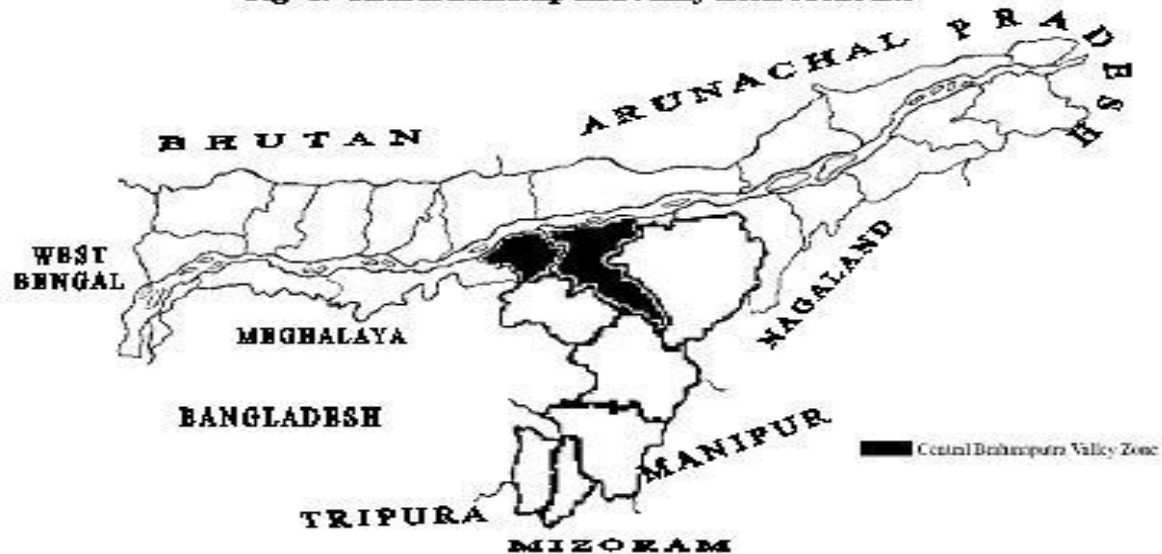
Agricultural Research Station (Shillongani, Nagaon). Besides, different articles, journals and websites are also referred for the purpose. For data analysis, simple statistical tables and graphs are used. The growth rate of agricultural production and yield are calculated using the formula:

$$\frac{Y_t - Y_{t-1}}{Y_{t-1}} * 100$$

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS:

The Central Brahmaputra valley zone is situated in the center of the state Assam

Fig- 1: Central Brahmaputra valley Zone of Assam



2011 Census report reveals that the rural population in Central Brahmaputra valley is 88.33 percent of the total population, for Assam it is 85.92 percent. About 62 percent of the total workers of Central Brahmaputra Valley are engaged in agricultural sector whereas for Assam as a whole about 52 percent of total workers depends on agriculture.

4.1 Shift in cropping pattern:

Table 1 reveals the change in cropping pattern (share of different crops in total cropped area) of major foodgrain crops in Central Brahmaputra Valley since 1970-71.

covering an area of 5524 sq. km. The valley occupied 7.04 percent of geographical area of the state. The mighty Brahmaputra flows along the northern periphery of the zone. Southern part of the zone is surrounded by hill district of Karbi Anglong and the western and eastern side by Kamrup and Golaghat district, respectively. (Refer Fig-1) Administratively, the zone is comprised of two districts, namely, Nagaon and Morigaon.

The Due to the absence of regular data on gross cropped area, total area under crops in the zone has been estimated by adding up the area under different field crops and excluded area under plantation and tree crops.

Analysis of area shifts across different crop groups suggested that during the 10 years from 1970-71 to 1980-81, the process of cropping pattern changes was slow and halting for total foodgrains. Foodgrains, which accounted for 77.11 per cent of the gross cropped area in 1970-71, still claimed 77.84 per cent of area during 1980-81. Where the share of area under wheat

increased from 0.52 per cent in 1970-71 to 3.27 per cent in 1980-81, the share of area under rice to total cropped area in the valley decreased from 72.1 per cent to 69.14 per cent. On the other hand, the share of area under total cereals and total pulses remained almost same during this period as shown in Table 1.

The proportion of area under foodgrains which had remained almost stagnant during 1970-71 to 1980-81, registered a sharp increase from 77.84 per cent of total area in 1980-81 to 82.63 per cent of total cropped area during 1990-91, and to 83.39 percent in 2000-01. This was mainly due to increase in share of area under total cereals (78.22) in

1990-91, and (80.38) in 2000-01. However, the share of area under total pulses declined to 4.39 percent and 3.01 percent in 1990-91 and 200-01 respectively.

During 2000-01 to 2009-10, share of area under foodgrains in Central Brahmaputra Valley zone has decreased from 83.39 percent (2000-01) to 81.78 percent (2009-10) due to decrease in area under total cereals from 80.38 percent to 78.35 percent. The proportion of area under wheat production increased from 0.52 percent in 1970-71 to 4.13 percent in 1990-91, thereafter declined to 3.38 percent in 2009-10.

Table- 1					
Shift in Cropping Pattern of Major Foodgrain Crops in Central Brahmaputra Valley Zone					
(percentage of total cropped area)					
Crop	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	2000-01	2009-10
Autumn Rice	16.22	14.56	17.84	14.03	6.67
Winter Rice	55.16	51.45	42.75	41.72	41.69
Summer Rice	0.72	3.13	13.27	22.11	26.04
Total Rice	72.1	69.14	73.86	77.85	74.41
Wheat	0.52	3.27	4.13	2.29	3.38
Maize	0.08	0.22	0.17	0.13	0.13
Total Cereals	72.74	72.87	78.22	80.38	78.35
Gram	0.06	0.12	0.09	0.06	0.05
Tur	0.08	0.32	0.62	0.42	0.3
Total Pulses	4.37	4.97	4.39	3.01	3.42
Total Foodgrain	77.11	77.84	82.6	83.39	81.78

Sources: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam & Directorate of Agriculture, Government of Assam.

Thus, the analysis of the statistical data relating to area under different crops separately in Central Brahmaputra Valley Zone (Table-1) reveals that among the food crops, cereals constituted the dominant position and among the cereals, paddy is dominant. The soil, topography, rainfall and climate of the zone are congenial for agricultural activities mainly for the cultivation of paddy crops. Paddy cultivation

occupies 74.41percent of total cropped area in 2009-10, which was 72.1 percent in 1970-71. However there was a gradual declining trend in area under autumn rice, which has switched over to the summer rice due to its higher productivity. The area under summer rice has increased from 0.72 percent in 1970-71 to 26.04 percent in 2009-10, whereas area under autumn rice has declined from 16.22 percent in 1970-71 to 6.67

percent in 2009-10 (Table-1). The area under winter rice, the principal kharif crop also declined from 55.16 percent in 1970-71 to 41.69 percent in 2009-10.

4.2 Decade-wise annual average growth rate:

The decade-wise annual average growth rate of area and production of major foodgrains in Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam over the period of 40 years since 1970 is shown in Table 2 and Table 3 below. The growth rate has been calculated for five periods, 1971-80, 1981-90, 1991-2000, 2001-10 and 1971-2010.

The estimates of decadal growth rate of area and production reveals that the growth of production of total foodgrains in Central Brahmaputra Valley during the entire period 1971-2010 had increased by 3.65 percent, whereas the growth in terms of area had increased only by 0.74 percent. This might be because during the period, the average growth rate of productivity had shown an increase by 2.55 percent (Table 4). For Assam during this period the growth rate of area, production and productivity was 0.72, 2.54 and 1.7 percent respectively which was less than Central Brahmaputra Valley. The Central Brahmaputra Valley zone as well as the state as a whole achieved highest area growth rate of total foodgrain in the period 1971-80 (at the rate of 2.36 percent and 1.65 percent respectively). The growth rate of production in Central Brahmaputra Valley and the state as a whole during the same period was 3.94 and 0.76 percent respectively. It can be observed from Table

2 that area constituted to be the major component to increase production of total foodgrains during this period. The very low rate of production growth (0.76 percent) in Assam might be due to persistence of traditional form of agricultural technology, inadequate electrification and irrigation facility etc. After that the area growth rate of total foodgrains of the Central Brahmaputra Valley gradually declined in the period 1981-90 and 1991-2000 and showed shrinkage in area with trend rate of growth at (-) 2.86 percent during the period 2001-10. Growth rate of production of total foodgrains on opposite showed an increasing trend and became more impressive (8.09 percent) during 1991-2000. This was largely on account of high yield growth rate of 2.19 and 6.34 percent respectively. Albeit in case of area for the state as a whole also the same trend is found, the rate of growth and shrinkage was lower than Central Brahmaputra Valley. During 1991-2000, the growth rate of production for Assam (3.43 percent) was much lower than Central Brahmaputra Valley (8.09), which might be caused by much lower productivity growth rate (2.73 percent) than Central Brahmaputra Valley (6.34 percent). While, the growth rate of production of total foodgrains during all the sub periods till 2000 was higher for Central Brahmaputra Valley than the state as a whole, the difference became more prominent during 1991-2000. It was only during 2001-10, Assam attained higher growth rate of production of total foodgrains.

Table-2					
Annual Average Growth Rate of Area (in percentage)					
Crops	Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam				
	1971-80	1981-90	1991-2000	2001-10	1971-2010
Autumn Rice	1.45 (0.77)	4.56 (1.46)	-2.08 (-1.16)	-8.8 (-4.75)	-1.28 (-0.96)
Winter Rice	1.96 (1.37)	0.39 (1.00)	0.71 (0.27)	-1.94 (0.01)	0.24 (0.65)
Summer Rice	24.1 (4.97)	11.32 (8.02)	16.63 (15.53)	-0.13 (3.1)	12.69 (7.98)

Total Rice	2.08 (1.24)	1.88 (1.22)	1.98 (0.73)	-2.94 (-0.47)	0.72 (0.67)
Maize	34.9 (7.85)	-0.01 (-1.27)	-0.09 (0.12)	-2.3 (-0.06)	5.82 (1.50)
Wheat	35.81 (27.88)	14.22 (4.78)	-4.98 (-1.7)	20.08 (-0.45)	15.78 (7.11)
Other Cereals and Small Millets	94.66 (31.85)	2.58 (-3.39)	1.01 (1.04)	2.41 (-4.69)	23.38 (5.55)
Total Cereals	2.35 (1.63)	2.25 (1.15)	1.60 (0.63)	-2.84 (-0.53)	0.8 (0.7)
Gram	19.05 (16.14)	6.19 (0.54)	-3.48 (-3.1)	-2.87 (-2.75)	4.36 (2.36)
Tur	21.33 (5.85)	15.72 (2.38)	-0.91 (0.41)	-0.22 (-1.35)	8.67 (1.72)
Other Rabi Pulses	3.34 (1.86)	1.48 (1.2)	-0.4 (0.55)	-1.6 (0.6)	0.64 (1.03)
Total Pulses	3.86 (2.22)	1.86 (1.18)	-0.66 (0.43)	-2.26 (0.4)	0.62 (1.03)
Total Foodgrain	2.36 (1.65)	2.14 (1.14)	1.47 (0.61)	-2.86(-0.5)	0.74 (0.72)

Sources: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent respective growth rate for the state as a whole.

In case of total cereals also the area growth rate for Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam was highest during 1971-80 (2.35 and 1.63 percent respectively). Interestingly, difference in growth rate of production of total cereals between Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam during this period was more than the difference in growth rate of area, which might be the result of productivity difference (Table 4). Area expansion of total cereals in Central Brahmaputra Valley slackened gradually in the period 1981-90 and 1991-2000 with trend rate of growth 2.25 percent and 1.60 percent per annum. Higher rate of growth of productivity of total cereals in Assam (2.77) than Central Brahmaputra Valley (2.05) during 1981-90 reduced the difference in growth rate of production. But the difference in the growth rate of production and productivity of total cereals between Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam became impressive during 1991-2000, might be due to the difference in the adoption of new technology. It showed shrinkage in area and production of total cereals in Central Brahmaputra Valley at (-) 2.84 and (-) 1.65 percent per annum respectively during 2001-10. For Assam too the growth in terms of area had declined but at a lower rate than Central Brahmaputra Valley, whereas production had increased at the rate of 1.79

percent. It is important to note that the growth rate in area, production and productivity for total rice, total cereals and total foodgrains have shown almost similar pattern due to the fact that rice is the most important cereal crops which occupies more than 90 percent of the cropped area under total foodgrains.

Analysis of the trend rates of growth separately for the three types of rice suggests that although winter paddy was dominant in terms of area and production, rate of growth in production was more for autumn and summer paddy. Yield level also was relatively high for summer paddy. Area was the major component of increase in production of three types of paddy during 1971-80, since productivity growth rate was very low except for summer paddy in Assam. While the growth rate of area and production of autumn rice in Central Brahmaputra Valley as well as in the state picked up substantially during 1981-91 than the preceding sub period, the winter rice on the other hand showed opposite trend except for production in Assam during the same period. This increase in production of winter rice in Assam was largely on account of impressive growth rate of productivity (3.05) than Central Brahmaputra Valley (2.75), might be caused by higher growth rate of area under HYV winter paddy in

Assam during this period. Although area under autumn rice declined in both Central Brahmaputra Valley zone and Assam during 1991-2000, production showed a trend growth rate of 6.9 and 2.15 percent respectively due to considerable growth rate of productivity. Production of winter rice too during this period showed an increase though area remained more or less stagnant. It is interesting to note that the higher productivity growth rate of autumn and winter paddy during this period failed to increase area under the same. Decline in area and production of autumn rice became more prominent and sharp during 2001-10. Productivity growth rate of autumn rice in Central Brahmaputra Valley during this period declined more sharply than Assam, might be due to remarkable decline in area under HYV autumn rice (-13.63) in this zone. During the same period area under winter rice in Central Brahmaputra Valley declined but production remained stagnant whereas, area under winter rice in Assam remained stagnant but production increased.

Interestingly, summer paddy had shown marked improvement in growth rate of area under cultivation and production compared to other two paddy varieties. The first sub-period (1971-80) witnessed significant area expansion growing annually at 24.1 percent per annum in Central Brahmaputra Valley, which had declined to 11.32 percent during the second sub period (1981-90). But Assam showed opposite trend of increase in the area growth rate during the second sub period over the first sub period (Table 2). The period 1991-2000 recovered in the declining trend for summer rice in both Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam. However, 2001-10 Central Brahmaputra Valley experienced stagnant situation with trend rate of growth although declining but low at (-) 0.13 percent. Production growth rate of it was impressive till 1991-2000, and became low during 2001-10.

Table-3					
Annual Average Growth Rate of Production (in percentage)					
Crops	Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam				
	1971-80	1981-90	1991-2000	2001-10	1971-2010
Autumn Rice	4.49(-0.22)	9.44 (5.26)	6.9 (2.15)	-6.4 (-2.56)	3.58 (1.19)
Winter Rice	3.77 (0.32)	3.3 (4.25)	5.92 (2.16)	-0.35 (2.74)	3.14 (2.42)
Summer Rice	27.5 (11.3)	20.8 (13.1)	20.9 (21.7)	0.32 (3.12)	17.1 (12.34)
Total Rice	3.71 (0.2)	4.6 (4.42)	8.68 (3.54)	-1.66 (1.93)	3.84 (2.58)
Maize	25.8 (8.89)	-0.2 (-0.5)	3.41 (1.42)	-1.93 (0.04)	6.3 (2.3)
Wheat	75.2 (53.59)	12.9 (2.4)	0.58 (2.64)	39.69 (8.81)	31 (15.92)
Other Cereals and Small Millets	92.8 (30.47)	3.19 (-2.4)	1.1 (0.96)	2.34 (-4.92)	23.1 (5.41)
Total Cereals	3.97 (0.72)	4.34 (4.09)	8.25 (3.46)	-1.65 (1.79)	3.72 (2.56)
Gram	15.6 (13.38)	6.08 (0.35)	-5.6 (-1.9)	-2.31 (0.67)	3.12 (2.85)
Tur	21.2 (6.91)	15.6 (2.19)	-1.2 (0.57)	-0.15 (-1.19)	8.54 (1.99)

Other Rabi Pulses	4.57 (3.63)	1.17 (2.73)	1.74 (3.17)	-0.18 (0.69)	1.75 (2.53)
Total Pulses	5.34 (3.79)	2.23 (2.44)	0.64 (2.76)	-1.29 (0.47)	1.64 (2.33)
Total Foodgrain	3.94 (0.76)	4.27 (4.05)	8.09 (3.43)	-1.67 (1.75)	3.65 (2.54)

Sources: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent respective growth rate for the state as a whole.

Gains of area expansion for wheat in Central Brahmaputra Valley (35.81 % per annum) and in Assam (27.88 % per annum) during 1971-80 were much higher as compared to paddy. During this period production growth rate for wheat was also remarkable. Succeeding periods however disappointingly recorded a declining trend in the growth rate of area and production for both Central

Brahmaputra Valley and Assam till 2000. Surprisingly, during 2001-10, when most of the foodgrain crops showed declining trend, wheat showed increasing trend.

Growth rate of area and production of total pulses of both Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam showed declining trend consistently.

Table-4					
Annual Average Growth Rate of Productivity (in percentage)					
Crops	Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam				
	1971-80	1981-90	1991-2000	2001-10	1971-2010
Autumn Rice	1.85 (-1.26)	4.16 (3.16)	8.78 (3.44)	2.27 (2.65)	4.32 (2.08)
Winter Rice	1.11 (-1.05)	2.75 (3.05)	4.94 (1.82)	1.39 (2.34)	2.58 (1.61)
Summer Rice	1.3 (6.2)	7.76 (3.67)	4.53 (4.91)	0.05 (0.14)	3.46 (3.67)
Total Rice	1 (-1.08)	2.53 (2.95)	6.34 (2.7)	1.19 (2.13)	2.81 (1.74)
Total Cereals	1.03 (-0.97)	2.05 (2.77)	6.34 (2.73)	1.03 (2.07)	2.65 (1.71)
Total Pulses	1.09 (1.48)	0.88 (1.3)	1.15 (2.25)	1.12 (0.04)	1.06 (1.26)
Total Foodgrain	0.91 (-0.95)	2.19 (2.73)	6.34 (2.73)	1.03 (2.01)	2.55 (1.7)

Sources: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent respective growth rate for the state as a whole.

Comparison of production growth rate of Central Brahmaputra Valley with that of the State average growth rate (Table 3) reveals that during 1971-80 the state lagged far behind in case of almost all the major foodgrain crops, which continued during 1981-90 with the exception of winter rice and pulses. However, albeit this difference Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam experienced almost equal production growth rate of total foodgrains (4.27 and 4.05) during 1981-90. This was because winter rice which covers approximately 70 percent of total foodgrains production in Assam

achieved higher area as well as productivity growth rate than Central Brahmaputra Valley zone during this period. During the period 1991-2000 however, among the foodgrain crops Assam recorded higher production growth rate than Central Brahmaputra Valley only in case of summer rice (marginally), wheat and pulses. But during this period, Assam experienced very low production growth rate of total foodgrains (3.43) than Central Brahmaputra Valley (8.09), might be due to very low productivity growth rate of autumn and winter paddy. The subsequent period,

however, witnessed a reverse situation where Assam recorded higher production growth rate in case of major foodgrain crops except wheat, tur, other cereals and small millets. During this period Assam experienced higher area and productivity growth rate in case of three types of paddy than Central Brahmaputra Valley zone.

5. CONCLUSION:

In Central Brahmaputra valley zone of Assam, area allocation among various crops has shown a measure of structural rigidity that reflects the traditional character of Indian agriculture wherein foodgrains have remained the predominant crop accounting for more than three fourths of the gross cropped area since the early 1970's. While, the growth rate of production of total foodgrains during all the sub periods till 2000 was higher for Central Brahmaputra Valley than the state as a whole, the difference became more prominent during

1991-2000. It was only during 2001-10, Assam attained higher growth rate of production of total foodgrains. the growth rate in area, production and productivity for total rice, total cereals and total foodgrains have shown almost similar pattern due to the fact that rice is the most important cereal crops which occupies more than 90 percent of the cropped area under total foodgrains. Analysis of the trend rates of growth separately for the three types of rice suggests that although winter paddy was dominant in terms of area and production, rate of growth in production was more for autumn and summer paddy. Yield level also was relatively high for summer paddy. Growth rate of area and production of total pulses of both Central Brahmaputra Valley and Assam showed declining trend consistently.

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Socio Economic Status of Women Vendors in Towns of Kokrajhar District

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Abstract

The study aims to examine the personal profile, family profile, migratory status, living, working and economic conditions of the women vendors of the towns of Kokrajhar district. It also aims to access their health condition. To study the socio-economic status of the women vendors, data was collected from the sampled women vendors with the help of a questionnaire. Data collected from the sample was entered in SPSS (V.13) and analysis was done. The finding of the study will help the people especially the policy makers to know the socio-economic condition of the women vendors. It will help in planning for the welfare of such workers

INTRODUCTION AND RELATED

STUDIES: Women are almost half the adult population. They contribute two third of the world's working hours and yet earn only 1% of the world's property ¹. In developing countries the reality of most women is that they are compelled by poverty to seek and income, either as the sole earner of the family or to supplement income of the family.

Globalization is causing shrinking of the organized sector accompanied by the expansion of informal sector. Economic opportunities created by the liberalization are highly unequal. Those who are skilled, have access to market, have better links, have been able to benefit, for women of upper class, the quality as well as opportunities for employment have improved. But for most women workers however, the quality of employment is poor

without any skill or access ². The rise of female participation in the informal sector is more due to economic compulsion than any change in work ethos. In a labor surplus economy like India's with low employment avenues and increasing cost of living females have been increasingly pushed into labor market.

In the informal sector in urban areas where women are not generally engaged in agriculture, they are engaged as weavers, vendors, constructional laborers, domestic servants etc.

As defined by ILO in 1991, the term 'informal sector' refers to very small scale units producing and distributing goods and services consisting largely of independent self-employed producers in urban areas of developing countries some whom also employ family labour or a few hired workers or apprentices, which operate with very little

capital or none at all, which utilizes low level of technique and skill, which therefore operate at a low level of productivity which generally provide very low irregular income and highly unstable employment to those who work in it.

It is informal in the sense that they are for the most part unregulated and unrecorded in official statistics. They tend to have little or no access to labour markets, to credit institution, to formal education and training institution or to many public services and amenities. They are not recognized, supported and regulated by the government, they are often compelled by circumstances to operate outside the law and even when they are registered and respect aspects of laws they are almost invariably beyond the pale of second protection, labour legislation and protective measures at work place. Informal sector producers and workers are generally unorganized and in most cases beyond the scope of action of trade union and employers organization and they generally live in appalling, often dangerous and unhealthy condition even without basic sanitary facilities in the shanty towns of urban areas³.

The workers of the informal sector work as piece workers, self-employed workers, paid workers in the informal enterprises, unpaid workers in family business, casual workers without fixed employer and sub-contract workers linked to the formal enterprises. Vendors are self-employed workers.

According to Mukhopadhyay, 'the boundary of the informal sector is obtained by the standard exclusion principle, i.e., what does the sphere of formal sector not covered is informal sector. The sector includes petty self-employed small units, of factory production employing 7-10 persons, shops and other establishments. Thus entire sector is a heterogeneous mix in which workers are not protected by labor

legislation rules. People migrate from rural subsistence sector to the urban commercial sectors. The holding sector is in actual practice the urban traditional or unorganized sector, which absorbs the rural migrants initially in what are called the informal economic activities such as hawking, pedaling, retailing of consumer goods, working in household repair shops, carrying head loads, pushing carts, plying manual rickshaw and so on. However, by its very nature this sector offers insecure jobs and low wages or returns'⁴. According to Harold Lubell the informal sector constitute the residual labor market of the last resort, characterized by self-employment and low income producers of marginal goods for lack of any other means of earning a livelihood. It is also identified as a reservoir of traditional and modern skills, which can be made productive, if effective demand is created for them⁵.

Based on the nature of their activity, vendors, so called petty traders can be categorized as 'street vendors', 'small petty vendors' and 'petty vendors'. Petty vendors have fixed space with proper shelter for conducting their trade which in turn allows them to invest more. Small petty vendors conduct the trade at a fixed space but without proper shelter. Street vendors carry their activity moving around the streets either carrying head loads or by using a push cart⁶. In the towns of Kokrajhar district only small petty vendors are seen.

METHODOLOGY:

The following methods were used in the study:

- a. Preparation of a questionnaire to collect data.
- b. Sampling: 41 women vendors were selected as samples from the towns of Kokrajhar district. There are three towns in the district namely Kokrajhar, Gossaigaon and Salakati.

30 of them were from from Kokrajhar town, 4 from Gossaigaon town and 7 from Salakati town.

- c. Collection of data: Data was collected through personal interviews with the help of questionnaire from the samples. Data was collected in October and November, 2012.
- d. The data collected was then entered in SPSS (V.13) and analysis was done.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: Personal profile, family profile, migratory status, living conditions, working condition, economic conditions and health of the sampled women vendors is discussed below with the help of tables derived with the help of SPSS.

Regarding the personal profile of the respondents', the study reveals that majority of the women vendors were Hindus and the rest were Christians (Table 1.a). Muslim women vendors were not seen. Castes wise distribution shows that majority of them were scheduled tribes (Table 1.a). Table 1- b, c, d shows that all the women vendors were married, majority of them belong to age 31-50 years and more than 50% of them had their marriage before being 21 years. About 76% of them were educated but they did not have high level of education (Table 1- e, f). 66% of them had only primary education and the rest have education only up to middle level. Majority of them reported that they could only write their names and do simple calculation.

Table 2- a, b, c, d, e, f shows the family profile of the respondents. The study reveals that about 93% of them came from big nuclear families comprising of 4-8 members. The rest have very small families having less than 4 members or very big families having greater than 12 members. About 22% of the respondents were either

widow or divorced and 78% respondents' husbands were alive. Out of that 78%, about 49% did not have educated husbands and only 29% had educated husbands. Though they were educated, majority had only primary education. Respondents having husbands reported that because of no education or low level of education their husbands work in the informal sector as laborers, vendors, farmers, rickshaw pullers, drivers, entrepreneurs other than vendors, private employees. 7.30% of the respondents reported having one child, 22% of two children, 41.5% of three children, 26.80% of four children and 2.40% of six children. Total numbers of children of the respondents were 122 and all were educated and 100 of them were unmarried. Majority of the unmarried children were found to be non-working and majority of the married children were found working. It was observed in the study that most of the children were young and school going and so they were unmarried and non-working.

Table 3 shows the migratory status, type and cause of migration of the respondents. Majorities (73.20%) of the respondents have migrated and out of that many have migrated daily. Poverty has compelled 66.00% of the respondents to migrate to work.

Table 4 – a, b, c, d, e shows the living condition of the women vendors. 80.50% reported of having own house and the rest reported of staying in rent. Many have migrated in the towns daily preferring to stay in their own homes in rural areas. Only a small percentage of the vendors have pucca houses, while a huge percentage of the vendors have kutcha and semi pucca (others) houses. Majority reported of having 2-4 rooms as because many have big families. More than 50.00% of them reported of having no ventilation in their houses and about 27.00% had improper ventilation. Though it was found that

majority had separate kitchen facilities (61.00%) yet most of their kitchens were not in good condition – without proper light, no ventilation and windows, ordinary doors, no water facility etc. All the respondents reported of having private water facility inside their premise because of the inadequate water supply by the government. Majority of the vendors living in their houses had tube well as the water source as because it is comparatively cheaper than digging wells or installing tap water connection. Most of the vendors that were staying in rented houses reported of preferring staying in houses with tube well water facility because of the cheaper rent. Almost of all of them (97.60%) did not have bath- room facility though a huge percentage of them had latrine facility inside their premises. More than 50.00% of the respondents did not have drainage facility around their houses which made their living area dirty. 92.70% of them availed electricity facility. Majority of those living in rural areas and migrating daily for work also availed electric facility because of the Rajib Gandhi Rural Electrification Program. Respondents reported of frequent power cuts and low voltage. Only a small percentage (12.00%) of the women was found throwing their waste in the collection points while the rest were found throwing in road side, around house or in drains. About 76.00% of the women vendors did not have TV, 80.50% did not have fan, 80.50% did not have good furniture and 73.00% did not have LPG connection for cooking in their houses.

Table 5 – a, b shows the working condition of the sampled women vendors. They were found selling meat, vegetables, fish and fruits. 80.50% of them reported of working for 9-12 hours a day. About 56.00% of them were in vending profession for 6-10 years, 36.60% for 11-15 years and 4.90% for greater than 15 years. 88.00% of

the respondents were compelled by poverty to work. Regarding the condition of work place it was found that all of them did not have shelter for work. They were found selling in the road side where they have to bear heat, cold, dust, noise and crowd. Only 25.00% of the respondents have separate toilet (for ladies) and drinking water. Another 50.00% of the respondents have no toilet but only drinking water facility. The rest 25.00% did not have toilet as well as drinking water facility.

Table 6- a, b, c, d shows the economic condition of the women vendors. The table shows that 41.50% had income Rs.4001.00-Rs.8000.00, 19.50% had Rs.8001.00-Rs.12000.00, 7.30% had Rs.12001.00-Rs.16000.00, 26.80% had Rs.16001.00-Rs.20000.00 and 4.90% had Rs.20001.00-Rs.25000.00 per month. About 17.00% of the respondents reported of having one earning member, 61.00% have two, 12.20% have three and 9.80% have four earning members in the family. Regarding the family income, 22.00% reported of having Rs.5001.00 – Rs. 10000.00 family income per month, 24.00% of Rs. 10001.00 – Rs. 15000.00, 17.10% of Rs.15001.00- Rs.20000.00, 29.30% of Rs.20001.00-Rs.25000.00, 4.90% of Rs. 25001.00 – Rs.30000.00 and 2.40% had greater than Rs.30000.00 per month. As seen from the table, the average spending by the women vendors on various items were: 50.49% on food, 2.71% on cloth, 1.83% on house, 6.63% on fuel, 5.95% on health, 7.37% on education, 6.07% on entertainment and recreation, 12.44% on travel and 6.49% on miscellaneous items. It was observed that majority of the women vendors were compelled by poverty to work and so they spend major portion of their income on fooding. Regarding indebtedness only a small percentage (7.30%) of the respondents were found in debt and they had borrowed from unorganized sources such as

relatives and money lenders. Even though many were poor they did not go for credit facilities given by organized sources. The reasons observed for no borrowing from the organized sources were low level of education and ignorance. Less borrowing from unorganized sources was also observed and the main reason found was the high rate of interest that prevails both in the rural and urban areas of the district.

Health status of the sampled women vendors are shown in table 7- a, b, c. As far as the illness is concerned, about 29.00% were weak, 75.60% had ache, 12.20% had sinusitis and headache, 17.10% had blood pressure and eye problem, 24.40% had gastritis, 2.40% had piles and 9.80% had menstrual problems. Due to poverty, majority of the respondents reported of visiting Govt. health centers and others

(homoeopathic centres, pharmacy, indigeneous medicines) as because visiting them cost comparatively lower than visiting private health centers. Regarding their child birth, all of them reported of getting antenatal care and giving normal delivery. More than 50.00% of women had their child delivery with the help of midwives. The reason observed for most of the women preferring normal delivery and midwives was the lower cost involved in it. 22.00% of the respondents reported having abortion and out of that 12.2% had spontaneous abortion and the rest had induced abortion.

More than 50% of the vendors reported of having non-cooperative husbands, domestic violence and non-involvement in decision making. 80% of them reported of not getting help in household work.

Tables:-

1. Personal Profile of the respondents':

a. Religion and Caste:

No. of samples	Religion			Caste			
	Hindu	Christian	Muslim	General	SC	ST	OBC
41	87.80	12.20		2.40	2.40	78.00	17.10

b. Age in years:

No. of samples	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55
41			9.80	26.80	12.20	41.50	9.80

c. Marital Status:

No. of samples	Unmarried	Married	Widow	Divorced
41		78.00	17.10	4.90

d. Age at marriage:

No. of samples	No. of married respondent	Age at marriage					
		16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45
41	41	56.10	41.50	--	2.40	--	--

e. Educational status:

No. of samples	Educated	Uneducated
41	75.60	24.40

f. Level of education:

No. of samples	No. of educated respondent	Primary	Middle	High School	Higher Secondary	Uneducated
41	31	61.90	9.8	--	--	24.40

2. Family Profile:

a. Family type and size:

No. of samples	Type		Size			
	Nuclear	Joint	<4	4-8	9-12	>12
41	92.7	7.3	9.8	82.9	7.3	--

b. Educational status and level of education of husband:

No. of samples	No. of husband	Educational status			Level of education of husband			
		Educated	Uneducated	No husband	Primary	Middle	High school	HS
41	32	29.3	48.8	22.0	22.0	7.3		

c. Occupation of husband:

No. of husband	Labor	Vendor	Agriculture	Ricks-haw puller	Driver	Entrepreneur	Private job	Govt. job	Misc
32	7.3	22.0	22.0	12.2	9.8	2.4		2.4	

d. No. of children:

No. of samples	Total Children	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	122		7.3	22.0	41.5	26.8		2.4

e. Educational and marital status of children:

Total no. of Children	Educational status		Marital status	
	Educated	Uneducated	Married	Unmarried
122	122	0	22	100

f. Married working and non-working and unmarried working and non-working children:

Total no. of children	Married		Unmarried	
	Working	Non-working	Working	Non-working
122	20	2	2	98

3. Migratory status, type of migration and cause of migration:

No. of samples	Migratory status		Type				Cause		
	Migrated	Not migrated	Daily	Seasonal	Temporary	Permanent	Poverty	Employment	Others
41	73.2	26.8	53.7		19.5		65.9	7.3	2.4

4. Living conditions: housing, water supply, sanitation:

a. Status of house, type of house and no. of rooms:

No. of samples	House status			Type of house			No. of rooms		
	Own	Rented	Others	Pucca	Kutcha	Others	<2	2-4	>4
41	80.5	19.5		17.1	39.0	43.9	4.9	78.0	7.1

b. Ventilation and kitchen status:

No. of samples	Ventilation status			Kitchen status			
	No ventilation	Properly ventilated	Improper ventilated	Separate	Multipurpose room	In veranda	outside
41	53.7	19.5	26.8	61.0	39.0		

c. Water sources:

No. of samples	Water source		Inside source			Outside source	
	In premise	Outside premise	Tube well	Well	Tape water	Tube well	Well
41	100		87.8	9.8	2.4	--	--

d. Bathroom, latrine, drainage and electric facility:

No. of samples	Bathroom facility		Latrine facility		Drainage of water		Electric facility	
	Yes	No	Inside	Outside	Exist	Does not exist	Yes	No
41	2.4	97.6	80.5	19.5	43.9	56.1	92.7	7.3

e. Waste disposal and other facility:

No.	Disposal of house hold waste	Other facilities
-----	------------------------------	------------------

of sam- ples	Road-side	Aroun d house	In drain s	Neighb -oring plot	Colle - ction point	TV		Fan		Furn - iture		LPG	
						Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
41	22.0	61.0	4.9	--	12.2	24. 4	75. 6	19. 5	80. 5	19.5	80. 5	26. 8	73. 2

5. Working conditions: working hour per day, service period in years, compulsion to work:

a. Working hour per day and service period in years:

No. of samples	Working hour per day				Service period in years			
	<4	4-8	9-12	>12	1-5	6-10	11-15	>15
41	--	19.5	80.5	--	2.4	56.1	36.6	4.9

b. Compulsion to work:

No. of samples	Compulsion to work				
	Poverty	To supplement income	Husband expired	Husband unemployed	Others
41	87.8	9.8	--	--	--

6. Economic conditions:

a. Respondents' income per month:

No. of Sample	Respondents' income per month					
	<4000	4001- 8000	8001- 12000	12001- 16000	16001- 20000	20001- 25000
41	--	41.5	19.5	7.3	26.8	4.9

b. Family income per month, number of earning members:

No. of earning members in the family							Family income per month					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	5001- 10000	10001- 15000	15001- 20000	20001- 25000	25001- 30000	>30000
17.1	61.0	12.2	9.8	--	--	--	22.0	24.4	17.1	29.3	4.9	2.4

c. Expenditure pattern:

No. of samples	Average spending by women vendors in different items								
	Food	Cloth	House	Fuel	Health	Education	Entertainment & recreation	Travel	Misc
41	50.49	2.71	1.83	6.63	5.95	7.37	6.07	12.44	6.49

d. Indebtedness, amount, source:

No. of samples	Indebtedness status	Amount of debt	Source of debt
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	Yes	No	<1000	1001-5000	5001-10000	10001-15000	Relative	Money lender	Bank
41	7.3	92.7	--	7.3	--	--	2.4	4.9	--

Purpose of debt:

Purpose of debt						
Marriage	Education	Illness	Daily needs	Business	To repair house	Not applicable
--	4.9	--	--	2.4	--	92.7

1. Health:

a. Illness and health service facility availed:

a. Illness and health service facility availed.																	
No. of samples	Common illness													Health facility availed			
	Weak	Ache	Fever	Skin disease	Malaria	Headache	Jaundice	Hypertension	Diabetes	Eye problem	Gas problem	Piles	Menstrual problem	Sinusitis	Government	Private	others
41	29.3	75.6	2.4	9.8	2.4	12.2	2.4	17.1	4.9	17.1	24.4	2.4	9.8	12.2	63.4	2.4	95.1

b. Antenatal care and delivery type:

No. of samples	Antenatal care			Delivery type			Delivery conducted by			Abortion		Abortion type	
	Yes	No	Not Applicable	Normal	Caesarian	Not applicable	Doctor	Midwives	Relatives	Yes	No	Spontaneous	Induced
41	100	--	--	100	--	--	43.9	56.1	--	22.0	78.0	12.2	9.8

Source of the tables: Based on field survey (October and November' 2012)

The foregoing discussion throws light on the various problems of the women vendors that they face at home, at work place and health problems. The problems faced by the women vendors at the home front were many. Some of the important

problems were: their dual responsibility both at home and at work place, sharing of earnings, cultural constraints, non-co-operative husbands, domestic violence and non-involvement in decision making. Besides that they also did not have good

living condition. They also faced several problems at work place like long hours of work, lack of provision of basic facilities, welfare programs and social security. They also reported of suffering from common illness. Since most of them belonged to the low social economic strata they were extremely vulnerable to ailments and diseases. They reported of having weakness, ache, gastritis etc. Above all these problems the women vendors have lacked behind in education. They either were uneducated or have very low level of education for which they could not enter in formal sector job market.

The world cannot afford to do without women's full contribution at every level of social, economic and political activity. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said 'in order to awaken the people it is the women who have to be awakened, once she is on move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves'.

So based on the findings, the following suggestions have been made:

- The finding related to the educational status of the women vendors (Table 1) shows that about 76.00% of them were educated but though educated they had low level of education. Majority of them had only primary education. Due to this low level of education they were not able to participate actively in decision making process. There is direct correlation between level of education and employment and naturally this is the basis for employment. Therefore equal access to education for women and girls should be ensured. Special measures should be taken to eliminate discrimination, create a gender sensitive educational system and improve the quality and level of

education to facilitate lifelong learning as well as development of occupational or vocational or technical skills for women.

- The finding regarding the place of work revealed that all of the women vendors had no proper shelter for work. As there was no proper shelter they have to carry their things up and down every day from home to work place and work place to home. Road side was their work place and majority of them did not have the basic amenities such as drinking water, toilet and light facilities. The government should look in to give the basic facilities at work place i.e., shelter, toilet, drinking water and light facilities.
- The findings regarding the income of the sampled women vendors on an average were Rs.12,207.32. Looking at their family size and number of earning members in the family that amount of earning was not good. In fact they were compelled by poverty to work. Being poor, in times of financial crisis they borrow at an exorbitant rate of interest from neighbours, relatives and money lenders but hardly approach banks due to their low level of education and ignorance. These leads to heavy indebtedness. Now micro credit mechanism and micro finance institutions of adequate financial, human and market resources to implement the policies should be managed by concerned departments, financial credit institutions and banks and connected institutions.
- The finding regarding health problems revealed that informal sector women vendors were suffering from common illnesses. The question of health and safety

should be considered in a broad context and possible areas should be identified where protective measures need to be increased.

- The entry of women vendors into the labor market has not yet had the effect of relieving them of a share of house work. Women vendors work longer hours in order to fit all their work. Still women vendors do not get due respect. They have to face domestic violence and no help from husbands. A suitable educational program to give dignity to the work they do need to be carried out with family members of the workers. Proper awareness should be created among the women vendor's husbands. Also counseling programs are needed to change the behavior of

the husbands and make them realize the importance of better environment in their family.

- Voluntary organizations can work towards making improvement in their health status, educational attainment and general welfare. Following areas particularly can be intervened by these groups:
 - i. To organize awareness programs regarding their legal rights, health nutrition and sanitation.
 - ii. To make arrangement for doctors to organize health camps or free medical checkups.
 - iii. To make provision for adult education.

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A Historical Background of Tea in Assam

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Abstract

Tea is one of the most popular beverages in the world. Tea in India is so popular that liking for it has reached the point of adoration. The best quality tea in India pours chiefly from Assam. It was way back in 1823 that Robert Bruce, a merchant and soldier, first spotted tea plant in Assam and this eventually led to East-India company developing a trade in it. A visit from Dr. Wallich to Assam in 1834 saw the formation of the Assam Company in England. Among the Indians, it was, however, Maniram Dewan, an Assamese noble man, who initiated planting tea leading many others, mostly Assamese, to follow in his footsteps. After independence, as the scenario change, Indian Companies like-Birla Tata entered the fray to become biggest producers of the coveted "Assam Tea". The picture, however, is not completely rosy as the tea plantation, tea-estate have been severely affected in recent years by the militancy in the state. Dwindling economic condition, stiff competition in international market and recurrent slumps have not helped the cause either. This paper is an earnest effort to highlight the historical background of the development of tea industry of Assam.

Introduction: Assam is the biggest producer of quality tea in India, contributing about 55 per cent to country's total tea production. It is generally believed that the people of Bodo tribe brought tea into Assam (Indialine, 2008). But they produced for themselves and hardly took it outside Assam. As pointed out by Bhuyan (1974) the tea plant was discovered in 1823 by Robert Bruce, merchant and soldier of fortune, during his visit to Rongpur, where he was imprisoned by the Burmese. A Singpho chief furnished Bruce with some plants. In 1824 Robert Bruce gave some plants to his brother C. A. Bruce who handed them over to David Scott. Scott in turn gave a few specimens to the Botanical Garden, Calcutta. The discovery of tea plant

in Assam enabled the East India Company to develop a trade, which China had hitherto monopolized. Bruce was appointed superintendent of the government tea forest, who in 1837 sent 46 boxes of Assam tea to the tea committee. When, in 1824, Dr. N. Wallich of Botanical Garden identified these specimens it was the beginning of the scientific study of tea in India. Dr. Wallich visited Assam in 1834 and submitted his report in 1835. The Assam Company was accordingly formed in England in 1839 with a capital of Rs. 5 lakh. The Assam Company with its headquarters in Nazira is the oldest commercial tea company of Assam which is still functioning. The second company was formed in 1859 as the Jorhat Tea Company and even today its central office is at Jorhat.

The first consignment of 12 boxes of tea manufactured by the Singpho chiefs were shipped from Calcutta to London in 1835. The first auction of tea took place in London on May 26, 1841, which was conducted by Ms McKenzie Lyll & Company. 35 chests of tea made by the Singphos and 95 chests from the government plantation of Assam were offered (North East Enquirer, 2002). The biggest research centre of tea in the world, now situated in Jorhat, was started in Calcutta in 1900 by the India Tea Association. In 1904, a laboratory was started at Heelea-kah Tea Estate near Mariani. In 1912, the laboratory was shifted to Tocklai (Jorhat) and was renamed as Tocklai Experimental Station. In 1964, the experimental station became Tea Research Association (TRA).

The first Indian to start planting of tea was an Assamese nobleman Maniram Dutta Barma, popularly known as Maniram

Dewan. He was a Dewan of Assam Company until he resigned in 1841 to start his own tea estate. He had two gardens at Jorhat and near Sonari. But the British hanged him in 1858 for taking part in mutiny in 1857. After Maniram Dewan's pioneering efforts, many others, mostly Assamese, came forward to plant tea. Someswar Sharma became the first Indian superintendent of the tea industry of the Manband Tea Company. After independence things started changing. The British dominated industry changed hands. Although the Jalans, Saharias, Ahmeds, Kanois, Darshan Lalls and few others were already there, the reputed industrialists of India like the Birla, Poddar, Paul, Shetia, Rhuia and Tata amongst other became the biggest producers of Assam tea. From 1823, the tea industry in Assam valley came a long way. Today there are about six lakh tea garden workers engaged in 850 tea gardens (North East Enquirer, 2002).



Cinnamora tea Estate: First Tea Garden of Assam Established by Maniram Dewan in 1850.

According to a report (North East Enquirer, 2002), in the year 2000, the total area of Assam under tea production was 26739 hectares and total production of tea was 451236 thousand kilograms, thus showing a yield (kg/hectare) of 1688. However, in 2001, the production of tea dipped to 450132 thousand kilograms, thus falling by 1104 thousand kgs from the previous year's production. The 2001 figures of Indian tea export (in million kgs) show a total figure of 164.19. The main countries to which the tea is going are CIS countries (including Russia and Kazakhstan) — 77.46 million kgs; UK — 15.41 million kgs; UAE — 19.65 million kgs; Iraq — 14.14 million kgs; Poland — 7.59 million kgs and the USA — 5.35 million kgs.

According to the Directorate of Tea, Govt. of Assam, there are about 28,000 small tea gardens in the State producing about 70 million kgs tea annually (cf. 451 million kgs mentioned above). According to another report, Assam has over 800 tea plantations that are of medium to large size. There are also over 200,000 small-scale cooperative and individual tea farms. On an average, Assam produces over 480 million kilogram of tea per year, making it the largest tea growing region in the world (North East Enquirer, 2002).

The State Government is thinking of registering the small tea gardens with the labour department. The Tea Board has opened a cell at the Assam Agricultural University to train small tea growers with the aim of improving the quality of Assam tea. A similar training session for small growers would also be started at Tocklai Research Station. According to the Tea Board, a cooperative of small growers was floated in Assam and the Tea Board would help it to purchase a factory of its own

which in turn would help produce quality tea. Recently a group of tea makers of small tea growers from Assam visited Kangra valley of Himachal Pradesh to learn about mechanized plucking and new methods of pruning tea bushes. Kangra valley is known for producing orthodox tea of a high quality. The group that was sponsored by the Tea Board returned with a wealth of information. The Tea Board will also introduce an export rating system soon to control the quality of Assam tea. The tea research association is also taking measures in Tocklai (Jorhat) for producing quality tea.

The Tea History Timeline

2727 BC CHINA - The Emperor Shen Nung discovers tea one day while drinking hot water in his garden.

600's Chinese character c'ha, meaning tea, comes into use

780 CHINA - The first tax on tea in China, due to its popularity. The first book on tea, the Ch'a Ching (The Classic of Tea), written by the poet Lu Yu is published.

Tea drinking becomes very popular at court, inspiring the custom of "Tribute tea", whereby tea growers "donate" their very best tea to the Emperor and the Imperial court.

Due to its popularity, tea is taxed for the first tax in China.

794 Japanese monks plant tea bushes in Kyoto's Imperial gardens.

900 Japan is again influenced by Chinese culture, when Japanese scholars return from a visit to China bearing tea.

1191 JAPAN - The Buddhist abbot Yeisei re-introduces tea to Japan after travels in China. He brings tea seeds and knowledge of Buddhist rituals involving a bowl of shared tea. He also writes the first Japanese book about tea

1261 JAPAN - Buddhist monks travel across Japan, spreading the art of tea and the Zen doctrine

1400's Tea drinking becomes prevalent among the masses in Japan

1521-1591 JAPAN - Sen Rikyu, known as the "father of tea" in Japan, codifies the tea ceremony.

1618 RUSSIA - Tea is introduced to Russia, when the Chinese embassy visits Moscow, bringing a chest of tea as a gift for the Czar Alexis.

1635 EUROPE - The "tea heretics" (doctors and university authorities) of Holland argue over the positive and negative effects of tea, while the Dutch continue to enjoy their newfound beverage.

1650/1660 NORTH AMERICA - A Dutch trader introduces tea to the Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam (a small settlement in North America). Later, when the English acquired this colony, they found that the inhabitants of New Amsterdam (or New York as they chose to re-name it) consumed more tea than all of England.

1652 EUROPE - Tea is introduced to England by the Dutch East India Company.

1660 England's first tax on tea, levied at 8 pence for every gallon of tea sold at the coffeehouses.

1664 Tea drinking becomes very fashionable among the aristocracy of England, although the debate continues as to its medicinal value or harm.

1670 The English begin to make and use silver teapots.

1675 EUROPE - In Holland, tea is widely available for purchase in common food shops.

1685 England begins to trade directly with China. Tea and the Chinese word t'e (Amoy dialect) is brought to England directly from the Amoy region.

1699 EUROPE - England imports an average of 40,000 pounds of tea.

1708 EUROPE - England imports an annual average 240,000 pounds of tea. People of all levels of society now drink tea in England.

1716 Tea is brought to Canada by the Hudson Bay Company.

1750 Black tea exceeds green tea in popularity in Europe.

1767 England imposes high taxes on tea and other items sent to the American colonists. The colonists, resenting the monopoly that England has over them, begins to smuggle tea in from Holland.

1773 EUROPE - The John Company and the East India Company merge, forming the New East India Company. This new company had a complete monopoly on all trade and commerce in India and China. Trade with China is expensive however, and England's solution to its financial problem is opium. They begin to trade opium, (which they could grow cheaply in India) with the Chinese for tea. The Chinese would become addicted to the supply of opium, ensuring a constant supply of cheap tea to the English.

The famous Boston Tea Party occurs when American patriots dressed as Mohawk Indians push 342 chests of tea overboard. This act would eventually lead to the American Declaration of Independence of 1776.

1784 The grandson of Thomas Twinning persuades the Prime Minister William Pitt to drop the high taxes on tea, not only eliminating smuggling, but making tea an affordable luxury to Brits of all walks of life.

The Comte de la Rochefoucauld writes "Throughout the whole of England the drinking of tea is general. You have it twice a day and though the expense is considerable, the humblest peasant has his tea just like the rich man."

1800 Tea gardens become popular haunts for fashionable Londoners.

1818 The Temperance Movement is founded as a result of rampant alcoholism brought on by the Industrial Revolution. Members seek salvation for the drunken men with "tea and god on their side". This movement eventually inspired the word "teetotaling".

1823 The first Indian tea bushes are "discovered" growing wild in the Assam region of India by British Army Major Robert Bruce.

1826 The first packaged tea is made available for purchase in England by the Horniman Tea Company.

1834 The "Tea Committee", appointed by the Governor-General Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, reports that tea can be successfully grown in India.

Experiments with tea planting are conducted in the Darjeeling region of India.

1838 The British seriously set about planting and cultivating tea in the Assam region of India.

1839 The first chests of Assam tea arrive at the London Tea auctions. The British are ecstatic as this means that they are now able to successfully grow their own tea.

1842 CHINA - The Opium Wars end with England winning "the right" to trade opium for tea.

1850's EUROPE - The world's nations competed with one another in global clipper races to lay claim to the fastest ships. The fast sailing ships would race all the way from China to England, and up the Thames river to the Tea Exchange in London, where they would present the year's first crop of tea to be auctioned. Steamships would replace these tall ships by 1871.

1851 Full of "tea pride" the British exhibit their own Assam-grown tea at the Great Exhibition.

1854 The British introduce tea to Morocco.

1867 Scotsman James Taylor, manager of a coffee plantation in Ceylon, experiments with growing tea, planting both the China and India seed. The Assam seed flourishes and becomes the first commercial tea from Ceylon.

1898 Tea is introduced to Iran.

1900 RUSSIA - The Trans-Siberian Railroad is completed, ending camel caravan trade between Russia and China. In Russia, tea has become the national beverage (besides Vodka).

Tea is planted in the Botanical gardens at Entebbe, Uganda.

In England, teashops become the popular place for the working class to take their afternoon tea. By this time Lyon's has over 250 teashops, and taking tea, as meal away from home becomes a part of daily life.

The proprietor of the Aerated Bread Company begins to serve tea in the back of her shop to her favorite customers. Her back room becomes such a popular place to take afternoon tea that the company decides to open an actual teashop, the first of a chain of shops that would come to be known as the ABC teashop.

1903 Tea is planted in Kenya at Limuru.

1904 NORTH AMERICA - The first "iced tea" was served at the St. Louis World's Fair. A certain tea merchant had planned to give away samples of his tea to the fair-goers, and when unable to think of anything else to do when a heat wave threatened his plans, he dumped ice into his hot tea.

1906 The Book of Tea is written by Okakura Kakuzo, thus introducing the west to the Japanese Tea Ceremony and its history.

1914 British workers are given tea breaks throughout the day as this is thought to improve their productivity.

British soldiers are given tea as part of their rations.

1953 The paper teabag is developed by the Tetley tea Company, thus transforming tea-drinking habits around the world.

II. The Tea Garden Labourers in Assam:

Assam's tea industry is dependent on about two million labourers almost all of whom are the descendents of those who were brought to Assam as slaves first by the East India Company and later by the British rulers and entrepreneurs from 1830's through 1920's, mostly from the Santhal Parganas district of Bihar (now in Jharkhand state). The descendents of these slaves, are now called tea tribes (Chatterjee and Das Gupta, 1981; Verghese, 1996). The tea tribes form the backbone of the Assamese tea industry. The tea-tribes are found mainly in the districts of Darrang, Sonitpur, Nagaon, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Cachar, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Tinsukia and almost all the districts of Assam (Wikipedia). It may be mentioned here that Santhali speaker tea tribes are also found in parts of Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts. The population of Santhali speakers is about 135,900. People from the Singpho, Boro, Moran and Kachari tribes are also involved in growing, and harvesting of tea.

According to Behal (2006) the tea industry, from the 1840's onwards the earliest commercial enterprise established by private British capital in the Assam Valley, had been the major employer of wage labour there during colonial rule. It grew spectacularly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when tea production increased from 6,000,000 lb in 1872 to 75,000,000 lb in 1900 and the area under tea cultivation expanded from 27,000 acres to

204,000 acres. Employment of labour in the Assam Valley tea plantations increased from 107,847 in 1885 to 247,760 in 1900, and the industry continued to grow during the first half of the twentieth century. At the end of colonial rule the Assam Valley tea plantations employed nearly half a million labourers out of a labour population of more than three-quarters of a million, and more than 300,000 acres were under tea cultivation out of a total area of a million acres controlled by the tea companies.

As described by the 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 intellectuals and professionals in various fields. The Tea tribes, being basically labourers, live in villages, inside tea-estates (established by tea-planters). These estates are located in interior places and this contributes to the backwardness and exploitation of them by the tea-planters. The workers, in a way, have to live with the basic facilities provided by the tea-planters. The tea-planters, usually exploit the tea-tribes in every possible way. Violence and agitation of labours against the management is common, where the state machinery normally protects the tea-planters. Noneducation, poverty, addiction of males to country-beer, poor standard of living and health facilities are the problems in their life. There are instances when tea-planters do not even supply the life-saving drugs when workers are dying out of epidemics. The 'welfare officer' appointed in every tea-estate due to compulsion from Govt. of India, are mostly show-pieces than of any good.



Laborers working in a tea garden.

III. The Recent Uprising of Tea-Tribe People in Assam:

Tea plantation, tea estates and the tea industry as a whole has been seriously hit by the explosive environment in Assam. Militancy is telling heavily on the industry. Many tea gardens are abandoned by their owners and many others are somehow functional. The dwindling economic condition has further been made worse by the tough competition in the international market, falling prices and recurrent slumps (Orange, 2008). These factors have led to deterioration of the economic conditions of tea labourers in Assam. Secondly, the tea garden labourers who were brought as slaves or bounded labourers by the British to Assam, have now well settled in Assam and the new generation that grew up in Assam has become well-integrated with the Assamese culture (Kar, 1975, 2001). In due course, a demand for an equitable dealing arose. As viewed by some, with good housing, health and education along with

better salaries and wages, the tea garden labourers enjoy better facilities than other labourers engaged elsewhere. Today prolific singers, sportspersons, academicians and even politicians are coming up from the garden areas of Assam, which truly reflect their condition. However, the rosy picture presented by such views is not in tune with the findings of a number of studies such as Barker (1884), Gohain (1973), Phukan (1984), Dutta (1985), OKD Institute Report (1992, 1996), Dev and Phookan (1996), Sarma and Borah (1998), Kerketta (1999), ICMR (2001), Medhi et al. (2006), Singh et al. (2006), Das and Islam (2006), etc.

An ethnic clash between Bodo tribe (one of the largest tribes in Assam and in North East India) and Santhals (who are the descendents of indentured tea labors in Assam that migrated from the Santhal Parganas district of the erstwhile Bihar) erupted in early 1996. As Narzary (2006) points out, the hidden truth of the ethnic clash is the banning of entry into the forest,

which caused heavy blow to the economy of Santhals. Narzary also holds that besides this, conspiracy and upper hand of third party cannot be denied. Thus there was an economic root of the ethnic clash and genocide.

In India, since her independence, 'reservation' is one of the major policy instruments used to bring about (at least supposedly) the protective justice to those who did not receive their due in the past. A very complicated chain of political and administrative considerations led to the representation of class by the castes and

tribes. The appropriateness, desirability, efficacy and effectiveness of this representation are though questionable, it has given rise to caste and tribe consciousness, and subverted class-consciousness (Lenin, 1902; Sheppard et al., 1990; Leftwriter, 2007). Like many other caste and tribe groups, the tea tribes of Assam as well began demanding the 'Scheduled Tribes' status. This demand is naturally not welcome by many other sections of the Assamese society. This led to unrest and uprising of the tea-tribes in Assam in the recent past.

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Politics of Economic Blockade: A Case of Manipur Experience

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Abstract

Considering the significance and effects of economic blockade in the region, the paper tries to study various facades of issues surrounding politics of economic blockade in Manipur by highlighting recent example of the economic blockade undertaken by Naga or NSCN (I-M) and their cognate groups and Sadar hills Districthood Demand Committee or Kuki-Chin groups on the National High Way no. 2 and 37. The paper tries to argue that economic blockade in Manipur is not to be treated simply as means to pressurize the union and state government as claimed by NSCN and Kuki groups for it has its larger impact on the normal life or against the Right to life of the people in the state particularly the community settling in the valley. It also, however, suggests that the impact of economic blockade extend to all the people of Manipur including the periphery people. The paper also addresses whether the economic blockade is legitimate or not. Therefore economic blockade is not simply an outcome of the policy failures of the state, but also a serious manifestation of ethnic conflicts which have been tormenting Manipur for the last few decades.

Key words: Economic Blockade, Ethnic Conflict, Civil Society, National Highway, Territorial Integrity, Manipu

Economic Blockade, a means used by pressure groups/interest groups or civil society to push through specific demand, is often experienced in India, particularly North East region. It is taken to be a quite effective means especially because of the fact that the states in the region are mostly land-locked. Particularly, this affects Manipur, the land of diversity in terms of ethnic groups, in vulnerable terms. In fact, the term economic blockade is not a recent term in the region. The word is very familiar as well as recognizable means of assertive,

re-assertive and reaction issues of the present day politics. Most of the states of North-East India is geographically located in hilly region and composed of land-locked states. Only the Brahmaputra and the Barak rivers provide the opportunity of water transport while these rivers are not so much important for transportation in the region. All the states of North- East India depend on rail line and land road for transportation of goods and passengers. Therefore, when there is an economic blockade that affects the rail line and land road transport it also

affects normal life of the people. We all know that the North-East India is a home to multi-ethnic communities. Thus, in the region, the problem of ethnicity has become quite a complicated issue. Though there are contextual differences in terms of the nature of conflicts, there is not a single state amongst the seven sisters that does not face the problem of ethnic conflict. The region has often been described as a “boiling cauldron” by many academicians and journalists because of various inflicting problems. Manipur, more particularly, in the last decade of the twentieth century was marked by violent ethnic clashes. First, there was the Kuki-Naga clash which started in 1992 and continued unabated till the end of 1998. It was followed by many other clashes including the one between the Meeteis and the Muslims in May 1993. In June 1995 again, there was a sudden eruption of Kuki-Tamil clashes in Moreh. In 1997-98 the peace of the state was shaken by Kuki-Paite clash, Kuki and Meetei had broken the age old friendship in 2005 and since then Manipur continues to be one of the most conflict prone states in the entire country (Koireng:2008). Besides, sequences of ‘Indo-Manipuri’ conflicts, since Manipur merge to Indian Union, have also created immeasurable violation of the Human Rights of common people. It is also seen that the civil society uses many means, from the Gandhian means (see Iron Lady Sarmila issue) to Machiavellian culture, for the protection of their human rights. The ‘boom tactics’ of the underground is not a serious pressure to the existing political and economic condition of the state. However, the Gandhian means can indeed be an effective pressure tactics to the social, political and economic condition of the state. Therefore, *economic blockade* is a fruitful means used in inter-intra relationships of ethnic groups and restoring the normal law and order situation.

Economic blockade is an effort to cut off economic related items and essential commodities of life like food clothe, supplies, medicine and communications from a particular area by force, either in part or totally (<http://www.wikiorg.in>). Most blockades historically took place at sea, with the blockading power seeking to cut off all maritime transport from other states to the blockaded country and vice-versa; although stopping all land transport to and from an area may also be considered a blockade. In Manipur, there is no opportunity of maritime transport since it is connected with other states only with land roads and air lifting. Therefore, any group who wants to call for an economic blockade can easily do so on the National Highways. Manipur has only three National Highways connecting with the rest of India and the neighboring Burma.

Why blockade happens in Manipur and how?

When an economic blockade happens in Manipur, it is mainly done by civil societies of either the Naga or the Kuki. In Manipur, all the National Highways pass through the Kuki and the Naga congested area. Thus, the economic blockade conducted by the Kuki group or the Naga group for their own interest is one of the effective means to lobby with the Government’s decision making process. Armed groups also describe it as the last option of **Pressure Tactics**. Economic blockades have been used as a means of agitation since the 1990s for any kind of contests between different ethnic communities and also for their assertive and re-assertive demands.¹

The Naga civil organizations often launch economic blockades just to put pressure on the Union and the State government and urge that it is not against the spiral community. When the Naga peace process (NSCN-IM and Government of India) appeared to be floundering, an impetus to Naga demand was provided by the ill-timed

decision of Manipur Chief Minister O Ibobi Singh. In a hasty decision, Ibobi Singh declared June 18 as “State Integration Day”. That is the day in 2001 when at least 24 people were killed and dozens wounded in Manipur’s capital Imphal after police open fired to disperse agitators protesting against New Delhi’s decision to extend the jurisdiction of a ceasefire with the NSCN-IM beyond Nagaland to cover Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The Nagas

of Manipur perceive the government's move to commemorate the 2001 uprising as a challenge to their goal of integrating all Naga-inhabited areas of the region. However the citizens are of the opinion that the government should preserve and protect the territorial integrity of Manipur.

Citizens’ Opinion on Issue of Manipur’s Territorial Integrity

Table No. 1

Opinion on Manipur’s Territorial Integrity	All	Valley	Hills Naga	Hills Kuki
Manipur should remain the way it is	70	96	2	31
Naga dominated areas should be merged with Nagaland	11	1	51	6
Naga- dominated areas should be given Greater Autonomy within Manipur	12	1	42	24

1. All the figures are in % and rounded off; rest of the respondents had no opinion
2. Question asked in the survey: now I am going to read out few statements. Please tell me which of these you agree with most. (a) Manipur should remain the way it is without any division. (b) Naga dominated areas should be merged with Nagaland. (c) Naga-dominated areas should be given greater autonomy within Manipur.

Sources: Figures are based on post-poll survey carried out by Center for the Study of Development Society.

By this decision, Ibobi Singh wanted to make political capital in Manipur. But it also stirred emotions in Nagaland and in Naga dominated areas of Manipur. This decision provided the trigger for the blockade as it was contrary to the position of NSCN. The All Naga Students’ Association of Manipur (ANSAM) stated that the decision of Manipur government was against the Naga demand for the unification of all Naga-dominated areas, including those in Manipur. The organization started a

blockade to force the Manipur government to withdraw this decision.

On the issue of ‘*Muivah home-coming*’ and ‘*Autonomous District Council Election*’ conducted 57 day long economic blockade by Naga civil society, but non-Nagas claims that it is a torture to the entire Manipur and particularly the Meeteis. The issues were simultaneously rise up and brought out a political turmoil in Manipur because the underlying agenda of the issues are doubtful which can be against the interest of ethnic non-Naga. Remembering June 18, the people try to justify Muivah’s home-coming as serious threat to the state politics. Peace process and Naga unification as Naga right in the one side and other side non-Naga’s unique history, the protection of territorial integrity and law and order situation had been tussled in the local and national media. The permission of the Union Government is void and invalid (against the unitary federalism of India that order of the Union Government is rejected by state government on the interest of the state) and Mr. Muivah’s *home-coming*, which was approved by the Union Government, was blocked by State Government at the Mao

gate, a border town between Nagaland and Manipur. Here, the most remarkable thing is that the Secretary General of NSCN-IM, Muivah, was born at the Somdal village of Ukhrul District, Manipur. Still he has his relatives, brothers and sisters with memories of past childhood in romance. His last thirty years exile against India for campaign of the Naga unification movement is based in Nagaland. Therefore, the group NSCN-IM (fraction group of NSCN) is recognized in Manipur as *C-team insurgency*.² The recent demand of the peace talks should be concluded to an Alternative Arrangement for Manipur Naga itself out of imagine Greater Nagaland contiguous Naga dominated area of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. It was supported and welcomed by some Naga community that Muivah's home-coming is a canvass for the Naga unification in general of the fifty years the Naga blood and tear of untold story.

In 2010, the state government decided to conduct Autonomous District Council (ADC) election and consequently, the state government conducted the election. The ADC was postponed more than 20 years as a result of the demand for the implementation of *Six Schedules*. The Nagas are opposing the election, until their demand to amend the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act-third Amendment 2008 is fulfilled. They alleged the council's history, that the present Manipur District Council Act did not give enough monetary power to District Councils. In a statement expressed by Manipur Tribal Joint Action Committee (MTJAC) it will intensify the fight against holding elections to the District council under the New Act. With the same demand, ANSAM conducted an indefinite economic blockade along the National Highways.

The longest economic blockade was launched by Sadar Hills Districthood Demand Committee (SHDDC) staff by the Kuki people of Manipur in demand of

SARDAR HILLS to be converted into a full-fledged Revenue District. It is a surprising event in the world. On the issue, the committee conducted 127 days long economic blockade on the National Highways (NHW No. 2 and 37) of the state. The most interesting thing is that such economic blockade is criticized by another counter economic blockade of 127 days conducted by the Naga people. Manipur Tribal Joint Action Committee (MTJAC) opposed the District Council elections, the Kukis are part of the members. However, the Kukis welcome the election and this signifies the Kukis' desire for peace and development (Arun: 2011). The Kuki's demand is when Manipur attained Statehood in 1972, *The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act, 1971* was passed by the Parliament for the creation of Six Autonomous District Councils, in which Sadar Hills District was one, with the intention that all of them will ultimately become full-fledged districts, and however, Sadar Hills has not yet given its proper due. All the other Five District Councils have been converted into full-fledged districts more than thirty years ago, whereas, Sadar Hills is kept as part of the Senapati district till today. Sadar Hills Autonomous District Council had been functioning like other district Councils of Manipur under the same Act on equal status. The SHDDC had all along petitioned to all successive Governments to upgrade the Sadar Hills into a full-fledged district, but the same has not been fulfilled and the Act passed by the Parliament in 1971 has not been implemented in respect of Sadar hills alone (Memorandum submitted to Home Minister: August 16, 2011). On 5 August, the State Cabinet meeting discussed on the matter of granting Districthood to Sadar Hills and pronounced it a *genuine demand*. The cabinet, however, decided that an in-depth deliberation and wide ranging consultation

is essential before granting the demand. On 6 August SHDDC President, Ngamkhoaho Haokip blamed the editorial of a local English paper, Hueiyen Lanpao saying that the paper has needlessly provoked the people of Sadar Hills with its acerbic observation on the emerging issue. “We are thankful” for the provocation, he said with visible sarcasm. While opposing the cabinet decision, the ANSAM always refer to the Government of Manipur that there were many Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) signed between the Nagas of Manipur and the Government of Manipur and the Naga Students’ Federation (NSF) and the Government of Manipur during the then Chief Ministership of Rishang Keishing and W. Nipamacha Singh respectively on the proposed creation of the Sadar Hills district in the State of Manipur. The ANSAM in particular and the Nagas in general would like to reiterate the stance of the Government of Manipur that the Sadar Hills district should not be created by carving out or cutting away parts of the Naga inhabited areas in the State of Manipur. ANSAM also warns the Government of Manipur that they must not make any kinds of policies and plans to create unnecessary confrontation among the ethnic groups in Manipur. The formation of the proposed District should be through consensus and also with the consent of the Nagas failing which the Government of Manipur will have to face unwanted consequences. (See commentary on the issue of SHDDC)

Responses of the valley people

A joint consultative meeting of civil society organizations was hosted by the Sadar Hills Districthood Demand Committee (SHDDC) at Kangpokpi on the raging issue of the Sadar Hills. The consultative meeting was participated by valley based organizations AMESCO, United NGO’s Mission Manipur, Senior

Citizens Manipur, HERICOUN, AMUCO, ICHAM, FREINDS, NIPCO, AMKIL, IPSA, UPF, All Manipur Tammi-Chingmi Apunba Nupi Lup, MAPI Council, UMO, DESAM, KSA and MSF. Talking to media persons after the meeting, SHDDC President, Ngamkhohao Haokip said that all the civil society organizations of Manipur which took part in the meeting expressed their support to the movement for the Sadar hills district. Though the meeting could not adopt any definite resolution, the civil society organizations agreed on doing whatever is possible to achieve the demand for a full-fledged Sadar Hills district before the 10th Manipur Legislative Assembly elections. If the Sadar Hills are given Districthood before the elections, the blockade will be called off automatically. Senior Citizens Manipur maintained from their side that giving the district status is something which cannot be denied to Sadar Hills. They also appealed to stop the blockade in the interest of the suffering masses. AMUCO too proposed to call off the blockade as it has resulted in untold misery to all sections of the population. However, FREINDS expressed their opinion in favor of carrying on the economic blockade. NIPCO highlighted the need for the re-adjustment of the Sadar Hills area so as to ensure peaceful coexistence of all communities. Regarding the question of whether the blockade should be lifted or not, NIPCO left it to the wisdom of SHDDC. They also underscored the need for collective responsibility in demanding the districthood status or imposing economic blockade. UPF observed that the Government is too strong-headed. They proposed to carry on the movement further until the demand is achieved under an understanding with the Government. Maintaining that the Government’s mentality does not deserve any faith, MAPI Council said that neither the blockade nor

other forms of agitation should be suspended.

Consequences of the blockade

Common people who are victims of the economic blockade appeal to the agitators to stop using blockade for getting their demands. The state government also appeals to the agitators not to use this means; however if the agitators do not heed to the government's warning the state has to exercise its power and suppress the conductors of the economic blockade by order of Warrant. Human Right Activist L.C Ginline Meetei submitted a plea to the Guwahati High Court (Imphal Bench) through the Right to information (RTI) demanding a clarification from the side of the state government on the issue of economic blockades in Manipur. Blockade conductors blame that both the State and the Central government are totally unmindful to their demands which they submitted through

memorandums. They gave the view that any kind of activities to get their demand became ineffective.³ Thus, economic blockade becomes the only means to get the attention of the State and the Central government. Considering the hardships faced by the people of the state due to the economic blockade, the State Government had been trying to procure essential commodities on one side and also negotiating with the agitators to end the economic blockade. However, the problem of the scarcity of essential commodities due to around four months of economic blockade is not solved completely by the arrangements of the State Government. Many businessmen took the advantage of the economic blockade and sold the essential commodities at high prices. The following table shows the price of commodities during the economic blockade.

Table No.2

Item	Original prize	Prize during Blockade
Rice	Rs. 15 per kg	Rs.50 per kg
Potato	Rs. 17 per kg	Rs.55 per kg
Onion	Rs.25 per kg	Rs.80 per kg
Sugar	Rs. 15 per kg	Rs. 50 per kg
Milk	Rs. 80 per kg	Not available in market
Petrol	Govt. rate	Rs. 250 per liter
Kerosene	Govt. rate	Rs. 60 per liter
Diesel	Govt. rate	Rs. 100 per liter
Candle	Rs. 10 per packet	Rs. 30 per packet
Fish	Rs. 100 per kg	Rs. 280 per kg
Chicken(dress)	Rs. 180 per kg	Rs. 300 per kg
Pork	Rs.180 per kg	Rs. 250 per kg
Tomato	Rs. 80 per kg	Rs.150 per kg
Eatable oil	Rs. 80 per liter	Rs. 300 per liter
Dry fish		Rs.300 per kg
LPG	Rs 440	Rs.2000 (Not available)
Egg	Rs. 4 per one piece	Rs. 10
Bus fare	Increase triple times from the original fare	

Source: The data is collected from the News Paper and broadcasting by All India Radio Imphal, during the economic blockade conducted by Kuki and counter blockade by Naga on Sadar hills issue.

The recent blockade conducted by the Kuki State Demand Committee (KSDC) is great significant in the state politics of Manipur too. The blockade initiate to the last stage of NSCN-IM's peace talk with the Government of India. It is generally termed 'Final Conclusion' of the peace talk and the main demand of the Nagas is not possible to realize while an alternative arrangement may possibly be worked out. This Alternative Arrangement too is both very sentimental and emotional to the Nagas of Manipur that the main beneficiary for the peace talk must be classified into Nagaland Naga and Manipur Naga.⁴ The prediction of the people to the agenda of the Alternative Arrangement will be some kind of undesired or curve the boundary in the future. People demanded that the terms and conditions of the Alternative Arrangement must be made open to the public. Civil societies particularly in the valley look at the situation to be restored the state boundary very attentively. Therefore civil organizations of the Nagas and non-Naga groups are standing into the mouth battle.

On the other hand, the KSDC put a pressure on the State and the Center Government that the Kuki home state must be realized first before the final settlement of Naga issue. KNO also warns the government that SoO will be closed and they will take up arms which are deposited at the designated camp, having two locker keys; one owned by the Indian Army and the other by the Kuki underground. KSDC also provide a map demanding the Kuki Homeland which is overlapping with the map of greater Nagaland. The map is not different from the map provided by the KNO in earlier days. The difference is that, unlike the Naga published map, the Kuki's doesn't cover the Kuki inhabited areas of other neighboring states. In regard the mapping too Kukis and non-Kuki civil organizations objected with each other

which can be seen in the media channels. KNO spokesman, Seilen Haokip asserts for *"the demand for creation of Zalemang, under the Constitution of India."* Further he said that *"we are not anti-national, but merely asking for our political rights."*⁵ This organization KSDC which is not known in earlier time call indefinite blockade from 15 November 2012 for the full fledged statehood.⁶ The United People's Front (UPF) which is a conglomerate of 9 armed groups of the Kuki declared that they would not support the proposed indefinite blockade call of the Kuki State Demand Committee. They also said that KSDC is an unknown organization.

After the public blockade started the state government invited KSDC for a talk on 20 November 2012. But it failed in arriving at a solution to end the blockade. Now the remarkable thing is that the issue of Kuki State demand is became national issue because of this public blockade and no one knows when the public blockade came to end. In academic circle, the non-Kukis questions arise whether the Kukis have the right to form a **Home State** in Manipur. They are migrant people from Burma and they have around 8 lacks populous out of the total population of the state where indigenous Kuki people are little according 2011 census. The public blockade that began to affect normal life in general and the Nagas issue are keeping silent and side-lined for a short time.

Victim of the blockade:

No one can able to describe the extreme troubles which are faced by common people during the economic blockade. No Oxygen and Live-Saving Drugs are available in the hospitals, and the doctors have to postpone any kind of operation minor or major, including emergency operations. The local productions are not sufficient to meet the demands for survival of the people in the state, Manipur. Therefore, Manipur is

required to import the goods to fulfill the Right to life of the people. The increasing price of household items during the blockade goes three times higher than the original price. This was the biggest problem of the people. Even the items which were available in the markets were not quality-controlled. Even though the blockade is over, the scarcity of primary requirement like food, petrol and its products are continues. In such situation no one be hope for peace which is, therefore, the main factor of causing *ethnic Diaspora* of Manipuri.

The capital of the state Imphal is at the center of the state and connects with the other district through either National Highway or State Highway. In Manipur, the most important National highway No.2 known as Imphal Dimapur Road pass through Senapati district, Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal district and touch Tengoupal sub-division of Chandel district before it meet her Moreh town and Tamu town of Burma. The National highway 37 known as Imphal Silchar Road pass through Imphal west, Tamenglong district and Jiribam sub-division of Imphal East and connects with Silchar town of Barak valley of Assam and National highway 150 known as Tiphaimukh Jasami road, starts from the Churhandpur district pass through Chandel district and joints Ukhrul district before meet Nagaland. Guite road passes through Imphal west, Bishenpur District, Churhanpur District and joints Aizwal of Mizoram. State Highway connects Ukhrul District Head Quarter (DH/Q) directly to state capital Imphal and Chandel (DH/Q) and Tamenglong (DH/Q) link by National Highway No. 2 and 37 respectively via State Highway.

The blockade affected victims can discuss under the following District wise:

The administrative unite of Manipur have nine districts. Four districts are based in Imphal valley and remaining five districts

are based in the hills.⁷ Economic blockade is conducted mostly on Impha- Dimapur road and Imphal-Silchar road because it serves as the 'Life line' of Manipur. The goods imported from other states of India are first stationed at Imphal then the goods are distributed to other District Head Quarters (DH/Q). During the blockade truck drivers have to face high risk as they are target by the agitators besides bad road condition. The drivers do not want to drive without full security. Even though security is provided to them, they are personally threatened by the agitators. So, the question is what will be happen to them after the economic blockade is over? Which profession will they take up after the economic blockade? These questions are in their mind.⁸

All the trucks carrying public goods reach Imphal lately. One day journey might turn out to be more than one month, sometimes two months. All the stock soon gets empty due to withdrawal on demand without deposit. Businessmen collect the goods and deposit them in their own store and are supplied to 70% population-congested areas of Imphal valley which has only four districts. Besides, private *passenger bus*⁹ drivers carrying goods earn a profitable sum of money during the economic blockade. So in Imphal valley had to face the scarcity of essential goods during economic blockade.

What about the remaining five hill districts? During the economic blockade, Senapati district and Ukhrul district gets the essential goods from Nagaland to their district H/Q without any disturbances. In Imphal valley the price of goods increases triple times from the original price, where as in such district head quarter price increase to a little amount.¹⁰ Likewise Churhanpur district gets the necessary goods from Aizwal of Mizoram. From Burma, the goods are imported to Tengnoupal sub-division via Moreh where necessary items are available in cheap amount. Chandel district and

Tamenglong district have no direct road links with other states or country. The district H/Q of these two districts are connected with Imphal by National Highway and then by the State Highway. They have less population, occupied large space of land, bad road condition, and

lacked security arrangement. Private businessmen have not interested to invest in such areas. Even government gives less attention. Besides, they are engaged in a negotiation with the agitators to end the economic blockade.

Land Holding Among the Kukis and Nagas in Manipur
Table No. 3

Sl. no	District	Kuki	Naga
1	Churachandpur	100	NIL
2	Chandel	75	25
3	Senapati	50	50
4	Tamenglong	35	65
5	Ukhrul	30	70

Source: T.S Gangte (2007) Problem of Ethnicity and Identity in Contemporary Manipur: A Scenario in Manipur Hills.

Ethnic people wise:

We also know that the important National Highways passes through the Kuki and the Naga congested areas. Jiribam sub-division is dominated by Meetei people but it is connected with Imphal through NH no. 37 (Imphal- Silchar Road). The Kukis and the Nagas settle next by next to the National Highways. The State Highway connecting the district H/Q of Chandel from Pallel town also passes through the Kuki and the Naga dominated areas. The State Highway connecting Tamenglong and Imphal is dominated by the Naga habited areas only. When an economic blockade happens, it may be conducted by either the Nagas or the Kukis, and the most affected people by the blockade is those who are settling at the periphery. Tamenglong and Chandel district is dominated by the Naga people. Saikul sub-division, Kangpokpi sub-division of Senapati district dominated mostly by the Kuki people is also affected by the economic blockade.

Un-affected area

Kakching sub-division of Thoubal district situated at the Imphal valley is a kind of *model village*. The people mostly belong to Schedule caste category, and are the descendant of Chakpa community.¹¹ They occupied large space of land area which is one of the very fertile areas in the state. People living in this part of the state enjoy high productivity in agricultural products. Dry woods for fire are also collected from the nearest foothills of the village. Villages at far away in the hills are not affected by the blocked in a sense that they can survive in primitive way of living.

Conclusion

In Manipur, three ethnic people, namely, Kuki, Naga and Meitei are in the conflict situation since last decade of the twentieth century. Such unwanted situations affect Manipur, the land of diversity in terms of ethnic groups. Of course, conflict between Naga and non-Naga is a serious problem. Sadar Hills and statehood of Kuki issue is also another headache to the non-Kuki groups in the state of Manipur. The conflict

between the Naga and the Kuki in 1990s is an unfortunate event not only in Manipur but also in the entire Northeast. Besides, there are many issues involving multi-ethnic groups which disturb the peaceful coexistence of the people in the state. Having different interests the ethnic groups used every means to lobby the state and central Governments' decision. Among the lobbies or means economic blockade is one of the simple, easy and effective means. No one knows where, when, and how, the issue of the economic blockade emerged. But frequent and long term economic blockade conducted by any group directly threatens the Right to Life of the entire people of Manipur. In another sense when economic blockade happens, it happens against the interest of other ethnic groups. It distresses all the people of Manipur, particularly people living in the periphery, i.e., the tribes. *"We feel the pain of people who are affected by the blockade. We express our regret on that. It is not only the valley people who are suffering. People in the hill districts are also suffering"* said David Choro, President ANSAM. Biju Kamei, a street Vendor from Tamenglong, does not know Bangla and Hindi properly. She sales her items in the street in the Premtala Street of Silchar town with limited customer. She wants to go to Imphal, where, the women get more empowerment.¹² Van drivers (school service) have to face every challenge during the blockade, especially to get petrol or diesel in the state. They cannot increase the fare though they have to buy the oil in high price. There is no increase in labor charge during the blockade. One could not even imagine the problems faced by the poor rickshaw puller during the blockade.

¹ There is many economic blockades in the state Manipur since Independence. Recent blockade are on the demand of ethnic interest that Naga wants to be member of

greater Nagaland and Kuki wants to be Sadar hills into full fledged district or Kuki State.

² C-Team insurgency is small type of insurgency which main demand is autonomy within the Indian constitution and now under the constitution follows cease fire or suspension of operation. Their based are mainly from outside Manipur for ethnic chauvinistic manner instead of united Manipur. (Sanajaoba: 2010)

³ ATSUM, Position statement on our unresolved issues, May 31st 2007.

⁴ Naga leaders express that the Naga issue would be resolve only by venture of the Nagaland people. Naga of Manipur would be decided for their own Manipur. Times of India, November 2 and 5, 1212

⁵ The Sangai Express, November 3 2012

⁶ Ibid. November13 2012

⁷ Four districts of valley are Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal and Bishenpur and hill district are Ukhrul, Chandel, Churachandpur, Senapati, Tamenglong

⁸ Interview truck drivers running on NH.37

⁹ Passenger buses are allowed to run during the blockade by staff of SHDDC.

¹⁰ All India Radio time to time broadcast the price of the items which are available in the market. Personally I meet the situation around one month in Ukhrul town and Moreh town during the economic blockade.

¹¹ Chakpa is quite an early tribe inhabiting this land whose way of life was basically different from the rest of the people. At one time they were independent but later they were brought to the subjugation by the Meetei and to pay tributes to the Meetei King. Hence, they were given the name 'Loi' (Hodson 1908: 8-9) (Ibohal:1986)

¹² Interview conducted during the economic blockade in the Silchar town. The respondent is suddenly come across and talk by Manipuri language

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Problems and Prospects of Women Entrepreneurship in Sonowal Kachari Society

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Abstract

Assam, the land of blue hills and green forestry, is one of the tribal living states of India. The total number of tribal population is highest in Assam as compared to other North-Eastern states. Fourteen (14) schedule tribes inhabit in Assam. SonowalKacharis inhabit over upper Assam covering seven districts viz-Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat. Some of SonowalKachari people inhabit in Arunachal Pradesh also. Among these districts of Assam Dibrugarh district is the largest inhabitat of SonowalKacharis. According to 1991 population census the total SonowalKachari population was 2,51,727. It has increased to 3,12,656 in 2001 in the state of Assam. The development of a society requires full participation by all section of the population including women. Involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities would ensure effective utilization of labour, generation of income and hence improvement in quality of life. It is realized by all the nations that social and economic changes can be ensured mobilizing women to take up entrepreneurial activities. The present study seeks to examine the economic activities and also problems faced by them in their various entrepreneurial activities in the society. Thus the present paper carries a great importance to study about the position of entrepreneurial activities among women in sonowalkachari society. The present study is based on data collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data are collected from field survey through direct personal interview with the help of well-designed questionnaire. The SonowalKachari women are in recent time very much interested in entrepreneurial work. But it has been observed that like other community women the rate of growth of women entrepreneurship is not enough among them. This is due to some basic problems arising in relation to entrepreneurial development in such societies. By considering all these sides the present paper is prepared with the objectives like, level of education, Causes of selecting this profession, age- group, training, finance etc. Based on all the objectives the present paper is presenting the main problems faced by the women entrepreneur like lack of education, lack of finance, lack of training etc. After identifying different problems the paper includes some suggestions to solve those.

TRIBAL POPULATION OF ASSAM

Assam, the land of blue hills and green forestry, is one of the tribal living states of India. The total number of tribal

population is highest in Assam as compared to other North-Eastern states. There are fourteen (14) schedule tribes inhabit in Assam. These fourteen tribes

are Barmans in Cachar, Bodo-Kachari, SonowalKachari, Miri (Mising), Deori, Hojai, Lalung, Mech, Rabha, Dimasa, Hajong, Khamti, Singpho and Garo. The tribes of the state have heterogeneous social system, culture, myths and legends. In our study we get the Sonowal Kachari tribes, which have an interesting past and differential socio-cultural behavior

THE SONOWAL KACHARIS

SonowalKacharis inhabit over upper Assam covering seven districts viz-Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat. Some of SonowalKachari people inhabit in Arunachal Pradesh also. Among these districts of Assam Dibrugarh district is the largest inhabitat of SonowalKacharis. SonowalKacharis belongs to the greater kachari tribes. For originity or the history of the Kacharis in Assam can be dated (traced) back to several hundreds of years. The Kacharis in Assam rooted to Tibeto-Mongoloid race. They were earlier called “Kiraat” which was originally the name of a tribe. A class of the “Kiraat” tribe in the “Mahabharata” which flourished in the banks of the river “Brahmaputra” and the “Barak”.

SONOWAL KACHARI POPULATION

According to 1991 population census the total Sonowal Kachari population was 2,51,727. It has increased to 3,12,656 in 2001 in the state of Assam. After 1991, since community wise population data were not collected, hence it is not easy to present recent population strength of Sonowal Kacharis. But those population noted as S.T. inhabit under the jurisdiction of Sonowal Kachari Autonomus Countil.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Sonowal women are independent. They do all domestic works like weaving, animal husbandry and also work at the crop-field. They are expert in fishing by *Jakai* (fishing instrument). There was not the system of child marriage, satidah etc. in the past time also but have allowed the system of widow remarriage. They have equal freedom as the men and they can even move openly to take education anywhere and enter other social sectors too.

SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY

The Sonowal Kacharis of Assam have a rich cultural heritage. They have marked their identity as a tribe having their own regional dialect and culture, society, customs and traditions and as a colourful tribe. They have influenced the civilization of Assam and have added to the rich heritage of India. The various cultural and religious activities of the Sonowal Kacharis are associated with the *Baithow Puja*, the *Haidanggeet*, *Hogra-Nritya*, *Bahuwa-Nritya* etc. They celebrate *Bihu* also. The SonowalKachari women engage themselves in *Aainaam*, *Gusaninaam*, *Biyanaam*, *Lakhiminaam*, *Hubusoni*, *Kunwarigeet*, *Gathiyankhunda*, *Phulkonwargeet*, *Manikonwargeetas* part of a social or cultural gathering. The Sonowal Kacharis have progressed in various other spheres. They were skilled in handloom weaving and crafts, mason work and sculpture.

ECONOMIC CONDITION

The economic condition of the SonowalKacharis is still backward like other tribal communities. The economy of the SonowalKacharis is predominantly an agrarian one. Their livelihood depends on agriculture and other allied activities. They devote a

larger portion of cultivable land for growing rice. Besides growing rice, they have also undertaken cultivation of various types of other crops like vegetables, potatoes, mustard seeds etc. But still in this century the modern technology is not properly a habitual practice for them. The frequent floods in the monsoon season largely affect the growing crops in the field and lack of marketing facility for agricultural products produced also badly effect most of villages. Unemployment is another growing burning problem among SonowalKachari community.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS

The educational attainment or literacy rate is also not satisfactory. Most of them lower-standard educated and very few of them have the education more or less 10+2 standard. This is said to be because of backward socio-economic condition of the SonowalKachari community. According to 1991 census report only 27.14 per cent of SonowalKacharis are literate.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

The development of a society requires full participation by all section of the population including women. Involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities would ensure effective utilization of labour, generation of income and hence improvement in quality of life. It is realized by all the nations that social and economic changes can be ensured mobilizing women to take up entrepreneurial activities. This study seek to examine the economic activities and also problems faced by them in their various entrepreneurial activities in the society. Thus, the study carries a great importance to study about

the position of entrepreneurial activities among women in Sonowal kachari society.

METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on data collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data are collected from field survey through direct personal interview with the help of well-designed questionnaire. Six villages of Sibsagar district are selected randomly and the survey has done for 50 Sonowalkachari women entrepreneurs. The villages are namely, AhomPathar, Nemukur, JamiraRajabari, Bhatgaj, Paraliguri, DihingmukhTeteliguri, under Demow revenue circle, Sibsagar. The secondary data are collected from books, magazines, websites etc.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The SonowalKachari women are in recent time very much interested in entrepreneurial works like, Handloom weaving, Piggery farm, Poultry farm, Dairy farm, DTP Computer Education, Handicraft etc. But it has been observed that like other community women, the rate of growth of women entrepreneurship is not satisfactory among them. This is due to some basic problems arising in relation to entrepreneurial development in such societies. By considering all these sides the present topic is prepared with the following objectives:

- i) To examine the educational level of women entrepreneurs.
- ii) To know about the causes behind women entrepreneurship.
- iii) To verify their age-groups.

- iv) To know about the availability of training for women entrepreneur.
- v) To examine their income level.

The most important element to achieve success in any short of business is the level of education. Through our field study we tried to enquire how much our sample entrepreneurs have got formal education and the following results found:

FINDINGS

Level of Education:

Table I: Level of education of the entrepreneurs:

	No of Women	Percentage
Illiterate	00	00
Upto VII	14	28.00
UptoX	26	52.00
UptoXII	8	16.00
BA	2	04.00
MA	0	00
Others	0	00
Total	50	100.00

Source: Field Survey

It is very much pleasure to say that in our sample we have not met any illiterate women entrepreneur. But it is also true that the level of education of our sample entrepreneurs is not up to the mark. Around 80.00 percent of total surveyed entrepreneurs are under-matric. Only 2 women are BA passed. From this result it is clear that among women entrepreneurs they are not achieved required education which is

very much important to develop their skills.

Age –Group of the Entrepreneurs:

Entrepreneur age is also another considerable element for the success. Generally a person can work hard during the middle age of life. In this regard we made an attempt to know about their age, while they are running their entrepreneurial activities and we got the following results:

Table II: Age Group of the Entrepreneurs

Age-Group	No of Women	Percentage
Less than 20	02	04.00
20-30	27	54.00
30-40	18	36.00
40-50	2	04.00
50 and above	1	02.00
Total	50.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey

It is very much pleasure to say that 90.00 per-cent of the total surveyed entrepreneurs are belonging from the age group of 20-40 years. Thus, those women who are dealing with the entrepreneurial activities are belonging from the best age show their best performance. Remaining 10.00 percent are from the age group of more than 40 and less than 20 years.

Table III: Marital status of the entrepreneurs

Marital status	No of women	Percentage
Married	31	62.00
Unmarried	19	38.00
Total	50	100.00

Source: Field Survey

The above result gives us an interesting result that, among our surveyed women 62.00 percent of them have started their entrepreneurial activities after marriage. Again while we were tried to know whether they receives support from their family members especially from husband or not, they gave a satisfactory result that they always gets full support from their family members. Thus this result carries the meaning that, in SonowalKachari culture majority of people supports women entrepreneurship. Thus marriage is not a

Marital status:

In our study we tried to know about whether our respondent are married or unmarried as, it is believed that a woman generally face lots of problems in continuing their past activities after marriage, and we got the following response:

barrier for women development in this community.

Reason for selecting entrepreneurship:

In respect of attaining success in entrepreneurial activities another important element is the cause behind the selecting the profession. In general, progress of the enterprise is based on the interest and urge of the person concerned. In this regard we have got the following results:

Table IV: Reason for selecting entrepreneurship

Reason	No of women	Percentage
To earn money	33	66.00
To be self-dependent	12	24.00
Due to the inspiration of the family members	4	08.00
To utilize the quality	1	02.00
Total	50	100.00

Source: Field Survey

It has been observed from the table that the main objective of our women

entrepreneurs in selecting their professions is to earn money. At the same time, from our

eye observation during the time of field survey, we have seen that majority of surveyed family's living standards and quality of lives are not that sound, which reflected by their house types, no of durable goods, sources of income etc. Of course a good amount of respondents told that they want to be self dependent in life and so, they have selected their professions as best means to attain self employment.

Table V: Sources of finance

Source.	No of women	Percentage
Own Saving	3	06.00
Institutional Sources	15	30.00
Non-institutional	32	64.00
Total	50	100.00

Source: Field Survey

The above table reveals that, there is a lacking of adequate supply of institutional credit from the sources like, Commercial Banks, Cooperative Societies, Regional Rural Banks and assistance from SonowalKachari Autonomous Council for the SonowalKachari women. Around 64.00 percent of women are still depending on village moneylenders by paying high rate of interest. In this regard the women have

Table VI: Level of training received

	No of women	Percentage
Yes	13	26.00
No	37	74.00
Total	50	100.00

Source: Field Survey

The above table express that, only 26.00 per cent women entrepreneurs have formal training. Around 74.00 percent women have not got any training at all. In this regard we come to know that those

Financial Support:

Another important instrument to run any enterprise, which can be term as life blood for any entrepreneurial work is finance. In general we have seen that, our entrepreneurs cannot move forward their steps due to the shortage of finance. Regarding this case our respondents had given the following respond:

expressed that they need the regular supply of credit facilities.

Level of Training:

The basic requirement for the success of any sort of business as well as industry is the proper training to the entrepreneurs. Because without some basic knowledge on the preferred field, it is quite impossible to all round management to achieve the goal. From our survey we have drawn the following results in this regard,

women who have not got any training are running their activities based on some eye-view and some idea form experienced people. Those entire women entrepreneurs

who are left without training have strongly realized that they need training.

Marketing and Transport:

In our village community, the producers always face the problem of marketing as well as transportation. In this context our respondents told that, they are unhappy with the prevailing marketing system. In general they have to depend on weekly market to sale their products where they are compelling to sale even in very low price. Simultaneously, some middle-men also come to collect their products and they always try to pay very less price. Thus our respondents told that, they hardly receive the

expected price for their products. Again the common transportation problem is also another obstacle in their marketing as well as smooth entrepreneurial growth.

Income received by the entrepreneurs:

In our study we tried to enquire how much the women entrepreneurs are succeed in their respective business and we got a satisfactory result that, most of them are happy with their business as it is providing them their minimum level of expected profit. The following table represents income of the entrepreneurs:

Table VII: Monthly Income received by the entrepreneurs:

Amount(monthly)	No of women	Percentage
Less than Rs.3000	06	12.00
Rs.3000-Rs.5000	13	26.00
Rs.5000-Rs.10,000	27	54.00
Rs.10,000and above	4	08.00
Total	50	100.00

Source: Field Survey

From the above table it has been clear that, around 80.00 percent entrepreneurs are earning the income monthly ranging Rs.3000-Rs.10,000, which can be considered as a good amount of income by considering their level of education. Although the respondents have told that they are still not satisfied with their income, yet the minimum income that they are deriving, is helping them to satisfy their personal as well as the family's some basic

needs. They also opined that, they are happy with their business and are trying their level best to improve it, to earn more profit.

Contribution towards society:

While discussing about the women entrepreneurship and its importance, it is very much important to study how much the women entrepreneurs are contributing to the society. In this regard we tried to examine what does our women entrepreneurs are felling about them and their work and we got the following information:

Table VIII: Contribution towards society:

Contribution	No. of women	Percentage
WomenEmpowerment	50	100.00
Creationof employment opportunities	17	34.00
Financial help to the family	50	100.00

Donation towards different social works,	27	54.00
Influence to others,	34	68.00

Source: Field survey.

The above table extends the view that all of our respondents feel that, after entering in this field they started to think about life in a different form, that is they come to know that they have some own creativity and if it is utilized properly they can get many success in lives. This information reveals the creation of the knowledge about women empowerment. Again 34.00 per-cent women told that they are hiring labour to help them in different works. Thus, the surveyed women are creating some amount of employment opportunities also. Some of the women told that from their income they are contributing some amount for the developmental activities like, construction of Namghar, celebration of social functions like, Bihu, Puja, Rashlila etc. At the same time, 68.00 percent women told that by influencing their works, many poor women are showing their interest for starting enterprise. In this regard they opined that they personally also encourage their friends to come forward in this field.

Suggestions:

The following suggestions can be offered to solve the inner problems as well as development of women entrepreneurship among SonowalKachari women and the nation as a whole:

Firstly, there is a big importance of frequent training programs for our women to develop their skill and abilities. Such trainings should be free as well as conduct in their locality. Again the trainings should be regular but not for long duration, i.e. short-run trainings are more preferable for our rural women.

Secondly, the financial reforms are also considered as an important instrument

to improve entrepreneurship. Since, the rural sonowalKachari people are poor for which they always afraid to come forward for entrepreneurial work. But, in practical field it has been observed that the availability of credit facilities is very less and hence most of the interested women are not aware about the sources of finance. Hence, rural industrial credit facilities must be making available at a cheaper rate so that interested women can move forward.

Thirdly, the prevailing education system should also be revised as there is a requirement of inclusion of vocational courses in the syllabus. Again a proper environment should create so that women are also achieve required formal education to improve their personality.

Fourthly, the marketing system should be developed. There should be an environment that the women entrepreneurs should make free to sale their products. The entrepreneurs should give the facility to concentrate only on production not for sale. There should be a mechanism of sale of their products at reasonable price.

Fifthly, the transportation system which is quite poor in rural area should be developed so that the entrepreneurs can cheaply carry their required materials for smooth development of their projects.

Sixthly, there is a requirement of frequent checkup system for those entrepreneurs who are dealing with animal husbandry, so that the dangerous diseases cannot affect their animals. Thus the veterinary health facilities should be expand properly to utilize modern technologies in their farms.

Conclusion:

In conclusion we can say that women are increasingly taking up entrepreneurial carrier for improving their economic status and also fulfilling their creative urge. The government and the non-governmental organizations are playing important roles in mobilizing women to become entrepreneurs

through different programs. The number of women entrepreneur has been increasing over the years. It is expected that more women will be taking up entrepreneurial carrier in future. In this regard the very important requirement for the society is to respect women and their creativity.

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Deforestation in Garo Hills and its impact

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Abstract

The state was declared a full-fledged state of the Indian Union on January 21, 1972. The state of Meghalaya comprises Khasi, Garo and Jaintia hills. The scheduled tribe populations (mainly belonging to khasi, Jaintia and Garo tribes) constitute 85.53% of the total population. The Garos inhabit western Meghalaya, the Khasis central Meghalaya and the Jaintias eastern Meghalaya. This topic will be confirmed to the issue of deforestation which is considering as the major cause of degradation of environment in Meghalaya especially in East Garo Hills district. For our study we will consider both primary as well as secondary data. This research topic will deal with the objectives like, causes of deforestation, its impact on eco-system, effect on socio-economic condition, implementation of Government policies etc. According to the State of Forest Report, the actual forest cover of the state is 15,584 sq. km in 1991 which has come down to 15,584 sq.km. in 2001. This accounts for around 69.5% of the state's geographic area. Per capita forest area in the state is 0.64 hectares compared to the national average of 0.11 hectares. However, the total recorded forest area is 9,496 sq. km. The Un-classed Forests, managed by Autonomous District Councils, village durbars and other traditional institutions, and private owners cover an area of 8,372 sq. km. It has been observed that, the area under forest has been decreasing at a faster rate in the Garo Hills due to many special reasons. The shifting cultivation is one behind it, for which there is a decrease in primary productivity of natural, agro-ecosystems, loss in fertility, soil etc. Again, the number of wood-mills are also increasing and cutting the trees for sale or plup. The previous cool weather is now transforming to hotter and hotter day by day, mainly due to deforestation and it is carrying some disease to the people.

The state Meghalaya was covered out from Assam as an Autonomous state on 2nd April, 1970 following the 22nd constitutional amendment act i.e. Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Bill of 1969 and turned into a full-fledged state on 21st January, 1972. At present there are ten districts in Meghalaya. The state has an area of 22,429 Sq. K. m. with eleven number of district.

Meghalaya is predominantly an agricultural state where more than 80

percent of total population live in rural areas and depend on agricultural sector for their livelihood. The state is mainly a tribal state. The Khasis, Jaintias and Garos are the major tribes of the state. The other tribes found in the state like Rabhas, Boros, Hajongs, Kochs, Dalu etc. are minor in number. Meghalaya has recorded the highest decadal growth of 27.82% among all the seven North-Eastern states, as per the provisional report of census 2011. The

population of Meghalaya as of 2011 has been estimated at 2,964,007 of which females comprise 1,492,668 and males 1,471,339. As per the census of India 2011, the sex ratio in the state was 986 females per 1,000 males which were far higher than the national average of 940. The ratio of females has grown steadily from a 1981 level of 954 per 1,000 males. Traditionally the female sex ratio in the rural areas has been higher than that in the urban areas. However, as per the census figures for 2001, the urban female sex ratio of 985 was higher than the rural sex ratio of 972. This has often been attributed to the belief that, unlike most other parts of India, there is no special preference for male children in Meghalaya.

According to Garos tradition they came originally from Tibet and after wandering long time in North Bengal and Brahmaputra valley they finally settled down in Garo Hills. They entered to the Garo Hills under the leadership of Abong- Naga and his wife Silme-Doka and first settled at Nokrek peak, after which, they scattered to the different parts of Garo Hills to earn their livelihood from agriculture and its allied activities. Now at present there are five Garo clans, namely, Sangma, Shira, Momin, Marak and Areng; where each clan having a number of sub-clans. The Garo people have been practicing matrilineal form of society.

Socio-economic and cultural patterns

According to 2001 census, the population of the state is 2,306, 069 with a density of 103 persons per square km. The scheduled tribe populations (mainly belonging to Khasi, Jaintia and Garo tribes) constitute 85.53% of the total population. The Garos inhabit western Meghalaya, the Khasis, central Meghalaya and the Jaintias, eastern Meghalaya. In the interior of the state (excluding urban populations), the tribal population percentage increases to

97.3% in Garo hills, 77.4% in the Khasi hills and 95.1% in the Jaintia hills. The decennial growth rate (1991-2001) of the tribal elements in the population has been 29.40%. Region wise, it was 24.50% in the Garo hills; 29.50% in the Khasi hills and 36.50% in the Jaintia hills. The literacy rate is 63.31%

Political and Governance Structure

The state of Meghalaya has been divided into 7 districts. These are: East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, South Garo Hills, Ri Bhoi, and Jaintia Hills. The total number of villages in Meghalaya is 5780.

There are three Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Meghalaya. They are Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council.

Economic base

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Meghalaya. The Garos practice shifting (jhum) cultivation. They are also good fishermen but indifferent hunters. The Hajongs however, do not practice 'shifting' cultivation. The Khasi have four main types of land uses.

- (1) the forest land for jhum cultivation
- (2) wet paddy land
- (3) high grass land
- (4) homestead land which is situated close to their courtyard.

The clearing of forests across the earth has been occurring on a large scale basis for many centuries. This process, generally known as deforestation, involves the cutting down, burning, and damaging of forests. Thus deforestation refers to the loss of forest cover, land that is permanently converted from forest to agricultural land, golf courses, cattle pasture, homes, lakes, or desert. The

Food and Agriculture Organization of UN (FAO) defines tropical deforestation as, “change of forest with depletion of tree crown cover more than 90%.” Depletion of forest tree crown cover less than 90% is considered forest degradation. Logging most often falls under the category of forest degradation and thus not included in deforestation statistics. Therefore forest degradation rates are considerably higher than deforestation rates. According to Brewbaker, the total forest area of the world estimated in 1900 was about 7000 M.ha. By 1975, it was reduced to 2890 M.ha. and this trend led to about 2370 M.ha. in 2000. Deforestation is one of the major causes of environmental degradation, which is considered as a crucial problem for the human civilization as well as one of the root causes of losing biodiversity.

ENVIRONMENT

The word environment comes from the French word ‘environer’ which means ‘to surround’ or ‘to encircle’. The dictionary meaning of the word ‘environment’ is a surrounding; external conditions influencing development or growth of people, animals or plants; living or working conditions etc. Environment, is generally, equated with nature wherein physical components of the planet earth, viz. land, air, water etc. support and affect life in the biosphere. Environment can be defined as the circumstances or conditions that surround an organism or a group of organisms, or the complex of social or cultural conditions that affect an individual or community. Environment also refers to the categories of forces and influence acting upon an organism and in relation to which the organism is capable of reacting and in return influencing.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Utilization of natural resources is interaction between two systems—the

natural and human. In course of utilization, sometimes the very resource base is eroded leading to devaluation or diminution of environment, or some sort of disturbance is triggered in the ecosystem functioning and structure causing ecological imbalance. Thus environmental degradation refers to the deterioration in its physical component brought in by the deterioration in its physical component brought in by the biological processes mainly by human activities to such an extent that it cannot be set right by the self-regulatory mechanism or homeostatic mechanism of the environment. In other words, Environmental Degradation simply means overall lowering of environmental qualities because of adverse changes brought in by human activities in the basic structure of the components of the environment to such an extent that these adverse changes adversely affect all biological communities in general and human society in particular. Environmental degradation leaves direct impact on the ecology and thus causes ecological imbalances because of marked reduction in the ecosystem and ecological diversity. Both natural and human causes are responsible for environmental degradation. The major natural causes are included— floods, earthquakes, forest fires, climate changes, cyclones, storms, diseases in man, plants, animals, soil erosion and deposition by water and wind, soil salinity and landslides. But it is true that, some of these natural processes are induced or accelerated by human activities.

SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study has assumed a great significance in the form of improvement of environmental picture of Meghalaya, because there is necessary to have a proper study about its current environmental issues. Based on that urge,

this present paper is trying to deal with one basic cause of environmental degradation created by human being which is called “DEFORESTATION”. Here we are conferring our field of study with referring to GARO HILLS DISTRICTS OF MEGALAYA. The paper is dealing with the following objectives:

- i) to know about the trend of deforestation in Meghalaya as well as in the districts.
- ii) to find out various causes of deforestation
- iii) to clarify about different affect for deforestation in the environment as well as in the society.
- iv) to explain various policies adopted by the central and state government to prevent deforestation and to examine how far those policies are practically applied in the study area.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Both primary and secondary data is used in our study. The primary data are collected at the field level through interview. The secondary data are collected from census reports, annual reports, newspapers, journals, references books, various published and unpublished official and non-official documents.

FOREST AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Forest is a vast fallow tract of terrain covered with trees and Underwood. Forest includes tree lots, grasslands, fodder and fuel plantations, shelter belts, strips and avenue plantation etc.

Ecologically, forest is not the result of only trees and other plants by chance but it is a gradually developed community of complex organism with specific biological laws. Forest covers much of the planet's

land area. They are extremely important to humans and the natural world. For humans, they have many aesthetic, recreational, economic, historical, cultural and religious values. Timbers and other products of forest are important economically both locally and as exports. Forests provide employment for those who harvest the wood or products of the living forest. Other non-wood forest products come in the form of medicinal compounds, dye sand fabrics. There are many people who are dependent on forests for their livelihoods. One-third of the world's population depends on wood for fuel as a significant energy source. Some indigenous people completely depend on forest as it is their home. The forest environment provides a perfect opportunity for ecotourism, which includes hiking, camping, bird watching and other outdoor adventures or nature study activity.

FOREST COVER

According to the State of Forest Report (FSI 2001), the actual forest cover of the state is 15,584 sq. km. This accounts for around 69.5% of the state's geographic area. Per capita forest area in the state is 0.64 hectares compared to the national average of 0.11 hectares. However, the total recorded forest area is 9,496 sq. km. The area of reserved and protected forests under the control of the state government is only 1,124 sq. km. The Un-classed Forests, managed by Autonomous District Councils, village durbars and other traditional institutions, and private owners cover an area of 8,372 sq. km. During 1985-87, 73.41% (16,466 sq. km) of the total geographical area of the state was under forest cover. It decreased to 69.75% (15,645 sq. km) by the year 1987-89 and then increased to 69.48% (15584 sq. km) in 1999-2001. The forest cover in different districts is given in the following table:

Forest cover (%) in different districts of Meghalaya

Districts	Forest Cover(in %)
East Khasi Hills	35.34
West Khasi Hills	53.52
Jaintia Hills	46.13
West Garo Hills	54.45
South Garo Hills	64.11
East Garo Hills	58.38
Ri-Bhoi	50.24

Change in forest cover (sq. km) in the state since 1991 (FSI report, 1999

State	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999
Meghalaya	15,875	15,769	15,714	15,657	15,633

Source: *State of the Environment Report 2005: Meghalaya*

The forest cover of Meghalaya decreased from 1981 to 1999; it was highest during 1980-89.
53.52

FOREST RESOURCES

Besides timber, a number of non-timber forest produce including cane, bamboos, broom-grass, mushrooms, orchids, commercially important grass species, and oil yielding trees, honey and wax are extracted from the forests every year in large quantities. Important medicinal plants are found in the forests. Gums, resins, edible wild fruits and tubers and cinnamon, large cardamom are other important non-timber forest resources of the state.

FOREST OWNERSHIP

Unlike the rest of the country where forests are mostly owned by the state and managed by the state forest department, in Meghalaya substantial forest areas are under the un-classed category, and are Mixed Pine owned by private individuals, clans, village councils, district councils and other traditional community

institutions. The Autonomous District Councils control the un-classed forests of 8,503 sq. km (96%).

FOREST ADMINISTRATION

Besides the State Forest Department and Autonomous District Councils, private individuals, communities and clans own the forests in Meghalaya. The ownership rights over land and resources are further protected by the sixth schedule of Indian Constitution. The acts and rules framed by the state and national governments are therefore not applicable to such forests. The district council acts are too weakly enforced, as there are not adequate forest personnel in the district council to enforce them. Hence, most community forests are virtually under no management and do not come under the effective enforcement of any of the forest laws. Unregulated shifting cultivation by the local tribal populations has been a major

threat to forest particularly in un-classed and community forests. In spite of the efforts of many state and national agencies, a viable land-use option to shifting cultivation is yet to be found. There is a need to work out a regulatory mechanism to control over-exploitation of forests, where the landowners themselves will be legally bound to sustainable harvest and manage their own forests.

CAUSES OF DEFORESTATION

Shifting agriculture, logging, mining and other human activities have been responsible for fragmentation, destruction and degradation of the forests in the state. High rainfall and hilly terrain have further accentuated the impact of human activities

Annual area (Sq.km.) under Jhum in different districts of Meghalaya

Districts	Area (sq.km.)
East Khasi Hills	6.2
West Khasi Hills	46.19
Jaintia Hills	11.74
West Garo Hills	155.45
South Garo Hills	67.87
East Garo Hills	117.15
Ri-Bhoi	27.4

No of Population dependent on Jhum Cultivation in Meghalaya.

Districts	No of person
East Khasi Hills	3,605
West Khasi Hills	26,870
Jaintia Hills	6,830
West Garo Hills	90,430
South Garo Hills	39,500
East Garo Hills	68,150
Ri-Bhoi	21,755

Commercial logging: This is another common form of deforestation in cutting trees for sale as timber or pulp. In Garo Hills, lots of legal as well as illegal wood-mill has been increasing in recent times for

on the forest. As a result, the forests are getting fragmented into small patches. As a whole we can forward the following main reasons for deforestation in Garo Hills:

Agriculture: Most of the forest is clearing for agricultural purposes (grazing cattle, planting crops etc.) Poor farmers cut down small areas and burn the trees and proceed with agriculture. Especially the Jhum Cultivation which is mostly practiced in Garo Hills destroys forest on a large scale, sometimes destroying several square kilometers at a time. The following tables are given to explain the extent of Jhum Cultivation in the area.

which we are losing very valuable trees at a faster rate. Again, huge rate of forest are cutting down to build roads. Logging roads enable landless people to access the interiors

of the forest, which in turn results in further deforestation and poaching.

Population growth: The rapid increase of population in Garo Hills is another cause of deforestation as they are cutting the trees without limit to construct their house, to earn money to live. Here we can point out that ,the lack of social awareness and ignorance of the people is also one major cause of deforestation.

The cash crop economy: The cash crop economy is an integral part of Third World “Development and a major cause of deforestation. The best land is taken to earn export income, which is very often used to pay the foreign debt. Farmers are forced onto marginal lands, resulting in deforestation, land degradation and poverty. In Garo hills this condition is occurring for rubber plantation, orange garden, battle nut garden etc.

Mining: Mining, is also playing an significant cause of deforestation in Garo Hills. Meghalaya has an estimated coal reserve of 559 million tones, which are spread over in an area of 213.9 sq. km covering approximately 1% of the total geographical area of the state. The Garo Hills district has the highest coal reserve of 390 million tones, followed by West Khasi Hills (98 million tons), Jaintia Hills (39 million tons) and East Khasi Hills districts (31 million tons)

Natural Causes: In Garo Hills nature itself is also another cause of deforestation, as around 90% bamboo plants has spoiled within recent two years by giving flower again many varieties of plants are affected and damaged due to some unknown diseases.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF DEFORESTATION

The major effects of deforestation are:

- The continuous cutting of forest in the area results an insecure future for forest workers.
- Heavy rainfall and high sunlight quickly damage the topsoil in clearings of the tropical rainforests. In such circumstances, the forest will take much longer to re-generate and the land will not be suitable for agricultural use for quite some of time.
- Where forests are replanted, their replacement can mean a loss of quality and due to this the productivity of agricultural goods especially vegetables are decreasing and hence the prices of such items are high in Garo Hills.
- The destroying of forest in Garo Hills is a big loss of future markets for ecotourism. The value of the forest is often higher when it is left standing than it could be worth when it is harvested.
- Deforestation can cause the climate to become extreme in nature.
- It has been observed that the weather which was very soft during the summer time, now becoming hotter and hotter.
- The sudden occurrence of flood in the plain region mainly in Assam is also another major effect, which is only due to lack of water capturing capacity in the hilly areas. The heavy rain in one part and droughts in another part of the same region is also mainly due to deforestation which is affecting the economy.
- The process of deforestation in this region is destroying this unique environment. Consequently, many

animals and plants that live in the rainforests face the prospect of extinction. The extinction of the plants and animals leads to diminished gene pool. The lack of biodiversity and a reduced planetary gene pool could have many unforeseen effects, some of which could be fatal to the future of humanity.

- Since the planetary gene pool continues to diminish in Garo Hills, there are fewer opportunities for advancements in many fields. Garo hills, which is rich in local medicine, is becoming poor due to loss of certain plants that grow only in forests. Furthermore, if the forests are destroyed in this way in this area the opportunity to explore that possibility would be lost forever. The effect of that it would have on future generation is unpredictable.
- Different people have different uses of forests. Indigenous Garo people who live in the forests, the forest is their home, source of food, shelter, nourishment, recreation, culture, and lively hood. The forest provides the materials for their homes, wood for their fires, the fish, the edible plants, and many more necessities as well as amenities. There are people who see the forest as a source of money. They cut down trees and sale it at high price. In the short-run, they can make huge profits for them. If this is continued unchecked, there will be no more trees to cut down. People who make their living by cutting and selling trees will go bankrupt.
- Because of the exposure to the sun, the soil gets baked and the lack of

sunshade by trees causes the moisture to quickly evaporate into the atmosphere. Thus, previously moist soil becomes dry and cracked.

- Moisture from the oceans fall as rain and the moisture is soon sent up to the atmosphere through the transpiration of foliage to fall again on inland forest areas. This cycle repeats several times to rain on all forest regions; with the disappearance of forest this process will stop.
- Less carbon dioxide and nitrogen exchange.
- Frequent shifting from one land to the other for practicing Jhum has adversely affected the basic life support systems like vegetation and soil. The decline in the area under natural forest, the fragmentation of habitat, local disappearance of native species and invasion by exotic weeds plants are some of the ecological consequences of shifting agriculture. Due to shifting cultivation on steep slopes, down-stream siltation of the water bodies is apparent in many districts.
- Deforestation is known to contribute to increased run-off of rainfall and intensified soil erosion in the region. Landslide is very common in the area for which the communication problem arises frequently during the rainy seasons.
- There are many rewards such as clean air and clean water, perhaps the two most important, that forest provide. Forests also provide many aesthetic, recreational and cultural rewards. If the forest is destroyed,

then these rewards disappear from this region which will be the great social loss for the entire world.

GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA AND ITS POLICIES

The National Forest Policy 1988 is the guiding policy of the forest management in the state. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and JFM Guidelines, 1990, 2002 are some of the national legislations/policies that guide the management of state's forest. Other acts and rules impacting the extraction of forest produce in Meghalaya are:

- Meghalaya Forest Regulation, 1980 (Adapted from Assam Forest Regulation, 1890)
- The Garo Hills Regulation, 1882 (Regulation 1 of 1882)
- Meghalaya Forest Regulation (Application and Amendment) Act, 1973
- Meghalaya Forest (Removal of Timber) Regulation Act, 1981
- Meghalaya Tree Preservation Act, 1976
- Meghalaya Protection of Catchment Areas Act, 1988
- The Meghalaya Wild Animal and Birds Protection Act, 1971 (Act 9 of 1971)
- The Elephant Preservation Act, 1879 (VI of 1879) ,etc.

Besides, Joint Forest Management Guidelines of 2003 and Guidelines for Forest Development Agencies, 2003 have also direct impact on the sharing of usufructs and benefits out of plantation forestry.

Although there is no formal forest policy adopted yet in the state (a draft policy paper was prepared in 1980 but not yet approved), the policy of the state forest department has been to increase the forest cover of the state by discouraging and regulating the felling in all categories of forests and greening barren areas which are under the constitutional jurisdiction of the District Councils. Attempts are also being made to streamline the administration of the forest and forestland under a single umbrella christened as 'unified control and management of the forests' of District Councils and the state forest department. Many rounds of discussions have taken place between the authorities of the District Council and the state government but there has been tangible result yet. Besides, it is also the intention of the department to create village reserve forests all over the state, in the same manner as the erstwhile village forests established by the people themselves during the pre-British period.

The existing Assam Forest Regulation adopted by the state as the Meghalaya Forests Regulation is far from adequate to achieve the aims and objectives of the policy. Therefore, a few other acts have been legislated like the Meghalaya Removal of Timber Regulation Act, the Meghalaya Tree Preservation Act etc. The Meghalaya Tree Preservation Act was legislated with the prima facie objective of preventing the felling of trees within a radius of 10 km from the heart of Shillong. There is also an enabling provision to extend the same to the other district headquarters. However, the enforcement of the provisions of most of the Acts has been far from satisfactory.

Normally, as per provision of the Sixth schedule of the constitution of India, it is not possible for the State Government to interfere with the administration of forests in

the Sixth scheduled areas. But through separate legislation, the State Government acts and rules can supersede the existing District Councils Acts also. Therefore, to discourage the felling of small trees in the District Council areas, the Acts attempt to regulate the marketing of the forest produce outside the state. This has been done based upon the logic that about 80 per cent of the timbers extracted from these forests go outside the state and the people of the state utilize hardly 20 per cent. Likewise, to conserve and preserve the forests in the critical catchment areas of the important rivers of the state, it is contemplated to legislate an Act, which will ban tree felling in these forests.

District Council Forest Acts

The District Councils have legislated separate forest acts and rules more or less in line with and in the same pattern as that of the State Forest Regulation. The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council Forest Act, 1958 are applicable in their respective jurisdictions. Unfortunately, this provision of the Acts could not be enforced and implemented in the true sense of the term. The Acts are self-contained with all the relevant desirable provisions, but the enforcement is not satisfactory. As a result of this, these forests have been subjected to indiscriminate felling during the last four decades.

Traditional Community Forest Laws

Most of the acts and laws passed by the Govt. of India, Govt. of Meghalaya and Autonomous District Councils remained less effective in managing the forests of the state. Contrary to this, the traditional institutions such as Nokmaship have been forceful and effective till recently in managing the forests under their jurisdiction following customary laws.

Supreme Court Orders

In addition to the above policies, rules and acts, the supreme court orders (dated 12 December, 1996, 15 January, 1998 and 12 May, 2001) have direct or indirect relevance to the forests, shifting cultivation and biodiversity conservation in Meghalaya.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF DEFORESTATION

Deforestation is a serious problem, but humans can make a difference. An individual as well as a society can practice green consumerism. The following actions could serve as effective solutions to the problem of deforestation.

- Reduce the consumption of forest and related products.
- Avoid harmful products by consumer boycotts, such as tropical rainforest wood, old-growth wood from the tropical rainforest.
- Boycott products of companies involved in deforestation.
- Compel government and industry to make changes in the forest policies.
- Individuals may communicate their uncertainty about the future of the world's forests to politicians, corporate executives and non-governmental organizations through personal communication or in groups using petitions and rallies.
- Environmental conservation may be given importance in school curricula.

None of these activities can occur without the raising of public awareness to inform consumers about the environmental effects of their products. One of the most important ways for a person to have a positive effect is to reduce his or her consumption of forest and related products. An increase in the participation of the public

and the availability of facilities for reducing, reusing and recycling is necessary.

Education is one of the most effective catalysts for change. Society should undertake to educate the people of today to change their ways and the younger generations to have respect for nature. In forest regions, the young people should receive knowledge about the biological, social and economic values of forests. Workers should be taught to use technology to enhance forest ecosystems instead of destroying them and for reforestation and afforestation projects. If humans are able to see themselves as part of nature, they will

also respect forests as living communities, not just resources to be exploited.

There are indigenous people who have lived in the forests for a long time. They have managed to use the forests sustainably while practicing shifting cultivation or hunting and gathering. Some of them still live in relative isolation in the forests. Human kind should protect their rights and preserve their cultures. They should be models for sustainability in the future. Indigenous people can show us what forest products to use and how to use them properly. They deserve to continue their ways of life.

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Poetical Noises of a Novelist's Heart: A Study of James Joyce as a Poet

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Abstract

James Joyce, who is mostly celebrated for his novels such as A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, also composed poetry. Two existing volumes of his poems are Poems Penyeach and Chamber Music. Although we are not likely to find in Joyce's poetry the artistic grace of his fiction, his poems are of much significance in the sense that they help us to explore Joyce, the artist as well as Joyce, the man. He seems to unlock his heart through his poems. They are saturated with his emotions and desires, frustrations and anger, disappointments and disillusion. Joyce himself conceived of his poems as musical noises interpreting moods. He used his poems as an escape from the literalism of his meticulously detailed and precisely accurate exposition of the ordinary; in them he records his yearnings and his transient states of feeling. They are mood music. The present paper intends to study various aspects of Joyce's poetry.

James Joyce composed poetry during his whole life, and especially in his early years. A good deal of it was comic and satirical; he was expert at composing limericks and scurrilous rhymes about his friends and enemies; theses are dotted throughout his correspondence. For instance, he vented his spleen against Sir Horace Rumbold (whom he called Sir Whorearse Rumhole) not only by making him write the illiterate hangman's letter in *Ulysses* (301) but in the following parody of Browning's "Pippa Passes":

"The Right Man in the
Wrong Place"

The pig's in the barley,
The fat's in the fire:

Old Europe can hardly
Find two pence to buy her.
Jack Spratt's in his office,
Puffed, powdered and curled:
Rumbold's in Warsaw –
All's right with the world.

(1-8)

Two longer and meatier satirical poems than such squibs as this are printed as a makeweight in the present Faber edition of *Pomes Penyeach*. They are "The Holy Office" of 1904 and "Gas from a Burner" of 1912. These are probably his best poems; they are lively, witty and well-managed attacks on people who had annoyed or injured him.

The title of “The Holy Office” betrays Joyce's anti-clericalism, but the poem's target is the 'mumming company' of Irish writers who were engaged in a resurgence of drama, poetry and novels in the Dublin that he was resolved to leave. According to him, they indulged in 'dreamy dreams'— which is a reference not only to the twilight Celtic legends that Yeats immersed himself in, but also to Yeats's mystical interests (as expounded in *A Vision*) and George Russell (A.E.)'s theosophy. Joyce attacked them for ignoring the physical side of life and, like his own Gerty MacDowell (*Ulysses* 357), thinking only in romantic and spiritual terms:

But all these men of whom I
speak
Make me the sewer of their
clique.
That they may dream their
dreamy dreams
I carry off their filthy streams
.....
.
Thus I relieve their timid
arses,
Perform my office of
Katharsis. (“The holy office,”
47-50, 55-6)

Of course, this is the 'holy office' that he means in the title; and the purging (katharsis) is performed in a domestic office furnished with a hole.

[Whatever truth there may have been in Joyce's ascription of spiritual bloodlessness to the poems of the early Yeats – such as “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” or “Had I the heaven's embroidered cloths”- it must be remembered that the later Yeats brought the physical side of love fully into consciousness in such lines as: “. . . Love has pitched his mansion in / The place of excrement” (“Crazy Jane Talks With The Bishop” 15-6).]

Secondly, and probably more biting, he regarded their whole woolly philosophy as soft-centred, lacking in intellectual rigour. They shamle, crouch, crawl and pray, whereas he stands erect, boldly challenging all comers like a stage on a mountain-ridge; they have “. . . souls that hate the strength that mine has / Steeled in the school of old Aquinas” (“The holy office,” 81-2).

This mixture of Byronic self-doomed pride, mark of all romantic Cains, and intellectual arrogance, is one of the dominant features of Joyce's character. The last two lines [“And though they spurn me from their door / My soul shall spurn them evermore.” (95-6)], which were written in the heat of the very moment when he was leaving Ireland, make an interesting contrast with the calmer rationalization that he expressed when he looked back on Stephen Dedalus ten years later: “I go to... forge in the smithy of my soul, the uncreated conscience of my race” (*A Portrait* 196).

“Gas from a Burner” he wrote in a rage when the publisher who has signed a contract to publish *Dubliners* seemed finally to refuse to do so (Grose 18). It is a very funny but not greatly significant poem. It is written in the first person, as if by Roberts the publisher, who boasts of how broadminded he really is, having published many *avant-garde* works; but he cannot allow Joyce —“that bloody fellow, / That was over here dressed in Austrian yellow” (49-50) — to bring into disrepute the name of Ireland:

This lovely land that always sent
Her writers and artists to banishment,
And in a spirit of Irish fun
Betrayed her own leaders, one by one.
(15-8)

The end is masterly. Roberts says:

I'll burn that book, so help me devil
.....
The very next Lent I will unbare
My penitent buttocks to the air

And sobbing beside my printing press
My awful sin I will confess.
My Irish foreman from Bannockburn
Shall dip his right hand in the urn
And sign crisscross with reverent thumb
Memento homo upon my burn.

(“Gas from a Burner” 86, 91-8)

This is not the James Joyce of his serious poems, collected in *Chamber Music* (1970) and *Pomes Penyeach* (1927). The only feature the scurrilous poems share with these is the technical excellence of the verse. The lyrics seem to come from a completely different pen, the pen which wrote the precious pale effusion that Stephen Dedalus composed in *A Portrait*. This is a villanelle, an example of a form which requires great dexterity to its two rhymes and two alternating refrains:

Are you not weary of ardent ways,
Lure of the fallen seraphim?
Tell no more of enchanted days.
(*A Portrait* 172)

The obvious characteristics of this poem are its abundance of highly-coloured incense-laden words such as seraphim, Eucharistic, and chalice, and a concentration on liquid phrases of small significance: ‘languorous look and lavish limb’, for instance.

Of course one can dismiss this technically accomplished poem as a prentice effort, and say that Joyce is looking mockingly if still affectionately at the callow youth who produced it. But *chamber Music* abounds with lights of amethyst, night wind answering in antiphon, reverie, sweet bosom, light attire, virginal mien, welladay, zone, snood, cherubim, ancient plenilune, epithalamium, grey and golden gossamer, soft tumult of thy hair, tremulous, divers treasures, witchery, soft choiring of delight, the waters’ monotone. Well, you might argue that *Chamber Music* dates from the same period of Joyce’s development as *A Portrait*, so is bound to share its poetical

style. But *Pomes Penyeach*, put out by Joyce in his full maturity six years after *Ulysses* was finished, abounds equally in love-blown bannerets, shy sweet lures (as in the villanelle of Stephen), moondew, lambent water, thurible, laburnum tendrils and seraphim. Joyce therefore conceived of his poems as musical noises interpreting moods; the man who wrote the Verlainesque lines:

All day I hear the noise of waters
Making moan
Sad as the seabird is when going
Forth alone
He hears the winds cry to the waters’
Monotone.

(*Chamber Music* xxxv 1-6)

is the composer of the miraculous ‘Sirens’ chapter (XI) of *Ulysses*.

But he is also the mocking concocter of the romantic sugariness that opens the ‘Nausicaa’ chapter (XIII) in the words of Gerty MacDowell, devotee of women’s trashy magazines (Grose 105). There is thus a paradox. Joyce wrote these swooning lyrics, expended much time and artistry on perfecting them, launched them into a cold world with every appearance of satisfaction at the same time he denigrated their style and manner by calling one little book *Chamber Music*, which could be and indeed was a reference to the sound of water falling into a bedroom utensil, and the other *Pomes Penyeach*, a possibly mock-modest assertion that they were not worth very much—and he even offered a “Tilly”, a little extra one, to give the customer thirteen, baker’s dozen, for the demanded shilling, or twelve pence of the purchase price.

The plain fact is that by our tastes today, in the post-Pound-and-Eliot era, these poems are empty exercises in factitious emotion-mongering. They are as soft-centred as anything written by the ‘decadent’ nineties poets or the Georgians, with their ripe sentiment, their hazy imagery and hazy rhythms, and their reliance on the mesmerizing power of ‘poetical’ words:

Meadows of England, shining in the rain,
Spread wide your daisied lawns
(Rupert Brooke, "Brumana" 2-3)

Or

Let me go forth, and share
The overflowing Sun
With one wise friend, or one
Better than wise, being fair
(William Watson, "Ode to May" 1-4)

It was Ezra Pound who made the
youthful T.S. Eliot focus his images
precisely, and so changed the course of
English poetry:

Remark the cat which flattens itself in
the gutter,
Slips out its tongue
And devours a morsel of rancid butter.

(T.S. Eliot, "Rhapsody on a
Windy Night" 35-7)

And oddly enough it was Ezra Pound who
'discovered' James Joyce through reading the
last poem of *Chamber Music*, "I hear an
Army charging upon the land". This poem
does present a hard violent image, and could
well at first be taken as an Imagist poem,
like those of Wyndham Lewis or Richard
Aldington, who were heading the new
movement; then in the last two lines it tries
to tie the image to the mood of the
despairing love-lorn poet. It is, however,
very different from the others in the book,
which all seem to lack energy. If Joyce was
to be a leader of any literary revolution, it
was clearly not to be through his lyrical
poems. As Anthony Powell says (in
Encounter, February 1973), talking of
Picasso:

One cannot help wondering whether
violent experiment was not vital for
Picasso, to avoid becoming trapped in
personal emotions less profound than
his actual skill as a painter. A parallel
might possibly be drawn with Joyce,
fleeing from his earlier naturalism, in
order to save himself from the
artificiality and elaboration of the late

19th century. This may be seen in *A
Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
where . . . occur pomposities of
phrasing that nothing short of *Ulysses*
would cure. In somewhat the same
manner did Picasso turn to Cubism,
Africa, and all the experiments that
followed, to control an innate
sentimentality and romanticism.
(Grose 47)

Joyce did indeed use his poems as an
escape from the literalism of his
meticulously detailed and precisely accurate
exposition of the ordinary, in them he
records his yearnings and his transient states
of feeling. They are mood music.

If *Chamber Music* is read
continuously from the beginning, a sequence
of moods can be felt. Rather like some
romantic cycles of songs (Schumann's
Frauenliebe und Leben or Tennyson's
Maud, for example), they pass from early
love, possibly through marriage or
consummations, to desertion and despair.
The story is not explicitly told, each poem
can be read as a separate expression of
emotion. Their outstanding virtue is the
extreme delicacy of the verse. The words are
chosen for their subtle sound, and there are
close associations with the scriptures,
especially the Song of Solomon, and with
Shakespeare and the English madrigalists, as
well as with contemporary poetical swoony
language.

Pomes Penyeach do not make up a
whole. They are short lyrics, very like the
earlier poems in style and content, but they
appear to be celebrating events, significant
moments or moods in Joyce's life. "She
weeps over Ragoon", for example, is about
Nora Joyce's first love who had died young
(Grose 23). Another lyric ("A Flower Given
to My Daughter") talks of a flower given to
his daughter Lucia, and seems with
hindsight to foreshadow the mental and

spiritual troubles that were to beset her (Grose 17). “On the Beach at Fontana” enshrines a moment of loving fear for his son Giorgio. Others refer to nothing identifiable, but all are short and poignant in expression, and clearly meant much to the poet, even if they communicate little to us beyond a vague gush of feeling encapsulated in an image that relies rather on sound than sense. One short lyric printed in the present Faber edition is supernumerary to the original baker’s dozen: it tells of the near coincidence of the death of Joyce’s father with the birth of his grandson, and ends with a prayer for his father’s forgiveness—

probably for deserting Ireland and for not offering the willing financial support that his father had hoped James’s brilliant career as a doctor or professor would provide.

A child is sleeping:
An old man gone.
O, father forsaken,
Forgive your son!

(“Ecce Puer,” 13-6)

Coincidentally, the best poem— at least the hardest and most vital – among the thirteen in *Pomes Penyeach* is the “Tilly” that begins the collection, which refers to the death many years before of his mother.

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Selected poems of Yeats : close reading in the perspective of their impact on Jibanananda Das' poetic self

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Abstract

Literature embodies universal aspect of mankind. Man is the centre; Nature is the guiding force. The co-relation between Man and Nature speaks of the essence of elemental unity. W.B. Yeats and Jibanananda Das are the exponents of this essential unity. Their poetic visions appear to spring from an identical imaginative power. The result is a sense of likeness between them in terms of poetic vigour and poetic thought process. This likeness is, of course, creative. Their certain poems echo one another cutting across the geographical distance between India and Ireland. In the Irish context, W.B. Yeats, a great modern English poet, is significant in any study that seeks to examine the circuits of cultural relationships within societies having an unequal relationship as between England and Ireland. It was under the influence of John O'Leary, Lady Gregory, Douglas Hyde, Maud Gonne and some others that Yeats developed an interest in Irish nationalism and went through Irish patriotic literature. This opened up for him an Ireland rich in myths and legends. Jibanananda Das, a great modern Bengali poet, can be related in this purview of the study. Both Yeats and Das saw their respective nations as colonies of the British imperialism. So there was an apparent common situation between these two nations. The poems of both Das and Yeats tended to be somewhat moulded by myths and legends. Both extract their essential imageries for their poems from respective myths and folklores. Moreover, the knowledge of history and the cultural heritage of the respective country widen the scope of their poetic imagination and outlook which enables them to recreate past glory and contemporary landscape. However, Das, unlike Yeats, appeared to be disinterested in contemporary political movements. Nevertheless, a sense of nationalism pervaded their poems. In Yeats' case, it was the fusion of both political and cultural; in Das' case, it was mere cultural, more akin to the aspects of Nature. Being a lecturer of English, Das might have been well versed in Yeats' poetry. In the process, Yeats' poetry holds an impact upon the poetry of Das.

W.B. Yeats is one of the greatest modern English poets. His verses are well-read worldwide cutting across all barriers of dissimilar and strange weather, climate, history, culture and tradition. The wave of

the impact of his poetry spatters on even Bengali literature. Jibanananda Das, among other Bengali poets, relishes the gusto of Yeats' poetic vigour and fervour. In the process, Yeats appears to be a brightening

star in the firmament of Das' poetic art. Yeats' poems appear to exercise a considerable impact this way or the other on the growth of Jibanananda Das as a poet. A close reading of some selected poems of Yeats pinpoint the impression of this impact on Das' poetic self, albeit Das holds an individualistic credentials as a great poet himself. Das was a student and a lecturer as well, of English literature. He came closer to Yeats' poetic world very early in his life. He was awe-struck to find how masterly Yeats exhibited the rural landscape coloured by myths, legends and folklores especially in his earlier poems. Das conspicuously transmitted that poetic spirit into his own verses but in tune of Bengal's rural surroundings and tradition. Yeats discerning eyes catch:

“O hurry where by
water among the trees
The delicate-stepping
stag and his lady sigh,
When they have but
looked upon their images—
Would none had ever
loved but you and I”
[The Rugged Wood :
In The Seven Woods]

Das sketches a similar kind of picture in his poem *Camp, Dhusor pandulipi*. Autumn was favourite with both the great poets. Autumn was the season frequented in the verses of both poets. Yeats finds in autumn :

“The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.
[The Wild Swans at Coole]

Das incorporates imagination into reality in the realm of autumn in his poem *Haas, Saat-ti Tarar Timir*. Yeats again plays

with autumn, this time, with colour, leaves and mice in the poem, ‘The Falling of the Leaves’ :

“Autumn is over the long leaves that love us,
And over the mice in the barley sheaves;
Yellow the leaves of the rowan above us,
And yellow the wet wild-strawberry leaves.”

Even in Yeats' love poem like ‘The White Birds’ [The Rose] and Das' *Ami Jodi Hotam*, [Banalata Sen], both voices echo one another. Yeats' lover contemplates :

“ I would that we were, my
beloved, white birds on the foam of the sea
We tire of the flame of the
meteor, before it can fade and flee;
And the flame of the blue star
of twilight, hung low on the rim of
the sky,
Has awakened in our hearts,
my beloved, a sadness that may not
die.”

Both poems appear identical in the canvas of images; but visions are somewhat different; where Yeats' poem is love-oriented, Das' is an attempt to come out from the anguish of life. Yeats' Nature is all-embracing of colour, fragrance, grace and flavour; the same is the case with Das' Nature; but in Das' case, it possesses an added variety in the sphere of elaborate manifestation of different aspects of Nature. The affliction of life at times drives him to the fancy world and his inner voice laments :

“*Ami jodi hotam banahangsa
Banahangsi hote jodi tumi,
Kuno ek diganter jalsiri nadir dhare
Dhanksheter kache
Chhipchipe sharer bhiton—
Ek nirala nirey ;*”

Das' voice thus sounds more romantic at heart divorced from the harsh ways of the world. Love remains an irrelevant aspect in his life shrouded in some kind of mystery. He rather idealizes love in his verses. But

due to his masterly presentation coupled with artistic imagination, nowhere and never in the poem his mute on love in his personal life is felt. Both 'The White Birds' and *Ami Jodi Hotam* in the process speak of the flight into a dreamy land, of course with a woman who ensures some kind of serenity and peace of mind. In 'On Woman' [The Wild Swans At Coole], Yeats reflects on woman's bountiful nature and generosity :

"May God be praised for woman
That gives up all her mind,
A man may find in no man
A friendship of her kind
That covers all he has brought
As with her flesh and bone,
Nor quarrels with a thought
Because it is not her own."

Das in the similar tone reinforces the positive impact of woman on mankind in *Mitabhasan, Banalata Sen* :

"Tumar saundarya nari, atiter daner matan
Madhyasagarer kalo taranger theke
Dharmashuker sposto ahobbaner moto
Amader niye jai deke
Shantir sangher dike-dharme-nirbane;
Tumar mukhe snigdha pratibhar paane"
Passion

strikes both poets when the chosen woman is cast away beyond time and space ; as is in the case of Yeats' persona :

"She was more beautiful than thy first love,
But now lies under boards."

[A Dream of Death : The Rose]

Das feels in the similar vein in *Saptak, Saat ti tarar timir* :

"Aikhane Sarojini suye ache, jani na se
aikhane
Suye ache kina
Onek hoyeche suya;-- tarpor ekdin chole
geche
Kuno door meghe"

It is quite interesting to find how alike both poets feel and think under the varied surroundings. Their poetic spirits crossing the barrier of time and space seem

to sing a somewhat similar song as far their thought process is concerned. Love once departs life ; only the memory of moments is left. Yeats speaks out :

'Your eyes that once were never weary of mine
Are bowed in Sorrow under pendulous lids,
Because our love is waning.'

And then she:

'Although our love is waning, let us stand
By the lone border of the lake once more,
Together in that hour of gentleness'

[Ephemera : Crossways]

Das too declares with his heart out in *Aghran Pantare, Banalata Sen* :

"Jani tumar du-chokh aaj amake khuje na aar
Prithibir pore –
Bole chup thaklam, keballi ashwathpata pore
ache ghaser bhitore
Shukno miyano chhera;--aghran aseche aaj
prithibir bone;"

This familiar tone is also echoed in Das' poem, *Dujan, Banalata Sen* :

"Amake khujo na tumi bahudin
– kotodin amio tumake
Khuji nako; ek nakshetrer niche tobu
– eki alo prithibir paare
Amora dujone achi; ..."

Das sings of love whose mighty passion succumbs to time at the end of day as is recorded in the poem named *Prem, Dhusar Pandulipi* :

"Ekdin – ek raat korechi premer saathe khela
Ekraat – ekdin korechi mrirtur abohela
Ekdin – ekraat; -- tarpor prem chole geche, --
Sobai choliya jai, -- sokolere jete hoi bole
Taharou furalo raat –
taratari pore gelo bela
Premerou je ..."

Yeats, before Das, urges somewhat identical feelings in his 'The Rose of the World' :

"Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam
And Usna's children died."

Both poets believe in the transitoriness of glory on earth under the changing phase of time. Yeats proclaims in 'Easter 1916' :

"Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly ;
A terrible beauty is born."

Poet Das looks back to history and finds man's constant struggle often overlooked and not rewarded. In *Jotodin Prithibite, Bela Obela Kaalbela*, Das reflects :

"*Itihas der din proman koreche
Manusher nirantar proyaner mane
Hoito- ba andhakar samayer theke
Bishrinkhal samajer pane
Chole jaoa;*"

This *Bishrinkhal* or disorder also clouds Yeats' perception :

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,"
[The Second Coming]

Yeats masterly conveys the elaborate image of disorder in 'Reconciliation' [The Green Helmet and Other Poems] :

Some may have blamed you that you took away
The verses that could move them on the day
When, the ears being deafened, the sight of the eyes
blind

With lightning, you went from me, and I could find
Nothing to make a song about but kings,
Helmets, and swords, and half-forgotten things
That were like memories of you – but now
We'll out, for the world lives as long ago;"

Das reproduces the similar idea with a passionate mood in *Janantike, Saat ti Tarar Timir*:

"*Tumake dekhar moto chokh nei – tobu
Gabhir bissaye ami ter pai – tumi
Aajo aei prithibite roye gecho
Kothao santana nei prithibite aaj;
Bahudin theke shanti nei
Nir nei
Pakhiro moton kuno hridayer tore
Pakhi nei*"

Ireland during Yeats' time underwent bloodshed at the cost of humanity

and liberty. Yeats is both a political and cultural nationalist simultaneously. The Easter Rising in 1916 left a mark in his agitated mind :

"Now days are dragon – ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep : a drunken soldiery
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door
To crawl in her own blood, and scot-free;
The night can sweat with terror as before
We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
And planned to bring the world under a rule,
Who are but weasels fighting in a hole."
[Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen : The Tower]

Das, though not a political man, was set back by the worldwide uncertainty, economic crisis, loss of values, etc. conditioned by the two world wars. His humanitarian outlook could not ask for any explanation but cries out :

"*A bikel manush na machider gunjaranmoi
Jugey jugey manusher addhyabasai
Oporer sujuger moto mone hoi
Quisling banano ki nij naam
– Hitler saat kanakori
Diye taha kine niye hoye gelo lal :
Manusheri haate tobu manush hoteche najehal;
Prithibite nei kuno bishudda chakari
A kemon paribeshe roye gechi sobe --
[Sristir Teere : Saat ti Tarar Timir]*

Poet Das possesses a sense of history. His poetic mind visits the landscape of history and comes across places like Kashi, Taxashila, Ujjayini, Agra, Delhi and so. In Yeats' poems too, myth, folklore and history are merged into one. Yeats in his 'Sailing to Byzantium' recounts :

"Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium."

Das too traverses the India of bygone ages. In *Banalata Sen*, one comes across such beautiful and immortal poetic lines :

"*Hazar bachar dhore ami path hatitechi
prithibir pothe,
Singhal samudra theke nishither andhakaare
malay sagare*

Onek ghurechi ami; Bimbisar Ashoker dhusar jagate

Sekhane chhilam ami; aro door andhakare Bidharva nagare;"

History is for both poets the guide to the evolution of mankind. It reflects the growth of civilization. In this regard, Yeats takes 'towers' and 'stairs' as symbols of the progress of civilization :

"Alexandria's was a beacon-tower, and Babylon's

An image of the moving heavens, a log-book of
The sun's journey and the moon's ...

I declare this tower is my symbol; I declare
This winding, gyring, spiring treadmill of a stair
Is my ancestral stair;"

[Blood and the Moon :

The Winding Stair and Other Poems]

Even Das takes up the image of the winding stairs in particular and stairs in general in his poem, *Manusher Mrittu Holey* :

"Ekdin nagarir ghurano sirir path beye

...
Sei siri ghure prai nilimar gaye giye laage;

Siri udhasito kore rodh;

Siri dhore oopore uthar pothe aarekrakam

Batas o aaloker asa-jaoa sthir kore ki osadharan

Premar proyan ?"

Yeats and Das in some of their poems sound identical. Yeats' 'He Reproves the Curlew' and Das' *Hi chil* are true exponents of idiosyncrasies of Nature articulated almost in a similar fashion. Yeats' speaker, a keen observer, addresses --

"O Curlew, cry no more in the air,
Or any to the water in the west;

Because your crying brings to my mind
Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair
That was shaken out over my breast:

There is enough evil in the crying of wind."

Das addresses in the similar vein :

*"Hi chil, sonali danar chil, aei bhiye meghe dupure
Tumi aar kedo nako ure ure dhansiri naditir pashe!
Tumar kannar soore betar fuler moto tar mlaan
chokh mone aase!"*

But the tone in Yeats' poem is subjective, while that in Das' poem is, to a more extent,

objective. The eyes of both the *chil* and the curlew are filled with tears. The *chil* cries flying across the river named *Dhansiri* while the curlew cries flying close to the watery place of the west. Both birds create melancholic atmospheres. Das digs relatively more into the mystery of nature ending up appealing to universal strokes of pain and pessimism, thanks to his objective approach. But both poems can be placed closer to one another as both reminisce the bygone love set in a rural background. Both Yeats and Das made an extensive use of images and metaphors. Dews, moon, stars, river, sky etc. make up of images in Das' verses. Das might have got an impetus from Yeats in drawing such images. In Yeats' 'The Valley of the Black Pig'—

"The dew drops slowly and dreams
gather; unknown spears

Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened
eyes."

The image of dew also revisits in Yeats' another poem entitled "He tells of the Perfect Beauty" —

"And therefore my heart will bow, when dew
Is dropping sleep,"

The image of 'dew' appears in such line from "He gives his Beloved Certain Rhymes" —

"And stars climbing the dew-dropping sky"
Live but to light your passing feet."

In Das' poems dew is a recurring image. In his famous poem entitled *Banalata Sen*, we come across such line :
"*samasta diner sese sisirer sabder moton / sandha ase*". The poem '*Kuri Bachar Pore*' beautifully picks up the image of dew, "*Sonali sonali chil—sisir sikar kore niye geche tare/ Kuri basarer pore sei kuasai pai jodi hothat tumare.*" In *Howar Raat* one comes across such majestic poetic line, "*Andhokar raate...samasta nakshatrera.*" Another poem, *Shikar* presents a canvas of dawn where the image of dew pervades, "*Sokaler aaloy toltol sisirer... jilmil*

korche." In *Maather Golpo* one can glimpse,
 " *Prothom fasal geche ghore--/Hemanter
 maathe- maathe jhore/ Sudhu sisirer jol.*"
 The dew-drop is marked in the poem,
 'Abosorer Gaan', " *Charidike nuye
 pore...sisirer jol;*"

Stars play important roles in
 canvassing picturesque gallery in the verses
 of both poets. Yeats writes :

"And then I must scrub and bake and sweep
 Till stars are beginning to blink and peep,"

[The Song of the Old
 mother : The Wind among the Reeds]

Yeats loves to play the image of stars in the
 wilderness, "Until the axle break/ That
 keeps the stars in their round." The poem
 named 'The Dawn' brings out both images
 of 'moon' and 'stars' together : " From their
 pedantic Babylon/ The Careless planets in
 their courses,/ The stars fade out where the
 moon comes". Poet Jibanananda Das is
 outstanding when it comes to image-
 painting. The galaxy of stars comes alive in
 his poem named *Howar Raat*. The galaxy is
 conditioned by history, astronomy, love,
 nature altogether, thereby, bringing about an
 overwhelming creative picture, that speaks
 of Das' range of creative imagination and
 artistic skill :

" *Swati tarar kul gheshe nil howar
 samudrer sada boker moto urche se*

Kaal amon chomotkar raat chhilo

*Samasta mrito nakshatrara kaal jege
 uthechilo—akashe ek til faak chilo na;*

*Prithibir samsta dhusar priyo
 mritoder mukho sei nakshatrer bhitore
 dekhechi ami;*

*Andhokar raate aswather churai
 premik chilpuruser sisir bheja chokher moto*

Jolmol korchilo samasta nakshatrera;

Je nakshatrera akasher booke nazar

hazar bachar aage morey giyeche

Tarao kaal janalar bhitore diye

asankhya mrito akash sange kore aneche;"

Star is a favourite image with poet Das. It is
 frequently revisited in his verses. In his
Nirjon Sakshar, a precise simile comes out :

" *Bahirer akasher shitey*

Nakshatrer hoiteche kshoi,

Nakshatrer matan hridoy

Poriteche jhore-- "

Through such images Das creates a romantic
 world. In *Koekti line, Dhusar Pandulipi*, a
 beautiful delicate world is visible, " *Jekhane
 samasta raatri nakshatrer aalo pore jhore,/*
samudrer howai bhesse aase,/gaan gai
sindhu tar joler ullase." His another poem
Suranjana exhibits : " *mone pore kobe ek*
tarabhora raater batase/ dharmasukher
chhele Mahendrar saathe "

Poet Das, being younger to Yeats
 separated by some thirty four years, might
 have been an ardent reader of Yeats' poems
 and inspired by them and have taken some
 poetic lessons all by himself at the end of
 the day. He had unmistakably love for
 Nature. He absorbed its colour, flavour,
 grace and its serenity. His frustration with
 life contributed to his intensifying adherence
 to nature. The uncertainty over his personal
 life and poetic recognition as well, coupled
 with severe criticism of his poetry, turned
 his interest towards his sense of unification
 with nature's bountiful resource. He escaped
 into the lap of nature— the world of
 tranquillity and seclusion-- away from the
 madding crowd. His continual bonding with
 nature gave him an impetus to delve deep
 into the complexity of human life. He came
 back, with an added vigour and persistence,
 to human society once he had escaped from.
 He made a bid to fight all that shook him
 earlier by virtue of an acquired passion,
 feelings and sympathy derived from all-
 inclusive Nature. His deep love for nature,
 in turn, gave birth to his genuine love for
 mankind :

" *Ami jhore jabo, tobu jiban agaadh*

Tumare rakhibe dhore seidin prithibir pore

Amar sakol gaan tobu-o tumare laksha kore

... ..
... .. *kuno ek manushir mone*
Kuno ek manusher tore

Je jinis beche thake hridayer gobhir ghobbore—
Nakshatrer cheye aro nishabdo asone
Kuno ek manusher tore ek manushir mone”

[Nirjan Sakshar: Dhusar Pandulipi]

A poet is an individual with all his idiosyncrasies and mindsets different from another poet. Despite some apparent identical poetic elements between them, dissimilarities are not lesser and negligible. But when it comes to image-building in a poetic world, both poets seem to live under the same climate and weather . There are some instances in the following :

“Where mouse-grey waters are flowing.
“*Ne-ul dhusar nadi apnea kaaj buje*
probahita ho!”
“Your eyes
Are bowed in sorrow under pendulous lids,”
“*Pakhir nirer moto chokh tule*
natorer Banalata Sen”

“O curlew, cry no more in the air,
Or only to the water in the west;
“*Hai chil, sonali danar chil, aei bhije meghe dupure*
Tumi aar kedo nako ure ure dhansiri naditir paashe”

“... .. a bat rose from the hazels
And circled round him with its squeaky cry,”
“*Ekti badur dur soparjito jyotsnai manishai deke diye*
jai
Jahader kotodur chakrabaal ache labhibar”

“... .. the mice in the barley sheaves”
“*Idur sheeter rate reshamer moto roome*
maakhiyache khud”

Amidst the apparently similar kind of imageries employed by both poets, subtle difference can not be overlooked :

“The cat went here and there
And the moon spun round like a top,
And the nearest kin of the moon,
The creeping cat, looked up.”

[The Cat and the

Moon : The Wild Swans At Coole]

“*Hemanter sandhai jafran ranger suryer*
sharire

Shaada thaba buliye khela korte dekhlam take”
[Beral : Banalata Sen]

Yeats’ ‘cat’ roams close to the moon quietly and Das’ cat plays with its *thaba* or paw under the saffron light of the evening sun. Thus poet Das tends to get a clue from his great Irish predecessor and then makes it his own, keeping tune with Bengal’s landscape and tradition, thanks to his artistic creativity.

The genesis of Das being akin to Yeats’ poetic fervour may be attributed to his vast knowledge of English literature. He belongs to a period when Tagore’s romanticism does not correspond to modern poetry to which contemporary Bengali poets can adhere. So they are bound to look outside. Das himself confesses in his treatise *Kobitar kotha* that they are born in a period and in a culture as well that they have no option but to derive inspirations from European literature for language and themes corresponding to modern poetry. Yeats and Eliot appear to be torch-bearers for them. However, Yeats’ poetry appeals to Das’ imagination. Yeats depicts an Ireland imbued with great landscapes and Nature’s variety. Yeats is a nationalist. More than a political nationalist he is basically a cultural nationalist. His earlier works were written with a mission of reviving great Irish cultural heritage which was, to a larger extent, spoiled and damaged by the British imperialist strategy. Thus Irish mythological figures and landscapes came alive in his poetic pages. Besides, his infatuation with occultism and magic coloured his earlier poems. All these elements play key notes in drawing images in Yeats’ poems that may catch the psyche of Das whose poems delineate images corresponding to the rural Bengal’s landscapes :

“*Charidike uchu uchu ulaban ghaser bichana*
Onek samai dhore chup theke hemanter jol

*Protipanna hoye geche je samaye nilakash bole
Sudure naarir kule takhan haaser dalbal*

...
Naiti amal haas nadite royeche mone pore"

[Haas : Saat ti Tarar Timir]

The image reminds of Yeats' 'The Wild Swans at Coole' :

"The trees are in their autumnal beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine –and –fifty swans."

Not only in thematic contents and thought-processes but also in poetic techniques they appear to be the boarders of the same boat. In order to create a strong emotional effect in their poems both make the judicious use of 'anaphora' -- a rhetorical term for the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or poetic lines. An instance of anaphora is seen in Das' *Ekti Kabita* [Saat ti Tarar Timir] :

*"Se aagun jole jai
Se aagun jole jai
Se aagun jole jai dohe nako kichu"*

In Yeats' case, it is :

"Remember all those renowned generations,
Remember all that have sunk in their blood,
Remember all that have died on the scaffold,
Remember all that have fled, that have stood,"

[The Marching Songs : Last Poems]

Though primarily symbolist in spirit, Yeats was much influenced by the imagist movement. On the other hand, as influenced by the surrealists, Das too underwent a great deal of impact upon his poetic tools by the imagists. The poems by both poets are rich in multitudes of concrete images. Both Yeats' poetry and Das' poetry show how mesmerizing and proportionate as well a poetic language can be. The diction at their hands brings about the desired effect. All

sensibilities find expression to the fullest. Das' poetic words are essentially his own. He is the master in creating phrases which give the impression of both touch and smell. His chosen words bring forth the lively atmosphere of the rural Bengal imbued with its folktales and myths. On the other hand, W. B. Yeats is a pioneer in bringing back Irish legends and tales in the tradition of English poetry. In this regards, his observation in his essay entitled 'The Celtic Elements in Literature' is noteworthy : "All folk literature and all literature that keeps the folk tradition, delights in unbounded and immortal things." His 'The Song of Wondering Aengus' reflects his this approach :

"When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire aflame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And some one called me by my name:"

Das' poetry is remarkable, one of many reasons being the haunting of folk tales roaming all around :

*"Jekhane shukai padma—
bahu din bishalakshi jekhane nirab
Jeikhane ekdin
Shankhamala Chandramala Manikmalar
Kakan bajito, aha,
kunodin bajibe ki aar"*

[Jotodin Beche Achi : Rupasi Bangla]

Thus both Yeats' poetry and Das' poetry are replete with myths and legends enriching their respective poetic credos thereby making native cultural traditions intact and known to common readers. So, in many ways, these two great poets despite hailing from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds seem to stand together on the same common platform. It is somewhat amazing to find certain common elements in their poems. The reason may be attributed to the probable fact that Yeats, a world-known English poet, being predecessor to Das, must have some kind of

impacts on Das as a poet who is an ardent follower of English literature. But again it is the greatness of Das who has at times outthought Yeats to create an extended imagery to the desired effect bringing all sensibilities to the fore, of course keeping tune with his surroundings and tradition. In the process, Das' poetic self has been built

up on its own accord, of course with Yeats being one of his models and guides. His greatest achievement is that he earns a niche for himself as a great modern Bengali poet independent of Tagore's overwhelming impact on the contemporary poets of Bengal.

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Ethnic Modernism: Reading Richard Wright's Native Son

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Abstract

*Literary modernism as stated by Rita Keresztesi , “grew out of a prejudiced, racially biased often xenophobic historical context that necessitated a politically conservative and narrow definition of modernism in America “. Modernism emphasizes neutrality of culture and in the context of American modernism it is important to question this claim and focus on the importance of the contribution of African American writers writing in what is taken to be the period of American literary high modernism. From the early decades of the 20th century there was a marked change in the racial, ethnic and cultural makeup of the nation and with this change literary modernism also changed in its form and context. The active participation of African Americans and other minority groups , as immigrants and ethnics , advanced the course of literary modernism in the United States of America . Sacvan Bercovitch in The Cambridge History of American Literature : Prose Writing 1910 – 1950 refers to Jean Toomer's Cane (1923) as “ the high point of achievement of American Ethnic modernism” .It is pointed out that this African American Text is modernist in its concern with “ psychological scrutiny, bohemian self searching , increasing ethnic expression , and engagement with new ideologies “ .The contention of this paper is to highlight further development of American ethnic modernism in a seminal African American novel : Richard Wright's **Native Son**. Apart from psychological scrutiny and ethnic expression, Richard Wright's novel is an engagement with certain important issues such as generational tensions, urban space and alienation which are important ethnic thematic concerns as well as issues underlying modernist emphasis.*

Modernist literature highlights the significance of space in literary representations. At the turn of the century Thomas Hardy brings to focus the metaphor of the century's “corpse outlaent” in 'The Darkling Thrush', T.S. Eliot writes about the wasteland to suggest the cultural space of the interwar period. A similar use of the space metaphor is noticed in African-American modernism, as evident in Richard Wright's *Native Son*. A cultural mapping out

of the space is used to define the moment- of horror, violence and revulsion.

The legacy of institutional racism and sexism shaped and continues to space the consciousness of the African- Americans in America. This in turn fosters a negative and opposing feeling about their own culture at times. Since the struggle for social justice continued in the 20th century, most modern African-American novelists, like their predecessors of the 19th century did not

neglect the moral and social issues in their narratives. They are concerned with issues that focus on the truths of the perversity of American racism and the paradoxes of African – Americans' double consciousness. They have also started rediscovering their own folk tradition and culture.

Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) can be regarded as a hybrid of mainstream modernist technique and theme and an experiment in what many critics have called African – American modernism. Influences of modernist language experiment, Freudian psychology, existential philosophy, Marxism,

“a tendency toward fragmentation, elements of violence, the pre-eminence of subjectivity which takes shape in a sense of loss and dislocation on the part of major characters” (Rosenblatt.p-7), etc can be traced in the novel and each becomes a reference point for Wright's understanding of European and American modernism. It also used the tradition of African – American folklore, African-American standpoint on urban environment, and a keen sense of African- American alienation to supplement modernism's prevailing themes and ideas.

In *Native Son*, Richard Wright focuses on the South side slums of Chicago and also analyses the character of Bigger Thomas. He presents him as a representative figure of the inconspicuous values of American society. The racial segregation has confined him and other blacks in a particular corner of the town thus preventing them from developing their potential. Bigger Thomas is controlled by forces which are both social and psychological which lead him to hate himself, to reject his family and community, finally leading to a complete alienation. Wright, thus, in his portrayal of Bigger,

“affirms the myth of the Bad Nigger and attempts to develop it into a kind of modern Everyman”(Bell.p-157).

The black hero, in most of the times, is hardly seen to get his way through the novel without passing through the phase that he is frightening to the white world or to his own self. He also finds himself either lost or isolated in the vast world.

Black is the colour which is associated with failure, gloom, rejection, frustration, etc. The black hero not only bears the black skin but this black becomes the external force against which he struggles. Bigger Thomas moves

“ensnared in a tangle of deep shadows as black as the night that stretched above his head”(Wright.1966.p-72).

Darkness remains a constant presence in his life. While in prison.

“he saw a dark vast fluid image rise and float,he saw a black sprawling prison full of tiny black cells in which people lived, each cell had its stone jar of water and a crust of bread and no one could go from cell to cell and there were screams and curses and yells of suffering and nobody heard them, for the walls were thick and darkness was everywhere”.(p.334-335)

This darkness was manifested in his inner self and he, from the very beginning was burdened with a sense of alienation. Like the blacks in the United States of America, he could not see himself as one among the white Americans nor could he adjust himself within his family and community. Being unable to do so he began to hate himself. His awareness of the shame and misery of the way they are forced to live also engulf him with fear and self hatred. His frustration could even be seen in his relation to his friends. Bigger and his friends knew that if they succeeded in their attempt in robbing a Whiteman than it would mean a

“challenge of the white world’s rule over them” (p.18).

But, Bigger was afraid to commit such an act and knew that Gus, too was afraid and to hide his feelings laid all the blame on Gus. Soon they were in conflict with one another. Bigger's violent action made his friends “hate and fear him as much as he hated and feared himself”(p.31). The contrasting themes and setting of the two movies that were seen by Bigger ‘ The Gay Woman' and ‘ Trader Horn' further intensify his alienation. He could not relate himself with both the worlds- the white and the black. This also

“symbolizes the dilemma of Bigger’s socialization as an Afro- American”

(Bell.p.158-159).

The psychological impacts of the external factors were such that Bigger could not trust others even when the others had no ill feeling towards him. Bigger was so accustomed to the inhuman treatment of the whites that he felt Mary’s and Jan’s behavior to be odd. They both treated him as a friend and spoke to him about the equality of blacks and whites. They sat with him in the same seat of the car which made him feel uncomfortable. They also ate and drank with him in such a manner that made him more perplexed. When in prison, even Jan’s caring attitude towards him was felt like a trap.

An important thematic concern underlying modernist emphasis is generational tension. In the novel, the generational tension between the mother and son is highlighted. It is very much true that like the other blacks in the United States of America, he could not see himself as one among the white Americans nor could he adjust himself within his community. He at the same time felt himself as someone outside his family. His family, especially his mother did not seem to understand his feelings and that made his sufferings more

acute. It was Mrs. Thomas who always coaxed him for his inability and even branded him as a selfish man who cared only for his own pleasures. He was regarded by her as

“the most no-countest man” (p.12).

She was so engrossed in the daily business of living that she forced her son to take the job that he hated.

Bigger, who earlier felt himself separated from his family and friends realized that he was a part of his family and community in the prison. On meeting his family and friends in the jail and seeing their shame in front of the whites, Bigger felt that they should rather feel glad for what he had done. He had done the thing which they feared most. He had always acted hard and tough towards his family to hide the feeling of hate and shame. He even began to feel the pain and sufferings of his mother. Bigger, who, all along regarded himself as alone, now realized that was not so. What he did had an impact on their lives. He just could not leave his family and friends nor could they forget him. Bigger, who was unable to cope with his friends, once again wanted to meet them. He felt

“like a man reborn.....like a man risen up well from a long illness.....”
(p.106).

Bigger at times thought that all the Blacks should unite and take a stand against the oppression of the whites. He felt that the whites were not people in the real sense of the term, rather they were

“a sort of great natural force”(p.109)

who cause destruction to the others. He had a feeling that he was different from the other blacks. Though in appearance they were alike, but their thinkings were different so as to bind them together. Deep in his heart he had a hope that a day would come when all the blacks would become one and act together to end the fear and shame. He was so much psychologically affected by the

presence of the whites in his life that he felt they ruled not only them but their relations to their own black people.

In terms of Marxism Wright's *Native Son* becomes important for understanding the racializing effects of capitalism through the creation and segregation of space. Also one can see the role of race in the making of contemporary capitalism. Bigger's experiences also defines and determines his social relationships. Bigger's reaction to his own environment (city of Chicago) .

"In both instances the deep sense of exclusion was identical. The feeling of looking at things with painful and unwarrantable nakedness was an experience, I learned, that transcended national and racial boundaries. It was this intolerable sense of feeling and understanding so much, and yet living on a plane of social reality where the look of a world which one did not make or own struck one with a blinding objectivity and tangibility, that made me grasp the revolutionary impulse in my life and the lives of those about me and far way "(p.xvii).

produces the consciousness necessary in order to re-imagine new social relations in the modern world. The novel begins with a description of kitchenette apartment occupied by the family of Bigger Thomas. This apartment is leased out to the Thomas family by Mr. Dalton, who also becomes Bigger's employer. The Kitchenettes were formerly large houses owned by whites and rented at high rates to black immigrants. Wright himself said in *Twelve Million Black Voices*

"the kitchenette is our prison, our death sentence without a trial, the new form of mob violence that assaults not only the lone individual, but all of us, in its ceaseless attacks"

(Wright.1988.p.105-106).

The kitchenette and Dalton's home in *Native son* thus marks both class and race restriction.

"He looked round the room, seeing it for the first time. There was no rug on the floor and the plastering on the walls and ceiling hung loose in many places. There were two worn iron beds, four chairs, an old dresser, and a drop-leaf table on which they ate. This was much different from Dalton's home. Here all slept in one room, there he would have a room for himself alone. He smelt food cooking and remembered that one could not smell food cooking in Dalton's home; Pots could not be heard rattling all over the house, each person lived in one room and had a little world of his own."(p.100)

Finally the murder of Mary Dalton had become "an act of creation for Bigger"(Bell.p-160). His desire to do something was at last fulfilled and he had done the thing which other blacks were afraid to do. Paradoxically the fear which he should have felt after the murder had in reality given way to a new freedom, a new achievement. His achievement, to some extent can be related to the American Dream. He has risen in his own way; it is very much true that he has realized his vision of the American dream in a world that is completely different. He has indeed become a man of importance and has created a space for himself.

"The thought of what he had done, the awful horror of it, the daring associated with such actions, formed for him for the first time in his fear-ridden life a barrier of protection between him and a world he feared. He had murdered and had created new life for himself. It was something that was all his own, and it was the first time in

his life he had had anything that others could not take from him.” (p.101)

Though his action was an accident, he did never try to console himself rather he felt proud of what he had done. All that he wanted to believe was that he was a black and “had been alone in a room where a white girl had been killed; therefore he had killed her.”(P101)He soon realized that all his life had been leading to an action like that and so his murdering of the girl was very much natural. He even felt that one had to be bold enough to “do something nobody thought of” (p102) He had done that thing which nobody thought that a black boy could do and so was filled with pride. He at one moment even wanted to tell the whole world that it was he who had done the daring deed. He was in such a position after the murder that he felt “he had just learned to walk.”(p.123) He had become a man of some importance to the whites for they would now like to know from him the whereabouts of a white girl. Even the death sentence could not change Bigger’s feelings; he did not repent his killings “what I killed for must’ve been good.”(p.392)

Richard Wright’s portrayal of Bigger needs to be looked into against the backdrop of Alain Locke’s concept of the New Negro, which caught the imagination of the Black intellectual world since 1925. Throughout *Native Son* Bigger felt His own fragmentation and was actually aware of his own lack of wholeness. Bigger’s internal response to his fragmentation passes through several distinct phases. Gradually, his initial disorientation gives way to exhilarating sense of himself as questing hero, which in turn disintegrates into a

numbling sense of total meaninglessness. The final stage of Bigger’s metaphysical wandering involves an extended meditation on what it means to murder and create.

His perception swings wildly between extreme subjectivity and extreme objectivity. He experiences himself as a cipher, surrendering all sense of control to the mechanical world around him. An extreme separation from the external social realities that condition his consciousness accompanies Bigger’s growing awareness of the world of images. As the external forces reassert their power, Bigger struggles to maintain a grasp on his internal reality, which Wright images increasingly in terms of total isolation. The final stage of Bigger’s existence seem to relate directly to Eliot’s ‘Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ “There will be time to murder and create” His claim that he had murdered and had created a new life for himself is essentially based on a momentary exhilaration associated with his discovery of his own significance, with the power of the external world reasserted in the capture scene, Bigger’s sense of creative power vanishes almost entirely. He is back in a wasteland where even the murder lacks meaning. Richard Wright’s portrayal of the problem of identity confronted by Bigger Thomas shows the difficulty of the African-American at a particular moment just after the Harlem Renaissance and its decline. In a way it represents the larger modernist problem of alienation and the failure of making sense when confronted with fragmentation.

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Political Phenomena in Barak-Surma Valley during Medieval Period

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Abstract

After the fall of Srihattarajya in 12 th century CE, marked the beginning of the medieval history of Barak-Surma Valley. The political phenomena changed the entire infrastructure of the region. But the socio-cultural changes which occurred are not the result of the political phenomena, some extra forces might be alive that brought the region to undergo changes. By the advent of the Sufi saint Hazrat Shah Jalal, a qualitative change was brought in the region. This historical event caused the extension of the grip of Bengal Sultanate over the region. Owing to political phenomena, the upper valley and lower valley may differ during the period but the socio-economic and cultural history bear testimony to the fact that both the regions were inhabited by the same people with a common heritage. And thus when the British annexed the valley in two phases, the region found no difficulty in adjusting with the new situation.

Keywords: Homogeneity, aryanisation, autonomy.

The geographical area that forms the Barak-Surma valley, extends over a region now divided between India and Bangladesh. The Indian portion of the region is now popularly known as Barak Valley, covering the geographical area of the modern districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi of Assam State. But the Bangladesh portion constitutes an administrative division of the country in the form of 'Sylhet Division' constituted with Sylhet, Maulavi Bazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj districts. However, the geographical formation of the region clearly indicates that the region forms a valley of the rivers Barak and Surma. So, the geographical name of the valley may be given as 'Barak-Surma Valley' following

what Nihar Ranjan Roy prefers in his *Bangalir Itihas* (3rd edition, Vol.-I, 1980, Calcutta).

In addition to geographical location this appellation bears a historical significance. Western portion covering the major part of the valley which now constitutes modern Karimganj district of the state of Assam and 'Sylhet Division' of Bangladesh was commonly known as 'Sylhet' during the medieval and British period. It emerged as a part of Bengal in respect of socio-cultural matters even before the expansion of the rule of the Bengal Sultanate in the early 14th century. The eastern portion now constitutes the districts of Cachar and Hailakandi, they formed a

part of Tripura kingdom and Dimasa kingdom during the early and late medieval period respectively, but both the portions underwent socio-cultural changes during the period under review in the same process despite of their political differences. The historical significance lies in the cultural homogeneity.

Again, the political development in the super structure of a region or a country generally to a large extent, casts its influence on the changes in the infrastructure. But in case of Barak-Surma valley, we have encountered with a problem of different nature. The socio-cultural changes which occurred during the period under review are not the results of the political influences. Some extra political forces might be so alive that it brought even the ruling family at least in the case of eastern portion of the region to undergo changes along with the process of development that came from within (J. B. Bhattacharjee, 'Sequence of development in North East India', 1988, New Delhi).

The decline of *Srihattarajya* in the 12th century CE marked the beginning of the medieval history of the Barak-Surma Valley. The political phenomena of the Barak-Surma Valley has been proceeded under two part: Lower Valley and Upper Valley. Geographically, lower valley included modern Karimganj district of India and 'Sylhet Division' of Bangladesh comprising of Sylhet, Maulavi Bazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj districts. The Muslim rule in the Lower valley began in 1303 CE and continued till 1765 CE when the region went under the virtual rule of the East India Company. The name of the famous *Sufi* saint Hazrat Shah Jalal is associated with the conquest of sylhet by the Muslims during the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Firuz Shah of Lakhnauti. The Muslim army conquered Gaur kingdom and Taraf Principality during the reign of Shamsuddin Firuz Shah. Then

bit by bit the whole of Lower Valley, except Jayantia kingdom and southern portion of Karimganj district which remained under an autonomous rule and Tripura state respectively. The Lower Valley or Sylhet remained under the sultans of Bengal either as independent or subordinate to the Delhi sultanate up to the rule of Akbar, when Bengal was annexed to the Mughal empire (Md Abdul Aziz, *Brihattara Sileter Itihas*, edited, 1997, Dhaka).

During the period in between the annexation of Bengal and that of Sylhet some *pathan* chiefs independently ruled over some petty states in the region. After the annexation of Sylhet to the Mughal empire, it was organised as an administrative unit named *Sarkar* under the *Subah* of Bengal of the Mughal empire. This system continued up to 1717 CE when the *Subadar* of Bengal became virtually an independent ruler (Quazi Mohammad Ahmed, *Srihatta Darpan*, 1886, Sylhet).

The history of the upper valley is directly connected with the history of the state of Tripuris. Aryanisation in the upper valley started in the 5th century CE. From 13th century onwards, the plains of the upper valley were parceled into small principalities, emerged out of the ruins of ancient *Srihattarajya* and became a prey between two strong powers – The Dimasa on the north and Tripura on the south. However, the Koches invaded the Dimasa kingdom, plains of Cachar and Hailakandi and extended their sway upto the border of modern Tripura state. The Koches ruled the plains of upper valley till it was supplanted by the Dimasas. The Dimasas first ruled the plains of upper valley from Maibong, now in N.C. Hills, but they then shifted their capital to Khaspur in modern Cachar in early 18th century CE. The Dimasas named their kingdom as *Hedambarajya*. This Dimasa state was annexed by the British in 1832 CE

(U.C. Guha, *Kacharer Itibritta*, 1921, Calcutta).

As regards the administrative system of lower valley, it is found that it was an *Arsah* during the pre-Mughal and a *Sarkar* during the Mughal period and a *Chakla* during the rule of the independent *Nawabs* of Bengal. The characteristics of the provincial administration of Delhi are discernible in the administrative system that was followed in the lower valley during the medieval period (Achyut Charan Choudhury, *Srihatter Itibritta*, 1917, Sylhet).

In upper valley during the medieval period, three administrative systems viz-the Tripuri, Koch and Dimasa were successively continued. The kingship in the Tripura state was based on the divine origin theory and was hereditary. The Tripuri community was divided into twelve *Halams* or groups. In course of time, the Tripuri king followed the Muslim administrative principles then prevailed in Bengal. However, the various tribes other than Tripura living in the state enjoyed local autonomy under their chiefs. The revenue from the plains and gifts and tributes from the tribes were the main sources of income of the kings (FA Qadri, *Society and Economy in North-East India*, ed. Vol-2, 2006, Shillong).

The Koch state in Cachar was established by Chilarai in 1562 CE and remained in existence till 1745 CE. The administration of the Koch state in the upper valley is an example of the medieval polity formation by a Hinduised branch of the Bodo family of the Tibeto Burman race with its epicenter at Koch Behar, far away from Cachar. At the initial stage a military rule was imposed on the conquered country. A feudatory character was given to the military ruler in course of time. But in the last stage, the feudatory ruler in course of time severed all relations with the central authority and styled himself as *Raja* (J.B. Bhattacharjee,

Social and Polity Formation in Pre-Colonial North-East India, 1991, New Delhi).

The Dimasa-Kachari state of upper valley was a monarchical form of state based on the divine origin theory. The functional authority of the state was vested in the *patra* and *Bhandari*. The *Rajdarbar* or royal assembly consisted of two wings-*Mel* and *Ul* meant for the subjects in the plains and hills respectively. In the judicial administration both Hindu and Muslim Laws were followed. The North Cachar Hills were ruled by a *Senapati* appointed by the king. In revenue administration *Khel* system was adopted which means a sort of social responsibility of paying revenues.

However, the upper valley remained totally outside of the Turkish or the Mughal rules during the whole period beginning with the establishment of the Turko-Afghan rule in the lower valley and ending with the annexation of the Hedamba kingdom by the British in the early 19th century. But the cultural synthesis and racial assimilation continued in the region almost in the same manner as in lower valley which was under the Turkish or Mughal rules. In other words, a pan Indian cultural formation continued in upper valley also (Sharifuddin Ahmed, ed. 'Sylhet-History and Heritage', 1999, Bangladesh Itihas Samiti, Dhaka).

The political history of upper valley and lower valley may differ during the period under review. But the socio-economic and cultural history bear testimony to the fact that both the regions were inhabited by the same people with a common heritage. At present also the Barak-Surma valley does not belong to a single political unit, the plain of Cachar along with present day Karimganj district forms an integral part of Indian union whereas the major part of Sylhet district is in Bangladesh. But inspite of political isolation, social boundary of the valley still incorporates both the parts and the people

accepts this dichotomy as a social reality and rather feel proud of it.

However, the middle age in Barak-Surma valley while retaining its continuity with the past history opened up virtues for new developments conducive for meeting the demand of the changing time. In popular parlance, the middle age is normally associated with backwardness and degradation. But in case of Barak-Surma valley this stereotype does not fit in. In fact, in the days of Sultanate the region

maintained its close relationship with Bengal and without much the major part of the region could become a part of Mughal India. The remaining part also retained social liaison with Sylhet uninterrupted by political disruption. Thus when the British took the possession of the valley in two phases, the first one in 1765 CE and the second in 1832 CE, the region found no difficulty in adjusting with the new situation.

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Manipuri Queens in the Royal House of Tripura: A Historical Study

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Abstract

Manipur and Tripura are two important states of North east India with a long glorious history of their own. Both the states maintained cordial relationship from the very early period despite regular intervals of conflicts. Marriage alliances between the royal families of Manipur and Tripura were common which began from remote antiquity and continued till 20th century. The instance of first marriage alliance between Manipur and Tripura is recorded to be occurred during the reign of Tripuri king Taidakshin around 5th century A.D. However, the most notable cases of matrimonial alliances between Manipur and Tripura started towards the end of 18th century. The Rajas of Tripura married not only Manipuri princesses but also many Manipuri girls belonging to plebeian family. Among them many girls were inhabitants of Tripura who came during the Burmese invasion of Manipur. The marriage alliances not only brought cordial relations between the two kingdoms but also there was cultural assimilation. The tradition of marrying Manipuri girls were even followed by many noblemen of the Tripura royal family. Tripura also witnessed various public welfare works that was contributed by the Manipuri Maharanis. Thus, we find that the Tripura royal house was filled with descendents from the Manipuri queens.

The present state of Manipur and Tripura are situated in the North Eastern part of India. Manipur is geographically bounded by Nagaland in the North, Mizoram in the South, Cachar district of Assam in the West and Burma in the East. Manipur enjoyed the status of an independent princely state up to 1981. It was only after two years of Indian independence that Manipur was merged in Indian Union on 15 October 1951. Whereas, the state of Tripura is bounded by [Bangladesh](#) in the north, south, and west and to the East lays the states of [Assam](#) and [Mizoram](#). It was a [princely state](#) during the [British rule](#). Like Manipur,

the native kingdom of Tripura also merged with the Indian Republic in 1949. Thus, geographically it is only a portion of Assam that stands between Manipur and Tripura.

From ancient times Manipur and Tripura were the two independent princely kingdoms. In the early period Manipur was called by the Tripuris as Mokhali/Mekhali and to the Manipuris the kingdom of Tripura was known as Takhen/ Takhel. The word 'Takhen' has come from the Bengali word 'Dakhin' which means South. The people of Sylhet used to call Tripura 'Dakhin' which was pronounced by the Manipuris as Takhen. They deviate the 'd' sound

changing to 't' and that of 'i' sound changing to 'e' due to their speech habit. During their princely regime they were neighbouring states and came into contact with each other in many occasions such as for trade, diplomacy, dwelling, matrimony etc. There are many instances of elephants brought to Manipur from Tripura. Besides, the kingdoms came in close contact with each other for political interdependence when there were rapid invasions of Burmese in Manipur and that of Pathans and Mughals in Tripura. The relation between the two kingdoms was filled with occasional conflicts and war fares. There were several cases of hostilities between Tripura and Manipur particularly between 16th to 18th centuries. These were in 1533, 1634, 1696 and 1724 A.D. The most remarkable armed clash between Manipur and Tripura took place during the reign of Tripura king Dharma Manikya II (1717-1733 A.D.) and the Manipuri king Garib Niwaz or Pamheiba (1709-1748 A.D.). In this battle Tripuris were severely defeated by the Manipuri troops. In order to commemorate the glorious victory over Tripura, a book was written called “Takhel Ngamba” (Tripura Conqueror). The book gives an excellent detail about the arm clash. However, despite such hostilities, matrimonial relationship between the two states continued which helped to maintain their age old friendly relationship. Matrimonial alliances between the two kingdoms began from centuries back. In this regard, the first reference of Tripura–Manipuri matrimonial alliances is recorded in the royal chronicle of Tripura “Sri Rajmala”. According to the chronicle, Tripuri raja Taidakshin, grandson of King Trilochana married a princess of Mekhali (modern Manipur). But, the details of the marriage is absent in the sources. They are silent about name of the princess as well as of her father. The renown historian. R.M Nath stated that the marriage took place

during 5th century A.D. However, due to discrepancies in the chronology of Tripura kings no date can be accepted as trustworthy. Again, the state chronicle of Manipur “Cheitharol Kumbaba” recorded that in 1609 A.D. Akhoicham girl ‘Yangnu’ wife of the king of Takhen (modern Tripura) went to her country. But, we do not find any further details about this marriage.

The most notable cases of matrimonial alliances between Manipur and Tripura started towards the end of 18th century. At the end of the century in 1785 A.D., Rajdhar Manikya II ascended the throne of Tripura and ruled up to 1804 A.D. In Manipur, his contemporary raja was king Bhagyachandra alias Joy Singha (1759-1761 & 1763-1798 A.D.). During their rule the first historically important marriage alliance took place. The old Raja Bhagyachandra of Manipur was a religious person and after installing his eldest son Labanyachandra as new king of Manipur started for pilgrimages to many secret religious places of India. On his journey he also visited Tripura and halted back at Agartala, the capital for some days. During his stay he gave one of his daughter princess Hariseswari in marriage to Tripura king Rajdhar Manikya II. This marriage was effective in bringing cordial relations between the two states. Raja Joy Singha then left for his pilgrimage by river ways. Rajdhar Manikya helped him by supplying 15 boats for the river journey and also gave seven hundred silver coins to Raja Bhagyachandra for his travelling expenses. The new queen Hariseswari brought along with her the idol of ‘Sri Radhamadhav’ which was installed in the royal compound. The king brought the priest of the temple, some musicians, some noble men and maid attendants of the queen from Manipur and gave them settlement near the royal house at a village called Mekhlipara. But, unfortunately, at present no Mekhli inhabits in the village. When the capital of the

kingdom shifted from old Agartala to the new Agartala (Nutan Haveli) during the reign of king Krishna Kishore Manikya (1829-1849 A.D.) the deity of the 'Sri Radhamadhav' was brought to the new place and installed to the north of the royal palace. After the name of the Radhamadhav the place came to known as 'Radhanagar'. Many Hindu festivals like 'Maharas' were performed in this temple every year as it is done in the 'Sri Sri Govindajee' temple of Manipur. Thus, Radhamadhav temple became famous for Manipuri Rasa dance and many pilgrims from places like Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong visits the temple only to view the 'Maharas' dance.

The policy of marrying Manipuri girls by the Tripuri raja continued thereafter. Sri Kailashchandra Singha in his book "Rajmala Ba Tripurar Itihas" has written that during the Burmese invasion of Manipur in 1819 to 1825 A.D. which is called in the history of Manipur as the 'Seven Years Devastation' many Manipuris had to flee from their native land and many of them took shelter at Tripura and later permanently settled. The then Raja of Tripura Kashichandra Manikya (1826-1829 A.D.) was fascinated by the beauty, cleanliness and plethora of health of the Manipuri girls. In 1826 A.D., he married princess Kutilakha/Kutilakshi of Manipur. He also married three other Manipuri girls who were the settlers of Tripura. After the death of Raja Kashichandra Manikya, his son Krishna Kishore Manikya (1829-1849 A.D.) ascended the throne of Tripura. Like his predecessors, he also married many Manipuri girls. Of which three of them were the daughters of Manipuri king Marjit Singha, they were - Chandrakola, Vidhukola and Akhileswari. Krishna Kishore Manikya was very fond of hunting and for the purpose he used to visit to a place called Haidra, 5 miles west of capital Agartala. It was a forest land which was marshy, thickly

wooded and full of birds which was very convenient for hunting and games. He also constructed a rest house at the place. At his old age the Raja also married a Manipuri Brahmin girl called Purnakala who was appointed as cook in the Tripura royal kitchen. This marriage was not supported by the Manipuris of Tripura. It was superstitious believe that it was a sin for a kshatriya to marry a Brahmin girl which will lead to misfortune of the king. Raja Krishna Kishore Manikya made Purnakala his chief queen but he did not take the Maharani Purnakala to the royal palace. Therefore, he built a house at Haidra (Dholeswar) for the Rani where she was kept along with some attendants. From that time in 1838 A.D., the construction of new capital or Nutan Haveli at Agartala began. Thus, Rani Purnakala became one of the factors behind the establishment of a new capital at Agartala. The king Krishna Kishore Manikya was killed by thunder in 1849 A.D.

Maharaja Krishna Kishore Manikya was succeeded by his son Ishan Chandra Manikya who ruled from 1849 to 1862 A.D. The new king also had three Manipuri wives. They were Moirangthem Chanu Muktabali Devi, Keisam Chanu Jatiswari Devi (she was mother of Maharajkumar Navadipbahadur, father of Indian famous musician Sachin Deb Barman) and Khumanthem Chanu Chandreswari Devi. Maharani Muktabali and her family were inhabitation of Sylhet. Ishanchandra Manikya brought her and her brother Moirangthem Shovananda or Sevananda to Agartala and gave settlement at Dholeswar. She constructed a temple of god Lakshmi Narayan at Dholeswar. The famous Manipuri musician of the time Babu Moirangthem Babuni was her nephew. He was one of the teachers who introduced 'Rasa' dance in Tripura. The next Tripura king, Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896 A.D.) not only followed the practice and policy of

marrying Manipuri girls but also encouraged the development of Manipuri culture in Tripura. Maharaja Birchandra Manikya is regarded as the founder of the modern Tripura. He had three Manipuri Maharanis namely, Ningthem Chanu Bhanumati, Panganbam Chanu Rajeswari or Kaboklei and Khuman Chanu Manmohini. Maharani Bhanumati was most favorite queen of Maharaja Birchandra Manikya. She was the daughter of Rajkumar Kulendrajit and sister of Rajkumar Ranadhwaj who was one of the influential ministers of the Tripura king. It is said that Maharani Bhanumati had a premature death which greatly disheartened the raja. The raja became very weak and he tried to console himself by reading Rabindra Nath Tagore's work titled "Bhagnahriday" (broken heart). Maharaja Birchandra also composed many poems in memory of his beloved wife Bhanumati. Panganbam chanu Rajeswari alias Kaboklei was the second Maharani of the king. She gave birth to Radhakishore Manikya, the next king of Tripura. A village called Rajeswaripur was established in the name of the queen. It is noteworthy that the Manipuri traditional festival 'Lai Haraoba' was introduced for the first time in Tripura by Maharani Rajeswari. She also installed the 'Sri Sri Radhamadhab' temple at Dholeswar and 'Lainingthou Pakhangba' temple at Banamalipur. The third queen of raja Birchandra Manikya was Khuman Chanu Manmohini. She was the daughter of Bhanumati's sister. Maharani Manmohini was only 13 years when the Raja married her. She also established a temple and a mandapa near the present Iskon temple at Tripura.

The policy of wedlock with Manipuri girls was continued by the next Tripura king Radhakishore Manikya (1896-1909 A.D.) whose mother was a Manipuri. He also had three Manipuri Maharanis - Maharani Tulshibati, Maharani

Monomanjuri and Maharani Ratnamanjuri or 'Dhaka Rani'. Radhakishore Manikya married Ratnamanjuri when he was a prince. In 1874 A.D., the then raja Birchandra Manikya went to Dhaka for a meeting with the British Governor Northbrook. He also visited the palace of exiled Manipuri Raja Debendra Singha at Dhaka. There, Birchandra Manikya saw Ratnamanjuri, the beautiful daughter of the dethroned Manipuri king. He was charmed by the beauty of the princess and decided to make her his daughter-in-law. Thereafter, he brought the princess at Agartala and arranged her marriage with his son Maharajkumar Radhakishore. She was called by the Manipuris of Tripura as 'Dhaka Rani' as the new queen has come from Dhaka. Maharani Ratnamanjuri was the mother of the next Tripura king Maharaja Birendrakishore Manikya. The first queen of Maharaja Radhakishore Manikya was Maharani Tulshibati. She was simply daughter of a cultivator of village Tarou (Nalgoriya) situated a little far away from Agartala. Maharani Tulshibati was a great social activist and kindhearted person. Even today she is remembered by the people of Tripura for her various contributions for the development of the society. She is credited for initiating the spread of women education in Tripura. During the last part of 19th century a wave for the development of women education in Tripura was initiated by the Maharani. With her effort she succeeded in establishing the first girls school in Tripura called "Maharani Tulshibati Balika Vidyalaya" located at Agartala. In 1905, the Maharani established a separate woman cell at the Victoria Memorial Hospital (presently known as I.G.M) at Agartala. She also could feel the difficulty of the people who had to come far away from villages to Agartala only for the purpose of marketing. Therefore, she requested the raja to establish a market (bazar). As a result, a market was

established and to commemorate her contribution the name of the bazaar was kept as “Ranirbazar”. Thought Maharani Tulshibati was an uneducated person but she was expert in compositions of songs and poems. Her composed songs related to ‘Holy’ festival were very famous during the time. Maharani Tulshibati also installed ‘Sri Sri Radhamadhad’ temple at Nalgaria and ‘Lainingthou Puthiba’ temple at Abhoynagar. Beside these we find that in almost all the Manipuri villages of Tripura such as Bishalgarh, Bamutia, Murabari, Daccabari etc. the Manipuri queens installed a number of temples. Rent free lands were provided by the queens to their relatives for the erection of the temples and mandapas. In the royal palace of Tripura the queens introduced the plantation of Basil leave as it was an important plan for offering to gods. The Manipuri queens brought along with them the culture and religion of their parental state which they enriches even in the royal palace of Tripura.

The next Tripura Raja Birendrakishore Manikya (1909-1923 A.D) married ten (10) Manipuri girls but they were not given the status of Maharanis. The year 1909 A.D. was a memorable and historical moment for both Tripura and Manipur. The then Manipuri king Churachand Singh paid a visit to Tripura on the occasion of coronation ceremony of the new Tripura king Birendrakishore Manikya. The Administrative report of Tripura 1908-09 A.D. recorded that “On 2nd Magh (15th January), His Highness the Maharaj of Manipur paid a visit to the state. The occasion was one of universal rejoicing. The Manipur house had been related to the Tipperah family by marriage, from a very long time, but this was the first occasion when the Heads of both the houses met one another as relatives. On this occasion, the Talukdars of Nurnagar, the most important section of the tenure holders in Roshnabad

were invited, and all of them attended the Durbar held in honour of his Highness the Maharaja of Manipur”. The Manipuri king also visited many Manipuri villages of Tripura and rendered financial help to the settlers. After the death of Maharaja Birendrakishore Manikya in 1923 A.D., his son Birbikramkishore Manikya succeeded to the throne of Tripura. But, as Birbikramkishore was only 16 years then, the coronation ceremony was performed when the prince completed his 19th year. The new raja had seven (7) wives, of which three of them were Manipuri but they were kept as simple Ranis. Beside this many nobilities of the Tripura royal family also married Manipuri girls. Some of them were Maharajkumar Navadipbahadur, Brajendra Kishore alias Lalukarta, Ramendra Kishore alias Nimukarta who married Nirupama Devi, Bhadravati Devi and Jotirani Devi respectively. The famous Indian musician Sachin Deb Barman (S.D. Barman) was the son of Nirupama Devi, wife of Maharajkumar Navadipbahadur. Again, Maharajkumar Navadipbahadur was the son of the Manipuri queen Jatiswari, the third wife of Ishanchandra Manikya. Thus, we find that there were many cases of Manipuri girls who were taken as wives by the Tripuri Rajas and its nobilities. But, no Manipuri king married Tripuri princess except for the fact that Rajkumar Tilak kumar Singha of Manipur royal family married Urmila Devi daughter of King Krishna Kishore Manikya of Tripura.

Thus, the historical evidences revealed that matrimonial alliances were common between Manipur and Tripura like in many other monarchical form of government. The Tripura royal house was filled with many descendents from the Manipuri queens. It is noteworthy that the policy of wedlock between the two royal families started from very early period which continued up to 20th century. The

marriage alliances brought not only cordial relation between the two states but also there was assimilation of cultures and religion. The Tripura ruling house had become synonymous with Manipuri culture and magnificence for these reasons. The Tripuri rajas married not only the Manipuri princesses but also many other Manipuri

girls of rather plebeian family. But, all the Manipuri queens were not given the position of the Chief Queen. The history of Tripura is filled with various contributions made by the Manipuri Maharanis for the development of its subjects in all aspects of life. Thus, Manipuri Maharanis had important position and high status in the royal house of Tripura.

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British Colonial Policy of Line System & Immigration Issue in Assam (1911-1931)

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Abstract

The British Colonial authorities encouraged immigration in Assam purely on economic ground. The establishment of tea and other industries in Assam during nineteenth century followed by the extension of cultivation of wastelands necessitated to follow a liberal immigration policy by the Colonial rulers. Accordingly, good numbers of immigrant labourers and cultivators were brought for the purposes from outside the Brahmaputra valley to fulfill the economic interest of the Colonial rulers. The majority of the immigrant cultivators came from the adjoining Bengal districts of Assam, among which largest numbers were Mymensinghia Mohammedans who were good cultivators. But soon it became a threat to the indigenous people. The large scale immigration led to a shift in the demographic balance of the Brahmaputra valley. To restrict the indiscriminate settlement by the immigrants the Colonial officials of Nowgong district in 1916 devised administrative measures known as Line system, which was followed by Colonisation scheme. These were the only steps taken by the Colonial rulers to solve the immigrant problems in Assam, but failed and it gradually turned into communal, racial and political questions in the Brahmaputra valley.

Since the establishment of tea and other industries in Assam in the nineteenth century followed by the extension of cultivation of wastelands of Assam required good number of immigrant labourers and cultivators from outside the Brahmaputra valley. So the British Colonial authorities followed a liberal policy of immigration in Assam purely on economic ground. Most of the immigrant cultivators came from adjoining Bengal districts of Assam among whom largest numbers were Mymensinghia Mohammedans. But soon it became a threat

to the indigenous people who felt that unless it was checked their economic and cultural life would be in danger.

Mass immigration in an organized way and occupation of wastelands, grazing and forest reserves posed a serious problem. Mass squatting and occupation of whole villages by Mymensinghia immigrants through purchase of lands, by offering attractive prices to local inhabitants, seemed to threaten the survival of indigenous inhabitants.

It was in 1911, that the Census Commissioner first pointed out the dangers of immigration by calling it “..... a peaceful invasion of Assam by the advancing hoards of Mymensinghia army...” But the Assamese remained ignorant of any adverse effect and the public took little interest in the matter.

For the first time in 1913, the problem of agricultural immigrants and the need of preventing interference with the Assamese had begun to attract the attention of Colonial authority. The number of various immigrants was then under twenty thousand and the government policy was to encourage immigration.

It is to be noted here that the Assamese indigenous cultivators had the habit of fluctuating cultivation by which they did cultivate the land for three or four years and they abandoned it. They used to think that the land had lost its fertility. The *Mymensinghia* immigrant cultivators took notice of it. Therefore they preferred to get settlement of such old and abandoned land. For such type of land the immigrants offered good prices and went on cultivating the land year after year.

The Colonial officials observed that the land settled with *Mymensinghia* immigrants was never abandoned. The officials realized one fact that it was impossible for indigenous cultivators to adopt the method of cultivation pursued by the *Mymensinghia* immigrants in near future. Therefore, it became necessary to Colonial officials, at least for near future, to reserve sufficiently large number of jungle lands near the villages of indigenous cultivators. It might enable them to carry out their old method of fluctuating cultivation.

In the meantime the Colonial Government proposed a consolidated set of rules of land settlement and published it in September 1915. It was planned to empower the Deputy Commissioner to make

settlement subject to the Chief Commissioner's orders. It also empowered Deputy Commissioner to expel any person who had not acquired appropriate right on a piece of land within three months of notice. It was finally approved by the Chief Commissioner in 1916.

In 1916 the Director of Land Records first put forward a proposal for a *Colonisation Officer to assist the settlement of the incoming immigrants and coordinate the work of all districts into which immigration was going on. Although this proposal was supported by several Deputy Commissioners, it did not appeal to the then Commissioner and was not raised until Mr. William Reid addressed Government with similar suggestion in 1920. From a letter of the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup it appeared that the system of drawing a line across which new immigrants should not be permitted to settle had already begun in the Barpeta sub-division, and from a similar letter from Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong it also appeared that some lines had been laid down in the villages to restrict indiscriminate settlement by immigrants. The division by lines originated entirely with the District officers concerned and was not adopted in execution of any Government order. Government however did not interfere and the system was gradually developed although not on parallel lines in all districts.

In 1923 it was found that *Mymensinghia* immigrants began to press on Assamese villages for land more aggressively than before, that the question of imposing some sort of restriction was considered. The first standing order was passed by Mr. Higgins, who in 1923 classified the villages in Nowgong district into seven different classes and his order was further amplified by Mr. Thomas in 1924. Accordingly, in Nowgong further settlement of immigrants was restricted in

eight mauzas. Though in a number of villages old immigrant settlers were allowed *an officer to look after the settlement of immigrants in Brahmaputra valley

to continue, subject only to the restriction that no more new immigrant settlers should be allowed to take up lands in those villages.

Under Line System the villages in Nowgong were divided into four categories- (1) exclusively occupied by immigrants; (2) exclusively reserved for Assamese; (3) mixed villages in which there both immigrants and Assamese; and (4) line villages in which a line has been drawn on the Assamese side of which no immigrant was allowed to settle.

The first restriction was applied only to *Mymensinghias*. But immigrants from other districts of Bengal started coming in. In 1924, by an order of Mr. Thomas the word *Mymensinghia* was dropped and the term immigrant was substituted to include all immigrants.

The Colonising Officer raised the question that the Assamese were subletting their lands to immigrants. On this, Mr. Thomas ordered that if such lands were covered by annual pattas that would be cancelled. In 1925 Government issued instructions approving the principle of these restrictions. During the time of resettlement all attempts were made to give effect to these orders.

In 1926 the problem of immigration was again extensively discussed. It was proposed to hold a conference of non-officials and officials at Shillong to discuss the subject. However due to inability of many of the non-officials to attend, the proposed conference had to be postponed. The District Officers were then consulted to ask leading gentlemen in their districts on the proposed legislation over the prohibition of transfer of lands between the Assamese and immigrants. It was found that the public opinion was divided and was not in favour

of such legislation. It was considered by the Colonial Government that the first move in such legislation should come from the people themselves or from their representatives. But no bill was, however brought forward in the Council.

In 1928 a Conference of district officers was held at Shillong to discuss various questions connected with the immigrant problem. The general opinion of the Conference was that the lines had been reasonably successful in Nowgong, but a failure in certain parts of Kamrup. It was then decided that the number of lines should be reduced, as far as possible. That line should be simplified and straightened with the object of allotting considerable blocks of lands to each community. It was also decided that the pattas should be annual in case of Assamese and other indigenous races so as to prevent them from transferring their land.

At this conference for the first time the Colonisation schemes were discussed and the proposal was raised to charge *salami* on all new settlements of lands wherever they were made. In September 1928 the conference of officials and Non-officials members of the Council was held. It formally approved the general policy of Colonisation scheme. Premium was fixed at Rs.25 a *bigha*, but later on it was reduced to Rs.10 in 1935. A Colonisation Officer was appointed in Nowgong to settle all available waste lands in the immigrant area on the block system.

A similar scheme was put into operation in the Mangaldai subdivision as well as in Barpeta. However in Barpeta subdivision the immigrants were so poor that it was found impossible to realise premium and the scheme had to be abandoned in 1932.

Thus Line System and the Colonisation scheme were the only steps taken by the Colonial Government to solve

the immigration problem in Assam. But they failed to do so rather prolonged it by the

gradual induction of communal, racial and political question into it.

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Socio-Economic Impact of Coal Mining Industry in Assam (1826-1947) - A Historical Study

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Abstract

This article is based on both primary and secondary sources which highlight the origin and growth of coal mining industry in Assam and also highlight the socio-cultural and economic changes due to industrialization in coal sector during colonial period.

Key words: Mining Industry, Industrial Revolution, Legacies, agency, Naga-Patkai belt.

I. Introduction: The Industrial Revolution was built upon coal, which was the main source of energy for running steam engines. India had substantial deposits of coal. But wide usage of coal in India had to await the growth of modern industry and transportation. During the rule of the East India Company, some attempts were made to extract coal commercially, but the industries preferred imported British coal. At that time, the main use of charcoal was in the smelting of metals by rural artisans. For the same purpose, the ordinance factories needed coal in larger quantities. This coal was imported from Britain, for the few attempts to use local coal did not satisfy the engineers. With the introduction of the steam ships in India, the demand for local supplies strengthened. To meet this demand, Calcutta's agency houses started small-scale mining operations in western Bengal. The Carr Tagore Company acquired the only major colliery, Raniganj, in the 1830's. It started enterprises that could use this coal. After Carr Tagore failed, the colliery passed

in to European hands. Inland transportation of this bulky commodity was, however, a serious problem. Rivers were not navigable throughout the year. Road transport was costly. Coal therefore continued to be mainly imported.

Coal mining industry is one of the most significant legacies of the British rule in Assam. The coal mining industry in Assam was a logical conclusion of the investment in plantation and oil sectors. The introduction of coal mining industry in Assam marked a land mark in the economic history of Assam. With the extension of tea cultivation and the introduction of commercial navigation on the Brahmaputra in the late 19th century there evinced a growing demand for coal.

The utilization of coal as an energy source, both for the steam engine, boiler etc. and in the form of coke, was a major characteristic of the first industrial revolution. It was on coal that the leading industrialized nations built their industrial power in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Occurrences of coal were known in Assam as early as 1825 and several futile were made to exploit some of the deposits during the earlier part of the 19th century. No progress on the development of the Assam coal fields was then possible due mainly to the backwardness in communication and transport systems in the states. The earliest coal mines were opened up near Safrai in 1828 and near Cherrapunjee in 1834. The Assam Tea Company was working the coal measures near Jaipur in 1840. Systematic geological and economic investigations for coal in Assam began from the middle part of the 19th century since when the Geological Survey of India (G.S.I) has been examining the coal occurrences in Assam from time to time. First geological references on Assam coal were made by H.B.Medlicott who examined the Garo Hills in 1882 and that of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills in 1889-90 by T.D.La Touche and that of the Upper Assam areas in 1874-76 by F.R.Mallet, F.H.Smith first made reference to the occurrences of coal in the Mikir Hills in 1898.

Medlicott's high recommendation on the quality of coal of the Makum (Ledo) coal field in Upper Assam led to the incorporation of the Assam Railways and Trading Company (A.R.T.C.) which in 1882 opened up the coal field areas of upper Assam along with the construction of a 136 kms of metre-gauge railway to it. Since 1882 the A.R.T.C.were working the various Upper Assam coal fields on up-to-date lines.

Prior to the independence, the coal fields of the united K & JHills were again examined by P.N. Mukharjee (1938) and A.M.N.Ghosh (1938). The coal fields of the Garo Hills were mapped by C.S.Fox in 1937-38 and further re-examined by the coal survey party of the Geological Survey of India during 1949-50. Investigations of the coal fields along the Naga-Patkai belt were made by Simpson (1906); Hayden (1910);

Pascoe (1911); T. Banerjee (1949-50) etc. Since 1897, the Assam railway and Trading Company has been working the Makum Coalfields on the most scientific ways. The mines included Namdang, Borgolai, Tikak, Ledo, Tirap, Lekhapani and Tipong.

As Sir C.S.Fox pointed out in his "The Economic Mineral Resources of Assam" published in 1947, "some of the Nazira coal fields situating at about 12 miles S.E.of Nazira Station up the Dikhu river, was regarded as amongst the best in India." Important collieries in this region are Barjan, Kongan etc. that have long been worked by M/S Shaw Wallace & Company."

II. Socio-Cultural Changes:

The coal belts in Upper Assam witnessed major socio-cultural shift after introduction of coal mining industry. The demographic change led to cultural change of the region. In particular, Tinsukia district saw a major cultural and social change with the influx of Bengali employees of the mining Companies. Bengali culture became dominant which had further socio-cultural consequences. Again, schools were started in the district to impart education among the employees. Consequently, the indigenous inhabitants started sending their children to these schools. The coal mining industry also had to a new class of people who made contracts with the Company for shifting coal for export. This new class belonged to the migrant group who managed to earn huge sum by coordinating with the white skinned mine owners, on the one hand, and colonial bureaucratic circle, on the other.

Coal industry, directly or indirectly plays a prominent role to convert the rural society to urban society. It made historic contribution to create an industrial society. As a result of fast industrialization, the process of urbanization too, is growing fast and this is having deep impact upon society. The industrialization is not only pushing up

the urban population but is also affecting the social conditions in nearby villages.

As consequences of industrialization the population in the cities has gone up. The process of industrialization increases the population. It is on account of industrialization that there is progressive rise in the population of cities in India. Whatever social impact is due to the urbanization is indirectly due to industrialization. Therefore the impact of industrialization and the impact of urbanization are in fact the facets of the same underlying process, namely, industrialization.

The increase in the population of the cities leads not only to the decline of social and family control but also leads to decline in the influence of religion. This in turn promotes atheism. This means that people in cities are not guided by tradition and are indifferent to religious belief. Their conduct is governed by rational or personal considerations. Thus the life in cities is relatively devoid of the influence of religion. Another impact of urbanization is the gradual extinction of the joint family system and its replacement by nuclear family. Now-a-days, most families consist of husband, wife and their progeny.

With the changes in the institution of family, there is also a change in the pattern of family. Women are becoming increasingly conscious of their rights and privileges but along with it there is also a tendency to arbitrary and willful conduct. The incidence of illicit sexual relations, divorce etc., are also on increase. The ostentation and intense fashion have also become the order of the day.

With a diverse population in respect of ethnicity, religion and language having varied socio-cultural practices, Assam is characterized by a high rate of population growth which has been even higher than the country's average almost throughout the last century. The state's population was 3.29

million in 1901 and it increased to 26.65 million in 2001 by experiencing an average annual exponential growth rate of 2.11 per cent during 1901-2001 as against the country's 1.47% as a consequence, the share of the State's population to the country's total increased from 1.38% in 1901 to 2.59% in 2001. Such a high growth rate has a number of far reaching demographic implications, including changes in the ethno-linguistic and religious composition of population in the State.

III. Economic Impact: Due to development of coal industry, certain changes are also evident in economic sphere. Development of science & technology, transport and communication has largely influenced the economic structure. Especially the agrarian economy is at present in a state of crisis. Besides the self-sufficient village economy has been disintegrated. It has become an integral part of national economy. Production is not just to meet the requirements of the community, but it is for the requirements of the markets. Thus there is shift from agricultural economy to national and industrial economy.

In the early part of the modern period, the economic activities were generally regulated by the governing power. It was an economic reflection of the growing unification of European peoples under strong monarchical Governments. The interest of the secular rules lay in internal unification and this necessarily meant economic as well as political integration. The mercantilist ideology dominated the period. The economic activities of the people were politically regulated to increase the profits of the king and to fill his treasury with wealth. The nation was looked upon by the mercantilist as an economic organization engaged in the making of profit. The ownership and use of productive properties were minutely regulated by mercantilist law.

Then came the industrial Revolution which changed the techniques of production. The policy of mercantilism also had failed to bring about the welfare of the people. To secure maximum production of usual goods the new doctrine of 'Laissez-faire' was propounded. The doctrine preached non-interference in economic matters. According to this doctrine, if individuals pursue their own interest, unhampered by restriction; they will achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Its advocates, Adam Smith, J.S.Mill, Spencer and Sumner contended that Government should remove all legal restrictions on trade, on production, on the exchange of wealth and on the accumulation of property. Adam Smith enunciated four principles-(i) the doctrine of self interest, (ii) laissez faire policy, (iii) the theory of competition and (iv) profit motive.

Upon these principles and in response to the changing techniques of production brought about by industrial Revolution, a new system of property ownership and 'production', capitalism developed. The Industrial Revolution replaced factories in place of households. In factories the work was divided up into little pieces, each worker doing a little piece. Production increased. Large plants in course of time were set. Corporations owning large plants came into being. All these developments of mass production, division of labour, Specializations and exchange were accompanied by capitalism.

Capitalism is an important phase in the development of economy. It is a necessary phase in the development of any country since it helps raise standard of living and encourages new social values like individualism, equity, freedom etc. of course it becomes an evil when it tends to exploit the workers.

European capitalists' penetration in to India began with the Portuguese establishment of their factory at Calicut in

1500(1498) and their conquest of Goa in 1506. The British rule in India, beyond the trading settlements which were already the initial outposts of conquest, dates from the middle of 18th century. India has been recognized as the pivot of the British Empire. According to Buchanan:

"Here was a country with all crude elements upon which manufacturing depends, yet during more than a century, it has imported factory made goods in large quantities and has developed only a few often simplest industries for which machinery and organization had been highly perfected in other countries. With abundant supplies of raw cotton, raw, jute, easily mined coal... with a redundant population of the starving because of lack of profitable employment ..., with an excellent market within her own borders...in which others were selling great quantities of manufactures, with all these advantages India, after a century, was supporting only about two % of her population by factory industry."

No doubt, the coming of the British gave a boost to Indian business enterprises. Their main field of activity was trade, money-lending and banking. The great product of this activity was Jagat Seth and Amin Chands who sole away the country without qualms. Up to 1947 the British policy was centered round on three principles. The first is the period of merchant capital represented by the East India Company. The second of the period of industrial capital and the third is the finance capital. However, the policy of free-trade, fixation of exchange rate, permitting the foreign capital to establish itself in India detrimentally balked the emergence of Indian capitalism.

Further, the managing agencies played a package deal for everything that was in short supply in India---industrial

capital, technical knowledge, modern management etc. finance capital both Indian and British, mainly operated through the managing agency system. By this system, a small number of managing agency firms promote, control and to a considerable extent finance the various industrial companies and enterprises, govern their operations and output, and market their products, the board of directors of the companies fulfilling only a subordinate role. The cream of the profit passes, not to the shareholders, but to the managing agency. Initially, a managing agent was just an executive who helped an entrepreneur to establish and run a plantation, a coal mine or a factory. Such an entrepreneur was often not familiar with local conditions and also did not want hire managers on his own, but gladly turned to an already established team with a prove record of managerial skills. However the managing agents used their brains for designing industrial progress. The picture of the industrialization of India under imperialist rule is a myth. According to **Buchanan....**

“The country is still annually importing for more manufactures than its export. While the proportions are gradually changing, Indian economic life is still characterized by the export of manufactures. In spite of her factories, India is less nearly self sufficient in manufactured products that she was a century ago.”

In the beginning, the coal industry provided an unfailing source of employment to

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labourers and educated class who were anxious to get employment. In the nature of things a large industry like coal, tea, and the industry’s contribution does not end here. The coal mining industry supported other industries like plywood, fertilizers tea, and transport etc. the industry has been the potent factor in the improvement of means of communication to this part of the country. The railways in Assam “Jorhat Provincial and Dibru-Sadia” were started to take stones, coal and tea. Later on most of the tea producing areas has either been linked through main line or through branch lines to the rest of the country. The most important road linking Lower and Upper Assam is Assam Trunk Road (A.T.Road). Most of the gardens situated on both the banks of the river Brahmaputra are either found on the main roads itself or linked with it. The tea gardens, coal etc not only contributed much to the construction of main roads and link roads but also made responsible by the Local Boards for the maintenance of such roads.

The development of trade and commerce in this region was mainly due to the prosperity of this industry. The town of Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Tinsukia and Tezpur owe to their location in the tea producing areas in Assam. We, can therefore, say that growth, development and prosperity of tea industry in Assam have contributed much to the economic development of the state of Assam in the pre-independence period.

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A Study of the Temples of Barak Valley during the reign of the Kachari Kings

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Abstract

Barak Valley, erstwhile Cachar, was ruled by a number of state powers in the pre-colonial period. Though ruled by different state powers, the land had been an example of social and cultural coexistence and assimilation of different culture and faith. The Dimasas were the last to rule the land before it was annexed to the territory of British India in 1832. On the backdrop of the above transition, the present paper would be an attempt to study the different Temples established through the efforts and patronage of the Kachari Kings, to trace the historical background behind the evolution of the Temples, to highlight the various religious practices evolved centering the Temples, the process of acculturation of the Dimasas and their adaptation of Brahminical Hinduism. It is noteworthy that Barak Valley has a number of Temples built during the reign of Kachari Kings viz., Ranachandi temple at khaspur and Bijoypur, Bharkhola, Sri Sri Bhuvaneshwar Temple at Sonai, Nrimata Temple at Ujaan Nagar, Barkhola, which has enriched the socio-religious tradition of this Valley.

The Dimasas are an off shoot of the Bodos of the Indo-Mongoloid ethnicity in the North-east of India. They are also known as Kacharis and Hedambas (Sanskritisation of the term Hachengsha), who had at one time ruled the greater portion of Upper Assam, from the Sadia-Dibrugarh to the borderland of Nagaland; but had to move towards west to settle at Dimapur (in the present Nagaland) from where they were, again, pushed further southwards by the rising Ahom force; thereafter, they had settled at Maibong on the bank of Mahur I in the present N.C Hills. The Dimasas, however, could not stay peacefully at Maibong due to the continuous attack of the Ahoms, and

other tribal groups, and after two centuries of sojourn at the hills had to forsake the hills to come down to the plains of Cachar shifting their kingdom at khaspur. The Dimasas, as a matter of fact, had already made a progress towards the process of acculturation or Sanskritisation by absorbing Brahminical Hinduism in their Maibong days.

Sri Sri Bhuvaneshwar Shiva Temple at Chandragiri, Sonai

Every year in the Bengali month of Kartik, about ten kilometres south from the Silchar town in a place called Sonai a huge mass of people from Barak Valley as well as from Manipur get accumulated to

offer prayer to the Mahadev of Sri Sri Bhuvaneshwar Temple situated in the Chandragiri hill. Besides the Manipuris, people of other communities also visit this temple but the Manipuris are more in number. This is due to the fact that the Temple was established by the Dimasa king Raja Krishna Chandra whose wife Induprabha was a Manipuri princess. She was devout Vaishnava but at the same time she used to worship Lord Shiva at her parents house before her marriage.

About two or three kilometer south from Sonai Bazaar, in the right side of Sonai-Palanghat road, there is a small mound called Shiv Tilla. Locally, it is also known as chengur Tilla. According to the Government record, the mound measures about 28 bigha of land. There is a small pond below the mound. In the left side, there is the beautiful Chandragiri park. One has to climb atleast ten to fifteen small and large sizes of steps to reach the Temple. There are two face to face brick built structures at a distance of about thirty feet. One is the famous Sri Sri Bhuvaneshwar Shiv Temple and the other is an abandoned structure which was probably used as a rest house of the Sevaits.

The main reason for which the Temple is historically so important are the two inscriptions found inscribed on the wall of the Temple. Both the Inscriptions are in Sanskrit and the script is in Bengali.

Inscription No. I

In order to propitiate Sri Sri Bhuvaneshwar Shiva, Noble Jay Singha Burman, the minister of His Majesty, the King, has completed (the construction of) the marvelous Palace (Temple) made of bricks of mine, situated in Chandragiri, in the city of Swarnapur, under the jurisdiction of Sri Sri, the Lord of Hidimba.

Inscription No. II

In the city known as Swarnapur, this marvelous palace is built with bricks for Bhuvaneshwar. In the shaka year when the sun ascends the Manmatha (the work was) completed.

The wise Sri Jaysingha, who was commissioned as the minister of Sri Maharaj, the Lord of Hidimba, has built the shiva Temple with bricks in the hill top of Chandra.

The information provided in the inscription I is clear, but the Inscription II contains an astrological puzzle, the portion could not be rendered in literal translation.

From the inscriptions, we learn, firstly, the Temple was constructed during the rule of Hedemba, that is Dimasa; Secondly, the construction work was supervised by the minister of the King, Jay Singha Burman; thirdly, the place was known as Swarnapur, the hillock where it was placed was called Chandragiri, and the place was within the jurisdiction of Hedambya Rajya; lastly, the astrological puzzle indicated that it was completed in 1707 shake, that is 1785 A.D.

From the local sources various legends relating to the Temple could be collected. It is said that Ranee Induprava, the queen of Krishna Chandra (1780-1813) had urged the king to construct the Temple like that of 'Nongmaijinching' (Nilkantha-shiva), in Manipur, her parental state, as Bhuvan shine was not easy accessible to her. As she was used to worshipping Shiva in Manipur, she kept up the practice here too.

The diety in Sonai is worshipped in Sunday following the practice of Manipur in the temple of 'Nongmijinching', an uncommon practice, as Shiva is worshipped in Monday everywhere. It is said that the queen used to come to the temple annually on the Sunday of Suklapakshya in the month when the sun ascends the Monmoth. She used to stay for sometime at a place in sonai named Chandpur. Following the tradition, the

Manipuris from all corners assembly in
Sonai
in the

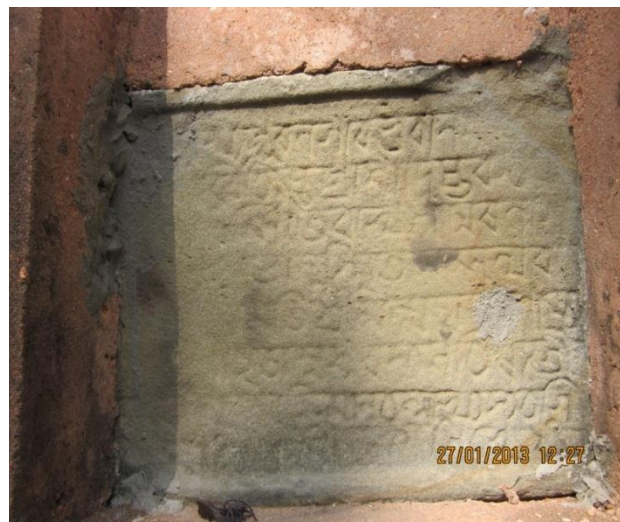
month of Kartik, Sunday of Suklapakhysa
every
year



Sri Sri Bhuvaneshwar Temple in Chandragiri at sonai



Picture of the Abandoned Structure just facing opposite to the main Temple

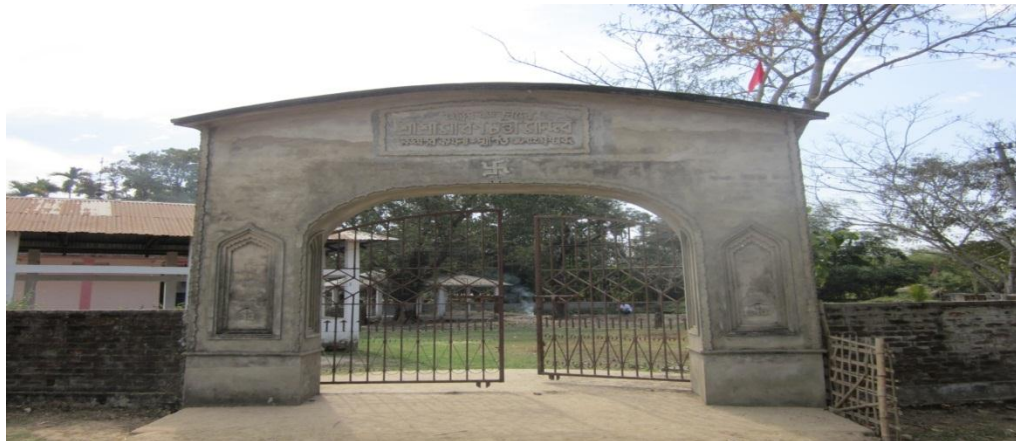


The Two Inscriptions inscribed on the wall of Sri Sri Bhuvaneshwar Temple in Sonai, Chandragiri

Ranachandi Temple at Bijoypur, Barkhola:

About two hundred years ago, in 1824 BCE a few years before the death of the last Dimasa king, Govinda Chandra Narayan, the Capital was shifted from Khaspur to Haritkar. Raja Govinda Chandra along with his queens and subjects and the idol of Devi Ranachandi in the symbol of sword shifted to Haritkar. In Khaspur, the last capital of the Dimasa kings there still survives a temple known as the temple of Ranachandi. This old shrine was abandoned long ago and the altar has long been vacant. It is said that the Devi in the symbol of the sword had originally been installed in the temple of Khaspur from where during the course of

Burmese invasions, she was secretly carried to Bijoypur where her honour would be secured. No inscription or any other archaeological remain has been found regarding the establishment of the Temple. The Temple is a recent renovation as the deity was originally enthroned in a tin shed. Here, Ranachandi is not worshipped in the Idol form but in the form of a sword which is kept concealed under a piece of cloth as no one is allowed to see or touch the sword. Here, Devi Ranachani is worshipped every Sunday. Besides this, every year in the Bengali month of Magh and Baishak, the Devi is worshipped with great pomp and grandeur.



Gateway to the Ranachandi Temple at Barkhola, Bijoypur



Ranachandi Temple at Bijoypur, Barkhola



Inside View of the Temple of the Ranachandi Temple at Bijoypur, Barkhola

The Nrimata Shrine at Ujaan Nagar, Barkhola:

Nrimata is a mother Goddess of Dimasa origin situated in Barkhola, a large village situated about 30 kilometres from Silchar town. The Shrine of the Goddess is situated in the north of Barkhola Bazaar. The shrine was established in Barkhola in between 1890-1895 BCE. The Kachari kings were great patrons of religion and they established quite a number of Temples through their patronage. The Nrimata shrine was established by the minister of Kirti Chandra Narayan, Maniram Laskar also known as Maniram Uzir who was appointed as a minister of the king to look after the administration of Cachar in the year 1736 BCE when he established a temporary Capital in Khaspur. Although the Goddess has been established in this village about a hundred years ago but the goddess was first established in Sonapur village about two hundred and fifty years ago. There is another shrine of Nrimata in Ujaan Nagar village in

Barkhola. There is a legend behind the establishment of the shrine. It is said that Maniram Laskar after being appointed by the king had a dream where the mother Goddess instructed Maniram to install two stone slabs from nearby hill and venerate them as her manifestation in the Barkhola shrine. Regarding the religious practices and rites held in this Temple, it can be said that besides being a Shakti Temple Hari Sankirtan, Shiva Puja and the different female rites or Vratas are held here. Durga Puja, Jagadhatri Puja and Kali Puja are held with grand pomp and grandeur every year. Although Devi Nrimata is a Goddess of Dimasa origin and has retained her original tribal name, however, the Goddess herself is being subjected to a process of significant transformation in a new direction. The Goddess is now a recognized Hindu divinity and occupy honourable position in the cult practices of the Bengalees of Cachar.

Conclusion:

From the Temples and shrines established through the efforts of the Dimasa kings, it can be concluded that the Dimasa had already adopted Sakta cult in their first phase of Hinduisation. The Bhabishya Puran states-

***Hedemba desha cho madheya
Ranachandi birajate***

They began to worship Ranachandi as the Royal deity, and introduced animal sacrifice as per the Sakta tradition that was current in Bengal of the period. Bengali Hindus sought to regain their strength by surrendering to a Mother figure-a Kali, Durga, who, however, were venerated in the folk tradition, nurtured primarily by the women in their Vratas performed by them to the exclusion of males in it. The Sakta cult made its appearance in Dimasa court in two ways. Firstly, the cult of Kamrup-Kamakhyia which permeated through the North-East in the ancient and medieval period had

its entry in the Dimasa Court during Maibong days following their association with the Ahom and the Koches. The other one representing the traits of Bengal version of sakta cult carrying the basic philosophy of it had its entry through the Bengal frontier. There are also numerous myths and legends current among the Dimasas regarding their initiation to the Sakta Cult. One such a legend is of a dream oracle which instructed the King to find the deity by touching a fearsome snake in the river at a stipulated time in the dead of night. The king, however, dared not touch the head and could only obtain a golden sword instead of a promised idol by placing his trembling finger on its tail. This sword has been adopted as a symbol of Devi Ranachandi, and is worshipped even today. Of course, this kind of legend with some variation is current among the various tribes of North East India.

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The Charter Act of 1833: A Study

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Abstract

The Charter Act of 1833 marked the beginning of a system of government for all India. Later, it adopted a representative character, which distinguished it fundamentally from the earlier rule of despotism. It marked the beginning of the Indianisation in services. It also tried to separate and decentralize executive and legislative functions.

The Charter Act of 1833 renewed the East India Company's privileges for another twenty years. The Charter Act of 1833 like its predecessor was the outcome of much enquiry and consideration. It was produced when whig and liberal principles were politically dominant in England. Macaulay was the Secretary of the Board of control and James Mill, a disciple of Bentham, was examiner of correspondence at the India House. It was as much in the logic of history as in consonance with the zeitgeist.¹ The ideal of laissez faire was the weapon with which newborn western capitalism dismantled the relics of feudal economy at home and raised abroad its own edifice of international economics.² By this act the monopoly of the East India Company had been put an end to and private traders were or free merchants were permitted under special license to trade laofully".³

The Company, till then was fast outgrowing its role and becoming a Raj. It was carrying its livelihood by wars and conquests, government and diplomacy and its original occupation of commerce was

proving a while elephant. Holt Hockenzie, confessed before the parliamentary committee in 1832" the Government of India has quite enough to do in the political management of the country without having any concern with commerce, they never have paid and never can pay that attention to the commercial affairs of the country which they ought to pay in order to trade to the most advantage.⁴ Since 1825 the company was not exporting goods to India on their own account for sale and had a abandoned the imports into British of all articles except raw, Saltpetre and indigo. Hence the statutory termination of the spent up mercantile character of the company was called for.

The Industrial Revolution in Britain rendered the old Mercantilist policy of the British unprofitable. Britain became a manufacturer of cotton and other factory goods on a large scale and she required foreign markets for their consumption.⁵ But the decrees of Napoleon against British commerce and the closure of the continental ports frustrated the quest for foreign markets

and the British industrialists were obliged to explore new markets in British colonies. A vast country like India naturally provided great scope for the realisation of their ambition for, besides constituting a large market for the manufactured goods and capital; India could supply the much needed raw materials. The British power in India after 1800 as no more than an accessory, an instrument for ensuring the necessary conditions of law and order by which the potentially vast India market could be conquered for the British industry.⁶ There was a tremendous political change in India since 1813 which imposed on the company political responsibilities incompatible with maintenance of its commercial character.

The annexation of the peshwa's dominions, of Assam and of a part of Erma and the extension of British supremacy over Rajputava the company became the defacto paramount power in India. Wallesley's dream of converting the British Empire in India into the British Empire in India into the British Empire of India.⁷ was realised within less than a decade through diplomacy and the use of arms.

Lord Ellenborough who became the president of the Board of control in September 1828, was in favour of radical change. He opined that "the company was to be abolished the Directors being retained as advisory commissioners and the government of India was to be placed in the hands of a secretary of state".⁸ But in 1830 Lord Grey formed a new ministry and Charles became president of the Board of control. He was a canningite in his political affiliation. It was a significant political change. The whigs, coming to back power after a long political exile. Thomas Macaulay was in the House of Commons and he became an Assistant Commissioner of the Board of control in June 1832 and its Secretary six months later.⁹ James Mill a disciple of Bentham

became examiner of the company's India correspondence in 1831.

The age of utilitarianism was another cause to pass the Act of 1833. Utilitarian influence expressed themselves more distinctly in the field of cultural and social policy than in the constitutional reforms. Bentinck who adopted utilitarian views gave great attention to social policy.

The Anglo-Burmese war of 1824 had caused to severe strain on the financial resources of government. In addition to increase in its civil expenses, its military expenses had also increased by £ 10,000,000. In 1828-29 the revenue of India amounted to £ 22,000,000. The consideration of the constitutional problem was, therefore, entrusted to the civil finance committee,¹⁰ instituted in pursuance of an order of the court of Directors who had asked the supreme government in 1827 to reduce expenditure to the level of 1823-24. This committee was directed on 11 May 1830 to extend its investigation to the expediency of the plan on which the several presidencies had been constituted by the legislature.¹¹

Grey recommended the formation of a Legislative Council with power to make laws for all places, persons and courts. In its composition, he suggested, it might include representatives of the Supreme Court and the church of the services and the subordinate governments, but definitely not of any Indians.¹² Copies of all minutes and discussion on the constitution of the Indian Government were transmitted to England for the consideration of the home authorities, who were considerably influenced in their decision by the nature of these recommendations. We have to solve one of the hardest problems in politics. We are trying to make bricks without straw- to give a good government. We have to engraft on despotism those blessing are the natural fruits of liberty.¹³ Even J. S. Mill the great

advocate of representative Government declared it as “utterly out of question for India”.¹⁴

Meanwhile, Select Committee had been constituted thrice in 1830-31 to investigate “the affairs of the company and the trade between Great Britain and China” but their work was interrupted by dissolutions of parliament in connection with the Reform Bill.¹⁵ The investigation really began after the reconstruction of the Select Committee of the House of Commons for the fourth time in January 1832. The Select Committee was divided into various branches, financial, revenue, judicial, military, and political. Evidence, oral and written was collected.¹⁶ A Report concerning the Reform Bill was submitted in August 1832.

The Finance Committee recommend that the armies of the three presidencies be united into one or at least be placed under the immediate orders of the Supreme Government and under one commander in chief. In that recommendation Metcalfe said, there may be difficulty in amalgamating the expedient to retain with each description the officers to whom they are most accustomed. It may therefore, perhaps be desirable to adhere generally to the same local distribution that at present prevails. But there loss not appear to be any difficulty in considering all as belonging to one army or in placing the whole under the Supreme Government and commander in chief.¹⁷

With regard to the consideration of the economy of this new system, Dalhousie advised that “such details can only be well arranged by the Supreme Government when formed, and from what I have seen in this country. He has also objection to commercial changes now in progress have been rapidly urged and recorded, but without attending their probable effect on the national revenue and on the interests of

the British consumer without insisting on their tendency to disturb our relation.”¹⁸

Henry St. George Tucker also gave suggestion for the administrative system of the East India Company’s government.

There was a strong section in parliament which advocated the immediate transfer of the company’s government in India to the British crown. Buckingham considered it preposterous that the government of an immense country should be entrusted to a joint-stock company. He even suggested that the Governor-General’s council should include representatives of both British and Indian population in order to make a beginning, at least, of that system of self-government to which they ought to advance with all colonies as fast as possible.¹⁹ Macaulay on the other hand, forcefully advocated the cause retaining the company as an organ of government for India. His main argument was that a revenue of twenty million a year- an army of two hundred thousand men- a civil service abounding with lucrative situations- should be left to the disposal of the crown without check whatever, is what no minister, I conceive, would venture to propose.²⁰ He admitted that the constitution had provided the House of commons a check on the abuse of the royal prerogative. But, he argued, that the ready and it would not have the necessary time to look into Indian affairs as its members looked neither had the necessary knowledge, nor has it motives to acquire that knowledge.²¹ The British public was extremely indifferent to India affairs Macaulay asserted “A broken head in cold bath fields produces a greater sensation among as then, three pitched battles in India..... Even when..... the president of the Board of control made his most able and interesting statement of the measure which he intended to propose for the government of a hundred millions of human beings, the attendance in the House of common was not

so large as I have seen it on a turnpike bill or rail road bill.²² Macaulay then concluded that there must be an efficient check on the authority of the crown, and that the House of common is not an efficient check. We must then find some other body to perform that important office. We have such a body- the company shall we discard it.²³

Macaulay agreed with the members of the House who advocated immediate winding up of the company that it was a political anomaly, but he asserted that there was no substitute available for the company. The Government which always took a party view of all public matters and problems confronting the country, opposed at every stage by the vexations tactics of the opposition. Such a nature of the Government Macaulay argued, was no solution of the Indian affairs. What we want, he emphasized, is a body independent not a tool of the treasury not a tool of the opposition no new plan which I have heard would give us such a body. It is, as a corporation, neither whig nor tory, neither high church nor low church, it has constantly acted with a view not to English politics but to Indian politics. We have seen the country convulsed by faction..... And amidst all these agitating events the company has preserved strict and unsuspected neutrality. This is to think, an inestimable advantage.²⁴

Macaulay was correct that parliament had neither the time nor the knowledge nor the will to interest itself in Indian affairs. At no stage during the discussion of the charter Bill, 1833 the attendance in the House of commons exceeded 150 members, and clause after clause of the Bill was passed without discussion at all. Thus view for the retention of the company was accordingly bound to prevail and the Act of 1833, the company secured a further lease of life for twenty years. But the Act also envisaged an earlier dissolution of the company as a

“government agency” for it made the provision nor the accumulation of twelve million pounds for purchasing the company’s stock”.²⁵

Grant had already informed the company that the China monopoly was to cease. The company’s establishment charges and freight were too high to permit it to reduce the price of tea to a level at which private merchants would be able to keep them. When tea became cheap the demand would increase too.²⁶ Again, as in the case of the India trade, the end of monopoly would promote a vast extension of British exports. It was expected that, the immense population, and the wealth of China and the inferiority of its manufactures would offer a much larger market for the cottons and woollens of Manchester and Glasgow, and the hardware of Birmingham and Sheffield.²⁷ The Government was bound to take steps to counteract the depression which had began, and the prospect of a new inexhaustible market in China seemed to offer an appropriate remedy. The company offered little opposition, indeed as early as 1825 it had anticipated the loss of the China monopoly and decided to give its China shipping short term contracts creating in 1834.

But the continuance of company’s administration in India was decided in favour of the company on two political grounds. In view of the Governments pre-occupation with the Reform Bill it was not prepared to assume direct responsibility for the administration of India. The abolition of the company would leave patronage in the hands of the Government and expose the whigs to the charge of political corruption. But the retention of the company’s political authority was to be subject to two conditions, it must give up all commercial interests, and it must the opinion of the chair would make the court of Directors, a Government Board”.²⁸ Grant did not hesitate

to intimate the Directors that if they rejected the Government's terms, he would propose to parliament" a plan for the future government of India without the instrumentality of the company.²⁹ A guarantee fund was created out the company's commercial assets as a collateral security for its capital stock. The court of Directors was afraid that as a result of the loss of commerce, the company would be reduced to "a state of weakness and dependence incompatible with the performance of its duties and became an instrument for carrying out the wishes of the president of the Board of Control.³⁰ It claimed the right of appeal to parliament in case of a difference of opinion with the Board of at least the right of giving publicity to such difference by communicating them, when relating to important subjects to parliament.³¹

Grant introduced the Bill into parliament in June 1833 and briefly outlined the terms that had been agreed on between the court and the Board.³² But after his illness Macaulay took over the proceedings and carried the Bill. The presence of the members in the House was quite large, of whom most of them were hostile to the company when the Directors, Fergusson presented the company's petition for the renewal of its privileges, "half the members present deliberately walked out and the rest made so much noise that he could not be heard".³³ Clause after clause of the Bill was passed without adequate discussion and consistently with the recent policy of the India House, not even the company interest made its presence felt.³⁴

Wynn, the former president pointed out during discussion that the independence of the Directors would be completely taken away by the bill. He added by that the presence of city merchants in the court of Directors was justifiable and useful only so long as the company's functions were partly

commercial. He suggested that "the correlative of the destruction of the courts independence and of the abolition of the company's trading function was a reduction in the number of Director to eight, each of whom should be qualified by at least twelve year's residence in India'.³⁵ He also proposed that "the patronage of India should be thrown open to public competition, but that a reasonable number of families that had long maintain in connection with India.³⁶ Macaulay's speech was more brilliant in style but in thought perhaps less origin. He assorted the very meaning of compromise is that each party gives up his charge of complete success in order to be secured the chance of utter failure. The company is an anomaly, but it is a part of system where everything is anomaly..... I will not, therefore, pull down the existing system..... which sanctioned by experience.³⁷

Macaulay gave parliament the assurance which in its jealousy and fear of an extension of the executive power, it was anxious to receive what we want, he said, is a body independent of the Government and no more than independent- not a tool of the treasury not a tool of the opposition.....³⁸ It was most impressed by the noiselessness with which the administrative machinery is worked.³⁹ and it accepted Macaulay's statement without question. The company's administrative functions were, therefore, continued for twenty years, and the existing dual organisation of the home government confirmed.

The British members were inclined to give representative institutions to Indians but such a more failed because of Macaulay who stood strongly for the continuation of company's rule in India. The Act was finally passed on 28th August 1833 and put into force on 22 April 1834. It introduced important changes into the constitution of the East India Company and the system of

Indian administration. This Act was based on the “papers respecting to the negotiation with His Majesty’s Ministers and the subject of the East India Company’s Charter, parliamentary papers Hansard and Historical introduction the Government of India” by Courtenay Ilbert.⁴⁰

These are the summary of the provisions of Charter Act of 1833 which was adopted by British parliament:-

This Act is for affecting an arrangement with the East India Company, and for the better government of His Majesty’s Indian territories, till the 30th day April 1854.

That from and after the 22nd day of April 1834, the exclusive right of trading with the dominions of the Emperor of China, and of trading in tea shall cease.

That the said company shall with all convenient speed after the said 22nd day of April 1834, close their commercial business.

That the said Board shall have and be invested with all full power and authority to superintend, direct and control all acts, operations and control all acts, operations and concerns of the said company which in anywise relate to or concern the government or revenues of the said territories is mentioned.

That the territories now subject to the Government of the presidency of Fort William in Bengal shall be divided into two distinct presidencies..... to be styled the presidency of Fort William in Bengal, and the other of such presidencies to be styled the presidency of Agra.

That there shall be Four Ordinary Members of the said council, three of whom shall from time to time be appointed by the said court of Directors from amongst such persons as shall be or shall have been servants of the said company and each of the said three ordinary members of council shall at the time of this appointment have been in the service of the said company for at least

ten years the Fourth Ordinary member of council shall from time to time be appointed from amongst persons who shall not be servants of the said company by the said court of Directors provided that such last mentioned member of council shall not be entitled to sit or vote in the said council except of meetings thereof for making laws and regulation.

That all vacancies happening in the office of Government-General of India shall from time to time be filled up by the said court of Directors, subject to the approbation of His Majesty, to be signified in writing by his Royal sign Manual, countersigned by the president of the said Board.

That the said Governor-General in council shall have power to make laws and regulations for repealing, amending or altering any Laws or Regulations whatever now in force or hereafter to be enforce in the said territories or any part thereof, and to make laws and regulations for all persons, whether British or Native, foreigners or others, and for all courts of justice whether established by His Majesties Charters or otherwise and the jurisdiction thereof..... except that the said Governor-General in council shall not have the power of making any Laws or Regulations which shall in any way affect and prerogative of the crown, or the authority of parliament or the constitution or Rights of the said company or any part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

That all Laws and Regulations made as aforesaid shall be of the same force territories as any Act of parliament would or ought to be within the same territories and it shall not be necessary to register or abolish in any court of justice or any Laws or Regulations made by the said Governor-General in council.

Provided that it shall not be lawful for the said Governor-General council, without the previous sanction of the said

court of Directors, to make any Law or Regulation whereby power should be given to any courts of justice, other than the court of justice established by His Majesty's charters, to sentence to the punishment of death any of His Majesty's natural born subjects born in Europe or the children of such subjects or which shall abolish any of the courts of justice established by His Majesty's Charters.

Provided always, and be it enacted, that all Laws and Regulations shall made at some meeting of the council at which the said Governor-General and at least three of the ordinary members of council shall be assembled, and that all other functions of the said Governor-General in council may be exercised by the said Governor-General and one or more ordinary member or members of council, and that in every case of difference of opinion at meetings of the said council where there shall be an equality of voices the said Governor-General shall have two votes or the casting vote.

That..... nothing herein contain shall extend to affect in any way the right of parliament to more laws for the said territories and for all the inhabitants thereof, and it is expressly declared that a full, complete and constantly existing right and power is intended to be reserved to parliament to control, supersede or prevent all proceedings and Acts.

That the executive Government of each of the several presidencies of Fort William in Bengal, Fort St. George, Bombay and Agra shall be administered by the Governor and three councilors, to be styled. The Governor in council of the said presidencies of Fort William in Bengal, Fort St. George Bombay and Agra respectively.

Provided also, that no Governor or Governor in council shall have the power of creating any new office or granting any salary, Gratuity or Allowance without the previous sanction of the Governor-General

of India in council that it shall and may be lawful for the Governor-General in council of Fort William in Bengal, Fort St. George Bombay and Agra respectively to propose to the said Governor-General in council drafts or projects of any Laws or Regulations which they said Governors or Governors in council respectively may think expedient together with their reasons for proposing the same.

And be it enacted that no native of the said territories- nor any natural born subjects of His Majesty resident therein, shall, by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, or employment under the said company.

And be it enacted, that every power Authority and Function of this or any other Act or Acts given to and vested in the said court of Directors shall be deemed and taken to be subject to such control of the said Board of commissioners as this is mentioned, unless there shall be something in the enactments conferring such construction, and except as to any patronage or right of appointing to office vested in or reserved to the said court.

And be it further enacted, that the court of Directors of the said company shall, within the first fourteen sitting days next after the first day of May in every year, lay before both Houses of parliament an account made up according to the latest advices which shall have been received, of the annual produce of the Revenues of the said Territories in India.

The Charter Act of 1833 was a great land mark in the constitution history of India. It sought to bring about centralization in the administration, especially in legislation. Till now, parliament had been making laws even on local issues for India because the presidency Governments issued regulations without having them registered and published in the Supreme Court.

Regulations which could not be made effective on Europeans.⁴¹ This was a very inconvenient system, moreover, the engross of Europeans was multiplying the legal problem concerning them. Laws regulating their conduct and protecting their interests in India were obviously to be made in India. The talk could not be left to three separate agencies, “to do so would be the surest means of leaving them to three separate and not infrequently conflicting system of law”.⁴² That was needed as Macaulay said, “one single paramount council armed with legislative council.”⁴³ only the central authority, the Governor General and council, could function as “one single parliament” law making body. The enlargement of the supreme Governments legislative jurisdiction was a natural corollary to the change in the Governor-Generals designation. The Governor-General of Bengal would henceforth be the Governor-General of India.⁴⁴ The laws for India were to be made in India, and parliament was to divest itself of its responsibility in this respect as far as possible. It was to be central authority that transfer of legislative power could, with the least disadvantage be made. The supreme Government, Macaulay said, would legislate for Europeans as far as natives and its law would “blend the king’s court as they blind all other courts.”⁴⁵

It was pointed out in Buckingham’s case against the press Regulation that supreme Government’s legislative power “was to be confined to more police regulations for preserving the peace, preventing and punishing nuisances and the like and was not to be extended to a general power of making original laws affecting the liberty or little to property of the inhabitants of Calcutta.... through a new law should be given by the local Government to affect the inhabitants of the provinces in the same respects.”⁴⁶

But with the limited powers of legislation in respect of the inhabitants of Calcutta, the supreme Government could not be expected to control the situation arising out of the “free ingress of Europeans”.

Some of the most important of the Indian Government have made without the direct or express authority of parliament and are most easily justified, as being in the exercise of the old legislative powers of the former governments not superseded, and therefore continuous to subsist. Some of the Regulations, about 1793, were of this description. The imposition of the taxes in the provinces is perhaps an instance, and it is a power which might come to be a subject of serious discussion and, if British persons are to be permitted to hold lands throughout India, of vital importance.⁴⁷

Charles Grant, president of the Board of control summed up the defects “The first was in the nature of laws and regulations by which India was governed, the second was in the ill-defined authority and power from which these various laws and regulations enacted and the third was the anomalous and sometimes conflicting, judicatures by which the laws were administered, or in other words the defects were in the laws themselves in the authority for making them, and in the manner of executing them.”⁴⁸

The act made five important provisions in regard to law making the executive power of making laws for the whole of the company’s territories in India was vested- subject to the overriding authority of parliament and the vests of the court of Directors in the Governor-General in council. Second, as a subsequent provision, Madras and Bombay were deprived of their power of making regulations. Third the system of registration of laws in the supreme courts was abolished. Fourth, the Governor-General’s council was strengthened by the addition of a new member, called the fourth ordinary member,

who would be a legal expert engaged solely in the making of laws. Fifth provision was made for the appointment of law commission for consolidation and codification of Indian laws.⁴⁹

The provision of the Fourth ordinary member was a “substitute for the sanction of the Supreme Court”⁵⁰ The legal position of the Fourth ordinary member under the Act of 1833 was thus defined by peacock 1859- the duty the Fourth ordinary member was confined entirely to the subject of legislation, he had no power to sit and vote except at meetings for the purpose of making laws and regulations and it was only by Courtenay and not by right, that he was allowed to see the papers of correspondence or to be made acquitted with the deliberation.⁵¹

The subordinate Governments lost their legislative power but the act⁵² gave the Governors or Governors in Council of Bengal, Madras, Bombay and Agra⁵³ to submit “drafts or projects of any laws or regulations which they might think expedient together with their reasons for proposing the same.”⁵⁴ The Governor-General in Council were required to take the same and to communicate their resolutions thereon to Governor or Governor in council concerned. Ishwar Prasad said that the act of 1833 created a real Indian Legislative council.⁵⁵ The distinction, according to him lay “not in relation to the personal of the bodies but to the function.”⁵⁶ The significance of the act lay in definitely assigning the function of legislation to the executive and making it powerful and able to perform that function.⁵⁷

Bentinck in 1835 created a separate department called “Legislative Department”. Thus there was established in India one central legislative authority in place of three councils which was existed before. The new council was armed with authority to pass laws and regulations for the whole of the

British territories in India. It continued to exist with some changes and modifications till 1861.

So, it is quite clear that this act centralized the administration of the country; Governor-General of Bengal became the Governor General of India. The Governor-General in council was given the power to control, superintend and direct the civil and military affairs of the company. Bombay, Madras, Bengal and others placed under the complete control of the Governor-General in council. All revenues were to be raised under the authority of the central Government and it was to have complete control over the expenditure provincial Governments were to spend only that money which was approved for them. Governor-General in council could suspend any member of the Governments of Bombay and Madras who disobeyed them. If a provincial government failed to carry out the orders of central government, it could be suspended. When the Governor-General went to a presidency, he superseded the Governor and exercised the right of overriding the local council. The result of all these provisions was that all power was centralised in the hands of the central government. Provincial governments had kept the central government informed of their progress in all departments. The central government could criticise the provincial governments on any matter and also give directions. Before, 1833, the powers of central government were inadequate and ill-defined. It had no power to make laws for the whole country on matters of common concern.⁵⁸ Before this, although the regulation passed by the governments of Madras and Bombay had to be confirmed by the government of Bengal before they became valid this power was never exercised and the result was that there were many discrepancies. All these regulations were passed by the governments without proper legal advice or assistance;

they were in many cases ill- drawn and ill-expressed. It was also not certain as to what was the exact nature and extent of the legislative powers of the various governments.

But according to this act, Governor-General in council could make articles of war and code of military discipline and provided for the administration of justice. This power of making laws included the power of making, repealing, amending and altering any laws and regulations in force in India. However, there were certain limitations on the law-making power. Governor-General in council could not alter the constitution of the company or amend the charter Act itself.⁵⁹ It could not alter the Minting Act it could not alter the prerogative of the crown. It could not pass laws against the laws of England. It is true that the process of law-making was simplified, but it is too much to say that the Act of 1833 decentralized the Legislative and Executive functions in India. What was done was that the law-member was to be consulted whenever a new law was passed.⁶⁰

It provided for the codification of law in India. Before 1833, laws were “so imperfect that in many cases it was quite impossible to ascertain what the law was.”⁶¹ Before this act, there were several types of laws enforceable in India. It was a difficult question to decide as to which law was applicable in a particular case. There was always a conflict of laws. There were the English Acts, Hindu Law and custom, Muslim law and custom and Bombay, Madras and Bengal regulations. So, this act authorised the Governor-General to appoint the Indian law commission to study, collect and codify various rules and regulations prevalent in India.⁶² The first Indian Law Commission was appointed in the year 1834 and Macaulay was the first Law Commissioner. As a result of the labour of this commission, the Indian Penal Code and

codes of civil and criminal procedure were enacted. These codes simplified and codified the substantive law procedural law.⁶³ The code remained a draft for about a quarter of a century. It was enacted by legislative council in 1860, a year after Macaulay's death.

By an Act passed in 1833, parliament provided for the constitution of a committee of the Privy Council, to be known as a judicial committee consisting of persons holding who had previously held, certain high judicial offices, for the more effectual hearing and reporting on appeal to His Majesty in council.⁶³

The appellate jurisdiction of a privy council in respect of the Sadar Dewani Adalat was an extension of the crown's jurisdiction to the judicial sector occupied by the company. During the years following the charter Act of 1833 there was more extensive employment of Indians in the judicial service. The office of Principal Sadar Ameen was created in 1831; its functions were extended in 1843. In 1843, the Law Commission recommended abolition of the office of Sadar Ameen, but the proposal was not implemented due to opposition from the Government of Bengal.

The process of Indianisation of Indian services was begun. The Indian civil service was considered the spine of the Indian body politic and to it the people generally looked for the protection of person and property and life and liberty. Its form and character developed under rule of the East India Company.⁶⁴

The Charter Act of 1833 incorporated for the first time a principle of competition. But it did so only in a limited form. Under this act, the Governor-General in council was to send for the approval of the Board of Control a complete annual list of vacancies which and when finalised, was to be submitted to the court of Directors. The Directors were then to make

nominations of admission to the East India College to the extent of four times the member of vacancies as announced by the Board.

Charter Act of 1833, marks the starting point of the Indianization in services. From Indian point of view, the most remarkable provision of the charter Act of 1833 was the clause 87 which laid down that no native of the said Territories, nor any natural born subject of His Majesty..... the said company. Nonetheless, the acceptance of a noble principle, even though on paper, is a sign or psychological preparation. Ram Mohan was the first Indian to plead for the appointment of meritorious Indians to covenanted post of the Government of India. Attachment of the Indian intelligentsia to British rule could be secured by “making them eligible to gradual promotion, according to their respective abilities and merits, to situations of trust and responsibility in the state.”⁶⁵ Ram Mohan cited the opinions of many distinguished servants of the East India Company, such as Munro and Rickard, in support in his view.

But on the other hand in happened to be the death blow for native industries. Ever since, the beginning of the century Indian industries had been fighting for existence against the imported machine-made goods. It sealed the fate of the great textile industry which was declining but not yet dead.⁶⁶

It was in more than one sense the period of dress rehearsal for British capitalism in India. The period not only distressed the conversion of India into a “quarry” of raw materials as the rapid growth of plantations in indigo, cotton, tea and coffee. The tremendous success of this capitalist enterprise held out the possibilities of development of large-scale modern industries on the soil of India itself. Towards the middle of the 18th century British capitalism had attained its apogee and in

near future would be subject to the law of diminishing returns.⁶⁷

Thus, the British parliamentary interferences in company’s affairs in India by the Charter Act of 1833 was laudable Lord Macaulay described this act as most extensive measure of Indian Government between Pitt’s India Act of 1784 and Queen Victoria’s assumption of the Government of India. Lord Morley’s appreciation was correct as it finally decided the future of the company and determined the shape of the government in India to come. It renewed for another twenty years only its political and administrative authority” in trust for His Majesty, his heirs and successors.⁶⁸ Lord Morley considered it the most important act passed by the parliament till 1909. The first thing that the Act accomplished was a strong centralised government for the whole of British India with legislative centralisation, it ensured uniformity of laws in the country. Section 87, of the act by its implication meant that there would be no governing caste in British India and that race and religion will not qualify or disqualify a person in matters of higher services and employments. Macaulay called this provision as the most wise, benevolent and noble clause of the Act. It marked the beginning of Indian Legislation.⁶⁹

The Act of 1833 intensified the process of administrative centralization initiated earlier. It provided that no Indian subject of the company would be debarred from holding any office under the company by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent or colour. But the provision was simply grandiose gesture which signified nothing reality.⁷⁰ The object of the Act, the Directors emphasized, was “not to ascertain qualification, but to remove disqualification. It does not break down or derange the pally through the instrumentality of our regular servants, civil and military.”⁷¹ In the application of this principle, the Directors

enjoined upon the Governor-General in council that fitness along was, “henceforth to be the criterion of eligibility.”⁷² But as A. B. Keith said “the excellent sentiment was not of much political importance, a since nothing was done, despite the views of Munro, Elphinstone, Sleeman and Bishop Herber, to repeal the provision of the Act of 1793, which excluded and but covenanted servants from occupying places worth over £ 500 a year.”⁷³ The clause 87 of the Charter would remain a dead letter because Indian guardians would not allow their wards to take admission in Haileybury as to cross the seas was regarded a sin in the orthodox Hindus.⁷⁴ Compulsory education at Haileybury for entering into civil service rendered clause 87 totally nugatory. The Supreme Court was a check on the despotic rule of the executive, but that check was done away with.⁷⁵

This provision of act was remained a dead letter. This act had made no provision to secure the nomination of Indians to the covenanted services of the company. The result was that not a single Indian was appointed to the covenanted service during the company’s regime. Indians remained excluded in both the civil and military department from any but the minor posts.

The importance of this provision cannot be discounted, for it became “the sheet-anchor of political agitation in India towards the end of the century. Almost all the political activities in the earlier year of national awakening turned on this clause which came very handy when demands were being made for giving Indians equal opportunities in administration.”⁷⁶ It gave the birth of political associations. Land Holders society 1837, society for the Acquisition of knowledge 1838 and the Bengal British Indian society 1843. Several journals were also published by members of the educated community through which they carried on their political agitation.

Conclusion:

The central government was headed by Governor-General. The expression Governor-General and council was headed by used in the Regulating Act but it was replaced by Governor-General in council in the Charter Act of 1833. The Governor-General was appointed by the court of Directors. The appointment was made on the advice of the prime minister of England. The Governor-General usually held office for a term of five years. This limitation was not imposed by statute or warrant of appointments, its origin has been traced to the five year term prescribed by the Regulating Act for the first Governor-General Warren Hastings under the Queen’s proclamation 1858, the Governor-General had in additional resignation a viceroy.

Under the Charter Act of 1833, the Governor-General’s council was composed of four ordinary members and one extra-ordinary member. The extra-ordinary member i.e. commander in chief of the company’s forces in India and if there be no such commander in chief and of Governor-General shall be vested in the same person then the commander in chief of the forces on the Bengal establishment was accorded rank and precedence at the council Board next after the Governor-General under the Government of India Act of 1858, the name council of India was assigned to the newly constituted council of the secretary of State for India and it was provided that the name of the Governor-General’s council was to be the council of the Governor-General of India.

The monopoly of the China trade was abolished in 1833. The company was completely shown of its commercial function in India. It became a trustee of the crown even in the field of administration.

Besides the Supreme Government, the administration of East India Company was divided into provinces. British India was an agglomeration of territories acquired at different times of different methods. These were initially grouped into three presidencies. Fort William in Bengal (under a Governor-General and a council), Fort St. George or Madras under a Government and a council and Bombay under a Governor and a council. The two latter presidencies retained this form of government. The Governor-General of India under the Charter Act of 1833, but the territories included in the presidency passed different stages of administrative distribution i.e. creation of the North-Western provinces in 1836, creation of the Lieutenant Governorship.

The Decentralisation commission pointed out that parliament originally contemplated the extension of the Madras, Bombay type of the council

system of government to the Major provinces. The Charter Act of 1833 provided for the creation of a fourth presidency the presidency of Agra under a Governor in council.

The Charter Act of 1833 provided for effective centralisation of legislation and finance.

The Charter Act of 1833 incorporated for the first time a principle of competition for Indian civil services. But it did so only in a limited form. Under this act, the Governor-General in council was to send for the approval of the Board of control complete annual list of vacancies which were finalized, was to be submitted to the court of Directors. The Directors were then to make notifications for admission to the East India College to the extent of four times the number of vacancies so announced by the Board.

The Charter Act of 1833 marks the starting point of the Indianisation in services, from the point

of view of the Indians, the most remarkable provision of the Charter Act of 1833 was the clause 87 which laid down that no native of the said territories nor any natural born subject of His Majesty will be debarred from the service of the company. Nonetheless, the acceptance of a noble principle, even though on paper, is a sign of psychological preparation. Ram Mohan Roy was the first Indian to plead for the appointment of meritorious Indians to covenanted posts of the government of India.

Charter Act of 1833 permitted the Indians to be appointed on higher posts on the basis of ability. Hence the policy of liberalisation and Indianisation was adopted.

The Government of India 1833 in fact, marked the beginning of a system of government for all India. Later it developed a representative character which distinguished it fundamentally from the earlier rule of despotism.

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E-Commerce: Socio-Economy Impact

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Abstract

The article explores the economic and social impact of E-commerce. Indian's E-Commerce market is at early stage, but it is growing faster and expected to see huge growth over the next four to five years. Even though there are only under-10 million internet users who actually buy online in India, there are about 150 million internet users or around 75 million households that are 'ready' for E-commerce. Almost 57 per cent of E-commerce sales come from small towns, while the eight metros account for the remainder. According to IAMAI, current E-Commerce market in India is around \$ 10 billion in 2012, out of which the travel industry alone contributes \$8.4 billion. The first Indian E-Commerce site Fabmart.com (now known as IndiaPlaza) was founded by Mr. K. Vaitheeswaran in 1999. With E-Commerce flourishing on one side, Social Media in India has also rooted itself very well. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, etc are now the part of a mango man's daily routine. Some of the most popular items imported by Indians include pharmaceutical products, branded and unbranded apparel, accessories, and electronic goods like mobile, smart phone, laptops, iPod etc. Payments through online banking, PayPal and mobile banking are affectively contributing to the growth of E-Commerce. Availability of e-books, songs, games and films are also accelerating the growth of E-Commerce. For a developing country such as India, one of the most important benefits of E-Commerce is its potential to help a developing rural community to leap-frog into the knowledge paradigm. E-Commerce is providing useful resource for growth of microfinance and traditional Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) in rural areas like Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) of Assam. The positive effects of E-Commerce can be accelerating the commercial growth to have a profound impact on the socio economy of rural community like BTAD of Assam.

Keywords: E-Commerce, MSE, BTAD.

INTRODUCTION: In an increasingly competitive and globalised world, Micro and Small enterprises (MSEs) need to complete more effectively in order to further push up economic activity and contribute towards increasing export earnings. MSEs will also continue to play an important role in increasing employment and incomes and

thus contribute to poverty reduction on a sustainable basis.

E-commerce is emerging as a new way of helping MSEs to compete in the market and thus contributing to economic development of BTAD of Assam. E-commerce can help deliver economic growth, increase new business opportunities, enhanced

competitiveness and better access to market as well as able to generate new employments. In this way it can help in the development of economic structure of a society.

At present, though most MSEs of BTAD does not have the knowledge of how investment in E-commerce could benefit their business and help them for spreading their business. This is the proper time when the opportunities for MSEs to adopt E-commerce are growing due to improved access to the technical and communication infrastructure.

E-commerce involves the purchase or sales of goods and services using Communication and Information Technology (CIT), like over computer networks (e.g. Internet) by business, individuals, governments or other organizations. E-commerce builds on traditional commerce by adding the flexibility and speed offered by CIT.

E-commerce offers new opportunities, and so entrepreneurs of BTAD area should try to gather maximum advantage of electronic market. Thus, it is a high time that the traditional entrepreneurs in BTAD area should act fast and decisively in order to use the growing electronic trading to achieved advantage.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY: The propose study has been under taken keeping in mind the following objectives:

- 1) To study the impact of E-commerce on local market and business.
- 2) To study E-commerce and its socio-economic impact on entrepreneurship development including BTAD area of Assam.
- 3) The analyses the impact of E-commerce on the entrepreneurs in BTAD area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: This research paper aims to give a better understanding of the socio-economy development through an empirical study of utilities of E-Commerce in various industries in the BTAD area. In order were conducted to examine the perceptions of entrepreneurs in E-Commerce regarding entrepreneurship and the factors affecting the development and integration of entrepreneurship in the BTAD area. The main purpose of the literature review was to collate the existing theories and basic knowledge about the entrepreneurship and E-Commerce to explore the conceptual relationships between them. A review of the current literature on E-Commerce as well as entrepreneurship was conducted. In addition web research was conducted to support the literature review. The sources provided by the web research were the most convenient and the fastest due to its accessibility. The analysis of some case studies has been done to support the literature review. Case studies were undertaken to explore organizational behaviour and practice, entrepreneurship and E-Commerce in various enterprises in BTAD area. In addition to the case studies, interviews were conducted in several enterprises of BTAD area to explore the conceptual relationship between entrepreneurship and E-Commerce, and the factors affecting the development and integration of entrepreneurship. These interviews focused on how these industries in BTAD area utilizes E-Commerce, how they benefited and what lessons can be learned from the experiences.

E-COMMERCE: IMPACT ON LOCAL MARKET AND BUSINESS

One of the main advantages of E-commerce is that it minimizes the cost of transportation, advertising, and marketing. Electronic commerce also reduce the

distance between buyer and seller, and thus permitting rapid exchange of information or service between buyer and sellers in any part of the world. E-commerce not only provides options of goods and services at a lower cost, but it can potentially enables much more options to the needs of individual buyers. Nowadays it is relatively cost low for starting any business through Internet. For business purpose entrepreneurs can utilize the social networking sites, like facebook. The social networking facebook is quite popular among the young generation in BTAD area. So facebook will act as a potential tool for business online, mainly for accessing the targeted wide market as well as for sales and services.

Mainly the entrepreneurs of BTAD area use mobile phone for business dealings. The use of mobile phone has greatly improved business by enabling both customer and suppliers a change of direct communication. That has tremendously cut down the transportation cost. A present time Internet is easy accessible from mobile phones in affordable price. In this contest mobile internet is a very effective tool of E-commerce for marketing as well as for sales and services.

E-COMMERCE: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BTAD

Socio-economic condition in rural areas of BTAD is still in a very poor condition. As such socio-economic development in the rural areas is a crying need. In order to achieve its goal in the field of business and employment generation a medium is required to reach to the teeming millions of rural people, and to act as an interface between the planners and the people. That medium can be provided by the Communication and Information Technology and Electronic commerce.

Electronic commerce can play a big role in encouraging rural entrepreneurs of BTAD area and thereby promoting village (both Micro and Small-scale) industries.

PRESENT PROBLEMS FOR SMEs IN BTAD AREA:

- i) Absence of direct platform for marketing.
- ii) No training facility for design, development and use of modern technologies.
- iii) No Training facility available for marketing and use of E-Commerce.

IMPACT OF E-COMMERCE ON ECONOMY^[1]

Business and the economy are inextricably linked with the development and implementation of new technology (Tassabehji, 2003). Growth and development of any modern economy has been recognized by many economic theorists, such as Kondratieff, Schumpeter, Mensch and Porter, to be based on innovation of new technology. Porter (1990) emphasizes that the prosperity and competitive advantage of a nation is no longer as a result of a nation's natural resources and its labour force, but rather the ability of its industry to innovate and upgrade. This can be seen as a disruptive technology on a macro environmental level. And today, the impact of new technology on the economy of a nation is indisputable. Continuous growth of E-commerce is expected to have deep impact on structure and functioning of economies at various levels and overall impact on macro-economy. Some key areas are discussed below:

a. IMPACT ON INTERMEDIATION

Traditional production, transportation and distribution process in BTAD area is

characterized by the liner-point-to-point

path. In this process intermediaries play an

1: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1TSD/is_2_6/ai_n25015739/?tag=content;col1

important role. In physical world, because of large distance between production units and consumer units, it is not possible for consumers to approach producers directly and vice versa. The existence of intermediaries namely, distributors, wholesalers and retailers, this increase the transaction costs for both the producers and consumers.

But in the emerging economic scenario, liner-point-to-point information and knowledge flow no longer represent the reality. In the process of E-Commerce transactions, it is possible for the consumer to conduct and place an order with the manufacturer instantly and directly (Singla, 2000). And same is possible within the various agents of this process (i.e., between producer and Retailers, Retailers and Distributors, Distributors and Retailers etc.). E-Commerce technology brings about the benefits of more accurate and timely information flow, administrative saving, lowering total distribution cost (6), closer trading relationship, improved cash flows, and moving closer to the end consumers (Gattorna & Walters, 1996).

No doubt that online ordering and delivery of product is reducing the role of intermediaries. Therefore, it is also feared that intermediaries would be completely eliminated in the E-Commerce economy.

b. IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE PRODUCTS

Various studies show that there is much about the potential success of E-commerce's in agriculture. Many theoretical benefits of E-commerce in agriculture have been identified such as:

- (1) Promotion of information flow, market transparency and price discovery

(Poole, 2001).

(2) Facilitation of industry coordination (Nicolaisen, 2001).

(3) Reduction or elimination of transaction costs (Porter, 2001; Thompson, 1996).

Internet based E-commerce also offer tremendous opportunities to create collaborative marketplaces in low-cost and effective way (Nicolaisen, 2001). E-commerce in agriculture could also potentially tighten the supply chain and cut marketing margins and transactions costs in way that benefit smaller, local producers as well as local agribusinesses. It also enables a vast array of products to be transacted, usually at a price that is competitive with local retailers. E-commerce can also change the situation of hard bargain caused by scattered farmers and lack of information. At the same time, the fast and convenient electronic bargain manner can accelerate the circulation of commodities, and lessen the risk, and increase the competitions of agricultural products in the international market (Cao and Chen, 2001). These theoretical benefits appear to be undisputed. However, these have yet to materialize into profitability. Study of Golman Sachs (2000) discussed the general barriers cited by business to Internet based E-commerce adoption and explained that these barriers also apply to agribusiness as well. These barriers include:

- (1) Unclear return on investment
- (2) Lack of budget
- (3) Lack of stakeholders support and
- (4) Complicated technology.

Added to these, there may be some other factors slowing down E-commerce adoption in agriculture. In fact, many of the issues faced by e-agribusinesses are the same as those faced by the firms in other

sectors similar to changes brought by other new agricultural technologies (Hooker et al., 2001). However, characteristics of the agricultural sector and its participants present some inherent impediments to the implementation of E-commerce practices. Nonetheless, despite these challenges, there is room for creative solutions potentially leading to successful adoption. Those potential strategies touch on: structure of industry; market and product expertise; and organizational development. At this point of time it is not very clear-the impact of E-commerce on farms, agribusiness firms, markets, and rural communities. Factors specific to agriculture will create additional challenges, which must be overcome before success may be attained. The ability of each player to work through these challenges will determine the speed of implication of e-commerce in agriculture.

c. IMPACT ON LABOUR MARKET

E-Commerce, consisting of marketing and other business processes conducted over the computer-mediated networks is changing the way organizations in many industries operate. It leads to the automation of some job functions and replaces others with self service operations, raising output per worker and dampening employment requirements in some occupations, as well as in the industries in which these occupations are concerned (Hecker, 2001). The introduction and implementation of new technologies has posed important challenges for the commercial workers and their trade unions worldwide. Among the issues that unions have to deal with are, both B2B and B2C, self-scanning, logistics system, multimedia and other in store sales support applications. In many ways, they are already deeply affecting labour market (Gottardi et al., 2004). In contrast, E-commerce has spurred employment in industries producing

software, and systems used by E-commerce and other occupations associated with websites and networks.

But, perhaps the larger impact of E-commerce on labour market can be seen in the form of online job search. However, very little is known about the importance of online job applications or direct employer initiated contracts with potential candidates. Even then, online job posting has grown spectacularly (Autor, 2001). Estimates place the number of online job boards at over 3000, the number of active resumes online at over 7 million, and the number of job posting at 29 million (Boyle et al., 1999; Computer Economics, 2000). Kuhn and Skuterud (2000) reported that 7 per cent of employed workers regularly use the web to search for a new job in 1998. The leading job board, Monster.Com, offered 3.9 million resumes and 4, 30,000 jobs in August 2000 (Nakamura and Pugh, 2000). Further, the Internet is likely to change how some workers deliver labour services. For example, falling telecommunications traffic regardless of where it originates (Call Centres, 1997; Uchitelle, 2000). Improvements in communication and control technology likely mean that people who monitor equipment or other workers can perform their task at the greater physical remove. Remote access to E-mail and company documents will enable many workers to perform some or all of their work from home to elsewhere.

d. IMPACT ON COST, PRICE AND COMPETITION

Logically, E-commerce reduces search and transaction cost (Mukhopadhyaya, 2002). Reduction in transaction costs are motivating businesses to incorporate E-commerce into their business strategy (Garcia, 1995 and Kambil, 1995) The net impact of E-commerce on UK Economy has been estimated to be between 2% to 3% of GDP (Landon Economics,

2000). It has also been estimated that improved demand forecasting and stock management as a result of E-commerce will enable reduction in overall inventories by as much as 25% in the US. At the micro level, there is evidence that this will provides a one-off sustainable improvement in the profitability by an average of 5% or more for the enterprises currently working with low margin (Goldman Sachs, 1999). The E-commerce lowers costs because, the Internet lowers selling search costs as well as, by allowing seller to communicate product information cost effectively to potential buyers, and by offering sellers new ways to reach buyers through the targeted advertisement and one-on-one advertising. Thus it is helpful in reducing the search costs on both the sides. By reducing search costs on both sides of the market, it appears likely that buyers will be able to consider more product offering and will identify and purchase products that better match their needs, with a resulting increase in economic efficiency. But the reduction in the cost combined with new capabilities of technology can set off more complex market dynamics (Bakos, 2001). Lower search costs in the digitized markets will make it easier for the buyers to find (23) low cost sellers and thus will promote price competition among the sellers. Thus E-commerce economy comes quite close to the features of the prefect competition, as larger numbers of buyers and sellers can instantly interact with each other. Many characteristics of e-commerce should increase competition because buyers will have access to a global marketplace and the ability to easily compare price and product features (Fletcher et al., 2000). E-Commerce technologies have the potential to significantly increase competition by increasing consumers' choice of products and traders (ACCC, 2001).

CONCLUSION: In the year 2013, the graph of online shopping is rising quickly and steadily. Lots of people prefer to purchase products online from the comfort of their home. Today, more than 60% of people shop online as it is a comfortable mode of shopping by just click a mouse. E-commerce brings changes our way of living, marketing. E-commerce has a very strong impact on socio-economy of BTAD area by providing new opportunities of marketing.

Impact of E-Commerce on Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) have factor that has influenced the processes of adoption and use of E-commerce in both SMEs and industries. Small scales enterprises that have adopted and have used E-commerce have taken into account not only the technological part and organizational aspects of implementation but also the strong user's on the web sites with their own skills, attitude towards work, enthusiasm and fear of technology. Whereas on the other side of the story, the majority number of consumers have to pace with and effectively use the services offered through internet by enterprises. Thus to carry out a successful relationship and transactions between consumers and firms, they not only have to exchange money and products but also information and mutual trust. E-commerce has been simply defined as a use of electronic range of networks to simplify, resolve, improve and pace up the various stages and processes of business like buying and selling and delivery of goods and services. E-commerce's prime driver is Internet which presents an hierarchical framework. The use of websites for small scales enterprises can create a major impact and global presence when compared to other Medias. The web are defined with no geographical boundaries or national boundaries but rather by the coverage of computer networks which offers widened

access to different markets for small scales and micro enterprises. Small scale industries find more competitive markets and intense pressures with their limited resources and manpower and mainly of weaker market power. Due to this SME's had to undergo pressure to co-operate more into networks

to spread information, develop costs and risks. Small scale industries are amongst the last ones to benefit from the new technology and are happily excited about the widened opportunities increased through internet and E-commerce.

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E-Commerce in silk industry of Assam: A critical study

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Abstract

In today's over changing market, it is very difficult for the business to survive without proper marketing facility and the influence have clearly shown in the silk industry of Assam which is flourished but the over changing modern technology affect in silk industry of Assam. Now a days most of the business sectors adopting modern technology and flourish on the contrary the silk industry of Assam which is now centered in Sualkuchi known as the Asia's largest silk village have fallen on bad days and unable to face competition from modern technology with the fast growing modern weaving techniques and more of that unable to compete the powerloom products. The produce of Sualkuchi depending on age-old and traditional method of weaving started to see its downfall. This article comprising about the benefits of E-Commerce in an organisation and an overview of silk industry of Assam.

KEYNOTE: Prospects of E-Commerce and silk industry of Assam.

INTRODUCTION: E-Commerce or Electronic Commerce is a modern technology for business and in today more of the business adopting E-Commerce and expanding their business worldwide. E-Commerce is a way to conduct business online instead of going to store. It also includes the entire online process of developing, marketing, selling, delivering, servicing and paying for products and services online. Connect business with the E-Commerce is not so difficult just we need internet connection in a computer.

Benefits of E-Commerce:

- 1) The business has now become a borderless market place including national and international markets. By becoming E-Commerce enabled, businesses now have access to people all around the world.

- 2) The paper-based information has decreased because the cost of creating, processing, distributing, storing data reduced and retrieving data very easily without spending time.
- 3) E-commerce has revolutionized the way consumers buy goods and services. The pull-type processing allows for products and services to be customized to the customer's requirements.
- 4) Enables reduced inventories and overheads by facilitating 'pull'-type supply chain management – this is based on collecting the customer order and then delivering through JIT (just-in-time) manufacturing. This is particularly beneficial for companies in the high technology sector, where

stocks of components held could quickly become obsolete within months.

- 5) The Internet is much cheaper than value added networks (VANs) which were based on leasing telephone lines for the sole use of the organization and its authorized partners. It is also cheaper to send a fax or e-mail via the Internet than direct dialing.
- 6) Digitization of products and processes. Particularly in the case of software and music/video products, which can be downloaded or e-mailed directly to customers via the Internet in digital or electronic format.
- 7) Businesses can be contacted by or contact customers or suppliers at any time.

Limitation of E-Commerce:

- 1) Lack of sufficient system security, reliability, standards and communication protocols. There are numerous reports of websites and databases being hacked into and security holes in software. There are some lacks and need to improve when one use E-Commerce regularly, So, the customer need to be sincere when use E-Commerce and think hundred times before give any sort of personal information. The companies that use E-Commerce for their business purpose improve reliability and given more priority on security.
- 2) Rapidly evolving and changing technology, so there is always a feeling of trying to 'catch up' and not be left behind.
- 3) Under pressure to innovate and develop, business models to exploit the new opportunities which sometimes leads to strategies detrimental to the organization. The ease with which business models can

be copied and emulated over the Internet increase that pressure and curtail longer-term competitive advantage.

- 4) Facing increased competition from both national and international competitor so often leads to price wars and subsequent unsustainable losses for the organization.
- 5) Problems with compatibility of older and 'newer' technology. There are problems where older business systems cannot communicate with web based and Internet infrastructures, leading to some organizations running almost two independent systems where data cannot be shared. This often leads to having to invest in new systems or an infrastructure, which bridges the different systems. In both cases this is both financially costly as well as disruptive to the efficient running of organizations.

IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE:

E-Commerce or Electronic Commerce is a new business concept that incorporates all previous business management and economic concepts. As such, E-Business and E-Commerce impact on many areas of business and disciplines of business management studies.

- 1) Issues of on-line advertising, marketing strategies and consumer behavior and cultures. One of the areas in which it impacts particularly is direct marketing. In the past the business was mainly door-to door, home parties, local markets. This moved to telemarketing and TV selling with the advances in telephone and television technology and finally developed into e-marketing

- 2) Development of different network and computing technologies and languages to support E-Commerce and E-Business, for example linking front and back office legacy systems with the 'web based' technology.
- 3) On-line banking, issues of transaction costs, accounting and auditing implications where 'intangible' assets and human capital must be tangibly valued in an increasingly knowledge based economy.
- 4) The impact of E-Commerce on local and global economies, understanding the concepts of a digital and knowledge-based economy and how this fits into economic theory.
- 5) The impact of on-line processing has led to reduced cycle times. It takes seconds to deliver digitized products and services electronically; similarly the time for processing orders can be reduced.

E-COMMERCE AND ITS IMPORTANT:

E-Commerce or Electronic Commerce is a modern technology adopting most of the business sector to expand their business. E-Commerce is a revolution of modern business practices. Electronic Commerce uses computer networks to improve organizational performance. Electronic Commerce can possible increasing profitability, gaining market share, improving customer service, and delivering products faster are some of the organization performance. If a organizations want to take advantages of new Internet technologies, then the organization must take a strategic perspective. That is, they must take care to make a close link between corporate strategy and electronic commerce strategy. Electronic commerce is not just of ordering goods from an on-line catalog. It involves all aspects of an organization's electronic interactions with its stakeholders,

the people who determine the future of the organization. Thus, Electronic Commerce includes activities of establishing a Web page to support investor relations or communicating electronically. Electronic Commerce or E-Commerce involves the use of information technology to enhance communications and transactions with all of an organization's stakeholders. Such stakeholders include suppliers, customers, financial institutions, employees, government regulators, managers and the public at large. The Internet raises quality of life, and it has the potential to perform this miracle on a global scale. Today the Internet has begun to make some big changes in the business.

Another way to understand the Internet is to consider the attributes that make it unique. These factors include the following:

1. The speed of transferring information and the increasing speed of economic transactions.
2. The time compression of business cycles.
3. The influence of interactivity.
4. The power and effectiveness of networks.
5. Opportunities for globalization.

E-Commerce is about setting our business on the Internet, allowing visitors to access our websites and go through a virtual catalog of the products and services online. When a visitors or customers want to buy something his/her selected item has been added to the virtual shopping basket. The items in the shopping basket can be added or deleted. when a customer all set to check out the complete total checked by the checkout counter and may ask some information i.e. name ,address etc. the payments should be via credit card and when entered all information which is transferred securely. Then customer just waits for delivery of the product.

SILK INDUSTRY OF ASSAM: Assam handloom industry is mainly concentrate in Sualkuchi which encompasses cotton textile, silk textile as well as traditional *Khadi* cloth endowing high social and moral value in and outside the state. However, Sualkuchi is well known for silk textiles both mulberry and muga silk. In fact muga, “the golden fiber” is produced only in Assam and it has also tremendous export potentiality.

Sualkuchi had 16,717 silk looms in 2,968 households out of 4023 families as per survey in 2002. And seeing the benefits of this industry, many families have also undertaken silk-weaving, leading to the growth of a silk industry cluster since the seventies of the last century. The cluster had 23,872 silk looms, besides 3,915 cotton looms in the year under reference. However the number of active looms was 19,168 in the cluster (Sualkuchi had 13,767 looms) Out of these looms 14,910 were producing pat fabrics, 2,817 muga and 1,441 tasar cloths besides 85 semi-commercial eri looms. The maximum numbers of looms, 15,017 were engaged in weaving mekhela chadar, 2,902 producing sarees, 1,216 weaving thaans or plain sheets and only 33 looms had woven Khasi dresses. Total quantity of fabric production in the year was 30 lakh square metres worth Rs. 7,060 lakh in round figure. Production of mekhela chadar was 3.37 lakh pieces, saree 78,000 pieces, 76,000 pieces thaans while the weaving of Khasi dress was negligible compared with other products. Marketing of these products is done mainly by the private silk stores spread over the towns and cities of the Brahmaputra Valley. They sell 59 percent of cloth of the fabrics; other private agents like ferriwalas sell 31 per cent. While the co-operative societies provide the market with only 3 per cent of the remaining 7 per cent are returned to the yarn suppliers who engage the looms of the poor households

working under sub-contract or putting out system.

The importance of the handloom industry lies in its employment potential. A silk loom of the cluster provides employment to 1.76 persons as weaver, helper, yarn winder and muga reeler and a person on management. Out of 19,618 weavers of the active looms, family weavers were 5,341 (27.86 per cent) as against 13,827 (72.13 per cent) hired weavers. Female weavers (10,496 or 54.75 per cent) as against 8,672 or 45.24 per cent male weavers generally dominate the weaving profession. Any way the market of the silk products remains confined within the Brahmaputra Valley although some sarees and plain sheets are purchased by non-Assamese customers.

ANALYSIS OF STUDY: Traditionally, sericulture is a major cottage industry in the State. Non mulberry silk in general and Muga silk in particular has been closely associated with the rituals and traditions of Assam and, thus, silk production and its usage has been an important household activity in the State over the years. Rearing of Eri, Muga and Mulberry silk worm are playing an important role in the economic development of a large section of rural population of the State. The sericulture activities in Assam are increasing day by day. Moreover the life of weavers of this sector is not developed. They concentrate only producing the indigenous items. The State Sericulture Department although did not implemented any specific Scheme for the empowerment of the weavers inclined in this sectors. More than 65 percent of the people obtaining livelihood from this activities and women of Sualkuchi play a significant role in handloom activities. Catalytic Development Programme, a central scheme has given priorities to women beneficiaries for taking up different

projects. In such cases, 30 percent of all beneficiaries' oriented schemes are reserved for women beneficiaries. In addition, the department also adopting technology programmes especially for women, NGOs/ entrepreneurs engaged in production of yarn and fabric by providing financial assistance.

It is reported that the State has produced 88.73 MT Muga Raw Silk, 819.09 MT Eri Raw Silk and 8.35 MT Mulberry Silk during the year 2009-10 as against 101 MT Muga Raw Silk, 810.00 MT Eri Raw Silk and 10.00MT Mulberry Silk in 2008-09. During the year 2006-07, the production of Muga Raw Silk, Eri Raw Silk and

Mulberry Raw Silk was 99 MT, 665 MT and 9 MT respectively.

The total area under Silk worm Food Plants has been recorded significant increase to 21229 hectare during 2009-10 from 18556 hectare in 2008-09. During the year 2006-07 the area under silk worm food plant was 18392.045 hectare. The total production of Silk Yarn, however, recorded marginal fall from 921 MT in 2008-09 to 916.17 MT in 2009-10. The decrease of production of silk yarn during the year 2009-10 was effected due to fall in production of Muga raw silk and Mulberry raw silk by 12.15 percent and 16.5 respectively over 2008-09.

Table 1: Sericulture activities in Assam

Sl. No.	Item	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
1	Sericulture Village (Nos)	9683	9373	9373	9537	10532
2	No. of families engaged	196152	191434	239281	238578	260707
3	Area under silk worm food plant (In Hect.)	18556	18392	18548	18556	21229
3.1	Eri	7293	7382	7531	7538	7623
3.2	Muga	7255	7299	7305	7305	8902
3.3	Mulberry	4007	3711	3712	3713	4704
4	Yield of cocon	-	-	-	-	-
4.1	Eri cut in cocon(In MT)	700	887	1046	1080	1089
4.2	Muga cocon(In Lakh Nos)	4905	4933	4302	5040	4436
4.3	Mulberry Reeling cocon (In MT)	119	92	110	100	84
5	Production of silk yarn (In MT)	634	773	884.81	921	916.17

5.1	Eri Raw Silk	525	665	784.26	810	819.09
5.2	Muga Raw Silk	98	99	91.07	101	88.73
5.3	Mulberry Raw Silk	12	9	9.48	10	8.35

Source: Directorate of Sericulture, Assam

During the period of study, there are few problems identified that are being faced by the Handloom and Textile industry of Assam. The major problems are mentioned below:

- 1) Shortage of skilled and expert weavers.
- 2) Lack of capital and credit facilities.
- 3) Lack of processing and finishing facilities.
- 4) Weavers concentrate too much on Govt. assistance rather than their own effort.
- 5) Lack of efficient marketing facilities, modern designs, pricing and packaging.
- 6) Government schemes are not properly implemented.

The study of Handloom & Textile is very important because it plays a vital role in providing gainful employment opportunities to the people of Assam. Weaving is the only activity, next to agriculture, which provides livelihood to the people particularly in the rural areas of Assam. Weaving is an influential medium which plays an imperative role in developing the socio-economic status of the economically weaker section in rural areas of Assam.

At present, it has been observed that a drive of women empowerment has gained impetus all over the world. Since handloom sector is women friendly it provides employment opportunities to women to a great extent. So the handloom sector helps women to be self-sufficient and empower with earnings and social status, which is very important for a civilized society.

Traditional Commerce v/s E-Commerce:

The traditional commerce activities are very effective in some business processes, and these processes cannot be improved upon through technology or E-Commerce. Some products that buyers prefer to touch, smell, or examine closely are difficult to sell using electronic commerce. For example, a customer might be reluctant to buy high-fashion clothing and food products, if they cannot examine the products closely before to purchase them. In the case of traditional commerce, the merchants have years of experience in creating store environments that convince a customer to buy. This combination of designing store, layout and product display i.e. keeping the products in a right place where customer can easily get that and knowledge of designing store is called merchandising. Sales person in course of time develop their skills to identify customer needs and find products and services that meet those needs. The arts of merchandising and personal selling can be difficult to practice over an electronic link or E-Commerce.

In E-Commerce business this is not possible, a customer can only see the products, E-Business is done over an electronic link. In E-Commerce business security issues is involved so, the customer have to be careful before payment for the product via credit card. The customer wait for the products when the company delivered but in Traditional business a customer can choose and get the product instantly. In E-Commerce, a customer have more option for choosing products by

visiting different sites and allow them to compare the product.

E-Commerce activities in silk industry of Assam: The silk industry of Assam is concentrating only the local market. As mentioned previously that now Sualkuchi is became the centre of silk industry of Assam. The Sualkuchi is became the Asia's second largest silk village and the weavers of this silk village has tremendous potentiality. The indigenous weavers of this silk village felt on bad days because they are unable to compete with the modern technology. The silk industry of Assam has been growing but the socio economic status of the weaver inclined this sector is not flourished. The demand of silk inside and outside the state is huge and silk industry is one of the major contributor of state revenue. To strengthen the handloom sector various development schemes have been undertaken by the Assam Government. Providing weavers with quality fabrics, modernization of looms, creation of commercial motivation amongst the weavers, extension of training facilities, development of textiles designs etc. include. The Handloom & Textiles Department trained 1650 artisans in its Handloom Training Centres in the year 2009-10, Apart from this, the Handloom & Textile Department have been implementing Chief Minister's Assam Bikash Yojana since 2007-08 and completed implementation for the years 2007-08. For self employment potentialities among the women weavers and the empowerment of the weavers, the Handloom & Textile Department has taken initiative to give benefit to 1.20 lakh women weavers of the State under the programme incentive to Handloom weavers. The Department has organized 49 District level Fairs, 22 Special Handloom Expos and 5 National Handloom Expo in the State during the year 2009-10 for publicity of the development programme as well as to create awareness about the handloom products of

the State. National Institute of Fashion technology was set up in collaboration with North Eastern Council (NEC) and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Kolkata to train professionals to meet the varied manpower requirement of the apparel section, but also a solid foundation to which the country could profitably transform to meet the international challenges. Proper E-Commerce technology in this sector is not applied yet. There are very few private company in Sualkuchi which taking their order through E-Mail. There may be many reason that the E-commerce is not so popular among the private silk industries. The main reason behind that they are not adequate of this technology, they don't have trained people, security is involved with this technology, and use of E-Commerce is costly rather than simply taking customers orders through E-Mail and delivered via courier. The State Govt. recently announced to open a silk college in Guwahati where trained the weavers, teaches them about the technology that weavers can apply in future. Weavers here have hardly been successful in finding a market for the products. According to officials, resistance to using modern technology was the main reason behind the decline. Despite demands for silk attires in the European market, the weavers failed to meet the growing demand due to technological stagnation and lack of interest to introduce innovations.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: In this over changing market it is very much necessary for the business to adopt E-Commerce. Now days, where all the business sectors have given priority on E-Commerce because E-Commerce help them for expanding their business worldwide. E-Commerce or Electric Commerce, where buyers met sellers and all the operation perform online just we need a computer and internet connection. On the other hand the weavers of Assam are only concentrate to

produce their indigenous garments using traditional methods and design. The product produced by the weavers are confined in the domestic market. As we know, that there is a huge demand of handloom items in the foreign markets, but the weavers of this area are not aware about this, due to lack of information technology. The government of Assam only conducts handloom Expo and events in various place time to time but this is not enough in today's competitive market. As mentioned that the private organization involved ferriwalas in business to sell their product but this is time consuming and less benefits. E-Commerce is web based business application that helps business to spread worldwide over internet. The weavers of Sualkuchi can't think of that and not aware the prospects of this sectors. Another serious problem faced by the weavers is that their products affected from the product of powerloom. Several private Silk industry

established in Sualkuchi use power loom for production, moreover they did not get the proper marketing facility, their market confined within the district and state. E-Commerce is a modern technique that can easily expand business. Applying E-Commerce in business is not costly, But still the silk industry of Assam is not adopting this modern technique, some business person taking orders through E-mail but that's not enough, now a days there are several web sites where people upload their products and sell online within a very few seconds and also paying online. Handloom textile cottage industry plays an important role in the socio-economic life of Assamese people, particularly in rural areas of Assam. The Govt. of Assam is paying more importance for the upliftment of socio economic status of the female.

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Neoliberalism, Liberalism and Development Practice: A Theoretical Exploration in the Context of the Changing Role of the State

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Abstract

Neoliberal measures involve worldwide flows of capital, communication and manufactured goods. The commonly held perception that such laissez faire policies remain confined only to the realm of the economy is a misconception. Neoliberalism builds up networks that make the boundaries of the social world fluid and even more pervasive. The effect of the era of dirigisme on economic inequality has seriously destabilized the hope on the welfare state. Development practice is facing a challenge to prove itself to revive the belief of the people on the state. The 'open' world has a significant effect on local development. The state is also conspicuously facing the challenges of adapting a best practice of welfare service delivery.

Key words: development practice, role of state, neoliberalism, liberalism

Capitalism, today, is the most pervading globalised phenomenon. Hand-in-glove with neoliberalism it has overpowered all indigenous, self-reliant, nationalistic and humanistic cultures, philosophies and economies of the world. Capitalism is now not 'primitive', from state capitalism it has reformed to large corporate capitalism and later on into an invisible as well as invincible, trans-national capitalism. In colonial economic operations, the village market was linked with the town so that the rural may be purposefully exploited but the transnational capitalism necessarily regulates the rural markets so as to enable to control people's choices, tastes, consumption habits and of course production. Cross border free flowing

capital also controls science and technology, markets and management, social institutions, communication and the future of nation-state, civil society and voluntary action.

In a country that is open to the movement of free capital, if the state pursues policies that is disliked by finance, then large amounts of finance pulls out of the country and goes elsewhere. Then the economy faces an acute crisis. In a neoliberal economy, the state is forever caught in an attempt to regain the confidence of the investors. For this state, has to bow to global finance capital with which domestic capital is intrinsically linked. This poses a threat to the functioning of democracy. The state follows policies that satisfy capital not the people. What more, no

matter who comes to power the trend in policies remain same. People's choices and hence elections become irrelevant.

Capitalism and Democracy

The conditions for democracy rests on the following theoretical understanding, first, democracy is a form of government that is likely only in the market economies or capitalistic economies, second, democracy is more likely to be sustained in wealthy or economically developed societies, third, democracy evolves in societies where there is a well-established tradition of compromise politics and of acceptance of checks and balances on central power (Kohli, 1986). Thus both the liberals and the neoliberals readily admit that there is a historical and logical connection between capitalism and democracy (Lindblom, 1977; Huntington, 1984). According to the historical view, the rising business classes successfully tamed the monarchical state by replacing the aristocracy by a government of 'wealthy commoners'. Later, under the pressure of organized working classes the government had to be formed by a legally equal citizenry. The logical reasoning is also apparent in the historical linkage. Capitalism is an economic system that is based on private property and provides a fundamental check on state power by separating the private and the public sphere. This division separates political equality from economic inequalities and lays the basis for legitimate elected governments in inegalitarian societies in the hope of modifying inherent inequalities through the use of democratic state power (Marshall, 1964; Moore, 1977). The political theorists have identified a number of characteristics of industrial economies that may help in evolving and sustaining democracy. Relative wealth laid the basis for the welfare state which in turn, tamed class conflict. In wealthy economic systems, the struggle for power is not also

seen as a zero sum game. As a result the losers are less likely to pursue political mobilization. Another strand of theorists believe that democratic institutions took shape prior to industrial capitalism as these institutions provided a framework to accommodate the demands of a new social class. For example England's feudal past have contributed to its later democratic evolution (Gilbert, 1975).

A popular and well-established line of thinking suggests that the process of industrialization and economic development is an inherently unstable one. From Durkheim through Parsons and Semler to Huntington, numerous scholars have concluded that the transitional stages between tradition and modernity are often characterized by social disorganization. The explanation for this state of affairs is thought to rest on the corrosive impact of economic development on a society's established beliefs and patterned behaviour. If new patterns of 'integration' do not keep up with the process of 'differentiation' then it results in social disorganization.

Liberalism and the role of the state

Liberalism is a collection of related philosophies about the roles and functions of individuals, groups and institutions in managing, directing and controlling the character and progress of human social life (Gray, 1989). It has emerged on the base of eighteenth century Enlightenment and a number of socio-political changes that had taken place during that period like the demise of the monarchy and the rise of the parliament, the decline of the church and the rise of religious individualism, the growth of capitalism and the shrinking of the agricultural economy and the rise of science as the litmus test of progress and development. In 1690, Locke said that Liberalism believes in the 'natural rights' of

men – to live as you wish, to act as you will and to amass what you can and these rights precede the organization of society, then it follows that no social body can legitimately interfere with them. Individualism is to be the tying force between the state and the society. All are equal before the state, the law should be rational not personal or spiritual (Paine, 1791; Wollstonecraft, 1795). A parallel interpretation that was necessary was about the moral basis of the government as natural rights could well bring in chaos. The response was that the government should act only in the interests of the individual and that the government had no wider role in the regulation of civil life. The government should maintain a legal framework in which the greater majority of the people could pursue their life's goals without undue interference from others. The 'invisible hand' and a minimalist state has been analysed clearly in Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776. It is a treatise on how self-interest leads to social harmony through the mechanism of market demand. This leads to a moral justification of pursuits of individual interests of wealth accumulation (Heilbroner, 1986). The inequities of wealth, status and education in Liberalism can be reformed by civil laws and by teaching the citizens how to manage his household and labour and to know his rights and duties (Condorcet, 1955). But his proposal gave rise to a politics of exclusion later on. Liberals promoted formal equality before the law but did not promote substantive equality. Liberal thinkers like J.S. Mill (1948) and Alexis de Tocqueville (1946) were fearful of the tyranny of the majority. That the local governments can act as check against the tyranny of the centre was emphasized by Mill very clearly. Liberalism developed the casework method of tendering assistance and focused on the circumstances

of each individual rather on each individual himself. Its form of social administration supported the tenet of economic individualism. The second wave liberalism experienced a change in its philosophical belief and nurtured certain paternalistic values in part by the experience of charitable work and a mistrust of democracy (Morgan, 1975).

Influenced by *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, some liberalists proposed that organized bodies of the state functioned like the organs of a living creature. Individual interests get subordinated to group interests in order to promote the welfare of the whole (Kidd, 1894; Durkheim, 1893, Pearson, 1905). Nation-state emerged strongly as the basis for social progress and social reform. The nation-state, in order to compete in the imperialist world, had to keep its citizens healthy and fit. Conversely individuals thrived when the society functioned well (Samuel, 1902). Liberal Managerialism viewed the state as a 'directive intelligence' in a risky and uncertain world, encouraged technocracy, opportunity and efficiency (Keynes, 1927; Beveridge, 1936; Watson 1957) whereas the liberal radicalism focused on social pluralism, community and tradition (Berlin, 1990; Rawls, 1971; Taylor, 1989). In liberalism 'equality' implied the right to be unequal-an equality of opportunity that promoted inequality of outcomes.

Neoliberalism and the role of the state

The economic and political crisis of the Keynesian Welfare State in the 1970s brought in a number of responses from the new liberal philosophy. Public expenditure had increased steadily without corresponding increase in taxation revenue. There was also concerning inflation. The Oil crisis followed by international recession worsened the situation. Hayek was another was another important social thinker of the

time. The central philosophy in Hayek's work was 'freedom', but in a negative sense, as an absence of coercion upon the activities of the private individuals. Hayek's theory directly attacks the concept of 'reason'. We can never understand the whole world. *Tacit knowledge* develops in to the evolutionary process through cultural practices and gets embodied into certain institutions. The spontaneous order that prevailed in the eighteenth century was the process of socialization in the family, community and economic life. Thus planned and organized institutional arrangements destroyed the spontaneity. It was proved that the state was always less efficient than the market. Only the price mechanism could satisfy people's preferences because of the social dispersion of 'tacit knowledge'.

The state was not be allowed to redress inequalities blown out by the market because according to Hayek, market outcomes were not to be considered unjust and moreover this went against freedom. Rather than supporting the 'rules of conduct', the state wields an ever increasing power over its citizens. He also believed in the *trickle down* distribution of wealth. The role of the state in development was that it should not lead to monopoly of a service provider but must also engage the private and charitable service deliverers (Hayek, 1960, 1979, 1988).

The noted economist Friedman supported Hayek's thoughts and spelt the doom of Keynesian economics which formed a guarantee for the moral basis of state intervention in the 1929-33 economic depression. However combination of high inflation, increasing unemployment and a very low economic growth exposed the weaknesses of Keynesian economics (Gamble, 1985). Extensive state intervention in welfare creates a class of bureaucrats who have a vested interest in further expanding the activities of the state. Thus state services

benefits producer groups more than consumers who become all the more dependent on the state as they lose all their individual initiative for self-maintenance. This breaks down the moral fabric that is the basis of bonding of the society. Moreover, social insurance is seen as a tax on the employment thus raises employment costs. By paying taxes for benefits people are deprived of the opportunity to look for alternative arrangements through the market and have no choice other than to take what the state provides.

Buchanan (1978) applied the public choice theory to argue that voters did not have the expertise and the information to select the state representatives. In fact the people were presented with a *ragbag* of policies to suit particular groups (Harris and Seldon, 1979). The solution was in the de-socialisation of the public sector and a return to the provision of services by the private after means-testing the solution. Reemphasizing the themes of 'freedom' and 'responsibility', Green proposes that the mainspring of a free and democratic society is the individual's sense of personal responsibility which is characterized by self-control, independence from government and duty towards fellow citizens. This made possible a 'community without politics' and it also encouraged a society the concept of 'duty without rights' (Green, 1996). The 'therapeutic' state often stigmatized the receivers of benefits seen as 'victims'. This has destroyed the moral framework in which civic associations functioned. Green emphasized that social solidarity generated by a moral community and civic associations are formed through legal, organizational and cultural measures. The legal system was to be outside the political system and there was to be complete independence of the charitable and voluntary institutions. Personal responsibility in family life would bring in a

shared responsibility of males in family affairs. Public policy must strengthen the ethical principles and moral behaviour to restore the civic life as a central actor in social life.

Development Practice and the role of the state

Development practice has a direct attachment to the state. In what way the state will deliver and ensure that all of its citizens are enjoying a minimum way of life depends on the politico-economic changes in the country. Thus it is expected that the practice of development will also adapt itself to the changing institutional structures. In the era before Enlightenment social and political hierarchy was ordained as determined by God and it was completely natural. With the coming of Enlightenment, hence modernity, ideas about the natural world shifted from the divine to the secular. Reasoning and intellect substituted God's will (Howe, 1994).

With the popularity of liberalism against conservatism and radicalism, different forms of the welfare state emerged in USA, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Kerala. Actually the encouragement towards the establishment of a welfare state was a strategy to assist the European societies to smoothly transform from a localized, traditional and feudal economy to an industrialized and modern economy (Pierson, 1998). It was believed that the state, along with the development of social sciences, would gradually transform the society in to a just and well-ordered entity. The state thus not only tried to smoothen out the bumps of capitalism but it also facilitated the continuance of capitalism. The state tried to support the interests of some small groups in the welfare of the society because it was assumed that the state worked for the welfare of the society through public expenditure,

government intervention and an efficient legal structure. It would also redistribute wealth. The state formed social laws and also shaped personal lives. Development practice also found newer channels of work with the newer roles of the state. Development practitioners occupied a significant space between the family and the individual and between the state and the society.

States in many developed countries have experienced changes in key social institutions and hence in its role (Harris, 1999). The assumptions about the protective guardianship of the state did not hold any further. Occupationally based income redistribution has become unstable now and incapable to meet the needs of the people (Gilbert, 2002; Goodin, 2000). Other factors like falling fertility rates, rising life expectance rates and low morbidity has precipitated the financial crisis in the welfare state (OECD 1995; World Bank, 1994). Increasing responsibility of the state towards welfare expenditure has raised the expectation of the population. Economists had repeatedly warned the looming macroeconomic crisis of the state and proposed a shift towards individual responsibility of welfare (Hoopark and Gilbert;1999). Globalisaion with its usual characteristics of high capital mobility, growth of transnational corporations and sophisticated information technology has brought about with it retrenched welfare expenditure and restricted labour rights. That the state is the best to solve social problems have been undermined (Taylor and Goody, 2001). As a parallel thought the moral validity of welfare has been questioned. And taxation as a source of revenue to disburse welfare has also been argued (Goodin, 2000). A variant of this thought is the proposition that welfare is a 'moral hazard' where the welfare state encourages free riding and in some cases

even cheating (Lindbeck, 1995). Another factor that has undermined the role of the welfare state is that it creates disincentives in production where the productive units become too much dependent on the state (Mead, 1986; Murray, 1994). The public intelligentsia has come to terms with the softer role of the state in removing poorness (Adams, 2000; Fincher and Saunders, 2001). The new welfare regime will be much inferior to the one already experienced. There will be a growing acceptance of menaces like poverty, inequality and unemployment as obvious fallouts of modernization and understanding of the idea that collective responsibility is not to work anymore. State delivery will be replaced by markets, social justice and equality will be replaced by commitments to individual freedom and choice, autonomy and responsibility (Ferge, 1997). The new regime will replace public delivered benefits to selective approach to private delivery of support and services. The aim will be to increase labour force participation within the framework of individual management of risk (Gilbert, 2002). The welfare state will not destabilize, it will only adapt itself to the changing contexts as the 'past does not offer a helpful guide to the future' (Khulna, 2000, 2001, p.188).

With reference to development practice it can be understood that in the preceding era the state communicated a particular relationship with its citizens, one in which it cared for and took some accountability for the effects on citizen's life. The present position taken by states is that the citizens are responsible to it as a society as a whole. This necessitates a significant institutional change (Bouma, 1998). Institutions in development practice constitute human service organisations, their employees (the government, market and the non-profit sectors) and other interested groups (social policy makers, social workers, social

researchers etc.). Institutional change thus necessitates changes in the functioning and logic of its constituents (Galvin, 2002). Friedland and Alford (1991) mention 'value spheres' as developed by Weber referring to the cluster of values nested within the overall logic of a system. The value spheres provide the basis for patterns of development practice shaped according to particular value spheres. Particular interpretative frameworks, logics and rationalities develop. The role of the welfare state should be to give certain development practices the professional legitimacy to *exist* and *act*. The extent of *normative isomorphism* (people holding similar value frameworks and passing them onto others) determines the extent of success of institutionalization and re-institutionalisation (Jepperson, 1991).

Development practice has an adorable attachment to the welfare state. The institutional instability and changes associated with neoliberalism calls for a reemphasis of development practice. The importance of the bottom-up participatory attitude towards development is strongly related with the core method of 'community development' practice (Parfitt, 2002, Ahmadi, 2003). However, economic goals should actively be conditioned by social perspectives to avoid 'distorted development' which is seen in the existence of high levels of poverty with high levels of welfare expenditures. Instead of remedial and ameliorative social programs development practice should encourage policies that continue social investment.

Conclusion

'Social Welfare' is a label for a complex and unstable mixture of relationships, experiences, processes and structures. The means by and conditions through which individual and collective welfare are achieved or undermined are the focus of

intense political action and social struggle. The new world order creates problems for the development of social policies and development practice. Welfare policies can no longer limit itself only to the national arena but must address the connections between the local and the global. There cannot be a single, total or complete theory of the role of the state. However, the state has re-emerged and has put governance as a central element in development, through a

focus on the interrelation between the state and its citizens in terms of duties and rights. Theories embedded in the Rights Base Approaches draw attention to the basic obligation of the state to take care of its most vulnerable citizens, including those not able to claim their rights for themselves.

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Patachitra of Orissa: A Case Study of Raghurajpur Village

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Abstract

Patachitra paintings are the pictogram of the most popular living traditions in the art world of Orissa. The paintings are traditionally practiced by local artisans in the village of Raghurajpur. Patachitra paintings of Orissa exhibit the strong line and brilliant colour that are the two principal aspects of Orissa folk painting. The paper looks at the history of evolution of the patachitra styles, technique and use of raw materials. Article focuses on the present scenario of patachitra paintings of Raghurajpur and how the village painters express their skill through colours and lines. The paper draws upon the analysis of the treatment of lines applied in the paintings.

I

Eastern India has a long tradition in folk arts, including Madhubani miniature painting, patachitra painting, manuscript painting, palm leaf painting, pottery and other crafts in various medium. Orissa is also renowned for its own indigenous art tradition. Traditional Paintings of Orissa have been classified into four main groups; they are (I) Mural Painting (II) Patachitra Painting (III) Palm Leaf Painting and (IV) Paper Painting. The village Raghurajpur of Orissa is very famous for patachitra painting. The Pata Painting has deep- rooted connection with the cult of Sri Jagannath and the temple practices (Baral and William: 2007). About the origin of pata painting Sangeeta Mishra mentioned, “Pata Painting or Patachitra usually means painting on cloth. The origin of Pata Painting seems to be very old. Buddhist monks in the ancient times were known to carry long scrolls of cloth paintings on the life and teachings of

the Buddha to preach his gospel. Many evidences show that painting on cloth flourished in Orissa in 15th and 16th century and later”. Patachitra artist of Raghurajpur, Sisir Kanta mentions that “**Pata chitra** is a form of painting that is done on clothes. The art form can be traced to as early as the 12th century A.D and has evolved around the Jagannath cult in Orissa. Even to this date certain ritual in the temple of **Lord Jagannath** is incomplete without the Patachitra. The Debasnana Purnima is generally associated with the ritualistic bathing ceremony of the Lord Jagannath. After this the deities become sick for fifteen days and the devotees don't have darshan of the Lord in his seat, the Ratnavediriod is known as Anasar. During this period, three Pata paintings of the Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are worshipped”. Therefore, it can be assumed that the ritual of Orissan Patachitra generated due to the RathaYatra festival.

Artist Sisir Kanta Satapati, Sangita Devi, Narayan Das all has expressed same opinion about the history of Orissa patachitra. Patachitra and palm leaf paintings are practiced till date in the villages of Raghurajpur, Sonpur, Banki, Khandapada, Dhenkanal, Jaypur, Khalli, Kote and

Bhubaneshwar etc. Some artisans of Raghurajpur who are still working, are Sisir Kanta Satapati, Rabindra nath Sahoo, Narayan Das, Sushanta Sharangi, Sudhir Maharana, Dr. Jagannath Mahapatra and so on. Among them some artists are national awardees and state awardees.



(Figure.1) Orissa patachitra depicting Radha and Krishna,

II

Raghurajpur is a small village in Puri district renowned for patachitra, a traditional form of painting, a place where arts and crafts have reached its stage of brightness. There are one hundred three households having three hundred eleven artisans in the village. The village is around 1.5 km from Chandanpur and 14 km away from Hindu pilgrimage town of Puri, on the southern banks of river Bhargabi (Bhargavi). This is also the only village in India, where each family is engaged in one craft or the other such as *patta* paintings, palm leaf engravings, stone carvings, papier mache toys and masks, wood carvings, wooden toys, cow dung toys and tusser paintings.

A close survey of the village makes one realize that thematically patachitra paintings are not only confined to the subject of Lord



(Figure.2) Orissa patachitra depicting Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra.

Jagannatha, but also inspired from other subjects; such as nature and the Dasavtara, series of Sri Krishna leela, stories from the Bhagabata, Ramayana and Mahabharata are depicted. The individual paintings of Gods and Goddesses are also painted. The Patachitra style is juxtapose of folk and classical elements but is more inclined towards the folk forms. Artist Narayan Das states that, the costume in the paintings reflects the [Mughal](#) and Rajasthani influences, and the design and decorative motifs are influenced by the paintings of Rajasthani miniature. Its uniqueness lies in its overall finesse and rhythmic juxtaposition of elements.

The chitrakaras of patachitra almost follow the same process of preparing the canvas for painting. It is clear that this process is traditionally going on from one generation

to the other, only some kinds of raw materials are replaced to readymade product for lack of storage in nature. Gokul Behari Patanaik who is 76 years old, is one of the oldest renowned artisans of patachitra from Bhubaneswar. He went to Lucknow to learn commercial art and started palm leaf engraving around 1961 and he is practicing scroll painting since in 1963. He received national award in 1968. He had trained a lot of students for the last many years. About process of making canvas he expresses his view, *“the cotton cloth is first dipped in a solution of tamarind (imli) seeds and water for 4-5 days. After that a paste of chock powder and gum is applied on it and khaddar stone is rubbed on the cloth. This is done to smooth the cloth. The cloth is then taken out and sun dried. The layer cotton is then sun dried. When cloth is smooth the chikana stone is rubbed on it to give it a shining. The solution and kaitha (wood apple) gum is on the cloth. Another layer of processed cotton is placed and gum is applied on it. This is done to stick the two layers. The painting is done on the prepared canvas with the help of earthen and vibrant colours.”* The artisans are used very fine brushes for their painting. Brushes of fine quality are prepared out of mouse's hair fixed on wooden handle.

The *chitrakaras* designed various decorative motifs like trees, animals, birds, flora and fauna in their paintings. The human figure is considered the best among all other forms a painter draws and paints. It has engaged the best attention of both the painters and sculptors in all times. The Orissan painters have also shown remarkable proficiency in drawing and painting the human figures. (Pathy: 2001). The style is characterized by formal and linear economy, expressive gestures of figures, stylized forms and quality brushwork of decorative motifs. A particular style of portrait paintings; in which noses are extended, chins projecting

out somewhat from the face, and the eyes are elongated and the faces are always shown in a profile manner.

So far as colour scheme is concerned the pata painter mostly used earth, tone and mineral colours by tradition although now a days poster colour are also used. In patachitra mainly five colours are used. They are Vermilion (Hingula) yellow (Harital) White (Shankha) Black (Kala) and Indian red (Geru). Historically artisans used red as a background colour but at present, besides red, they use pink, white, blue, and black colour. The very common colours used by the *chitrakaras* are red, blue, yellow, green, black, white, and pink. They also make paintings only on black and white combination. It is very noticeable that, there are some common characteristics of patachitras are based on the mythological texts and iconography, those are; they used blue for Krishna's body (figure.1), white for Balarama's body, yellow for Radha's body (figure.1) as well as for the bodies of other *gopis* (cowherd girls), and the use of green for Rama's body ([Cesarone](#) and [Gallery: 2001](#)).

Patachitras are usually painted in a regular series of steps. First a border is drawn around the pata. Then the outline of the figure is drawn in white pigment. Next the background between the border and the part of the figures is painted in solid colours using different colours for different areas all done in bold rather than fine brush work. Then increasingly fine decorations are added to the picture. Applications of lines in the paintings are very smooth and finest in character creating many beautiful decorative designs. Eyebrows, nose, lips, eyes, jewelry, dresses all are prominent painted by very strong lines. Outline of the figure indicates its rhythmic gesture (figure 3). Trees are very stylizing in character; at first artisans draw it by charcoal or chalk, then they

applied colours and finally they ornate it by

decorative design (figure.4).



Figure.3 linear treatment of figure of patachitra
The border of paintings is very much important like that of the central theme. Use of double lines is found on the borders of paintings. It is clear that lines and designs are not only equal in sizes, smooth and minutely detailed and intricate lines are shown in detailed (figure.6). The inner border of the painting often uses a sort of leaf-and-scroll motif and is narrower in width than the outer border, which often uses a floral motif (figure.7). The postures



(Figure.4) Detail study of tree of Orissa patachitra painting
are largely well defined and repetition as a style creates an interesting aesthetic appeal. One of the important aspects of patachitra is that it doesn't incorporate any "Depth" or "Perspective Visualization". Patachitra is a two dimensional art form but application of strong and rhythmic lines and use of bright colour in the painting give an extraordinary dimensional appeal.



(Figure.5) Border design with black lines



(Figure.6) Border design with colourful lines



(Figure.7) Treatment of natural motifs with colorful lines

III

After visiting the Raghurajpur village and observing their paintings we can sum up that the Patachitras are symbolic, simplicity, and technical in character. The paintings are a set of representation which enlighten us about the social structure as well as cultural identity of Orissa. The folk culture of Orissa as especially patachitra painting has rich heritage. It has achieved eminence in the international art market. To conclude one must consider that in the absence of patachitra painting there is no identity of culture in Orissa and the Rathayatra festival of lord Jagannatha temple. If any art lover likes Indian art and crafts then he have to visit Raghurajpur. The big attraction of Raghurajpur is that the whole village

community is involved in making different kind of art and crafts. Traditionally they use different raw material for making their art works but according to time and people medium has changed. Now most of the artists use poster colours and fabric because these products are easily available on the market and as well as in order to time saving. But they maintain the traditional characteristics and style and themes of paintings although the medium has changed. The media of pictorial expression of painting are basically based on colour and linear design. Patachitra paintings give aesthetical feelings and remind us about the native life through their colourful line drawings.

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www.orissaart.com

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We had interviews with some artisans of Raghurajpur village (Puri) and Bhubaneswar between 05/07/2012 to 10/07/2012).They are:

- I. Sisir Kanta Satapati (Raghurajpur)
- II. Narayan Das, (Raghurajpur)
- III. Sushanta Sharangi, (Raghurajpur)
- IV. Dr. Jagannath Mahapatra (Raghurajpur)
- V. Gokul Bihari Patanayik (Bhubaneswar)
- VI. Shangita Devi (Bhubaneswar)

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D. M. Armstrong on the Identity Theory of Mind

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Abstract

The Identity theory of mind occupies an important place in the history of philosophy. This theory is one of the important representations of the materialistic philosophy. This theory is known as "Materialist Monist Theory of Mind". Sometimes it is called "Type Physicalism", "Type Identity" or "Type-Type Theory" or "Mind-Brain Identity Theory". This theory appears in the philosophical domain as a reaction to the failure of Behaviourism. A number of philosophers developed this theory and among them U. T. Place, J. J. C. Smart, Herbert Feigl, D. Armstrong, and David Lewis are prominent. The main thrust of this theory is states and processes of the mind are identical to states and processes of the brain. In this paper, I am trying to delineate the view of Armstrong on the nature of mind.

The Identity Theory of mind came into existence as a serious philosophical thesis in the late 1950's. Although this theory was introduced by the psychologist E. G. Boring in 1933, it took a long duration of time to be accepted as an alternative theory in philosophy. The pioneering works, which deserve credit for the acceptance of the philosophical version of this theory in philosophical domain, were - U. T. Place's "Is Consciousness A Brain Process?" (1956), Herbert Feigl's 'The "Mental" and the "Physical" (1958) and in 1959 J. J. C. Smart's paper "Sensations and Brain Processes" (1959).

D. Armstrong has great contribution to the Identity theory of mind. In his preface to the book *A Materialist Theory of Mind* he admitted that almost from the beginning there were philosophers who were materialists about mind. But this materialist

analysis of mind could not attract the philosophers of twentieth century till the appearance of U. T. Place, H. Feigl and J. J. C. Smart. Armstrong acknowledges Smart's influence on his thought with regard to the analysis of mind- body relation. He says, "Professor J. J. C. Smart converted me to the view, defended in this book, that mental states are nothing but physical states of the brain. He in his turn has acknowledged the influence of U. T. Place..... My intellectual debt to them remains profound."

Armstrong categorically and enthusiastically announced that he was and is happy to say that mental states and the states of the brain are identical, and this identity is a contingent identity. The Identity theory of mind is regarded by many philosophers as really paradoxical. They say that this theory of mind is very extraordinary. In this connection we may

refer the view of A. G. N. Flew who, in 1962 writes: “In the face of the powerful and resolute advocacy now offered *this admittedly paradoxical view* can no longer be dismissed in such short order.”

Armstrong too admits that when he first heard this theory he also found it paradoxical. He also thinks that not only he himself but many other philosophers shared the attitude of Flew. But he is sure that this attitude is confined exclusively to philosophers only. Like the first year university students they usually thought that it is not possible to regard mind as the brain and that is why they regard it as self evident to hold that the Central – state theory is false. But Armstrong holds that such a view of philosophers is not shared by others and it is evident that because of the potentiality, this theory enjoys wide support outside philosophy.

Armstrong holds that whenever we speak of ‘brains’, ‘brain-storm’, ‘brain-washing’, ‘brain-child’, racking one’s brains’ we actually speak about the mind. And if we ask the people who have general education and without having any philosophical training that whether mind is brain or is it separate from brain, many of them will answer that mind is brain. Some will in return, ask that if mind is not brain then what it is. Armstrong believes that there are persons who deny this fact and their denial is based on theological reasons. On the contrary, there are scientists and particularly the psychologists, who do not regard the Central-state theory paradoxical. Among them Hebb (1958) is a representative of this group. In his famous book ‘Text Book of Psychology’ he writes;

“There are two theories of mind, speaking very generally. One is animistic, a theory that the body is inhabited by an entity – the mind or soul – that is quite different from it, having nothing in common with bodily processes. The second theory is

physiological or mechanistic; it assumes that mind is bodily process, an activity of the brain. Modern psychology works with this latter theory only. Both are intellectually respectable (that is, each has support from highly intelligent people, including scientists), and there is certainly no decisive means available of proving one to be right, the other wrong.”

Armstrong believes that to maintain the unity of mind and body, the identity theory explains it in a very simple way. According to him, Brain is the pilot in the vessel as because physically it resides inside the body. To say that mind is ‘in’ the body and to say that mental processes are ‘inner processes’ are completely natural. He used the word ‘in’ primarily in spatial sense. But this sense of use of the ‘in’ must be denied by the dualist according to whom mind is a mystery and thus in any gross material sense mind is not in the body.

Armstrong says that as the attribute and the behaviourist theories can provide a simple principle of numerical difference for minds, such as, difference of place, so he expects that this can be provided by the Central-state materialism. He also believes that the interaction of mind and body can be explained by this theory in a very simple way. This theory derives the conclusion that mind and body interact on the ground that brain and body interact. According to Armstrong, from the implication of the Central–state theory we are allowed to say that it is not that we have a mind or that we do not have it, there is no sharp break because in a gradual way mind comes into being. This conclusion is drawn by Armstrong on the ground that there is evolution of the species and development of the individual and, in this process, in a gradual way brain comes into being. Thus Armstrong believes that the especial advantage of this theory and also of

behaviourism is that they represented the world-picture in a simple way.

But Armstrong also points out that there is a basic difference between the Central-state theory and behaviourism. The Central-state theory admits the existence of inner state where behaviourism denies. The Central-state theory holds that these inner mental states are physical states of the brain.

It is already mentioned that Armstrong developed the Identity theory originally advocated by Place, Feigl and Smart. But before his positive contribution to the theory, he delineated some of the serious objections of this theory that might be raised by the critics and subsequently he tried to meet these objections.

In the first place he considered the argument that any theory of mind to be satisfactory must have to admit the logical possibility of disembodied existence of mind. If the Central-state theory argued that mind is the brain then this theory does not admit the disembodied existence of mind as because there is no brain without body.

Secondly, an independent existence of brain states and processes could be conceived as these seem to be things. Even their existence could be conceived as, (e.g., patterns of electrical discharge in space) without requiring the existence of any brain. But it is not clear how the Central-state theory can account the mental states because these have no independent existence.

Thirdly, regarding intentionality, i.e., the power of the mental states to refer to things other than themselves is not explainable in the account given by a Central-state theory. Armstrong believes that this is not a problem only with Central-state theory, but no theory prior to it is able to give us a satisfactory solution on this problem.

Fourthly, it is found in the theory of behaviourism that in the some way or other behaviour or disposition to behave does

enter into the concept of mind. But what the views of central-state theory are with regard to this mental feature or how this theory does justice in regard to mental feature of behaviour is not clear.

The above mentioned problems were raised by Armstrong in his book *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*. But he also mentions some other drawbacks of the theory and their remedies. He claims that the difficulties of the central-state theory mentioned above will become pale in front of the present problem that he will raise as because this is a more powerful line of argument. He considers an argument that could be regarded as conclusive against the claim that mind is the brain. Consider the question whether the statement 'the mind is the brain' is a logically necessary truth or this statement is simply contingently true. Whether the defender of this theory desires to assimilate the statement with other statements like 'An oculist *is* an eye-doctor' or '7+5 *is* 12' on the one side and on the other side they try to assimilate the statement with 'The morning star *is* the evening star' or 'The gene *is* the DNA molecule'. Armstrong holds that it is not so easy to answer the above question as because it is a dilemma. To him, the statement 'The mind is the brain' is certainly not a logically necessary truth. In this connection he refers Aristotle who delineated brain as an organ which keeps the body cool and nothing more. And in this description of brain, Aristotle certainly cannot be blamed of denying a necessary truth, mistake although he committed, it was an empirical mistake. Armstrong suggestion is that among the contingent statements of identity we must have to find out a model if 'mind is the brain' is a true statement. The statement that 'the mind is the brain' must be compared with some other contingent assertion of identity like "The morning star

is the evening star' or 'The gene is the DNA molecule'.

Armstrong claims that if it is admitted that the statement 'The mind is the brain', then logically independent explanations of the meaning of the two constituting words 'mind' and 'brain' must be possible. In this connection he refers to the example of a contingent statement that 'the morning star is the evening star'. Here the meaning of the two phrases - 'the morning star' and 'the evening star' - can be explained like this way - a very bright star that appears and can be seen on certain mornings of a year in the sky is called 'the morning star'. Similarly, a very bright star that appears and seen on certain evenings of a year in the sky is called 'the evening star'. Here the meanings of the above mentioned two phrases can be given by logically independent explanations. On the same line of argument Armstrong mentions another statement that "The gene is the DNA molecule" and he claims this statement to be a contingent one. Here the meaning of the word 'gene' and the word 'DNA molecule' can be explained in the way that - gene is a principle that resides within us and because of which hereditary characteristics, like colour of the eye, are transmitted from one generation to another. The phrase 'the DNA molecule' can be meaningfully explained by saying that a certain type of molecule constituted by very complex chemicals and the nucleus of the cell is formed by this. Thus here also the meanings of the two phrases 'gene' and 'DNA molecule' can be given by logically independent explanations.

Thus Armstrong's conclusion is that to be meaningful to say that 'The mind is the brain' is to say that the meanings of both the words 'mind' and 'brain' can be explained in these ways. He is sure that in that case the word 'brain' will not create any trouble. But the problem is with the word 'mind'. In a quasi-ostensive way it is possible to explain

the meaning of the term 'brain'. But in the case of 'mind' to attempt to give a verbal explanation or ostensive definition of the meaning of the word is impossible. In that case he must depart from a physicalist view point. This problem is a great one that the central-state theory is facing.

Armstrong says that in virtue of certain physical characteristics of an object we call it brain and it is found inside the skull of the people as a sort of certain physical object. But if we treat this physical object also as mind we must have to add some *further* characteristics to it by virtue of which it is so-called. Because, the meaning of the word 'brain' and the word 'mind' are not same. But the question remains as to what this further characteristics are that are not found in the brain.

The above mentioned problem is stated by Armstrong in another way. According to him, it is the view of the central-state materialism that to be *aware* of our mental state is to be aware of mere physical states of the brain. But it is certain that we are not aware of the mental states as the states of the brain. These mental states, according to Armstrong, are of a quite peculiar sort - these are mental.

One of the physicalists, Paul Feyerabend, was daunted by this problem. His suggestion on this issue is that the world-view that is recognized by the materialist does not allow him to state any statement that may assert or imply the existence of mind. Thus talking about mind by a true Physicalism is an intellectual loss but it should talk simply about the operation of the central nervous system.

In order to have an explanation of the concept of mind Armstrong refers to the psychological way of thinking about man. In picturing man psychologist holds that man is an object upon which certain physical stimuli continually act and certain behaviour are elicited from him because of these

stimuli. Thus there is a causal chain between the stimulus and response and mind falls in between this causal chain to mediate our response to stimuli. But central-state theory says that it is nothing but physical processes in the central nervous system that falls between the stimulus and response. This theory even does not believe that mind is an epiphenomenon of stimulus and response.

Thus, according to Armstrong, solving of the problem of 'mind' is within our hand if we think of the psychologist's picture outlined above. From the psychological point of view a particular mental process is the effect of certain stimuli and also cause of certain responses and both of these processes are within man. The concept of mental state is that which is brought about by certain stimuli and which in turn brings about certain responses in a man. Armstrong points out that it is science to discover the exact nature of mind or mental states. He also agrees to the modern science the supposition that the central nervous system or more crudely and inaccurately, but more simply, the brain performs the task of mediator between stimulus and responses.

So far we have explored Armstrong's analysis of the issue of mind and brain. After explaining his own view he considers the view of Place and Smart which are called the classical exposition of central-state materialism. Armstrong points out that both of these thinkers consider only the side of stimulus, but not response. In this connection he quotes Smart (1959), "When a person says, 'I see a yellowish-orange after-image', he is saying something like that: *'There is something going on which is like what is going on when I have my eyes open, am awake, and there is an orange illuminated in good light in front of me, that is, when I really see an orange'.*"

Armstrong believes that having an orange after-image is explicated by Smart in terms of stimuli alone. Here in a suitable condition an orange acts upon a person. He opines that similar line is taken by Place also. Contrary to the view of both Place and Smart, Armstrong desires to defend a central-state account of *all* the mental concepts. According to him, it is our natural tendency to distinguish between thought or belief and the expression of thought or belief in words or action, between emotion and the expression of emotion in action, and also between the intention or aim and its expression in action. When something is squeezed out, we literally say that 'something is expressed' as we find that from olives, oil is expressed. If the same is applied to the mind, the picture of the inner state is that it yields or that it brings about out behaviour. It is sure that if this picture is to be rejected, there must be some strong reason behind it. There is hardly any reason that strong to reject that picture.

Explaining introspection Armstrong says that it helps us being aware of sense-impressions, sensations and mental images. These are regarded by him as most obtrusive sort of inner items. But it is true that sometimes we do not have thoughts and intentions. In that case they may be imagery without accompanying sensations. In analysing the position of Place and Smart in this regard Armstrong says, "I think, indeed, that Place's and Smart's position is a mere hang-over from the Sensationalism of the British Empiricists which attempts to reduce all actual mental items to impressions, images and sensations."

Armstrong holds that although both Place and Smart did not give an account of all mental concepts but subsequently Smart has changed his views and accepts all mental concepts in Central-State account. Armstrong believes that if someone admits inner mental states he will have to give all

the mental concepts in a central account and it is actually a theoretical economy. Armstrong says that the original ground chosen by Place and Smart on perception is inadequate as they explain it in terms of the characteristic effects of certain stimuli. This point is regarded by Armstrong as partial truth. A full truth about perception, according to him, is that a person can do certain things. In that case a person can systematically discriminate between certain classes of objects in his behaviour. A person's lacking in perceptual powers is picked up by certain inefficiency in his conduct. So, according to Armstrong, both stimuli and responses are equally important in perception.

After considering the views of Place and Smart Armstrong has given his own view on the concept of mental state. He says,

"The concept of mental state is primarily the concept of a *state of the person apt for bringing about a certain sort of behaviour*."

Armstrong does not regard that mind is behaviour but he points out that mind is the cause of behaviour. This does not make him a patron of behaviourism. He denies himself to be a proponent of behaviourism as he forbids us to identify mind with behaviour. He identifies mind with the inner principle of behaviour.

Armstrong holds that for the sake of argument if we accept the view that to talk about mental state is to talk about inner states of the person apt for bringing about certain sort of behaviour then obvious questions come up about the nature of these inner states and what these inner causes are. Armstrong says that to answer this question is not an easy task and no logical analysis can help us in this regard. In his view only a high-level scientific speculation can solve this problem. But yet he puts forward

different accounts of the mind that have been advanced through the ages.

According to Armstrong, primitive view about the mind or spirit is that it is breath which makes a difference between a living man and a corpse. While making difference between the two, this theory makes difference between man and other sorts of things. Man differs from other living things in essential respects. A living man's behaviour is extremely different from other things, but the difference between corpse and other material object is little one. Moreover, the most essential features which make a living man different from a corpse is his breath. This breath or air is the spirit or mind which is responsible for inner principle of man's unique behaviour.

Other suggestions about the nature of the mind are that it is a flame in the body or it may be said that a collection of atoms which are specially smooth, mobile and scattered throughout the members of the body. Again, mind is thought of as a spiritual substance, or regarded as a set of special properties of the body. These properties cannot be reduced to the physico-chemical properties of matter. The irreducible properties are supposed by the Central-state Materialism as a physico-chemical working of the central nervous system.

Armstrong says that many features of the statement 'The mind is the brain' can be understood by a very good model provided by the statement 'The gene is the DNA molecule'. The concept of the 'gene' was introduced by Brian Medlin to Biology. Mandel holds that this gene is responsible for producing certain characteristics in animals or persons. In explaining the nature of gene, Armstrong holds that, different sort of answers are possible. One of them is that the gene might have been an immaterial principle. Moreover, genes are responsible for the colour of our eyes. Biologist's

conclusion regarding gene is that, for the production of heredity characteristics it plays a vital role and this conclusion they have drawn from experiment on the substance that is found at the centre of cells: deoxyribo-nucleic acid. This identification of the gene and the DNA is sufficiently certain although it is impossible on the part of anybody to observe directly nor one could ever hope to observe in practice the causal chain from the gene to the colouring of the eyes. From this observation Armstrong's assertion regarding central-state theory is that, "...once it is granted that the concept of a mental state is the concept of a state of the person apt for the production of certain sorts of behaviour, the identification of these states with physico-chemical states of the brain is, in the present state of knowledge, nearly as good a bet as the identification of gene with the DNA molecule."

With this conclusion Armstrong declares that his preliminary sketch of the central-state is complete with this version.

Thus the Central-state materialism of Armstrong identifies beliefs and desires with states of the brain and in this regard Smart agreed with him. But Place does not agree with this view. Place is rather against the attempts to extend identity theory to dispositional states like beliefs and desires. His argument was that we have no privileged access to our beliefs and desires.

Place firmly believes that it is fundamentally sound to analyse the cognitive concepts like 'knowing', 'believing', 'understanding', 'remembering' in terms of disposition to behave. The same also true in case of volitional concepts, like 'wanting' and 'intending'. He further says that in the case of these dispositional mental states it is necessary to give a different account of the mind-brain relation. This account, according to him, is different from that of mental processes which he refers by the term 'consciousnesses'. By the term

'mental process' Place means the process in the brain and nothing more. But the dispositional mental states are not recognized by him as states of the brain. Dispositional state is causally dependent on the structure of the entity which bears this disposition, but in no way it is identical with the structure of the entity. Again, disposition has no existence apart from its structural underpinnings otherwise it will become a peculiar entity.

With regard to the notion of mental propensities, such as, believing a certain proposition to be true, or wanting something to come about, or intending to do something, there are arguments that these belong to a different category apart from mental capacities. Because in those cases none but the individual himself has privileged access to his own dispositional mental states. in this connection Place says, "But this is only because in these cases stating what you believe, asking for what you want, and stating your intentions are in themselves manifestations of the dispositions in which believing, wanting and intending consist"

Armstrong also rejects the argument that we have privileged access to our beliefs and desires. According to Armstrong, there are persons who may admit that it cannot be logically guaranteed that introspective awareness is free from mistakes but at the same time maintain that to our own current inner states we have a logically privileged access. But this view is denied by Armstrong. According to him, it may be that, someone's inner states can be understood by the person himself as because he himself is logically ultimate authority of his own inner states, but in that case, there is every possibility of his being mistaken. Thus Armstrong concludes,

"So it seems that, once incorrigibility is given up, logically privileged access cannot be sustained. No doubt we have a privileged access (at times) to our own

mental states, but it is an *empirically* privileged access"

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चाह कर भी

चाह कर भी
कह नहीं पाते हैं दिल की बात
हो जाते हैं गुमसुम
दर्द भरे, अजनबी हालात

अनजाने वो हो जाते हैं
जो हैं बरसों जान-पहचाने
क्यों करते हैं ऐसा
बोलो हम क्या जाने

रिश्ते टूट चुके हैं पर
अभी भी हैं निभाते हुए
अपने थे कभी ये
पर अब पराए हुए

दोनों की मंजिल नहीं है एक
तो चलना क्यों साथ-साथ
हमराही की गुंजाइश कहाँ है
अब तो तन्हा है हालात।

तेरे साथ

तेरे साथ चलती रही है मेरी यादें हर कही
अब साथी मेरे अलग रास्ते की गुंजाइश ही नहीं

प्यार करके छोड़ दे तुम्हें तन्हा
ऐसा हो सकता नहीं
मिलो तुम चाहे न मिलो
मेरी ऐसी कोई ख्वाहिश भी नहीं

प्यार करने में अगर देरी की हमने
तो क्या हुआ?
लो अब कह देते हैं तुम्हें
सुन लो जरा

चलेगी ज़िन्दगी हमारी यू ही
तुम्हें याद करते-करते ही
प्यार मिले, मिले ना सही
तुमसे रिश्ता तोड़ेंगे नहीं।