

WOMEN AND SOCIETY

Prospects, Issues and Challenges

Editors:

Dr. Chandrama Goswami

Dr. Barnali Deka

Dr. Kunjalata Baruah

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Editorial

The way women are represented in society and the roles they perform has evolved through history. Position of women in society has always been a matter of discussion in debates, magazines, social media and newspapers. Indian society from ancient to modern times has considered women as an important part of the society. The greatness of India's ancient culture is justified in the honoured place ascribed to women. As mentioned in ancient Hindu scriptures, no religious rites can be performed with perfection by a man without the participation of his wife. Thus, women were given not only important but equal position in society.

However, the position of women did not remain the same and it was left to reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Jyotirao Phule who fought for the betterment of women. The father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi encouraged women to come out of the four walls of their houses to fight for the freedom of the country. The result is that now the Indian Constitution has given equal rights to women. There is no discrimination between men and women and both can compete with each other in all professions.

Women's position in society has changed gradually and we see a steady rise of women in all fields. They are not restricted to cooking and taking care of their households, but have established themselves in all fields. Women exercise their right to vote, contest for Parliament and Assembly elections, seek appointment in public office and compete in other spheres of life with men. This shows that women in India enjoy today equal liberty. They have acquired the liberty to participate in the affairs of the country. They have been given equality with men in shaping their future and sharing

responsibilities for themselves, their family and their country. Modern day women are independent, take right decisions boldly, stand up for their rights and have succeeded. Droupadi Murmu, Indira Gandhi, Kalpana Chawla, Sushma Swaraj, Aishwarya Rai, Susmita Sen, and many more women achievers are prime examples of women success stories.

However, though women have made considerable progress in India, yet they still have to struggle against many social evils till date. Gender discrimination, Sexual harassment, dowry deaths, rape, gender pay gap are some of the evils facing our society even today. The present volumewith a total of 26 articles looks into different aspects of women issues in Indian society.

In the paper 'Women Empowerment through Mushroom cultivation in Assam', Dr Rajreepa Talukdar emphasizes on how mushroom cultivation can be easily taken up by women as a source of livelihood. This activity can ultimately lead to empowerment of those women engaged in mushroom cultivation by giving them financial independence. The paper on "Need of Financial Literary for Women' by Shri Paresh Kumar Sarmah talks about the financial services like credit facilities available for women. It describes the necessity of financial inclusion as a pre requisite of women empowerment. In 'The Stories of Four Women Heroes from North East India', Dr. Pallabi Saikia, describes the acts of valour of four women – Rani Gaidinliu from Manipur, Numoli Rajmao from Assam, Irom Xarmila from Manipur and Laxmi Baruah from Assam. All four of them were empowered women who fought for the upliftment of their fellow sisters. 'The Voice of the Marginalized: Rise of the Other' by Dr. Runjun Devi analyses how Rita Choudhury, one of the women novelists of Assamese literature has depicted the rise of the female protagonist in her novel Pothsondhi. Mr Jintu Mani Nath's article 'Shakuntala Devi: Magician of Arithmetic Calculations' describes the natural born mathematical genius Shakuntala Devi who taught millions of children throughout the world through her

seminars in schools and institutions. She had the capacity to beat the speed of computers in calculations. In the article 'Obesity and its related major complications in women, with special reference to India', Ms. Pritimoni Das describes the obesity problem faced by women and the major causes responsible for causing obesity. For women to be empowered, they need to be physically and mentally fit and obesity can be one problem which can act as an obstacle for empowerment. Mrs. Trishna Jyoti Das and Dr. Jayanta Kr Boruah in 'Kanaklata Baruah and her Role in 1942 Independence Movement in Assam' describes the role of Kanaklata Baruah in the freedom struggle of the country. Kanaklata Baruah stands as a symbol of courage and empowered woman who defied all odds to fight for her motherland. Dr. Barnali Deka and Dr. Kunjalata Baruah highlights the role of Government schemes, policies and programmes taken up by the government of India for women in respect of health, education and employment in 'Role of Mahila Shakti Kendra in Creating Awareness among Rural Women on Government Policies and Schemes in Darrang District of Assam'. 'Women in Botany: A review on the impact of Gender Bias in Plant Science and Biodiversity Conservation' by Dr. Debashree Kakati and Dr. Nibedita Das focuses on the aspect that life, nature, Earth and fertility have always been considered with female features throughout different civilizations. It emphasises that though women's local and traditional knowledge is important in terms of food security, agriculture, conserving biological diversity, yet few women are represented at the policy and decision-making level. 'Dress and Dressing: Expression of Gender Identity and Gender Discrimination' by Dr. Breehivorna Talukdar highlights the concept of dressing among men and women in a society and how it is always believed in a patriarchal society that women should maintain their culture through their clothing. Whereas clothing is actually a symbol of expression of personal and public identities of a person. Clothing for both men and women is culturally defined but at times women are imposed to dress

in a manner which is against their wish just to maintain tradition. Women and environment are closely interlinked. In all cultures, Earth is considered as a woman and referred to as Mother. This is highlighted in Ms. Ranjita Goswami's article 'Women and Environment'. The article talks about the movements for environmental protection where women have always played an important role. The article also describes the role of six women environmentalists – Purnima Devi Barman, Medha Patkar, Gauri Devi, Sunita Narian, Vandana Shiva and Maneka Gandhi who have contributed significantly towards environmental protection. Dr. (Maj) Leena Saikia says that women generally have less opportunity to play any role in disaster management in her article 'Role of Women in Disaster Management'. There are many obstacles preventing women from becoming positive role players but the society stands to benefit a lot through greater involvement of women in disaster management. Khanjana Deka in 'Concept of Women Empowerment in the field of Library and Information Technology' analyses how library and information technology can be a tool in empowering the women in the library sector which is the main part of any academic institution. The job of a women librarian is attractive but women faces different obstacles especially during pregnancy, childbirth and child care leave etc. It is important for women librarians to learn digitization in their specific domain which is likely to empower them. In 'Political Participation of Women in Legislative Assembly Elections (1985-2021): A Case Study of 78 No. Gohpur Legislative Assembly Constituency of Assam' by Dr. Joyjit Hazarika analyzes the participation of women in Gohpur Legislative Assembly Constituency (78) in the elections of Assam Legislative Assembly in comparison to the participation of male. It is found that though women are engaging in the political process in the Gohpur Constituency; their representation in the constituency is quite low. Even political parties are not interested in promoting women as candidates in election. In comparison to men, the percentage of female voters is low. It is necessary for the government to take

greater steps to encourage more women participation. Even political parties should change their mindsets and promote more women in party offices as office bearers, as well as project women as candidates in legislative assembly elections. The patriarchal structure of society and position of women in socio-cultural lives provides the ground for the growth of witch hunting. The root of this criminal act is much deeper than it is seen normally. Witch hunting is just an outcome of many hidden criminal practices having patriarchal roots. Awareness and legal measures are needed to remove this evil from society. This is depicted properly by Dr. Sangita Bharati in 'Analysis of Root Causes and Factors of Witch Hunting in Assam: Practices and Challenges'. Dr. Usha Rani Deka analyses the gender gap still existing in primary education in the Darrang District of Assam in her article 'Gender Gap in Education at the Primary Level under Darrang District of Assam'. This is a burning problem facing India. The paper comes up with initiatives that can be taken up to minimise the gender gap in education in the Darrang District. These include making schools available at short distances, providing transport and communication facilities, increasing the number of scholarships given to girl students, etc. Dr. Pranjit Kumar Nath and Dr. Pabitra Kumar Nath describes the community conservation approach adopted by local people to conserve the Manas National Park in their 'Rejuvenation of Manas National Park through People's Participation: A Success Story of Community Conservation'. The villagers of the fringe areas took initiatives for the protection of Manas where alternative sources of livelihood were planned and introduced to the villagers. Women SHGs also were trained to benefit from conservation of the forest and earn from alternative livelihood methods. Ms. Deepa Pradhan and Ms. Priya Sonowal discusses the trafficking of women and girls in 'Indian Scenario of Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation: Women and Children'. The study found that economic, social, cultural, and political factors such as poverty, unemployment, Devdassi system, child marriage, etc. play a crucial role in the perpetuation of this

activity inspite of a number of laws being enacted. Dr. Munmani Devi discussed the different customs and traditions related to the attainment of puberty by the girls, especially within the Darrang District of Assam in her article 'Darrangar Loka Utsav Puspotshabat Biswayanar Prabhab: Ek Adhyayan'. The topic gives an idea of the customs of different communities towards this aspect of human life. Dr. Arpana Devi describes how Manu accords respect, security, and all rights to women on an equal footing with males in her article 'Manusamhitat Narir Adhikar Aaru Surakhya: Ati Alochona'. Here, the researcher tries to present a summary of Manu's ideas on women's protection, religious freedom, property rights, and education rights, the latter of which are crucial for our society. The author gave a detailed description of ancient Hindu society from the perspective of women. Witch hunting is a very serious social problem among the tribal communities of West Assam. Birubala Rabha - a well-known social worker who received fame and glory for her work was also a victim of witch hunting in her early days. But with her courage, and determination she gave life to the number of families who were the victim of Witch hunting. Dr. Manju Kalita has been successful in depicting a picture of the mission of Birubala Rabha through her article 'Birubala Rabha: Andhbiswshar Biruddhe Ek Pratibadi Kantha'. In the article 'Jyoti Natokot Nari: Karengor Ligiri aro Rupalim Natokor Pradhan Nari charitro Sewali aroRupalimor Bishesh Prasongot', the author Chitra Ranjan Nath tries to describe the role of women character in different dramas of Jyoti Prasad Agarwala. *Rupalim* and *Sewali* are the most famous women character in the drama of Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla. They are the symbol of love and sacrifice. In the article, the author successfully described women's character during the time of Jyoti Prasad Agarwala. Dr. Rupjyoti Baruah in her article 'Lakshminath Bezbaruah Galpot Adhunik Narikantha' discussed how women characters are portrayed in his writings. Assamese society during the time of Bezbaruah was a conservative society. And his writings focus on the prevailing exploitation and

gender disparities during his period. Dr. Baruah discussed these issues beautifully in her article. While all the articles reviewed here discussed women's role during the last few centuries, Dr. Barnali Kalita, on the other hand, peeps through history and goes back to the Vedic period to discuss the place of women in society through her topic 'Praasin Bharatiya Samajot Narir Sthan: Veda, Brahmana, Upanishad Aro Mahakabyar Bishesh Ullikhansaha'. Citing examples from Ramayana, Upanishad, and other ancient literature she elaborates on the ancient society during the Vedic period. However, from the examples, it has been evident that the role of women in ancient society was not the same everywhere. Based on the role they perform their social status also gets changed. Deepti Das discussed how women are being portrayed in the novel Ayananta by Arupa Patangiya Kalita. The writer wants to display the social traditions, oppressions, and rules for women in contemporary society through the characters of Ayananta. The author of the article successfully summarised the novel through the topic 'Arupa Patangia Kalitar Ayananta Upanyashat Pratifalita Samaj Byabasthat Narir Sthan: Ek Bishslashanatmak Adhayan'. In 'Unnabinsha Satikar Narir Swadhin manobhabar Prakash, Prasanga Madhusudan Dutta r Birangana Kabya Eti Adhyayan', written by Dr. Mausumi Kanshabanik, deals with the feminine representation of few ancient women characters from the ancient Indian epic works like Ramayana, Mahabharata and Purana. While doing this she has taken inspiration from a few western epic works. The works of Madhusudhan Dutta is therefore very much essential to understand a different representation of those ancient characters and also how women thought independently during that time.

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Women Empowerment through Mushroom Cultivation in Assam

Dr. Rajreepa Talukdar

Introduction

Women make a significant contribution in most spheres of life. Even in farming, their contribution is substantial. Agriculture is the main strength of Indian economy and a variety of agricultural crops are grown today. In India, they play a pivotal role in developing its economy. Therefore, a great need has been felt for exploring the possibilities of entrepreneurship development for rural women that would enable them to raise their standard of living and also contribute their skill in nation building process. Women's role in agriculture is diffused with their diversified responsibilities in managing the household. In India too, especially in the North-eastern region, women are significant stakeholders in farming practices as well as selling the farm products. Women especially in Assam are inclined to have some sort of financial independence in the form of money generated from cultivating in their own small areas. One such growing field of economic growth and an additional source of income for these women is the cultivation of mushroom.

Mushroom belonging to fungi species, is a nutritious

vegetarian delicacy and a good source of high quality protein (20-35% dry weight). Presently, three varieties of mushroom are cultivated namely, white mushroom (*Agaricusbisporus*), the paddy-straw mushroom (*Volvariellavovvacea*) and oyster mushroom (*Pleurotussajor-caju*). *Agaricus* species is mostly cultivated mushroom contributing 35-40% of the global production. Mushroom constitutes low calorie but nutritious diet as it is rich in protein, vitamins and essentials minerals and hence they are considered as best food for people suffering from diabetes, hypertension, cardiac problems, obesity, anaemia, cancer, etc.

In India, the National Research Centre for Mushroom (NRCM) is established as the nodal institute for providing technical assistance for mushroom cultivation. It has led to both horizontal and vertical growth of mushroom industry. In addition, the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) established by the government is providing major emphasis to enhance the agricultural production and productivity as well as to generate household income and employment of rural population. Attempts have already been made for skill development among rural women in the field of mushroom farming so that they could start their own entrepreneurial units using low cost thatched houses. Hence, adoption of mushroom farming apart from solving malnutrition problem in rural masses can also lead to rural development by increasing income and self-employment particularly among women folk who constitute 70% of total women's population (Dey et al., 2020).

Mushroom cultivation a boon to the society

Mushroom farming is an agricultural activity well suited to the state of Assam for varied reasons such as:

1. **Land resource utilization:** Mushroom production is an indoor activity using vertical space hence does not compete with agricultural land thus suited to small farmers, farm women and landless labourers.

2. **Reduction in agricultural waste:** Many agricultural wastes can be utilized to produce quality food and organic manure in field crops.
3. **Biologically efficient:** Besides mushrooms have high biological efficiency i.e. conversion of dry substances into fresh mushroom.
4. **Boost health:** It can provide nutritional security particularly for poor people through incorporating mushrooms in their diet.
5. **Aid in economy:** It is a source of regular additional income as there is increasingly good demand of mushroom even in the rural areas as well as urban areas in proximity to the production areas.
6. **Reduction in environmental pollution:** Mushroom has the ability to consume organic materials discarded by man and thus help control pollution in modern society.
7. **Improve quality of life:** It can generate self-employment, alleviate poverty and improve socio economic status of women and youth in the rural areas.

Present scenario of women engaged in mushroom cultivation in Assam

In Assam, the prospects for exports of mushroom also look promising. Cultivation of almost all the edible mushrooms, especially that of oyster mushroom has increased tremendously in Assam because of their abilities to grow in a wide range of temperatures and utilising various agro-based residues as well as easy availability of the raw materials (Boruah et al., 2021).

An example of employment of women in Assam through mushroom is that of the Tribal women of Sonapur (in Assam) have taken up mushroom cultivation to become self-reliant and improve their living conditions. There are many such women who have taken up mushroom cultivation in Sonapur. Mushroom Development Foundation (MDF), a

non-governmental organization has helped these women to recognize the potential of mushroom cultivation and trained them as well. MDF carried out an awareness program in over 50 Assam villages that reached to over 1,000 men and women. It also supplied mushroom seeds developed in their laboratory for better yields. Within Sonapur, the MDF has also taken up an interesting campaign to attract more villagers towards mushroom cultivation. Since Guwahati is a huge market, most of the mushrooms produced in Sonapur are sold in the city. With its proximity to Guwahati, Sonapur has immense potential to grow into a hub for supplying skilled labour to the city.

Aaranyak, another NGO in association with DBT-sponsored Technology Incubation Center on Mushroom organizes training programmes on mushroom cultivation for Karbi women from the villages under the Kohora river basin in Assam's Karbi Anglong district. After having received an overall idea of different types of edible mushrooms and its potential economic importance for a family, these women have successfully started cultivation of mushrooms with the commercial intention.

In the villages of Golaghat district of Assam, women's collectives, women tea garden communities and farmer women have taken to mushroom cultivation to a large scale agro-business with support from the MDF and the North East Institute of Science and Technology (NEIST). In the recent years, mushroom cultivation is gaining popularity among rural people of Tinsukia district too (Boruah at al., 2021). KVK, Tinsukia is playing a major role in providing trainings, awareness camps and demonstration programmes at different parts of the district since some years. It has also conducted a number of front line demonstrations among 250 farmers of Tinsukia district during the period 2017 to 2020. The economic analysis of oyster mushroom production revealed that the yearly cost of production of mushroom was between Rs. 10,800 to Rs. 12,400 in the period of 2017-2020. Farmers received the highest gross income in the range

of Rs. 24,000 - Rs. 30,000 in the three years. Considering the results obtained from this case, the feasibility of mushroom cultivation in the state of Assam as a profitable venture for upliftment of rural income can be predicted.

Future aspects

Women are the custodians of traditional knowledge that is of great significance in rural food and medicine. They not only retain a high and widely shared level of general knowledge about wild foods, medicinal plants, and other natural resources but also acquire new knowledge as roles and duties change. Women should be involved not only in collecting edible mushrooms, but also in cultivating medicinal mushrooms (Karwa et al., 2005). In tribal pockets of India, Assam in particular, tribal women sell edible mushrooms, such as, *Agaricusbisporus*, *Termitomycesheimii*, *Pleurotussajorcaju*, *Pleurotussajorcaju* and *Cantharelluscibarius*. They collect these naturally growing mushrooms from the forests and sell them in local markets. This enables them to contribute to their families' income. These mushrooms are commercially important and can be cultivated by tribal as well as non-tribal women collectives of Assam with the aid of both government and non-governmental organizations. Mushroom cultivation can generate income and develop self-reliance among the rural women thus saving them from tiring manual labour. On the other hand, it will provide them with more opportunities for cultural, societal and technical education in improving the quality of life by income generation. Biotechnological packages for women can be introduced in the weaker sections of the society in order to improve health avenues for livelihood and in supplementing their family income.

Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded by the fact that mushroom cultivation can be adopted as a profitable agricultural entrepreneurship by rural tribal and non-tribal women communities of Assam successfully. Adoption of this venture,

would generate sufficient employment opportunity is available at home itself. Cultivation of mushroom would also help in eliminating protein malnutrition among rural people who are primarily dependent on cereals and in addition offer remunerative employment. Women force will get another dimension of the entrepreneurial skill which would lead to a better human resource development. This venture would therefore justify the popular quote by Jawaharlal Nehru, which goes by-"When women move forward the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves".

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Need of Financial Literacy for Women

Sri Paresh Kumar Sarmah

Introduction

Financial literacy refers to the ability to understand and apply different financial skills effectively, including personal financial management, budgeting and saving. Financial literacy makes individual become self-sufficient, so that financial stability can be accomplished. It requires the experience of financial principles and concept, such as financial planning, compound interest, debt management, efficient investment strategies and money time value. The key steps to improve financial literacy include- learning the skills to create a budget, ability to track expenses, bearing the strategies to pay off debt, planning for retirement effectively (Sujain, 2022). This perception towards money is related to his/her daily life. Financial literacy demonstrates how an adult makes financial decisions. This expertise will help an individual to build a financial roadmap to define their income, their expenses and their liabilities. This subject also affects the small business owners, who contribute significantly to economic growth and stability. According to the Financial Literacy and Education Commission, there are five key components of financial literacy- earn, spend,

save and interest, borrow and protect. To be financially literate is to know how to manage one's money. Financial literacy empowers people, especially women, to make independent decisions. During emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, an individual can take right steps if he/she is financially literate. Financial literacy is the foundation of one's relationship with money, and it is a life long journey of learning. Financial literacy for women should be given topmost priority. Financial literacy for women is an important aspect of their independence, financial decision making and other aspects.

Financial skills are as simple as budgeting, investing, credit management and financial management. In other words the financial literacy is the ability to manage money. Financial literacy is important because it equips us with the knowledge and skills we need to manage money effectively. There is a difference between financial literacy and financial education. Financial literacy is the ability to know how to manage financial resources. Basic financial literacy helps people to become self-sufficient and achieve the ability to understand how financial resources work. A Lack of financial knowledge and capabilities lead to poor financial choices and investment mistakes which could result in understand economic consequences. Low financial literacy is often cited as a potential cause of under saving.

Why women need financial literacy?

Women need financial literacy for the following reasons (Roy, 2021)–

- It prepares them for emergencies.
- Women can deal with rising costs of living and inflation.
- Children tend to be more influenced by their mothers than their fathers. Being financially literate sets an example for one's children as well.
- In most households, women are responsible for the day

today expenses. Thus it is helpful for them to know how best to use the money.

- Financially literate women gain more confidence in their own decision making.

In these days, there are ample resources for women who wish to become financially literate, online resources are abundant for those who wish to educate themselves. At the same time it is stark reality that women in India may not always have access to financial literacy or they do not have interest to learn these things by themselves (Roy, 2021) Women are significantly less financially literate than man. Only 24 percent Indians are financially literate. India is the home to one fifth of the world population and has a literacy rate nearly 80 percent (Rana, 2021).

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched the National Strategy of Financial Education (NSFE) 2020-2025. The policy aims to teach financial literacy concepts among general people, encouraging them to save actively and boost their participation in the financial markets. The Central Bank recommends for including financial education in the curriculum at schools and colleges, inculcating the concept at an early stage, helps people put it to use later in their lives. The National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE), set up by RBI, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) as well as Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) aim at educating Indians on primary area, such as the difference between saving and investing, the power of compounding the time value of money as well as the importance of diversification among others.

Women display lower financial literacy and confidence than man, leaving them at a potential disadvantage. Even those for women financial knowledge is likely to be very important, for example, widow or single woman, know little about concepts relevant for day today financial decision making. Women face unique financial challenges, they need

financial knowledge in order to build a financially secured future. Women's distinct challenges arise from life expectancies that are longer than man, lower life time income than man and career interruptions due to child rearing. Moreover women are much less likely to plan and thus less likely to prepare for their retirement than men. Low financial knowledge has substantial consequences because it is linked to several other financial decisions. In concrete numbers, worldwide 35 percent of men are financially literate compared with 30 percent of women (Klapper, et al). This gender gap is found in both advanced economies as well as emerging economies. Financial literacy rate tend to be higher in high income economies. Women running their own business face multiple challenges, the biggest of which is the difficulty in accessing finance, while Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have financial schemes to bolster women led business, creating awareness and access to these is essential. According to World Health Organization, Women live longer than men on average by six to eight years. This means that women need a bigger financial reservoir than men to ensure their old age. The financial situation of a mother who has children support system is going to be very different from a woman who is deprived of it. As women tend to be caregivers - taking care of children and elderly relatives too, they either tend to take career breach or shift from conventional work structure than can have a bearing on their income. Moreover Women play a pivotal role in agriculture and in rural development. In developing countries, among the poor, rural women are the poorest and most vulnerable. Empirical evidences suggest that women in rural areas are more adversely affected by poverty than man. The issue of gender bias and equity point to the double burden, women have to bear that on being poor and being a woman.

Achieving women's economic empowerment will take sound public policies, a holistic approach and long term commitment from all department actors. It is important to start with women by integrating gender specific perspectives into policy and programme design. More equitable access to

assets and services- land, water, infrastructure, technology, innovation and credits will strengthen women's rights, increase agricultural productivity and promote economic growth. The RBI has been conducting financial literacy week every year since 2016 to propagate financial education messages on various themes. The theme of this year's (2022) week long financial literacy and awareness programme is "Go digital Go Secure". The focus is to create awareness about- (a) Convenience of digital transactions, (b) Security of digital transactions and (c) Protection of customers.

Access to safe easy and affordable credit and other financial services by the poor and vulnerable groups, disadvantaged areas and lagging sectors is recognized as a pre-condition for accelerating growth and reducing income disparity and poverty. Access to a well functioning financial system, by creating equal opportunities, enable economically and socially excluded people to integrate better into the economy and actively contribute to development and protect themselves against economic shocks. Despite the broad international consensus regarding the importance of access to finance as a crucial poverty alleviation tool, it is estimated that globally over two billion people are excluded from access to financial services (United Nations, 2006). Countries with larger number of people excluded from the financial system show higher inequality and poverty in comparison to those where financial inclusion is more.

Conclusion

Financial inclusion means "a comprehensive and holistic process of ensuring access to financial services and timely and adequate credit where needed by vulnerable groups at an affordable cost". Inclusive growth basically means "broad-based benefits". Growth is inclusive when it creates economic opportunities along with ensuring equal access to them. Inclusion should be seen as a process of including the excluded as agents whose participation is essential in the development process. Empowering rural India is of utmost importance and the government can effectively do so through

financial inclusion. Financial literacy is integral to the inclusive growth process and sustainable development of the country. It is a new paradigm in the economics of growth and development. A strong financial system ensures that poor households, small women enterprises need not depend on middleman. A formal financial literacy system could lead to improvement of their financial condition and living standards, enabling them to create financial assets, generate income and build resilience to meet macro-economic and livelihood stocks.

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The Stories of Four Women Heroes from Northeast India

Dr. Pallabi Saikia

*"Women have a much better time than men in this world;
there are far more things forbidden to them."*

–Oscar Wilde

In a traditionally male dominated society, women face lots of difficulties to break the glass ceiling and hence although having skill and capability, they remain unable to run across the boundaries set by the society and remain unsung throughout their life. The aim of this article is to highlight the inspirational stories of four great women of Northeast India who were playing catalyst for the change and development of the societies in the Northeast region of India through their administrative skill as well great fighting attitude and thus able to overcome all the obstacles and succeed in their respective lives.

The first story begins with the following slogan

"We are free people, the white men should not rule over us."

This is the famous dialogue of the Great Rani Maa from Northeast of India who fought gallantly against the British

Rule and united the people to struggle for the independence. She is not other than Rani Gaidinliu, the great freedom fighter and the Naga spiritual and political leader who led an armed rebellion against the British Government.

Gaidinliu was born on 26th January 1915 in Tamenglang district of present day Manipur. She belonged to the Rongmei Naga tribe, which is one of the important tribe of Naga culture. It is heard from the local folks that when Gaidinliu was born, the umbilical cord surrounded her neck and in Naga culture this is believed to be a very good sign. The then priest of that area had predicted that she would grow up to become an extraordinary woman and would contribute a lot to the society and her name would remain remembered forever.

During her childhood, the Heraka movement had started in that region and many people joined the movement because of its views and ideas. The word Heraka means pure and it is derived from ancestral Naga practices known as "Paupaise". This Heraka movement was a socio-political-religious movement started by HaipouJadonangMalangmei, the great Naga revolutionary whose main aim was to standardize the traditional Naga belief systems and to stop the conversion of Naga people to Christianity. Haipou started the concept of worshiping to "TingkaoRagwang", the supreme God and thereby grew the spirituality of Naga culture. Besides its religious aspects, Heraka movement had a political aim: they wanted the people to forget the past hatred of the inter-village feuds and communal tension and unite against the foreigners. Haipou Jadonang had heard about Mahatma Gandhi's plans for civil disobedience movement in India and wished to express solidarity with Gandhiji. Rani Gaidinliu was immensely influenced by the Heraka movement because of her Guru "Haipou" (who was also her cousin by relation) and joined the movement in 1927 at the age of only 13. However the great Haipou was arrested and executed in 1931 by the British Government and then Gaidinliu took the overall leadership of the Heraka movement and proved to

be an able disciple and follower of the great Haipou. Gaidinliu was a very good speaker or in other words gifted speaker and could encourage or motivate people very easily and thus she became an inspirational leader among the Naga people at a very young age. She could mobilize people including young girls and women and started her troop of Army and together they started the guerrilla war against the British rule.

Within a very short span, the rebellion group under the leadership of Gaidinliu created fear among the British Government and British started to treat her as big enemy. The British Government had announced big prize to the person(s) if anyone could disclose her whereabouts (it is heard that the prize announced was Rs. 500 (very huge amount in 1930) and tax relief for next 10 years for the entire village). However the local people remained loyal to their leader and restrained themselves from the provocation. The Government became so desperate to catch Gaidinliu that they started to interrogate every girl named Gaidinliu in that region. After many failed attempts, she was at last arrested from Pulomi village along with her supporters in 1932 while she was busy in building a wooden fortress in Pulomi area. The trial was put on thereafter and she was sent to imprisonment in 1933 only at the age of 17. She was able to be freed only in 1947 after India won independence as the interim Government led by Jawaharlal Nehru decided and announced her freedom.

During her imprisonment, Jawaharlal Nehru met her at Shillong Jail in 1937 and promised to pursue for her release. In fact Nehru gave her the title Rani ("Queen") during that visit. He gave her that appreciation as Gadinilliu was loved by the people as their Queen and she was considered as the incarnation of the great Goddess Cherachamdinilu.

After her release from prison in 1947, she continued to work for the betterment of Naga people and did many revolutionary works for the Naga people.

She was honoured with many awards for her contribution to Indian society. She was awarded with Tamrapatra freedom fighter award in 1972 and Padma Bhusan award in 1982 and Vivekananda Seva Award in 1983. She was also awarded with the BirsaMunda Award posthumously. Government of India also issued a postal stamp in her honour in 1996 and a commemorative coin in 2018.

The great lady has been considered as Rani maa in whole Northeast and still Naga people worship her as their mother or Goddess. The Rani (or Queen of every Naga heart) passed away on 17th February 1993 at the age of 78 in her native place.

There is no instance in Indian freedom history about a woman freedom fighter who was imprisoned for such a long period of almost 15 years and at only age of 17 years. She is one of the greatest fighters of Indian freedom movement and still many of us don't know much about the greatest warrior. Our textbook should at least have a lesson on the Ranimaa.

The 2nd story starts with the description of a beautiful pond (pukhuri)

Situated in the heart of Jorhat Town. As Jorhat is famous being the last capital of great Ahom kingdom, there are many written and unwritten history and stories in and around the town.

The pond which is being referred here is known as Jorhat Borpukhuri or Vishnu Sagar Pukhuri or popularly known as Rajmao Pukhuri. This pond was excavated by Queen-mother Numali Rajmao and dedicated to Lord Vishnu and so it is popularly known as Vishnu-Sagar Pukhuri. But later on, it came to be known as Rajmao Pukhuri in the memory of the Queen mother.

Numoli Rajmao was known as the mother of the last king of Ahom dynasty Chandrakanta Singha and wife of

Kadamdighala Gohain. Kadamdighala Gohain was the grandson of Lechai Namrupia Raja, the younger brother of king Rudra Singha. Kadamdighala Gohain was holding the titular rank of Charingia king or Raja.

Nothing much is known about Numoli Rajmao's early age. However from the rebellion of Moamoria her name has become popular. Numoli Rajmao and her husband supported and helped Purnananda Burhagohain, the then Chief Minister to suppress the Moamoria rebellion. Because of their strong support, Buragohain was able to control or dominate the rebellion and re-establish the Ahom Dynasty again in Assam.

But after the Moamoria rebellion the administration of Ahom Kingdom got weakened and in 1817 the Burmese Army invaded Assam under the guidance of Badan Chandra Borphukan. This Badan Chandra Borphukan was a senior officer in Ahom kingdom and he had to look after the Ahom forces in lower Assam region. But he betrayed the Ahoms due to his greediness and allowed the Burmese Army to invade Assam and thereby took the overall administration of Assam. There were the black days of Assam and many Assamese people were either murdered or tortured in those days and the whole administration got de-stabilized. At that time Chandra Kanta Singha was the King, but he was mere a 20 years old boy and could neither control the aggression of Badan nor that of the Burmese. As such again his mother Queen Numoli Rajmao had to take the responsibility of the administration of the state. She used all tactics to stabilize things and helped the king to rule the state smoothly. However Badan continued to be a big headache for the dynasty. As such, Queen took help of a faithful subedar "Rup Singh Subedar" or popularly known as Rup Singh Bangal to kill Badan. Accordingly, Rup Singh killed Badan in the year 1818 as per direction and advice of Numoli Rajmao. The killing of Badan brought a huge change in the state and the Queen tried to improve both the financial and administrative strength of the state and was successful in

stabilizing the overall health of the Ahom Kingdom. However because of another political conspiracy king Chandrakanta was dethroned and Purandar Singha became the king and Queen also had to leave her post.

The people of Assam respected the Queen mother as their own mother or mother of the whole state. Though she was removed from the official post, the people and the state refused to forget the great contribution of the iron lady and continued to remember her for her strong and timely decisions and overall administrative skills. She excavated a large pond in the heart of Jorhat in 1818 and dedicated it to Lord Vishnu. But it is the love of the people to their Queen mother that changed the name of the pond to Rajmao Pukhuri very soon and it is now an attractive tourist spot for the outsiders of Jorhat.

Though the iron lady tried a lot to rejuvenate the glory of Ahom kingdom and stood like a lioness in front of all the enemy of the state, but history books do not have much information on the great lady. Much research needs to be done on the life of the great lady.

Now let's start the third story with the lines of a beautiful poem

*Without malice to anybody
Without hurting anyone
With tongues held right
Let me live
Like a child
A three-month old*

The lines are from the self-composed poem of a lady from Manipur who is famous for a 16 year long marathon battle through hunger strike. She is none other than Irom Zarmila, often called the 'Iron Lady of Manipur', a symbol of commitment and dedication to the society, to the battle against a unjustified Law Armed Force Special Power Act (in short AFSPA) imposed in Northeast.

AFSPA, established in 1958 as an Act of Parliament, grants special powers to the Indian Armed Forces in disturbed areas. Currently, AFSPA is implemented in Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Nagaland, and parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Under its provisions, the armed forces have been empowered to shoot openly, enter and search without a warrant, and arrest any person who has committed a cognisable offence, all while having immunity from being prosecuted.

According to critics of the Act, it gives overarching blanket powers to the security forces which have resulted in rampant killings. EEVFAM (the Extra-judicial Execution Victim Families Association of Manipur) approached the Supreme Court in 2012 against the alleged 1528 extrajudicial killings in Manipur since the 1980s because of the Act.

An ordinary woman from Imphal, the capital city of Manipur, Irom was dragged into the world of activism at the height of rampant killings in Manipur when the conflict between the Indian security forces and the banned militant groups were at the maximum height. In November 2000, when Irom was 28-years-old, 10 civilians were allegedly gunned down by the 8th Assam Rifles at Malom Makha Leikai, near Imphal's Tulihal airport. The infamous incident is commonly known as the 'Malom massacre'. The massacre prompted Irom to begin a hunger strike against the atrocities in Malom, which later developed into a prolonged hunger strike against the repeal of AFSPA.

Three days after she began her fast, Irom was arrested for "attempting suicide" and remained in police custody for 16 years where she had never bowed down and continued her hunger strike. During this time, she was tried to be fed forcefully even through a Ryles tube.

Irom ended her hunger strike on August 9, 2016. She cited two reasons for her decision. First that her hunger strike seemed to have little impact on the government, and that while her strike continued, so did AFSPA and that no

attempt had been made by the government to remove it. Irom had said that she felt a need, therefore, to 'change track' and adopt a different approach. She then decided to enter the political fray and contest the 2017 assembly elections as a means to actively take forward the battle to remove AFSPA from Manipur.

Irom co-founded a new party - People's Resurgence and Justice Alliance (PRJA) along with Harvard graduate Erendro Leichombam. The party had fielded five candidates in all including Irom who were to stand against Manipur's Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh on his home turf, Thoubal.

Irom lost miserably, garnering a paltry 90 votes, the least of all five PRJA candidates. Voters in the area had said that while they love Eche Sharmila (sister Sharmila), they did not agree with her decision to join electoral politics.

For Irom, this election was significant not only because she was contesting, but also because this was the first time that she cast her ballot in 20 years. Rejected by her own people, she decided to leave both electoral politics as well as her home state and focus on her personal life with fiancé Desmond Coutinho, whom she married soon after the electoral debacle. The BJP, which so far had no presence in Manipur, emerged winner and formed the government for the first time in Manipur.

Though many can think that Irom's battle is an unsuccessful one, but her dedication and commitment to the people of Manipur is and will be remembered by all Manipuri. Though she had lost the electoral battle, but all the voters sincerely admitted that they would always love their Irom, but won't accept Irom as a political leader. Her strive to improve the situation in Manipur is not like a sweet fairytale, but a real battle and sheer example of strong determination. She still is working for the improvement of society and for the whole nation through non-violent moves and expressing her wish to continue her battle until her death.

The fourth story starts with a thought of empowering women from underprivileged backgrounds

By creating financial institutions which finally resulted in the foundation of "Kanaklata Mahila Urban cooperative Bank", Assam's first co-operative bank for women and run by women. Behind this great initiative there was a woman named Mrs. Lakhimi Baruah who was an Indian banker and social worker. She has been recognized by Government of India through the Padma Shri award, the fourth-highest civilian award in the Republic of India in the year 2021.

After working for more than a decade in banking section, Mrs. Lakhimi Baruah realized how women from very poor backgrounds faced problems because of lack of money or a place to safely keep their earnings during her involvement with various women groups and they actually needed a bank that they could access easily, could save their earnings and take easy loans when in need and thereby established the Konoklata Mahila Urban Cooperative Bank in the year 1998. Now this Konoklata Mahila Urban Cooperative Bank has given credit to thousands of women in Assam and have given them a loan as seed capital or to tide over the loss of the only earning member of a family.

Mrs. Lakhimi Baruah was born in a small village of Jorhat, Assam. Mrs. Baruah's mother passed away during her birth and her father died when she was in her early teens. From her childhood she realized the importance of financial security, especially for women. However she did not surrender before the hardship and continued her struggle amongst all odds and difficulties. She started her job in District Central Co-Operative Bank and went on to become its Accounts Manager. However she continued her pursuit for formal education and got her graduation in 1980 while working for the bank.

During her stint with the bank, she witnessed underprivileged women; most of them illiterate and they usually queuing up for a loan for hours. She also realized

that their hurdle would not end here, as after their patient wait they would be turned away at the counters because they were unable to produce the requisite documents. It was frustrating for Mrs. Baruah, who used to sit behind one such counter and hear stories of desperation, of women wanting to escape an abusive marriage or mothers wanting to pay for their children's education.

As such, in 1983, Mrs. Baruah took a tentative step towards helping them. She established Mahila Samiti, a women's committee at Dakshin Sarbaibandha in Jorhat, to help women get the financial help they needed from banks and financial institutions.

Despite no specialised knowledge of banking, Mrs. Baruah applied to the Reserve Bank of India in 1990 to set up a cooperative bank for women. After the struggle of eight long years the approval came in 1998. The bank was registered on May 22, 1998, under Assam Co-Operative Societies Act, 1949. Finally, in 1999, the bank was set up in Jorhat with an initial investment of Rs. 8.45 lakh and 1,420 women members and 52 promoters. From 2002, the bank employs only women and now has four branches, 21 regular employees, and 45,000 account holders, mostly women. At present, the bank manages more than 35,000 accounts in four branches. The deposits total to around Rs. 80 million and the share capital, to Rs. 6.5 million. As per Mrs. Baruah the primary objective of the bank is to provide commercial banking facilities including providing opportunities for self-employment and to popularise thrift and banking habit among women.

Even now also, Mrs. Baruah is working constantly at the bank every day. The lady tries to spread awareness about Konoklata Bank through social gatherings and this way want to reach out to a larger number of women across the state. She conducts regular meetings with her employees and stake holders and always tries to promote or popularize the concept of her dream banking system. She always reiterates that her dream is to have at least one branch in each district of the state before her death.

Mrs. Bauah was awarded Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Award in 2015 and Jingle award in 2019. In 2021 she was awarded the Padma Shri, the fourth-highest civilian award in the Republic of India, Padma Shri. In the same year Baruah was selected as icon for Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) by the district administration of Jorhat for Assembly polls, 2021.

Mrs. Lakhimi Baruah is an iron lady with strong determination and always in the pursuit of the noble goal to strengthen the woman of her state and thus support the financial growth of the state. She is a lady with a very strong will power as to accord approval for registering a commercial bank from Reserve Bank of India is impossibly difficult, but she tried for eight long years and at last succeeded to accord approval and after that has made her bank self-sufficient and financially strongly viable.

The main focus of this article is to highlight the bravery and dedication of these four North-Eastern lionesses. They are real inspirations to all the women who want to chase their dreams against all odds. We salute their contribution towards the development of the nation, by nurturing the emotions of women and hence helping in the upliftment of the mankind as a whole.

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The Voice of the Marginalized: Rise of the Other

Dr. Runjun Devi

Pothsondhi (2021) is a saga of the marginalized that speaks us about gender issues seen in our society. In the preface of the novel, Nabin Barua has noted,

*"Pothsondhi is an imaginary narrative and social document of women empowerment penned down by Rita Choudhury who has done the field study before writing this."*¹

Her characters specially the women are seen with their sufferings because they are '*the other*' and considered as weaker section. But it is the credit of the novelist who has incorporated positive messages in the novel to show that the good elements/people are instrumental to make a better and equal society. As the concept of '*gender sensitization*' is being deftly handled by the novelist to envisage humanitarian thoughts and activities there rises the positive message to society about the equality of gender. Moreover there are good persons who work for this idea of equality to establish a balanced world in which the potential weapon is the change of stereotype attitudes of people towards women. The inherent theme of women empowerment is visible from the beginning to the end of the novel although the subjugation of the marginalized comes here and there while the novelist

brings in this issue. Besides the man woman relationship also is narrated at the centre of the novel, *Pothsondi*.

The novelist, Rita Choudhury has focused on women chronicle and social reality that reveals the silence of the marginalized and how they can rise like a phoenix by dint of their sheer determination. The narrative unfolds the lives of some women who are visible as women but they are kept as invisible. The message of the novelist is clear to the reader and critic alike that since women are part and parcel of our society they cannot be ignored and deprived of human rights always and left to a horrible corner. Instead through the protagonist, the novelist has focused on social issues like men's cruelty to women, women's jealousy to women which are basic realities that determine the condition of our surroundings. But it is necessary to incorporate the wave of change to that situation which will be crucial in determining the role of women. The novelist indirectly teaches the reader how to accept the challenge to help the weaker section to grow as fine human beings to live equally with other. The psychology of the sufferers has been taken into account and is redirected to adapt to a situation which may lead them to be the winner,

*'Bad things have strong evil wings. All of a sudden these can fly like a storm.'*²

With these words readers can feel the mind of the sufferer while a messiah like Varun says to the protagonist, Anjali, *'The bad things are the crude reality of civilization and these are poisonous weed.'*³ We need to understand the objective of the novelist who has focused on gender equality through the removal of the stereotype behavior which is metaphorically presented as 'poisonous weed'.

However we can identify the stereotype role of rich woman like Karabi who considers that the materialistic comfort given by her IAS husband is more desirable than the company of a poor girl like Anjali. Thus the novelist introduces us to two different worlds, one is full of wealth

and power and the other is full of sadness and poverty. The people living in these two areas have their respective experiences to describe and the novelist as an omniscient narrator speaks about the events taking place in the lives of the characters. Readers feel sympathy at the sufferings of Anjali, Makan and people like them while at the same time they feel anger and hatred for the attitude and behavior of Karabi and her so called aristocrat class. It is the sense of power that makes the rich to forget and neglect the poor and the binary opposition, good/bad; rich/poor is clearly narrated by the novelist to show the crossroads in which Anjali has experienced the bitterness of life and sometimes sweetness too in the company of Varun and Sumona. She cannot reveal her identity to Sumona, her roommate because her world is beyond Sumona's imagination. She cannot say that she lives in an orphanage, her mother is insane, she has to look after her two young brothers and the unwanted nights under the tree while people use the body of her mother as an object of sex. For those lusty people Makan and Anjali are just women. The three siblings do not know about their fathers they are the offspring of Makan only. But Anjali hears from the rumour carried on by people that pregnant Makan was left by the son of the DC. It is impossible to know the identity of him as Makan does not know what to say. With insult, hunger and insecurity Anjali grows up and her mother tries to say to her about study. The protagonist, Anjali learns to sing a few lines from a song that was that was sung by Makan and eats whatever is given to them by people. Makan keeps her three children under her observation so that none can harm them. Anjali felt, *'Those who live on other's kindness they cannot look higher'*⁴ and her dream to make her mother free of all scandals is guiding her all throughout her life. But while she has come to know that Sumona's father Palash Katoky is the man whose physical relationship with Makan impregnated her and Anjali was born. Makan lost her senses as Palash left her. Coming to Dibrugarh Anjali has come to know that who her father is, and this is destiny that brings the father and daughter to a point from where they can start a new

bonding but the father decides to maintain silence to live in a safe and comfortable home. She again becomes a victim in the hand of Sumona's mother who thinks that there is an illicit relationship between Palash Kotoky and Anjali. The father's intentional silence pushes Anjali to more insecurity at the loss of truth to others and being haunted by this unbearable insult brought by the rich people the protagonist returns to Guwahati alone by bus.

However Anjali, the protagonist ascends to a higher position in society overcoming all the challenges in life that she has become a decision maker. Through the depiction of characters like Makan , Anjali, Sumona, Karabi the novelist has tried to describe the situation in one's surrounding wherein the body of the woman is considered as an object of sex and how man can play with it . The protest of the novelist against this attitude reverberates in the words of Anjali, "*You played with her...she is my mother.*"⁵ This outburst of the protagonist takes us to a point where we feel her agony, the shameless life she has lived with her unmarried mother who gave birth to three children and is out of her mind. Sympathy and pity for the protagonist and her mother create hatred in the minds of the reader who hate Palash Katoki for his cowardice and silence. His willingness to protect his daughter Sumona from all irritating situations force him not to confess the truth to his wife that during his youth he was in love with Makan for a brief while and for his playful behavior Anjali was born. He could not say it although he felt a bond for Anjali in the deep corner of his heart. Here the novelist has depicted Palash as a coward who is guilty and unable to confess even after knowing that Anjali is his daughter. It is his class consciousness. His responsibility to Sumona makes him an escapist. His first escape from Makan's life was determined by his parents while his second escape happens on account of his lack of strength and courage to face the reality at a crucial time which would have rescued Anjali from her fatherless identity, would have freed Makan from giving birth to her daughter out of her relationship with Kotoky. Anjali returns with emptiness to university and

being encouraged by Varun she tries to crack the hard nut of civil service examination. Success and glory envelop Anjali as she clears IAS examination. Simone de Beauvoir said, "*Women are framed as 'the other', while men are the self and the subject.*"⁶ Beauvoir further maintains the existentialist belief in absolute freedom of choice and the consequent responsibility that an individual can choose and shoulder on which is being seen in the character of Anjali who dexterously handles her life which was full of chaos.

The idea of women empowerment and gender sensitization is observed through the rise of Anjali who was considered as a marginalized one to the zenith of bureaucracy and it is the befitting reply to that society which victimized Makan and Anjali. In the beginning the novelist just describes Anjali, the newly transferred DC of Dibrugarh in a gala event of New Year party hosted by the administration of the district wherein Sumona has arrived with her husband, the SP of the same district. The novelist is the third person omniscient narrator who knows the connection between Anjali and Sumona and points it to the reader to this connection. It is being observed that something is hidden in the past of the protagonist, Anjali who was a negligible girl some ten years back. The reader is aware of the fact that the narrator is going to reveal some truth through the flashback narrative. For it the speaker says about three pothsondhis or crossroads of which the meeting of these two ladies is the last one. The reader breathtakingly waits to know what decision would be taken by Anjali after meeting Sumona. It may be either a path of revenge or a potential tool of forgiveness Anjali can adopt. But Rita Choudhury in all her novels always chooses to show the brighter side of life at the end of everything and here also we are delighted to see how the power of forgiveness rescues Sumona and Anjali from further embarrassing situations. As an administrator Anjali knows what to do for the welfare of people and she understands that Sumona is innocent. Thus the positive vibe is being recorded in the relationship between them which establish that good humans are the boons. Besides Anjali

has proved her strength as a decision maker not only in administrative lines but also in personal life. Thus Rita Choudhury has illuminated the idea of women empowerment through the depiction of Anjali, the protagonist as a victim of society at first then her rise to a decision maker. The sufferings she underwent is not necessary to carry on, instead she should enlighten the lives of others by her power as a DC. She knows that Sumona is an innocent and helpless child of a rich family who should not be made guilty for her mother's behavior. The glory of Anjali's character is done at the end while she decides not to reveal the identity of her father to Sumona that both of their father is same. Other characters except Varun are kept in the darkness about this fact. Anjali could have clarified to Sumona that the suddenly discovered reality of life brings Palash closer to his other daughter, Anjali and the whole storyline of *Pothsondhi* takes a new twist.

The novel reveals how the guest of Sumona returns to Guwahati, being helped by Varun. In the novel we have come to know in the beginning that Varun is now Anjali's life partner. Though he belongs to the rich and elite class yet he identifies the qualities of Anjali and with the help of the myth of Hanuman he inspires her to be bold and strong so that people like Palash Katoky, Karabi and their so called rich class cannot harm her anymore. And for her own survival the befitting reply to patriarchy is to equalize herself to the male decision makers. The constant striving of Anjali leads her to zenith of success from where she is doing justice to the needy ones yet she is unable to forget the episodes of her past that haunt and shrink her mind.

Thus the novelist exhibits that Anjali now speaks back to them who treated her as '*the other*' and ensures that the voice of the other is heard through her emancipation as an equal counterpart of male.

The participation of women in the decision making process is an elementary weapon. The critic Vesna Kesic states, "*The notion of equality was basically derived from the*

*traditional socialist doctrine that gives priority to economic and social justice over traditional liberal principles of political rights and freedoms, but it did not exclude legal and political equity."*⁷

In the novel the novelist has sensitized the gender issues through the depiction of the subjugated characters. It must be stated that gender issues should be addressed to create fellow feeling and confidence in women which is shown by the novelist, Rita Choudhury. We may quote Virginia Woolf who said in her book, *A room of One's Own*, "*Without self confidence we are as babes in the cradle.*"⁸ This narrates the need of participation of women in every field to build up their confidence to rise to a greater height from where they will address the issue of gender equality and will lend the voice to the marginalized as observed in the novel, *Pothsondhi*.

It has been observed that the illumination of '*the condition of women in a patriarchal society*' has become the thematic concern of the novelist in one side and the '*rise of the other*' is addressed at the end of the novel, *Pothsondhi*. To do justice to the character of Anjali, the protagonist, an attempt has been made in the novel to exhibit the role played by the good samaritans like Binanda, the Headmaster at the prime of her life while Varun has been depicted as an instrumental character whose support and inspiration builds up self confidence in her to overcome the face of the reality and accept the challenges. Readers and critic of the novel are equally happy as the timid woman, Anjali climbs to the role of a decision maker and reverses her course of life from a street girl to the most coveted status of the DC. The clear message to society delivered by the novelist is that change of attitude towards the '*stereotype role of women*' is the much needed ideology from all sections of people to establish a better world with equal participation of women along with their counterparts. Of course, a woman should know her potential to dedicate herself to strive for the change of her role which would be no more stereotype at all. Here the

protagonist has identified her strength and weakness and has tried to situate herself in a position that might rescue Makan, her mother from the scandalized stories and rumors made up by people which have been haunting her since childhood. The success of the protagonist glorifies humanity as she has received kindness from at least from few people who offered the homeless family a hut to shelter themselves from rain and sun, sometimes food to satiate hunger. The pathetic condition no longer remains when the protagonist empowers herself. If Anjali would not have fostered the dream to look up to the sky and to rise, she would have been put in the same condition like her mother, Makan who lost her sweet voice that had attracted Palash Kotoki , and subsequently lost her identity also. But the point is that Anjali and Makan are two different women who are tied by birth yet one knows the boundaries of life and society, and is determined to explore and cross those by empowering herself. If Makan would have got the same kindness from society, perhaps she too could have tap her resources in life and would not have spent her entire life in a pitiable condition without her fault. One may say that her fault was to believe an unknown young man but it is her simplicity rather destiny to fall into a trap and lose her love that leads her to insanity.

Finally it is maintained that the novelist , Rita Choudhury has dealt with the relevant issues associated with women in a male dominated society and has emphasized on the importance of '*being educated to become the change*' and has described the crucial ways of '*women empowerment*' through the rise of the protagonist.

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Shakuntala Devi: Magician of Arithmetic Calculations

Jintu Mani Nath

Shakuntala Devi contributed a great deal to mathematics. She was a natural-born math genius who taught millions of children throughout the world through her seminars in schools and institutions. Her remarkable calculative abilities earned her the title of "Human-Computer."

About Shakuntala Devi

Shakuntala Devi, also known as the "Human-Computer," made significant contributions to mathematics. She was born on November 4, 1929, in Bangalore, India, into a Brahmin family. Her life had ups and downs, upheavals and unhappiness. Despite her wishes, young Shakuntala was not formally schooled, and became the primary earner for her impoverished family. However the poor and underprivileged childhood Shakuntala Devi has, from her childhood days, she had always been the kind of person that would stop at nothing to achieve everything she sets her mind to. This attitude brought so much opportunities and successes to her life.

She had remarkable mathematical ability that inspired millions of children all around the world. At a young age,

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her excellent arithmetic ability made her famous all around the world. Her father was a circus performer and he had discovered extraordinary mathematical skills at an early age. Then he made her participate in the mathematical talent shows. She came from a lower-middle-class family and her family couldn't afford to pay for her schooling, so she had to quit.

But she was a born-genius and able to solve difficult mathematical calculations even without the need for formal education in school. She began doing public performances at universities as early as the age of six, including the University of Mysore, Annamalai University, and Osmania University, to mention a few, and she answered all of the questions brilliantly. She became famous over the period of time and started to earn bigger money even being a child.

She began touring across the world in the 1950s, beginning in London, where she became well-known in the media, earning the moniker of Human-Computer from the BBC. She could outsmart the computers in terms of speed and accuracy in mathematics.

Shakuntala Devi's achievements and contributions to mathematics

Shakuntala Devi's feats include the following:

1. In 1977, at Southern Methodist University, she gave the 23rd root of a 201-digit number in 50 seconds. Her answer-546,372,891-was confirmed by calculations done at the US Bureau of Standards by the UNIVAC 1101 computer, for which a special program had to be written to perform such a large calculation.
2. In 1980, she multiplied 7686369774870 and 2465099745779, calculating the 26-digit answer in 28 seconds at Imperial College London. This event was recorded in the 1982 Guinness Book of Records. Writer Steven Smith said, "The result is so far superior to anything previously reported that it can only be described as unbelievable".

3. In Stanford University US, 1988,
 - In two seconds, she calculated the cube root of 95443993 as 457.
 - In ten seconds, she calculated the 8th root of 20047612231936 as 46.
 - In ten seconds, she calculated the cube root of 2373927704 as 1334.

As per New York Times "She could give you the cube root of 188,132,517 - or almost any other number - in the time it took to ask the question. If you gave her any date in the last century, she would tell you what day of the week it fell on".

Shakuntala Devi's Secret: How Did She Learn Mathematical Skills?

Shakuntala Devi was a born genius. She was a self-learner. She was the daughter of a circus performer, and when she was three years old, she used to travel with her parents. It was discovered that card tricks aided her in the development of math skills. She began visiting various schools and institutions to demonstrate her calculative aptitude as soon as she learned to compute cube roots mentally. She had started travelling throughout the world when she was a teenager.

She had always been a self learner. There isn't a lot of information about her math schooling. She, however, published several books on math computations and puzzles. Some clues can be found in Shakuntala Devi's own writings. In 'Figuring: The Joy of Mathematics', she described methods for mental multiplication.

Some selected books of Shakuntala Devi

- *Astrology for You* (New Delhi: Orient, 2005). ISBN 978-81-222-0067-6
- *Book of Numbers* (New Delhi: Orient, 2006). ISBN 978-81-222-0006-5

- *Figuring: The Joy of Numbers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), ISBN 978-0-06-011069-7
- *In the Wonderland of Numbers* (New Delhi: Orient, 2006). ISBN 978-81-222-0399-8
- *Mathability: Awaken the Math Genius in Your Child* (New Delhi: Orient, 2005). ISBN 978-81-222-0316-5
- *More Puzzles to Puzzle You* (New Delhi: Orient, 2006). ISBN 978-81-222-0048-5
- *Perfect Murder* (New Delhi: Orient, 1976)
- *Puzzles to Puzzle You* (New Delhi: Orient, 2005). ISBN 978-81-222-0014-0
- *Super Memory: It Can Be Yours* (New Delhi: Orient, 2011). ISBN 978-81-222-0507-7; (Sydney: New Holland, 2012). ISBN 978-1-74257-240-6
- *The World of Homosexuals* (Vikas Publishing House, 1977), ISBN 978-0706904789

The most special book she authored

She had a warm spot in her heart for homosexuals. She portrayed homosexuality in a good light and wrote a book titled '*The World of Homosexuals*', the first book on the subject published in India. She claimed that everyone has multiple sexual proclivities and orientations at different times, and that there is no such thing as homosexuality or heterosexuality.

Some Interesting facts about Shakuntala Devi

- **She never liked the title - Human-Computer.**

When she appeared in an interview with the BBC Channel, this title was given to her. On October 5, 1950, Leslie Mitchell hosted this show. She had been given a difficult question by the channel, to which she had accurately responded. However, because the channel did not have the

same answer, they incorrectly described the answer. When they checked it later, they discovered that Shakuntala Devi's response was right. As a result, she was given the title of Human-Computer and became well-known.

- **She did not receive any formal schooling.**

She belonged to a poor family and her parents could not pay the school fee because of which she could not complete the school studies.

- **Study of her Abilities**

In 1988, Arthur Jensen, a professor of educational psychology, who died in 2012, analyzed Shakuntala Devi's abilities; also he reported his findings in 1990 in the journal *Intelligence*.

Jensen was stumped as to how she was able to perform so well. None of the objective test results could explain why or how Devi was able to perform feats with numbers that are so far beyond what most of us can do in this sphere as to seem incredible. Her peculiar ability was indeed rare, perhaps one in hundreds of millions," he wrote in his report.

Jensen speculated in his study that during her childhood, most of the basic operations involved in her performance became automated. "Devi 'perceives' large numbers differently from the way most of us ordinarily do. When she takes in a large number (and she must do this visually), it undergoes some transformation, almost instantly - usually some kind of simplification of the number," Jensen wrote.

- **Lok Sabha Elections**

She ran for the Lok Sabha as an independent in 1980, representing Bombay South and Medak in Andhra Pradesh. She contested against Indira Gandhi in Medak, claiming that she wished to "protect the people of Medak from being duped by Mrs. Gandhi." She finished ninth with 6514 votes (1.47 percent of the votes).

- **Marriage**

She was married to Paritosh Bannerjee, an IAS officer, in 1960 and has a daughter living in London. They were divorced in 1979

- **She applied her mathematical strength to a pursuit of astrology**

Devi tried her hand at astrology, which is highly esteemed in Indian culture, perhaps because of her obsession with numbers. A newspaper advertisement at the time claimed that "Personal Astrologer of Presidents, Prime Ministers, Royalty, Movie Stars, and Top Business Tycoons of the World is now available for Astrological Consultations." According to a New York Times report, she travelled the world in the same way, seeing up to 60 clients every day. They'd give her their birth date, time, and location, and she'd answer three questions about their life. She also penned the book "Astrology for You."

- **Calendar calculations**

She could calculate the day of the week any given date in the previous century fell on. If she was told the date July 31, 1920, for example, she would immediately recognise it as a Saturday. Her average response time was roughly 1 second if the date was presented in the order of month, day, and year (for example, July-13-1920). But when the dates were stated to her in the order year, month, day (for example 1920-July-31), "her answers came about as fast as one could start the stopwatch", the 1988 test at Berkeley found.

Death of Shakuntala Devi

Shakuntla Devi died on April 21, 2013, in Bangalore, at the age of 83. She was suffering from respiratory issues. She inspired math students all over the world with her amazing abilities and brilliance. A biopic movie has also been made where the role of Shakuntala Devi has been played by Vidya Balan, Directed by Anu Menon.

Conclusion

Shakuntala Devi possessed exceptional mathematical abilities, as evidenced by her accomplishments and books. Her capacity to calculate with pinpoint accuracy at breakneck speed has never been seen before. She used to beat the speed of computers in calculations.

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Obesity and Its Related Major Complications in Women, with Special Reference to India

Pritimoni Das

Obesity is a metabolic disorder which has become a global problem in recent years. Fats are solid substances which are ester of fatty acid and glycerol at room temperature. Fats are simple lipids (Greek: lipos-fat) which are one of the major nutrients having utmost importance to the body. It is the chief storage form of energy that plays a major role in cellular structure and various biochemical functions. "Lipids may be regarded as organic substances relatively insoluble in water, soluble in organic solvents (alcohol, ether etc.), actually or potentially related to fatty acids and utilized by the living cells." (Satyanarayana, 4th edition)

According to World Health Organization, obesity can be defined as "Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health." According to The National Institutes of Health, an individual is considered as obese if the limit of 30 kg/m² is crossed. This owes to the more energy consumption or intake than the use.

Although India is a third world country and the problem of malnutrition prevails in most of the regions here, still it has witnessed the pervasiveness of obesity and its related complications at an alarming rate. It has been reported that

in urban areas of the country, 23% women are either overweight or obese. (International Institute for Population Science, 2007). As a consequence, the country has been struggling to cope up with two opposite nutrition related disorders. Moreover, in a country like India, where wealth inequality is observed, high adiposity levels in women belonging to wealthier part of the society, remarkably in urban areas is prominent (Prentice 2006, Ziraba *et al.*, 2009, Giha *et al.*, 2011, Gaur *et al.*, 2013).

The major factors responsible for obesity are–

1. Unhealthy lifestyle due to lack of exercise.
2. Consumption of foods with more calories such as fast food, foods having higher fat and sugar content etc.
3. Spending more time in front of the TV, laptop, playing video games, excessive use of mobile are common causes for obesity in children.
4. Slower metabolic rate is a common cause of obesity in aged people.
5. Consumption of alcohol.
6. Genetic; in which there is already an inherited predisposition or tendency towards obesity.

Obesity can be measured as Body Mass Index (BMI) which can be calculated as–

$$\frac{\text{Weight of a person (in kg.)}}{\text{Height}^2}$$

The BMI of an individual is an indicator of obesity as higher BMI indicates overweight and obesity and the related health risks. A body mass index (BMI) over 25 is considered overweight, and over 30 is obese.

WHO classified BMI on the basis of body weight for height which was widely adopted. The following table shows standard BMI (Adopted from WHO report, 1998).

WHO Classification of Weight Status

Weight Status	Body Mass Index (BMI), kg/m²
Underweight	<18.5
Normal range	18.5–24.9
Overweight	25.0–29.9
Obese	≥30
Obese class I	30.0–34.9
Obese class II	35–39.9
Obese class III	≥40

Source: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Prevalence of obesity is found to be more in females than male. Also, naturally women after puberty tend to attain more fat mass than men particularly in the pelvic and thigh region. In 2016, Global Health Observatory (GHO) reported 15.1% of women and 11.1% of males as obese which were aged over 18 years. Moreover, the study conducted by National family health survey (NFHS-2) in 1998-1999 and NFHS-3 in 2005-2006 showed the incidence of obesity among Indian women become prominent from 10.6% to 12.6% (elevated by 24.52%). The situation is more reflective in the women residing in cities (23.5%) that belongs to the o age group of 40-49 years (23.7%). Biological factors, such as increasing age and declining reproductive ability are responsible for obesity among women but not men.

Obesity hampers the normal physiological functions of our body and leads to further health complications such as fatty liver, dyslipidaemia, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure etc. The excessive fats are accumulated in liver, kidney, and walls of the blood vessels and particularly on adipose tissues. The cells of adipose tissue which are called as adipocytes become large and distorted due to high amount fat deposition. The major consequence of obesity are-increased Triglyceroid, Low density Lipid (LDL), Very Low density Lipid (VLDL) and reduced High Density Lipid (HDL) which is considered as good cholesterol.

We have conducted an in vivo study in Swiss albino

mouse (*Mus musculus*) model where mouse were grouped as control (Normal chow feed) and obese (60% High fat diet) to understand the pathophysiology of obesity. It revealed the enlarged and distorted adipocytes, severe fat deposition in vital organs like liver, kidney, intestine, pancreas etc. in the obese group as compared to control non obese group. Moreover, lethargy, slow metabolic rate and lack of physical activity were recorded in the obese mice. Mouse have 99% similarity with human genome, easier to handle due to smaller size and cost effective which renders it to be to be advantageous over other model organisms to study such metabolic disorders (Vandamme, 2014).

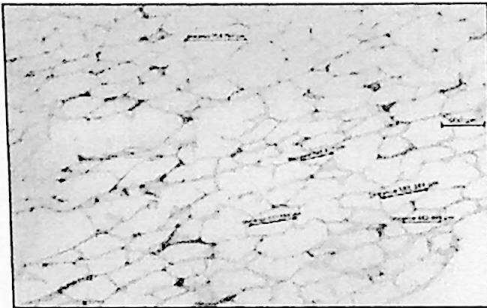


Fig. 1: Enlarged adipocytes in normal diet fed non obese mouse (*Mus musculus*)

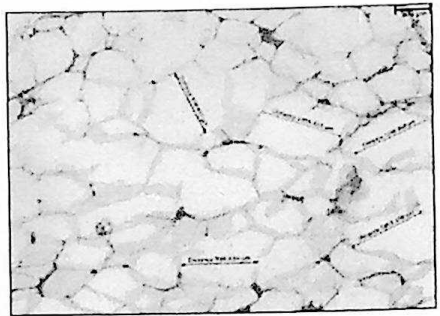


Fig. 2: Enlarged adipocytes in High Fat Diet induced obese mouse (*Mus musculus*)

Complications related to obesity in women

Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS)

One of the major concerns that have been increasing in women (25-35 years of age) is PCOS which is characterized by occurrence of several cysts in the ovary, is associated with obesity. It has become a burning problem in women which interferes with the reproductive cycle and reduces fertility. These women are also prone to insulin resistance that leads to commencement of diabetes, mainly in later half of life. Lack of physical activity and fast food, fatty food consumption are mainly associated with increased rate of PCOD. The male hormone, testosterone is secreted in large amount in the body of females and symptoms are mainly-

- Irregular periods
- Glucose intolerance
- Presence of hair on abdominal and chin areas (Hirsutism)
- Complications and delay in pregnancy etc.

Obesity during pregnancy

This condition is more threatening as it is associated with the health risks of both mother and the foetus. It might lead to miscarriage, gestational diabetes, hypertension etc. (Guelinckx *et al.*, 2008) prolonged gestation period and difficulty during childbirth which results in elevated risk of infection (Aviram *et al.*, 2011).

Abnormal eating pattern in obese women

Obese women also complaints about difficulty in controlling the frequency of their eating, portion sizes, or eating behaviour which is termed as "Binge-eating disorder". It is characterized by the consumption of a large amount of food in a brief period of time (less than 2 hours). As a consequence, they eat even they do not experience hunger and eats much faster than normal rate (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Obesity in women due to Stress

From the biological standpoint, stress is the response or reaction to any kind of threat received by the body that stimulates the release of stress hormones such as Epinephrine, Norepinperine and Cortisol that are associated with flight or fight response. Interestingly, work place stress is one of the most important causes of obesity in women. The other factors associated with increased stress are marital environment, lack of emotional support, financial problems, lack of appreciation, facing continuous criticism, body shaming etc. that create an enormous impact on health. If the condition persists and is neglected, than women become vulnerable to various health issues like anxiety, insomnia,

migraines, poor memory and difficulty in concentration, depression, weight gain, irregularity in periods etc. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), stress can be classified into three different types based on their characteristics, symptoms, duration, and treatment approaches.

1. **Acute stress:** This most common type of stress arises due to constant thinking about the previous events or the upcoming deadlines to be fulfilled in future.
2. **Episodic acute stress:** It occurs when a person is exposed to regular episodes of acute stress.
3. **Chronic stress:** If a person feels to be trapped in a risky situation or a situation which she cannot handle anymore, then this is called as chronic stress.

Increased risk of hypertension in a particular age group in women

It is a medical condition which is more common in women of age group 40-70 years, in which the blood vessels remained in a constant stress due to high blood pressure which is created by the force of blood pushing against the walls of blood vessels (arteries) as it is pumped by the heart. The excess fats that are deposited in the walls of blood vessels constrict the diameter of the vessels to be which forces the blood to flow in a high pressure causing the fatigue of heart. If this condition persists, hypertension can lead to a heart attack, an enlargement of the heart, cardiovascular diseases and heart failure. Females are susceptible to hypertensions because of depression, especially post partum depression, hormonal changes during menopause, lack of sufficient sleep etc.

Obesity related Diabetes mellitus (Type II DM)

Obesity is considered as a global endemic as it aids in onset of yet another metabolic disorder- Diabetes mellitus (Type II DM). Type II DM is characterized by insufficient Insulin secretion by pancreas and /or insensitivity to Insulin (WHO). Insulin is a hormone which is mainly secreted by β

cells of islets of Langerhans of pancreas tissue. This hormone is peptide in nature and is of utmost important as it controls the blood sugar level in body. In normal condition, it converts the excess glucose to glycogen in liver and later could be converted to glucose and used if the blood glucose level is reduced. Insufficient production or insensitivity to insulin causes rise in the blood glucose or sugar level which is termed as Type II DM. The effects are even more dangerous as diabetes can affect the functioning of other vital organs apart from pancreas. The patient also suffers from kidney failure, vision loss, weight loss etc.

Inflammation due to obesity in women

In response to excess fats, the cells are affected with chronic low level inflammation, mostly in vital organs like liver, brain, pancreas and adipose tissue (Medzhitov *et al.*, 2008 and Gregor *et al.*, 2011). Obesity induces the activation of immune cells in adipose tissues which starts the differentiation of adipocytes. It also increases the risk of cancer and a variety of infectious disease (Catalan *et al.*, 2013 and Milner *et al.*, 2012).

Coronary heart disease and heart failure in women

This medical condition arises when the build up of fats blocks or interrupt the blood supply in the coronary arteries. The overweight and obesity are associated with increased risk of heart failure and the risk of heart failure is 5% in men and 7% in women for each extra 1 kg/m² in BMI. Obese individuals have been shown to be twice as likely to have a stroke, than people with a BMI of <23.55.

Neurological diseases in women

Obese women during later period of life are prone to two other complex neurological disorders- dementia and Alzheimer's disease (Kloppenborg *et al.*, 2008).

Psychosocial and social enigma in obese women

In our society, where gender inequality is a major issue,

obese women often have to face discrimination and stigma that are responsible for anxiety, depression and stress (Ratcliffe et al., 2015 and Flint et al., 2016). The strong bigotry in this country has set the lean women to be more attractive than obese ones which are evident even in children as young as 6 years of age (Wadden et al., 1983).

Obese women are often traumatised with biasness in various places like educational, work place and even in health care sections. It severely affects their mental health, lowers self esteem and they become prone to anxiety where the actual talent remains hidden under social pressure. The TV commercials, movies etc. have also played a negative impact on their minds where physical attributes are portrayed as integral part rather than skill and personality.

The obese women repeatedly face sexual abuse and obesity and studies conducted in bariatric surgery patients reported that 16%–32% women had a history of sexual abuse (Gustafson et al., 2006 and Grilo et al., 2005). Obese women are also likely to experience emotional neglect during their childhood, verbal abuse or other family problems (Sarwar et al., 2016).

Treatment measures

The following measures are observed to be effective against obesity and help in weight loss:

1. A proper and healthy diet plan with less calorie intake (carbohydrate, fats) and incorporation of foods with protein and fibre.
2. Regular exercise and yoga to burn the extra calories.
3. Avoidance of junk or fast foods, especially those that contain MSG (Mono Sodium Glutamate), frozen foods.
4. Lifestyle changes with a positive and happy attitude. Yoga is very much beneficial for mental health as well as to deal with the stress and we must take a little time out from our busy schedule to start afresh.

5. Consulting a physician if the condition becomes worse which involves pharmacotherapy, behavioural therapy etc.
6. Mental and emotional support from family, colleagues, friends do help a lot to cope up with the severities related to obesity.

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Kanaklata Baruah and Her Role in 1942 Independent Movement in Assam, Sonitpur

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Introduction

It has been rightly observed that though Assam was one of the latest victims of British imperialism in India, her independent status being lost only with the signing of the Treaty of Yandabu in 1826, she was also one of the earliest to rise in revolt against the shackles of foreign rule and join the mainstream of the country's movement for freedom. True it is that, the glorious history of our country's struggle for freedom can be traced as far back as the Revolt of 1857; yet, in a very real sense, the first nation-wide movement for freedom with a broad, popular base began only in the year 1921-the year Gandhiji set the nation on the path of Non-Co-operation. It was this movement that revealed the spiritual power of Indian womanhood, and the Assamese Women, too, came forward to share that glory.

But, even long, before that, the Assamese Women, accustomed to value the freedom of their land even above their lives had the glorious tradition of Ramani Gabharu

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and Mula Gabharu who had taken up arms to safeguard the honour of a throne concerted by the bloody sacrifice of Sati Jaymati. That glorious tradition was further enriched by the heroic sacrifices of young women like Rangili and Padumi. The same heroism was also evinced in repulsing the frequent invasions made by Pathan and Mogul invaders.

But the Assamese women, too, like the Rani of Jhansi whose dream of a united and free India did not come true even after her sacrifice of like on the battle field, had to wait till the advent of a man whose magic call could rouse an entire nation from the state of sleepy forgetfulness. That man was Mahatma Gandhi.

At a time when Karl Marx, his heart pining for a revolutionary change in the lot the downtrodden, stood for the doctrine of ends justifying the means and declared that class struggle was inevitable in the context of the evils let loose by the Industrial Revolution in the west, there was heard a voice low and gentle but powerful with a spiritual conviction-that threw a challenge to this Marxian doctrine and asserted that it was not only the ends, but the means also must be just and pure.

This saintly man of action of the East, with his nature humility but with the firmness of conviction, spoke out "class struggle is not inevitable; the heart can also, sometimes, change the heart, if social conditions favour." This created a new chapter in the history of political science-a golden chapter.

The immortal contribution made by this great soul lay in his preaching of the path of Satyagraha which meant abiding by truth even if it meant self-imposed sufferings: a non-co-operation with injustice even by being the victim of oppression. It was with such determination that the people all over the country stood up heroically against the British Empire, where the sun never set, in the year 1921.

To Gandhiji, the loom was the symbol of the peoples self dependence and freedom. Gandhiji found the quintessence

of the vital power represented by the loom in Assam. That was why, seated on the lap of Tezpur or the historical Sonitpur that commands an enchanting view of the mighty Brahmaputra, Mahatma Gandhi, in his article entitled "Lovely Assam", wrote "The women of Assam weave dreams of fairyland into the texture of their clothes. Every woman in Assam is by nature an artist." Gandhiji wrote this from his own experience.

The year 1921 saw a number of Assamese stalwarts jump into the non-violent struggle for freedom. They were Karmavir Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phookan, Agnikavi Kamalaknat Bhattacharya and Chandra Prasad Agarwalla, the illustrious poet of "Pratima under the leadership of these brave patriots, all able-bodied women took part in the struggle. Women leaders like the late Hemanta Kumari Devi Bardoloi, poetess Nalinibala Devi, Bijut Phookan, Sumitra Bhattacharya, Kiranmayee Agarwalla, Snehalata Devi Baruah, Chandra Prabha Saikiani, and Shrijuta Rajabala Das, who was the Secretary of Dibrugarh Women's Congress Committee of those days all these women leaders undertook extensive tours from village to village to educate and inspire the people. The massive response to the Non-co-operation movement in Assam was largely due to the work done by these women leaders.

In the struggle that followed during the year 1930-31, the Assamese women took a leading part with the young generations of the land. A women's force "Bahini" was formed at Golaghat under the leadership of Shrimati Swarnalata Barua, Raj Kumari Mohini Gohain and Basantalata Hazarika. The picketing organised by these women in front of the shops dealing in wine, opium, etc. struck terror into the hearts of even the British imperialist rulers.

The women volunteers who participated in the picketing organised in front of the Cotton College at Guwahati were Basantalata Hazarika, Sashi Prabha Hazarika, Mukta Prabha Agarwalla, Durgaprabha Bora, Ghanakanti Devi and Shrimati Bhubaneswari Devi. Even though these brave

women formed into an impenetrable barrio in front of the Cotton College, the Government dared not put them under arrest for fear that the situation might go beyond their control.

But the mass uprising that had occurred under the leadership of Chandra Prabha Saikiani at Nowgong, led to the arrests of the Saikiani, Guneswari Devi, Muktabala Baishnabi, Mohini Gohain, Dariki Kachari and others. The arrests of these women proved to be a source of further inspiration to the movement which spread over every nook and corner of Assam. The first Assamese woman to undergo imprisonment was Guneswari Devi, wife of Gunesh Chandra Barthakur of Jakhalabandha. She shouldered the leadership of the Nowgong women after Chandra Prabha Saikiani had left for Barpeta and spent a year and a half in jail. While confined in Tezpur jail, she fell seriously ill but eventually recovered from her illness. But her colleague, Dariki Kachari met her death in jail because of an attack of cholera and thus left her impact in the history of freedom movement. This became a golden chapter of sacrifices in our history.

In the Non-co-operation movement of 1921, it was the women who helped in saving the lives of the Satyagrahis by begging from door to door. Again, in 1930-31, it was the funds collected by the women and the girls that fed the congress workers. One also recall here the unparalleled sacrifices made by Mangri or Malati, a woman belonging to the labourer community of Misamari tea estate, who became a victim of secret murder because of her dedication to the ideals of non-violence.

In 1940, Gandhiji himself led the movement of offering individual Satyagraha, and no one could offer such Satyagraha without his permission. Being favoured with his permission, a few of the Assamese women had the honour of participating in this movement. Among those who courted arrest at that time for raising their voice against the British regimes. They are Shrimati Swarnalata Baruah, with two, women, volunteer from Golaghat, Shrimati Amal Prabha

Das, Chandra Prabha Saikiani. It was possibly beyond the dream of the ruling authorities that the Individual Satyagraha launched in 1940-41 would, just after a year, assume stormy proportions. The arrests of Gandhiji and the members of the Congress working Committee together with Gandhiji's call "Do or Die", soon had a galvanizing effect upon the course of the movement. There were country-wide arrests of leaders, including the members of the movement. Both Tyagavir Hem Chandra Baruah and Omeo Kumar Das were bedridden and the Assamese freedom fighters had to choose their own leaders from among themselves. At this stage Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla himself met Omeo Kumar Das at his house to decide upon the future programme. Omeo Kumar Das told Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, "I am bed-ridden, but she will remain with you. You will shoulder my responsibilities". Here mentioned the women leader Pusalata Das to lead them.

The programme drafted by Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla was discussed in the presence of the Satradhikar of Nikamul Satra, Shrijut Gahan Chandra Goswami Dev, and the young worker, Shri Viswadev Sarma. The programme was accepted with some modification. It was decided that Satyagraha's would be divided into two groups-one would be called "Death Force", the other, "Peace Force". The former would include only those of age 18-50 who would face death smilingly; and the latter would include any willing adult. The members of the Peace Force would work towards maintaining peace and order in villages which had been subjected to military oppression. The Congress Committee came across only a few people who were willing to join the Death Force. At first they were opposed to enlist the name of Kanaklata on the plea that she was too young; but her fiery zeal compelled them to include her in the list. Her undaunted, heroic words, "I'm not afraid of the bullets of the police I will die to uphold the honour of the flag. Please allow me to lead the procession at Gahpur, leading at Dhekiajuli; I will not allow the flag to be disgraced." Kanaklata kept her word even at the cost of her young life.

Thus we find that in all the major movements for freedom, the women of Assam always played their heroic roles and contributed substantially towards the success of the movement. It was for this reason that the British Prime Minister declared in 1930 that what they were afraid of was not Gandhiji, but of the innumerable illiterate women of India who became the mouth piece of the message of revolt in every household. No military force could suppress such an awakening.

The women from Assam took leading part in the freedom movement. In the 1924 movement more than a dozen of Assamese women viz, Kanaklata Baruah, Bhogeswari Phukanani, Kahali Nath, Abali Kuchani, Gulapi Chutiani, Thuniki Das, Dariki Das, Kon Chutiani, Lila Neogani etc., laid down their lives in the altar of their motherland. Such proud heritage would always remain a source of inspiration to women of Assam to play their role in administration and politics and work for a better future.

Objectives of the study

1. to study the immortal contribution made by the women leaders of Sonitpur.
2. to find out the proud heritage which would always remain a source of inspiration to women of Sonitpur to play their role in administration and political and work for a better future.

Methodology of the study

The present study is an attempt to find out the proud heritage of Assamese women specially of Sonitpur district. It is intended to throw light on some unfamiliar aspects of Indian freedom movement 1942 in Assam.

The primary source includes published and unpublished official documents and reports, news papers, both in English and Assamese. Census of India and evidences i.e. persons directly or indirectly involved with movement. The secondary

source contains published and unpublished books, journals and periodicals etc.

Discussion

Landmark of Sonitpur District (Divided)

Sonitpur district is spread over an area of 5324 sq. kms. on north bank of Brahmaputra river. In terms of area Sonitpur is the second largest district of Assam after Karbi Anglong district. The population of Sonitpur district is 16,77,874 as per 2001 Census. In terms of population it ranks third in Assam after Kamrup and Nagaon districts. The people here are not a homogeneous lot. Rather, they are a mosaic of ethnic groups, an admixture of diverse types of people. The District lies between 26°30'N and 27°01'N latitude and between 92°16'E and 93°43'E longitude. Located between mighty Brahmaputra River and Himalayan foothills of Arunachal Pradesh, the district is largely plain with some hills. Brahmaputra River forms the south boundary of the district. A number of rivers which originate in the Himalayan foothills flow southwards and ultimately fall in Brahmaputra River.

Tezpur can be described as the cultural capital of Assam. Every landscape of Tezpur reflects its rich cultural heritage since time immemorial. Tezpur was a cradle to three doyens of Assamese Culture: Rupkonwar Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rava, and Natasurya Phani Sarma.

The British annexed the then Assam into the Indian British Empire in 1826. After 1826 the Lower Assam and the Central Assam (Darrang, Nagaon and Raha) were made one division which extended up to Biswanath. The division was placed under one Administrative Officer designated as the Principal Assistant to the Commissioner. The Upper Assam portion was left to the native rulers with supervisory control under a British political agent with political headquarters at Biswanath. Captain Neufville was the political agent for Upper Assam. Darrang Division was administered till 1833 from Guwahati.

Darrang was converted into a district and Mangaldai was

made the district Headquarter in 1833. But due to various reasons the British shifted the head quarter to Tezpur in 1835. The district comprised of two sub-divisions, Tezpur sadar sub-division and Mangaldoi sub-division with head quarter at Mangaldoi. The District of Darrang was divided in to six Revenue Circles under one Sub-Deputy Collector in each Circle. There was one Transferred area in the district at Charduar. An Asstt. Political Officer was posted at Charduar under the Deputy Commissioner who acted as Political Officer.

Life Sketch of Kanaklata Baruah

Kanaklata Boruah was born on 22nd December 1942 in a village named Barangabari under Kolongpur Mouza in the present district of Biswanath Chariali. Her father was Krishna Kanta Boruah and mother was Karneswari Boruah. She lost her mother while she was five years old and had to look after her younger brother and sister. She lost her father when she attain the age of thirteen.

During the period of 1942 people did not put much importance an education. The guardians were more conscios of the education of their sons than that of their daughters. Kanaklata Boruah also could not learn much education. She had to end her educational life while she was a student of class-III. Due to her domestic works in which she was highly busy at the cost of her study. The area of Barabgabai people were not developed and were also inconvenient of communication, and are was fully forest and people are dependen on agriculture and forest product.

On 10th September 1942, at Gohpur a young girl led a procession of unarmed villagers under Congress flag. She was Kanaklata Barua - a girl from Barangabari village. As soon as Kanaklata unfurled the flag she and her companion Mukunda Kakati were gunned down by the armed Police. The saga of her heroic sacrifice is still remembered with pride. On the same day at Dhekiajuli Police Station eleven unarmed villagers were gunned down by the armed Police while trying to hoist the tri- color at the Police Station -

three of them were teen-aged girls- Tileswari, Numali and Khahuli . Finally, the British era had come to an end on 15th August "1947" when India gained her Independence in the midnight of 14th August.

Landmark of Gohpur and Kanaklata Barua

Swahed Kanaklata Barua was one of the leaders in Assamese women in Indian independence movement. She was from Barangabari under Gohpur police station in the district of Biswanath Chariali (previously Sonitpur, Darrang). She was gunned down by the British armed Police along with Mukunda Kakati in front of Gohpur Ploice Station in 20 September 1942.

She was born on 22nd December, 1924 at Barangabari in a conservative family called 'Dolakasharia' family under Gohpur Police Station. She became orphan at the age of 5 and perhaps because of her helpless position, she bore a responsible mind since her childhood; and that responsible and dutiful charter on her part ultimately inspired her to dedicate her life for the cause of the nation at the prime of her life 20th September of 1942 is a red letter day in the history of 'Quit India Movement'. Like in many other places of Assam, preparation for successful implementation of the programme was also at Barangabari under Gohpur Police Satiation in the district of Darrang (Biswanath Chariali). The preparation was made by the people of three Mauzas - Kallangpur, Helem and Brahmajan under the leadership of local leaders like Jonaram Bhuyan, Jiten Borah, Lakhi Kanta Bora, Giridhar Barua, Karneswar Hazarika and Mukunda Kakaty. These leaders inspired the local people with the slogan of Gandhiji' Do or Die' Shaheed Kanaklata Barua, who took the leading part in the programme chalked out by those leaders for 20th September, 1942 at Barangabari and ultimately became martyr on the said day, was an unsophisticated village girl of 18 years. Kanaklata barua got her name enrolled in the volunteers force organized for the purpose of hoisting the Indian national flag at the Gohpur Police Station on 20 September, 1942 without the knowledge of other members of the family.

In the early morning of 20th September, like the other days, she completed her domestic works and took meal with her younger brother and sisters, telling them mournfully that she might not be able to come back alive and then she went out and joined the picketers at Barangabari Chariali. She stood at the head of the women volunteers line with the national flag in her hand. On receipt of the signal from the leaders, the volunteers, two in line, male and female proceeded towards the Gohpur Police Station about 12 KM from the spot. The aim of the volunteers was to hoist the national flag at the British dominated police station, following Gandhiji's principle of non-violence. They were joined by many other volunteers at different places on their way to Gohpur and all of them were shouting the slogans, 'British imperialists should go back', 'Freedom is our birth right' etc.

Gohpur Police Station is situated at a distance of about 11/2 KM from the gate of New Purubbari tea garden owned by a native entrepreneur. The volunteers took rest at the place for a while and they were made aware by the respective team leaders of the dangers likely to be faced by them in front of the Thana gate. The leaders asked the female volunteers to be behind the line, but Kanaklata strongly opposed the suggestion, by saying that they would not be at the back of the line, if necessary; the women volunteers would sacrifice their lives for the cause of the nation. This immortal speech of Kanaklata on the verge of her imminent death inspired the minds of thousands of male and female volunteers of the day and made them forget the dangers likely to be faced by them in front of the Thana. Shouting the slogan 'Do or Die' they reached the Thana and made queue before its western gate. At the same time, volunteers from the eastern part of Gohpur like Kalabari, Kamdewal, Dubia etc. led by the local leaders like Golok Pujari, Nirod Boran Das, Chandra Bardoloi, Mineswar Kakaty, Uma Bardoloi, Bhbaneswar Kakaty, Thaneswar Bora and others reached the Thana and made queue in front of the eastern gate. The police force led by R.M. sunia surrounded the western gate and did not allow the picketers to enter the compound to hoist the flag in spite

of repeated request from their side. In the meantime, Kanaklata with the national flag in her hand took her position at the head of the line of female volunteers and tried to convince the policemen by saying that they came to achieve their noble object of hoisting the national flag at the Thana for the cause of the nation, following Gandhiji's teachings on non-violence and that they would go back after discharging their noble duty. This argument of Kanaklata could not stop the Britishers from preventing the picketers from entering the Thana compound. But the police force prevented the volunteers by pointing their guns towards them. Ultimately Kanaklata tried to enter the compound by pushing aside a gun in her hand, saying that they could kill their human bodies but not their soul which is made of iron. She also said that whatever measures the Britishers might adopt to prevent them from doing their duty, but they would proceed. This immortal speech of Kanaklata gave inspiration to thousands of picketers of the day in the eve of imminent danger. The police force opened fire at the unarmed picketers without any prior warning and Kanaklata was gunned by one constable Gogal Chipahi by name, next round of firing caused grievous injury on the head of Mukunda Kakaty, who succumbed to it on the same day at 8 p.m., and also injured many other volunteers like Hemakanta Bora, Thuleswar Rajkhowa, Bhola Bardoloi etc. Kanaklata died on the spot. But this brutality on the part of the imperialist could not stop the volunteers from achieving their goal, and ultimately, one Rampati Rajkhowa of Kamdewal hoisted the national flag on the Thana building in the evening of the same day without the knowledge of the British officials of the Thana. The body of Kanaklata was brought to her home at Barangabari and cremated at her own land there. Mukunda Kakaty was also cremated on the same night.

Kanaklata is no more with us, but the sacrifice of her life for the cause of freedom of our country has remained a great source of inspiration for thousands of Indian women. Kanaklata can be compared with Rani of Jhansi who sacrificed her life for the cause of India's freedom at the time

of Sepoy Mutiny and also with Zoan Ark of France. let us remember the great martyr after 80 years of her death.

Conclusion

This historic and valiant act by Mrityu Bahini at Gohpur gave an impetus to quit India Movement all across the country and made the movement successful which ultimately made the British to leave the country shortly and the country attained Independence in 1947. Kanaklata is no more with us, but the sacrifice of her life for the cause of freedom of our country has remained a great source of inspiration for thousands of Indian women. Kanaklata can be compared with Rani of Jhansi who sacrificed her life for the cause of India's freedom at the time of Sepoy Mutiny and also with Zoan Ark of France. Let us remember the great martyr after 70 years of her death.

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Role of Mahila Shakti Kendra in Creating Awareness among Rural Women on Government Policies and Schemes in Darrang District of Assam

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Introduction

Being an integral part of society overall development of womenfolk is one of the most crucial issues in India. As women are very important segment in the whole developmental process, all the developmental policies, schemes and programmes must be extended concerning the areas of women empowerment in order to ensure their visibility in the process of progress of the society. Thus the issue of women empowerment becomes a matter of grave concern for the policy makers in India. This is the reason behind the radical transformation in all the women centric schemes and programmes of government that has been implemented since the adoption of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specifically the gender equality goals. Government of India has been implementing various schemes and programmes encompassing the areas of women welfare specifically in health, education and employment. It is worth mentioning here that the success of these schemes and programmes heavily relies on the accessibility of

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opportunities and information about these for the women in true sense. It has been observed that many women are still out of reach from these opportunities due to lack of proper knowledge and information and are deprived from accessing the benefits of such programmes. Considering this crucial issue the multi level Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK) are being set up at national, state, district and block level. The Mahila Shakti Kendras are providing "one stop convergent support services for empowering rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition". In this paper an attempt is made to study the role of MSK in creating awareness among rural women about different government policies and schemes launched for their emancipation.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this paper are:

1. To look into the government policies and schemes launched for women by Government of India.
2. To study the functioning of Mahila Shakti Kendra in creating awareness among rural women about government schemes and programmes in Darrang District.

Methodology

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. Both primary and secondary data have been used in this study. Primary data have been collected from 5 (five) officials of Mahila Shakti Kendra, Darrang using a self-structured interview schedule. Books, journals, internet sources and government official records have been used as secondary sources for analysis.

Review of Related Literature

For the present study a review on the following literature is done to get insight into the selected research problem:

In a study conducted by Eswari & Anji (2021)¹ on the awareness about legal rights among rural women in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu found that most of the rural women have awareness about Child Marriage Prohibition Act-1929, Dowry Prohibition Act-1961, Domestic Violence Act-2005 and All Women Police Station whereas most of the rural women are unaware about Education as a Fundamental Right, State Human Right Commission, Women and Child Development Department, Women's Right Commission, Women Safeguard by Indian Constitution etc. Nawale et al. (2020)² conducted a study to assess the knowledge regarding Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana among antenatal mothers of Pune city and found that 20% antenatal mothers have inadequate knowledge about the Yojana. Borah & Saikia (2020)³ analyzed the problems of rural development programmes in Assam and revealed that rural development programmes have almost failed in solving the problems of rural people of Assam. Lack of awareness among the masses, lack of qualitative participation of women, political interference, corruption, communication gap between the implementing agency and the people, wrong identification of beneficiaries, illiteracy etc. are the barriers in the way of rural development in Assam. Yadav, Sharma & Raj (2020)⁴ in a study on women empowerment through Pradhan Mantri Ujjawla Yojana (PMUY) found that this scheme has significantly influenced the socio-economic aspects of women empowerment. The study also revealed the necessity of enhancing awareness about the benefits of LPG among the women. Prashanthi et al. (2020)⁵ carried out a research to explore the extent of awareness and utilization of the central government schemes such as Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Sukanya Samrithi Yojana (SSY), Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), and SABLA by the women in the Jogulamba Gadwl district(rural) of Telengana State. The study revealed that most of the women are aware about these schemes. ICDS and KGBV are implemented under Grama Panchayat whereas SSY and SABLA are not available in their Panchayat. In a study on 'Child Sexual Abuse in India - Awareness and Attitudes'

conducted by World Vision India(2020)⁶ in 15 states - three states each in the North, South, East, West and North-East regions of the Country found that amongst parents and caregivers, the highest awareness is in Manipur at 63.33%. Overall, 35% children and 32.13% caregivers are aware of the POCSO Act. Baruah, Baruah & Saikia (2015)⁷ conducted a study on awareness and utilization of Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND) Services among rural mothers in Kamrup District of Assam. The findings of the study revealed that most of the beneficiaries are aware about services being delivered in VHND. It also explored that complete package of services in VHND are not utilized to the optimal extent by beneficiary mothers in rural Kamrup. Ghosh (2011)⁸ analyzed the responses of the rural community in Malda to the age old practice of child marriage in the context of legal reform designed to prevent this social evil. The study explored that despite legal interventions, the problem of child marriage, being a part of social traditions, continues to prevail among rural community in Malda. According to the study, lack of awareness is one of the other factors responsible for this practice.

An Overview of Some Government Policies and Schemes

Government of India under Ministry of Women and Child Development has been implementing a number of women welfare schemes and programmes with the aim of bringing socio-economic development, employability and ensuring rights and justice for women. These schemes are launched to empower women by making them aware about their rights and duties as well as access to resources in a decisive step towards greater security for them. "Empowerment includes higher literacy level and education for women, better health care for women and children, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights and responsibilities, improved standard of living and acquiring self-reliance, self-esteem and self-confidence."⁹ Hence, focusing on all these important areas, the policies on

empowerment of women has certain clear cut goals and objectives:

- Provide an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- There should be enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in political and social justice.
- Equal access to political participation and decision making.
- Equal access to healthcare, quality education, employment, public office and safety.
- Strengthening the legal system to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.
- Changing social attitude and community practices by active participation.
- Mainstreaming gender perspective in the developmental process.
- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girl children.
- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organization.¹⁰

Besides women specific schemes and programmes most of the policies and programmes launched by government of India have certain provisions that deal with empowerment of women. The areas of concern covered by these policies and schemes deal with different variables including health, education, economic opportunities, political participation, gender based violence etc. Following are some policies and schemes which are very important for women that assure women's rights, safety, employability and empowerment. Some important policies and schemes are highlighted below—

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA)

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 is an affirmative action policy of government of India which is directed towards providing reliefs to the victim women who faces violence at home. It is a civil law that recognizes the right to residence of women, right to live women in a violence free home, recognizing that a women requires assistance with legal procedures and other forms of support, the PWDVA allows for the appointment of Protection Officer, and recognizes the role of Service Provider in providing medical aid shelter, legal counseling and other kinds of support services.¹¹ This act provides protection to women from not only physical violence, but also other forms of violence such as emotional and psychological abuse.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

Government of India has banned the conduct of child marriage by enacting the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. This act prohibits solemnization of marriage of a child. If a boy who is less than 21 years of age and a girl who is less than 18 years of age are not eligible to get married. If marriage of such child is solemnized then, according to the law such marriage can be nullified. Again if the Magistrate receives any information of arranging such illegal marriage, he/she can issue injunction prohibiting that child marriage. The Act has certain provisions of punishment for those who violets such law. 'A person who conducts child marriage or any person who promotes child marriage may be punished with two years of rigorous imprisonment or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupee or with both'. Thus this act prohibits child marriage and provides relief to victims along with enhancing punishment for those persons who conducts or promotes such marriages.¹²

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO)

The Ministry of Women and Child Development introduced the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

(POCSO) Act in 2012. The aim of this act is to protect children from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography and provide for establishment of special courts for trial of offences and related matters and incidents. This act is gender neutral and it ensures healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child. It gives special protection to a child below eighteen years of age by prohibiting any type of sexual abuse, traffic of children for sexual purpose including child pornography.¹³

National Nutrition Mission or POSHAN Abhiyaan

This Government of India's flagship programme which emphasizes on nutritional status of adolescent girls, pregnant women, lactating mothers and children from 0-6 years age. The programme, through use of technology, convergence and community involvement with a targeted approach strives to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight in children. Launching on 8 March, 2018 by Government of India it aims to build a people's movement (Jan Andolan) around malnutrition. As a part of this Abhiyaan, month of September 2018 was celebrated as Rastriya POSHAN Maah. The broad themes for celebration covered antenatal care, optimal breastfeeding, complementary feeding, anemia, growth monitoring, girls' education, diet, right age of marriage, hygiene and sanitation, eating healthy foods etc. Under this programme more than 12.2 crore women, 6.2 crore man and over 13 crore children were reached through various activities undertaken during POSHAN Maah.¹⁴

One Stop Centre Scheme

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has formulated a centrally sponsored scheme for setting up One Stop Centre, a sub-scheme of umbrella scheme for National Mission for Empowerment of Women including Indira Gandhi Matritrav Sahyaog Yojana. This scheme, popularly known as Sakhi is being implemented since 1st April, 2015. One Stop Centers (OSC) are intended to support women

affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. Under these centers women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, irrespective of age, class, caste, educational status, marital status, race and culture, will be facilitated with support and redressal. The OSCs offer different services to the women facing any kind of violence like sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, honour related crimes, acid attacks or witch-hunting. The services include emergency response and rescue services, medical assistance, assistance to women in lodging FIR, psycho-social support, legal aid and counseling, shelter, video conferencing facility etc.¹⁵

181 Helpline Number for Women

In India, the scheme for universalization of women helpline was introduced in April 1, 2005. Government of India has launched Universal Women Helpline Number through short code 181. Accordingly the Assam Government on March 29, 2018 launched 181-Shakhi toll free women helpline in Assam. The main objective of launching this scheme is to provide 24 hours telecom service for the women who is affected by violence. It also provides emergency response through referral by linking with the appropriate authority such as Police/Hospitals/Ambulance services/District Legal Services Authority/Protection Officer etc. The helpline number is an integral part of One Stop Centre. Moreover women are provided appropriate support services and access to government schemes and programmes that are affected by violence. The support services include medical aid, police assistance, professional counseling, shelter, legal aid etc. Women are also being informed about the processes to be adopted for accessing benefits under government schemes and programmes launched for their empowerment.¹⁶

Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND)

Since 2007, under the National Health Mission, Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Day is being celebrated. Its

aim is to provide development services to the community through several flagship programmes. It mainly focuses on four components- health, nutrition, early childhood development and sanitation. VHSND is organized in every village once in a month at the Anganwadi centers. The Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Anganwadi workers (AWWs), MPWs (Multipurpose Workers) are the frontline service providers of VHSND. The services include health and counseling service for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, diseases, growth monitoring services, breastfeeding, maternal nutrition, promotion of hygiene, hand washing, safe drinking water, use of toilets etc.¹⁷

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana(PMMVY)

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana launched on 1st January, 2017 is a maternity benefit programme that is implemented all over India by Ministry of Women and Child Development. Under this scheme services are provided to the pregnant women and lactating mothers, including the case of miscarriage/stillbirth, the case of infant mortality etc. Under this scheme cash incentives of Rs. 5000/- (in three installments) are provided for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and lactating mothers. The eligible beneficiaries would receive the incentive given under the Janani Suraksha Yojana for institutional delivery.¹⁸

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana(DDU-GKY)

This scheme is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission which aims at reduction of poverty. The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) launched on 25th September, 2014 is implemented to skill the rural youth who are poor by providing them jobs having regular monthly wages or above the minimum wages. Thus it will benefit more than 55 million poor rural youth who are ready to be skilled by providing sustainable development. The socially disadvantaged groups are specially covered under this

scheme. Out of total coverage, 50% of funds will be earmarked for SCs & STs, 15% to minorities. Also one third of persons covered under the scheme should be women.¹⁹

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana launched on 25th June, 2015 is a flagship scheme which is a credit linked subsidy scheme (CLSS). This scheme aims to encourage home ownership amongst women in cities and villages. As per its guidelines, the government has made it necessary for a family to possess a minimum of one woman member registered as the owner of a new house under the flagship housing programme. Under this scheme the women borrowers falling under Economically Weaker Section (EWS), and Low Income Group (LIG) can avail of an interest subsidy of 6.5 percent on a home loan upto Rs.6 lakhs, while Middle Income Group (MIG) can get an interest subsidy of 4 percent/3 percent on a home loan upto Rs. 9 lakhs or Rs12 lakhs. Depending on their necessity the widows, single women, women of SC & ST category can avail the advantage of this scheme.²⁰

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

This is a social welfare scheme launched by Government of India on 1st May 2016. The tagline of this scheme is 'Swachh Indhan, Behtar Jeevan' which tries to ensure a smoke free rural India. It aims to provide concessional LPG connections to the women living below poverty line (BPL). Under these scheme cash assistance of Rs.1600/- (for a connection 14.2kg cylinder), Rs.1150/- (for a 5kg cylinder) is provided in the name of the women belonging to the BPL family. Moreover, all the beneficiaries is provided with first LPG refill and stove both free of cost along with their deposit free connection by the Oil Marketing Companies. Thus this scheme ensures universal coverage of cooking gas in the country. This step empowers women along with protecting their health. It has also provide employment for rural youth in the supply chain of cooking gas.²¹

Arunodoi Scheme

Government of Assam launched a new scheme 'Arunodoi Scheme' on 2nd October, 2020. This scheme provides minimum guarantee to the poorest people for their nutrition and protection of health. Thus it is a poverty alleviation scheme which aims to provide financial assistance to the economically backward families having annual income less than two lakh. This scheme will provide financial assistance of Rs.830/- per month through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme to the poor families. The women being the primary caretakers of the family are kept as beneficiaries of the scheme. The financial assistance is given to each beneficiary family for providing medicines for taking care of their health need, pulses, sugar, fruits and vegetables for nutrition.²²

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY)

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana launched on 22nd January, 2015 is a scheme launched under 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign for the protection of future of the girl child. Under this scheme parents of the girl child can open savings account and deposit money in the name of maximum number of two girls (only one account per girl). In this case at the time of opening the age of the girl child should not exceed 10 years. The investments under this scheme are eligible for getting tax benefit and the interest earned and amount received at maturity of this scheme are tax free.²³

The withdrawal of deposited money shall be allowed for the purpose of higher education of the account holder to meet education expenses. The account shall mature on completion of a period of 21 years from the date of opening of account. In case of marriage of girl child the account can be prematurely closed after her attaining the age of 18 years.²⁴

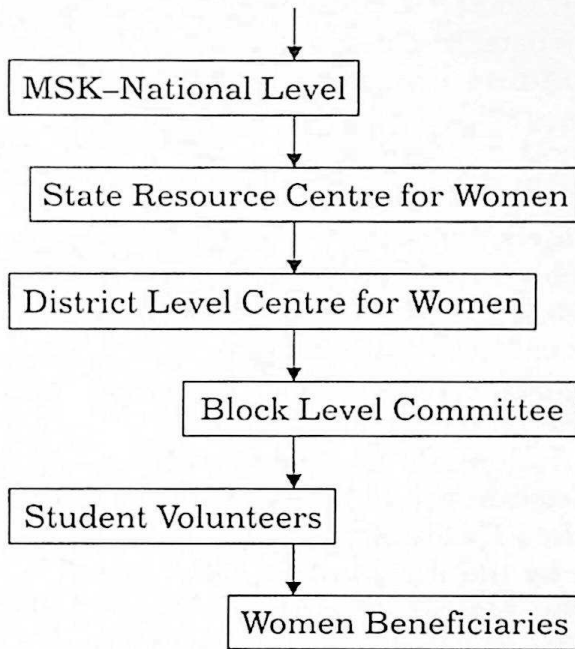
Most of the schemes highlighted above are directly or indirectly benefits the women addressing the issues through maternity benefits, shelter, employment opportunities, protecting girls' rights, nutritional supplies, protecting health and education etc. Empowering rural women is very

important for bringing sustainable development of a society. Because women empowerment deals with the issues of gender equality and increased participation of women in decision making including socio-economic development process. Findings of different research studies reveal that launching of government schemes and policies especially for women have increased women participation in labour market, decision making process by developing self-confidence among them. The social protection scheme for women has great potential for promoting women's economic empowerment and reducing gender inequalities. The design of social protection schemes requires an integrated approach, linking with other livelihood programmes and social services, so that these can lead to sustainable poverty reduction.²⁵

It is also observed that despite taking lots of initiatives, the attainments by the women in the field of income, employment and in educational front, the scenario of women empowerment seems to be comparatively poor and needs to be checked. Government initiatives alone would not be sufficient to achieve this goal because empowerment will be the real and effective only when they are endowed income and property so that they may stand on their feet and build up their identity in the society. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which they can get the proper benefit from the schemes made by the government for women development.²⁶

What is Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK)?

Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) is a sub-scheme under Government of India's umbrella scheme Pradhan Mantri Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (PMMSY). According to the Budget Speech of 2017-18, targeting up to 2019-20, this sub-scheme has covered 115 aspirational districts for setting up of Mahila Shakti Kendras. Through this scheme rural women are provided access to their entitlements by linking with the government authority and concerned departments. It aims to empower rural women through awareness generation, training, capacity building with the assistance of students

Organizational Structure of Mahila Shakti Kendra

volunteers. Mainly the scheme is implemented through the state government/UTs administration. Under this scheme, efforts are made to establish co-ordination and active participation by the officials of different Ministries and departments. According to the guidelines for implementation of MSK scheme published by Ministry of Women and Child Development, GOI, there are four components of MSK scheme which provides multi-dimensional services. For the implementation of women centric schemes and programmes at the national level domain based experts provide necessary support, at the state level State Resource Centre for Women (SRCW) under the Department of Women and Child Development/Social Welfare of the State Government provide technical assistance, at the district level the District Level Centre for Women (DLCW) serves as a link between village/block and state level and the Block Level Centre facilitates the activities conducted at gaon panchayat level/Anganwadi Centres. In the implementation of MSK Scheme different frontline workers like ASHAs, AWWs, ANMs, Women Self-Help Groups, Protection

Officers, Mahila Police Volunteers, Bank correspondents, Siksha Mitra, Elected Representatives, NSS/NCC Cadres etc are been entrusted the responsibilities to conduct training, capacity building programmes, awareness generation, sensitization etc.²⁷

Discussion

The study is conducted in Darrang district of Assam. The researchers have visited the Mahila Shakti Kendra, Darrang which is attached with the Social Welfare Department of Darrang to collect information regarding the organizational structure, functioning and the challenges faced by MSK, Darrang. Informations have been collected from 5 government officials using self-structured interview schedule. According to the information collected the NITI Ayog identified Darrang district as one of the aspirational districts, so by the recommendation of NITI Ayog Mahila Shakti Kendra, Darrang was established on 17th November, 2018 under Darrang District Social Welfare Department. After setting up MSK, Darrang has started to conduct different activities from November, 2019 onwards to realize its goals. The official sources informed that the MSK, Darrang is headed by a Women Welfare Officer (at present Mousumi Kalita) and two co-ordinators (at present Nayanmoni Das & Dipanjali Das) at the district level. It has 5 block level committees namely- Dalgaon, Besimari, Sipajhar, Pub-Mangaldai and Pachim-Mangaldai Block Committee respectively. The Bock Level Committee is headed by a Chairman who is the Block Development Officer of that concerned block. The District Child Development and Protection Officer is also associated with the functioning of MSK. The Block Level Committees conduct different programmes by enrolling 1000 Student Volunteers (200 per block) selected from different colleges of Darrang district. While conducting different activities MSK, Darrang follows the guidelines of State Resource Centre for Women. Such activities include different need based trainings, awareness camps, awareness rallies for sensitization on women issues

related to health, nutrition, violence, organizing seminars, webinars, and capacity building programmes keeping in view the goal of women empowerment. The student volunteers are engaged in awareness generation regarding different government schemes and programmes like POSHAN Abhiyaan, One Stop Centre, Women Helpline Number, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana etc. as well as different social issues like domestic violence, child marriage, sexual offences etc. through block level interventions.

Besides these activities, under MSK, Darrang two action research studies have been conducted on namely–

1. Analysis of cases of domestic violence and
2. Self initiated child marriage

On the basis of these studies the crucial areas have been identified by the MSK team and actions are being adopted accordingly.

It is also informed that the functioning of MSK is under constant supervision and monitoring by the higher authorities. The Principal Secretary and Secretary of Social Welfare Department, Assam and the representatives of State Resource Centre for women, POSHAN Abhiyan and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana have visited MSK, Darrang and they reviewed the progress of MSK scheme. They also suggested different measures to eradicate the prevailing challenges in the implementation of the scheme.

Analysis of Functioning of MSK, Darrang

On the basis of official data and information gathered through interview, the functioning of MSK, Darrang in creating awareness among rural women on government policies and schemes & programmes are stated below:

Table-1
Training Programmes conducted by MSK, Darrang

S.No.	Name of Training Programme	Number of Participants
1	Training of Trainers	40
2	Student Volunteers Training	1000

Source: MSK Office, Darrang

The above data shown in the table reveals that MSK, Darrang has conducted two training programmes. One is training of trainers (TOT) under MSK scheme and other is training of Student Volunteers. The training of trainers was conducted on 5th and 6th February, 2020. A total of 40 (Forty) participants (eight people from each block) participated in this programme. Participants included college teachers, NGO workers who has previous experience of giving training. Student volunteer training was conducted from February, 2020 to October, 2021. A total of 1000 (One thousand) selected college students (200 students from each block) participated in this training programme.

Table-2
Webinar/Seminar conducted under MSK, Darrang

S.No.	Theme of Webinar/ Seminar	Number of Participants
1.	Webinar on "Affect of Child Marriage & Protection of Children From Sexual Offence Act, 2012"	200
2.	Webinar on "Domestic Violence Act and Provision of Child Labour Prohibition Act"	193
3.	Seminar on "Problem of Old Age People & Role of Caretaker & Family Member having Old Age Member"	238

Source: MSK Office, Darrang.

The aim of this training programmes are to encourage the spirit of voluntary community service and gender equality

among the students and to acquaint them with various important government schemes & programmes as well as social issues that have impact on lives of women so that they can provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements.

The data shown in the table-2 brings to light that MSK, Darrang has conducted two webinars on the theme "Affect of Child Marriage & Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act, 2012" and "Domestic Violence Act and Provision of Child Labour Prohibition Act" on 31st January 2021 and 11th December 2021 respectively. These two webinars have mainly focused on creating awareness among people about the legal provisions for protection of children and women. Student Volunteers, Anganwadi workers, Supervisors, Child Development Project Officers, Statistical Assistant, Legal advisor etc. are the participants of these webinars.

Table-3
Campaign conducted under MSK, Darrang

S.No.	Name of campaign	Number of campaign
1.	Awareness meeting on girl child education	17
2.	Awareness meeting on human trafficking	02
3.	Legal awareness camp	04
4.	16 days of Campaign on end violence against women & girl child day	01
5.	Observance of world breast feeding week	01
6.	Awareness rally	05

Source: MSK Office, Darrang.

Through these webinars, Student Volunteers, Anganwadi workers and Supervisors are sensitized on the issues of domestic violence, child marriage, child labour and protection of children from sexual abuse and also they are entrusted the responsibility to spread the negative impact of such issues among the common people. Furthermore, MSK

has organized a Seminar on the theme "Problem of Old Age People & Role of Caretaker & Family Member having Old Age Member" on 20th November 2021. This seminar has mainly focused on capacity building and keeping mental health of the senior citizens including both men and women. Residence of Old age home, Doctors, Student Volunteers, Legal Service authority etc. have participated in this seminar.

The data shown in the table-3 reveals that MSK, Darrang has organized 17(seventeen) Awareness Meeting on Girl Child Education at school level. School children, teachers, parents, panchayat members and other resource persons of the local area have participated in these awareness meetings. It has also organized 2 (two) Awareness Meeting on Human Trafficking issue with the help of police administration and 4 (four) Legal Awareness Camp with the help of District Legal Service Authority. Furthermore, it has conducted 16 days of campaign on 'End violence against women & girl child day' from 25th Nov 2021 to 10th Dec 2021. This campaign is conducted from 25th November, the Internatinal Day for Elemination of Violence against Women, to 10th December, Human Rights Day. The main focus of this campaign is to increase awareness regarding prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. This campaign gives emphasis on the global theme for the year 2021's campaign on 16 days of Activism against Gender-based violence i.e. "Orange the world: End violence against women." It has also organized sensitization programme on World Breast Feeding Week (from 1st August to 7th August, 2021) with the theme "Protect Breastfeeding: A Shared Responsibility". Student Volunteers with AWWs, ASHAs & ANMs have conducted this sensitization programme in each development block of Darrang District. Besides these activities it has organized 2 (two) Awareness Meeting on Human Trafficking issue with the help of police administration and 4 (four) Legal Awareness Camp with the help of District legal service authority. It has also conducted several Awareness Rallies on different social issues on the occasion of National Girl Child Day (24th January), State Child Protection Day(4th

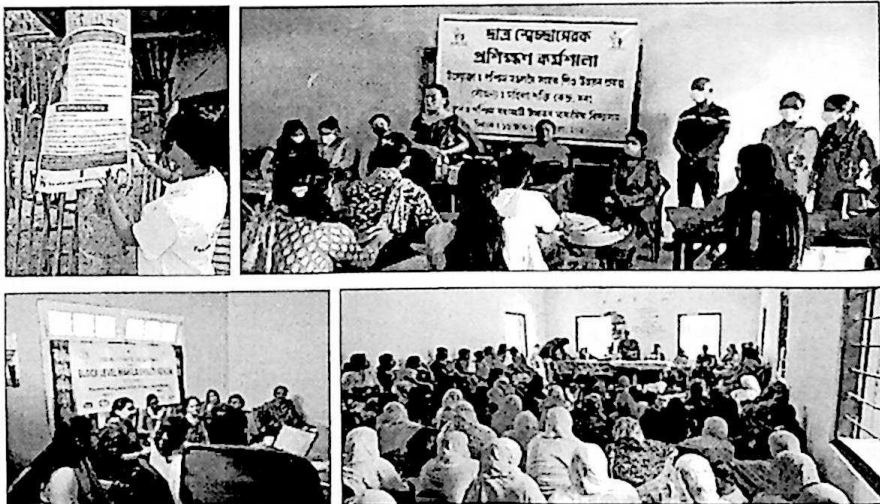
March), International Women Day (8th March), World Day Against Human Trafficking (30th July), International Rural Women Day(15th October) etc.

Table-4
Other activities conducted by MSK, Darrang

S.No.	Name of activities	Theme
1.	Skill-Oriented activity	Cutting, Embroidery & Beautification
2.	Posters	Child marriage issues
3.	Hording	Details of women centric schemes
4.	Leaflet distribution	MSK scheme

Source: MSK Office, Darrang.

The data shown in the table-4 brings to light that District level Centre for Women (DLCW) of MSK, Darrang has conducted a convergent meeting cum training on skill development (especially on cutting, embroidery & beautician course) for destitute women & girl who were rescued & supported by One Stop Centre, Darrang. It has prepared Poster on child marriage issues and Leaflet on MSK scheme and distributed these among the rural women of each development block of Darrang District by the Student



Volunteers from December 2020 onwards. It has also prepared Hording on women centric schemes in details and posted in mass gathering places of Darrang District.

Challenges faced by MSK, Darrang

On the basis of the information received by the researchers through interview the following challenges are found faced by the implementers of MSK Scheme in Darrang:

1. As the Scheme is very new (effective from November, 2019) and recently launched, the scheme is not fully operationalised yet (till the time of field survey) converging all the stakeholders.
2. The officials also identified the problem of linkage between block/village level and state level authorities in implementing the scheme under Pradhan Mantri Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (PMMSY).
3. The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has put a serious challenge in the implementation of the MSK scheme resulting in delays in conducting different activities.
4. During the session 2020-21, the implementers could not reach the community at the grassroot level due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown and the programmes were postponed frequently.

Conclusion

From empowerment point of view it is very much significant for the women to get access to all the women centric schemes and programmes enforced by the government without any hindrances. In this context Mahila Shakti Kendras are playing a vital role in providing necessary support, resources and information for the women beneficiaries. It is worth mentioning that the Constitution of India not only has provisions of gender equality but also has provisions providing directions and power to the state for taking necessary action concerning women welfare. Considering this, Government of India, State Governments

and Union Territories are launching different policies and schemes to improve the standard of living for women. In spite of such policies and schemes, if we look into the issues relating to the status of women, it is observed that due to prevalence of many obstacles and challenges women are depriving of getting benefits and facing gender discrimination. In this regard MSK is trying to provide the facilities to the real women beneficiaries by awareness campaigns, sensitization, training etc. collaborating with different stakeholders, government authorities, panchayat bodies, civil society organizations etc. The efforts made by MSK, Darrang are found very much fruitful in ensuring gender justice and gender equality to a great extent. It is hoped that MSK will create an environment of full participation of local community, especially women to realize their full potentials in the near future with its women centric activities conducted for their real empowerment.

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Women in Botany: A Review on the Impact of Gender Bias in Plant Science and Biodiversity Conservation

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"Being a Woman is easy, being an admirable woman is an art and science both."

-Dr. Ichha Purak

Introduction

Gender representation in the field of scientific study has been a much focused topic of discussion since only last 50 years. Even though gender inequality has been one of the major distinctive attribute of modern society, still there has been various legal, academic and employment related discrimination against women and gender imbalances have been seen persisting even today (Madalli *et al.*, 2019). As per UNDP report and Scopus rating India was the fifth largest research producer in 2017, but unfortunately exhibiting the highest United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) gender inequality index among the 30 largest research producers in Scopus. Therefore, it could be considered as one of the important cases for the status and position of India in global science. In fact the authentic and reliable

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data about gender inequality in India is difficult to obtain due to various serious causes like due to economic conditions (Madalli *et al.*, 2019), stronger family influences (Vindhya, 2007), greater female safety concerns (Vindhya, 2007), and differing socio cultural expectations (Chandrakar, 2014). Therefore, the present review is aimed to study the impact of gender inequality in the field of plant science i.e. "Botany".

The Concept of "Gender"

'Gender' is a term coined in the 1960s to refer to the relations between men and women that affect in a substantial way how each are expected to behave (Borjas, 2001). 'Gender' is a social construct and consists of a set of behaviors and expectations (Madalli *et al.*, 2019). There are three most common genders are male, female and the third gender comprising of the queer communities that have been recently legally recognized as the third gender in several South Asian countries, including India (Mal, 2018; Hinchy, 2013).

Gender research from early time has clearly demonstrated the presence of 'gender bias' both in social and natural sciences as well. Scientists consider prevailing social gender norms as 'natural' and often incorporate these norms into their theories (Borjas, 2001). As a result mens behaviour and knowledge were taken to be 'standard' (eg. are the 'farmers', 'foresters', 'leaders', 'shamans', etc.) and women were given less importance. Subsequently, gender bias affects the postulated theories, questions formulated, the methods used, and the research outcomes ending up in creating biased scientific knowledge.

History and myth associated with feminism in plant science and biodiversity conservation

Life, nature, the planet Earth and fertility have long been presented with female features throughout different civilizations and times. Coatlicue, the earth goddess of life and death in the Aztec mythology; Papa, the mother Earth for Maori people of New Zealand; Pachama, the Earth with the Incas; Nantosuelta, the goddess of nature for the Celts;

Bharat Mata, the modern Hindu Mother India; Gaia, Mother Earth for the early Greeks; Demeter, the goddess of agriculture in Greece, all were worshipped as the female deities for centuries (Deda and Rubian, 2004). Flora is the term depicting the names of plants of a particular region or a particular period. In Roman belief the 'Flora' is the goddess of flowers, gardens and spring, a name that represent all plant life (Borjas, 2001). Several rituals were celebrated in her name in ancient Rome. In India also, several plants are worshiped considering them as female goddess, such as Tulshi. By 18th century, the Flora's image was revitalized and Botany also regained its glory as an Enlightenment science (Borjas, 2001). In Europe, due to the relation between women and medicinal herbalism, ethnic traditions, folk knowledge and homegardening, specially influenced by the local myths and folk literature depicting the association of women with flower, garden, nature and fertility, botanical work received a more or less feminine attribute (Borjas, 2001). It implies young, middle and upper class women were inspired to study and cultivate plants.

Carolus von Linneaus, the 'father of Botany', classifies the plant based on sexuality which is now considered to be an artificial one. His concept of classification was based on parallels between plant and human sexuality, i.e. masculine and feminine which was very much prevalent in those days (Shteir, 1996). He used some anthropomorphic terms to denote the sexuality of the plant world - such as 'brides and bridegrooms', 'eunuchs' and 'clandestine marriages' etc. In his concept the prevalence of gender biasness could be noticed when he assigned higher rank for the groups (class, unit) having stamen, and a subsidiary ranking to the order having pistil. Also, the male part in plants was described as active and female parts as inactive, which exhibits the naturalization of the sex and gender ideologies of those days (Shteir, 1996). By the late 1820's natural system of classification of plants started developing, considering a series of characteristics rather than simply considering the reproductive characters only.

At the time of Victorian England, John Lindley was the first Professor of Botany at London University. In his inaugural speech he expanded the scope of botany from merely a plant identification practice to a whole study of plant morphology and so on. But he also added the scope of botany as an occupation for man and just an amusement form for ladies (Shteir, 1996). This encourages to shaping the concept of 'botanist' as a standard male individual and women's botany was in kitchen garden only (Shteir, 1996).

In India, women have been playing an integral part in its rich culture and tradition from time immemorial. Most of the rituals and religious practices in India are primarily concerned with the worshiping of celestial bodies or worship of nature which contributes to the wildlife conservation. Indian woman grow *Ocimum sanctum* (Tulsi) plant in the courtyard of their house and worship it, they tie cotton thread or piece of red cloth on the trunk of various trees such as *Ficus religiosa* (Peepal), *Aegle marmelos*, *Cocos nucifera*, *Musa paradisiaca*, *Madhuca indica*, *Butea monosperma* (Chandrakanth *et al.*, 1990). These are the best examples of caring and devotion towards plants.

World's largest knowledge bank based on local management and utilization of plant resources is 'gender blind'

Borjas (2001), stated in his review the importance and predominance of women in holding majority of the traditional knowledge and management system of world's plant biodiversity. This is because of the daily role played by women in their day to day life as housewives, plant gatherers, home gardeners, herbalists, seed custodians and plant breeders as well. But women's knowledge and management practices about plant diversity and their different uses has been underestimated and undervalued for long time. Therefore, Borjas (2001) termed such knowledge base as 'gender blind', not because only due to under rating of women's knowledge, but also because of not understanding the fact that women and men have different physical domains

of work, knowledge, practices, interests and needs with respect to plants and their environments. Torres et al. (2016), reported no gender bias existed in the knowledge of medicinal plant exist, while they investigated the same considering three primary scales viz. national, continental, and global.

Kitchen: a site for plant diversity conservation

Women develop not only a domestic relationship with plants while preparing and processing food, but also develops a spiritual, emotional, ritualistic and health concerned relationship. Culinary practices have always been an important part of traditional knowledge system of any ethnic group and represent many things of the concerned community. Such food tradition including collection of edible herbs and vegetables, growing crops, preparation of dishes, processing and preservation methods of seasonal foods, post harvest processes and using wild medicinal plants are perpetuated and transmitted from mothers to daughters. In this way elements of ethnic identity are well maintained as well as plant biodiversity is also conserved and diffused (Zimmerer, 1996).

Man the Hunter; Women the Gatherer

The earlier evolutionary theories were based upon the idea of 'men' and 'hunting' as the principal driving force of the theory of human evolution which is mostly considered as gender biased (Fedigan, 2001). But with the development of the new model of evolution of a foraging society, comprising of mainly hunting, fishing and gathering, it was evident that the bulk of the food staff is provided by gathering and not by hunting only. Subsequently, the role of 'woman as gatherer' started receiving its deserving importance and acknowledgement. According one statistical analysis, among 135 different societies around the world, women are responsible for 79% of the total vegetable food collected which is very close to the estimates of other databases (Barry and Schlegel, 1982).

In India, in general, women exhibit greater traditional

and folk knowledge and different perception about the usefulness of plants than men. Men's plant knowledge concerns primarily with the agriculture, while that of women is based on household, medicines, cleansers, fiber, food and tools. Women's ethnobotanical knowledge of 'wild plant management' plays an important role in the survival of certain tribes through different plant based livelihood practices for several centuries (Stevens, 1999). But with the development of urban society over rural, the foraging activities of women got declined. Reduction of foraged food in diet leading to malnutrition, promoting food purchase and thus decreasing the traditional knowledge base and the use of local plant diversity (Borjas, 2001).

Women in nurturing home gardens- the 'genetic backstop'

Home gardens are small social, aesthetic, recreational space, near home which serve as secondary food and income source mostly maintained by women (Borjas, 2001). Like most other women's work, home gardening also get 'invisible' or often described as 'minor' or 'supplemental' to agricultural production. Home gardens serve as a genetic backstop for plants that are planted in small scale and have less economic importance (Ninez, 1987). In Sweden useful varieties that would be lost due to clearing and burning are transplanted to home gardens for their preservation (Okigbo, 1985). *In situ* conservation of plants in home garden promotes their continuous evolution (Ninez, 1987). Women educate their children about basic traditional techniques of biodiversity conservation through weeding and harvesting in most of the village communities. But less focus on home gardens and its importance indirectly lead to the invisibility and devaluation of the women's contribution to the biodiversity conservation.

Shamans and midwives

According to WHO, 80% of the world's population uses locally available medicinal herbs for their primary healthcare (Farnsworth *et al.*, 1985) which are prescribed by folk

medicinal practitioner such as midwives, herbalists and shamans (McClain, 1989). While doing ethnomedicinal research focus is usually given more to shamans or the 'medicine men' than 'common' knowledge of a lay woman or midwife.

Women as plant breeder and farmer

The relation between women and plant breeding is old. Women are more knowledgeable in deciding the selection factor of seed which is very crucial in plant breeding and storage purpose. For example, in Rwanda, women produce more than 600 varieties of beans (Sperling and Berkowitz, 1994), while in Peru, in one small village, Aguaruna women plant more than 60 varieties of manioc (Boster, 1984). In the Peruvian Andes women almost exclusively manage potato and maize seed (Zimmerer, 1991). Even men are forbidden to handle seed or enter seed storage areas (Zimmerer, 1991). In Quechua useful plants are often worshipped under the name of mother such as *Mama sara* (maize), *Mama acxo* (potato), *Mama oca* (Mama cocoa) (Tapia and de la Torre, 1993).

In another observation Zimmerer (1991) has found that, in absence of male farmer who had out migrated for certain reasons, females could successfully headed the farm household with a good productivity. Such feminisation of agriculture is seen to be successful in many cases.

Women and plant germplasm conservation

Several studies show that there are some social rules for gathering and collecting plant materials in ethnic communities. In California, Oak trees and seed plots were owned by women and inherited from mother to daughter (Dick-Bissonnette, 1997).

Telfiiria occidentalis (fluted pumpkin), considered as 'women's crop', is an indigenous vegetable used by Igbos in Nigeria and is grown in homegarden. Interestingly women cannot cut plants belonging to due to myth prevailing in the community. Thus, women must grow their own *Telfiiria*

plants (Akoroda, 1990). Women's traditional gathering right in Thailand also exhibits several interesting information about the influence of women in plant germplasm conservation (Price, 1997). Unfortunately, most researches on Intellectual Property Right largely fail to acknowledge the pre existing indigenous system of knowledge predominantly practiced by women.

One of the best examples of role of women in biodiversity conservation is the *Chipko movement*, also called *Chipko andolan*, in Mandal village in the Himalayas of India. It was a nonviolent social and ecological movement by rural villagers, particularly women, in India in the 1970s, aimed at protecting trees and forests slated for government-backed logging. The people, led by Gaura Devi, stood up to the loggers, surrounded the trees and sang, "This forest is our mother's home; with all our strength we will protect it" (Breakthrough).

The fate of women researchers in Botany - yesteryears and today

Elke Mackenzie (1911-1990), born as Ivan Mackenzie Lamb, was a British botanist, specialized in the field of lichenology. She was the recipient of both the British and United States Polar Medals for her involvement in Operation Tabarin. She had a great contribution to cryptogamic botany. In 1953, Mackenzie was offered the directorship of the Farlow Herbarium of Cryptogamic Botany by Harvard University. Born as a man and suffering from Gender dysphoria she underwent a sex reassignment surgery to become an women. But at that time she was forced into retirement after her sexual transition. Still her courage in deciding to live as she wanted, at an advanced age, jeopardizing a secure position will always be admired. Mackenzie is the namesake of two genera, *Lambia* and *Lambiella*, and several species.

Janaki Ammal, the first Indian Botanist joined Indian Academy of Sciences in 1935, as a research fellow in its very first year. However, later she had to leave the institution due

to her status as a single woman from a caste considered backward. Facing caste and gender based discrimination she left for London and joined the John Innes Horticultural Institute as an assistant cytologist (www.thebetterindia.com).

Transgender and pansexual botanist L. K. Tuominen is a botanist working on plant secondary metabolism (500QS). He is a transgender and pansexual person currently undergoing transition treatment and surgeries. Besides academic and professional courses he also developed a course exploring how science has both reinforced and disproven racist ideas over time.

Kew's amazing data resources on gender bias

Kew holds a huge range of datasets and collections, and one such dataset is the enormous International Plant Names Index (IPNI), which later developed the *Index Kewensis*. In compiling all 15,604 botanical authors recorded by IPNI, it exhibited only 12.20% female authors who have published plant names since 1753, which in a period of over 269 years (Lindon et al., 2015). Also, a complete analysis of all 624,682 species described as new to science between 1753 and 2013, showed that fewer than 3% of all of these species names (17,604) were published by female authors whereas 92.81% of all species names were published by male authors (Lindon et al., 2015).

The first plant species to be published by a female author was *Amomum verum* Blackw., a wild ginger, published by Scottish artist and business woman Elizabeth Blackwell (1757). Interestingly the second species was published by a woman only during 1780s i.e. after a gap of 23 years (Lindon et al., 2015). However, female authorship gradually rose throughout the last century until it exceeded 10% in the 1990s though it is not satisfactory. Over the last twenty years, female authors have on average published 80% of the number of new species published by their male counterparts (Lindon et al., 2015). Of the 500 most productive plant name authors, just eight were female (Lindon et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Although in recent time there has been a broad acknowledgment that women's local and traditional knowledge is very important in terms of food security, agriculture, conserving biological diversity, or even in plant based economics, few women are represented at the policy and decision-making level.

Zimmerer extensively studied Andean native cultivation and production system and found it to be highly gender biased. Most Ethnobotanical researcher also considers medicine men as superior over women folk healers based on three errors, i.e. omission, unreliability and error in interpretation (Borjas, 2001).

With changing time Gender relations are also changing and, with them, women's incentives and management practices are changing, which in turn affects biodiversity management. With the increasing privatization of land and properties, women may lose access to forests and fields where they gather wild plants, hence the scope of their contribution to nurturing and conserving plants get limited. While men turn to cash cropping, women may lose access to gardens or fallow fields where they manage traditional varieties (Wooten, 1997; Shroeder, 1997; Astone, 1996). Until the time when research, studies and making policies related to local plant management attributes equal importance and scope to men, women and transgender as well, the scientific studies of plants would remain gender biased only.

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Dress and Dressing: Expression of Gender Identity and Gender Discrimination

Dr. Breehivorna Talukdar

Introduction

Patriarchy- A social structure in general, it is the predominantly most discussed issue and used word in the context of gender discourses and especially women's discourse in contemporary world. While the ideology of feminism and feminist movement are guided by the motto of making women visible in private and public spaces with their distinct voice and identity, it is patriarchy which serves as a major stumbling block. Patriarchy not only serves as a hindrance towards building a gender equal society but also a gender neutral society. The impact of patriarchy is visible and imminent in all stages of human social development spanning from family to politics, culture, economy and religion. The invention of agriculture, development of productive forces, private ownership of animals, slaves, and finally land, paved the way for society to take a patriarchal lead. The urge of major owners of means of production (man) to transfer the ownership to their legitimate children required a strict discipline on sexual nature of women. As a first instance, monogamy was imposed on women, to get a legitimate heir to the land of father. From this sexual control,

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started the first cultural manifestations of patriarchy in ideologies that preached that women are subordinate to men in every respect, and are fit only for homely purposes. Many justifications were created in order to counter every resistance, and question, which included developing an inferiority complex within a female with respect to her own body. She was excluded from direct production processes, and made to perform household functions. The tag of preserving social and cultural honour is thrust upon a woman along with the notions of purity and pollution.

Patriarchy accentuates the idea of purity and pollution. The word literally translates into the authority of the patriarch i.e. the male or the father figure. Patriarchy implies domination of the paternal line. It is about giving maximum weightage to the needs of males in society vis-a-viz females. Putting men first is an automatic approval to putting men's priorities and thoughts first which translates into patriarchy becoming the predominant ideology and a source of hegemony worldwide.

When a social system functions as a dominant ideology, it reflects its presence through various modes of societal roles and social conditionings. One of the most common forms of societal conditioning or social structuring is the concept of gender and gender guided identity markers. Gender is a social construct that compartmentalizes the masculine and feminine sexes into distinct categories of social beings and becomings. Through the markers of distinct roles, gender tries to accentuate the difference between male and female and further fix them into socially constructed categories of difference. This differentiation in turn becomes an intrinsic part of a person's social identity and gets reflected in various cultural norms, forms of behaviour and attitudinal perceptions or outlook of men and women. One of the chief markers of gender identification as well as gender differentiation is the concept of culture.

Culture in an etymological sense refers to the aggregation of various unique norms, rituals, moorings and

habits through which different societies worldwide express their distinct essence and personalities. It is an umbrella term which encompasses the social behaviour, knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs and capabilities of human societies. No two cultures are same, although there can be similarities and an array of dissimilarities. Culture represents itself broadly through verbal and non-verbal symbols. It can also be regarded as a process of communication through which people express their distinct identities as well as homogeneities and heterogeneities. Human societies acquire cultures through the processes of socialization and enculturation. There are specific norms or social guidelines laid down by such processes which earmark the behaviours of man and woman.

Dress and Dressing: An Overview

Dress and Dressing or in other words Clothing is an important cultural marker through which cultures try to bring out their diversity and unique identity. It is also a reflection of self identity. Clothes are used not only as means to cover human modesty but it is also used to symbolize power and communicate the geo-cultural imagery of different regions. For example, the Saree is not just a piece of garment worn by women but it is a symbol of India and the Indic civilization. Different forms of sarees available in the country and the varied manners of dressing it is reflective of its regional varieties and cultures present in each Indian states. Thus, dress and dressing can be regarded as symbols of expression of personal and public identities of a person.

Clothing and Gender Identity

Clothing for both men and women is culturally defined. Cultural norms and expectations are related to the meaning of being a man or woman and are closely linked to appearance. It is an "identification" tool that functions in determining the symbolic boundaries between people in a sense. While the concept of Sex is physiological referring to anatomical variation in the bodily structure of man and

woman, gender is a socio-cultural construction. The social, psychological and cultural connotations ingrained in gender induce man and woman to develop their identities in certain distinct manners. Hence, there are specific norms earmarked in societies for the two genders to act and behave in certain ways. Owing to the physical strength of man, he is mostly considered to be the power holder or the authoritative figure in family as well as society. On the other hand, women or females are considered weaker in strength and more docile and hence they are relegated to the private sphere with their role mostly centred around nurturing as they are the natural wombs that give birth to new lives. The public visibility and authoritative allocation of power and privilege accorded to the man makes them superior and dominant over their female counterparts. Hence, the social roles assigned to the men become an instrument of power play which in turn enables a patriarchal display of dominance of men over women in society.

Dress and dressing is also an important factor through which is expressed a gendered domination of women by men. The human body is one vector through which a person projects his/her "gendered identity". Turner, Malcolm Bernard, and Erving Goffman explore two notions of the body: the body as it manifests itself to oneself, known as the phenomenological body, and the performative social body, that is interpreted by and participates with others. The dress has the most direct contact with the human body and is therefore considered an integral part of the Self. It also is a powerful means to evoke a person's social and cultural identity. Throughout human history, humans have used dress and dressing as a poignant tool to express their identity and also to change, hide or even modify the appearance of their bodies. As a cultural phenomenon a dress carries the ability to project the history and unique cultural traits of a person or a community at large. However, herein also lies the question of who should represent the culture?

While both men and women are equal preservers and

representatives of culture, yet it is seen that in the name of being cultural, there emerged distinct codification of dress and dressing. And this codification is more compulsive for a woman than a man. From the time a child is born, they are put into a world of gendered discourse and sexual difference, and taught to distinguish not only between what is 'female' and what is 'male,' what is masculine and what is feminine, but also the social and political consequences if they cross these binaries. Clothing placed on children helps reinforce these identity-based stereotypes, restricting and limiting children to choose between either 'girls' or 'boys' clothes, more often than not without the choice of cheap gender neutral options. Appearance regulation in terms of beauty and dressing is a major cause of gender control. Clothes invented by humans to protect their bodies against environmental changes have actually enunciated a process of gendered division where the power balance tilts heavily against the women.

Dress and Dressing becomes a congenial way through which women are constricted by societies to appear in 'a certain way' by demure and covered dressing. A woman guided by free will wearing clothes of her choice becomes a symbol of a liberal society and in a patriarchal vision a free willed woman is a socially deviant woman and hence she becomes a threat to a society's culture.

Dress and Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination in society is a manufactured social process. Through the means of language, family, profession and leadership, the societal powers are utilized by men to maintain their hegemonic powers over women and society. The patriarchal urge to retain the dominance of men over women is primarily done through sexuality. The notion of sex is stretched across social and other varied dimensions through which men tries to control women's bodies and thereby keep them subservient. Religion and Culture are used as policing tactics to restrain women from exercising their free will in matters of clothing and appearance. A veiled

and covered woman is a sign of purity and chastity. Salwars, Hijabs, Burqas have therefore become a tool for gendered persecution. In many conservative countries across the world, women are forced to cover themselves in the garb of modesty to prevent the men from going astray. In other words, women are viewed as sexual objects and maintaining their sexual purity as well as preventing men from engaging in any sexual misconduct becomes the foremost duty of women.

For example, in Taliban ruled Afghanistan, women are forced to wear burqa so as not to morally corrupt men. While in Iran, there is a government decree issues to make women adhere to "Islamic dress Standards". In India, recently, six Muslim girls were denied entry into college for wearing Hijab. While Khap Panchayats in specific villages in Haryana debar women from wearing jeans. In a study conducted by PEWS Research Centre Study in 2021, Women in 56 countries faced social hostilities from individuals and groups due to dress and dressing that were deemed to violate religious and cultural norms. Hostilities ranged from verbal abuse, physical violence to honour killings. On the other hand, women in 61 countries faced state restrictions on dress especially on head coverings. In Assam, a girl was debarred from the examination for wearing shorts with authorities calling it improper for the occasion while there was no mention of specific dress code in the exam guidelines.

Conclusion

Dress and dressing is a choice. If human beings by nature are considered rational and free; then freedom entails expressing their lives and living through the self. Identity of the self is a continuous exercise of knowing and expressing oneself through means that an individual believes in and connects with. Gender identity too a process through which a person can choose to project the individual gender. As gender is multifarious, we cannot straightjacket it into two distinct categories. Gender is and must be a fluid concept and so is gender dressing. Imposing or conditioning any gender to dress a certain way is in itself a contradiction to

the Natural Rights of Humans. Therefore, the only way a society can promote distinctive freedom in letter and spirit is to allow men, women and transgender to express their identities freely irrespective of any socio-religious constraints because cultures are changing and no culture can claim to be totally in sync with all its age old customs, beliefs and moorings.

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Women and Environment

Ranjita Goswami

Environment is that which surrounds us from all sides. Women and environment are closely interlinked. In all cultures the earth is a woman. Mother earth is the only planet which provides air, water, food, flora, fauna etc. and in the absence of even one of these five basic components of environment human life cannot exist. Our environment consists of the abiotic factors of land, water, air, climate, odour tastes and biotic factors of plants and animals and all those socio-cultural factors which constitute the quality of life. The environment is the basic source of raw materials and energy resources. It provides essential life-support functions without which many living organisms would cease to exist. The environment acts as a reservoir which absorbs and recycles the waste products of biotic life and abiotic processes. From this it emerges that preservation and protection of environment at all levels is essential. Environmental degradation has been taking place since the dawn of civilization. Women play a critical role in managing natural resources on family and community levels and are most affected by environmental degradation. Women have the advantage of increasing the awareness about environmental protection. They can educate their children

and their neighbors. In different communities around the world, women manage water, sources for fuel and food from both forests and agricultural terrain.

Women have been closely linked to the environment since the start of human evolution. It is said that women are primarily responsible for the gathering of fuel, fodder and wild foods and the growing of subsistence crops for survival. Women are seen as being the most appropriate participants in environmental conservation as they are the main victims of environmental degradation. No other group is more affected by environmental destruction caused by industrialization and urbanization, than poor village women. Rural women's reliance on natural resources for their families' sustenance is far greater than men's. Poverty sometimes drives women to over exploit natural resources.

The concept of ecofeminism came into being in the 1970s delineating women's participation in protecting the environment as well as to keep the society healthy. Ecofeminism presupposes a direct connection between women's biology and women's relationship with the environment. Ecofeminists unite in a central belief of essential convergence between women and nature. Ecofeminism reveals women's understanding of everyday needs.

The movement for environmental protection is a global process, where women are coming forward to protect their surrounding environment. Women of Germany, Kenya, Malaysia, U.K, United States, Canada, Switzerland and Australia are coming forward against deforestation, atomic power, dumping of hazardous task, use of toxic chemicals and nuclear technology etc. The Rio declaration (1992) on general rights and obligations says that women have a vital role in environmental management and development. The declaration finds that full participation of women is essential to achieve sustainable development. India's Chipko movement and Kenya's Green Belt Movement highlighted the role of women's voices and perspectives in sustainable development.

"The world's women are the key to sustainable development, peace and security," U.N. Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon told participants at the Earth Institute's State of the Planet meeting at Columbia University, in New York City, in March 2010. Because women are the chief resource managers for their families in many parts of the world, their engagement in remedies for and adoption to climate change is essential.

Globally there are many examples of women writing/fighting to save the environment. One of the first well known environmentalists was Rachel Carson, whose concern for the environment was voiced in her seminal book, 'Silent Spring' in 1962. Carson warned about the dangers of using chemical pesticides, particularly DDT, as it has serious effects on human health.

Several studies and surveys have indicated that women express more concern for the environment than do men. Women are equally concerned about economic and environmental issues. Women are more concerned about toxic wastes and over use of technology than men. Women tend to have a long term environmental perspective. Conservation of natural surroundings is a part of maintaining the harmony of life for women. It is felt through the ages that the most active and vibrant contribution to preserving the environment comes from women. They have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance.

According to Swaminathan (1985), "Some historians believe that it was women who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming while men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and fauna cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, fodder, fibre and fuel."

Women are the guardians of their families' health in terms of water use decisions. Women can bring about a drastic revolution in water conservation and management because it fits so naturally with their home making role. Women can manage and conserve biological diversity. In the field of renewable energy management and utilization which women can handle effectively if associated to do so. The close relationship between women and natural resources is more visible in rural context. For them nature is an integral part of their subsistence.

Women can be very active participants in the defense of the environment and can stop, or even reverse, the degradation of our natural resources. Women are traditional protector of the environment. A world survey on public attitude towards the environment sponsored by UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) showed that women are more likely to choose a lower standard of living with fewer health risks over a higher standard of living with more risks. The platform for action adopted by the fourth world conference on women in Beijing in 1995 identified the need to involve women more actively in environmental decision making at all levels. This perspective can be incorporated in all strategies leading to sustainable development. Women have better access to local environmental issues. Women often have a leadership role in reducing unnecessary use of resources, promoting an environmental ethic and recycling resources to minimize waste. Women in local organizations have a firsthand knowledge of the impact of environmental degradation in their communities. Through their work with the media, women can help publicize regional examples of the abuse of the environment in their communities so as to raise awareness that can lead to more effective political action.

Women possess attributes and skills which are vital to ecological sustainability. Women make a major contribution to the physical act of managing natural resources. They are active in grass roots conservation groups and their network is better to achieve ecological sustainability. It has become a challenge for us to get familiar with our environment issues

and contribute collectivity for improving our quality of life. This can only be possible through imparting both formal and informal environment education to each of us young and old women and men.

The Indian women were always ahead in the matter of prevention of pollution and protection, preservation, conservation, promotion and enhancement of the environment. They have made greater sacrifices have exhibited greater love than men in the area of environmental protection. The strong desire, devotion and dedication towards better environment made Indian women a crusader against environmental pollution.

It is important to recall the names of Indian women who have fought legal battles in the court of law for environmental protection as Mrs. Sarla Tripathi of Indore, Kinkari Devi of Sirmour District, Krishna Devi of Rajasthan etc.

Six Women Environmentalist of India and their contributions towards Environmental Protection: Here we cite examples of six women who have contributed significantly towards environmental protection.

Purnima Devi Barman: Purnima Devi Barman from Assam has won the prestigious Whitley Award 2017, also known as the Green Oscars, for her efforts in conserving greater adjutant storks. Barman is associated with Aranyak NGO that works for wildlife conservation. She has been working with Dadara, Pachariya and Hingimari villagers of Kamrup District to save the greater Adjutant Stork, locally known as Haargila in Assam.

Medha Patkar: A popular environmentalist, she is known for her active role in the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) - a powerful mass movement against the construction of a large dam on the Narmada River. The proposed Sardar Sarovar Dam is a multicrore project and would have displaced more than 320,000 people. It was alleged that foreign funds were being used to hamper rehabilitation. Medha Patkar was also concerned that the people living there had no idea about the project. She formed the NBA in 1989

and has been involved since then. As a peaceful means to protest, she took up fasting several times. NBA has subsequently created high level awareness.

Gauri Devi: Mother of Chipko Movement: The powerful Chipko movement which was started in 1974 is well known. Everyone knows the leader Sunderlal Bahuguna, but no one remembers the female leader Gauri Devi. She was the head of Mahila Mangal Dal at the Reni Village. She contributed equally in saving the trees. The day when lumbermen came to cut the trees, along with 27 other women she tried to convince them. But when she failed, all the women hugged the trees overnight till the lumbermen had to surrender and leave the place. This news spread in the nearby villages of Uttarakhand and several other women came forward for the same act.

Sunita Narian: Sunita Narain is an Indian environmentalist and political activist as well as a major proponent of the Green concept of sustainable development. She is the Director General of Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and editor of the fortnightly Magazine, Down to Earth. She began her work in the 1980s along with Anil Agarwal, another prominent environmentalist and co-edited State of India's Environment report. After the loss of tigers in Sariska, Sunita chaired the Tiger Task Force for conservation in 2005. She is a member of the Prime Minister's Council for Climate change and National Ganga River Basin Authority (which employ practices to clean the river). In 2005, she was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian Government. She has also received the World Water Prize for work on rainwater harvesting and for its policy influence in building paradigms for community based water management. Her research interests are global democracy (emphasizing on climate change) and local democracy (forest resource management and water related issues).

Vandana Shiva: She is a Delhi based environmentalist and ecofeminist. A Gandhi follower, she is well known for her efforts to protect forests, organize women's networks and conserve local biodiversity. A physicist and philosopher of science, she has authored books such as Monocultures of

the mind, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, *Biopiracy and Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*. In 2003, she was identified as an environmental 'Hero' by the Time Magazine. She has founded and advised various organizations. Vandana Shiva is the director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy in Dehradun. She was awarded the 1993 Right Livelihood Award. Vandana Shiva was one of the founders of Navdanya. Navdanya, a national movement to protest the diversity of living resources, was created in 1991. Since its 20 years of existence, more than 2000 varieties of rice have been conserved and 34 seed banks established in 13 states nationwide.

Maneka Gandhi: Maneka Gandhi is a self-described environmentalist and animal rights leader in India. In 1994, she founded People for Animals, the largest organization for animal's welfare in India. She was appointed chairwomen of the Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA) in 1995. She believed in ahimsa and the fact that India was in need of a movement to stop the cruel treatment meted out to animals. She anchored a TV program "Heads and Tails" and authored a book under the same title. She now chairs the Jury of International Energy Globe Foundation which annually awards the best environmental innovations of the year. For her revolutionary work among animals, she went on to receive some of the highest awards in the world.

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Role of Women in Disaster Management

Dr. (Maj) Leena Saikia

A disaster is an event which results in widespread human loss of livelihood, property causing suffering and loss in a definite area. Disaster may be natural which is caused by a natural hazard or may be man-made caused by a human induced hazard. A natural Disaster is an event that is caused by a natural hazard and leads to human, material, economic and environmental losses, which exceed the ability of those affected to cope. Man-made disaster is a serious disruption of normal life triggered by a human induced hazard causing human, material, economic and environmental losses. Some examples of natural disasters are the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 2001 earthquake in Gujarat (Bhuj), Cyclone in Odisha in 1999, 2008 earthquake in China, 2007 Cyclone in Myanmar, annual floods in Assam etc. Some examples of man-made disasters are the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy, the 1997 **Uphaar** Cinema Fire in Delhi, Rajdhani Express train derailment in 2002, **Kumbakonam** School Fire Tragedy in 2003, Jaipur serial blasts in 2008 etc. Disaster management includes prevention, preparedness, mitigation, reconstruction, rehabilitation etc. which are interconnected as one supplements the other. This include activities before or pre-disaster, during and post-disaster i.e. after the

occurrence of a disaster. Disaster management as an activity involves measures to—

- Reduce the risks associated with disasters through timely measures, short-term and long-term policies.
- Provide required assistance to communities during and after the disaster and
- Ensure rapid sustained recovery and rehabilitation after the occurrence of disaster.

Actually, there are different phases in Disaster management such as response and relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction, mitigation, preparedness. Response and relief are immediate measures taken up in anticipation of during and immediately after a disaster to ensure that the effects are minimized. Rehabilitation and reconstruction are the operations and decisions taken after a disaster with a view to restore an affected community to its former living conditions. Mitigation is often used to refer to actions against potential disasters. Mitigation measures are both physical and structural, such as flood defenses or strengthening buildings as well as non-structural, such as training in disaster management, regulating land use and public education, among others. Prevention aims at impeding the occurrence of a disaster event, while mitigation attempts to prevent same and reduce the effects of certain disaster. Preparedness comprises measures, which equip governments at various levels organization communities and individuals to handle and respond effectively to disaster situations and cope with them effectively.

Disaster management is becoming multidisciplinary covering wider aspects such as forecasting warning, search and rescue, evacuation, relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation, education, training and awareness. In addition to the government, it is diversified with the NGO's, community based organizations, educational institutions, media and community which play vital role in it.

Women are the first and foremost victims of disaster. Their nutritional status mobility, access to information is less as compared to men, especially in poorer sections of society. In the event of death and physical disability of men arising out of the disasters, women shoulder the responsibilities. Women also display tremendous courage, resilience and necessary skills in the time of crisis. It is women, who come forward to provide care to the affected family members, and arrange for food, water and fuel for the families affected by disaster (IGNOU, 2005).

In different case studies from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and India it has been found that women are the greatest victims of disaster in the developing countries (IGNOU, 2005). The specific needs and situation of women and children need to be addressed. These include privacy, separate toilet and other sanitary facilities in temporary camps, presence of female relief workers etc. Emergency situations make them extremely vulnerable as they are confined to their homes and the warning signals do not reach them in time. They became more vulnerable for the inability to understand the language of the warning system. Women headed households are particularly vulnerable. Single women with no adult man in their families are often deprived of relief, food and other items (Fernando and Fernando, 1996)

In dry zone of Sri Lanka, people face scarcity of food and water during the long dry periods. Women, as regular manager of the food and water take care of the needs of the family, resort to various mechanisms to survive the difficult conditions. As drought advances, the number of meals taken per day is reduced, in order to preserve the available food grains. Through the system of "**Rice Settu**", 5-10 families get together to contribute with a given quantity of rice to a common pot every week/month. The collection is accessed by each family on a rotating basis organized by women in the drought affected villages in a common practice to avoid the risk of starvation of the family. In **Andarawewa**, many women went to collect money to purchase large plastic

barrels to collect and preserve water to meet their family's water requirements during the long dry periods. In flooded area (in Bangladesh), women take considerable risk to procure drinking water from great distances walking through chest-high water or swimming to collect fresh and clean water. Women use various techniques to take water out of the tube wells so as not to mix it with flood water, and to purify the water, in the absence of fuel wood (Nasreen, 2000). In procuring food for the family during flood emergencies, women manage the risk of starvation through various means; by gathering edible wild plants and rotten or discarded vegetables. The study also observes that the social networks of women provide emergency survival support during floods. In Jhang, Punjab, Pakistan, in the after month of floods when affected people return to their destroyed houses, male members usually start rehabilitation work on agricultural land and in caring for livestock. Women share responsibilities with them in the handling of animals and in the rebuilding of houses, which involves preparing mud and doing construction work (Hameed, 2001).

A research conducted in the earthquake hit Gujarat in 2001 records the role of women played in post quake reconstruction. Women were found to be engaged in rubble clearing, in masonry for reconstruction as well as in community work. They were taking part in community meetings about the quake, and were meeting other villages to address the drought issues, which were also affecting the earthquake hit areas in Gujarat. Women were seen taking extra efforts to bring the situation back to normal, to ensure a sense of security for the families of the community (Enarson, 2001).

Banaskantha, situated in the north of Gujarat is a drought prone and arid area where the unpredictability of rainfall results in long drought spells. Lack of water is the main problem threatening the livelihoods of the people in this area. The community falls back on livestock as a resource when rain fails and crop cultivation is affected. In the long

drought spells when families are forced to migrate in search of food and water, they also take their animals with them. The responsibility for ensuring fodder for livestock lies mainly with women. They formed themselves into a cooperative to ensure fodder security for animals during the dry spells, with support from the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and distributing fodder to ensure fodder security for all the families with livestock. All these were managed by the women in the village. As a result of this initiative, they were not dependent on relief during the drought periods; increase their capacity to support their own livelihoods (Bhatt, 1997).

Another problem arises when drinking water wells go saline near irrigation works. Women are the most reliable source for identification of water resources. They should be consulted when investigation for development of water resources are undertaken in a community. Their knowledge of water resources and water quantity during wet and dry seasons, and their assessment of smell, taste, colour and convenience, can assist in the final choice of sites. They may also be aware of alternative sources.

"Human beings are at the centre of sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Women have often played leadership roles or taken the lead in promoting an environmental ethic, reducing resource use and reusing and recycling resources to minimize waste and excessive consumption" (Beijing Platform for Action, para 246 & 250).

Women generally have had less opportunity to play any role in disaster management. There are great deals of obstacles preventing women from becoming positive role players but there is a lot of benefit that could be procured through greater involvement of women in disaster management. Some unique characteristics of our communities make it imperative to lay special importance on participation of women in formulating plans for disaster preparedness. The factors that affect women's environmental

management are their decision making power, their access to appropriate training and technologies, the development options. Actually women are sound managers of nature and in constant contact with the environment. There is a need to enable women to participate in the decision making as they are part and parcel of the community. To incorporate all information in the formulation of any strategy, equal importance is to be given to both for successful implementation; formulation of local plans has to lay special emphasis on women to make significant contribution towards it. In most cases women are involved in 'secondary' support operations such as food preparation and distribution, information dissemination, child care, health and psychological support; shelter etc. and not in the too well publicized and media attracting operations, such as search and rescue. Women are seen as the vulnerable group, less likely to participate in planning, in preparation and unable to cope in the wake of disaster. The traditional view of women as victims leaves men to make decisions about their rules and needs which results in overlooking the vital work and unique perspective that a woman can bring to disaster management. There is a need for active participation of women in disaster management and in coping with its ensuring physical and mental stress.

Communication and education are two most important requirements for any disaster management and women can play an important role in these situations. Once the disaster strikes, communication becomes an essential support system for relief as well as Search and Rescue Operations. An effective communication system facilitates various teams get to know what kind of assistance is required and in which areas. Special medical help or evacuation teams may be asked in critical situations, which will eliminate the need for physical communication of information. Though they play a key role in different activities of disaster management, their capacities need to be strengthened. They have always contributed significantly primary environmental care; they bring their extensive knowledge, skills and perspective of

the environment. Those are the both life-supporting activities including water and fuel collection and household chores, and to productive facilities, such as agriculture and small scale industries.

So, one has to appreciate the concerns of vulnerable groups and especially the policy makers and administrators need to accommodate these. Also efforts are required to provide necessary resources, information, skill, to enable them make a positive change in risk reduction. Their specific needs need to be reflected in all the stages of disaster management. Enhanced leadership training can improve women's awareness in every step. As India is an extremely disaster-prone country, so all including women should play important role in creating awareness in communities, and reaching vital information to them. Women can also generate an awareness about local disaster vulnerability, how to cope with them, and work together as a team to reduce the impact of disaster on the community as a whole, to take part in disaster management activities.

In conclusion it can be said that women are playing important role in disaster management and no doubt there are scope for them if they have got chance in participating in each step of the activities related to disaster management from grass root level to administrative level such as decision making.

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Concept of Women Empowerment in the Field of Library and Information Technology

Khanjana Deka

Introduction

The present study focuses on the role of library and information technology in empowering the women in the library sector which is the main part of any academic institution. As the education is the chief tool of women empowerment we have tried to analyse how the women engaged in library either as a librarian or an assistant worker are seen evolving their parts in the digital era while the libraries are now being transformed into digital libraries etc. Since the libraries are the knowledge hubs for one and all, women libraries also can gather either knowledge from the available books as well as they can utilize their skill by the help of information technology. In this paper an attempt is made to observe how the women librarians may emancipate as "new women" in digital era.

It is seen that in the study of gender, issues of women empowerment always stifle the minds because men and women do not enjoy the same status in society. The job of a women librarian, hence, though attractive yet the women face critical situation sometimes, specially during pregnancy, childbirth, child care leave etc. If a women librarian is skilled

to handle her job by the help of internet from her home then it would make them feel good in managing their work in a hassle free way. Thus it is important for women librarians to learn digitization in their specific domain and role of information technology will empower them in a major way.

Rapid advances in information processing, storage and communication technologies have revolutionized the role of worldwide libraries in disseminating information services to their users. As a result, libraries are facing new challenges, new competition, new demands, new expectations and a variety of information services from user tailored to their wants and needs. On the threshold of a new millennium, librarians are getting involved in new activities in the computerization of libraries, combining in a balanced manner the execution of traditional activities with those which guarantee transition to the new model of an electronic library.

The dawn of new millennium, also started the introduction of other concepts in the library and information field's activities which, although they did exist, yet these were not part of the vocabulary in the conventional librarians. For example, information management, strategic planning, management by objectives, marketing, mission, vision and others are new concepts. When facing a new wave it becomes essential to prepare women librarian to settle in new conditions imposed by globalization. Various courses were started on strategic planning of information services, marketing, accounting, new technologies and guidelines as information policies were initiated across various universities in India. This new culture was slowly incorporated into library's problems and drawing up legal documents, which is being revised and outlines strategies needed to carry out the plan in new conditions.

Librarianship as a Profession for Women

Now that women are entering as competitors in almost every field of labor formerly looked upon as belonging exclusively to the sterner sex, it may not be uninteresting to

hear a little about library work as a profession for women. In the first place, let us look for a moment at the mere routine work which goes on in every free library, and which is done for the most part by the assistants, I refer to the labeling, repairing and issuing of books. The first two will in all probability be done more quickly and neatly by a girl than a boy; and as regards the issuing of books, there is an advantage in having at least one female assistant, as many of the lady borrowers prefer to be attended to by one of their own sex. In those libraries which have separate reading-rooms for ladies, it is also essential that a female assistant should look after the room and attend to the renewal of the papers and periodicals placed there.

But to proceed to the real work of a librarian, that which is done for the most part behind the scenes, such as choosing new books, classifying and cataloguing them, attending to correspondence, and the numerous other duties which are comprised in a librarian's work. Here, too, a woman will be as much at home as a man, and will make the institution under her charge a success.

At the turn of new millennium libraries started getting involved in new activities of the libraries, where computerization balanced with the more traditional activities of librarianship has created a new model of library. Speedy development in information processing, storage and communication technologies have changed the role of libraries worldwide in disseminating information and services to the user. However, libraries are now facing new challenges, new competitions, new demands and new expectations. The libraries of today are gradually converting to a hybrid version - containing both services of traditional and electronic form. The libraries of tomorrow are going to be information chapter of a new type; one that is based on information technology for each and every aspect of library activities. To cope with this new world of information technology, women librarians tomorrow will also have to be equally trend to have the status which male librarian maintain. Thus they will compete and

raise their level to their male counterparts and by doing this they will be getting empowerment.

Women LIS professionals have good computer skills and work in the digital library area extensively. They provide various services including document delivery service, browsing online journals database, etc. they guide students on digital systems maintained in the library. They are as competent as men, if not more so, in performing these tasks. These tasks can be seen by looking at women professionals who have organized National Seminars and Conferences, inviting participating librarians across the country. As a matter of fact, the library profession is an ideal job for women who lack teaching. It is a noble profession where women can provide services to the library clients and update the knowledge of the library users.

As librarianship has evolved it has become much more specialized, labor intensive, intellectually demanding, technologically advanced to render service to society. Unfortunately, those who are working within librarianship clearly understand the high levels of education, intellect, leadership, thoughtfulness, and the many other qualities required of them to perform their job satisfactorily but the majority of the public is still unaware of their high-level skills and importance to society. Likewise, librarians are still vastly underpaid for the jobs they perform. Scholars and researchers believe that the reasons for these injustices lie in the very fact that in the women dominated profession. Librarianship should be promoted as a perfect carrier for the true women, because it would allow her to use her natural qualities of purity, submissiveness, domesticity and nurturing nature which would accommodate her to serve well in her specific domain Librarianship as profession in India was not regular till the early part of twentieth century, the first women credited with occupying and key-post in India was Ms. Anandibai Prabhudesai who was the superintendent at the children's library in Baroda in 1930s.

In India, Women were allowed in the professional

librarianship mainly during the first half of 20th century. In 1942, the first qualified female librarian took a job at the Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Women choose to take up librarianship as a career because

1. Women who wanted employment but were not particularly prepared to teach, considered librarianship a good alternative, because the environment would be academic whereas the work will not have the requirement of teaching on regular basis.
2. Security of the women in the workplace is a major factor in some areas of our country. Indian society is quite sensitive about this matter. A library as a workplace can ensure security and safety for women.
3. Librarianship does not demand travel in service which appealed to the fairer sex.
4. In addition to rendering services to readers, women could acquire knowledge by reading or searching for books for themselves in a library.
5. The quality expected in an Indian woman is suited to the activities in a library.

Hierarchical Position and status of women LIS Professional in India

The Indian Library system can be divided into five areas of work.

1. National Library System
2. Academic Library System
3. Special Library System
4. Public Library System
5. Informatics

The status of women in Indian libraries under the broad concept that librarianship is a woman oriented vocation. The

dictionary of the Indian situation has been analyzed from the modern management point of view. Development within the professional field to prepare women for the responsibility of senior position of library of tomorrow. The status of women has to be measured by the actual position occupied by women in the society, family place of work and within the economic power structure. Since status is synonymous to power, and privileges, the measurement of actual status of women in any society will obviously mean the power they enjoy, followed by prestige and privileges.

In the Indian context the power enjoyed by a woman till very recently was basically depended on the hierarchical position within the family and motherhood of male children. The economic status of an Indian woman was depended on the family occupation and position enjoyed by the father, husband and son.

The social stereo type is clearly reflected in the division of professions which need specific training in higher education. Academia, scientific profession, research, law, etc. are male oriented and male dominated professions whereas teaching, social work and later librarianship have been considered as service professions which are suitable for women. In both the developed and developing countries, it has always been mentioned that women by nature can support the service professions better.

Women now work in various capacities and positions within these systems of librarianship. There is a major difference between the types of libraries that absorb the maximum number of women within these systems. Women are in demand in girls' schools and women's colleges which are in significant numbers in India. But within the hierarchy of the library system the prevalence of women in these types of libraries does not make them eligible to occupy the top positions in major libraries. In the government library sector the maximum numbers of women are seen in a cadre which is above the paraprofessionals but below the decision making level. Since most women especially those who are married

cannot attend training programs organized outside the city of work, the women lag behind their colleagues. Therefore, when promotions are considered by seniority cum fitness, then the assessment reports do not reflect any additional qualification or achievement.

Empowerment of Women

Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process, which enables women to realize their full potential and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted, nor can it be given away as alms. Power has to be acquired and once acquired it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved, in short, empowerment is a process of challenging exercised, sustained and preserved in short, empowerment is a process and capacity of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power and empowerment is attained through awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation in decision-making process, control and transformative-action.

Women empowerment in India cannot be compared with that in other countries. Women were highly respected in the Vedic ages. The focus on women's education was never absent. The word 'sahadharmini' was known from the Vedic days. Sahadharmini means - equal partner. It is thus very clear that women in ancient days enjoyed respect, education and reverence.

In India women are more than man, most of this woman are living in bad condition, they are suffering various problems since independence; the Government has implemented several empowerment programs to develop or empower the women. But they have not made any remarkable improvement in their living conditions. It is mainly attributed to the non-availability of education and information on the emerging technologies.

Women's Empowerment as a concept, introduced at the International women's conference, in 1985 at Nairobi, defines

that - redistribution of social power and control of resources in favor of Women Empowerment can be achieved only by thrusting a quantitative and qualitative change, particularly in the field of education, health and employment. Global empowerment of women is a new concept. Since the second half of twentieth century, the issue of women's empowerment has gained importance among scholars of universities, and in national and international platforms. But the concept was not deeply ingrained into the governments' policies and programs until the declaration of the 'Women's Decade' in 1975. Through the Indian government endowed franchise to all its citizens irrespective of caste, creed, sex and color immediately after Independence, it was confined mainly in papers while the majority of women were essentially powerless until the last decade of previous century. Considering their low socio-economic position, scholars, bureaucrats, governments have begun to pay considerable attention in empowering women. Because of Indian's feudal society, the pace of advancement of women was slow and women did not come out to take part in important activities.

An empowered woman would be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive self-esteem, able to face any difficult situation and to participate in developmental activities and in the process of decision-making. Empowerment literally means, becoming powerful. Empowerment can refer to user participation in services and to the collective movement generally in which groups take action on their own behalf either in cooperation with or independently. All the National and International conventions on women insist on Networking and group cohesion as important strategies for women's empowerment.

To develop India as a super power, it is important to see women as equally competent like men. It should be a priority to give her a chance to develop herself. To achieve it we should focus mainly on the education of girls. Moreover, they also get equal salary with the men for equal work. To empower the women our goals should be to remove child marriage and the dowry system from the whole nation. The

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Indian government is also working to make India more suitable for women so they can also get equal opportunities and can grow themselves. In this regard, the supreme court of India also made it mandatory to provide admission to the National defence academy for women. The program of Action (POA 1992) of the National Policy on Education (NPE 1986) states that women become empowered through collective reflection and decision-making. It has been clear for decades that women in many parts of the world make key contributes in areas of development such as agriculture, health, education and water resources management. Hence improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of sustainable development.

Skills required for women librarians in the digital era

In the recent past, knowledge and its technological applications have grown at an every increasing speed worldwide, services, manufacturing, etc. This is most apparent in electronics, communications, information and services. The advancement of the digital technology helps effective participation of women in the decision-making and implementation process related to science and technology including planning and setting priorities for research and development and the choice, acquisition, adoption, innovation and application of science and technology for the development. The advancement in information and communication technology (ICTs) has been among the most exciting and far-reaching developments in science and technology in the late twentieth century, and women librarians should learn all these to empower themselves. Without these digital skills they would be unable to show their progression in the professional field.

The information revolution offers both opportunities and challenges to women. Today information society is passing through various new challenges and opportunities such as; information professional skills, information management skills and up to date subject knowledge as mentioned in the next page.

1. Make the appropriate use of information in a suitable situation.
2. Analyze the users' need from time to time.
3. Watch on the information flow within the enterprise.

In the present information age, appropriate techniques for sorting, manipulating, disseminating and desired information are taken for the right user at the right time in the right form. Computer and internet are changing our society from an information society to a global society.

Digital Library and women Librarian in the digital age

The concept of digital libraries has appeared 'libraries without wall' (Dabas, 2008). A definition of digital libraries is from Digital Library Federation (1999). 'Digital libraries are organization that provide resources, including the specialized staff to select, structure, offer intellectual access to interpret, distribute preserve the integrity of an ensure works so that they are readily and economically available for a use by a defined community or set of communities.'

According to NSF/ARPA/NASA digital libraries initiative, (FY 1994) states, "information sources accessed via the internet are ingredients of a digital library. Today, the network connects some information sources that are a mixture of publicly available (with or without change) information and private information shared by collaborators. They include reference volumes, books, journals, newspapers, national phone directories, sound and voice recordings, images, video clips, scientific data (raw data streams from instruments and processed information), and private information services such as stock market report and private newsletters. These information sources, when connected electronically through a network, represent important components of an emerging universally accessible, digital library."

With technological advancements and the changing learning environment, librarians are providing borderless information services. According to Obadare (n.d), digital

information is changing the role of librarians radically: No longer are they to wait for students to ask for assistance in finding information in a place called a library. Their new role makes it imperative for them to provide services and instructions regardless of location, time or format. Consequently, the digital age has changed librarians from the custodian of books to thoroughbred information experts who now provide services to users in diverse locations. This transformation is precipitated by changes in the way clients are accessing, retrieving and using information. As a result, librarians are now providing as well as promoting access, guidance, and training to both physical and electronic materials housed outside and in an online environment. They ensure that there is an active and efficient flow of information from the generators to the users of information in the digital environment.

Women librarians' Association of Assam (WLAA)

Women Librarians' Association of Assam (WLAA) was formed on 23rd November, 2019 at UGC-HRD center Gauhati University and first general meeting was held on 28th December, 2019 at National Law University and Judicial Academy (NLUJA). Dr. Jyotika Devi, (Librarian, AEC) and Dr. Kangkana Baishya (Librarian NLUJA) were selected as first President and Secretary respectively.

Aims and Objectives of WLAA

- Education Including Reading Habit,
- Women and children welfare,
- Development of Art and Culture.

Activities and programs for the year 2020 of WLAA

The members of the association discuss about various activities to be perform and also various programs to be conducted for the year 2020. The association took the responsibility to conduct children literary program, 2020, and make the students aware reading habit by organizing various

competition for children in the field of storytelling, story writing, art and music. The members of the association also recommended in conducting such programs for the society so that the concept of the librarians would be introduced to the society and for this the members discussed to work together and work for the society. The members of the WLAA recommended visiting orphanage home, Sishu Sadan located in Sundarbari, Jalukbari to organize a literary program in order to inculcate reading habits among the children of orphanage.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show that information technology has created women empowerment because women empowerment refers to gender equality. It especially favors women rights. Women empowerment all refer to the empowerment of women to take all decisions from their choice. So that she can take all of the decisions for her social and economic development. Empowerment of women will surely encourage all of the women to stand for their education and the life of their own choice. The women empowerment mission encourages women to be self-reliant. So that she can have positive self-esteem and generate potential in herself to compete with the world and to make the position of her choice. This is only possible if equal opportunities in society will also be available for women. Empowering women would mean encouraging them for their socio-economic development.

In the 21st century, everyone is going through digital transformation journey and smart solution. Library professional must adopt the change and improve new skill and knowledge about new technologies that will be needed to provide smart library information services in the digital environment. They have great opportunities and bright career prospects as long as they adopt and innovate their professional and technological competencies. The professional library anticipates and embrace change constructively, creatively and intelligently will be ones, who

are most likely to, develop and succeed in the 21st century.

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**Political Participation of Women in Legislative
Assembly Elections (1985–2021): A Case Study
of 78 No. Gohpur Legislative Assembly
Constituency of Assam**

Dr. Joyjit Hazarika

Introduction

In order to understand the dynamics of state politics, it is vital to grasp the process of political participation in general. It is only with the people's engagement in politics that a democratic political system can stand. The level of political participation continuously replicates the strength and prosperity of a democratic political structure. It reflects the consensus of people regarding power and authority of power holders at a particular time when the level of people's participation in the political process is high. Subsequently, the Constitution of India encompasses several methods and procedures to secure people's political participation. Under Part III, from Article 12 to 35 and Art 325 to 326 of the Constitution of India ensures the peoples' participation without any discrimination. In order to understand the dynamics of politics, it is important to understand women's political participation in the democratic process. The effectiveness of a democratic political system can be measured by the participation of men and women in politics and their ability to influence it. Although all efforts are made, the political role of Indian women today is not considered to be

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satisfactory. A large section of women still lacks the right to political participation for a variety of reasons. Electoral participation is the key to a democratic society, which ensures fairness and equality for men and women.

As a policy term, 'political participation' includes a wide range of activities from exercising the right to vote to contesting elections, attending public events to encouraging voters, etc. In principle, the Indian constitution guarantees equality to both men and women, but when we take into account the views from the women's perspective, we still find gender differences. Until today, women have not been taken seriously by patriarchal society in the political sphere in India. Presently, in Assam Legislative Assembly out of 126 Legislative Assembly Constituencies only six female members are in the Legislative Assembly. By analyzing the gender disparity in the rate of political participation of women in Gohpur LAC in the Legislative Assembly elections, this paper attempts to study the nature of women's political participation.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the participation of women in Gohpur Legislative Assembly Constituency (78) in the elections of Assam Legislative Assembly in comparison to the participation of male. This paper highlights the Assam legislative election of 1985, which coincided with the Assam Accord. An analysis of women's role in politics after Assam Accord is being attempted here from 1985 to 2022 in Gohpur Legislative Assembly to observe male female ratio that highlight the gender issues in democracy. The use of descriptive methods based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from secondary sources imply the comparative analysis in this regard. Information and data are collected from secondary sources like research articles, journals, books, newspapers, election commission reports, etc.

Gohpur Legislative Assembly Constituency: A Profile

Gohpur has an enormous history, which is significance for the people of Assam. The town is well known for being

Table-1
Voters' Patterns of Gohpur Legislative Assembly Constituency

Constituency No. Name	Number of Polling Stations		General Electors		Overseas Electors		Service Electors		Grand Total (Col. 7+11+14)					
	Men	Women	Third Gender	Total	Men	Women	Third Gender	Total						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
73	Tezpur	227	94645	97662	3	192310	1	0	0	1	748	35	783	193094
74	Rangapara	171405	197	84990	85668	2	170660	0	0	0	0	713	32	745
75	Sootea	194731	97814	95783	6	193603	0	0	0	0	1086	42	1128	
Sonitpur														
District Total	1118	480119	475054	19	955192	1	0	0	0	1	3555	138	3693	958886
76	Biswanath	168351	198	84182	83998	1	168181	0	0	0	0	159	11	170
77	Bihali	154	64290	62816	0	127106	0	0	0	0	136	5	141	127247
78	Gohpur	229	1033451	01158	0	204503	0	0	0	0	369	14	383	204886
Biswanath														
District Total	581	251817	247972	1	499790	0	0	0	0	0	664	30	694	500484

Source: Assam Election Commission Report 2022, Assam.

the homeland of renowned freedom fighter Kanaklata Barua, who was shot during the Quit India Movement in Assam.¹ The reason behind choosing the area as a Gohpur Sub-Division is that it is one of the places of Assam, which is comprised of a diverse population. The people living within the area of Gohpur Sub-Division are Bodo, Nepali, Missing, Deuri, Tea garden labourer and other indigenous people. On the south 28 revenue, villages are in the Tribal Block inhabited by the people of Missing Community. It is worth mentioning that Chaiduar Block is covered by eight tea-estates and Pub-Chaiduar Block by two tea estates. Geographically Gohpur is situated in such a position where in the east, Lakhimpur District is situated; in the west, Biswanath district headquarter is located; in the north Arunachal Pradesh and in the south, the river Brahmaputra is there.² There are total 407458 Bighas, 2 kathas, 12½ lesas areas comes under the Gohpur LAC.³ There are all total 204886 voters in Gohpur LAC as per the Assam Election Commission report 2022.⁴ There are 103345 male and women 101158 voters.⁵

Political Participation of Women in the Gohpur Assembly constituency:

Gohpur Legislative Assembly Constituency is a well-known constituency of the North Bank of Assam. It is located in Biswanath district of Assam. After independence, from the very first Assam Legislative Assembly Election of 1951, Gohpur constituency carries its own importance. From 1985 to 2022 total 8 Legislative Assembly Elections have been held in Assam. Election always plays a vital role in politics. People can directly be a part of the power struggle by taking part in elections. Thus, total strength of electors, both men and women, has a major role in that case.

Electors denote those people who are eligible to vote. The following table (Table-2) shows the electoral strength of both male and female from 1951 to 2016 in the Assam Legislative Assembly elections of Gohpur constituency. While we analyze the rate of percentage of women and men voters

who showed their interest in participating the assembly election, rate of women voters percentage has been found increasing from 46.65 of 1985 assembly election to 50.02 percent in 2021 assembly election. It appears that gender sensitization concerning political system has improved in the Gohpur constituency in the course of time. The percentage of male voters decreased by 3.37 percent. In 1985, the difference between the male and female voters was 6.7 percent. However, the new trend of equal participation of women with male voters in the election is found from the year 2006 assembly election onwards where only 1.32 percent of gender differences among the voters was found.

Table-2
Total Electors and Voters Profile of
Gohpur Assembly Constituency (1985-2022)

S. No.	Year	Male Electors	Female Electors	Male Voters	Female Voters	Total Voters	Male Voters (%)	Female Voters (%)
1	1985	50658	46792	41320	36135	77455	53.35	46.65
2	1991	60788	55336	46267	41772	88039	52.55	47.45
3	1996	65508	59789	51435	45121	96556	53.27	46.73
4	2001	70420	66710	58464	53546	112010	52.20	47.80
5	2006	82843	81343	65959	64240	130199	50.66	49.34
6	2011	82801	77386	66026	63469	129495	50.99	49.01
7	2016	89225	82059	73955	72066	146021	50.65	49.35
8	2021	103802	100804	81915	81982	163897	49.98	50.02

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

Although the number of women participation in the assembly election is found as increasing, but the women number contesting in the elections has not been growing (Table-3). In 1985, one women candidate contested in the assembly election, but she was not able to win the election. She lost her position by margin of 28127 votes. The same women again contested in 1991 assembly election, but again she failed to win the election. Significantly, the margin has been decreased with the male winning candidate. This is an affirmative indicator of women's political participation. However, in the Gohpur constituency no women candidate

contested in the assembly election from 1996 to 2006 elections. Finally, in 2011, Monika Bora succeeded to win the election. She is the only women MLA from Gohpur constituency till now. However, in 2016 Assam Legislative Assembly election, a male candidate defeated her by the margin vote of 28935. In the last Assembly election of 2021, no woman was found in contest in the election from the Gohpur constituency.

Table-3
Name of the Women Candidates of
the Gohpur Assembly Constituency (1985-2022)

S.No	Year	Name	Voted	Margin	Party
1	1985	Nirmalata Mahanta	28383	28127	Independent
2	1991	Nirmalata Mahanta	16891	16757	Independent
3	1996	Nil	-----	-----	-----
4	2001	Nil	-----	-----	-----
5	2006	Nil	-----	-----	-----
6	2011	Monika Bora (Winner)	60441	36224	INC
7	2016	Monika Bora	56489	28935	INC
8	2021	Nil	-----	-----	-----

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

While talking about the political parties and their initiative in promoting women in the politics, it is found that only Congress party had projected women candidates in the Gohpur legislative Assembly election in last 36 years till today (Table-3). Only two women contested in the election in four times from 1985 onwards. In 1985 and 1991 elections, the same woman candidate contested as an independent candidate. No party projected women candidates on behalf of the party. Only in 2011 and 2016 elections, Indian National Congress party projected women candidate and won the 2011 election (Table-4). Although, it is evocative to specify that Monika Bora the candidate, is wife of Ripun Bora, Ex-MLA of Gohpur constituency, she got the seat only because her husband was under judicial trial that time and was not in the position to contest in the election. Still it shows the strength of a woman who replaced her husband in 2011.

Table-4
Name of the winner of the Gohpur Assembly
Constituency (1985-2022)

S. No.	Year	Name	Male/ Female	Party	Total Vote	Margin
1	1985	Ganesh Kutum	Male	INDEPENDENT	11622	28127
2	1991	Kosheswar Barua	Male	INC	16891	5108
3	1996	Ganesh Kutum	Male	AGP	33664	2533
4	2001	Ripun Bora	Male	INC	58850	9986
5	2006	Ripun Bora	Male	INC	69718	38163
6	2011	Monika Bora	Female	INC	60441	36224
7	2016	Utpal Borah	Male	BJP	85424	28935
8	2021	Utpal Borah	Male	BJP	93224	29294

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

Although casting of vote is an imperative pointer but in the patriarchal structured society, actual problem is how much a woman in the forefront to lead or represent a constituency when the whole structure of party politics is dominated by male authority. The major fact of the Gohpur legislative constituency is that number of contestant women candidates is very low than the male counterpart (Table-5). In 1985, only one woman candidate contested in the election, although complete data not available in the election commission report. However, in 1991 out of total 16 candidates only one woman contested in the election. However, in both the elections women candidates did not win the election. After that in 1996 out of ten contestants, not a single women candidate was there. The same thing happened in the 2001, where out of six candidates all were male. In 2006, out of eight candidates no women candidate was there. However, in 2011 election out of seven candidates, one woman candidate was there and she won in the election. Again, in 2016, one woman candidate contested in the election out of total five candidates, but not able to win the election. In the recent election, which was held in 2021, out of four candidates not a single woman candidate was there. Table 1.5 exposes the low political participation of women of Gohpur legislative assembly constituency in terms of contesting in a Legislative Assembly election and

accomplished with representation. By contesting or being elected in an election a person can directly be part of the decision-making system of a state.⁶

Table-5
Number of Male and Female candidates of Gohpur
Assembly Constituency (1985-2022)

S.No.	Year	Total No.	Male	Female
1	1985	Data not available	Data not available	1
2	1991	16	15	1
3	1996	10	10	0
4	2001	6	6	0
5	2006	8	8	0
6	2011	7	6	1
7	2016	5	4	1
8	2021	4	4	0

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

Conclusion

The essential perception of a democracy is women's political engagement. In order to develop a society, both men and women must be given equal opportunities, particularly in political spheres. It is important that, in a patriarchal society, women should be encouraged to leave the four walls of their homes to participate in the democratic system, not just by voting but also by contesting in election. Women are engaging in the political process in the Gohpur Constituency; however their representation in the constituency is quite low. Even political parties are not interested in promoting women as candidates in election. In comparison to men, the percentage of female voters is seen very low. The data specify that the government should take greater steps to encourage more women to enter politics. Even political parties should change their mindsets and promote more women in party offices as office bearers, as well as project women as candidates in legislative assembly elections.

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Analysis of Root Causes and Factors of Witch Hunting in Assam: Practices and Challenges

Dr. Sangita Bharati

Introduction

Witch hunting is a phenomenon seen among indigenous communities in Assam. To understand witch hunting one has to deal with is that of existence of witches. Issues related with witch hunting inspired the researcher to interact with the community members who brought knowledge that there is a strong popular belief among people about witches and their existence. They believe that practicing witch-craft empowers women with evil powers to harm people. The phenomenon of witch-hunting is a form of violence, violence mainly against women. Witch-hunting or witchcraft victimization is largely perpetrated on women by immediate families, relatives and community members, and therefore it may be seen as an act of domestic violence. However, analysis of the nature of witch-hunting reveals that it is not just a result of gendered familial ideologies but of larger gendered and superstitious community structures which needs to be understood within the context of rural cultural norms, specially, beliefs in the supernatural powers available to women.

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Witch-craft and Gender

'Witchcraft', might better be replaced by the phrase 'the causing of harm through the use of supernatural powers'. Witch hunting is the practice of killing someone based on superstitions. The killing is led by the belief that a particular person is the reason or cause of misfortunes and illness of others (Miguel: 2005). It is an age-old phenomenon. This practice prevails in many countries of the globe including North America, Sub-Saharan Africa, United Kingdom and India. Witches are projected as practitioners of black magic to harm people. Witches are considered as 'mysterious creatures with power of killing people by eating their entrails and also of causing fevers, murrain in cattle and other kinds of evil' (Man:1983 cited in Sinha: 2007:1674). It is believed that witches cast evil eye leading to misfortune and fatal diseases (Sinha: 2007). These superstitions force people to harm the person accused as witch, often resulting in death of the accused, sometimes even harm to her family and removal from village area. It has close link with religious beliefs and gender norms of communities. Daya Verma (2007) commented that 'all over the world including India, witches were mostly poor working class women, old and widowed' (2130). Ananya Baruya (2005) also emphasised that victims of witch hunting are mostly women. Men accuse women as witch to end the authority of women and establish male superiority and subjugate them. Therefore, gender hierarchy, poverty and widowhood increase women's vulnerability to witch hunting. Similarly, Sinha (2007) finds link of witch hunting to religious beliefs of community while Ata Mallick (2008) finds 'personal enmity or material gain' as motivating reasons behind the practice of witch hunting (118). One can easily capture property of widowed women by branding as witch and forcing her to leave the village for good. The tacit social sanction of such acts makes use of this conspiracy successful.

Field work

From the standpoint of feminist perspective, to

understand this issue of witch hunting the researcher conducted a field study and hear the voices of the victims of witch-craft accusations and brought forth their experiences of sufferings. Data has been collected mainly from Goalpara, Sonitpur and Udalguri districts. For collecting data, in-depth interviews of survivor women, NGO workers and lawyers are taken and observations are made on awareness activities by different NGOs. This paper is a part of a larger work on domestic violence. The concept and practice of witch hunting is seen from feminist point of view in this paper.

Accusation and Identification process of a 'witch'

No one ever claims to be a witch, witchcraft accusations 'are based on mere suspicion, rumour, or gossip' that circulates within the community (Adinkrah: 2004: 337). Accusations always rumored from family members, villagers or community members through which the process of identification of a so-called witch starts. After such accusations are 'confirmed', action against the accused is taken up immediately. They are 'threatened, drugged, forced to submit to humiliating ordeals, or are coerced into confessing' to her supposed evil powers; in extreme cases, the accused witches are even butchered to death because of an allegation of witchcraft (Quarmyne: 2011: 481). Data reveal that witchcraft accusation is done with some hidden intentions. The woman is treated as a witch from the moment the accusation is made, and various actions are adopted to make her admit about her evil act. Once she admits that she practices witchcraft, violence starts upon her. When a person is accused of witchcraft, the person is blamed for causing suffering to others. The capacity to harm and cause suffering makes other people scared of the accused person if that person harms the entire village. This belief and fear encourage the community people to torture or kill the witch for the safety of the entire village. The following cases demonstrate the same:

Champa said that she was charged by villagers for causing illness to another woman. She was pressured to accept the

blame of causing harm to the woman. Later she was taken to the ojha to clarify her evilpractices.

Saguni said that she was branded as a witch for causing sufferings to Jayanti, who was suffering from frequent body pain but was not being given any medicine. Instead prayers and other rituals were performed by her family for her recovery. During her suffering Jayanti took Saguni's name for causing her suffering. Saguni was called thereafter and charged with causing Jayanti's illness. After that she was threatened to be killed for practicing evil acts and causing harm to people.

In the case of Raniswary, her stepdaughter blamed her for having control over snakes and having evil powers gained from Hindu gods. She also instigated the village people, saying that Raniswary would harm the entire village. They believed her to be a witch having the potential to harm the village. The people became ferocious and forced her to leave the village.

As soon as it is believed that a disease has been caused by some witch, people try to get rid of the witch through prayers and offerings. Boiled rice, together with a cock reduced to ashes, is taken in a banana leaf and kept on the middle of a road as an offering to the witch. People believe that without these prayers and offerings, the patient would die. Only after such offerings are made the doctor is approached depending on the availability of doctors in that region. Sometimes the patients die due to delay in appropriate treatment. If the patient dies, the belief of the existence of a witch becomes deeper and the identification of the witch starts. People having a strong belief on witchcraft find various ways of identifying witches. When somebody is branded as a witch or accused of practicing witchcraft, people usually consult with the witch doctor to confirm or reveal the identity of the offending witch. Witch doctors, popularly known as *ojha*, *shaman*, *guni*, *bez*, *deodhani* or something else are considered experts in identifying witches through their special knowledge supposedly gained via different difficult methods

of devotion. On the basis of the detail provided by the witch doctor, a woman from the community is identified as a witch and is tortured in front of the entire community and nobody dares to save the victim or oppose the witch doctor's claims. The witch doctor follows a strict process to identify the witch. He covers the patient with a net and beats the patient with thorny branches after chanting some hymns. Thereafter, he asks the patient to tell him who has caused the illness. The rationale for beating is to make the patient spill out the name of the witch who has caused this harm. To escape the pain caused by the beatings, the patient takes someone's name randomly. The person whose name is taken is treated as a witch. Taking the name of a particular person as a witch is sometimes motivated by the intention to take revenge too.

Accusations of witchcraft are complex socio-cultural phenomenon, which involves various factors such as gender, class, etc. Accusation of a woman as a witch can be understood as a manifestation of gender hierarchy and the lower social status of women, whereby the male attitude of dominance and violence against women is legitimised by calling them witches (Chaudhuri: 2012). The fact that witch doctors are always male and victims beings mostly women reveal the hidden gendered nature of witchcraft accusation.

Branded as a witch: Reasons of perpetuation of witchcraft accusation

From the data various reasons of witchcraft accusation have come to light. The causes includes some general as well as a few specific that turns witch-craft look more like domestic violence rather than a gender-neutral criminal activity. The causes are superstitions, unnatural deaths of community members, land and other property issues, conflicts of interest among family members, village and community health issues, aggression and revenge. Lack of education and awareness, medical facilities, interior and remote locations, lack of exposure to new technologies are some of the reasons that add to the perpetuation of witch-hunting even in current times.

Superstitions

Superstitions play an important role in witch-hunting. People believing in superstitions also strongly believe in witchcraft, and that belief leads to victimisation of the accused person. Whenever somebody is ill in the village for a long period and the patient does not get well after offering prayers and performing other rituals to the community God, people start believing that the illness is caused by some witch, and the identification process starts. This finally leads to the torture and death of some innocent person. Due to people's belief on superstitions, they resort to the traditional system of performing rituals, offering cocks or goats to their community God and praying to cure the ill. Such practices make conditions critical, and the person dies due to medical negligence. Rather than understanding the real cause of death, community members believe that some witch has killed the person. Unnatural and untimely deaths of community members due to some illness are considered to be caused by practice of witch craft. Such false assumptions lead to accusation of innocent victims. The following cases reflect the impact of superstitions on accusations:

Champa, a survivor of witch victimisation explained that Rabha (a plain tribe of Assam) people believe in traditional rituals and pujas for curing illness. She said that pujas and other rituals have nothing to do with the cure, and when a patient does not get medicine the illness is bound to be prolonged. This belief in traditional ways of deciphering illness is the root cause of the continuing witch-hunting practice and victimisation of women.

Sironi was similarly branded as a witch for causing the death of a man from her village. The person was suffering from high blood pressure and was not given any medicine. Instead rituals were performed for his cure. During rituals after his death, his friend claimed that he had not died due to illness but rather due to evil effects of witchcraft practiced by Sironi.

Taking advantage of people's belief on superstitions, a group of people misled the entire community against a woman whom they want to brand as a witch. It is always easy to motivate people who believe in superstitions and fear their adverse effects. Conspirators thus fulfill their wishes by misleading community people without revealing their own cunning intentions.

Land and property issues

Land and property issues reveal another aspect of witch-hunting. Accusations of witchcraft have also been made out of greed for the land and property of the accused women. People conspire against a woman and accordingly plan to brand her or her entire family as witch and with the help of villagers drive out the accused to capture the land and other property. It is a common way to capture another's property, because women who are branded as witches and driven out of the village are not allowed to come back to the village. The following cases will show this:

Raniswary was driven out of her village due to her stepdaughter's allegation of having control over snakes and having evil powers. In reality her stepchildren did not want her to own any of her husband's land and property and accordingly threw her out of the village by branding her as a witch. Her stepdaughter spread rumours about her that she possesses evil powers. She was portrayed as a threat to the entire village. So to save their village, the villagers drove Raniswary out of the village.

Rashmi was branded as a witch by her own nephew, which resulted in forceful eviction of Rashmi and her daughter from her village. Her nephew seized all her property after the death of her husband. When Rashmi's married eldest daughter protested against this unjust treatment meted out to her mother and sibling, Rashmi's nephew threatened to pronounce her a witch, too. She did not dare to utter a word for her mother and had to keep quiet.

Confirming the motive of capturing property of women accused as witches, NGO activist Mr D. Saikia said:

Behind the conspiracy to brand somebody as a witch is not superstition or illiteracy. It is the plan of some cunning people, who use the simple and ignorant people and their belief on supernatural powers. They mislead the simple people against those who are accused in order to force them out of their property.

Women having property become easy targets of witchcraft accusation. Thus the profit motive is also found to be associated with witchcraft accusation (Mishra: 2003). Witch doctors frame women in such a way that they are bound to leave their property and village, and those who conspire against the accused women later capture their property.

Settling personal scores

Personal enmity is also settled by branding women of the opposite camp as witches. Sometimes, women are branded as witches just to take revenge on somebody or to vent old anger over some issues. Superstitious minds and a lack of awareness prevent community members from doubting such accusations. Once the accused is labeled as witch, she can rarely be saved from collective attacks and eviction from the village. Under such conditions, pronouncing a woman as a witch directly or indirectly is the easiest way to take revenge. The following cases will elaborate this:

Budulis's husband was upset and dissatisfied with everything she used to do. He never liked her, always scolded her and found faults with her to torture her physically. After drinking he would beat her badly. Getting irritated with her husband's behaviour she complained against him to an NGO. The NGO called him up for further inquiry. This made him angry and he started instigating the villagers spreading rumours that his wife is a witch.

In the Udalguri district, an entire family was thrown out of the district as one female member of the family, Lakhyamati, was suspected of being a witch. She was branded as a witch by a woman named Chitra, who did not like her. Lakhyamati along with her family, was driven out of the village by the villagers after severe attacks. Later with the help of the police and an NGO named BROTHERS, they were re-established in their village (AssomiyaPratidin: 10 Oct: 2014).

In Kokrajhar district, a couple named ShomMurmoo and Fulmoni Mardi were killed in attacks of sharp knives and sticks used by three villagers. When arrested the three accused people confessed that they have killed the couple for personal rivalry as they were suspected to be witches (AssomiyaPratidin: 28Oct:2014).

In one incident in Majuli, a family was killed with the help of hired goons. Two daughters-in-law appeared in the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) examination, and the younger one qualified and got the job. This made the other one jealous. Out of jealousy, with the help of some villagers, she branded the younger woman as a witch, got her raped and killed her husband and her son.

Regarding the cause of branding somebody as a witch, Birubala Rabha, who has been trying to end this evil and running a mission observes that personal jealousy is one of the main causes behind this heinous act. People's jealousy often forces them to make plans to harm the successful person. Witchcraft accusation is the most frequently used tool to execute such plans.

Mr D. Saikia, an NGO activist, said:

Unlike in the past, witch accusation is not an act of superstition now; rather it is an act of planned conspiracy and jealousy, which is carried out by educated people and often uneducated ignorant people are used to serve the purpose.

He also mentioned a case from the Udalguri district, where one woman was killed for practicing witchcraft. But the reality was something else. The woman was beautiful and smart. She knew how to read and write. She was conscious about her own economic independence, and she had substantial savings. She used to advise other women of her village about savings and also taught them the procedures to save money in a bank. This act was not liked by some men, who tried to take undue sexual advantage of her. Rejection and jealousy made those villagers conspire against her, and finally they succeeded in killing her by branding her as a witch.

Ms Jyoti reported about a widowed woman who was accused of being a witch and killed. The accusation was led by a person who had tried to force the woman into sexual involvement and was rejected. Later, to take revenge for being refused, he conspired against the woman and got her killed by the villagers.

The above cases reflect the tendency to objectify women or treat women as a commodity for men's pleasure. These cases also reveal men's anger towards women who challenge the men's perceived role of wage-earner in the family. Women who earn equally as men are considered as a threat to men's privileged position and bargaining power for being earning members. Therefore, the financially independent woman who motivated other women to be financially independent was considered a transgressor to the prevailing norm of male supremacy and women's subordination. She was seen as posing a challenge to the masculinity by being independent, and that resulted in violence against her. Challenges to this perceived right of men often lead to violence against women. This can also be linked to men's fear of strong female power, which they try to suppress by any means to ensure male supremacy (Deka: 2013). In patriarchy, when a woman becomes independent, earns money, which is supposed to be men's work, it is obvious that she would become a target of men to whom she posed a challenge. Hence, to keep

women 'in their right place' and dependent on men, and to restrict them from challenging men's position in the society, witchcraft accusations are used.

Lack of medical facility and poor health care system

In most cases witch-craft accusation starts with the outbreak of some diseases or somebody's prolonged illness. The suffering often becomes prolonged because the community people adopt traditional healing measures or rituals to cure the disease instead of seeking advice from qualified health practitioners. People don't understand that the absence of adequate modern medical treatment actually resulted in deaths or turns into epidemic; and to find solution the village folks visit a witch doctor who tell them that that disease is an outcome of witchcraft, after that the hunt for the witch begins. People's belief and reliance on traditional rituals to cure diseases also is strengthened by other factors including community backwardness and remoteness of village from town area to avail all modern medical facilities. Their poor financial condition too gets in the way to cooperate with modern technique of medical treatment and drive them to wrong interpretation of ailments.

Poverty

Poverty is one of the most important reasons for witch hunting. Poverty makes people believe in Oja or Bez and traditional healing measures instead of going to trained medical practitioners. Moreover, poor financial condition forces people to conspire against some lonely, widowed or aged women to capture her land or property.

Lack of Education

Illiteracy is one of the prime reasons that accelerate witch-hunting in Assam. Due to lack of education and awareness people believe in existence of witch, whatever the Oja or Bej say about witch and their evil acts. Tribal communities, people from hill areas, tea garden areas lack proper education and that is the reason they fall prey of this evil superstitious act.

They are unaware about human body and germs and diseases and believe in rituals for cure.

Consumption of local wine

Many times accusation of witch happens by drunken person in half-conscious state. Community people use to drink local wine and under its influence they get the courage to commit this evil act. In a sub-conscious state of mind under alcohol effects, if somebody pronounces one person randomly as witch, people will not think twice before attacking the person whose name is taken. Therefore, consumption of drugs and wine many times results in witch-accusation.

Thus, the above mentioned reasons and conditions are found to provide the favorable ground for growth of this evil practice in Assam. Among all these, personal jealousy, property matters, intention to take revenge, family issues turn witchcraft accusation into an act of domestic violence. Moreover, the reasons and motives of making witch-accusation and the fact that the known perpetrators and witch doctors are mostly male which makes this act an act of domestic violence. Statistics also reveal that large numbers of women face this form of violence and it is increasing at a rapid pace. However, this is simply not an act of domestic violence alone, but much broader and complex with multifaceted socio-economic-religious and other hidden angles. Perpetuation of this crime often reflects the impact of the socialisation process and prevailing patriarchal notions, norms and values.

Aftermath of witch-accusation: types of attacks on witches

The data reveals the adoption of various ways to torture women who are declared as witches. The ways include imposing a fine on the accused woman, ranging to several hundreds of rupees; making collective physical attack and other kinds of physical-mental torture on the accused woman to force her to accept the responsibility of performing the

evil act and causing harm to the community people, murdering and torturing her family members, socially boycotting her and restricting her from getting involved in social functions; and finally driving her out of the village and capturing her property. The use of these methods compels the woman to accept and admit to all allegations made against her following which the intention of the conspirator is achieved.

Suggestions to curb the evil practice of witchcraft

1. As illiteracy is found to be the most important factor to motivate people to get involved in the heinous practice of witchcraft, therefore steps taken to remove illiteracy from the society is expected to be the most effective tool to remove witchcraft.
2. Creating modern and well-equipped hospitals and health centers in the tribal dominated area will be helpful to end witchcraft practice.
3. Making people aware about scientific and medical development will act as deterrence against the popular belief of illness caused by witches which eventually end up the killing of innocent women.
4. As found in the study, property issue is also linked up with the accusation of witches, giving inheritance rights to women will be an important step to stop branding women as witches with the intention to capture her property.
5. NGO's, women's groups and other civil-society organizations are found to be working to end this evil practice. Still, more rigorous and in-depth work are necessary to end it up completely. In this regard, actions from the government authority will be more effective.
6. Strict and effective implementation of legal provisions, establishment and functioning of women-cell in police stations will be helpful in stopping this social evil practice.

Conclusion

To understand the issue of witch-hunting, this paper thus responded with the causes of perpetuation of witch craft and the interplay of different socio-cultural factors and contexts that trigger witch-hunting. In terms of causal factors the study shows it as one of the ways of settling personal scores through conspiracy. The intention of conspirators is served well and without much opposition. However people's popular beliefs on norms, rituals, cultural practices as well as ways of life influence the emergence and continuation of this criminal act. The patriarchal structure of society and position of women in socio-cultural lives provide the ground for its growth. The root of this criminal act is much deeper than it is seen normally. Witch hunting is just an outcome of many hidden criminal practices having patriarchal roots. Awareness and legal measures are needed to remove this evil from society.

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Gender Gap in Education at the Primary Level in Darrang District of Assam

Dr. Usha Rani Deka

Introduction

The concept of 'Gender' was first developed by Iill Methews in 1984 (source: Paul, S. *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, 2016) According to Methews, the concept of gender gives recognition to the fact that every known society distinguishes between men and women. Therefore, the concept of gender is a systematic way of understanding men and women socially and the patterning of relationships between men and women. Thus, the concept of gender helps to study the differences in behavior between men and women and to analyze the basic of these differences as basically biological or as social constructions by the society. By its own nature, gender is fluid and changeable, and is decided by the individual. Gender is culturally constructed. Hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. Gender affects almost all aspects of women's and men's lives, their needs, opportunities and access to resource. Gender can be seen as the full range of personality traits, attitudes, feelings, values, behaviours and activities that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential bases.

A gender gap, by definition, is a disproportionate

difference or disparity between the sexes. Gender Gap means the differences between women and men, especially as reflected in social, political, intellectual, cultural or economic attainments or attitudes. The Gender gap in education refers to the increased likelihood of better educational opportunity achievement for males than females in most society.

Primary education and national prosperity are interdependent. Primary education helps the masses to acquire ability of reading, writing and arithmetic as well as to make them aware in respect of their rights and responsibilities. Primary education helps each and every member of a society to be empowered in the different fields of the society. It is also the strong instrument of social change which can modify the human behaviour and attitude. In order to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by our country utmost priority should be given on reducing gender gap in education.

About the Study Area

Darrang is one of the educationally backward districts of Assam. According to the census report 2011, Darrang District stands in the second lowest literacy district of Assam with the literacy rate 63.08% just after the Dhubri District (source: [https:// w.w.w.census.2011.co.in](https://w.w.w.census.2011.co.in)). Darrang District is consisted with three Educational Blocks namely Kalaigaon Educational Block, Sipajhar Educational Block and Dalgaon Educational Block. The District Head Quarter 'Mangaldai' is under the Kalaigaon Educational Block. The district is bounded in the East by Sonitpur District, in the North by Udalguri District, in the West by Kamrup (Rural) District and in the South by the River Brahmaputra. Under the Darrang district, a sizeable section of people is covered by the Scheduled Caste (SC) belt and the people of Char because a large part of the Southern boundary of the district is covered by the beach of the Brahmaputra River. Of course, the people of General caste, OBC, ST, Adibashi are also the inhabitant of the district.

Objective

To examine the nature of gender gap in education at the primary level under the Darrang district of Assam.

Methodology

The descriptive method is followed for the present study. The study is based on the Secondary Sources. So, different books, journals, magazines, newspapers, published articles, internet source are used for collection of relevant data for the study.

Discussion

Darrang is a district of Assam where population is consisted with heterogeneous castes and creeds. The culture of the people under the district is different from community to community. The communication system is also very backward in the large part of the district till now. Mangaldai is the administrative Headquarter of Darrang district. Although, Mangaldai town is an urban area as it is the district headquarters, yet its demographic nature is almost rural. There are three Educational Blocks under the Darrang District. Mangaldai Town is situated under Kalaigaon Educational Block, which is consisted with heterogeneous group of people like SC, ST, OBC, General caste, Adibashi and even the Char people. A large part of the Southern boundary of the Block is covered by Char area where communication system is found to be too backward. A brief sketch of the study area is presented in respect of gender gap in education at the primary level in below:

Table-1
Literacy percentage, Population and Sex Ratio

Total Population	Average Literacy Rate	Male Literacy Rate	Female Literacy Rate (male)	Sex Ratio (Per 1000 boy child)	Child Sex Ratio (0-6 age)
9,29,000	63.08%	67.87%	58.04%	954	969

Source: <https://w.w.w.census.2011.co.in>.

Table-1 shows that the male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate in respect of Darrang District. It shows the disproportionate difference between the male and female in respect of obtaining Primary education. On the other hand, in respect of sex ratio and child sex ratio, status of girl child is satisfactory. From the table, it is evident that girl child is able to get recognition from the society. But, education for girl child is not properly recognized by the society under the study area, as female literacy rate is found to be lower than male literacy rate.

Table-2
No. of School, No. of Teacher and
Sex wise % of Male & Female Teacher

No. of Primary School	Total no. of Primary Teacher	Sex wise % of Primary Teachers	
		Male Teacher	Female Teacher
1731	4569	70.27%	29.73%

Source: www.dise.in. darrang, 2018.

Table-2 shows that percentage of male teacher is higher than the female teacher working at the primary level in Darrang District. It shows that there is a disproportionate difference between the male teacher and female teacher working in the primary schools under the study area. From the table-2 it is evident that shortage of female teacher is one of the significant problems of primary education under the study area.

From the table presented above, it is evident that the total literacy rate, the female literacy rate and the percentage of female teachers at the primary level under the Darrang District is not up to the satisfaction. It is observed by the investigator that due to the extreme poverty of the common people specially in the char areas and the Adibashi community, parents are not interested to educate their girl child. They are not free from the problem of child labour which adversely affect on the girl child in respect of obtaining primary education. It is

mentionable that the southern boundary of the district is covered by the beach of the Brahmaputra River, which is inhabited by the char people; where communication system is also found to be very backward. The large part of the area is under the Kalaigaon Educational Block, where the district headquarter 'Mangaldai' is situated. Moreover, the primary livelihood of those people is agriculture and animal husbandry. Early marriage is also practiced under the study area, specially in the Char areas (source: Assam Tribune, a daily Newspaper, on 2nd March 2017). It indicates the increased likelihood of better educational opportunity achievement for males than females under the study area. Another remarkable cause of gender gap in education under the district is the dearth of female teachers at the primary level than male teachers; even the govt. has recruited more number of female teachers throughout the district than earlier. But the present scenario reveals that due to the lack of convenient communication system along with different social problems including insurgency problem adversely affect on the female teachers which results in dearth of female teachers under the district. In most of the cases, it is observed that the poor and illiterate parents are not easily interested to send their girl child to go for education due to the lack of female teachers at the primary schools. Because, it is found that lack of sympathy on the part of male teachers towards girl students, for which girl students are suffering from insecurity and mental conflict due to the lack of the female teachers in their schools. It results in gender gap in education at the primary level under the study area.

Some prominent causes inherent with the gender gap in education under the Darrang District may be outlined as given below:

- i. Extreme poverty of the parents
- ii. Illiteracy of the parents
- iii. Social superstitions and prejudices practiced against girl child.
- iv. Child labour system

- v. Ill practices like early marriage
- vi. Inconvenient communication system in the rural and backward areas
- vii. Insurgency problem
- viii. Dearth of female teachers than male teachers at the primary level
- ix. Lack of proper inspections
- x. Lack of proper awareness among the masses in respect of women education.

Suggestions

Since primary education is considered as the Mass-education and the backbone of our national development; proper attention should be given by the civil society along with the Govt. and the concerning Education Department by taking some initiatives in respect of minimizing the gender gap in education at the primary level in Assam in general and in Darrang District in particular; which may be outlined as given below:

- (a) Primary schools should be made available at an easy distance for girl students more particularly in the rural and backward areas.
- (b) Transportation and communication facilities should be made convenient both for the girl students and the female teachers.
- (c) Number of Female Teachers and Female Inspectors should be increased at the primary level under the Darrang District.
- (d) More number of Government scholarships should be given to the girl students.
- (e) Provision of inspection should be made more dynamic throughout the district.
- (f) Infrastructural facilities should be developed by giving

utmost importance in favour of both the girl students and the female teachers.

- (g) Stop 'Child labour' with creating proper awareness among the masses by the civil society and the Govt.
- (h) Provision of adult education should be made available under the study area especially in the remote as well as in the char areas.
- (i) Ill practices against girl child like early marriage should be strictly prohibited.
- (j) Educational Awareness Camp should be organized frequently by the different agencies like district administration, NGOs, educational institutions in the remote and backward areas under the study area.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it may be concluded that Gender disparity is still practiced under the study area not only in the field of education but in different other fields also. Poor economic condition of the parent as well as the social attitude against girl child adversely affect on the obtaining primary education by the girl-child in most of the remote and char areas under the Darrang District of Assam. Specially in the char areas girl-child are severely suffering from social superstitions and prejudices (source: Assam Tribune, a daily newspaper, on 2nd March 2017) including malnutrition which adversely affect on the Female literacy rate at the primary level under the study area. Extreme poverty, illiteracy and ignorance of the parents, ill practices against women etc. are some of the remarkable causes of gender gap in education at the primary level under the study area. It should be minimized keeping in view the needs, hopes and aspirations of the respective society. Because "the destiny of our nation can be shaped in her classrooms". (Kothari Commission of 1964-66).

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Role of Assamese Women in Biodiversity Conservation: A Review

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Introduction

Biodiversity refers to the variety and variability of life forms including different flora, fauna and microorganisms present on the planet Earth. At present, the estimated numbers of living species reported from the world are 8.7 million (Mora et al., 2011). India's role is commendable in the contribution of biodiversity as it contributes about 7.8% of the total life forms found in the world despite the fact that its geographical area is only 2.4% of the world (MoEF 2009). The state of Assam is full of rich biodiversity and cultural heritage. It encompasses two biodiversity hotspots of the world namely The Eastern Himalaya and Indo-Myanmar biodiversity hotspots. The cultural diversity of the state is enriched because of the existence of ample biodiversity present in the state. But the alarming growth of human population and consequent negative impact on biodiversity has resulted in large scale deterioration of ecological settings of the state over the last few decades. As women play an important role in managing and conserving

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natural resources, the women folk of Assam also have a tradition of maintaining the ecological balance of their surroundings. It is noteworthy that tribal women of Brahmaputra and Barak valley have a remarkable contribution towards conservation and management of natural resources and biodiversity. Maintenance of Sacred groves of West Karbi Anglong district, rejuvenation of Manas National Park, conservation of critically endangered species like Greater adjutant stork, Bengal florican and cleanliness drive in villages of Assam are some of the striking instances, where in women have taken a leading role towards conservation of natural environment. The women folk of India are well versed with the economically important plant species of their area which they learn from their ancestors make sustainable use of it and pass this knowledge to their future generations. This traditional knowledge helps them in identifying and collecting forest products. Tribal and rural women of India to nurture their families are actively involved in collection of seeds, grains, tubers and seedlings of varied types of cereals, vegetables, fruit trees, medicinal plants, spices, etc. from the forests and also to grow them on their piece of land which are repositories of local biodiversity of useful plants nearby human inhabitations of the tribal and rural areas of India (Rout et al., 2010). This practice has played a significant role in domestication and conservation of varied plant species of Indian origins (Kaushik et al., 2018; Abhijeet et al., 2018; Rout et al., 2010; Gurulakshmi 2012; Srivastava and Adi Community 2009; Agarwal and Arora 1989; Gadgil, 1991). Women from all walks of life in Assam play a crucial role due to their active involvement in their surrounding environment and they are considered as custodian of culture and biodiversity. Especially, women from tribal and rural societies of Assam believe forests as a gift of Mother Nature to the mankind and a source of food, fodder, fuel wood, honey, resins, gums and other minor forest products for their livelihood (Awais et al., 2009). However, they are viewed as insignificant partners and not accorded due attention. Therefore, many a times they suffer limitations in such activities. The central preoccupation of this review is to

explore key role of Assamese women in environmental nurturing and conservation at community and individual level.

Materials and Methods

The study is based on extensive search of literature and primary observation on ecological services performed by the Assamese women in general and the womenfolk of tribal and rural society in particular. This is evident that the women community of this society have been contributing to care of their surroundings through tradition or self conscious voluntary approach. Some base information of leading women as environment activist has been gathered through personal interview. Secondary sources such as books, on line journals, news paper and articles are reviewed to frame this study. It presents a critical evaluation of the information collected from these sources.

Discussion

Women have a spontaneous attachment to environment. Worshiping to tulsi, people tree, feeding cows and birds are some of the traditional practices of Indian women that highlight their caring and devotion to nature. There are some pioneer Indian women who have made history for the protection of environment and they have become the source of inspiration for others as well. The womenfolk of both tribal and non tribal society from Assam have been paying an iconic role at individual and community level for the conservation of biodiversity. Some prominent works devoted to nurturing and conservation of environment are assessed in the following.

Sacred Grove of Assam

Forest dwelling tribes such as Karbi, Bodo and Rabha inhabiting the hills, plains and foothills of Assam have the tradition of maintaining sacred groves which are locally called "Than". Dimasa tribes of the North Cachar hills in Haflong district of Assam call sacred groves "Madaico". Till now 17

sacred groves have been documented in the state. Sibrai, Alu Raja, Naikhu Raja, Wa Raja, Ganiyang, Braiyung and Hamiadao are the various deities to whom these sacred groves are dedicated. Vaishnav temples called Shankara Deva Mathas are distributed all over the state. Sacred groves are attached to these Mathas. Giant Bamboo, Pear Bamboo, Pink banana, Metico pepper, Indian smilax, Areca nut, Sand paper tree and Devil's cotton are among the most commonly found plant species in the sacred groves. The identity of an area/village is often associated with plant resources either available in the area/village or important locally. Karbi Anglong has a long tradition of nature worship and there are seven Sacred Groves in the District - Ronghang Rongbong, Inglong Kiri, Ritasor, Bichikri, Arlongpuru Hamren, Mahamaya, Rek Anglong. The role of tribal women in conserving and maintaining these sacred groves is tremendous. The women of the tribal societies pass the messages to next generation through different stories associated with these sacred groves.

Rejuvenation of Manas National Park

The Manas National Park (MNP) is one of the country's wealthiest reservoirs of flora and fauna. However, the Park has faced several ups and downs due to socio-political unrest, poaching and illegal encroachment. It has been observed that 20.47 sq. km area of the Park has been encroached from 1991 to 2004 due to the socio-political unrest in the region. As a result of this, in 2003, Manas lost the glory of the World Heritage Site. However, on 10 February 2003, the Government of Assam, the Central Government of India, and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) signed a memorandum of settlement on Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in New Delhi which has brought peace and security to the region. Immediately the conservation fraternity, including the Department of Environment and Forest, BTC (now BTR-fringe villagers, took the initiative to protect and conserve the bioresources of MNP, taking the community conservation and livelihood generation approach. The women community

of the fringe villages were actively involved in the rejuvenation process of Manas through community participation and livelihood generation for the sustainable wellbeing of the biodiversity-rich area. It is to be noted that self help groups (SHGs) consisting mainly of women were formed in the fringe areas through series of consultation workshops taking a radius of 1 km buffer from the park boundary covering the fringe villages. These SHGs were trained to work on piggery, beekeeping, vermicomposting, weaving, food processing and preservation, fishery, stitching, dairy farming, goat farming, and mushroom cultivation. The SHGs around the Park received market linkages in 2014 when these SHGs participated in the International Agri Fair 2014, held at Guwahati from 08 - 11 Feb 2014, bearing market linkages with Vietnam, Myanmar & Thailand. Similarly, the tourist lodges in and around the Park have been contacted for selling of SHGs' products during tourist seasons (October-May). In addition to this, nearby towns like Barpeta Road, Patshala, Barama and Bijni have also been targeted for marketing. A local livelihood exhibition cum sale is organized regularly at Bansbari, the central location, around the Park, which helps the SHGs exhibit the various products prepared by them. These activities among the women have drastically reduced the forest dependency of the fringe villagers of Manas National Park.

Conservation of Greater adjutant stork

The state of Assam is one of the last strong hold of Greater adjutant stork. Dr. Purnima Devi Barman is one of the leading women who is solely trying to protect this critically endangered species in Assam. Dr. Barman is a wildlife biologist from Assam, who is known for her conservation work of the greater adjutant stork (*Leptoptilos dubius*), locally known as the *Hargila*. She is the founder of the *Hargila Army*, a group of women conservationist initiative. In 2017, Barman was the recipient of both the Whitley Award for her conservation efforts and the Nari Shakti Puraskar, the highest civilian award for women, presented by the President of India. The greater

adjutant, a large stork listed as endangered by the IUCN red list and it has a global population of 800-1,200 mature individuals, with the majority of these individuals (650-800) found in Assam, India. In Assam this bird species lives in close contact with urban areas, sheltered in privately owned trees and scavenges at rubbish dumps. As a result, the greater adjutant is threatened by pollution, habitat loss, and felling of nesting trees.

Barman began working with greater adjutants while conducting her PhD research in the remote villages of Dadara, Pacharia and Singimari in the Kamrup (rural) district of Assam. In 2007, she witnessed a tree owner cutting down a tree containing a greater adjutant nest with nestlings inside. This led Barman to discover that this bird had a bad reputation among the villagers due to its unattractive appearance, scavenging nature and foul-smelling nests. Barman then decided to postpone her PhD in order to focus on educating local communities about the ecological importance of the greater adjutant. Barman led a number of conservation campaigns that integrated the culture and traditions of the local villagers. These included presenting conservation messages during religious functions, cooking competitions, street plays and community dances. Other education techniques included involving film celebrities to spread conservation awareness, and throwing celebrations for owners of nesting trees used by the greater adjutant. Education campaigns were also directed at children and young adults, using games and activities to educate them on the ecological importance of the greater adjutant. A scholarship was also developed for children of nesting tree owners. Barman also gathered support from Kamrup district government by inviting government officials to visit greater adjutant habitats and by engaging local forestry and police departments to directly participate in conservation actions. Barman was the recipient of the 2017 Nari Shakti Puraskar (the highest civilian award for Indian women) presented by the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind. Also in 2017, a Whitley Award (also known as a Green Oscar) was presented

to her by Anne, Princess Royal of the United Kingdom. In addition, Barman has received the Leadership Award 2015 from the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP), the Future conservationist award 2009, UNDP India Biodiversity Award 2016 from the United Nations, Royal Bank of Scotland RBS "Earth Hero Award" 2016, Bharat Sanchar Roll of Honour 2017 from BSNL in 2017, Balipara Foundation "Green Guru Award" in 2016, and the FIICI FLO Women Achiever Award from North East in 2017.

Conservation of Bengal florican

Another young lady of Assam working for biodiversity conservation is Dr. Namita Brahma. Dr. Brahma has done her research work on critically endangered grassland bird Bengal florican. She has also worked for conservation of biodiversity and community based conservation in Manas landscape. She received Future Conservationist Award of Conservation Leadership Programme in 2008 for carrying her research and conservation work on Bengal florican. She has been instrumental in capacity building and enhancing women participation in conservation based rural livelihood in and around Manas National Park.

Conservation of Hog Deer

Another young lady of Assam is Alolika Sinha, who is a conservation biologist, working with non-profit non-governmental organisation for more than a decade. She has the responsibility of overseeing conservation works on large herbivores such as hog deer and its habitat. For her doctoral research she had studied habitat ecology of Hog Deer (*Axis porcinus*) in Manas National Park in Assam from Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. Her research included population estimation of the hog deer in Manas using standardized methods and gain an understanding on how different habitat and anthropogenic factors impact the species. Her research has provided new insights and helped build the scientific evidences needed to conserve the species and its habitat.

Cleanliness drive in villages

Father of our nation strongly stressed on the fact that sanitation is more important than independence. He made cleanliness and sanitation an integral part of the Gandhian way of living. So clean India would be the best tribute India could pay to Mahatma Gandhi. He was greatly fascinated by the sanitation of Assamese village wherein cleanliness is a part and parcel of way of life. Sweeping with broomstick by the women of every village family at the break of dawn is a regular phenomenon in Assam. To make India clean, Honourable Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat Mission on October 2, 2014. To add to this mission; now he has taken steps to ban single use plastic (SUP) and march towards the goal of making India greener and cleaner. Recently some of the villages of Assam have achieved the status of cleanest village as declared under Swachh Bharat Mission by the government of India. The paper highlights those villages where in women play a vital role-

a) Rangsapara village

It is under Balijana Block, situated about 16 km from Goalpara town. It was declared Assam's cleanest village in the year 2016-17 by the Public Health Engineering Department. The thought of cleanliness was imbibed in the year 1990 at the initiative of present village headman Roverth John Momin. The villagers formed a managing committee in 2000 with four resolutions - peace and unity, clean and hygienic toilets, clean drinking water and cleaning the village on Wednesdays by men and on Saturdays by women. This village consists of two parts - Rangsapara and Khawari. It is a Garo village where as per the 2011 census, there were 510 Christian Garo people living in 92 households. Their main food is rice and meat and they love playing football and volleyball. This village was recognized and rewarded by the State Government with Rs 5 lakh which was used for development and welfare activities. The village has pucca sanitary toilets and open defecation is not allowed. The

managing committee is also strict regarding cleanliness, alcohol, drugs and use of plastic. Any person violating the rules is fined Rs 5,001. No villager has ever been fined till now and there is also no police case in this village.

With a literacy rate of about 70 per cent, the villagers speak languages like English, Garo and Assamese and are mostly farmers, engaging themselves in growing vegetables, paddy and rubber. The female members of the village have become a strong component of proper waste management system using bamboo-made dustbins, both for bio-degradable and non-bio-degradable waste.

a) Belona village

Belona village of Bajali subdivision in Barpeta district has recently earned the distinction of becoming the first 'Clean and Green' village in the State. Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said, "A community coming together to walk on the path of Swachhata, the people of Belona have shown how conscious collective effort can beat Plastic Pollution." Taking note of this achievement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the Assam administration for this remarkable achievement. Taking inspiration from Swachh Bharat vision, the village called Belona, located in the Bajali subdivision of Barpeta district, has set an example of clean and green village and it aims to go to the national level to make a name and set an example for its cleanliness. This village has recently earned the distinction of becoming the first 'Clean and Green' village in the State of Assam.

A few years back, the people residing in this village decided to go plastic free, and efforts were put in to make the village an ideal example of cleanliness and greenery. Their dream became reality when in 2016, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal declared Belona as the first clean and green village in Assam. The women have played a pivotal role in this campaign. They gather in the village to make newspaper bags which they distribute to the shops and other business establishments in and around Pathsala town. It is

also seen that the residents of the village are fully aware of the ill effects of plastic and the need for going green.

b) Shikdamakha Village

Shikdamakha is a Tiwa village situated in West Karbi Anglong district of Assam and falls under the Amri development block.

Shikdamakha is at 25.9487°N 92.2237°E. It lies in the center of the Umswai Valley and is surrounded by hills, two of which are revered in Tiwa tradition: Palakhongor and Shabri Makha. The village is 80 km (50 mi) from the state capital Dispur, Guwahati which can be accessed by road along National Highway 37 (India), a journey of about 2 hours 30 minutes through lush green hills.

As per 2011 Population Census report, Shikdamakha is a home to 103 households and it has a population of 595 of which 321 are males and 274 are females with 75% literacy. The people of Shikdamakha are Christian by faith who are humble and hardworking. On 25 September 2016, the Government of Assam and the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) named Shikdamakha the cleanest village in the state. On 15 October 2016 the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) declared Shikdamakha as the cleanest village of West Karbi Anglong District. Villagers use bamboo baskets for storing garbage in front of every household and every corner of the village, and the accumulated garbage is disposed at a regular intervals. Thrice in a week men and women take part in a community cleaning drive.

c) Haldha Village

Haldha village is situated towards north western corner in Sipajhar Block of Darrang district in Assam which is 30 km. away from Mangaldai town. As per 2011 census the population of this village is 487 and the literacy rate is 73%. This is the only village of Darrang district that got the recognition of cleanest village from district administration

in 2017. All the families of the village have left no stone unturned to make their village an ideal clean village in the state of Assam. The two organizations, namely *Bornadi Pragati Sangha* and *Haldha* women society have taken pioneering step to turn this dream into reality. This has become possible only through the mutual cooperation among the locals of the village. Both male and female members of the village come out with broomsticks to sweep all over the lanes and by lanes every morning, collect the garbage and put it in bamboo dustbin at the gateway of every household. The prime organizations frequently convene awareness campaign among the villagers to get them used to this practice of cleanliness. They have adopted a multi pronged scheme for the all round development of the village. These are organic farming, one village with one cottage industry (sericulture), pure drinking water, health of mother and child, sanitation, plantation of tree and basal plant, awareness of spiritual thinking and abstaining from using gutkha and plastic, just to name a few. Already the scheme of one village with industry has also introduced a economic change in the village. Significantly, the district administration has selected village Haldha in Sipajhar LAC as the cleanest village of Darrang.

Environmental awareness drive

A 31 year old Assamese woman, Ms. Nijara Phukan walked 2000km from her native place Sibsagar to New Delhi to submit memorandum to President of India for taking necessary governmental actions consisting of seven main demands to raise awareness for conservation of nature in 2019. On her extraordinary and green journey for the environment, Phukan was accompanied by Munmuni Payeng, daughter of "Forest Man of India" Jadav Payeng and environment activist Pankhi Borah from Nagaon district of Assam. Phukan is a member of a group called "Brikho Bondhu", an organization of nature lovers who united through Facebook to carry out plantation campaign in and around Sibsagar.

Assam "Chipko" movement

It is viewed that history has repeated itself in Assam in October, 2021, where citizens are taking to streets demanding preservation of another green corridor. Referring to the Sal Bagan area as the pride of Dabaka in Assam, residents have initiated the "*Chipko Andolan*" of the 1970s, where people have carried out a non-violent movement to protect trees in Uttarakhand. The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has proposed to cut down 5000-7000 Sal trees in Assam's Dabaka, which has evoked massive outrage among inhabitants of Hojai and nearby region. Local women say that a 13 km stretch of road linking Hojai district to Karbi Anglong, famous for bagan of Sal trees along with Teak, Mahogany, Bhatghila, Elephant fruit and host of other medicinal herbs. This area has been demarcated for felling in a bid to expand the present two lane highway that passes through the Dabaka Forest Reserve. The local women have taken active part to protect this Sal Bagan and they have staged demonstration protesting against this decision of NHAI. Because of this massive protest, the Assam Environment NGO Forum, a collective of 12-13 green groups, have appealed to the government to rethink the plan so that the Dabaka Reserve Forest is safe.

Conclusion

It is concluded that, biodiversity is the basis of life and anthropogenic activities are causing continuous harm to it. Rapid urbanization, population explosion and other developmental activities have resulted in shrinkage of forest area and habitat loss for wildlife. In the recent past, many plant and animal species have become extinct and many more species are endangered and nearing extinction. Therefore conservation of biodiversity is a must for the survival of life on the planet earth and the role of women is of utmost significant. From the above discussion it is very evident that Assamese women are very much aware of the conservation of biodiversity, as they are very much associated with their cultural heritage. But still there is greater need of

involvement of Assamese women in all programmes pertaining to environment and biodiversity conservation from grassroots to highest level. School curriculum need to play an important role in this regard and the authors believe that New Education Policy 2020 will play a major role in protection and conservation of environment. It is firmly stated, "In the end, we will be judged not by what we have created but by what we have refused to destroy" and Assamese women will always play a major role in protecting against the destroy of Mother Nature and nurture its biodiversity.

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Indian Scenario of Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation: Women and Children

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Introduction

Human trafficking is one of the widespread crimes in the world. The unlawful act of transporting or coercing people in order to benefit from their work or service, typically in the form of forced labour or sexual exploitation (Oxford Dictionary) is Human Trafficking. The most vulnerable group of trafficking in society are women and girls. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) research shows that 80% of trafficked persons are women and girls, and 50% of the victims were minors (George *et.al.* 2010). For purposes of sexual or commercial exploitation, women and girls are kidnapped, sold, and coerced by slavers in nearly every country in the world (Iyer & Radha, 2016). The business of women trafficking is not a recent development, it has its origins from ancient times. Female slaves were often highly valued in the ancient nations for use as prostitutes, concubines, or to breed more slaves (George *et.al.* 2010) In the modern era, the factors of selling females remained the same by far. Many cases of human trafficking suggest that

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the missing reports are linked with the activity (NCRB report, 2015). The women are kept in minimal facilities, tortured, and are forced to give their service in the brothels. They are devoid of exposure to the world and are controlled by the recruiters (Sahoo. A.S, 2018). The health officials insist that trafficking in women causes significant health risks to the general public, especially in terms of sexually transmitted diseases. Women sold into prostitution are often discouraged or forbidden from using contraceptives such as condoms and thus become high-risk candidates for the spread of diseases (Naik. A.B, 2018).

India is one of the leading exporters and has a crowded market for human trafficking. Among various types of trafficking women and children, trafficking is the highest, and the majority of them are indulged in prostitution (Banerjee, P, 2006). The zones of trafficking are West Bengal, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Mumbai, and North-Eastern India (Lux. K & Mosley. J, 2015; Achichi. K, 2015; Banerjee. P, 2006). There is a kind of homogeneity in the areas from where the trafficking is very high. These locations are either in the border areas like West- Bengal, and North-East India or are very isolated and interior like the villages of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, etc. Also, poverty is a connecting link between victims (Sharath. A. M. 2020; *Report on Women and Children Trafficking in India, 2015*).

In this study, we have tried to understand the scenario of human trafficking with special reference to women and children who are generally forced into prostitution. The study also attempts to find out the causes that drive the vulnerable group to human trafficking. At last, the various attempts of governments, NGOs, and international institutions to address the crime is included in the article.

Relevant Literature

The extensive review of the literature provided us a convenient insight to understand the various facets that are accountable for women and child trafficking in India. Women

and Child trafficking have been identified as the fastest and largest growing criminal industry in India. According to the reports over the last five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims (especially women and girl child) in India and also exploit victims from India to abroad. In recent studies, India has considered as the hot spot of source, destination, and transit for women and child exploitation where 90% of trafficking transpires to be domestically (intra-state or inter-state), and 10% takes place across the national border. U.S. **Department of State** placed India in its 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report in the Tire 2 category for the 8th consecutive years since 2013, insinuating that the country is fully unable to meet the minimum requirements for the elimination of trafficking but efforts taken to prevent are somehow commendable. During the reporting period, the **National Crime and Records Bureau (NCRB)** issued its 2020 Human Trafficking Cases (IPC) in Crime in India Report. In 2020, the government reported 1,714 human trafficking cases under the IPC compared with 2,208 trafficking cases in 2019 and 2,2782 human trafficking cases in 2018. According to NCRB, among the 28 states and 8 union territories, Telangana and Maharastra reported their highest 184 human trafficking cases followed by Andhra Pradesh (171 Cases) and Kerela (166 cases) in the year 2020. **Saraswati R. Iyer et al, 2016** reported that women trafficking cases increasing in India day by day in many forms like forced prostitution, forced marriage in many regions like Haryana and Punjab because of dismal sex ratios and bonded labour, etc. only just because there is no common platform that links up the prevention strategies taken by our government between source and destination areas. **Christine Joffres and Co, 2008**, reported in their report that trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has been a major issue in India for women and child trafficking. An estimated 800 000 women and children are trafficked every year (where 80% of this is ending in forced sex work) across international borders. Interstate trafficking represents 89% of trafficking for CSE in India whereas about 10% of trafficking for CSE is from

neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal (biggest suppliers, approx. 2.17% and 2.6% respectively of the international traffic) into India. **Siddhartha Sarkar, 2014** analysed in his report that women trafficking in India are mainly associated with poverty (especially Dalits and Tribal communities) and lack of awareness of human trafficking. Women and children (particularly girls) are mainly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and are trafficked for prostitution, ritual sex slavery, forced begging, bonded labour, organ harvesting, socially sanctioned practices, and bride kidnapping. **Vimal Vidushy, 2016** has elaborated that the root causes of women and child trafficking in India can be categorized by Push and Pull factors. The push factors are comprised of poverty associated with the dowry, annual natural disasters, lack of education, skill, and income opportunities for women in rural areas, lack of awareness about the activities of traffickers, domestic violence against women, and ignorance of girl child, etc. The pull factors include remunerative employment propositions and attractive modern lifestyle in big cities, easy money, the demand of young girls for marriage in other regions, growing demand of young kids for adoption, rise of rapidly expanding sex industry, migration due to cheap labour, heavy population growth in the region, and also a high demand of young girls in the military concentration places like Kashmir in India in recent times. **Biswajit Ghosh, 2006** has critically analysed that the main ground of human trafficking in India can be divided into three groups that are for commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), bonded labour, and other forms of exploitation such as organ sale, begging, camel jockeying, etc. **Shivam Jindal et al, 2020** mentioned that there are four major issues regarding the trafficking of humans: educational issues, social issues, political issues, and psychological issues. **Abdul B. Naik, 2018** explained that the key factor behind human trafficking in India is poverty. Also, other driving forces that support women trafficking are, gender and caste-based discrimination, lack of resources, lack of human and social capital, social insecurity, the commodification of women, social exclusion,

marginalization, inadequate loopholes in outdated state policies, lack of governance, and involvements of police with traffickers, unemployment, cheap child labour, child marriage, bride abduction and priority to marriage, attraction to modern city life and employment trade, corruption, and political issues, and lack of awareness among the victims.

Objectives and Methodology

The study aims:

- To understand the driving factors that lead in Human Trafficking
- To analyse the causes of Human Trafficking
- To overview the provisions of Government and NGOs in addressing Human Trafficking.

This study is primarily based on the qualitative literature survey method. It facilitates the study of the issues related to human trafficking in India especially of women and children. Extensive review of the literature provided useful insight into the various factors that are responsible for the human trafficking of Indian women and children. The present study is exclusively based on secondary data which has been collected from the various issues of annual reports, books, magazines, bulletins, other related documents, and National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) Reports and National Human Right Commission (NHRC) Reports. The data from the U.S Department of States are also considered in the study. Information collected from different sources was analysed in a qualitative way for taking inference.

Factors leading to Human Trafficking

South Asia is a hub of human trafficking in the world. The countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and India are the red spot area of human trade. It has been estimated that more than 200,000 girls and women are trafficked annually for commercial sexual exploitation in South Asia especially from India, Bangladesh, and Nepal

(Kamble. R.M, 2019). Experts estimate millions of women and children are victims of sex trafficking in India. 80% of human trafficking across the world is done for sexual exploitation and the rest is for bonded labour. India is considered as the hub of this crime in Asia (Nirmala, 2013). According to the U.S. State Department, India is both a source and transit country for trafficking, as well as one of the most popular trafficking destinations in South Asia. It is estimated that 10% of India's trafficking in persons is international while 90% is domestic, a pattern that differs from the more common paradigm of trafficking across international borders. Given India's size, trafficking tends to occur across state borders instead. Among the women and girls who are trafficked into India, most come from Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia, and Myanmar. Many of the Indian women trafficked out of the country end up either in the Middle East for sexual exploitation. The trafficking of women and girls is highest for the use of commercial sexual exploitation, however, there are also other reasons for trafficking like bonded labour, forced labour, begging, rag picking, organ harvesting, domestic help, etc.

In this study, the focus is on women and girl trafficking that is basically done for forced sexual work. In the works of Banerjee (2006), Joffres et al (2008), Iyer and Radha (2018) and many others have identified that the driving forces due to which people get into the trap of trafficking are mainly because of economical, social, cultural, and political reasons.

Poverty is the most prominent and homogenous factor for the expansion of this crime. Economically backward families face many problems of livelihood so the traffickers or the middlemen provide financial incentives for the girl child to the families and they easily let go of their children with the criminals.

Unemployment is another reason for which females fall under the trap of trafficking and are destined for sexual exploitation. The burden of running a family for various reasons like if the male family members are not working, or

if she is a widow or a divorcee, etc. comes on the shoulders of the female member. As these women do not have skilled knowledge and find themselves in immense responsibilities, they easily fall for the words of traffickers and trap in forced sexual works.

Devdassi custom in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra has led to a higher rate of human trafficking in the country. This ritual is a stigma of the society and considered as an offence but in many remote villages, the practice still exists. Young girls are devoted to the temples of different deities and after she hits puberty, she is used as a village prostitute. Some of these girls are kidnapped or abducted by the traffickers and kept in brothels under exploitative conditions.

Child Marriage may be thought of as an abolished ritual, but the cases of its existence are still witnessed in the backward and remote villages of India. The poor parents give away their girl child for low dowry to an aged groom. This groom then takes the girl to the traffickers or the brothels and sells her for some money.

Social Exclusion and discrimination in society also become the reason for Human trafficking. The females get frustrated with the discriminations and sometimes domestic violence or disturbing family environment and run away from their homes. These eloped girls become easy prey to the traffickers.

Luring by false promises is the most common tactic of the trafficker to attract the girls and the women. Marriages, employment opportunities, luxurious life, etc. are common assurance words for drawing in the vulnerable section under the trap of human trafficking. With the trust of these people, the girls leave their homes, and then they are sold into commercial sexual institutions. These girls are then forced into prostitution and kept in adverse situations by their recruiters.

Statelessness or lack of documentation also becomes a

reason for human trafficking. The poverty-ridden females migrate to new areas for job opportunities and the lack of proper documents of their origins makes them homeless. Their claims of being a citizen of a particular country are not backed with any proof and so they catch the eyes of the traffickers. The majority of Nepalese and Bangladeshi girls fall under this kind of trap.

Border areas serve as the crowded traffic flow zones of Human Trafficking. The rank of West Bengal and the North-Eastern states in the scale of flesh trade is high due to the proximity to the international borders. The transport of the victims to new lands makes the procedure of the business easier. Therefore, many Indian girls are sent to Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the Nepalese, Bangladesh girls are deported to India.

Natural Disaster and Wars boost human trafficking. During the calamities, be it natural or artificial, the abducted females are considered as death and so no complaints are filed and they are easier to sell in the trafficking markets.

Lack of Awareness among the girls about the nexus of trafficking also makes them vulnerable in society. They fail to understand the intention of the traffickers and trust them easily and fall for their fake promises.

These are some of the common driving forces that bring people under the cycle of human trafficking, moreover, some political and legal conflicts may also lead to this crime. Such as in Nepal, the extremist group supplies girls to traffickers for catering their requirements to hold the group. At present time the bar of human trafficking has not come down rather has increased to a greater extent. Furthermore, the numbers are rough estimations from the registered cases and rescued operations as the actual data cannot be collected for human trafficking.

Causes of Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is the second or third largest

organised crime in the World. Trafficking in women and children, a 9 billion USD (Rs 57,315 Crore approx.) industry, is estimated to be the fastest-growing enterprise of the 21st century (Sahoo. A.S., 2018). Some of the researchers have considered globalization as a reason for the expansion of crime (Naik. A.B, 2018; SSRN Paper). Human trafficking caters to various purposes and so the demand curve is always steep in the market. The study of Kamble (2018), Naik (2018), Sahoo (2018) and other social scientists have enlisted following conditions that have led to human trafficking.

The migration of the male counterparts to the town areas for jobs leaving their families back in the villages increases the demand for sex workers. The voluntary engagement in this field is negligible so trafficked girls are forced into the profession of prostitution.

Sex Tourism is another reason for human trafficking. The tourist places have a demand for sexual pleasure which is catered by the flesh trade of the country. The girls are kept on drugs and are forced into sexual exploitation. According to UNICEF 5lakh, child sex workers are forced into Sex tourism.

Bride abduction or Forced marriage is another purpose of human trafficking. In Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh because of higher female infanticide and foeticide, the sex ratio is very low which leads to a lack of marriageable women. So, the girls from the North-Eastern states of Assam and West Bengal are abducted and sold to the males of Haryana, Rajasthan, etc. Then these girls are forced into marriages so that no legal action of trafficking could be taken. However, after marriage they are not given the respect of their wife, rather used as a commodity and are sexually exploited by all the male members of the family.

Another important purpose that is fulfilled by human trafficking is **Military conscription** of females for sexual pleasure by abusing and exploiting the girl (Deb. H & Sanyal. T, 2017)

About 80% of female trafficking is for sexual purposes and is supplied in brothels or forced marriages. Sometimes they are also used as domestic help with sexual exploitation by their owners. Many a time the trafficked girls are resale to different recruiters at different rates. The girls do not have any say in the sale and purchase and they are trapped in the vicious circle. Furthermore, if these girls are rescued or are able to run from hell, then the societal rejection and family dismissal make them either go for suicide or to return to sexual exploitation.

National framework of laws related to human trafficking in India

1. The Constitution of India, 1949

Indian constitution provides some provisions for women and child trafficking.

- **Article 23**, of the constitution, guarantees the right against exploitation; prohibits traffic in human beings and other similar forms of forced labour and makes their practice punishable under law, and is enforceable against the State and private citizens.
- **Article 24** said that "No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment."
- **Article 39(e)** (the Directive Principles of State Policy articulated in the Constitution) directs its policy towards securing the health and strength of workers, men, and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength.
- **Article 39(f)** imposes a duty on the State to direct its policy towards ensuring that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment.

2. Indian Panel Code, 1860

According to Indian Panel Code, 1860, trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is a punishable crime, and the accused shall be punishable with non-bailable imprisonment of 3-10 years or for life, and shall also be liable to fine. There are 25 provisions covered under the Indian Panel Code, relevant to human trafficking. Some significant among them are

- **Kidnapping for begging (sec. 363A IPC);** kidnapping and maiming a minor for begging shall be punishable.
- **Procuration of minor girls (sec. 366A IPC);** inducing any minor girl under the age of 18 years to go from any place and be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse with another person shall be punishable.
- **Importation of girl from a foreign country (sec. 366B IPC);** importation of any girl under the age of 21 years from any other country into India or from the State of Jammu and Kashmir and forced or seduced to illicit intercourse with another person shall be punishable.
- **Kidnapping or abducting to subject the person to grievous hurt, slavery, etc. (sec. 367);** kidnapping or abducting any person for grievous hurt, slavery, or to the unnatural lust, etc. shall be punishable.
- **Kidnapping a child for stealing from its person (sec. 369 IPC);** kidnaping or abduction of any child under the age of 10 years to take dishonestly any movable property from the person of such child, shall be punishable.
- **Trafficking of persons (sec. 370 IPC);** the import, transport, harbor, transfer or receive of any person/ persons or minor/minors by using threats, or force, or any other form of coercion, or by abduction, or practicing fraud, deception, or by abuse of power, inducement, including the giving or receiving of payments or benefits, is the offense of trafficking and shall be punishable.

- **The exploitation of a trafficked person (sec. 370A IPC);** trafficking of a person and minor for sexual exploitation in any manner, shall be punished.
- **Selling of minors for prostitution (sec. 372 IPC);** marketing of girls under the age of 18 years for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or any unlawful and immoral purpose shall be punished.
- **Buying of minors for prostitution (sec. 373 IPC);** buying of any person under the age of 18 years for prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or any unlawful and immoral purpose shall be punished.
- **Punishment for rape (sec. 376 IPC);** committing rape on a woman or a minor under 16 years of age shall be punished.

3. Government Initiatives: Central Acts, Programs and Schemes

- **The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929:** It sets down the legal age of marriage as 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys and empowers the court to issue injunctions prohibiting child marriage.
- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956 (ITPA):** The Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act 1956 (SITA) is amended in 1978 and later renamed and amended as Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act in 1986. This act was enacted concerning the International Convention signed at New York on the 9th May 1950, for the prevention of immoral traffic. The salient offenses of this Act are the prohibition of brothels, living on the earnings of prostitution, detaining a person in premises where prostitution is carried on, prostitution in or vicinity of public places, seducing or soliciting for prostitution or of a person in custody.
- **The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:** This Act enacts to prohibit enormity against women and children of scheduled

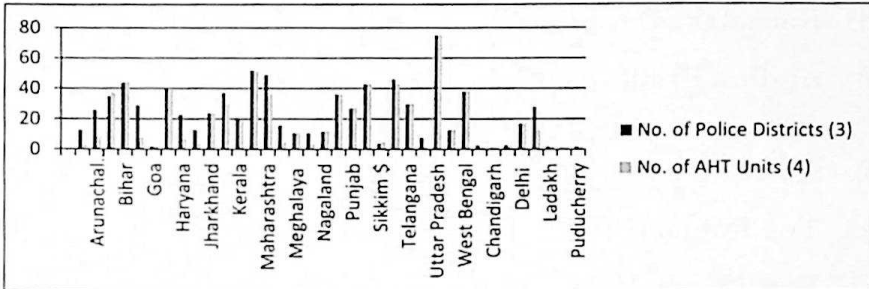
castes and scheduled tribes and to provide Special Courts for the trial of such offenses.

- **National Commission for Women Act, 1990:** This Act constitutes 'National Commission for Women (NCW)' that is concerned with advising the Government of India on all policy matters that affect women.
- **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993:** 'National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)' was established under this Act in 1993 which concerns the promotion and protection of human rights in India. NHRC works on the project for the formulation of 'Integrated National Plan of Action on Trafficking' in partnership with the 'National Commission for Women and the Ministry of Women and Child Development' to prevent and tackle the issues of trafficking in women and children.
- **National Plan of Action, 1998:** This Act was formulated to combat trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of women and children in 1998. It offers rehabilitation and reintegration to the survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and guides them back to normal social life.
- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000:** This Act consolidates and amends the law relating to juveniles in conflicts with law and to children in need of care and protection; especially pertinence to children who are vulnerable and are therefore likely to be inducted into trafficking.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** This Act is especially relevant to the problem of pornography.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:** The Act forbids child marriages in India. It also protects and assists the victims of child marriages.
- **Juvenile Justice Protection of Children from Sexual offenses (POCSO) Act, 2012:** It gives protection under special law to children from sexual abuse and exploitation and provides definitions to the terms like sexual abuse, including

penetrative and non-penetrative sexual assault, sexual harassment, etc.

- **The Criminal Law (amendment) Act, 2013:** This Act provides for amendment of Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 on laws related to sexual offenses against women.
- **Care and Protection of Children Act, 2015:** The Act focuses to provide proper care, protection, and treatment to the child's development, needs and by adopting a child-friendly approach for their ultimate rehabilitation through various institutions.
- **Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2016:** It provides for the establishment of investigation and rehabilitation authorities at the district, state, and national levels. Establishment of Anti-trafficking Units to rescue victims and investigate cases of trafficking and the creation of rehabilitation Committees that will provide care and rehabilitation to the rescued victims are the main focus of this Bill.
- **Immoral Trafficking (Prevention, Protection, and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018:** The Bill creates a law that comes with the provisions for investigation of all types of trafficking, and rescue, protection, and rehabilitation of trafficked victims.
- **Anti-Trafficking Nodal Cell State Program:** The Nodal cells are initiated by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) by appointing Anti-trafficking Nodal Officers in all states for dealing with the affairs that are connected to human trafficking.
- **Integrated Anti-Human Trafficking Units (IAHTUs):** To prevent and combat trafficking in persons, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has proposed to establish 330 Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), an integrated task force under strengthening the law enforcement response to human trafficking in India plan. It will be constituted by a

group of trained Police officials and the Women and Child Welfare and department of the State, and also reputed local NGOs in the selected five states Maharashtra, Goa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Bihar for the training.



Source: [https://ncrb.gov.in/sites/default/files/crime_in_india_table_additional_table_chapter_reports/Table%2014.8.pdf]

- **Swadhar Greh Scheme:** The scheme (launched by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2002) visions to furnish a supportive institutional framework for women victims of difficult circumstances, including sexual exploitation by providing the primary need of food, shelter, clothing so that they could restart their life with a fresh and dignified way. Under this program government also initiates economic and medical care to the victims.

- **Ujjawala Program:** This central scheme is a comprehensive scheme for the prevention of trafficking, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration of women and child victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2007. The target group of this program is women and children that are victims and are vulnerable to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.

- **Some States also enacted their Acts**

- Tamil Nadu Children Act, 1920
- The Bombay Devadasis Protection Act, 1934
- West Bengal Children Act, 1959
- Bihar Children Act, 1970

- e) Assam Children Act, 1970
- f) Andhra Pradesh Children Act, 1979
- g) Orissa Children Act, 1982
- h) Karnataka Devadasi (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982
- i) Andhra Pradesh Devadasi (Prohibiting Dedication) Act, 1989
- j) Goa Children's Act, 2003
- k) The Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012
- l) Tamil Nadu Hostel and Homes for Women and Children (Regulation) Act, 2014

- **The Role of NGOs**

There are several non-government organizations like Prena, Vihaan, Prajwala, Sankklap, Guria Swayam Sevi Sansthan, Rescue Foundation, and many more that have been working consistently on the ground either individually or in collaboration with the government to espouse combat against women and child traffickers. They diligently work in the sector of prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration, and counselling of victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Despite their limited resources, funding, training, and access to information; the number of initiatives and efforts that have been shown by them is credible.

Conclusion

Trafficking of women and girl child for sexual exploitation is one of the burning issues that any society has been facing over the years worldwide. Our research is to understand the factors and causes that drive this unlawful violence against women and child, particularly in India, and also to discuss the legal provisions and government initiatives to intercept the relentless crime. In our critical analysis we find out that mostly economic, social, cultural, and political factors such as poverty, unemployment, Devdassi, child

marriage, luring by false promises, statelessness, lack of awareness, etc. play a crucial role to lead this inexcusable offense. Lack of participation in higher education due to dependency of women on parental conditions in rural areas is the major issue of women trafficking, whereas social issues like stereotypical roles of men in the society and traditional roles of wife and mother who always have been called into question in all the matters, gender inequality, are the factors of women trafficking. On the other hand, some political circumstances like war, bribing, border issues, negligence by higher political authorities, etc. play a vital role in the process. Even though there are considerable legal actions against traffickers and several government initiatives such as Acts, Programs, Schemes, etc., and sedulous work of Non-governmental Organizations for prevention, identification, and rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration of the victims of this heinous crime, but are not enough to handle all the dimensions of the process. There are many escape clauses in our Laws and Acts that need to be revised to address these proceedings. To respond more productively and carry out a counter-trafficking network, the Indian government needs to create a system that can fight more strongly and effectively to destroy human trafficking. However, Laws and Acts can not only be the facets to eliminate all the problems related to human trafficking. Since trafficking of women and children in India has become sedentary and to fight this permanent and large industry needs positive and relentless efforts, scientific enquiry, remarkable perspectives, and multi-sectoral approaches to analyse the flows to overcome trafficking among women and children in India.

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দৰঙৰ লোক- উৎসৱ পুৰোহিতৰত বিশ্বায়নৰ প্ৰভাৱ :
এক অধ্যয়ন

ড° মুনমনি দেৱী

আৰম্ভণি :

লোক সংস্কৃতিৰ এক অপৰিহাৰ্য অঙ্গ উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠান। প্ৰকৃতিৰ ভয়াৱহ পৰিস্থিতিৰ পৰা হাত সাৰিবলৈ, প্ৰাকৃতিক শক্তিসমূহক পূজা সেৱা কৰা, পথাৰৰ শস্য আৰু মানুহৰ বংশবৃদ্ধিৰ বাবে সন্তান কামনা কৰা, মাৰি-মৰক ব্যাধি আদিৰ পৰা হাতসাৰি থকা, বিদ্যা বুদ্ধি তথা ধন-সম্পদ বিচৰা আদিয়েই উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানৰ প্ৰধান লক্ষ্য। উৎসৱ সমূহৰ ভক্তসকলে বিচৰা বস্তু বা পৰিস্থিতিক প্ৰায়ে প্ৰতীকাত্মক ৰূপত প্ৰকাশ কৰা হয়। ড° নবীন চন্দ্ৰ শৰ্মা দেৱৰ মতে উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠান সমূহ আদিম মানৱে কৰা ঐন্দ্ৰজালিক ক্ৰিয়া - কাণ্ডৰ উত্তৰ জীৱিতা মাথোন।^১

ঐতিহ্যপূৰ্ণ দৰং জিলা, বিভিন্ন ধৰ্ম গোষ্ঠী আৰু বিচিত্ৰ কলা - সংস্কৃতিৰে ভৰপূৰ। ইয়াত সামাজিক ব্যৱস্থাবে বিভিন্ন উৎসৱ পালিত হৈ আহিছে আৰু অতি সাম্প্ৰতিক কাললৈকে দৰং বাসী সংহতিৰ ডোলেৰে বান্ধ খাই আহিছে। মূলত উৎসৱ সমূহ বহুজনৰ সমাৱেশত কোনো এক নিদিষ্ট দিনত পূজা অৰ্চনা কৰাৰ লগতে ৰং-ধেমালী, নৃত্য-গীত, আনন্দৰ মাজেৰে পালিত হৈ আহিছে। পৰম্পৰাগত ভাৱে পালিত হৈ অহা লোক-উৎসৱ সমূহ ধৰ্মীয় অনুভূতিৰ

ওপৰত প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত। সেয়ে জাতি-ধৰ্ম, বৰ্ণ নিৰ্বিশেষে উৎসৱ সমূহে সকলো জনগোষ্ঠীকে মৰমৰ এনাজৰীৰে বান্ধি ৰাখিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। লোক - উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠানবোৰ বিভিন্ন সামাজিক আচৰণৰ জটিল ৰূপ। গ্ৰাম্য সংস্কৃতিত উৎসৱ - অনুষ্ঠানৰ প্ৰাধান্য অধিক। দৰঙত সৰু-বৰ বহুতো লোক-উৎসৱ আছে। এই উৎসৱ সমূহ ঘাইকৈ চাৰিটা ভাগত ভাগ কৰা হৈছে^১। ঋতুকালীন উৎসৱ, ২। পঞ্জিকা আশ্ৰয়ী উৎসৱ ৩। সংস্কাৰ মূলক ঘৰুৱা উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠান অথবা জীৱন-বৃত্তৰ লগত সম্পৰ্কযুক্ত উৎসৱ আৰু ৪। সীমিত অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰা উৎসৱ।

অধ্যয়নৰ উদ্দেশ্য :

এখন ঠাইৰ ঐতিহ্য বহনকাৰী উৎসৱ - পাৰ্বন সমূহৰ লগত সেই ঠাইৰ স্বকীয় ভাৱমূৰ্তিৰ বৰ ওচৰ সম্বন্ধ আছে আৰু সেইবোৰৰ যোগেদি সেই ঠাইৰ পৰম্পৰা আৰু সাময়িক ছবি ফুটি উঠা দেখা যায়। সময়ৰ পৰিৱৰ্তনে এইবোৰত বহুতো নতুনত্ব আনি দিছে। বিশ্বায়নৰ প্ৰভাৱত আমি ধৰ্মীয় ৰীতি-নীতিতকৈ বাহ্যিক জাকজমকতাহে অধিক গুৰুত্ব দিছে। নগৰীয়া আধুনিক সংস্কৃতিৰ হাতত প্ৰাচীন নীতিৰ গ্ৰাম্য সংস্কৃতিয়ে পৰাজয় স্বীকাৰ কৰিছে যদিও ধৰ্মীয় ভাৱধাৰাৰ ভেটি একেবাৰে উছন হোৱা নাই। বিভিন্ন কাৰণত সময়ভেদে মনৰ অমিল হ'লেও উৎসৱ সমূহৰ যোগেদি সকলোৱে পুনৰ একত্ৰিত হৈ কৃষ্টি - সংস্কৃতিৰে সাঙোৰ খাই কিদৰে এক দৰং বাসী হিচাপে পৰিচিত হৈ আহিছে। সেই বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰাৰ প্ৰয়াস কৰা হ'ব।

অধ্যয়নৰ পদ্ধতি :

এই অধ্যয়নত প্ৰধানকৈ বিশ্লেষণাত্মক পদ্ধতিৰ সহায় লোৱা হৈছে।

সমল সংগ্ৰহ :

অধ্যয়নৰ সমল সংগ্ৰহৰ বাবে লিখিত তথ্য অধ্যয়ন আৰু বিভিন্ন সমল ব্যক্তিৰ পৰা তথ্যসমূহ সংগ্ৰহ কৰা হৈছে।

অধ্যয়নৰ পৰিসৰ :

এই অধ্যয়নত প্ৰধানকৈ সংস্কাৰমূলক আৰু ঘৰুৱা উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠান অথবা জীৱন বৃত্তৰ লগত সম্পৰ্কযুক্ত উৎসৱ-অনুষ্ঠানৰ অন্তৰ্গত দৰঙৰ পুৰুষোৎসৱ

সম্পৰ্কতহে আলোচনা আগবঢ়োৱা হ'ব।

বিষয়বস্তুৰ আলোচনা :

দৰঙত যিবোৰ জাতি, উপ-জাতি বা জনগোষ্ঠী আছে, সকলোবোৰে এই উৎসৱ পালন নকৰে। কেৱল চাহ জনজাতিকে ধৰি হিন্দুখিনিয়েই পূৰ্বৰে পৰা এই উৎসৱ পালন কৰি আহিছে। বড়ো, মুছলমান আৰু নেপালী সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ মানুহখিনিয়ে স্বাভাৱিক বা প্ৰাকৃতিক এই ঘটনাটোক নাৰী জীৱনৰ এক গোপন ঘটনা বুলি গোপনীয়তা অৱলম্বন কৰে।

পূষ্পোৎসৱ যৌৱনাৰম্ভ হ'ল জীৱনৰ এক বিশেষ সময় , যি সময়ত মানুহে প্ৰজনন শক্তি লাভ কৰে। আনহাতে যি কৃত্যই বালিকাক শিশুকালৰ পৰা বিচ্ছেদন কৰি নাৰীত্বলৈ উত্তৰণ কৰে সেই কৃত্যক যৌৱনাৰম্ভ আখ্যা দিব পাৰি।

শৰীৰৰ কোনো অঙ্গ বিচ্ছেদনেই যৌৱনাৰম্ভ কৃত্যৰ মূল লক্ষ্য। সতীচ্ছদ ছিন্নকৰন, চুমত , আঙুলি বিচ্ছেদন, চুলিকটা, কৰ্ণবেধ আদি যৌৱনাৰম্ভ কৃত্যৰ অঙ্গীভূত জীৱনৰ এটা স্তৰে আন এটা স্তৰলৈ উত্তৰিত হোৱা প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰ পৰিক্ৰমাত যৌৱনাৰম্ভ সদৃশ উৎসৱ - অনুষ্ঠানৰ গুৰুত্ব অস্বীকাৰ কৰিব নোৱাৰি।

দৰঙত স্বৰূপাৰ্থত যৌৱনাৰম্ভ কৃত্য আৰম্ভ হয় গাত কাপোৰ দিয়া আনুষ্ঠানেৰে। সাম্প্ৰতিক সময়ত গাত কাপোৰ দিয়া অনুষ্ঠান দেখিবলৈ পোৱা নাযায় যদিও ঘৰৰ মাক-খুৰীয়েক-আইতাকহঁতে ছোৱালীজনীৰ দৈহিক সাধাৰণ পৰিৱৰ্তন চকুত পৰাৰ লগে-লগে বাহিৰলৈ ওলোৱা-সোমোৱা কৰোতে গাত কাপোৰ ল'বলৈ কোৱাহে পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। মুঠতে গাত কাপোৰ দিয়া বা গাত কাপোৰ ল'ব দিয়া কৃত্যই আগমুক পূষ্পোৎসৱৰ ইঙ্গিত বহন কৰে কিয়নো ছোৱালীজনী যে কন্যাকালত উপনীত হ'বলৈ বেছিদিন নাই সেই কথাষাৰেই আমাক সকীয়াই দিয়ে। আনকি ছোৱালীজনীক আইতাক-মাকহঁতে মিতিৰৰ ঘৰলৈকো পঠাবলৈ ভয় কৰে। ছোৱালী পুষ্পিতা হ'ব ভাবিয়েই আঠ-দহ বছৰত ভৰি দিয়াৰে পৰা মাকে কাপোৰ - কানি বোৱা, গহনা-গাঠুৰি গঢ়োৱা আদি কাম মনে-মনে কৰি থাকে। নিজে বব নাজানিলে আনৰ হতুৱাই হ'লেও বৈ সাঁচি থয়। পাট-মুগাৰ কাপোৰ দিলেও বোৱা-কাপোৰ সাঁচি ৰাখে।

দৰঙৰ লোক-সমাজত পুৰোহিতৰক তোলনি বিয়া, পুষ্পিতা হোৱা, দখ ডাঙাৰ হোৱা, মানুহ-হোৱা, লায়ক হোৱা, শাস্তি হোৱা, বয় যোৱা, ফুটা হোৱা, অনাচাৰ হোৱা, ধুৱেনী হোৱা, দুই বিয়াৰ হোৱা আদি নামেৰে জনা যায়।

তোলনি বিয়া আচলতে বিয়া এখনৰে প্ৰতীকি উৎসৱ। সংস্কাৰভিত্তিক এই অনুষ্ঠানটো নাৰীৰ সৃজনী ক্ষমতা লাভৰ স্বাক্ষৰ বহনকাৰী উৎসৱ।

প্ৰথম বজঃ দৰ্শন হোৱাৰ লগে-লগে ছোৱালীজনীক ঘৰৰ পুৰুষ বা ল'ৰা অথবা আলহী-অতিথি আদিয়ে সহজে নেদেখাকৈ আছুতীয়া কোঠাত থাকিবলৈ দিয়ে। কিয়নো পুষ্পিতা হোৱাৰ কালছোৱাত ছোৱালীজনীক নিলগকৈ কোনো পুৰুষৰ মুখ নেদেখাকৈ তিনিদিন, কোনো ঠাইত চাৰিদিন বখাতো আজিও দৰঙৰ সমাজত প্ৰচলিত হৈ আছে। ছোৱালীজনী থকা বিছনাখনৰ ওচৰতে এটা দুগৰিত বা কাঁহৰ বাটিত ধান, আগলতি কলপাত এখনত কল, মিঠা তেলৰ চাকি, তামোল - পাণ দি ছোৱালীজনীৰ ওচৰত ৰাখে। ছোৱালীজনী শুবলৈ ঠিক কৰা বিছনাখনৰ মূৰ শিতানত কটাৰী এখন ৰাখিবলৈ দিয়ে, যাতে ভূত-প্ৰেত আদি অপদেৱতাই অনিষ্ট কৰিব নোৱাৰে। আগতে ব্ৰাহ্মণাদি উচ্চকুলৰ ছোৱালীক পুষ্পিতা হোৱাৰ পূৰ্বেই বিয়া দিয়া হৈছিল, এই বিয়াক আগবিয়া বোলা হৈছিল। পুৰণি কালত ব্ৰাহ্মণ সমাজত ছোৱালী পুষ্পিতা হোৱাতো দোষণীয় আছিল। পুষ্পিতা হ'লে পৰাচিত (প্ৰায়চিত্ত) হ'ব লাগিছিল। এতিয়াও ব্ৰতৰ শেষত ছোৱালীজনীক পৰাচিত কৰা দেখা। শৰীৰটো শুদ্ধ হ'বৰ বাবে বা নিয়ম ভঙ্গ দোষ মাজনা হ'বৰ বাবে কাৰিক প্ৰায়চিত্ত কৰা হয়।^{১০} আগবিয়া দিয়া ছোৱালীৰ বিয়া হ'লে দৰাঘৰক পুষ্পিতা হোৱাৰ 'জননি' দিছিল। আগবিয়া নোহোৱা ছোৱালীৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত মোমায়েক অথবা সম্বন্ধীয় মানুহৰ ঘৰত জননি দিছিল। জননি সৰু গামোছা বা ৰুমাল এখনত তামোল-পাণ ১ (এক) যোৰ, অপৰাজিতা বা জয়ন্তী ফুল এটা, ডালিমৰ কলি এটা আৰৈ চাউল এমুঠি, ডিমৰুৰ গুটি এযোৰ, বগা বেঙেনা এটি ধোপটোৰ দৰে কেইবা পাক কৰি বন্ধা বস্ত্ৰ বিশেষক 'জননি' বোলে। জননিত দিয়া প্ৰতিটো বস্ত্ৰেই যৌনজীৱন বা প্ৰজননৰ প্ৰতীক। তামোল-পাণে ভৱিষ্যৎ যুৰীয়া জীৱনৰ ইঙ্গিত বহন কৰে। জয়ন্তী বা অপৰাজিতা ফুল স্ত্ৰী অঙ্গৰ প্ৰতীক। ডালিমৰ কলি, আৰৈ চাউল আৰু ডুমৰুৰ গুটিয়ে প্ৰজনন

ক্ষমতাৰ ইঙ্গিত বহন কৰে। বগা বেঙেনা পুৰুষাঙ্গৰ প্ৰতীক। জননি দিয়া যজাননী দিয়া মানে গাঁৱত অমুকৰ ছোৱালী ডাঙৰ হ'ল বুলি জনোৱা হ'ল। এই কাৰণেই কিজানি আইসকলে জননি দিছিল বুলি ভবাৰ থল আছে।

ছোৱালীজনী পুষ্পিতা হোৱাৰ দিনা বা পিছদিনা মাক-দেউতাকৰ হাতত তামোল-পাণ এযোৰ আৰু আধলি-সিকি যি পাৰে মাননি দি দৈৱজ্ঞৰ ওচৰলৈ পঠিয়াই বা কিছুমানে ঘৰলৈ দৈৱজ্ঞক মাতিও গণনা কৰা দেখা যায়। দৈৱজ্ঞই গণনা কৰি ছোৱালীজনীৰ বিয়া সাত দিনত হ'ব নে ১৫ দিনত হ'ব, নে ২১ দিনত হ'ব তাৰ নিৰ্ণয় কৰে, ছোৱালী তোলনী হ'বৰ সময়ত যি নক্ষত্ৰ হয় সেই নক্ষত্ৰ অনুসাৰে পতিহিতা, ক্ৰান্তা, সুভগা, বেষ্যা, দুঃশীলা আৰু পতিহীনা যোগ পায়। দৈৱজ্ঞই কোৱা মতে পতিহিতা, ক্ৰান্তা, সুভগা যোগ ভাল। ছোৱালীজনী পদ্মীনী (পদুমনি) কন্যা, চিত্ৰিনী (চিত্তেনী) কন্যা, শঙ্খিনী (শাখিনী) নে হস্তিনী (হাথিনী) কন্যা তাকো কৈ দিয়ে। প্ৰথমতে কি বস্ত্ৰ মুখত দিব, ধুৱাবৰ বাবে কোনখিনি সময় শুভ, ধুৱাই উঠি কি বস্ত্ৰ দেখুওৱাব লাগিব, কিমান দিন ব্ৰত পালিব লাগিব সেইটো নিৰ্দিষ্ট কৰি দিয়ে।

প্ৰথম দিনা পুষ্পিতা হোৱা ছোৱালীজনীক খাদ্য গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ দিয়া নহয়। পিছৰ কেইদিনত দৈৱজ্ঞৰ পৰামৰ্শ অনুসৰি কেৱল গাখীৰ আৰু ফলাহাৰহে কৰিবলৈ দিয়া হয়। ওচৰৰ আয়তীসকলে গাখীৰ, বুটমাহ, ফল-মূল, আদি লৈ আহি ছোৱালীজনীক নাৰী জীৱনৰ ঘাত-প্ৰতিঘাতৰ কথা বুজাই দিয়ে আৰু মাককো দিহা-পৰামৰ্শ দিয়ে। মাটি খুচৰি বা হাতেৰে ইটো-সিটো কৰি থাকিব নাপায় বা টানকৈ কথা ক'ব নাপায় আদি কথাৰেও বুজনি দিয়া দেখা যায়।

সন্ধিয়া সময়ত ছোৱালীজনীৰ মঙ্গল কামনা কৰি চাৰি - পাঁচ জনীমান কুমাৰী ছোৱালীয়ে সন্ধিয়া সময়ত চাকি জ্বলাই উৰুলি দিয়ে। উৰুলিয়ে তোলনি হোৱা ছোৱালীজনীৰ গাত উৰ্বৰা শক্তি জগাই তোলে বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও দিন - ৰাতি সন্ধিক্ষণৰ সন্ধ্যা সময় (কাল-সন্ধ্যা) খিনি বিপদমুক্ত নহয় বুলি ধৰি সমাগত ৰাতিত আৰ্বিভাৰ হ'ব পৰা ভূত-প্ৰেত বোৰৰ পৰা নিৰাপদে থাকিবলৈ চাকি জ্বলাই ধূপ-ধুনা দি উৰুলি হিয়া হয়।

প্ৰচলিত প্ৰথামতে তোলনি হোৱাৰ তৃতীয়দিনা আয়তীসকল আহি পৰিয়ালৰ সৈতে ছোৱালীৰ ঘৰত আঠৈ ফুটায়। এই আঠৈ ফুটোৱা কৃত্যৰ লগতো প্ৰজনন বা উৰ্বৰা বিশ্বাস জড়িত। আঠৈ যিমনে ফুটে ছোৱালীজনীয়েও সিমনে প্ৰজনন ক্ষমতা ধাৰণ কৰি ভৱিষ্যতে বংশবৃদ্ধি কৰে বুলি ধৰা হয়। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও ভজা আঠৈ সম্পূৰ্ণৰূপে ফুলি উঠিলে কন্যা সন্তান আৰু নুফুলা বা অৰ্দ্ধ প্ৰস্ফুটিত হ'লে ল'ৰা সন্তান হ'ব বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়।

চতুৰ্থ দিনা দৰঙৰ পৰাম্পৰাগত ৰীতিমতে গাঁৱৰ আয়তীসকলে আৰু আত্মীয় কুটুম সকলোৱে লগ হৈ উৎসৱ মুখৰ পৰিৱেশ সৃষ্টি কৰি তোলনি হোৱা ছোৱালীজনীক গা-ধুৱায়। ইয়াক চুৱা-ধোৱেনী বোলে। ছোৱালীজনীক মূৰে - গায়ে কাপোৰেৰে ঢাকি বা চকুমুদি থাকিব দি ঘৰৰ পৰা বাহিৰলৈ উলিয়াই অনা হয় আৰু বাৰীৰ একাষে পূৰমুৱাকৈ পুতি থোৱা কলপুলিৰ তলত আনুষ্ঠানিকভাৱে মাকে ছোৱালীজনীক তুলি আনি থোৱা পানী আৰু মাহ-হালধিৰে গা-ধুৱায়। সেইসময়ত আয়তীসকলৰ এগৰাকীয়ে আন এগৰাকীক পিঠাওৰি সানি স্ফুৰ্টি কৰাও দেখা যায়। বিয়া নামেৰে আয়তীসকলে উৎসৱ মুখৰ পৰিৱেশ সৃষ্টি কৰে। তলত গা ধুৱাওতে গোৱা বিয়া পদ এটি উল্লেখ কৰা হ'ল—

মাহ মূৰত দিয়া, হালধি ভৰিত দিয়া
 ঐ ৰাম ধীৰে পানী ঢালি দিয়া হে
 মৰমৰ মাকে গেল চাতে মাৰি
 ঐ ৰাম মেখেলা আনোঙ্গৈ বুলিহে
 ৰৌমাছ খাইটি ঐ ভকুৱা গালি ঐ
 ঐ ৰাম তইহে ধুৱাবা পালিহে
 ধুৱেবি ধুৱেবি ভালকে ধুৱেবি
 ঐ ৰাম মুখখান বোকোৰা কিয়া হে।।*

গাধুৱাই উঠি সোণ-ৰূপৰ পানী ছটিয়াই সূৰ্যৰ ফালে দেখুৱাই সেৱা কৰায়। বিধি অনুযায়ী গুটি লগা গছৰ ফালে চাবলৈ দিয়া হয়। তেনে কৰিলে ছোৱালীজনীয়ে সোনকালে স্বামী পাই আৰু সন্তানৰ মাক হ'ব পাৰে বা ভৱিষ্যতে সংসাৰখন ভৰা-পূৰা হয় বুলি ধৰা হয়। সেয়ে তোলনি

বিয়াত গোৱা পদত আছে-
 গা ধুই ৰুকুণী অইন দিগিৰ নাচেবি
 ভৰা বিৰিখকে চাবি এ
 ভৰা বিৰিখডাল প্ৰতিপাল কৰ্বি
 অল্পতে জননী হ'বি এ।।"

বিধি অনুযায়ী কেতিয়াবা ৰাজহাঁহ, বগা পাৰ আদিও দেখুৱায়। কেতিয়াবা কোনো ছোৱালীক ক'লা ভোবোৰা ছাগলী আদিও দেখুৱাব লগীয়া হয়।^১ প্ৰবাদ আছে যে কৌৰৱ মাতৃ গান্ধাৰী পুষ্পিতা হোৱাত দোষযুক্ত হৈছিল। সেই দোষ নিবাৰনৰ বাবে কৃষ্ণ অজৰ লগত বিয়া দিয়া হৈছিল। গা - ধুওৱাৰ পিছত যিটো কলপুলিৰ তলত গা ধুওৱা হৈছিল সেই কলপুলিটো গাতটোতে পুতি থোৱাৰ নিয়ম অদ্যাপি দৰঙত প্ৰচলিত।

ইয়াৰ পিছত ছোৱালীজনীক নতুন মেখেলা - চাদৰ পিন্ধাই কপালত সেন্দূৰ (কামৰ পত্নীক) ৰ ফোট দি গাভৰু সজাই আত্মসচেতনতাৰ মনোভাৱ জগাই তোলা হয়। ধুওৱা ঠাইৰ পৰা দাংকো লাকৈ আনি চোতালত পাৰি থোৱা আঠীয়াকলৰ আগলতি কলপাতত প্ৰথম খোজটো দিয়াৰ নিয়ম আজিও আছে। আগৰেপৰা সজাই থোৱা আসনত ছোৱালীজনীক বহুৱাই আয়তীসকলে কইনা সজোৱাত ব্যস্ত হৈ পৰে আৰু গায়-

অ' দলি চপৰা
 আনক কি সজাবা
 নিজৰ মূৰে ৰাপৰা।
 আহি কি দেখিলো মুখৰে হাঁহি
 গোটাই গাতোতে ভোকেলীৰ ছাহী
 খুজাওতে খুজাওতে হৈ গেল যা
 বাৰ বছৰতো নোধোৱেই গা

বয়োজেষ্ঠ আই সকলে দিয়া দিহা মতে ছোৱালীজনীৰ সন্মুখত আগলতি কলপাতৰ ওপৰত চাকি-বস্তি, ধূপ-ধূনা দি তামোল-পাণেৰে দুৰ্গৰি এটাত চাউল, কল, প্ৰসাদো আগবঢ়ায়। এই মাহ-প্ৰসাদ পু ৰক্ষক খাবলৈ দিয়া নহয়। ইয়াৰ

পিছত ডালিমৰ ফুল (ডালিমক জৰায়ুৰ প্ৰতীক বুলি ধৰা হয়),^১ তামৰ পইচাঘআঙঠি, তামোল - পাণ এযোৰ টোপোলা বান্ধি 'কনাই' (জননি) অৰ্থাৎ সন্তানৰ প্ৰতীক সজাই মাক বা আন আয়তীয়ে কনাইটোৰ ওপৰত সনা পিঠাগুৰি অলপ ঢালি ঢালি এবাৰ নিজৰ কোলাত এবাৰ কইনাজনীৰ কোলাত দিয়ে ইয়াকে ধোপখেলাবোলে। কনাইটো ইকোলা-সিকোলা কৰি থাকোতে পিছফালৰ পৰা কোনোবা এগৰাকীয়ে কনাই লওঁতাজনীৰ নাকে-মুখে পিঠাগুৰি সানে, আকৌ আন এজনীয়ে পানী ঢালি বহি থকা পীৰাখন টান মাৰি নি চোঁচবাই ৰং-ধেমালী কৰে, খুৰীয়েক বা সমবয়সীয়া আন এগৰাকীয়ে অস্বাভাৱিক ভাৱে অমিতাৰে গথা মালা পিন্ধি মূৰত জাঁপি, হাতত লাখুটি লৈ উপস্থিত আয়তীসকলক হাঁহিৰ খোৰাক যোগায়।

এনেদৰে প্ৰচলিত সকলো নিয়ম কৰোৱাৰ পিছত কইনাজনীয়ে আঠুকাটি ভগৱানৰ ওচৰত সেৱা লয় আৰু আয়তীসকলে ভৱিষ্যত জীৱন সুখৰ হোৱাৰ কামনাৰে উৰুলি জোকাৰ দিয়ে। ইয়াৰ পিছত মাক বা আন কোনোবাই ঘৰৰ ভিতৰলৈ আগবঢ়াই লৈ যায়। ছোৱালীজনী ঘৰৰ দুৱাৰমুখ পোৱাৰ লগে লগে 'দোলনি' (দুনৰি) ৰ চাকিটো ওভোতাই দি কইনাজনীক গচকি যাবলৈ দিয়া হয়। গচকত চাকিটো ভাঙি টুকুৰা - টুকুৰ হ'লে ছোৱালীজনীক ভৱিষ্যতে সন্তানৰ মাক হ'ব বুলি বিশ্বাস কৰা হয়। লোকবিশ্বাস মতে যিমানটা টুকুৰা হয় সিমানটা সন্তান ছোৱালীজনীয়ে ভৱিষ্যতে প্ৰসৱ কৰে।

ধুৱেনী উপলক্ষে আগবঢ়োৱা মাহ-প্ৰসাদ আইসকলে খায়, এই মাহ-প্ৰসাদ পুৰুষে খাব নোৱাৰে। আনকি পুস্পোৎসৱ হ'বলগীয়া গাভৰুৱে এই মাহ-প্ৰসাদ নাখায়, তেল-সেন্দুৰ নলয়। কাৰণ পুস্পোৎসৱৰ মাহ-প্ৰসাদ খোৱা পাটগাভৰু সোনকালে ধুৱেনী হয়। সেইদৰে পুৰুষে খালে খাওতাজনৰ আয়ুস ক্ষয় হয় বুলিও লোকসমাজত বিশ্বাস প্ৰচলিত আছে।

চুৱা ধুৱেনীৰ পিছৰ পৰা ছোৱালীজনীয়ে ঘৰৰ বাহিৰ ওলাবলৈ পাৰে। ব্ৰাহ্মণ বা কায়স্থ ভিন্ন আন লোকে চুৱাধুৱেনী অনুষ্ঠিত কৰাৰ পিছত দৈৱজ্ঞই নিৰ্দিষ্ট কৰি দিয়া দিনত ভাল ধুৱেনী সম্পন্ন কৰিহে তোলনি বিয়া পাতে। পাৰিবাৰিক সুবিধা অসুবিধা অনুযায়ী তুলি বা সামৰি থৈ যিকোনো এটা দিনত

বিয়াখন পাতিব পাৰি বাবেই কিজানি নিৰক্ষৰা, সৰলমনা আইসকলে এই বিয়াক 'তোলনি বিয়া' বুলিছিল। তোলনি বিয়া অনুষ্ঠিত নোহোৱা পৰ্যন্ত ছোৱালীজনীয়ে কিছুমান নীতি-নিয়মৰ মজেৰে থাকিবলগীয়া হয়।^{১০} যেনে-

কোনো মন্দিৰ বা তীৰ্থস্থানলৈ যাব নোৱাৰে
মাঙ্গলিক কাৰ্যৰ যা-যোগাৰ কৰিব নোৱাৰে
ব্ৰাহ্মণ সজ্জনক চাহ-তামোল দিব নোৱাৰে
আনকি ৰন্ধা - বঢ়া কামো কৰিব নোৱাৰে।

দৰঙত বিবাহৰ আগে আগে তোলনি বিয়া পতাটো পৰম্পৰাগত। আৰ্থিক দুৰৱস্থা বা আন কিবা অসুবিধাত যদি তোলনি বিয়া পাতিব নোৱাৰে আৰু এই নোৱাৰাৰ মাজতে যদি বৰ বিয়া (শুভ বিবাহ) হৈ যায় বা নিজে নিজে বিয়া হৈ গুছি যায়, তাৰ পিছত যদি সন্তান-সন্ততিৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত বহুদিনলৈ অসুবিধাৰ সন্মুখীন হয় তেতিয়া মানুহে 'আয়তীৰ লেঠা' থকা বুলি কয়।

উল্লেখযোগ্য যে কিছুমান ছোৱালীৰ আদ্যৰাত্ত একেবাৰে নোহোৱাকৈ থাকে তাক 'ডলদাঁহী' ^{১১} তিৰোতা বোলে। এওঁলোকক ধৰ্মীয় কামত আগভাগ লোৱা দেখা নাযায়। অৱশ্যে কোনোবাই বাধা দিয়ে নে নিজেই মনৰ আৱেগত অংশগ্ৰহণ নকৰে তাক সঠিককৈ জনা নাযায়।

বিধি অনুসাৰে যিমান দিনৰ ব্ৰত সেইদিনাহে তোলনি বিয়া তোলাৰ নিয়ম। চুৱাধুৱেনীৰ পিছতহে আচল ধুৱেনী উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। সাধাৰণতে আগবেলা ধুৱেনী অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। ধুৱেনী কাৰ্য সমাধা হোৱাৰ পিছত ভাটিবেলা ছোৱালীজনীৰ বিয়া পাতে। আত্মীয়-স্বজনৰ ঘৰত দিয়া 'জননি' বিয়াৰ দিনাখন এজনী সৰু ছোৱালীয়ে জপাৰ ভিতৰত ভৰাই লগতে আৰ্চী-ফণি, তেল-সেন্দুৰ, আঁঠে, বুটমাহ আৰু পিন্ধাবলৈ বুলি কাপোৰ এসাজ আনে। আহোতে আয়তীসকলে সদলবলে গীত-পদ গাই আহে। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও বিয়ালৈ আহোতে নিমন্ত্ৰিত সকলো আয়তীয়ে হাতত বুটমাহৰ শৰাই একোখন অনা দেখা যায়। দৰাঘৰৰ প্ৰতীক ৰূপী জননি কঢ়িয়াই অনা ছোৱালীজনী হ'ল দৰাঘৰৰ প্ৰতীক। এইখন বিয়াতো কনাই বা জননি লোৱাৰ নিয়ম আৰু অন্যান্য নিয়মখিনি চাৰিদিনৰ বিয়াখনত কৰা নিয়মৰ সৈতে একেই। এই প্ৰসঙ্গত কোনো কোনোৰ

মতে জননিটো ছোৱালীজনীৰ সন্তান স্বৰূপ আৰু কোনোৰ মতে স্বামীস্বৰূপ। ধোপখেলাৰ পিছতেই বিয়াৰ সামৰণি পৰে। বিয়াৰ পিছত বুটমাহ, আঠৈ, স্থানবিশেষে জালুকৰ গুৰি মিহলোৱা পিঠাগুৰি, চুজি, চিৰা-সান্দহ, মাহকৰাই আদিও খুৱায়। সাধ্য অনুসাৰে নিজৰ পৰিয়ালৰ আত্মীয়-স্বজনক মাতি ভোজ - ভাত খুৱায়।

পুষ্পোৎসৱ সম্পূৰ্ণৰূপে স্ত্ৰীউৎসৱ। কিছুদিন আগলৈকে তোলনি বিয়াৰ আন এটি আনুষঙ্গিক অনুষ্ঠান আছিল সখীবন্ধা। বৰ্তমান সখীবন্ধা অনুষ্ঠানটো দেখিবলৈ পোৱা নাযায়। হাঁহি - ধেমালীৰে পৰিপূৰ্ণ পুষ্পোৎসৱ আয়তীসকলৰ মিলন তীৰ্থ আৰু অতি মৰমৰ উৎসৱ। বিয়া হৈ যোৱাৰ পিছত দৈৱজ্ঞই নিৰ্ধাৰিত কৰি দিয়া অনুসৰি সিদ্ধ ভাত নিজে ৰান্ধি পদুমৰ পাত বা কলপাতত হবিয়ান কৰিব লাগে। হবিয় শেষ হোৱাৰ পিছত পুৰোহিতক মাতি বিধি অনুযায়ী গুচি কৰি লোৱা হয় আৰু পৰিয়ালৰ সৈতে পুনৰ খাব পৰা হয়।

দৰঙৰ চাহ-জনগোষ্ঠীয় লোকসকলেও তোলনি বিয়া উদ্‌যাপন কৰা দেখা যায়। সাইলাখ একে নহলেও ধুওৱা আৰু বিয়াৰ প্ৰকৃত নিয়মখিনি প্ৰায় একেই। কেৱল লোকবিশ্বাস অনুসৰি তেওঁলোকে ধুৱেণী হোৱা দিনৰ পৰা ধুওৱা দিনালৈ শিল এটা শেতেলী (বিচনা) এখনত ৰাখে। শিলটোক তেওঁলোকে সন্তানৰ প্ৰতীক হিচাপে গণ্য কৰে। ১২ কইনা ধুওৱাৰ আগে আগে ছোৱালীজনীৰ মঙ্গল কামনা কৰি পূজা এভাগ কৰে। অৱশ্যে এই পূজাভাগ পুৰুষ সকলেহে কৰা দেখা যায়। ছোৱালীজনী বিয়াত বহুৱাই সন্মুখত সেন্দুৰৰ ফোঁট দিয়া আমপাত পাঁচ খিলা ভৰোৱা এঘটি পানী আৰু কাঁহৰ থালত দুবৰি, হালধি সনা আঁৰৈ চাউল, গোবৰৰ লাড়ু, পিঠাগুৰিৰ লাড়ু আৰু চাকি এগছি দিয়ে। চাহ জনজাতি সকলৰ জননি দিয়া বা দৰাপক্ষ অহাৰ কোনো নিয়ম নাই। ইয়াৰ বাহিৰে বাকী নিয়ম হিন্দুধৰ্মী লোক সকলৰ সৈতে একেই।

আনহাতে দৰঙৰ নেপালীসকলে ছোৱালীজনী পুষ্পিতা হোৱাৰ সময়ত এসপ্তাহ বেলেগৰ ঘৰত ৰখাৰ নিয়ম আছে। উক্ত দিনকেইটা সাধাৰণতে পুৰুষৰ মুখ আৰু ৰ'দ চাবলৈ দিয়া নহয়। পৰিস্কাৰকৈ ৰখা হয়, ৰান্ধনি ঘৰত সোমাবলৈ দিয়া নহয়, দমকল, কুঁৱা, পুখুৰী আদি চুবলৈ দিয়া নহয় আৰু বাইশ দিনলৈ

কোনো মাস্তলিক কাৰ্য কৰিবলৈ দিয়া নহয়। নেপালী সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ লোকে ছোৱালী ঋতুমতী হোৱাৰ আগতে বেলাৰ লগত সম্পূৰ্ণ মাস্তলিক পৰম্পৰাৰে বিয়া পাতি দিয়ে।^{১০}

দৰঙত তোলনি বিয়া সকলো লোকে পালন নকৰে নতুবা অনুষ্ঠুপীয়াকৈ আয়োজন কৰে। এই ক্ষেত্ৰত বড়ো জানজাতিৰ লোকৰ কথা উল্লেখ কৰিব পাৰি। তেওঁলোকে পুষ্পিতা হোৱা ছোৱালীজনীক চাৰি বা পাঁচদিনৰ পিছত কলগছৰ গুৰিত পীৰা পাৰি গা-ধুৱায়। গা ধুওৱা পানীখিনি আয়তীসকলে আগতীয়াকৈ নিদিষ্ট ৰীতি-নীতিৰে ওচৰৰ পুখুৰী বা নদীৰ পৰা তুলি আনে। গা ধুওৱাৰ পিছত আত্মীয় - কুটুম্বক মাতি আনি ভোজ-ভাত খুৱায় যদিও এই উৎসৱ সামৰ্থ অনুযায়ীহে কৰা হয় বা নকৰিলেও হয়। তিনিদিন, পাঁচদিন, সাতদিনত পদুম পাতত হবিষান্ন কৰে। তাৰ পিছত বগা ফুল, সোণ-ৰূপৰ পানীৰে গা-ধুৱাই গুচি কৰি লয় আৰু পৰিয়ালৰ লোকৰ সৈতে পুনৰ খাব পৰা হয়।^{১১}

দৰঙত বাস কৰা মুছলমান সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ লোকে পুষ্পিতা হোৱাক 'সাবালিকা হোৱা' বা 'নাপাক হোৱা' বুলি কয়। ছোৱালী সাবালিকা হ'লে এই সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ লোকে কোনো উৎসৱ পালন নকৰে যদিও কিছুমান নীতি-নিয়ম পালনেৰে ছোৱালীজনীক এটা নতুন জীৱনলৈ আঙুৱাই দিয়া হয়। নাপাক হোৱা গম পোৱাৰ লগে-লগে মাক বা খুড়ীয়েকে মতা মানুহে নেদেখাকৈ ছোৱালীজনীক আছুতীয়া কোঠাত ৰাখে। উল্লেখযোগ্য যে, নাপাক হোৱা খবৰটো দেউতাকৰ বাহিৰে ঘৰৰ আন মতা মানুহক জনোৱা নহয়। ছোৱালীজনীক কোঠাটোৰ ভিতৰত কোনো এক আসনত বহিবলৈ দিয়ে তাৰ পিছত মাক বা খুড়ীয়েকে মাটি মাহ আৰু কেঁচা হালধি মিহিকৈ বটি লৈ ছোৱালীজনীৰ দুবাৰ তলত আৰু গুপ্তাঙ্গত লেপি দিবলৈ শিকাই দিয়ে। এনেকৈ কিছুসময় থাকিবলৈ দি সেইদিনাই গা ধুওৱাৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰে। তিনিটা পুখুৰীৰ তিনিটা ঘাটৰ পৰা পানী আনি তাৰ লগত আন পানী মিহলাই দি তাত বগা ফুলৰ পাঁচটা বা সাত টা, দুবাৰি বন, এঁৱা গাখীৰ অলপ, আৰৈ চাউল অলপ মিহলি কৰি ছোৱালীজনীক গা ধুবলৈ লৈ যোৱা হয়। ছোৱালীজনীক মাক বা খুড়ীয়েকে গা ধুৱাই দিয়ে। গা ধুওৱাৰ সময়ত প্ৰথমতে মূৰত পানী ঢালি চুলিখিনি তিয়াই দিয়া হয়। তাৰ

পিছত নাভিৰ পৰা তলৰ অংশ তিনিবাৰ বা পাঁচবাৰ মান ধোৱা হয়। ইয়াৰ পিছত চাবোনেৰে গা ধুওৱা হয়। লোকবিশ্বাস অনুসৰি ছোৱালীজনীৰ মূৰত যেতিয়া প্ৰথম পানী ঢলা হয় তেতিয়া চকু মেলি থাকিবলৈ দিয়া হয়। কিয়নো চকু মেলি মূৰত পানী ঢালিলে হেনো ছোৱালীজনীৰ যি মাহেকীয়া হ'ব সেয়া দিনৰ ভাগতহে হ'ব অন্যথা চকু জপাই থাকিলে ৰাতি হোৱাৰ সম্ভাৱনা থাকে। গা ধুওৱাৰ পিছত কাপোৰ পিন্ধাই আগৰ কোঠালিটোত পুনৰ বহুৱাই চাহ বা ফল-মূল খাবলৈ দি ভাত খাবলৈ দিয়া হয়। চতুৰ্থ দিনৰ দিনা ঘৰত মৌলবীৰ হতুৱাই কোৰাণ পাঠ কৰি ছোৱালীজনী পৱিত্ৰ কৰা হয়। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও পঞ্চম বা সপ্তম দিনৰ দিনা গৃহস্থৰ সামৰ্থ অনুযায়ী তিনি বা পাঁচজনী সমবয়সীয়া ছোৱালীক মাছ মঙহকে ধৰি পাঁচ বিধ বা সাত বিধ ব্যঞ্জনেৰে ভাত খুৱাই সন্তুষ্ট কৰে। এইদৰে সাত দিন পিছত ছোৱালীজনী পৱিত্ৰ হয় আৰু পুনৰ ঘৰৰ পৰিয়ালৰ সৈতে থকা-খোৱা স্বাভাৱিকভাৱে কৰিব পাৰে।^{১৩}

পুস্পোৎসৱৰ লগত কিছুমান বিশ্বাস জড়িত হৈ আছে। তলত উল্লেখ কৰা হ'ল-

ক) আহাৰ অথবা আঘোণ মাহ, শুক্ল পক্ষ, ৰাতিপুৱা আৰু নিজ ঘৰত একো নোখোৱাকৈ থকা অৱস্থাত পুষ্পিতা হোৱা ভাল।

খ) পুষ্পিতা হোৱা সময়ছোৱাত ছোৱালীজনীয়ে খেতি-পথাৰ, শাক-পাচলিৰ বাৰী অথবা তামোল-পাণৰ বাৰীত সোমাব নোৱাৰে। আনকি গোঁসাইঘৰ বা ধৰ্ম্মীয় স্থান কিম্বা পূজা পাতলৰ স্থানলৈ গ'লে সেই ঠাই অপৱিত্ৰ হয় বুলি ধৰা হয়।

গ) ঘৰৰ চাৰিবেৰৰ ভিতৰত ঋতুকালীন গা ধুব লাগিব। কোনোৱে পুষ্পিতা হোৱা সময়ত ছোৱালীজনীয়ে পিন্ধি থকা সাজপাৰ মাটিত পুতি থয়।

ঘ) পুষ্পিতা হোৱাৰ পৰা গা-ধোৱাৰ চাৰিদিনলৈ ছোৱালীজনীয়ে ভাত খাব নোৱাৰে, কেৱল ফল-মূল আৰু গাখীৰহে খাব পাৰে।

ঙ) অপদেৱতাৰ পৰা ৰক্ষা পাবৰ বাবে পুষ্পিতা হোৱা অৱস্থাত এখন সৰু চাকু বা দবুৱা কটাৰী ৰাখে।

মুঠতে পুষ্টিতা হোৱা সময়ছোৱা কোনো কোনোৱে ধুমধামেৰে, কোনোৱে অনুষ্ঠুপীয়াকৈ আৰু কোনোৱে একেবাৰে পালন নকৰে। কিন্তু এই সময় ছোৱাত সকলোৱে সাৱধানতা অৱলম্বন কৰা দেখা গৈছে। এগৰাকী ছোৱালীৰ দৈহিক পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ সময়ছোৱাত কোনো কষ্টকৰ কাম কৰিব দিয়া নহয় বা নাপায়, নুচুৰি নিয়মৰ মাজেৰে যাতে ছোৱালীজনীয়ে জিবণি লৈ থাকিব পাৰে সেই উদ্দেশ্য এই লোকাচাৰ সমূহৰ মাজত দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়।

ইংৰাজী Globalization শব্দটোৰ প্ৰতিশব্দ হিচাপে আমাৰ ভাষাত বিশ্বায়ন, গোলকীকৰণ আদি শব্দ ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা হয়। বিংশ শতিকাৰ শেষাৰ্দ্ধত আৰু সমাজবাদী শিবিৰৰ পতনৰ উত্তৰ কালত বিশ্ব পুঁজিবাদে নিৰ্মাণ কৰি তোলা আন্তৰ্জাতিক আৰ্থৰাজনৈতিক ব্যৱস্থাটোৰ অন্য নাম হ'ল বিশ্বায়ন।^{১৩} ১৯৯০ দশকত বিশ্বায়নে নতুন মাত্ৰা লাভ কৰে। ইয়াৰ পৰিধি সম্প্ৰসাৰিত হয় বাণিজ্য, প্ৰযুক্তি, যাতায়ত, শিল্প, সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতি, ধৰ্ম, অৰ্থনীতি আৰু মানুহৰ সৰ্বাত্মক চিন্তা জগতলৈ। মুঠতে বিশ্বায়ন হ'ল পুঁজিবাদী ব্যৱস্থাবেই এটি সম্প্ৰসাৰিত ৰূপ, যি ভৌগোলিকভাৱে সুবিস্তৃত আৰু মানুহৰ প্ৰতিটো ক্ষেত্ৰকেই গভীৰভাৱে প্ৰভাৱিত কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম।

সামৰণি :

আজিৰ যুগ বিশ্বায়নৰ যুগ। সম্প্ৰতি সমগ্ৰ মানৱ জাতিকে বিশ্বায়নে কম-বেছি পৰিমাণে প্ৰভাৱিত কৰিছে। দৰঙৰ সমাজ জীৱনতো ইয়াৰ প্ৰভাৱ অনস্বীকাৰ্য। সেয়েহে দৰঙৰ লোকউৎসৰ পুৰোহিতসকলৰ ওপৰতো বিশ্বায়নৰ প্ৰভাৱ বিদ্যমান। বিশ্বায়নে মানুহৰ জীৱন পদ্ধতিৰ পৰিৱৰ্তন সূচনা কৰাৰ ফলত চহৰৰ কথা বাদেই, গাঁৱৰ কৃষিজীৱি মানুহৰ জীৱনলৈও নতুনৰ সোঁত প্ৰবাহিত হৈছে। বিশেষকৈ খাৱন-বোৱন, পিন্ধন-উৰণ, কেশবিন্যাস, প্ৰসাধন, সোধ-পোছ আদিত অসমীয়া সত্তা পাবলৈ নাই। বিয়াৰ আয়োজন, নিমন্ত্ৰণ, অভ্যৰ্থনাত আগৰ আন্তৰিকতা আৰু সামাজিকতা নাই। জা-জলপান, ৰন্ধন-প্ৰকৰণ সলনি হৈছে। গাঁৱে-ভূঁয়ে সমানে নগৰীয়া কৃত্ৰিমতা সোমাইছে। নগৰীয়া আধুনিক সংস্কৃতিৰ হাতত প্ৰাচীন নীতিৰ গ্ৰাম্য সংস্কৃতিয়ে পৰাজয় স্বীকাৰ

কৰিছে।

যুগৰ পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ লগে-লগে যুগোচিত পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটাতো স্বাভাৱিক। ইয়াক কোনেও প্ৰতিহত কৰিব নোৱাৰে। আজি একবিংশ শতিকাত থিয় হৈ আমি যদি পুৰণি গাঁৱলীয়া সংস্কৃতিৰ অবিহিত ৰূপটো চাব বিচাৰো তেন্তে নিৰাশ হ'ব লাগিব। কিয়নো শিক্ষাৰ বিস্তাৰে গাঁৱৰ মানুহক সচেতন আৰু বাস্তৱমুখী কৰি তুলিছে। বিশ্বায়নো এটি পৰিৱৰ্তিত পৰিস্থিতিহে। আধুনিকতাই লোকমনকো পৰম্পৰাৰ পৰা আঁতৰাই আনিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। দৰঙৰ পৰম্পৰাগত উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠানসমূহতো পৰিৱৰ্তন বা উত্তৰণৰ প্ৰভাৱ নপৰাকৈ থকা নাই। আধুনিক শিক্ষা, পশ্চিমীয়া সভ্যতা আদিয়ে নতুন সকলক অনেক পৰিমাণে পৰম্পৰাৰ প্ৰতি সন্দিহান কৰি তুলিছে। আজিকালি অন্নপ্ৰাসন, উপনয়ন, বিবাহ, তোলনি বিয়া আদিকে ধৰি প্ৰায়বোৰ অনুষ্ঠান হোটেল ৰেষ্টোৰা অথবা বিবাহ ভৱন আদিত পতা হয়। খেৰৰ বিচনাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে কাঠৰ খাতত ৰখা, কলপুলি পুতি গা ধুওৱাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে গা-ধোৱা ঘৰতে গা ধুওৱা, আঁঠে ফুটোৱা (আঁঠেৰ সলনি মুড়িৰ ব্যৱহাৰ) আদি নীতি-নিয়মৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত শিথিলতা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। আনহাতে কেৱল মাহ-প্ৰসাদেৰেই সামৰণি মাৰিব পৰা এই অনুষ্ঠানত বিশাল ব্যয়েৰে বিবাহৰ দৰেই তোলনি বিয়াও পতা দেখা গৈছে। আধুনিকতাৰ জাকজমকে চহা মনৰ প্ৰাঞ্জলতা আৰু সজীৱতা স্তিমিত কৰাৰ ফলস্বৰূপে তোলনি বিয়া পতাৰ মূল সৌন্দৰ্য ভালেখিনি হ্ৰাস পাইছে।

সময়ৰ অগ্ৰগতিত পৰিৱৰ্তন, পৰিৱৰ্তন আৰু উত্তৰণ আদিৰ প্ৰভাৱ উৎসৱ - অনুষ্ঠানত পৰাটো স্বাভাৱিক। এইবোৰে যাতে উৎসৱৰ প্ৰতীকি অৰ্থ, উদ্দেশ্য আৰু সামাজিক তাৎপৰ্যত আঘাত কৰিব নোৱাৰে। সেইকথাটোও আমি লক্ষ্য কৰিব লাগিব। বৈচিত্ৰৰ মাজত ঐক্যভাৱৰ উন্মেষ সাধনত উৎসৱ অনুষ্ঠানৰ ভূমিকা অস্বীকাৰ কৰিব নোৱাৰি। এইবোৰে ভাৱৰ আদান-প্ৰদান আৰু পাৰস্পৰিক বুজাবুজিত বিশিষ্ট মাধ্যমৰূপে কাম কৰি আহিছে। অৱশ্যে বিশ্বায়নৰ ফলত হোৱা পৰিৱৰ্তনে আমাক গোটেই পৃথিৱীখনক জনাৰ যি সুবিধা দিছে সি আমাৰ বাবে আদৰ্শগীয়া। কিন্তু বিশ্বায়নৰ প্ৰভাৱে যাতে আমাৰ অসমীয়া সমাজ - সংস্কৃতিৰ মূল অস্তিত্ব উভালি পেলাব নোৱাৰে তাৰ বাবে আমি আমাৰ জাতিটোক ৰক্ষণাবেক্ষণ দিব লাগিব।

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সমল ব্যক্তি :

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মনুসংহিতাত নাৰীৰ অধিকাৰ আৰু সুৰক্ষা : এটি আলোচনা

ড° অৰ্পনা দেৱী

অৱতৰণিকা :

প্ৰাচীন নীতি-নিয়ম, আচাৰ-ব্যৱহাৰ তথা আইন-কানুনৰ মুখ্য আছিল স্মৃতি গ্ৰন্থসমূহ। বৰ্তমান যুগৰ আইন প্ৰচলিত নোহোৱালৈকে ভাৰতীয় পাৰিবাৰিক জীৱন, সামাজিক জীৱন আৰু আনকি ৰাজনৈতিক জীৱনো স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থবিলাকে নিৰ্দেশিত কৰি ৰাখিছিল। স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থসমূহৰ অবিহনে কৰ্তব্য-অকৰ্তব্য, ধৰ্ম-অধৰ্ম, পাপ-পুণ্য, আচাৰ-অনাচাৰ আদিৰ সঠিক জ্ঞান হ'ব নোৱাৰে। স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থসমূহক সংস্কৃতিক আধাৰ তথা প্ৰমাণিক গ্ৰন্থ বুলি ক'ব পাৰি। স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থসমূহৰ ভিতৰত মনুসংহিতাই হৈছে প্ৰাচীনতম আৰু সৰ্বাধিক লোকপ্ৰিয় গ্ৰন্থ। মনুসংহিতাক মানৱ-ধৰ্ম-শাস্ত্ৰ, মনুস্মৃতি আদি নামেৰেও জনা যায়। বিষয়বস্তুৰ ব্যাপকতা আৰু গভীৰতাৰ বাবে মনুসংহিতাখনকেই পৰিপূৰ্ণ স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থ হিচাপে গণ্য কৰি অহা হৈছে। বৰ্তমান মনুসংহিতা যিটো ৰূপত পোৱা গৈছে, তাৰ বহুবোৰ কথাই প্ৰমাণ কৰে যে, বৰ্তমানৰ ৰূপটো সম্পূৰ্ণ মনুৰ ৰচনা নহয়। এই গ্ৰন্থখন অধ্যয়ন কৰিলেই বুজিব পাৰি সময়ে সময়ে নানান কথা প্ৰক্ষিপ্ত হৈ আহিছে। সম্ভৱত এই গ্ৰন্থৰ প্ৰাচীনতা আৰু মহত্বৰ কাৰণে 'মনুৰচিত স্মৃতি' বুলি কোৱা হয়। মনুসংহিতাৰ সময় সঠিকভাৱে নিৰ্ণয় কৰিব

সহকাৰী অধ্যাপিকা

সংস্কৃত বিভাগ, মঙলদৈ মহাবিদ্যালয়

নোৱাৰি। তথাপিতো বৰ্তমানৰ মনুসংহিতাই খ্ৰীষ্টীয় প্ৰথম-দ্বিতীয় শতকমানত গঢ় লোৱা বুলি ধৰি লোৱা হৈছে। মনুসংহিতাৰ বৰ্তমান পাঠত ১২ অধ্যায় আৰু ২৬৯৪ টা শ্লোক পোৱা যায়।

মনুসংহিতা ভাৰতীয় সংস্কৃতিৰ অভিন্ন অংগ। ইয়াৰ খ্যাতি কেৱল ভাৰতবৰ্ষতে নহয় সমগ্ৰ বিশ্বজুৰি বিয়পি আছে। ১৭৭৬ চনতেই এই গ্ৰন্থখন ইংৰাজী ভাষালৈ অনূদিত হয়। মনুসংহিতাত ব্যক্তিগত জীৱন আৰু সমাজ জীৱনৰ এখন বহল মানচিত্ৰ প্ৰতিফলিত হয়। এই গ্ৰন্থত সৎ কৰ্মৰাজিৰ নিৰ্দেশনা দিয়াৰ লগতে জ্ঞান-বিদ্যা আহৰণক মানৱ জীৱনৰ শ্ৰেষ্ঠতম লক্ষ্য আৰু কৰ্মৰূপে দেখুওৱা হৈছে।

মনুসংহিতাত বিভিন্ন বিষয় যেনে ধৰ্মৰ উৎপত্তি, গৃহস্থীৰ জীৱনচৰ্যা, ৰাজধৰ্ম ইত্যাদিৰ লগতে নাৰীবিষয়ক বহু কথাই বৰ্ণিত হৈছে। বেদৰ পিছতেই মনুসংহিতাত নাৰীক সৰ্বোচ্চ সন্মান আৰু অধিকাৰ প্ৰদান কৰা হৈছে। মনুৰ মতে, য'ত নাৰী পূজিতা বা সন্মানিতা হয় তাত দেৱতায়ো বাস কৰে আৰু য'ত নাৰী অপমানিতা হয় তাত সকলো কৰ্ম নিষ্ফল হয়। মনুৱে গুণৰ প্ৰশংসা কৰিছে আৰু অৱগুণক নিন্দা কৰিছে। সেয়েহে মনুৱে গুণৱতী স্ত্ৰীক পৰ্য্যাপ্ত সন্মান প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰিছে, তাৰ লগে লগে অৱগুণৱতী নাৰীকো নিন্দা কৰাৰ লগতে দণ্ডবিধানো কৰিছে। আনহাতে, মনুসংহিতাক যদিও নাৰীবিৰোধী গ্ৰন্থ বুলি অভিহিত কৰা হয় কিন্তু দেখা যায় এই গ্ৰন্থত নাৰীৰ প্ৰাপ্য এনে কিছুমান অধিকাৰৰ কথা কোৱা হৈছে যি সমূহ আজিৰ যুগত লাভ কৰিবলৈ নাৰীয়ে আদালতৰ দ্বাৰস্থ হ'বলগীয়া হয়। যি কি নহওক, মনুৱে নাৰীক সমাজত এক গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ স্থান প্ৰদান কৰিছে। তেওঁৰ মতে, যি সমাজত নাৰীয়ে সন্মান লাভ নকৰে সেই সমাজে কেতিয়াও প্ৰগতি লাভ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। মনুৰ মতে, যি পুৰুষে নিজৰ পত্নীক প্ৰসন্ন কৰি ৰাখিব নোৱাৰে, তেওঁৰ সম্পূৰ্ণ পৰিয়ালেই অপ্ৰসন্ন আৰু শোকগ্ৰস্ত হয়। আনহাতে যদি পত্নী প্ৰসন্ন হৈ থাকে তেন্তে গোটেই পৰিয়ালেই অনন্দিত হয়। আনহাতে যি কুলত জী-বোৱাৰী কোনো কষ্ট নোপোৱাকৈ আনন্দৰে থাকে, সেই কুলৰ সদায় শ্ৰীবৃদ্ধি হয়। নৱবিবাহিতা জী-বোৱাৰীবোৰ যি ঘৰত সন্মানিতা নহৈ গালি-শপনি খাই থাকে, সেই ঘৰ নাশ হয়। আজি আমি দেখিবলৈ পঁও নাৰীয়ে কিদৰে পদে পদে শোষণিতা

আৰু লাঞ্চিত। ৰাজনৈতিক ক্ষেত্ৰখনতেই হওঁক, সামাজিক বা পাৰিবাৰিক ক্ষেত্ৰতেই হওঁক নাৰী বিভিন্ন স্তৰত পীড়িত তথা প্ৰতাৰিত। পুৰুষে সদায় নাৰীক হীন বুলি গণ্য কৰাটো অভ্যাসত পৰিণত হৈছে। সেয়েহে আজি আমাৰ সমাজত উন্নতিৰ পৰিবৰ্তে অধোন্নতিহে হ'বলৈ ধৰিছে। মনুসংহিতাত মনুৱে নাৰীজাতিক সন্মান, সুৰক্ষা তথা পুৰুষৰ সমানে নাৰীক সকলো অধিকাৰ প্ৰদান কৰাৰ পোষকতা কৰিছে লগতে সমাজক নাৰী জাতিৰ প্ৰতি সন্মান প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰিবলৈ আহ্বান জনাইছে।

নাৰীৰ অধিকাৰ :

কোনো কোনোৱে অভিমত প্ৰকাশ কৰে যে, প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতত নাৰীৰ স্থিতি অতি নিৰাশাজনক আছিল। ভাৰতীয় শাস্ত্ৰ বিশেষকৈ মনুস্মৃতিত নাৰীৰ অধিকাৰ আৰু স্বতন্ত্ৰতাক সম্পূৰ্ণৰূপে নস্যাৎ কৰা হৈছে বুলি বহুতে অভিযোগ উত্থাপন কৰে। কিন্তু যদি গুৰুত্ব সহকাৰে এনে শাস্ত্ৰৰ অধ্যয়ন কৰা হয় তেন্তে ঠিক ইয়াৰ বিপৰীত ছবি পৰিলক্ষিত হয়। মনুৱে নাৰীৰ প্ৰাপ্য এনে কিছুমান অধিকাৰৰ কথা কৈছে যিসমূহ লাভ কৰিবলৈ আজিৰ যুগৰ নাৰীয়ে যথেষ্ট সংগ্ৰাম কৰিবলগীয়া হয়। মনুৱে নাৰীক সকলো অধিকাৰ প্ৰদান কৰিছে, যি এগৰাকী নাৰীৰ প্ৰাপ্য। মনুৱে এফাঁকি শ্লোকত উল্লেখ কৰিছে যে, 'নাৰীক বাল্যকালত পিতাকে, যৌৱনকালত পতিয়ে আৰু বৃদ্ধ বয়সত পুত্ৰই ৰক্ষা কৰিব।' এই শ্লোকফাঁকিৰ বাবেই মনুৰ বিৰুদ্ধে অভিযোগ উত্থাপিত হৈছে যে মনু নাৰী স্বতন্ত্ৰতাৰ পৰিপন্থী। কিন্তু প্ৰকৃত অৰ্থ অনুধাৱন কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে মনুৱে নাৰীক ৰক্ষা কৰাৰ কথাহে কৈছে। মনু নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি যথেষ্ট উদাৰ। তেওঁৰ দৃষ্টিত নাৰী পুৰুষৰ সমানেই পূজনীয়া আৰু সন্মানীয়া। মনুৰ মতে, স্ত্ৰী আৰু পুৰুষ ইজনে আনজনৰ অবিহনে অপূৰ্ণ। তেওঁৰ মতে, নাৰী, পৰিয়াল, কুল বা সমাজৰ সুখৰ আধাৰ আৰু সেয়েহে তেওঁলোকৰ অধিকাৰক ৰক্ষা কৰাটো সৰ্বাধিক মহত্বপূৰ্ণ। মনুসংহিতাত নাৰীয়ে লাভ কৰা অধিকাৰসমূহৰ বিষয়ে এটি চমু আলোচনা তলত আগবঢ়োৱা হ'ল-

শৈক্ষিক অধিকাৰ :

শিক্ষাই নাৰীৰ সৰ্বাংগীন বিকাশ সাধনত গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা পালন কৰে।

শিক্ষাই অন্যান্য অধিকাৰক সুৰক্ষিত কৰিবৰ বাবে নাৰীগৰাকীক সক্ষম কৰি তোলাত এক গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা পালন কৰে। আনহাতে এক সুস্থ সমাজ গঢ়ি তোলাত নাৰী শিক্ষাই বিশেষভাৱে সহায় কৰে।

আচাৰ্য্য মনুৱে সততাৰে ঘটা ধন, বন্ধু, আয়ু, কৰ্ম আৰু বিদ্যা- এই পাঁচবিধ সন্মানৰ স্থান বুলি উল্লেখ কৰি বিদ্যাক সৰ্বোচ্চ স্থান প্ৰদান কৰিছে-

বিত্তং বন্ধুবৰ্যঃ কৰ্ম বিদ্যা ভবতী পঞ্চমী।

এতানি মান্যস্থানানি গৰীয়ো যদ্ যদুত্তৰম্।।*

মনুৰ দৃষ্টিত মোক্ষ প্ৰাপ্তি, বিদ্যা তথা তপৰ দ্বাৰাহে সম্ভৱ। তেওঁৰ মতে গ্ৰন্থ অধ্যয়ন যিসকলে কৰে তেওঁলোক আটাইতকৈ শ্ৰেষ্ঠ।*

মনসংহিতাত নাৰীয়ে শিক্ষালাভ কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত কোনো প্ৰতিবন্ধকতা আৰোপ কৰা হোৱা নাই। মনু স্ত্ৰীশিক্ষাৰ সমৰ্থক। তেওঁৰ মতে, নাৰীয়ে যিকোনো প্ৰকাৰৰ শিক্ষাগ্ৰহণ কৰিব পাৰে। মনুৰ মতে, বিবাহৰ আগতে কন্যাই গুৰুগৃহত থাকি বিদ্যা গ্ৰহণ কৰিব পাৰে।

বৈবাহিকো বিধিঃ স্ত্ৰীণাং সংস্কাৰো বৈদিকঃ স্মৃতঃ।

পতিসেৱা গুৰৌ বাসো গৃহাৰ্থোৎপ্নি পৰিক্ৰিয়া।*

শ্লোকফাঁকিত কোৱা হৈছে যে, বেদত উল্লেখিত ধৰণে বিবাহ সম্পন্ন হোৱাৰ পূৰ্বে নাৰীয়ে গুৰুৰ ওচৰত অধ্যয়ন বা প্ৰাতঃকালত বা সন্ধিয়া সময়ত হোমকাৰ্য সম্পাদন কৰিব লাগে। বিবাহ সম্পন্ন হোৱাৰ পিছত সেই নাৰীগৰাকীয়ে পতিসেৱা আৰু ঘৰ-গৃহস্থৰ সকলো দায়িত্ব আৰু কৰ্তব্য পালন কৰা উচিত।

ধৰ্মীয় অধিকাৰ :

মনুৱে নাৰীক ধৰ্মানুষ্ঠানৰো অধিকাৰ অৰ্পন কৰিছে। নিজৰ গৃহত আয়োজিত সকলো ধৰ্মানুষ্ঠানৰ মুখ্য দায়িত্ব পত্নীক প্ৰদান কৰিছে। মনুৰ মতে এনে দায়িত্ব এগৰাকী বিদুষী পত্নীয়েহে সম্পন্ন কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম, অশিক্ষিত পত্নীয়ে নহয়। সেয়েহে এনে অধিকাৰ প্ৰাপ্তি নাৰীৰ শৈক্ষিক আৰু ধাৰ্মিক

অধিকাৰক স্বতঃসিদ্ধ কৰে। মনুৰ মতে, ধৰ্মকাৰ্যৰ অনুষ্ঠান স্ত্ৰীৰ দ্বাৰা সম্পন্ন হোৱা উচিত।

অপত্যং ধৰ্মকাৰ্য্যাণি শুশ্ৰূষা বতিৰুত্তমা।

দাৰা অধীনস্তথা স্বৰ্গঃ পিতৃণামাত্মনশ্চ হ।।*

পুনৰ তেওঁ কৈছে যে, ঘৰৰ পৰিষ্কাৰ-পৰিচ্ছন্নতা, ধৰ্মানুষ্ঠানৰ আয়োজন, অন্নব্যঞ্জন আদি কাৰ্য নাবীৰ অধিকাৰত ৰাখিব লাগে- শৌচে ধৰ্মেৎন্নপন্ত্যাং চ পাৰিণাহস্য ৰেক্ষণে।।

আকৌ মনুৱে নাবী অবিহনে ধৰ্মানুষ্ঠান আধৰুৱা বুলি কৈ কৈছে যে, ধৰ্মকাৰ্যত পতি আৰু পত্নীৰ পাৰস্পৰিক সম্বন্ধ থকা উচিত- তস্মাৎ সাধাৰণো ধৰ্মঃ শ্ৰুতৌ পত্ন্যা সহোদিতঃ।

সম্পত্তিৰ অধিকাৰ :

নাবীৰ সম্পত্তিৰ অধিকাৰৰ ওপৰতো মনুৱে গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ মন্তব্য আগবঢ়াইছে। তেওঁৰ মতে, পুত্ৰ-পুত্ৰী এক সমান- পুত্ৰঃ পুত্ৰেন দুহিতা সমা। গতিকে পুত্ৰ-পুত্ৰীক পৈতৃক সম্পত্তিৰ সমান অধিকাৰ প্ৰদান কৰা উচিত। তেওঁ প্ৰশ্ন উত্থাপন কৰিছে যে, পুত্ৰ আৰু পুত্ৰী সমান গতিকে পুত্ৰী থকাৰ পিছতো অন্য কোনোৱে তেওঁৰ সম্পত্তিৰ অধিকাৰ কেনেকৈ কাঢ়ি নিব পাৰে?-

যথৈবাত্মা তথা পুত্ৰঃ পুত্ৰেণ দুহিতা সমা।

তস্যামাত্মনি তিষ্ঠম্ব্যাং কথমন্যে ধনং হৰেৎ।।*

আকৌ মনুৰ মতে নিজস্ব সম্পত্তিৰ ভাগ পুত্ৰীয়েহে পাব- মাতৃস্তু যৌতুকং যৎ স্যাৎ কুমাৰী ভাগ এৰ সঃ। মাতৃৰ বিয়োগৰ পাছত সকলো সহোদৰ ভাই-ককাইয়ে আৰু কুমাৰী ভনীয়ে মাকৰ ধন ভগাই ল'ব।

জনন্যাং সংস্থিতায়াং তু সমং সৰ্বে সহোদৰাঃ।

ভজেবন্ মাতৃকং বিক্ৰথং ভগিন্যাশ্চ সনাভয়ঃ।*

মনুৰ মতে, পিতৃৰ সম্পত্তিৰ ভাগ পুত্ৰৰ সমানে পুত্ৰীয়ে লাভ কৰিবই কিন্তু মাতৃৰ সম্পত্তিৰ ওপৰত কেৱল মাত্ৰ পুত্ৰীয়েহে অধিকাৰ লাভ কৰিব।

মনুৰে এই বিশেষ অধিকাৰৰ এই কাৰণেই পোষকতা কৰিছে যাতে এগৰাকী নারীয়ে কাৰো দয়াৰ ওপৰত নিজৰ জীৱন অতিবাহিত কৰিবলগীয়া নহয়।

আকৌ যদি এজন ব্যক্তিৰ পুত্ৰ-পত্নী আদি কোনো আত্মীয় নাথাকে তেন্তে তেওঁৰ সকলো সম্পত্তি ভাই-ককাই, ভনী আদিয়ে ভাগ কৰি ল'ব। আনহাতে যদি ডাঙৰ ভায়েকে লোভবশতঃ সৰু ভাই-ভনী তেওঁলোকৰ প্ৰাপ্য প্ৰদান নকৰে তেনেহ'লে আইনগতভাৱে দণ্ডনীয় হ'ব-

সোদৰ্যা বিভজেৰং স্তং সমেত্য সহিতাঃ সমম্।

ভ্ৰাতৰো য়ে চ সংসৃষ্টা ভগিন্যশ্চ সনাভয়ঃ।।”

য়ো জ্যেষ্ঠো বিনিকুৰীত লোভাদ্ ভ্ৰাতৃন্যরীযসঃ।

সোৎজ্যেষ্ঠঃ স্যাদ্ভাগশ্চ নিয়ন্তব্যশ্চ ৰাজভিঃ।।”

মনুৰে নারীৰ সুৰক্ষা আৰু অধিক সুনিশ্চিত কৰিবৰ কাৰণে, নারীৰ সম্পত্তিক নিজৰ জিন্মাত ল'ব বিচৰা ব্যক্তিক কঠোৰ দণ্ড বিহাৰ পোষকতা কৰিছে। সেয়েহে তেওঁ কৈছে যে, বন্ধ্যা, পুত্ৰহীনা, কুলত কোনো নথকা, পতিব্ৰতা, বিধবা আৰু ৰোগিনী নারী- এইসকলৰ ধন-সম্পত্তি ৰক্ষাৰ দায়িত্ব প্ৰশাসনৰ। যদি উপৰোক্ত নারীসকলৰ ধন-সম্পত্তি কোনো ব্যক্তিয়ে লাগিলে সেয়া মিত্ৰই হওঁক বা সম্বন্ধীয়ই হওঁক হৰণ কৰিব বিচাৰে তেনেহ'লে তেওঁলোকক চোৰক দিয়া দণ্ড বিহিব লাগে-

বশা অপুত্ৰাসু চৈবং স্যাদ্ বক্ষণং নিষ্কলাসু চ।

পতিব্ৰতাসু চ স্ত্ৰীণু বিধবাস্বাতু আতুৰাসু চ।।”

জীৱন্তীনাং তু তাসাং য়ে তদ্দহৰেয়ুঃ স্ববান্ধবাঃ।

তান্ শিষ্যাৎ চৌৰ দণ্ডেন ধাৰ্মিকঃ পৃথিবী পতিঃ।।”

অন্যান্য অধিকাৰ :

উপৰোক্ত অধিকাৰসমূহৰ উপৰিও মনুসংহিতাত নারীক অন্যান্য কিছুমান অধিকাৰ প্ৰদান কৰা হৈছে। অধিকাংশ প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় বিদ্বানৰ মতে, নারীয়ে অৰ্থোপাৰ্জন কৰাৰ দায়িত্ব গ্ৰহণ নকৰাটোৱেই উচিত। কিয়নো এটি পৰিয়াল সুচাৰুৰূপে পৰিচালনা কৰাত এগৰাকী নারীয়ে মুখ্য ভূমিকা পালন কৰে।

যদি নাৰীগৰাকী অৰ্থোপাৰ্জনত ব্যস্ত থাকিবলগীয়া হয় তেন্তে তেওঁলোকে সেই দায়িত্ব পালনত ব্যৰ্থ হ'ব পাৰে। কিন্তু মনুৱে নাৰীৰ অৰ্থোপাৰ্জন কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত কোনো বাধা আৰোপ কৰা নাই। তেওঁৰ মতে, যদি পতি কোনো কামৰ বাবে বিদেশত যাবলগীয়া হয় তেন্তে স্ত্ৰীৰ জীৱন-নিৰ্বাহৰ বাবে সুবন্দোবস্ত কৰি যাব। কিন্তু যদি সেয়া সম্ভৱ নহয় তেন্তে স্ত্ৰীগৰাকীয়ে অনিন্দনীয় শিল্পকাৰ্যৰে নিজেই নিজৰ জীৱন-নিৰ্বাহৰ বাবে অৰ্থোপাৰ্জন কৰিব পাৰিব।

ইয়াৰ উপৰিও মনুৱে স্ত্ৰী অধিকাৰ অক্ষুণ্ণ ৰাখি আঠ প্ৰকাৰ বিবাহৰ চৰ্চা কৰিছে। তেওঁ বিবাহৰ এই সকলো প্ৰকাৰতে নাৰীৰ ইচ্ছাক প্ৰাধান্য দিছে। মনুৱে নাৰীক স্ব-ইচ্ছাৰে যোগ্যবৰ নিৰ্বাচনৰ পূৰ্ণ অধিকাৰ প্ৰদান কৰিছে।^{১০} আনহাতে আকৌ কোনো নাৰীয়ে যদি নিজৰ পতিৰ সৈতে সন্তান জন্ম দিয়াত অসমৰ্থ হয় তেন্তে সেই নাৰীক অন্য পুৰুষৰ দ্বাৰা সন্তান জন্ম দিয়াৰো অধিকাৰ প্ৰদান কৰিছে।^{১১} বৰ্তমান সময়ত দেখা যায় সন্তান নাথাকিলে পতিয়ে দ্বিতীয় বিবাহ কৰি সন্তানৰ পিতৃ হয় কিন্তু মনুৱে এই অধিকাৰ নাৰীক প্ৰদান কৰিছে। আকৌ নাৰীৰ স্ব-অধিকাৰ প্ৰসংগতো মনুৱে মতপোষণ কৰিছে যে, ধনৰ আয়-ব্যয় বিষয়ত, ঘৰৰ দায়িত্ব পালনত নাৰীয়ে পূৰ্ণ স্বতন্ত্ৰতা লাভ কৰা উচিত আৰু এই সকলো কাৰ্য তেওঁলোকৰ মাৰ্গদৰ্শনতেই হোৱা বাঞ্ছনীয়।^{১২}

নাৰী সুৰক্ষা :

মনুৱে নাৰী সুৰক্ষাৰ বিষয়তো গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ পৰামৰ্শ আগবঢ়াইছে। তেওঁ সকলো বৰ্ণৰ বাবে স্ত্ৰী ৰক্ষা সৰ্বাতোকৈ উত্তম ধৰ্ম বুলি অভিহিত কৰিছে- ইমং হি সৰ্ববৰ্ণানাং পশ্যন্তো ধৰ্মমুত্তমম্। আকৌ আন এঠাইত উল্লেখ কৰিছে যে, চাৰি বৰ্ণৰ নাৰীক ৰক্ষা কৰাতো সকলোৰে পৰম ধৰ্ম- চতুৰ্ণামপি বৰ্ণানাং দাৰা ৰক্ষ্যতমাঃ সদা। তেওঁৰ মতে, এগৰাকী ৰুগীয়া আৰু শাৰীৰিকভাৱে দুৰ্বল পতিয়েও নিজৰ পত্নীৰ ৰক্ষাৰ বাবে যত্ন কৰিব লাগে- যতন্তে ৰক্ষিতুং ভাৰ্যাং ভৰ্তাৰো দুৰ্বলা অপি। এগৰাকী নাৰীক ৰক্ষা কৰাতো পিতা-পুত্ৰ আৰু পতিৰ দায়িত্ব বুলি তেওঁ গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ মন্তব্য আগবঢ়াইছে-

বাল্যে পিতুৰ্বশে তিষ্ঠেৎ পাণিগ্ৰাহস্য যৌৱনে।

পুত্ৰাণাং ভৰ্তৰি প্ৰেতে ন ভজেৎ স্ত্ৰী স্বতন্ত্ৰতাম্।^{১৩}

কিন্তু মনুৱে যে নাৰীক বন্ধনত ৰাখিব বিচাৰে সেইতো নহয়। তেওঁ নাৰীক চাৰিদেৱালৰ মাজত আৱদ্ধ কৰি ৰখাৰ পক্ষপাতি নাছিল। নিম্নোক্ত শ্লোকফাঁকিত নাৰীৰ স্বতন্ত্ৰতাৰ কাৰণে তেওঁৰ অভিমত স্পষ্ট-

অৰক্ষিতা গৃহে ঋদ্ধাঃ পুৰুষৈৰ্বাপু কাৰিভিঃ ।
আত্মনমাত্মনা যাস্তু বক্ষ্যেযুক্তাঃ সুবক্ষিতাঃ ॥১০

অৰ্থাৎ মনুৰ মতে, নিজৰ ঘৰত সম্বন্ধীয় লোকৰ আৰেষ্ঠনীত বন্দি কৰি থলেও নাৰীৰ প্ৰকৃত বক্ষা নহয়। যিসকল নাৰীয়ে নিজক বক্ষা কৰে, সেই সকলেই সুবক্ষিত হৈ থাকে।

এগৰাকী কন্যাৰ সুৰক্ষাৰ বাবে পৰিয়ালেও বিশেষ সাৱধানতা অৱলম্বন কৰে। কাৰণ কন্যাগৰাকী কোনো কাৰণত কলংকিত হোৱা মানে পৰিয়ালৰ কলংক আৰু এই বিচাৰধাৰা আমি মনুসংহিতাতো দেখিবলৈ পোঁও নিম্নোক্ত শ্লোকফাঁকিত-

সূক্ষ্মেভ্যো অপি প্ৰসঙ্গেভ্য : স্ত্ৰিয়ো বক্ষ্যা বিশেষতঃ ।
দ্বয়োৰ্হি কুলয়োঃ শোকমাৰহেযুৰবক্ষিতাঃ ॥১১

অৰ্থাৎ অতি সূক্ষ্মাতিসূক্ষ্ম অপ্ৰিয় প্ৰসংগৰ পৰাও নাৰীক বিশেষভাৱে বক্ষা কৰিব লাগে, কাৰণ নাৰী অৰক্ষিত হ'লে দুয়ো কুলক (পিতৃ আৰু পতিৰ) কলংকিত কৰে। মনুৱে চৰিত্ৰবান নাৰীক অতি সন্মানীয় দেৱীস্বৰূপা বুলি অভিহিত কৰিছে। তেওঁৰ মতে, গৃহত লক্ষ্মী আৰু নাৰীৰ মাজত কোনো পাৰ্থক্য নাই অৰ্থাৎ স্ত্ৰীয়েই ঘৰৰ শ্ৰী বা লক্ষ্মী, স্ত্ৰীহীন গৃহ শ্ৰীহীন-

প্ৰজনাৰ্থং মহাভাগা : পূজাৰ্হা গৃহদীপুয়ঃ ।
স্ত্ৰিয়ঃ শ্ৰিয়শ্চ গেহেষু ন বিশেষোৎপত্তি কশ্চন ॥১২

মনুৱে নাৰীৰ সামাজিক অধিকাৰৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব প্ৰদান কৰিছে, কাৰণ যি সমাজ, নিজৰ স্ত্ৰী, ভনীসকলৰ বক্ষা বিকৃত মনোবৃত্তিৰ মানুহৰ পৰা কৰিব নোৱাৰে, তেওঁ নিজেও কেতিয়াও সুবক্ষিত নহয়। সেয়েহে মনুৱে পৰামৰ্শ আগবঢ়াইছে যে, যি নাৰীয়ে নিজৰ বক্ষা স্বয়ং নিজৰ সামৰ্থ আৰু আত্মবলৰ দ্বাৰা কৰিব পাৰে, বস্তুতঃ তেওঁলোকেহে সুবক্ষিত হৈ থাকিব পাৰে।

মনুৰে নাৰী সুৰক্ষাৰ বাবে নাৰীক পীড়িত তথা অত্যাচাৰ কৰোতা জনক কঠোৰ দণ্ড বিহাৰ বাবে আহ্বান জনাইছে। যদি কোনো ব্যক্তিয়ে নাৰী, শিশু, ব্ৰাহ্মণক হত্যা কৰিছে তেন্তে তেওঁক মৃত্যুদণ্ডেৰে দণ্ডিত কৰাৰ বাবে মন্তব্য আগবঢ়াইছে- স্ত্ৰী বাল ব্ৰাহ্মণঘাৎশচ হন্যাদ্ দ্বিষ সেবিনস্তথা। কোনোৱে যদি নাৰীৰ সম্পত্তিও চুৰি কৰিছে তেন্তে চুৰি কৰাজনক মৃত্যুদণ্ড দিবলৈ তেওঁ পৰামৰ্শ আগবঢ়াইছে-

পুৰুষাণাং কুলীনানাং নাৰীণাং চ বিশেষতঃ।

মুখ্যানাং চৈৱ ৰত্নানাং হৰণে বধমৰ্হতি ॥১১

আনহাতে নাৰীৰ লগত ব্যভিচাৰত লিপ্ত হোৱা পুৰুষক উচিত শাস্তি প্ৰদানৰ বাবেও মনুৰে আহ্বান জনাইছে। যদি কোনো পুৰুষে কোনো পৰ নাৰীক বলাৎকাৰ কৰে তেন্তে ৰজাই সেই পুৰুষক পৌৰুষহীন কৰি দেশৰ পৰা বহিস্কাৰ কৰি শাস্তি প্ৰদান কৰিব-

পৰদাৰাভিমৰ্শেযু প্ৰবৃত্তান্ মহী পতিঃ।

উদ্বৈজন কৰৈৰ্দগৈশ্চিন্নয়িত্বা প্ৰাসয়েত ॥১২

আকৌ কোৱা হৈছে যে, যদি কোনো পুৰুষে কন্যাক বলাৎকাৰ কৰি দুষিত কৰে তেন্তে তেনেলোকক মৃত্যুদণ্ড দিয়া উচিত- যোৎকামাং দুষয়েৎ কন্যাং স সদ্যো বধমৰ্হতি। মনুৰে পুৰুষক স্ত্ৰীৰ শালীনতা ভংগৰ দৰে অপৰাধৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সাক্ষীৰ অধিক সাক্ষ্য গ্ৰহণ নকৰি কঠোৰতম দণ্ড প্ৰদানৰ বাবে মত প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। বৰ্তমান সময়তো দেখা যায় যে, আজি কিছু সময়ৰ পূৰ্বৰ পৰাই এনেকুৱা বিষয় শীঘ্ৰেই সমাধান কৰা হেতু ফাষ্ট ট্ৰেক্ কোৰ্টৰ ব্যৱস্থা হৈছে।

তেওঁ পুৰুষসকলক নিৰ্দেশ দিছে যে, যাতে তেওঁলোকে কেতিয়াও মাতৃ, পত্নী আৰু পুত্ৰীৰ সৈতে বিবাদত লিপ্ত নহয়। মিছা দোষাৰোপ, নিৰ্দোষী হোৱা সত্ত্বেও ত্যাগ কৰা, পত্নীৰ সৈতে বৈবাহিক দায়িত্ব পালন নকৰা পুৰুষক দণ্ডিত কৰিব লাগে বুলি মনুৰে নিজৰ মত প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে-

ন মাতা না পিতা ন স্ত্ৰী ন পুত্ৰস্ত্যাগমৰ্হতি।

ত্ৰ্যজন্মপতিতানেতান্ ৰাজ্ঞা দণ্ড্যঃ শতানি যট ॥১৩

সামৰণি :

ওপৰৰ আলোচনাৰ পৰা দেখা যায় যে, মনুসংহিতাত নাৰীৰ অধিকাৰক পুৰামাত্ৰাই স্থান দিয়া হৈছে। মনুৰ মতে এগৰাকী নাৰীয়ে সেই সকলো অধিকাৰ লাভ কৰা উচিত যি অধিকাৰ এগৰাকী পুৰুষে লাভ কৰে। মনুৱে প্ৰত্যেক ব্যক্তিকে নাৰীক ৰক্ষা কৰাৰ শিক্ষা প্ৰদান কৰিছে। তেওঁৰ মতে, এগৰাকী নাৰীক বাল্যকালত ৰক্ষা কৰা দায়িত্ব পিতৃৰ, বিবাহৰ পিছত পতিৰ আৰু বৃদ্ধা অৱস্থাত পুত্ৰই সেই দায়িত্ব পালন কৰা উচিত। মনুৱে স্ত্ৰী শিক্ষাৰ ওপৰতো গুৰুত্ব প্ৰদান কৰিছে। মনুক নাৰী স্বতন্ত্ৰতাৰ বিৰোধী হিচাপে আখ্যা দিয়া হয় যদিও প্ৰকৃততে মনুৱে নাৰীৰ অসুৰক্ষিত তথা মৰ্যাদাবিহীন স্বতন্ত্ৰতাৰহে বিৰোধী আছিল। সেয়েহে তেওঁ নাৰীসকলক সৰুয়াই দিছে যাতে তেওঁলোকে পিতা, পতি আৰু পুত্ৰৰ সুৰক্ষাৰ পৰা নিজকে আঁতৰাই নাৰাখে। মনু কেতিয়াও নাৰী স্বতন্ত্ৰতাৰ বিৰোধী নাছিল সেই কথা এই গ্ৰন্থখন ভালদৰে অধ্যয়ন কৰিলেহে বুজিব পাৰি। মনুৰ মতে, নাৰীৰ সৰ্বপ্ৰথম সামাজিক প্ৰয়োজনীয়তা হ'ল- সুৰক্ষা আৰু সেই সুৰক্ষা হয় শাসন ব্যৱস্থাৰ জৰিয়তে, কোনো পুৰুষৰ দ্বাৰা অথবা নিজৰ সামৰ্থ্য অনুসৰি লাভ কৰা উচিত। মনুৱে নাৰীক কেতিয়াও হয় জ্ঞান কৰা নাই। তেওঁ কোনবোৰ অবগুণৱতী নাৰী তাক দেখুৱাইছে সঁচা কিন্তু সৎ গুণৱতী নাৰীক সদায় প্ৰশংসা কৰিছে আৰু সমাজকো নাৰী জাতিৰ প্ৰতি সন্মান প্ৰদৰ্শন কৰিবলৈ আহ্বান জনাইছে।

সকলো ভাৰতীয় বিদ্বানে স্বীকাৰ কৰে যে, মনুসংহিতা বেদৰ ওপৰত প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত। ইয়াৰ দ্বাৰা মনুসংহিতাৰ প্ৰক্ষেপসমূহ চিনিবলৈ আৰু মনুৰ নিজস্ব শুদ্ধ বিধানসমূহ জানিবলৈ সৰল হৈ পৰে। মনুৰ সকাৰাত্মক বিধানসমূহৰ লগত বিৰোধী বিধানো মিলাই দিয়া হৈছে। বিৰোধী শ্লোকসমূহ নিশ্চয় পিছত সংযুক্ত কৰা হৈছে, যিসমূহক প্ৰক্ষিপ্ত শ্লোক বুলি ধৰি ল'ব পাৰি। যদি মনুৰ বাস্তৱিক বিচাৰসমূহক প্ৰক্ষেপৰ পৰা মুক্ত হৈ বুজিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰো তেনেহ'লে সমাজত কেৱল নাৰীয়ে উচ্চ স্থান লাভ কৰিব এনে নহয় বৰঞ্চ আমি ইয়াকো গৰ্বৰে ক'ব পাৰিম যে প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতৰ সমাজ অতি উদাৰ আৰু বিকশিত আছিল। মনুৰ দৰে আজিৰ পুৰুষেও যদি নাৰীক আদৰ আৰু সন্মান কৰে, তেওঁলোকক ৰক্ষা কৰে তেনেহ'লে সেই দিন দূৰ নহয় যেতিয়া আমাৰ সমাজো সফলতাৰ

উচ্চ শিখৰত আৰোহন কৰিব।

পাদটীকা :

- ১। যত্র নার্যস্ত পূজ্যন্তে বমন্তে তত্র দেবতাঃ।
যত্র এতাস্ত ন পূজ্যন্তে সৰ্বাস্তত্রাফলাঃ ক্ৰিয়াঃ।। মনু /৩/৫৬
- ২। শোচন্তি জাময়ো যত্র বিনশ্যত্যাশু তত্ কুলম্।
ন শোচন্তি তু যত্র ত্রতা বর্ধতে তদ্ হি সৰ্বদা।।
জাময়ো যানি গেহানি শপত্ত্যপ্রতি পূজিতাঃ
তানি কৃত্যাহতানি এব বিনশ্যন্তি সমন্ততঃ।। মনু /৩/৫৭-৫৮
- ৩। পিতা বক্ষতি কৌমাৰে ভৰ্তা বক্ষতি যৌৱনে।
বক্ষন্তি স্থবিৰে পুত্রা ন স্ত্ৰী স্বতন্ত্ৰ্যমৰ্হতি।। মনু /৯/৩
- ৪। মনু /২/১৩৬
- ৫। তপো বিদ্যা চ বিপ্রস্য নিঃ শ্ৰেয়সকৰং পৰম্।
তপসা কিল্বিবং হন্তি বিদ্যায়া অমৃতম্ অশ্নুতে।। মনু /১২/১০৪
- ৬। মনু /২/৬৭
- ৭। মনু /৯/২৮
- ৮। মনু /৯/১৩০
- ৯। মনু /৯/১৯২
- ১০। মনু /৯/২১২
- ১১। মনু /৯/২১৩
- ১২। মনু /৮/২৮
- ১৩। মনু /৮/২৯
- ১৪। মনু /৯/৯০-৯১
- ১৫। মনু /৯/৫৯
- ১৬। মনু /৯/১১
- ১৭। মনু /৫/১৪৮
- ১৮। মনু /৯/১২
- ১৯। মনু /৯/৫
- ২০। মনু /৯/২৬
- ২১। মনু /৮/৩২৩
- ২২। মনু /৮/৩৫২
- ২৩। মনু /৩/৩৮৯
- ২৪। মনু /৯/৩

গ্রন্থপঞ্জী :

আয়ুৰ্বেদালংকাৰ, ড° কৃষ্ণ কুমাৰ, *প্ৰাচীন ভাৰত কা সংবিধান তথা ন্যায় ব্যৱস্থা*,
ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় সংস্কৃত সংস্থান, দিল্লী।

আৰ্য, ড° ভাৰতী, *স্মৃতিয়ো মে নাৰী*, বিশ্বভাৰতী অনুসন্ধান পৰিষদ, জ্ঞানপুৰ।

বৰুৱা, ডাঃ প্ৰফুল্ল নাৰায়ণ(অনুবাদক), মনুসংহিতা, কৌস্তভ প্ৰকাশন, ডিব্ৰুগড়।
শৰ্মা, ড° উমাশংকৰ, সংস্কৃত সাহিত্য কা ইতিহাস, চৌখস্তা ভাৰতী একাডেমী,
বাৰণসী।

<https://agniveer.com>

বীৰুৱালা ৰাভা : অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ বিৰুদ্ধে এক প্ৰতিবাদী কণ্ঠ

ড° মঞ্জু কলিতা

সময় বালিত কেতিয়াবা কিছুমান সাধাৰণ মানুহে নিজৰ কৰ্ম দক্ষতাৰে অসাধাৰণত্বৰ খোজ পেলাব পাৰে। তেখেতসকলৰ বিৰল প্ৰতিভা বুৰঞ্জীৰ পাতত সোণোৱালী আখৰেৰে জিলিকি থাকে চিৰদিন। তেনে এক প্ৰতিভাৰ গৰাকী বীৰুৱালা ৰাভা যিগৰাকীৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে অন্ধবিশ্বাসত বিশ্বাসী কিছুমান মানুহে শিৰনত কৰিবলৈ বাধ্য হৈছিল। আজিৰ আলোচনাত এইগৰাকী সাহসী মহিলাৰ কৰ্মৰাজিৰ বিষয়ে কিছু আলোকপাত কৰিব বিচৰা হৈছে।

গোৱালপাৰা আৰু গাৰোপাহাৰ জিলাৰ সীমান্তৱৰ্তী টিক্ৰিকিল্লা অঞ্চলৰ ঠাকুৰভিল্লা গাঁৱত ১৯৪৯ চনত বীৰুৱালা ৰাভাৰ জন্ম হয়। অতিকৈ পিছপৰা এই গাঁওখনত শিক্ষা-দীক্ষৰ পোহৰ প্ৰায় নাই বুলি ক'লেও অত্যাুক্তি কৰা নহয়। তেনে এখন গাঁৱতে ডাঙৰ-দীঘল হৈ বীৰুৱালাই সেই একে পৰিৱেশতে বৈবাহিক জীৱন আৰম্ভ কৰে। আচৰিতভাৱে প্ৰায় ৮০ দশকৰ পৰা বীৰুৱালাই তেওঁৰ চৌপাশৰ পৰিৱেশৰ প্ৰতি চিন্তিত হৈ পৰে আৰু কিছুমান নতুন চিন্তাই তেওঁৰ মনত প্ৰৱেশ কৰে। লাহে লাহে তেওঁৰ বাবে সমাজৰ প্ৰচলিত নিয়ম-

সহকাৰী অধ্যাপিকা

দৰ্শন বিভাগ

মঙলদৈ মহাবিদ্যালয়

কানুনবোৰ অসহ্যকৰ হৈ আহিব ধৰে। তেওঁ উপলব্ধি কৰিবলৈ ধৰিলে যে অন্যান্য সমাজৰ তুলনাত জনজাতীয় সমাজত এনে কিছুমান বিশ্বাস সোমাই আছে যিবোৰ একেবাৰে অযুক্তিৰ আৰু ভিত্তিহীন। বীৰুৱালাৰ গাঁৱৰে এগৰাকী মহিলাক ডাইনী বুলি অত্যাচাৰ কৰি গাঁৱৰ পৰা খেদি পঠিয়াই দিয়া হৈছিল, সেই দৃশ্যই তেওঁৰ মনত বাৰুকৈ ভাবিবলৈ বাধ্য কৰালে যে ইয়াৰ পৰিসমাপ্তি এদিন হ'বই লাগিব। কাৰণ মানুহ ডাইনী হ'ব নোৱাৰে — তেওঁৰ মনত এইটো বাৰুকৈয়ে খেলিছিল। বীৰুৱালাই উক্ত কাৰ্যৰ প্ৰতিবাদ কৰিছিল আৰু গাঁওবুঢ়াক অৱগত কৰিছিল। গাঁওবাসীৰ লগত বহুত যুক্তি-তৰ্ক কৰি শেষত গাঁওবুঢ়াৰ পৰাও একো সঁহাৰি নাপাই তেওঁ অকলে এই অত্যাচাৰৰ বাবে মাত মাতিছিল, প্ৰতিবাদ কৰিছিল। এখন সমাজৰ বিপক্ষে থিয় দি কথা ক'ব পৰা সাহস বীৰুৱালাই গোটেইছিল, য'ত তেওঁকো হয়তো সমাজে গাঁৱৰ পৰা উলিয়াই দিবলৈ কুঠাবোধ নকৰিলেহেঁতেন। তথাপি বীৰুৱালাই হাৰ মানা নাছিল।

১৯৮৩ চন। বীৰুৱালাৰ বাবে এক সংগ্ৰামী বছৰ। তেওঁৰ জীৱনলৈ হঠাতে ঘোৰ অমানিশা নামি আহিল। বীৰুৱালা ৫টা সন্তানৰ মাতৃ। তেওঁৰ প্ৰথম সন্তান ধৰ্মেশ্বৰ আছিল এগৰাকী মানসিক ৰোগী। কোনোমতে পেটে-ভাতে খায় থকা পৰিয়ালটোৱে পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজৰ নিয়ম অনুসৰি বেজ-ওজা, দেওধনী এইবোৰৰ আশ্ৰয় ল'লে। দেওধনীয়ে ল'ৰাটোৰ আয়ুস আৰু তিনিদিনহে আছে বুলি কলত স্বামী-স্ত্ৰী দুয়োৰে মূৰত যেন বজ্জহে পৰিল। কিন্তু জাৰি-ফুকি তিনিদিন পাৰ কৰাৰ পিছতো ল'ৰাজন যেতিয়া বাচি থাকিল তেতিয়া বীৰুৱালাৰ মনত এই জৰা-ফুকা, ঠিকনা চোৱা আদি কথাবোৰ মিছা যেন অনুমান হ'ল। তেওঁৰ মনত এক বেলেগ চিন্তাই গা কৰি উঠিল। ইফালে দেওধনী আৰু বেজসকলৰ লগ লাগি গাঁৱৰ মানুহবোৰে বীৰুৱালা আৰু তেওঁৰ পুত্ৰক ডাইনী সজালে। বীৰুৱালাই এই কাৰ্যত মনে মনে নাথাকিল। এক নতুন সাহস বুকুত লৈ পৰম্পৰাগত এই বেজ-বেজালিৰ দৰে প্ৰথাবোৰৰ বিৰুদ্ধে প্ৰতিবাদ আৰম্ভ কৰিলে। এইগৰাকী নাৰী গাঁৱৰ আন নাৰীবিলাকতকৈ বেলেগ হিচাপে চিহ্নিত হ'ল। তেওঁ কথাবোৰ দকৈ যুক্তিৰে বিচাৰ কৰি চাই কিছু গৱেষণা আৰম্ভ কৰি দেখিলে যে আচলতে গাঁৱৰ ৰাইজে যিবোৰ মানুহক ডাইনী সজাই সেই মানুহবোৰ আচলতে তেনেই সহজ-সৰল। তেওঁলোক ইমানেই হোজা প্ৰকৃতিৰ যে অন্যাৱৰ বিৰুদ্ধে মাত মতাৰ সাহস তেওঁলোকৰ নাছিল। এই

সৰলতাৰ সুযোগ লৈ এচাম লোকে তেওঁলোকৰ কিছুমান স্বার্থ সিদ্ধি কৰিবৰ বাবে মাজে মাজে কিছুমান লোকক ডায়েন বা ডাইনী সজায়। ফলস্বৰূপে ভুক্তভোগীজনে অশেষ লাঞ্ছনা-গঞ্জনা আনকি কৰুণভাৱে মৃত্যুকো আঁকোৱালি ল'ব লগা হয়।

সাধাৰণতে কিছুমান জটিল ৰোগ জৰা-ফুকাত ভাল নহয়। তেতিয়া বেজসকলে পূজা-পাৰ্বণ কৰিবলৈ গৃহস্থক নিৰ্দেশ দিয়ে। তাতো সুফল নাপালে ওচৰৰ কোনোবা লোকক যিজনৰ লগত বেজগৰাকীৰ কোনো মতানক্য, আষেজ বা শত্ৰুভাৱপন্ন আছিল তেনেলোকক বেমাৰৰ বাবে জগৰীয়া কৰি ডাইনী সজাই দিয়ে। হয়তো তেওঁলোকক খেদি সম্পত্তি হস্তান্তৰ কৰিব পাৰে। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও দেখা যায় যে কেতিয়াবা দুষ্ট এই লোকসকলে বিধবা অসহায় মহিলাৰ লগত যৌন সম্পৰ্ক স্থাপন কৰিব বিচাৰে আৰু যদি এই মহিলাসকলে এই কাৰ্যত সহযোগ নকৰে তাৰ ফলত জাপি দিয়া ডাইনী সন্দেহত এইসকলে জীৱন আৰ্হতি দিবলগীয়াও হয়। বীৰুৱালাই এই সকলোবোৰ প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰি এক প্ৰতিবাদী সজাগতাৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিবলৈ মন মেলিলে। ইপিনে দিনে দিনে বীৰুৱালা আৰু তেওঁৰ পুত্ৰৰ ওপৰত ডাইনী সন্দেহত গাঁওবাসীৰ অকথ্য নিৰ্যাতন আৰম্ভ হ'ল। গাঁৱৰ ৰাইজে তেওঁলোকক বহিষ্কাৰ কৰিব বিচাৰিলে। কিন্তু সাহসৰ প্ৰতীক এই মহিলাগৰাকীয়ে নিজৰ স্থিতি এৰি দিয়া নাছিল। কোনেও তেওঁক বহিষ্কাৰ কৰিব নোৱাৰিলে। এটা সাক্ষাৎ কাৰত বীৰুৱালাই কৈছিল—এইবোৰ অশিক্ষিত জনজাতিৰ মাজতহে হৈছিল। শিক্ষাৰ যদি সম্প্ৰসাৰণ হয় তেতিয়াহ'লে ক্ৰমান্বয়ে এই অন্ধবিশ্বাসবোৰ সমাজৰ পৰা নাইকিয়া কৰিব পৰা যাব। বীৰুৱালা নিজেও এগৰাকী অশিক্ষিত তিৰোতা আছিল। আনুষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষা তেওঁৰ মুঠেই নাছিল যদিও অনানুষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষাৰে তেওঁ শিক্ষিত হৈ উপলব্ধি কৰিছিল যে মানুহৰ মনত তথাকথিত কিছুমান অযুক্তিকৰ চিন্তাই এনেকৈ শিপাই আছে যিবোৰে যুগ যুগ ধৰি মানুহক প্ৰবঞ্চনা আৰু ঠগাই আহিবলৈ সহায় কৰিছে। শিক্ষাই মানুহক যুক্তি বিচাৰ কৰিবলৈ শিকায়। আনুষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষা নথকাৰ কাৰণে বীৰুৱালাই প্ৰতিবাদৰ পথ ল'বলৈ কিছুমান অসুবিধাতো পৰিছিল। যিকি নহওক, আত্মবিচাৰ আৰু আত্মোলন্ধিৰে তেখেতে বিজ্ঞান মনস্কতা নিজেই গঢ়ি ল'ব পাৰিছিল আৰু অন্যান্যৰ বিৰুদ্ধে মাত মাতাৰ সাহস গোটাৰ পাৰিছিল। ১৯৮০ চনতে তেওঁ গাঁৱত মহিলা সমিতি

গঠন কৰি সম্পাদিকাৰ দায়িত্ব লয়। প্ৰশাসনিক বিষয়া, চক্ৰ বিষয়া আৰু গাঁওবুঢ়াৰ সহযোগত গাঁৱৰ পুৰুষ-মহিলাসকলৰ মনত জ্ঞান সঞ্চার কৰাৰ চেষ্টা কৰে। প্ৰচলিত ডাইনী হত্যা, ধৰ্ষণ, শিশু অপহৰণ আদিৰ বিৰুদ্ধে প্ৰচাৰ চলায়। আনকি চৰকাৰৰ ওচৰত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ আইন উলিয়াবলৈ হেঁচা প্ৰয়োগ কৰে। বীৰুৱালাৰ সাহসক স্বাগতম জনাই লাহে লাহে কিছুমান উদীয়মান যুৱক-যুৱতী ডাইনী সন্দেহত উৎপীড়িত একাংশ মহিলাই বীৰুৱালাক সংগ দিয়ে। শিক্ষিত আৰু উৎসাহী কিছুসংখ্যক লোকৰ সহযোগত 'মিশ্বন বীৰুৱালা' নামৰ এক সংস্কাৰমুখী সংস্থাৰ জন্ম হয়।

স্থানীয় মহিলা সমিতিৰ সম্পাদিকা হৈ থকাৰ বাবে ১৯৯৯ চনত 'অসম মহিলা সমতা ছোচাইটি'ৰ দ্বাৰা বীৰুৱালা ৰাভা আমন্ত্ৰিত হয়। এই অনুষ্ঠানৰ সংস্পৰ্শত আহি বীৰুৱালাই যেন এক নতুন জীৱন পালে। তেওঁ দুগুণ উৎসাহেৰে কামত অগ্ৰসৰ হ'ল। সমগ্ৰ অসমতে 'মিশ্বন বীৰুৱালা'ৰ জৰিয়তে এটা জাতীয় অন্ধবিশ্বাস বিৰোধী আন্দোলনৰ সূত্ৰপাত হ'ল। এই মিশ্বনটোৱে মানুহৰ মনত যথেষ্ট সজাগতাৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিলে। উল্লেখযোগ্য যে ২০১১ চনলৈকে তেওঁ ৩৩ গৰাকী মহিলা আৰু দুগৰাকী পুৰুষ মুঠ ৩৫ গৰাকী ব্যক্তিক উন্মাদ দলবদ্ধ লোকৰ আক্ৰমণ তথা নিশ্চিত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ পৰা উদ্ধাৰ কৰে।

উল্লেখনীয় যে, 'মিশ্বন বীৰুৱালা'ৰ সহযোগত বীৰুৱালাই এখন অভিশপ্ত গাঁও যাৰ নামেই হৈছে 'ডাইনী গাঁও' উদ্ধাৰ কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হয়। ডাইনী সন্দেহত গাঁৱৰ পৰা বহিষ্কাৰ হোৱা অথবা ডাইনী হত্যাৰ কবলৰ পৰা কোনো বকমে প্ৰাণ বচাই পলাই বন্ধা পৰা এচাম লোকৰ দ্বাৰা গঠিত এখন গাঁৱৰ নাম ডাইনী গাঁও। গোৱালপাৰা আৰু পশ্চিম গাৰোপাহাৰ জিলাৰ সীমানাত ঘন জংঘলৰ মাজত এই গাঁওখন। মুঠ ২৫ ৰ পৰা ৩০ টামান পৰিয়ালৰ বসবাস এই গাঁওখনৰ বাবে হাবিৰ জীৱ-জন্তুতকৈও হিংস্ৰ মানুহ নামৰ এই শ্ৰেণীটো যিয়ে মানুহৰ ওপৰত কৰিব পাৰে অবৰ্ণনীয় অত্যাচাৰ, উৎপীড়ন। বীৰুৱালাই এই গাঁৱলৈ গৈ নিজৰ সাহস আৰু বুদ্ধিমত্তাৰে বঞ্চিত লোকসকলক উদ্ধাৰ কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হয়।

এনেদৰে বীৰুৱালাৰ একানপটীয়া প্ৰচেষ্টা আৰু ধৈৰ্য্য তথা সাহসৰ বাবে লাহে লাহে তেওঁ প্ৰচাৰ মাধ্যমলৈ আহো আৰু সমগ্ৰ দেশতে তেওঁৰ নাম

প্রচাৰ হয়। বীৰুৱালাৰ নিজৰ জীৱনলৈও যথেষ্ট ভাবুকি অহা স্বত্বেও তেওঁ মিশ্বন চলাই গৈ থাকিল। বীৰুৱালাৰ সাহস আৰু সমাজসেৱাৰ স্বীকৃতিৰ চিন স্বৰূপে ২০১৫ চনত গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে তেওঁক সন্মানীয় ডক্টৰেট ডিগ্ৰী প্ৰদান কৰে। সেই একে বছৰতে 'ড° ভূপেন হাজৰিকা স্মৃতি বক্ষা সমিতি' আৰু 'সদৌ অসম ছাত্ৰ সন্থা'ই তেওঁক 'ড° ভূপেন হাজৰিকা সংহতি বঁটা' প্ৰদান কৰে। বিভিন্ন ঠাইত স্বীকৃতি জনাই সম্বৰ্দ্ধনাও জনোৱা হয়। ২০১৬ চনৰ ২৩ নৱেম্বৰ তাৰিখে ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় প্ৰেক্ষাপটত 'মাই হোম ইণ্ডিয়া [My Home India] ই এই ডাইনী বিৰোধী সমাজকৰ্মী মহিলাজনীক মুম্বাইৰ শিৱাজী পাৰ্কস্থিত ছাভাৰকাৰ সভাগৃহত আয়োজিত এক গান্ধীৰ্যপূৰ্ণ অনুষ্ঠানত ২০১৬ বৰ্ষৰ 'ৱান ইণ্ডিয়া বঁটা' [One India Award] প্ৰদান কৰে। এই বঁটাত নগদ এক লাখ টকাৰ এখন চেক, এটা স্মাৰকৰ উপৰিও সমাজকৰ্মী গৰাকীৰ জীৱন ভিত্তিক তথ্যচিত্ৰ এখনো প্ৰদান কৰে। এই বঁটাই সমাজকৰ্মীগৰাকীক দুওণে উৎসাহ আৰু প্ৰেৰণা দিবলৈ সক্ষম হয়। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও ২০১৮ চনৰ ২৯ অক্টোবৰত "Women World Sumrnit foundation ২০১৮" বঁটা বীৰুৱালা ৰাভাক প্ৰদান কৰা হয়। উল্লেখনীয় যে জেনেভাৰ "Women World Foundation" নামৰ সংগঠনটোৱে বীৰুৱালা ৰাভা আৰু তামিলনাডুৰ ৯ গৰাকী মহিলাক সমাজত চলি থকা অমানৱীয় কাৰ্য তথা সংস্কাৰৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সংগ্ৰাম কৰি হাৰ বাবে বিশেষভাৱে সন্মান জনাবলৈ ১৫ অক্টোবৰ তাৰিখে জেনেভালৈ আমন্ত্ৰণ জনাইছিল। কিন্তু আৰ্থিক দুৰৱস্থা আৰু শাৰীৰিক অসুস্থতাৰ বাবে বীৰুৱালা ৰাভা জেনেভালৈ যাব নোৱাৰাত এক্সিজাৰ ইনষ্টিটিউট অব মেনেজমেণ্ট এণ্ড ফাউণ্ডেচন টেকনলজী [Exciser Institute of Management and Foundation Technology] নামৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠানটোৰ জৰিয়তে গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ত বঁটাটো প্ৰদান কৰে। বঁটাত থাকে এক লাখ টকাৰ এখন চেক আৰু এখন প্ৰশস্তি পত্ৰ। এই আন্তৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় বঁটা প্ৰাপ্তিৰ বাবে বীৰুৱালা ৰাভা গোটেই বিশ্বতে এগৰাকী সমাজ সংস্কাৰী মহিলা হিচাপে জনাজাত হৈ পৰে।

বৰ্তমান যুগ বিজ্ঞান আৰু প্ৰযুক্তি বিদ্যাৰ যুগ। আমাৰ চৌদিশৰ বাতাবৰণ সলনি কৰা শক্তিবোৰৰ ভিতৰত বিজ্ঞান হৈছে অন্যতম। আজি ২১ শতিকাত ভিতৰৰ গাঁও-ভূই আদিতো শিক্ষাৰ পোহৰ পৰিছে। গতিকে সময়ৰ লগে লগে

মানুহৰ মাজত চলি অহা অনেক এলাস্কুলীয়া বিশ্বাসো আঁতৰি যাব ধৰিছে। তথাপিহে আতি দুখজনকভাৱে এই সময়তো মানুহ যে একেবাৰে সংস্কাৰমুক্ত হৈছে এনে নহয়। অৱশ্যে নিজ স্বার্থ সিদ্ধি কৰাৰ উপায় হিচাপেও কিছুমান লোকে এই বিশ্বাসবোৰত হয়ভৰ দিয়ে। কেৱল ডাইনীৰ ক্ষেত্ৰতে নহয় আন আন কিছুমান ক্ষেত্ৰটো এইবোৰ প্ৰযোজ্য হৈ আছে। এগৰাকী বোৱাৰীক কিবা কাৰণত বেয়া পালে তাই কুলক্ষী, সাংখিনী আদি কু-মন্তব্য দি ঘৰৰ পৰা উলিয়াই আনকি গাত কেৰাচিন ঢালি হত্যা কৰা হয়। হয়তো গভীৰভাৱে চালে তাৰ অন্তৰালত কিবা বহস্যও লুকাই থাকে। প্ৰশ্ন হয় ডাইনী প্ৰকৃততে আছেনে? উত্তৰ হ'ব নএগ্ৰথক। ডাইনী বুলি একো থাকিব নোৱাৰে। ই মানুহৰ মনে সজা বিষয়। তুলনামূলকভাৱে শিক্ষা-দীক্ষাৰ পোহৰ নপৰা বঞ্চিত শোষিত, অনুন্নত, পিছপৰা শ্ৰেণীৰ মাজত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ পয়োভৰ বেছি। আমাৰ অসমৰ কোকৰাঝাৰ, চিৰাং, ওদালগুৰি, তামুলপুৰ, গোসাইগাঁও, তেজপুৰ, মাজুলি, টংলা, হৰিশিঙা আদি জনজাতীয় ঠাইবোৰত ইয়াৰ প্ৰভাৱ বেছি। চাহ জনগোষ্ঠীৰ মাজতো যথেষ্ট অন্ধবিশ্বাস চলি থকা দেখা যায়। কেৱল অসমতে নহয় অন্ধ্ৰপ্ৰদেশ, ঝাৰখণ্ড, চণ্ডিগড়, গুজৰাট, বিহাৰ, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ, উৰিষ্যা, হাৰিয়ানা, মহাৰাষ্ট্ৰ আদিতো জনজাতিৰ মাজত ডাইনী হত্যাৰ দৰে ঘটনা হোৱাৰ উদাহৰণ আছে। অষ্ট্ৰেলিয়া, লেটিন আমেৰিকা, আফ্ৰিকা, শ্ৰীলংকা, নৰৱে, চুইডেন আদি সভ্য দেশতো এনে ঘটনা ঘটিছে।

শেষত এইটো ক'ব পাৰি যে বীৰুৱালাৰ দৰে যদি সাহসী আৰু প্ৰতিবাদী লোক সমাজলৈ আহে তেতিয়াহ'লে এনেধৰণৰ প্ৰচলিত সামাজিক ব্যাধিবোৰ দূৰ কৰিবলৈ বেছি দিন নালাগে। এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ মহিলাই যদি অসাধাৰণভাৱে নিজকে সমাজসেৱাত ব্ৰতী হ'ব পাৰে তেওঁৰ দৰে অনেক মহিলাই সমাজ সংস্কাৰত আগভাগ ল'ব নোৱাৰাৰ একো কাৰণ নাই। বীৰুৱালা আমাৰ পথ প্ৰদৰ্শক। বৰ্তমান প্ৰায় ৭০ বছৰ গৰকা এইগৰাকী মহিলাৰ চিন্তা, আদৰ্শ আৰু কৰ্মস্পৃহাৰ প্ৰতি আমাৰফালৰ পৰাও সহস্ৰ অভিনন্দন জনালো।

মুখ্য সহায়ক গ্ৰন্থ :

দেৱী, ললিতা। অসমৰ সমাজ সংস্কৃতিত এভূমুকি, প্ৰকাশক-দৰং জিলা সাহিত্য সভা, জুলাই ২০১৯।

জ্যোতিনাটকত নাৰী
 ('কাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী' আৰু 'ৰূপালীম' নাটকৰ প্ৰধান
 নাৰীচৰিত্ৰ শোৱালী আৰু ৰূপালীমৰ বিশেষ প্ৰসঙ্গত)

চিত্ৰ বঞ্জন নাথ

জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ নাটকত প্ৰধান নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ স্বৰূপ :

জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদে তেওঁৰ নাটকত সংস্কাৰমুক্ত দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে অসমৰ জনসমাজ তথা জনসংস্কৃতিৰ জীৱন্ত ছবি অংকন কৰিছিল। তেওঁৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰসমূহতো সেই দৃষ্টিভংগীৰ ছাপ দেখা পোৱা যায়।

জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালাৰ নাটকসমূহত নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ ভূমিকা মন কৰিবলগীয়া। সম্পূৰ্ণ অসমীয়া আদৰ্শ-পৰম্পৰাৰে পৰিচালিত চৰিত্ৰসমূহ প্ৰায়ে মহীয়সী, মৃদুভাষিণী, সুকোমল, নম্ৰ, লজ্জাশীল, লাৱণ্যময়ী আৰু আত্মত্যাগৰ মহিমাৰে ভাস্বৰ। চৰিত্ৰ বিলাকৰ গাত বাস্তৱতাৰ ছাপ সু-স্পষ্ট। জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ শিল্পীসুলভ হাতৰ পৰশত এই নাৰী চৰিত্ৰবিলাকৰ আৱেগ, অনুভূতি, সুখ-দুখ, আশা-আকাংক্ষা, বিয়াদ-বেদনা জীপাল হৈ উঠিছে। শোৱালী, ৰূপালীম, লভিতা, উষা প্ৰভৃতি প্ৰতিগৰাকী নাৰী চৰিত্ৰই ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ আদৰ্শৰে ত্যাগ আৰু মমতাৰ প্ৰতিমূৰ্তি ৰূপত দেখা দিছে।

জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ 'কাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী' আৰু 'ৰূপালীম' নাটক দুখনত মুখ্য নাৰী চৰিত্ৰবিলাকৰ দুটা ধাৰা দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়— এফালে শোৱালী,

ৰূপালীম আৰু আনফালে কাঞ্চনমতী আৰু ইতিভেন। শেৱালী-ৰূপালীম দুয়োগৰাকী সাধাৰণ নাৰী কিন্তু সাধাৰণ হৈও আনৰ গুৰুচিন্তুক। আনহাতে কাঞ্চনমতী আৰু ইতিভেন কম-বেছি পৰিমাণে ৰাজকীয় আভিজাত্য আৰু নতুন মূল্যবোধৰ দ্বাৰা উদ্বুদ্ধ নাৰীচেতনাৰ প্ৰতীক।

মানৱ জীৱনৰ বাস্তৱ দৃষ্টিভংগী গ্ৰহণ কৰা ‘কাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী’ নাটকখনে অসমীয়া নাটকৰ ধাৰালৈ এক নৱ-চেতনাৰ আগমন ঘটাইছিল। নাটকখনৰ নায়িকা শেৱালী। তাই ৰূপহী যদিও কাৰেঙৰ এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ লিগিৰী। আন দহ গৰাকী নাৰীৰ দৰে তাইৰো অন্তৰত প্ৰেম আছে, সেই প্ৰেমৰ প্ৰকাশ তাই কৰিব নাজানে অথবা নিবিচাৰে। ৰাজকোঁৱৰৰ সুন্দৰক তাই ভাল পায়, কিন্তু কোনোদিনেই যে ৰাজকোঁৱৰী হ’ব নোৱাৰে, সেই কথা ভালদৰে জানে। কোঁৱৰৰ প্ৰতি তাইৰ গোপন প্ৰণয় অকপটে স্বীকাৰ কৰে যদিও যিকোনো মুহূৰ্ততে কোঁৱৰৰ সুখহে কামনা কৰে। অৱশ্যে কোঁৱৰে সোধা প্ৰশ্নৰ উত্তৰ তাইৰ হাতত নাই। কোঁৱৰে তাইক সোধে— ‘কিয়? কিয় ভাল পায়?’ এই প্ৰশ্নৰ উত্তৰ শেৱালীয়ে “এনেয়ে ভাল পাওঁ” বুলিহে দিয়ে। আচলতে কোনেও কাকো এনেয়ে ভাল পাব নোৱাৰে। কিন্তু কাৰেঙত নিজৰ স্থান উপলব্ধি কৰাৰ লগতে নিজৰ ভৱিষ্যত সম্পৰ্কে থকা শংকা আৰু সন্দেহত তাই কোৱা এই কথাখিনিৰ মাজেৰে নাৰী বিদ্বেষী সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰে শেৱালীৰ অন্তৰৰ নিভাঁজ প্ৰেম উপলব্ধি কৰিব নোৱাৰিলে। কোঁৱৰৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰত্যাখ্যাতা শেৱালীয়ে ৰাজকোঁৱৰীৰ সন্মানক তুচ্ছজ্ঞান কৰি ত্যাগৰ মহিমাৰে নিজকে জুয়ে পোৰা সোণৰ দৰে জিলিকাই তুলিছে। সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰৰ প্ৰতি গভীৰ প্ৰেম প্ৰকাশ কৰি তাই কৈছে— “ৰজাই ল’ৰাই মোক কুঁৱৰী পাতিলে ৰজাৰ ডাঙৰীয়াসকলে কোঁৱৰক ৰজা ভাঙিব আৰু মাৰোৱাই পেলাব পাৰে, বুজিছ?” প্ৰেমিকৰ সৰ্বতো প্ৰকাৰৰ মংগল কামনা কৰা এই চৰিত্ৰটিয়ে শেষত আত্মজাহ দিয়ে প্ৰেমিকৰ অজ্ঞাতে।

এই শেৱালী চৰিত্ৰটিৰ বিপৰীতে কাঞ্চনমতী চৰিত্ৰটি সম্পূৰ্ণ ওলোট। নাৰীবাদী চেতনাৰে উদ্বুদ্ধ এই চৰিত্ৰটিয়ে প্ৰথমতে কোঁৱৰৰ বন্ধু অনংগৰামক ভাল পাইছিল যদিও সেই ভালপোৱাই পূৰ্ণতা নাপালে। ঘৰৰ হেঁচা আৰু সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰৰ মাতৃৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাত কোঁৱৰকে স্বামীৰূপে মানি ল’বলগীয়া হ’ল।

অনংগই যেতিয়া তেওঁলোকৰ প্ৰেমৰ কথা সমাজৰ আগত অথবা নিজ বন্ধু কোঁৱৰৰ আগত কোৱাৰ সাহস কৰিব নোৱাৰিলে, তেতিয়া কাঞ্চনমতীয়ে সমাজৰ বান্ধোন স্বীকাৰ কৰিবলৈ বাধ্য হ'ল। তাই ক্ষোভ প্ৰকাশ কৰি কৈছে, “আমাৰ দেশৰ ছোৱালীয়ে অৱশ্যে যাকে ইচ্ছা তাকে ভাল পাব পাৰে, কিন্তু যাকে ইচ্ছা তাকে বিয়া কৰাব নোৱাৰে। চৰুক সুধি চাউল নবহায়।”

কাঞ্চনমতী এগৰাকী স্পষ্টবাদী, সাহসী ছোৱালী। সমাজৰ বান্ধোন স্বীকাৰ কৰি কোঁৱৰক স্বামী হিচাপে মানি ল'লেও সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰৰ দোষ, অন্যায়বোৰ সাহসেৰে আঙুলিয়াই দিছে। বিবাহৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সমাজৰ দৃষ্টিভংগী প্ৰকাশ কৰি তেওঁ কৈছে— “বিবাহৰ দ্বাৰা শাৰীৰিক সম্বন্ধ ঘটে আৰু মানসিক সম্বন্ধ হ'বই লাগিব বুলি সমাজে ধৰি লয়, নিৰ্দেশ কৰে। ভালপোৱা মানসিক সম্বন্ধ, শাৰীৰিক সম্বন্ধ তাৰ উদ্দেশ্য নহ'বও পাৰে।” কাঞ্চনমতীৰ এই বক্তব্যৰ মাজেদি জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ প্ৰেম, ভালপোৱা আৰু বিবাহ সম্পৰ্কত সমাজত প্ৰচলিত বন্ধমূল ধাৰণাৰ অন্তঃ-সাৰশূন্যতা প্ৰকাশ কৰা হৈছে।

সামন্তবাদী সমাজৰ ঠুনুকা আভিজাত্যত নাৰীক সদায় পণ্যৰ দৰে গণ্য কৰা হয়। পুৰুষৰ দ্বাৰা সৃষ্ট ৰীতি-নীতিৰ বন্ধনত নাৰী সদায় সজাৰ পক্ষীৰ দৰে আবদ্ধ হৈ থাকিব লাগে। অন্তৰ্দ্বন্দ্বত ক্ষত-বিক্ষত হোৱা কাঞ্চনমতীয়ে এই অসহনীয় বন্ধনৰ পৰা মুক্ত হোৱাৰ উপায় মৃত্যুৰ বাহিৰে আন একো নেদেখে। সেয়ে বিষ পান কৰি আত্মহত্যা কৰে।

জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ ‘ৰূপালীম’ নাটকত মুখ্য নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ হিচাপে ৰূপালীম আৰু ইতিভেন চৰিত্ৰ দুটা পাওঁ। দুয়োটা চৰিত্ৰ সম্পূৰ্ণ ভিন্ন। ‘কাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী’ৰ শেৱালীৰ দৰে ৰূপালীমো এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ ছোৱালী। পাহাৰৰ উদাৰ সৰলতাৰ দ্বাৰা পালিত সৰল অন্তৰৰ এই নিষ্পাপ ছোৱালীজনীয়ে কাৰোবাক ভাল পাব পৰাকৈ এখন বহল হৃদয়ৰ গৰাকী। তাই মায়াব’ নামৰ গাঁৱৰেই কৰ্মী ৰুক্মী ডেকা এজনৰক ভাল পায়। মায়াবলৈ তাইৰ ভালপোৱা প্ৰকাশ কৰি মণিমুঞ্চৰ আগত কম— “খুব ভাল পাওঁ। গছত যিমান ফুল আছে, ডালত যিমান পাত আছে, নৈত যিমান পানী আছে, শূইনত যিমান বতাহ আছে, নিশাৰ আকাশত যিমান তৰা আছে— তিমান।” তাইৰ ভালপোৱা প্ৰকাশতো যেন জনজাতীয় জীৱনৰ নিষ্পাপ, সৰলতা প্ৰকাশিত হৈছে।

ৰূপালীম মানৱীয় মমতাৰে ভবা এজনী সৰল অন্তৰৰ ছোৱালী। সেয়ে তাই প্ৰেমিক, পিতৃ আৰু ৰাজ্যৰ আন প্ৰজাৰ মুক্তিৰ পণতহে নিজৰ অনিচ্ছা স্বত্বেও তাইৰ শৰীৰ মণিমুগ্ধক দান কৰিবলৈ ৰাজী হৈছে। আনৰ সুখ আৰু মঙ্গলৰ কাৰণে ক্ষুদ্ৰ স্বার্থ ত্যাগ কৰিবলৈ সন্মতি প্ৰকাশ কৰি ৰূপালীমে যি মহানুভৱতাৰ পৰিচয় দিলে, তাৰ তুলনাত মণিমুগ্ধ, ইতিভেন প্ৰভৃতি চৰিত্ৰৰ সৌন্দৰ্য্য স্নান পৰি গৈছে। দৰাচলতে ৰূপালীম বাহ্যিক ৰূপ-সৌন্দৰ্য্যৰেই নহয়, আভ্যন্তৰীণ সৌন্দৰ্য্যৰেও অনিন্দ্যসুন্দৰী।

তাই মাতৃহৃদয়ৰ মমতাৰে উদ্বুদ্ধা এগৰাকী ৰুক্মী গাভৰু। তাইৰ বায়েকৰ অকণমান ল'ৰাটোৰ প্ৰতি বৰ মৰম। তাক লৈ থাকিবলৈ তাইৰ বৰ মন। সেয়ে তাই মায়াব'ক কয়, '... সি বৰ অকণমান, সি কথা ক'বকে নোৱাৰে। সি মই কোলাত ল'লে কান্দে। সি কান্দিলে মই তাৰ মুখত আঙুলিটো সুমুৱাই দিওঁ। হিঃ হিঃ হিঃ— মায়াব'ঙ্গ তাক মোৰ বৰ লবৰ মন গৈছে।' আকৌ মায়াব'ই বাঘ এটা মাৰি মূৰটো কাটি আনোতেও তাইৰ অন্তৰে হাহাকাৰ কৰিছে। মাক নথকা বাঘৰ পোৱালী কেইটাৰ চিন্তাই তাইক জুৰুলা কৰিছে; অন্তৰৰ দুখত ভাগি পৰিছে। সিহঁতক কোনে খুৱাব, খাবলৈ নাপায় যে সিহঁতৰ মৃত্যু হ'ব সেই কথা ভাৰি তাইৰ দুখ লাগিছে। সেয়ে বাঘপোৱালী কেইটা মায়াব'ক আনি দিবলৈ তাই কৈছে—“পিছে, বাঘৰ পোৱালীকেইটাও তুমি আনিবা দেই। মই সিহঁতক খাবলৈ দিম, নহ'লে সিহঁতে অকলে অকলে হাবিত কান্দি কান্দি ঘূৰি ফুৰিব।” সাধাৰণ ছোৱালী এজনীৰ বন্যজীৱৰ প্ৰতি এনে আচৰণে আচলতে চৰিত্ৰটিৰ সৰল অথচ মৰমিয়াল ৰূপটো ফুটাই তুলিছে। ৰূপালীমৰ আলফুলীয়া হৃদয়ত যেনেদৰে মায়াব'ৰ দৰেই তেওঁৰ পিতৃ জুনাফালৈ অকৃত্ৰিম শ্ৰদ্ধা ভক্তি আছে, তেনেদৰেই অকণমানি ভাগিনীয়েক, আনকি বাঘপোৱালী কেইটিলৈয়ো সমানেই মৰম আছে। দৰাচলতে ৰূপালীমৰ সৰল নিষ্পাপ হৃদয়ৰ সাৰ্থক প্ৰতিফলন ঘটিছে চৰিত্ৰটোত।

এই সৰল, সাধাৰণ ছোৱালীজনীৰ কিন্তু মুখ খুলি প্ৰতিবাদ কৰাৰ সাহস নাই। সেয়ে কাৰোবাৰ ঈৰ্ষাৰ জুইত নিজেই ভস্মীভূত হৈছে। নিজৰ সতীত্বত কলংকসনা বুলি মিছা অপযশ মূৰ পাতি লৈ মৃত্যুৰ দৰে কঠোৰ শাস্তিৰ সন্মুখীন হ'বলগীয়া হৈছে এই চৰিত্ৰটিয়ে।

একেখন নাটকৰে আন এটি আকৰ্ষণীয় অথচ অতি জটিল চৰিত্ৰ হ'ল ইতিভেন। এওঁ ৰুক্মী বজাৰ ভনীয়েক আৰু প্ৰান্তদেশৰ অধিপতি মণিমুগ্ধৰ বাগদত্তা। দেশপ্ৰেমেৰে উদ্বুদ্ধা যেন লাগিলেও প্ৰকৃতৰ্থত এই চৰিত্ৰটি কৌশলী, নাৰীৰ সহজাত ঈৰ্ষাপৰায়ণ প্ৰবৃত্তিৰ দ্বাৰা পৰিচালিত আৰু প্ৰতিশোধ প্ৰৰণ মনোবৃত্তিৰ।

ৰূপালীমৰ পিতৃ জুনাফাই ৰুক্মী বজাক মণিমুগ্ধ ৰূপালীমক হৰণ কৰি নিয়া বুলি দিয়া অভিযোগ ৰজাই নাকচ কৰিছিল যদিও ইতিভেনে এই ক্ষেত্ৰত সম্পূৰ্ণ সহযোগ কৰিলে। নিজ ৰাজ্যৰ ছোৱালী হৰণ কৰি নিয়াৰ বাবে তেৱেই মণিমুগ্ধৰ বিৰুদ্ধে সকলো ৰুক্মী প্ৰজাক একত্ৰিত কৰিলে। আচলতে নিজৰ বাগদত্তা পুৰুষজনে যেতিয়া এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ ৰুক্মী ছোৱালীৰ ৰূপত ভোল গৈ হৰণ কৰি নিছে, তেতিয়া আন দহগৰাকী নাৰীৰ দৰে ইতিভেনৰো অন্তৰত ঈৰ্ষাৰ ভাৱ জাগৃত হৈছিল। সেই ঈৰ্ষাৰ কোপত পৰিয়েই নিজৰ ককায়েকক সিংহাসনৰ পৰা পদচ্যুত কৰি মণিমুগ্ধৰ কাৰেং আক্ৰমণ কৰিছিল।

প্ৰতিশোধপৰায়ণ মনোবৃত্তিৰ হ'লেও মণিমুগ্ধক আক্ৰমণ কৰোঁতে, মণিমুগ্ধই আঘাত পাওঁতে ইতিভেনৰ অন্তৰে হাহাকাৰ কৰিছে। “মণিমুগ্ধ মণিমুগ্ধ মই আছোঁ তোমাৰ ওচৰতে।” বুলি আঘাতপ্ৰাপ্ত মণিমুগ্ধক শুশ্ৰূষা কৰিছে। তাৰ পিছতেই মণিমুগ্ধক ৰূপালীমৰ পৰা আঁতৰি আহিবলৈ আহ্বান জনাইছে যদিও মণিমুগ্ধই ৰূপালীমৰ ৰূপ-যৌৱন উপভোগ কৰিব নোৱাৰলে তেওঁৰ জীৱন অসম্পূৰ্ণ বুলি কোৱাত পুনৰবাৰ প্ৰতিহিংসাৰ দ্বাৰা উদ্বুদ্ধ হৈ মণিমুগ্ধক আক্ৰমণ কৰিবলৈ তৎপৰ হৈছে।

মণিমুগ্ধৰ হাতত বন্দী হোৱা ইতিভেন, জুনাফা, মায়াব' আৰু ৰুক্মী প্ৰজাসকলক ৰূপালীমে মণিমুগ্ধক দেহ দানৰ বিনিময়ত মুক্তি দিছে। ৰূপালীমৰ ব্যৱহাৰত মুগ্ধ হৈ মণিমুগ্ধই ৰূপালীমকো বিনাচৰ্তে মুক্তি দিয়ে।

নায়িকা হিচাপে নাটক দুখনত চৰিত্ৰ দুটিৰ গুৰুত্ব :

শেৱালী আৰু ৰূপালীম—এই দুয়োটা চৰিত্ৰৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি কৰিয়েই নাটক দুখনৰ নামকৰণ কৰা হৈছে। কাহিনীৰ অগ্ৰগতিত চৰিত্ৰ দুটিৰ ভূমিকাৰ ওপৰত ভিত্তি কৰি এই দুয়োটা চৰিত্ৰক নায়িকাৰ আসনত বহুৱাব পাৰি।

সমালোচক ভৱেন বৰুৱাৰ ভাষাত, “জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ নাটকৰ কেন্দ্ৰত নায়কতকৈ নায়িকাৰ ভূমিকা গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ। তেওঁৰ প্ৰতিখন নাটকৰ কেন্দ্ৰত আছে ‘সংস্কৃতি’ আৰু সেই সংস্কৃতিৰ প্ৰতিনিধিত্ব কৰিবলৈ— তাক পোষণ কৰিব পৰা শক্তি এটাৰ প্ৰতিনিধি হিচাপে জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদে ৰাখিছে এক বিশেষ চৰিত্ৰৰ আৰু মনৰ এবিধ নাৰীক।”

নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ প্ৰাধান্যই জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ নাটকত এক বিশেষ ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। সাধাৰণতে তেওঁৰ নাটকসমূহ নায়িকা প্ৰধান। নাট্যকাৰ গৰাকীয়ে নাটকত কাহিনীতকৈ চৰিত্ৰৰ বিচিত্ৰতাৰ ওপৰতহে বেছি গুৰুত্ব দিছে। এই কথা ৰূপালীম নাটকৰ পাতনিত তেওঁ নিজেই কৈছে, “.. আদৰ্শ চৰিত্ৰ দাঙি ধৰাতকৈ চৰিত্ৰৰ বিচিত্ৰতাহে দেখুৱাবলৈ প্ৰয়াস পোৱা গৈছে।” কাহিনীতকৈ চৰিত্ৰৰ ওপৰত বেছি গুৰুত্ব দিয়াৰ বাবেই জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদে প্ৰতিখন নাটকৰ নাম কাহিনী বা বিষয়বস্তুৰ সলনি চৰিত্ৰৰ নামেৰে নামাকৰণ কৰিছে। ৰূপহী ৰুক্মী গাভৰু জুনাফাৰ জীয়েক ‘ৰূপালীম’ নাট্যকাহিনীৰ মধ্যমণি। ৰূপালীমৰ ৰূপ-সৌন্দৰ্য্যৰ মাধুৰীয়ে প্ৰান্তদেশৰ অধিপতি মনিমুগ্ধৰ দৰে কামাসক্ত পুৰুষৰ মন গহনত বাসনাৰ বীজ সিঁচি দিয়ে। এই কথাত মণিমুগ্ধৰ বাকদ্ভা ইতিভেন ঈৰ্ষাৰ বহিত দেই-পুৰি মৰে; অৰ্থাৎ ৰূপালীমৰ ৰূপ-সৌন্দৰ্যই ইতিভেনকো পৰিচালিত কৰিছে। মহেন্দ্ৰ বৰাৰ ভাষাত, “ৰূপালীম হ’ল জালত পৰা হৰিণী।” পৰিস্থিতিৰ চাকনৈয়াত পৰি অস্বীয়জন স্বদেশ আৰু স্বজাতিৰ মঙ্গলৰ বাবে ৰূপালীমে নিজৰ সৰ্বস্ব ত্যাগ কৰিবলৈ প্ৰস্তুত হৈছে— “তুমি মোক যি কৰিবলৈ কোৱা মই তাকেই কৰিম।” অনিচ্ছা স্বত্বেও নাৰীত্ব বিসৰ্জন দিবলগীয়া হোৱাটো এগৰাকী নাৰীৰ কাৰণে দুভাগ্যজনক। কিয়নো সতীত্বই হৈছে নাৰীত্ব। কিন্তু নাটকখনৰ শেষৰ ফালে নায়িকা গৰাকীৰ সৰলতা আৰু ত্যাগৰ মহত্বই মণিমুগ্ধৰ অন্তৰৰ পাশৰিক শক্তি বা জৈৱিক কামনা-বাসনাক পৰাভূত কৰিলে। অন্তৰৰ কলুষতাৰ আন্ধাৰ ৰূপালীমৰ স্নিগ্ধ সৰলতা আৰু পৰিত্ৰতাৰ পোহৰে আঁতৰাই পেলালে। অৱশ্যে নাৰীৰ ঈৰ্ষা আৰু প্ৰতিশোধৰ জুইত নিজকে বিসৰ্জন দিবলগীয়া হ’ল এই সহজ-সৰল আৰু নিঃস্পাপ অন্তৰৰ ছোৱালীজনীয়ে।

‘কাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী’ নাটকৰ ‘শেৱালী’ সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰৰ ৰাজকাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী। ভৰ যৌৱনা শেৱালী সৰল মনোবৃত্তিৰ অথচ অমায়িক। তাইৰ সহজ-সৰল

ব্যৱহাৰত কোঁৱৰ মুখ। সেয়ে হয়তো আন লিগিৰীবোৰতকৈ কোঁৱৰে শেৱালীৰ লগত বেছিকৈ কথা পাতে, ধেমালি কৰে। এই কথা কাৰেঙৰ আন আন লিগিৰীৰ লগতে ৰাজমাও (সুন্দৰৰ মাতৃ)ৰ চকুতো পৰিছিল।

শেৱালীয়ে সুন্দৰক ভাল পায়। কোঁৱৰ আৰু শেৱালীৰ গোপন প্ৰেমৰ কথা কাৰেঙৰ ভিতৰে-বাহিৰে প্ৰচাৰ হয়। দুই-এগৰাকী লিগিৰীয়েও এই ক্ষেত্ৰত শেৱালীক 'ৰাজকুঁৱৰী হ'বলৈ সপোন দেখা' বুলি ইতিকিং কৰাৰ লগতে সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰৰ মাকে কোনোপধ্যেই এই কথা মানি ল'ব নোৱাৰি শেৱালীক নিঃশেষ কৰিবলৈ কোঁৱৰৰ অজ্ঞাতে তাইক নগাপাহাৰলৈ নিৰ্বাসন দিয়ালে। আচলতে সাধাৰণ কাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী এগৰাকীক কোনো কাৰণতেই কোঁৱৰৰ মাকে ৰাজকুঁৱৰী কৰিব নিবিচাৰে। পিছত এই কথা গম পাই কোঁৱৰে শেৱালীক বিচাৰি নগাপাহাৰত ওলায়গৈ। কিন্তু কোঁৱৰে তাইক বিচাৰি অহা বুলি জানি, তাইক পুনৰ ৰাজকাৰেঙলৈ কুঁৱৰী কৰি লৈ গ'লে কোঁৱৰে ৰাজ্য হেৰুৱাবলগীয়া হোৱাৰ লগতে কোঁৱৰক মৃত্যুদণ্ড পৰ্যন্ত দিব পাৰে বুলি ভাৰি শেৱালীয়ে পাহাৰীয়া জুৰিত জপিয়াই আত্মজাহ দিয়ে।

দুয়োখন নাটকৰ চৰিত্ৰ দুটিৰ গতিশীলতা আৰু পৰিণতিয়ে দৰ্শক-পাঠকৰ মনত আলোড়নৰ সৃষ্টি কৰে। এনে ক্ষেত্ৰত চৰিত্ৰ দুটিৰ আৰ্হিত নাটক কেইখনৰ নামকৰণ যথার্থ হোৱা বুলি ক'ব পৰা যায়।

চৰিত্ৰ দুটিৰ প্ৰেম সম্পৰ্কীয় ধাৰণা :

ৰূপালীম আৰু শেৱালী সমাজৰ নিম্ন শ্ৰেণীৰ, সাধাৰণ ছোৱালী। দুয়োজনী ৰূপহী অথচ অমায়িক। চৰিত্ৰ দুটি সহজ-সৰল, লাজকুৰীয়া আৰু মানৱীয় মমতাৰে পৰিপূৰ্ণ।

ৰূপালীমে মায়াব'ক ভাল পায়। মনে-প্ৰাণে ভাল পায়। কিন্তু এই মায়াব'ই যেতিয়া তাইতকৈ সাধাৰণ বাঁহৰ পেঁপা এটিকহে বেছি গুৰুত্ব দিয়া বুলি অনুভৱ কৰে, তেতিয়া তাই খঙেৰে ভৰিৰে গছকি পেঁপাটো ভাঙি পেলায়। তাইৰ সৰল মনে মায়াব'ই তাইৰ বাহিৰে আনক ভালপোৱাটো কেতিয়াও নিবিচাৰে।

মাতৃহৃদয়ৰ আকুলতাৰে ভৰা ৰূপালীমে বায়েকৰ কণমানি ল'ৰাটো

আহোঁতে তাৰ লগত প্ৰথমে খেলে। তাক জোকাই, সি কান্দিলে মুখত আঙুলি সুমুৱাই দিয়ে। তাইৰ এই মৰমৰ কথা অনুমান কৰিয়েই মায়াব'ই সিহঁতৰ গাঁৱৰ পৰা কণমানি ল'ৰা এটা আনি দিব বুলি কোৱাত ৰূপালীম আনন্দত আত্মহাৰা হয়—“তেন্তে মায়াব’, আনিবাচোন দেই। মই তাক খুব মৰম কৰিম। তাক মই লগত লৈ ফুৰাম, মোৰ লগতে খুৰাম। মোৰ লগতে শুৰাম। মই কেতিয়াও তাক মোৰ লগৰ পৰা এৰি নিদিও।” ৰূপালীমৰ কথা শুনি মায়াব'ক তেতিয়া ক'ত মৰম কৰিব বুলি সোধাত তাই আকৌ কয়, “কেলৈ? ল'ৰাটো মই বুকুত সুমুৱাই থম আৰু তাৰ মৰম কৰি তোমাৰ সৈতে কথা পাতি থাকিম।” ৰূপালীমৰ এই ধৰণৰ সংলাপে চৰিত্ৰটিৰ এফালে চিৰন্তন মাতৃহৃদয় আৰু আনফালে এগৰাকী গভীৰ প্ৰেমিকা হিচাপে আত্মপ্ৰকাশ কৰিছে।

মায়াব'ই বাঘ এটা মাৰি তাৰ মূৰটো কাটি অনাত ৰূপালীম বিচলিত হৈ “মায়াব’, মায়াব’, তুমি বাঘৰ মূৰটো কেলৈ কাটিলা? ... পিছে তাৰ পোৱালীবোৰক কোনে খুৱাব? সিহঁত মৰি যাব নহয়?” মাকজনী অবিহনে বাঘৰ পোৱালী কেইটাৰ আসন্ন মৃত্যুৰ কথা বুজিব পাৰি তাইৰো সুপু মাতৃ হৃদয় জাগৃত হৈছে। সেয়ে তাই বাঘ পোৱালীকেইটা আনি দিবলৈ মায়াব'ক অনুৰোধ জনাইছে।

ৰূপালীমে কেৱল কেচুৱা, বন্যজীৱ-জন্তু অথবা মায়াব'কেই ভাল নাপায়; নিজ পিতৃ জুনাফালৈও তাইৰ অশেষ মৰম। পিতৃ জুনাফাক লৈ তাইৰ বৰ চিন্তা। মায়াব'ক বিয়া কৰাই তাৰ ঘৰলৈ যাব লাগিব বুলি কোৱাত তাইৰ চিন্তা হৈছে, “সেইদৰে থাকিলে মোৰ বুঢ়া বোপায়ে কেনেকৈ খাব? কেনেকৈ জীৱ?” সেয়ে তাই মায়াব'ৰ ঘৰলৈ বিয়া হৈ যোৱাৰ পৰিবৰ্ত্তে “তুমি মোক সদায় বোপাইৰ ঘৰত চাই আহিবা। ময়ো তোমাক চাই থাকিবলৈ পাম” বুলি কয়। কাৰণ তাই জানে, তাই বিয়া হৈ গ'লে পিতৃ জুনাফা অকলশৰীয়া হৈ পৰিব। অকলশৰীয়া পিতৃৰ আলপৈচান ধৰিবলৈ কোনো নাথাকিব। কিন্তু শেষত, পিতৃৰ প্ৰতি থকা এই মৰমৰ ওলোটা প্ৰতিদানহে ৰূপালীমে লাভ কৰে। মণিমুগ্ধই ৰূপালীমৰ পিতৃ, মায়াব', ইতিভেন আৰু আন আন ৰুক্মী প্ৰজাসকলক বন্দী কৰি মৃত্যুদণ্ডৰ ভাবুকি দি তাইৰ দেহ দানৰ বিনিময়ত মুক্তি দিয়াৰ চৰ্ত দিয়াত অনিচ্ছা স্বত্বেও কেৱল সকলোৰে মুক্তিৰ বাবে তাই মণিমুগ্ধ

তৰ্চ মানি ল'লে। পিছত তাইৰ ত্যাগ আৰু সৰলতাত মুগ্ধ হৈ মণিমুগ্ধই তেওঁ কৰা কামৰ বাবে ৰূপালীমৰ ওচৰত ক্ষমা বিচাৰি তাইক বিনাচৰ্তে মুক্তি দিয়ে। কিন্তু ইমান মৰম আলসুৱা, ত্যাগী ছোৱালীজনীক যেন কোনেও বুজি নাপালে। সেয়ে ইতিভেনৰ কথামতেই তাইক অসতী সজোৱা হ'ল। আনকি নিজ পিতৃয়েও তাইক অসতীয়েই আখ্যা দিয়ে— 'অসতী-অসতী-ৰুক্মী নাৰীৰ খিলঞ্জীয়া কলংক।' এইদৰে কোনেও অন্তৰৰ আবেদন বুজিবলৈ চেষ্টা নকৰা এই নিষ্পাপ চৰিত্ৰটিয়ে আনৰ দৰ্শ্যৰ জুইত জ্বলি ভগ্নীভূত হয়।

ৰূপালীম এগৰাকী আদৰ্শ প্ৰেমিকা। বসন্তৰ কুঁহিপাতৰ দৰে তাইৰ কোমল ৰঙীন মনে প্ৰমিক মায়াব'ক লৈ এখন সুখৰ সংসাৰৰ সপোন ৰচে, যদিও মণিমুগ্ধৰ উদ্দাম বাসনাই সেই সপোন ভাঙি চুবমাৰ কৰি দিয়ে। তাইৰ সৰল প্ৰাণে মাতৃহীন বাঘপোৱালীৰ কথা, মাকৰ অভাৱত পোৱালীৰ মৰণৰ কথা যিদৰে ভাৰে, নিৰ্দয় মানৱ সমাজে তাইৰ কথা কিন্তু অকণো নাভাবিলে। আত্মবলিদানেৰে ৰূপালীমে মানৱ সমাজলৈ স্বৰ্গীয় প্ৰেমৰ আদৰ্শ দাঙি ধৰিলে। এই চৰিত্ৰটি সমাজৰ নিম্নশ্ৰেণীৰ সাধাৰণ যুৱতী হ'লেও তেওঁৰ সমগ্ৰ মানসিক সদ্ভাৱত গভীৰ প্ৰেম আৰু ত্যাগৰ মহিমা বিলীয়মান হৈ আছে। এইগৰাকী ৰূপালীমে কেৱল মায়াব'কে ভাল নাপায়, স্বদেশ তথা স্বজাতিকো সমানে ভাল পায়। তাইৰ দেহদানৰ বিনিময়ত মণিমুগ্ধই মায়াব', জুনাফা, ৰুক্মী প্ৰজাসকলক মুক্তি দিব বুলি প্ৰতিশ্ৰুতি দিয়াত ৰূপালীমে নিজৰ সতীত্ব বিসৰ্জন দিবলৈ মান্তি হৈছে। দৰাচলতে, ৰূপালীম জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালাৰ আলোক সন্ধানী শিল্পী চেতনাৰ মানৱী ৰূপ। ৰূপালীমৰ হৃদয়ৰ গভীৰতা, আদৰ্শৰ বিশালতা আৰু ত্যাগৰ মহিমাৰ সোঁতত মণিমুগ্ধৰ বিলাসিতা আৰু কামনা উটি গ'ল। ৰূপালীমৰ ত্যাগৰ জ্যোতিয়ে মণিমুগ্ধৰ কাণ-চকু মুকলি কৰিলে।

'কাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী' নাটকৰ নায়িকা শেৱালী। তাই শান্ত, সহজ-সৰল, মৰমিয়াল ছোৱালীজনী সুন্দৰকোঁৱৰৰ ৰাজকাৰেঙৰ লিগিৰী। লিগিৰী হ'লেও তাইও এগৰাকী নাৰী। এগৰাকী নাৰী হিচাপে তাই সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰক মনে মনে ভাল পায়। কিন্তু তাইৰ এই ভালপোৱা গোপনে নাথাকিল। লাহে লাহে সমাজৰ চকুত তাই ধৰা পৰিবলৈ ধৰিলে। সুন্দৰ কোঁৱৰে কিয় ভাল পাই বুলি সোধাত তাই "এনেয়ে ভাল পাওঁ" বুলি কৈ আত্মৰক্ষা কৰিছে। আচলতে

কোনেও কাকো এনেয়ে ভাল নাপায়। তাই জানে যে তাই এগৰাকী সাধাৰণ লিগিৰী, আৰু সেয়ে কোঁৱৰৰ লগত তাইৰ প্ৰেম কেতিয়াও সম্ভৱ নহয়। পিছত ৰাজমাৰে এই গোপন প্ৰেমৰ কথা গম পাই শেৱালীক নগাপাহাৰলৈ নিৰ্বাসন দিয়ে। কিন্তু নগাপাহাৰলৈ কোঁৱৰে তাইক বিচাৰি যোৱা বুলি গম পাই পুনৰ ৰাজকাৰেঙলৈ লৈ গ'লে কোঁৱৰে ৰাজকাৰেঙৰ অধিকাৰ হেৰুৱাব লাগিব, আৰু হয়তো কোঁৱৰক প্ৰাণদণ্ডেৰে দণ্ডিত কৰা হ'ব বুলি ভাৱি তাই পাহাৰৰ জুৰিত জপিয়াই আত্মজাহ দিয়ে। নিজৰ ভালপোৱা মানুহজনৰ মংগল কামনা কৰিয়েই নিজৰ প্ৰাণ পৰ্যন্ত বিসৰ্জন দিয়া চৰিত্ৰটো মহান ত্যাগৰ নিদৰ্শন।

এইদৰে দুয়োটা চৰিত্ৰ বিশ্লেষণ কৰিলে দেখা যায় অতি কোমল অন্তৰৰ নাৰী দুগৰাকী সমাজৰ অন্যান্য-অবিচাৰ আৰু মানৱতাহীন আচৰণত মৰ্মমূৰ হৈ গৈছে যদিও ত্যাগ আৰু আত্মবলিদানেৰে দৰ্শক-পাঠকৰ হৃদয়ত গভীৰ সহানুভূতিৰ সংস্কাৰ কৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে।

গ্ৰন্থপঞ্জী :

গোহাঁই, হীৰেন (সম্পা.)। *জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ ৰচনাৱলী*। অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ।
সপ্তম পৰিৱৰ্তিত সংস্কৰণ, ২০০৭।

গোস্বামী, ভূপেন (সম্পা.)। *নাট্যচিত্ৰ নাট্যচৰ্চা*। শৰাইঘাট অফছেট প্ৰেছ,
বামুণীমৈদাম, গুৱাহাটীঃ প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০১৬।

দত্ত, সিদ্ধাৰ্থ (সম্পা.)। *ৰূপকোঁৱৰ*। অৰিন্দম অফছেট এণ্ড ইমেজিং চিষ্টেমচ্,
ৰাজগড়, গুৱাহাটীঃ ২০১৫।

দাস, গোবিন্দ। *জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ নাট্য মনীষা*। জ্যোতি প্ৰকাশন,
পাণবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটীঃ দ্বিতীয় প্ৰকাশ, মাৰ্চ, ২০১০।

নাথ, প্ৰফুল্ল কুমাৰ। *নাটক, প্ৰাচীন আৰু আধুনিক*। চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, গুৱাহাটীঃ
দ্বিতীয় পৰিৱৰ্তিত সংস্কৰণ, ২০১০।

বৰুৱা, প্ৰফুল্ল কুমাৰ। *জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ নাটক*। বনলতা, ডিব্ৰুগড়ঃ চতুৰ্থ সংস্কৰণ,
জুলাই, ২০০৯।

বৰুৱা, প্ৰহ্লাদ কুমাৰ। *জ্যোতি মনীষা*। বনলতা, ডিব্ৰুগড়-ৰ। পঞ্চম প্ৰকাশ, জানুৱাৰী, ২০১৫।

বৰুৱা, ভৱেন। *প্ৰসঙ্গঃ জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ*। বনলতা, নতুন বজাৰ, ডিব্ৰুগড়ঃ দ্বিতীয় পৰিৱৰ্তিত সংস্কৰণ, ২০১২।

ভট্টাচাৰ্য, হৰিচন্দ্ৰ। *অসমীয়া নাট্য সাহিত্যৰ জিলিঙণি*। লয়াৰ্চ বুকষ্টল, পাণবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটী, পুনৰ মুদ্ৰণ, ২০১৩।

মহন্ত, পোণা। *নাটকৰ ৰং ৰূপ*। অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ; গুৱাহাটীঃ প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৮।

মহন্ত, পোণা। *নাটকৰ কথা*। বনলতা, ডিব্ৰুগড়ঃ প্ৰথম সংস্কৰণ, ২০০৪।

মহন্ত, পোণা আৰু অন্যান্য। *ৰূপান্তৰৰ শিল্পী জ্যোতি প্ৰসাদ*। বনলতা, নতুন বজাৰ, ডিব্ৰুগড়ঃ প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০০৩।

হোছেইন, ইছমাইল। *জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদৰ জীৱন আৰু দৰ্শন*। জ্যোতি প্ৰকাশন, গুৱাহাটী। ষষ্ঠ প্ৰকাশ, ২০১৪।

লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পত আধুনিক নাৰীকণ্ঠ

ড° ৰূপজ্যোতি বৰুৱা

অৱতৰণিকা :

লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱা অসমীয়া চুটিগল্পৰ জন্মদাতা। ‘জোনাকী’ কাকতৰ যোগেদি অসমীয়া সাহিত্যলৈ যুগান্তৰ অনাসকলৰ ভিতৰত বেজবৰুৱা আছিল আগৰণুৱা। ভাৰতীয় নৱন্যাস যুগৰ সাহিত্য জগতৰ এটি উজ্বল নক্ষত্ৰ আছিল বেজবৰুৱা। তেওঁ বহুমুখী প্ৰতিভাৰে অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ সকলো বিভাগৰে পৰিপুষ্টি সাধন কৰিছিল। তেওঁ আছিল একেধাৰে কবি, নাট্যকাৰ, ঔপন্যাসিক, সাংবাদিক, সমালোচক, শিশু সাহিত্যিক, বম্বাচক, জীৱনীকাৰ আৰু গল্পকাৰ।

উনৈশ শতিকাৰ শেষ ভাগত ‘জোনাকী’ আলোচনীতে বেজবৰুৱাৰ প্ৰথম গল্প ‘সেউতী’ প্ৰকাশ পায়। বেজবৰুৱাই পোন প্ৰথমে অসমীয়া সাধুকথাবোৰ পুনৰ মূল্যায়ন কৰে আৰু এই সাধুকথাবোৰতে আউজি লৈ আধুনিক চুটিগল্পৰ জন্ম দিয়ে। বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পপুথি চাৰিখন ক্ৰমে ‘সুৰভি’ (১৯০৯), ‘সাধুকথাৰ কুকি’ (১৯১০), ‘জোনবিৰি’ (১৯১৩) আৰু

সহযোগী অধ্যাপিকা

মঙলদৈ মহাবিদ্যালয়

‘কেঁহোকলি’ (১৯৬৮)। ‘কেঁহোকলি’ বেজবৰুৱাৰ জীৱনকালত প্ৰকাশ পোৱা নাছিল। বেজবৰুৱাৰ মৃত্যুৰ পিছত বাঁহী আৰু অন্যান্য ঠাইত সিঁচৰতি হৈ থকা আৰু গল্পপুথিত অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত নোহোৱা পোন্ধৰটা গল্প গোটেই ‘কেঁহোকলি’ নামৰ গল্পপুথিখন প্ৰকাশ কৰা হয়।

লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাই তেওঁৰ সমসাময়িক অসমীয়া তথা ভাৰতীয় সমাজৰ পৰাই গল্পৰ সমল গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। উনৈশ শতিকাৰ অসমীয়া তথা ভাৰতীয় সমাজৰ বাস্তৱ চিত্ৰ বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পৰ মাজেৰে চিত্ৰিত হৈছে। ভেম, ভণ্ডামী, কু-সংস্কাৰ আৰু স্থবিৰতাৰ মাজত বুৰ গৈ থকা অসমীয়া মানুহখিনিক, সমাজখনক বেজবৰুৱাই কেবল নিৰপেক্ষ দৃষ্টিৰে চাই যোৱা নাছিল। এই সমাজখন আৰু মানুহখিনিৰ স্বৰূপ উদঙাই দেখুৱাবলৈ তেওঁ প্ৰধানকৈ আশ্ৰয় লৈছিল হাস্য আৰু ব্যঙ্গ বসৰ। ... তেওঁৰ সাহিত্য সেৱাৰ অন্তৰালত সোমাই আছিল সমাজ-সংস্কাৰ কৰাৰ আন্তৰিক অভিলাস। বেজবৰুৱাই হাস্য আৰু ব্যঙ্গ গল্পসমূহৰ যোগেদি অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত এটা নতুন বাট মুকলি কৰিলে আৰু বাস্তৱবাদী সাহিত্যৰ পথ প্ৰশস্ত কৰিলে।

বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পত তেওঁৰ সমসাময়িক সমাজখন প্ৰতিফলিত হৈছে। বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পত স্থান পোৱা সমাজখনৰ পৰিধি বিশাল। সেয়া সুদূৰ উৰিষ্যা আৰু বংগৰ পৰা অসমলৈকে বিস্তৃত এক বৃহৎ সমাজ। সেই সমাজ প্ৰায় এশ বছৰৰ পূৰ্বৰ। তেতিয়াৰ মানুহৰ জীৱন ধাৰণৰ পদ্ধতি, আচাৰ ব্যৱহাৰ, আদৰ-কায়দা বেলেগ আছিল। বিজ্ঞান প্ৰযুক্তি, চিন্তা ভাৱনা আদি অনেক দিশতে আজিৰ তুলনাত তেতিয়াৰ মানুহ আৰু তেওঁলোকে বসবাস কৰা সমাজখন পিছপৰা আছিল। সেইখন সমাজত মানৱতা বা মনুষ্যত্বৰ ধাৰণাই নাছিল। কু-সংস্কাৰ, অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ গ্ৰাসত পৰি নানান সমস্যা সৰ্বসাধাৰণে ককবকাইছিল। সেইখন সমাজ আছিল পুৰুষ প্ৰধান ভাৰতীয় সমাজ। সেই সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত নাৰীৰ স্থান আছিল অতি দুখ লগা। পুৰুষে নাৰীক সমমৰ্যাদা দিয়া নাছিল। নাৰীক প্ৰায়ে ভোগৰ সামগ্ৰী ৰূপেহে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰিছিল। শিক্ষা-দীক্ষাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত তেওঁলোক পিছপৰা আছিল। বাল্য

বিবাহ, বোৱাৰী হত্যা, বাল বিধবাৰ নিৰ্যাতন, পুৰুষৰ বহু বিবাহ আদি সমস্যাই নাৰীসকলক জুৰুলা কৰিছিল। কিন্তু তেওঁলোকৰ দুখ-যন্ত্ৰণা লাঘৱ কৰিবলৈ কোনো নাছিল। নাৰীসকল নিজেও এই সমস্যা সমূহৰ সমাধান কৰিব পৰাকৈ সৱল নাছিল। বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পত এইখন সমাজৰ চিত্ৰ সুন্দৰ ৰূপত চিত্ৰিত হৈছে।

বিষয় প্ৰৱেশ :

উনবিংশ শতিকাত পাশ্চাত্যত গঢ় লৈ উঠা নাৰীবাদ আৰু নাৰী সৱলীকৰণৰ ধাৰণাৰ সৈতে অসমীয়া সমাজ আৰু সাহিত্য জগতৰ চিনাকি হোৱা নাছিল বুলিয়েই ক'ব পাৰি। কিন্তু লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱা আছিল অতি সমাজ সচেতন ব্যক্তি। তেওঁ এখন আধুনিক সমাজ প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ কাৰণে সময়তকৈ আগত খোজ দিছিল। বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পৰ মাজেদি বাস্তৱবাদী সাহিত্যৰ ধাৰা প্ৰবৰ্তন হৈছিল বাবেই তেখেতৰ গল্পত নৰ-নাৰীৰ প্ৰেম আৰু মানৱতাবাদে গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ স্থান পাইছিল। নাৰীক আধ্যাত্মিক দৃষ্টিৰে চাইছিল বাবেই বেজবৰুৱাৰ বহু গল্পত নাৰীৰ মহিমা প্ৰদৰ্শিত হোৱা দেখা যায়। বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পত সেই ৰক্ষণশীল পৰিৱেশৰ মাজতো সেইবাবে আধুনিক ভাৱধাৰাৰ প্ৰকাশ ঘটিছে। তেওঁৰ কেইবাটাও গল্পৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰই আধুনিক মনৰ পৰিচয় দিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। কেইবাটাও গল্পত তেওঁ পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত নাৰীৰ স্থান, নাৰীৰ স্বকীয় পৰিচয়, নাৰীৰ অধিকাৰ আদিৰ দৰে বিষয় সামৰি লৈছে।

বেজবৰুৱাৰ প্ৰথম গল্প 'সেউতী'ৰ বিষয়বস্তু আছিল নাৰী নিৰ্যাতন। বাল্য বিবাহৰ বলি হোৱা 'সেউতী' নামৰ ৯ বছৰীয়া ছোৱালী এগৰাকীয়ে এটি অন্ধবিশ্বাসৰ কবলত পৰি কৰুণভাৱে মৃত্যুক সাৱটি ল'ব লগা হৈছিল। 'সেউতী'তে নাৰীৰ ওপৰত হোৱা অন্যায়ে-অবিচাৰৰ বিৰুদ্ধে বেজবৰুৱাই প্ৰথম প্ৰতিবাদ সাব্যস্ত কৰিছে। বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্পত সেইখন সমাজৰে অনেক কাহিনী আৰু চৰিত্ৰই আত্ম প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। তেওঁ ভালেমান চুটিগল্প

একাধিক পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ নামেৰে নামকৰণ কৰিছে আৰু সেই চৰিত্ৰটোক আঙুৰাই নিছে। তেওঁ গল্পত সৃষ্টি কৰা পুৰুষ চৰিত্ৰসমূহৰ ভণ্ডামী, কপটতা, ঠগ, প্ৰৰঞ্চনাৰ বিপৰীতে নাৰী চৰিত্ৰসমূহ অধিক আদৰ্শৰ ওপৰলৈ উঠিছে। বেজবৰুৱাই নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি সততে এক সমমৰ্মিতা প্ৰকাশ কৰিছিল। বেজবৰুৱাই মুকলিভাৱে স্ত্ৰীশিক্ষা আৰু স্বাধীনতাৰ প্ৰতি সমৰ্থন আগবঢ়াইছিল আৰু তেওঁৰ সমস্ত সাহিত্যৰ মাজতে তাৰ অনুৰণন গুনা যায়।^৬

বেজবৰুৱাৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ আৰু কাহিনী প্ৰধান গল্পসমূহ হ'ল— 'সেউতী', 'ভদৰী', 'মালতী', 'জয়ন্তী', 'এৰাবাৰী', 'লাওখোলা', 'কনকলতা', 'আমালৈ নাপাহৰিব', 'কাশীবাসী', 'নিস্তাৰিণী দেৱী বা ফাতেমা বিবি', 'যেনে কুকুৰ তেনে টাঙোন', 'ৰচিত', পাতমুগী আৰু ললিতী কাকতী আদি। এই গল্পসমূহত নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি থকা বেজবৰুৱাৰ শ্ৰদ্ধা আৰু সহানুভূতি প্ৰকাশ পাইছে। গল্পসমূহত বেজবৰুৱাই যে নাৰীৰ কেৱল গুণেই গাইছে তেনে নহয়। কিছুমান গল্পৰ মাজেৰে তেওঁ নাৰীৰ নীচতা, হীনতা, ভণ্ডামী, ব্যভিচাৰ আদি প্ৰকাশ্যে দাঙি ধৰিছে।^৭

'জোনবিবি' গল্পপুথিৰ অন্তৰ্গত 'এৰাবাৰী' বেজবৰুৱাৰ এটি বিশিষ্ট গল্প। গল্পটোৰ কথক এগৰাকী পিটিছন ৰাইটাৰ মহৰী। তেওঁ কানীয়া। ঘৈণীয়েকৰ কু-বাক্য শুনি মন বেয়া লাগি তেওঁ কাছাৰীলৈ নগৈ ঘৰ এৰি গুচি যাবলৈ ওলায় আৰু এৰাবাৰী এখনত উপস্থিত হয়। কাণীৰ ৰাগীত টোপনি আহিলত তেওঁ বাহিৰৰ চকু বন্ধ হ'ল, কিন্তু ভিতৰৰ চকু মেল খালে আৰু তেওঁ গছবোৰে পতা কথা-বতৰা বুজিব পৰা হ'ল।^৮ সেই অৱস্থাতে তাত থকা খেৰেজু, আম, কপৌ আৰু অশোক গছ কেইজোপাই এৰাবাৰীখনৰ সৃষ্টিৰ বিষয়ে কৰা আলোচনা তেওঁ শুনি আছিল। কাহিনীটো কালৰ বুকুত জাহ যোৱা এটা পৰিয়াল আৰু সেই পৰিয়ালৰ দুৰ্ভগীয়া যুৱতী বিধবা সৰুবৌৰ। ... ওচৰ চুবুৰীয়া দামোদৰ বৰ পূজাৰীৰ ডেকা পুতেক ভোগ দত্তই 'ধৰ্ম্মিষ্ঠী সতী শান্তি' সৰুবৌৰ মনত সাংসাৰিক সুখৰ

অৰ্বেধ স্পৃহা জগাই তুলিলে। ‘দূৰ্বল সৰুবৌৰ পাপৰ ফল প্ৰকাশ হ’লত তেওঁক ঘৰৰ পৰা উলিয়াই খেদি দিয়া হ’ল। ... লাজ অপমানৰ হাত সাৰিবলৈ সৰুবৌৰে পুখুৰীত জাপ দি আত্মহত্যা কৰিলে কিন্তু ভোগদত্ত নিৰ্দোষী প্ৰমাণিত হ’ল। তাৰ গাৰ নোম এডালতো কোনেও হাত দিব নোৱাৰিলে। ... সি ভাল কুলীয়া ভাল মানুহৰ ঘৰৰ ছোৱালী এজনী বিয়া কৰাই সমাজত এজন লেখৰ মানুহ হৈ ফুৰিবলৈ ধৰিলে। সৰুবৌৰ মৃত্যুৰ এবছৰৰ ভিতৰতে মাউৰে মানুহ ঘৰ মাৰি উছন কৰিলে। বাৰীখন এৰাবাৰী হ’ল।^{১০} গছ কেইজোপাই সেই সময়ৰ সমাজত পুৰুষে নাৰীৰ ওপৰত কৰা অমানৱীয় আচৰণক ধিক্কাৰ দি কৈছে—

“মানুহৰ সংসাৰ কি কঠোৰ। মানুহৰ অন্তৰ কি নিষ্ঠুৰ। মানুহৰ বিচাৰ কি দুৰ্ঘোৰ। তাত দয়া নাই, চেনেহ নাই, বিবেচনা নাই, ধৰম নাইঙ্গ ইহঁত হেনো আকৌ পশুতকৈত শ্ৰেষ্ঠ, আমাতকৈও ওখ শাৰীৰঙ্গ ইহঁতে ঈশ্বৰৰ ওপৰত ন্যায়-বিচাৰ বিচাৰে, নিজৰ সকলো দোষৰ ক্ষমা মাগে, কিন্তু ইটোৱে সিটোক বিচাৰৰ নামত অবিচাৰ-অত্যাচাৰ কৰে, ক্ষমা কৰিব নোৱাৰে।” (বেজবৰুৱা গ্ৰন্থাৱলী, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, এৰাবাৰী, পৃষ্ঠা : ৭৩২)

গল্পটোত গছ কেইজোপাৰ কথোপকথনৰ জৰিয়তে সমাজত চলি অহা পুৰুষৰ ব্যভিচাৰ আৰু অন্যায়েৰ বিৰুদ্ধে বেজবৰুৱাই মাত মাতিছে।

বেজবৰুৱাৰ ‘সুৰভি’ গল্পপুথিৰ অন্তৰ্গত ‘লাও খোলা’ এটি উল্লেখযোগ্য গল্প। এটি সপোনক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি গঢ় লোৱা ‘লাওখোলা’ এটা কাহিনী প্ৰধান গল্প। গল্পৰ পৰিৱেশ কলিকতাৰ বাগানবাড়ী।^{১১} ‘লাওখোলা’ৰ কথকে অৱসৰৰ সময় কটাৰ বাবে বন্ধুৰ বাগানবাড়ীলৈ যায়। তাৰে পুখুৰীত মাছ মাৰোতে লাওখোলা এটা উঠি আহে। পিছত নিশা কথকৰ বিছনাৰ ওচৰলৈ মাইকী মানুহ এজনী আহে। তাইৰ কাহিনীৰ পৰা গম পোৱা যায় তাই আছিল বাল-বিধবা। গাভৰু কালত তাই বৰজনাৰ প্ৰবোচনাত পৰি ব্যভিচাৰত লিপ্ত হয় আৰু শেষত তেওঁৰ হাততে নিহত হয়।^{১২} গল্পটোৰ আৰম্ভণিতে কথকে বাগানবাড়ীৰ বৈভৱ আৰু বিলাসী

জীৱনৰ বৰ্ণনা দিছে। ব্যস্ত দৈনন্দিন জীৱনৰ পৰা আঁতৰি গৈ দেহ-মন জুৰ পেলাবলৈ পুৰুষৰ আনন্দ-বিনোদনৰ ব্যৱস্থা বাগানবাড়ীত সুলভ। এই বৰ্ণনাৰ পিছতে বেজবৰুৱাই ভৌতিক চৰিত্ৰ এটিৰ ৰূপত গল্পটোৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰটিৰ আবিৰ্ভাৱেৰে পুৰুষ শাসিত সমাজত নাৰী নিৰ্যাতনৰ ছবি এখন দাঙি ধৰিছে। গল্পটোত নাৰী গৰাকীৰো সাময়িক দুৰ্বলতাৰ আভাস আছে যদিও গল্পকাৰে তাক 'শেষত অজগৰ সাপৰ আকৰ্ষণত নিৰুপায় হৰিণী তাৰ মুখৰ ভিতৰত সোমোৱাদি গৈ মই পাপ অজগৰৰ মুখত সোমালো' বুলি তাৰ সপক্ষে যুক্তি আগবঢ়াইছে। মূলতঃ বাল্য বিবাহেই নাৰী গৰাকীৰ জীৱনলৈ দুখৰ বোজা কঢ়িয়াই আনিছিল যদিও ইয়াৰ মূলতে আছিল পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা। এই ব্যৱস্থাৰ বলি হোৱা নলিনীয়ে কথকৰ আগত কৈছে—

'হৰি হৰি! তিৰোতাৰ জীৱন দুখৰ জীৱন। তাক আৰু দুৰ্ভগীয়া কৰিবলৈ মতা সদায় সাজু। বিয়া কাক বোলে তাক জনাৰ আগতেই আৰু স্বামী কাক বোলে তাক চকুৰে দেখাৰ আগতেই অৰ্থাৎ প্ৰকৃত পক্ষে স্বামীক পোৱাৰ আগতেই মই স্বামী হেৰুৱালো, বিধৱা হ'লো, তোমালোক পুৰুষৰ কেনে যুক্তি! কেনে ন্যায়! তোমালোক আপোনপেটীয়া স্বাৰ্থপৰ জাতি। তিৰোতাৰ আগত বৰ মতা বোলোৱা তোমালোকৰ স্বভাৱ। ... আমি এবাৰ স্বামী হেৰুৱাই তোমালোক পুৰুষ ব্যৱস্থা মতে দুনাই বিয়া কৰাব নোৱাৰোঁ; কিন্তু তোমালোকলৈ হ'লে সেই বাট একেবাৰেই মুকলি ৰাজআলি। যৈণীয়েক মৰি থাকক যতবাৰ হয়, তোমালোকে যিমান মন যায় বিয়া কৰি থাকিবা; তালৈ শাস্ত্ৰই হাতত ছাটি ধৰি তোমালোকক আদৰি লগে লগে লৈ যাব। ছিঃ এনেখন শাস্ত্ৰ তোমালোকৰ? এনেকুৱা তোমালোক! এনেকুৱা এইখন সংসাৰ, এইখন সংসাৰৰ গৰাকী কোন? আপোনপেটীয়া মতা কেইটাৰ বাহিৰে ইয়াৰ কোনোবা গৰাকী আছে যেন মনে নধৰে।' (বেজবৰুৱা গ্ৰন্থাৱলী, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, লাওখোলা, পৃঃ ৫৯৭-৯৮)

'লাওখোলা' গল্পত নলিনীয়ে কোৱা এই কথাবোৰ বেজবৰুৱাৰ

নাৰীবাদী চিন্তা আৰু দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীৰ সুন্দৰ প্ৰকাশ। পুৰুষ প্ৰধান সমাজত নাৰীৰ দুৰ্দশা আৰু দুৰ্ভাগ্যৰ এক দলিল। বাল্য বিবাহ বৰ্তমান সমাজৰ পৰা উঠি গৈছে। তথাপি মন কৰিবলগীয়া কথাটো হ'ল কাহিনীটোত বাল্য বিবাহতকৈ গুৰুত্ব পোৱা বিষয়টো আছিল নাৰীক পণ্য সামগ্ৰীৰ দৰে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা মনোভাৱ। যি আজিৰ আধুনিক সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাতো কমি যোৱা নাই।^{১০}

বেজবৰুৱাৰ 'সাধুকথাৰ কুকি'ৰ অন্তৰ্গত 'মালতী' এটি নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ প্ৰধান গল্প। এই গল্পটিতো নাৰীৰ ওপৰত পুৰুষে কৰা জোৰ-জুলুমৰ বিৰুদ্ধে প্ৰতিবাদৰ ধ্বনি শুনিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। কেৱল প্ৰতিবাদেই নহয় মালতীয়ে মৃত্যু বৰণ কৰি হ'লেও অন্যায়াকাৰীৰ ওপৰত প্ৰতিশোধ লৈছে।

'মালতী' গল্পটিৰ পৰিৱেশ বুৰঞ্জীমূলক। স্বেচ্ছাচাৰী আহোম ৰজা প্ৰতাপ সিংহই সুন্দৰী যুৱতী দেখিলেই নিজৰ অঙ্ক শায়িনী কৰিবলৈ আগ্ৰহ কৰিছিল। তেওঁৰ বাবে ই আছিল এক ৰাজকীয় বিশ্বাস আৰু অধিকাৰ। সেয়ে জাত-পাত, মত-অমতৰ বিচাৰ নকৰি তেওঁ যুৱতীসকলৰ ওপৰত নিৰ্যাতন চলাইছিল। সমাজৰ চিৰাচৰিত নিয়ম লংঘন কৰি প্ৰতাপ সিংহই জয়ৰাম বৰুৱাৰ ষোড়শী কন্যা মালতীক নিজৰ কাৰেঙলৈ অনাত মালতীয়ে চৰম প্ৰতিশোধ ল'লে। মালতী প্ৰতাপ সিংহৰ হাতত নিহত হ'ল। নিচাসক্ত ৰজাই নিজেই গম নোপোৱাকৈয়ে মালতীক হত্যা কৰিলে। মালতীৰ অশৰীৰি আত্মাই বিদ্ৰূপৰ অটুহাস্যৰে জীয়াই থকালৈকে প্ৰতাপ সিংহক অতিষ্ঠ কৰি প্ৰতিশোধ ল'লে।

লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাই 'এৰাবাৰী', 'লাওখোলা' আৰু 'মালতী'—এই তিনিওটা গল্পতে অতি প্ৰাকৃত বা অলৌকিক পৰিৱেশ একোটি সৃষ্টি কৰি ভাৰতীয় সমাজৰ এটা বাস্তৱ সমস্যা দাঙি ধৰিছে। তিনিওটা গল্পতে নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ কেইটা পুৰুষৰ কামনাৰ বলি হৈছে। পুৰুষৰ ভোগৰ সামগ্ৰীৰূপে ব্যৱহৃত নাৰী কেইগৰাকীয়ে তেওঁলোকৰ ওপৰত হোৱা নিৰ্যাতনৰ একো প্ৰতিবাদ বাস্তৱত কৰিব পৰা নাই। কিন্তু গল্পকাৰে সামাজিকতে হওক বা

আত্ম-প্ৰেতাত্মা ৰূপে আত্মপ্ৰকাশ কৰায়ে হওক, তেওঁলোকৰ মনত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ প্ৰতি থকা ক্ষোভ প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। অৱশ্যে নিজৰ মুক্তিৰ পথ নিজে বাচি ল'বলৈ এই চৰিত্ৰ কেইটি সফল হোৱা নাই।

লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাৰ 'কেঁহোকলি' গল্পপুথিৰ 'ৰচিত' গল্পটোৰ বৃন্দাই হাকিম স্বামীৰ অত্যাচাৰ আৰু অনিয়ম মানি লোৱা নাই। পৰম্পৰাগতভাৱে চলি অহা নিয়ম অনুসৰি 'পতি পৰমেশ্বৰ বুলি' মানি নলৈ, মদপী আৰু দুশ্চৰিত্ৰৰ গিৰিয়েকৰ ঘৰ ত্যাগ কৰিছে; কিন্তু নিজকে এগৰাকী সৰল নাৰীৰূপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰিব পৰাকৈ বৃন্দা সাহসী নহয়। সেয়ে তেওঁ অত্যাচাৰৰ হাত সাৰিবলৈ দেউতাকৰ ঘৰলৈ ঘূৰি গৈছে। বৃন্দাৰ পিতৃৰ কাৰ্যৰ মাজেৰে জোৱায়েকৰ মানসিকতাৰ প্ৰতি ক্ষোভ প্ৰকাশ পাইছে।

বেজবৰুৱাৰ 'কেঁহোকলি' গল্পপুথিৰ অন্তৰ্গত 'পাতমুগী' এটি সাৰ্থক গল্প। 'পাতমুগী' গল্পটিৰ মাজেৰে নাৰী মনস্তত্ত্বৰ এক উজ্বল চানেকী পৰিস্ফুট হৈছে। পাতমুগীৰ চৰিত্ৰ নাৰী প্ৰতিনিধিমূলক। 'পাতমুগী' পুৰুষৰ দ্বাৰা হোৱা শোষণ-বঞ্চনাৰ এটি জীৱন্ত চৰিত্ৰ। ডবকা মৌজাৰ কুমাৰ গাঁৱৰ আলতী বাইৰ একমাত্ৰ জীয়েক পাতমুগী। ৰূপে-ওণে বৰ মানুহৰ ঘৰৰ জীয়েকী যেন দেখা পাতমুগীক বকতা মৌজাৰ বামুণৰ ল'ৰা এটাই বিয়া কৰাই আলতী বাইৰ ঘৰতে থাকিবলৈ লয়। এবছৰ পিছত সি হঠাতে পাতমুগীক এৰি থৈ গৈ নিজৰ জাতৰ আন এজনীক বিয়া কৰাইছেগৈ। তাই গিৰিয়েকৰ দুৰ্বাৱহাৰত পুৰুষ জাতিৰ 'প্ৰৱঞ্চনা', অফিচ-কাছাৰীত হাকিম-উকীলৰ ব্যৱহাৰত 'নিষ্ঠুৰতা'ৰ প্ৰমাণ পাইছে। এই বিপদৰ সময়ত সহায় কৰিবলৈ আগবাঢ়ি অহা পিতৃতুল্য দদায়েকৰ ক্ষন্তেকৰ বাবে হ'লেও তাইৰ প্ৰতি জাগি উঠা জৈৱিক আকৰ্ষণত পাতমুগীয়ে পাইছে পুৰুষ জাতিৰ 'দুৰ্বলতা'ৰ প্ৰমাণ। প্ৰথমবাৰপ্ৰায় পাতমুগীয়ে দদায়েকৰ এই শোচনীয় অৱস্থা উপভোগ কৰি কৈছে—'দদাই'ৰ লাগি কি চাইছা? নামি আহা, পিছলি পৰিবা চাবা। কিন্তু পিছ মুহূৰ্ততে চঞ্চলা চপলা পাতমুগীয়ে গভীৰ ৰূপ ধাৰণ কৰিছে। নিজৰ এনে ব্যৱহাৰৰ বাবে তাই দদায়েকৰ ওচৰত ক্ষমা

বিচাৰিছে। এই ঘটনাটোৰ পাছত দদায়েকৰ সৈতে গিৰিয়েকৰ বিৰুদ্ধে গোচৰ তৰিবলৈ যোৱা পাতমুগীৰ অভাৱনীয় পৰিৱৰ্তন ঘটিকে আৰু গোচৰ তৰা সিদ্ধান্ত পৰিত্যাগ কৰিছে। পাতমুগীয়ে প্ৰৱঞ্চক বামুণৰ ল'ৰাৰ প্ৰতি উদ্দেশ্য কৰি কৈছে—

‘এই কেইটা দিনৰ ভিতৰতে মই অনেক দেখিলোঁ, অনেক শিকিলোঁ। সেই চপনীয়া বিটলীয়াক মোক আৰু নালাগে। কিন্তু সেইবুলি মই তেওঁৰ কোনো অনিষ্ট কৰিবও নোখোজো। ... মই মোৰ মনটো শিলৰ খুটি যেনকৈ বান্ধিলো। মহাত্মা গান্ধীৰ বাক্য শিৰত লৈ মই স্বদেশ আৰু সকলোৰে হকে আৰু ঘাইকৈ দুখীয়াৰ হকে মোৰ এই জীৱনটো উচৰ্গা কৰিলো। কালিৰ পৰা কোনেও মোক আগৰ অৱস্থাত নেদেখে।’
(বেজবৰুৱা গ্ৰন্থাৱলী, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, পাতমুগী, পৃঃ ৭৬০)

‘পাতমুগী’ৰ মুখৰ এইখিনি নতুন যুগৰ মুক্ত নাৰীৰ বাবে প্ৰথম মন্ত্ৰ ধ্বনি আছিল।^{১৩} ব্যক্তিগত সুখৰ কথা ভাবিবলৈ এৰি পাতমুগীয়ে মহাত্মা গান্ধীৰ আহ্বানত আৰ্ত্তজনৰ হকে জীৱনটো উচৰ্গা কৰিবলৈ সংকল্প গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। এনেকৈয়ে একৰ দুখ-যন্ত্ৰণা দহৰ দুখ-যন্ত্ৰণাৰ লগত এক হৈ গৈছে। এই পৰিণতিৰ তাৎপৰ্য্য দ্ব্যৰ্থক, ধনাত্মক আৰু ঋণাত্মক— ইয়াত এটি নাৰীসত্তা সমাজৰ খকা-খুন্দলিত পৰি নিজৰ স্বাভাৱিক জীৱন যাপনৰ পৰা বঞ্চিত হৈছে; অথচ একে সময়তে ক্ষুদ্ৰ জীৱনৰ সীমা ভাঙি ৰাজহুৱা জীৱনৰ বিশালায়াতনত প্ৰৱেশ কৰিছে।^{১৪} ব্যক্তিগত জীৱনৰ কামনা বাসনাৰ অবদমনৰ দ্বাৰা পাতমুগীয়ে নিজৰ চৰিত্ৰত উৎকৰ্ষ সাধন কৰিছে আৰু পুৰুষ তান্ত্ৰিক সমাজত ভোগৰ সামগ্ৰী হৈ নাথাকি এটি সন্মানজনক জীৱন-যাপনৰ লক্ষ্যৰে ভৱিষ্যতলৈ এটি সৱল খোজ আগবঢ়াইছে। গতিকে পাতমুগী চৰিত্ৰটিৰ ৰূপত বেজবৰুৱাই অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত প্ৰথম এটি সৱল আৰু নিজৰ মুক্তিৰ পথ বিচাৰি ল'ব পৰা নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছে।

বেজবৰুৱাৰ সকলো গল্পৰ ভিতৰতে নাৰীমুক্তি আৰু নাৰী বিদ্ৰোহৰ উজ্বল চানেকী হৈছে ‘কেঁহোকলি’ৰ অন্তৰ্গত ‘ললিতী কাকতী’। প্ৰকৃতপক্ষে

ললিতী কাকতী চৰিত্ৰটোৰ মাজেৰে বেজবৰুৱাৰ জীৱন দৰ্শনৰ স্বৰূপ প্ৰতিফলিত হৈ উঠিছে।^{১০} গল্পটোৰ মাজত বিবাহ, স্বামী-স্ত্ৰীৰ তাৎপৰ্য বুজি নোপোৱা পুৰুষৰ বিৰুদ্ধে ললিতী কাকতী নামৰ নাৰী গৰাকীয়ে তীব্ৰ ক্ষোভ আৰু বিদ্ৰোহ ঘোষণা কৰিছে। ললিতী কাকতীৰ চৰিত্ৰটিৰ মাজেৰে বেজবৰুৱাই এগৰাকী আধুনিক নাৰীক অংকন কৰিছিল। সেয়া আছিল বেজবৰুৱাৰ আধুনিক মনৰ পৰিচয় মাথোন।

ললিতী কাকতী বেজবৰুৱাৰ এটি উল্লেখযোগ্য গল্প। গল্পটিৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ ললিতী এগৰাকী অৰ্দ্ধ শিক্ষিতা যুৱতী। নগৰ বালিকা স্কুলত শিক্ষা লাভ কৰা ললিতী অলপ জেদী। তাই আজিকালিৰ নব্য ধৰণৰ^{১১} মাক-দেউতাকে মৰমৰ জীয়েকক বাছি বাছি এজন হাকিমলৈ বিয়া দিলে। হাকিম জোঁৱাইৰ আচল ৰূপ বিয়াৰ পিছতহে ওলাল। হাকিমৰ জঘন্য চৰিত্ৰ লাহে লাহে প্ৰকাশ পালে। ললিতীক শাৰীৰিক, মানসিক অত্যাচাৰ কৰি তেওঁ খেদি দিলে। তেওঁ দ্বিতীয় বাৰ বিয়া কৰায়ো ললিতীৰ দৰেই খেদি পঠিয়াই আৰু তৃতীয়বাৰ বিয়া কৰিবলৈ যো-জা কৰে। দুয়োবাৰে তেওঁ কন্যা দায়গ্ৰস্ত পিতৃ-মাতৃৰ পৰা যৌতুকৰ ধন-সম্পদ দাবী কৰি লৈছিল। এই সকলো কথা দেখি শুনি স্বাধীনচিতীয়া ললিতীয়ে গিৰিয়েকৰ স্বৰূপ উদ্ঘাটন কৰিছে আৰু তাৰ চানেকীৰে গিৰিয়েকলৈ এখন চিঠি লিখিলে বাঁহীৰ সম্পাদকলৈ সেইখন চিঠিৰ প্ৰতিলিপি পঠিয়াই দিলে। সেই চিঠিখন কথকৰ হাতত পৰিল। চিঠিখনত লেখা কথাবোৰে ললিতীৰ নাৰীবাদী চিন্তাৰ আভাস দিয়ে। চিঠিখনত ললিতীয়ে স্পষ্টভাৱে ঘোষণা কৰে।

তিবোতাই অকল বিয়া কৰি স্বামীসেৱা কৰা আৰু সাতি সন্ততি জন্মাই লালন-পালন কৰাৰ বাহিৰে যে তিবোতাৰ জীৱন ইহ সংসাৰত সফল কৰিবলৈ আন কাম নাই, এইটো 'কুমাৰী' শ্ৰীমতী ললিতী কাকতীয়ে নামানে। বিয়াৰ দাসত্ব শৃংখলাৰ বাহিৰে লক্ষ লক্ষ প্ৰকাৰৰ কাম আছে, য'ত লাগি থাকি তিবোতাই নিজৰ জীৱন সফল কৰি মঙ্গলময় ঈশ্বৰৰ ৰাজ্যত মঙ্গলময় ইচ্ছা পূৰ্ণ কৰি নিজৰ জীৱন কটাই যাব পাৰে। (বেজবৰুৱা

গ্ৰন্থাৱলী, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, ললিতী কাকতী, পৃঃ ৭৫৭)

স্বামীৰ বৰ্তমানত নিজকে স্বাধীন বা 'কুমাৰী' বুলি ঘোষণা কৰা ললিতী নতুন নাৰীৰ প্ৰতিনিধি। অৰ্দ্ধ শিক্ষিত হ'লেও ললিতীয়ে বিদ্যাসাগৰক জানে। আধুনিক চেতনাৰ মৰ্মত বিৰাজমান যৌক্তিকতা ললিতীৰ চিঠিখনৰ চকুত পৰা বৈশিষ্ট্য। মিল, বেস্থাম আদি লিবাৰেল চিন্তাবিদৰ দ্বাৰা উদ্বুদ্ধ স্বয়ং গল্পলেখক বেজবৰুৱাই এই চিঠি প্ৰস্তুত কৰিছে—ললিতী কাকতীৰ হৈ। ললিতীয়ে তাইৰ দীঘলীয়া চিঠিত লিখিছে—

আগৰ কালত শিক্ষাত তিৰোতাক অন্ধাঙ্গিণী বুলিছিল, সহধৰ্মিনী বুলিছিল; আপোনালোকৰ আজিকালিৰ বিলাতী শিক্ষাত better half বোলে। কিন্তু মুখেৰে এনেবোৰ সম্বোধন কৰি, গৰু-মহৰ প্ৰতিও মানুহে যেনে ব্যৱহাৰ নকৰে তেনে ব্যৱহাৰ তিৰোতাৰ প্ৰতি কৰিব পায়নে? এয়েই আপোনালোকৰ উচ্চ শিক্ষানে? উচ্চ শিক্ষা মানে চাহাবী টুপী, ঠেঙা, কোট পিন্ধি, মেজত কুকুৰা, ভেৰা, গৰু, গাহৰিৰে খানা খোৱাটোৱেই নে? আৰু মদ খাই মতলীয়া হৈ ফুৰাটোৱেনে? চৰিত্ৰ বক্ষা কৰাটো অকল তিৰোতাৰহে কৰ্তব্যৰ ভিতৰত, পুৰুষৰ নহয়নে? (বেজবৰুৱা, গ্ৰন্থাৱলী, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, ললিতী কাকতী, পৃঃ ৭৫৫)

আমাৰ সমাজত প্ৰচলিত অনেক কু-প্ৰথাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে ললিতীয়ে সাহসেৰে যুক্তি দিছে—

আমাক পুৰুষে দেখোন বৰকৈ পতিভক্তি শিকায়; পুৰুষ আমাৰ ভক্তিৰ পাত্ৰ হ'বলৈ যত্ন নকৰি চৰিত্ৰ বিযয়ত উদগু হয় কিয়? আমাক স্বামীৰ শত দোষলৈ আওকাণ কৰি চকুমুদি থাকি দিনে-ৰাতিয়ে স্বামীৰ সেৱা কৰিবলৈ পুৰুষে কয়; স্বামী পাষণ্ড-দুৰ্বৃত্ত-দুৰাচাৰ-মদপী-কুচৰিত্ৰৱান হ'লেও সেইবোৰলৈ আমি চকু নিদি, কেৱল সেৱাকেহে কৰি থাকিবলৈ তেওঁলোকে ব্যৱস্থা দিয়ে; কিন্তু তেওঁলোকে পাহৰে যে আমিও মানুহ।

কিয়, তিব্বতোতা অলপ দোষতে যে পৰিত্যাগ কৰিবলগীয়া হয়, স্বামীৰ বেলিকানো এই অন্ধ ভক্তি কিয়? ইতিহাস পুৰাণ ধৰ্মশাস্ত্ৰৰ নানা উদাহৰণ দি পুৰুষে এইবোৰ শিকনি তিব্বত্যাক দিয়ে দিয়ক ভাল কথা, আমি সেই শিকনি ল'ম; কিন্তু তেনেবিলাক সজগুণ আমি স্বামীৰ ফালৰ পৰা দাবী কৰিব নোৱাৰোঁ কিয়? “জোৰ যাৰ মুলুক তাৰ”—নীতি পুৰুষৰ হাতত আইন কৰাৰ আৰু আইনৰ ব্যৱস্থা দিয়াৰ ভাৰ দেখি নহয়নে?” (বেজবৰুৱা গ্ৰন্থাৱলী, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, ললিতী কাকতী, পৃঃ ৭৫৬)

বেজবৰুৱাই ললিতীৰ চিঠিখনত পুৰাতন ভাৰতীয় আইনকাৰ সকলকো সমালোচনা কৰিছে। পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰীৰ বাবে পৃথক পৃথক বিধি বিধান এইকাৰণেই যে স্মৃতিকাৰ সকলো পুৰুষ আছিল। এনে এজন আইনজ্ঞ ঋষিক ললিতীৰ স্বামীৰ লগত তিব্বতোতা জনম ধৰাই বিবাহ কৰাই দিলেহে তেওঁলোকে সেই যন্ত্ৰণা বুজিব বুলি ললিতীয়ে চিঠিত লিখিছে। তেওঁ আৰু লিখিছে যে, নিজৰ সুখ বঢ়াবলৈ যদি পুৰুষক স্বৰাজ, স্বায়ত্ব শাসনৰ প্ৰয়োজন, একে কাৰণতে নাৰীকো সেই স্বায়ত্ব শাসন লাগে। আমাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ আৰু অনেক কেৰেণ এই চিঠিখনত ললিতী কাকতিয়ে উল্লেখ কৰিছে আৰু তাৰ প্ৰতিবাদ কৰিছে। শেষত তেওঁ লিখিছে—

‘আপুনি সামাজিকতো নাভাবিব যে মোক পৰিত্যাগ কৰিলে বুলি মই জীৱন্ততে মৰিলোঁ। আপোনাৰ নিচিনা পাপ-শিকলিৰ বান্ধৰ পৰা মুকলি হৈ মই জীলোঁ জানিবা। এই পৃথিৱীত অলেখ দুখিত প্ৰাণী আছে; সিহঁতৰ দুখ গুচাবলৈ সিহঁতক সেৱা-শুশ্ৰূষা কৰিবলৈ মোৰ এই ক্ষুদ্ৰ নগণ্য জীৱন উচৰ্গা কৰি মই নিজকে ধন্য মানিছোঁ। শক্তি অনুসাৰে পৰোপকাৰ কৰা, সজ পুথি পঢ়া-শুনা কৰা, সজ কাৰ্য্য কৰা, ঈশ্বৰ চিন্তা, ঈশ্বৰৰ সেৱা-ভজনা কৰি জীৱন সাৰ্থক কৰা কাৰ্য্য কৰিবলৈ মই দৃঢ় সংকল্প কৰিছোঁ।’ (বেজবৰুৱা গ্ৰন্থাৱলী, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, ললিতী কাকতি, পৃঃ ৭৫৭)

ললিতাৰ এই চিঠিখনৰ মাজেৰে বেজবৰুৱাই এটি সাৰ্থক নাৰীবাদী চৰিত্ৰ অংকন কৰিছে। স্বামী নিৰ্যাতিতা, পৰিত্যক্তা হ'লেও ললিতী দুৰ্বল নহয়, তেওঁ স্বাধীনচিঠীয়া, সাহসী আৰু প্ৰতিবাদী কণ্ঠৰ গৰাকী। বেজবৰুৱাৰ ললিতা অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ ইতিহাসত এক নবীন সংযোজন।

উপসংহাৰ :

অসমীয়া ছুটি গল্পৰ জন্ম দাতা লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাই আজিৰ পৰা এশ বছৰ আগতে গল্প ৰচনা কৰিছিল। সেই সময়ৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থা বৰ্তমানৰ দৰে নাছিল, কিন্তু বেজবৰুৱা আছিল এগৰাকী সমাজ সংস্কাৰক লেখক। সেয়ে তেওঁ আন সকলোতকৈ কিছু আগবঢ়া আছিল। তেওঁৰ গল্পসমূহৰ মাজেৰে আধুনিক চিন্তাধাৰাৰ বলিষ্ঠ প্ৰকাশ ঘটিছে। তেওঁৰ নাৰী বিষয়ক ভালেমান গল্পত সেয়ে নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ সমূহৰ নিৰ্যাতনৰ, শোষণৰ বিৰুদ্ধে প্ৰতিবাদ মুখৰ হৈ উঠিছে। তেওঁৰ গল্পত নিৰ্যাতিতা, পৰাধীনতা, আশ্ৰয়হীনা নাৰীৰ মাজৰ পৰাই ললিতী কাকতী আৰু পাতমুগীৰ দৰে আধুনিক মনৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ জন্ম হৈছে। তেওঁ আছিল নাৰী মুক্তিৰ এগৰাকী প্ৰবল প্ৰবক্তা, কোনো বাদ (ইজম্)ৰ গৰিলা নলৈও তেওঁ দৃপ্তকণ্ঠেৰে নাৰী মুক্তিৰ বাবে ওকালতি কৰিছিল। ললিতীৰ চিঠিত পোৱা সংযত স্ক্ৰোভ আৰু ক্ৰোধ লেখক গৰাকীৰ নিজৰে। ললিতীৰ চৰিত্ৰটো তেওঁৰ মুখপাত্ৰ মাথোন। লেখকৰ এই দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী মাত্ৰ আধুনিক নহয়, সৰ্বাধুনিক।

গ্ৰন্থপঞ্জী :

কটকী, প্ৰফুল্ল। *সাহিত্যৰথী*, জ্যোতিপ্ৰকাশন, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম সংস্কৰণ
২০০৬ চন।

গগৈ, হৃদয়ানন্দ (সম্পাঃ)। *লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাৰ গল্প সমগ্ৰ*, জ্যোতি
প্ৰকাশন, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম সংস্কৰণ ২০০১।

গোহাঁই, হীৰেণ। *কালান্তৰৰ দোমোজাত বেজবৰুৱা*, শান্তি প্ৰকাশন,

গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম সংস্কৰণ ২০১৩।

দত্ত, উদয়। চুটিগল্প, ষ্টুডেণ্ট ষ্ট'ৰ্চ, গুৱাহাটী, নতুন সংস্কৰণ ১৯৯৫।

দাস, শোণিত বিজয় (সম্পাঃ)। কথা গুৱাহাটী, কথা পাব্লিকেশ্বন, চতুৰ্থ বছৰ, দ্বিতীয় আৰু তৃতীয় সংখ্যা, ডিচেম্বৰ ২০০৭, জানুৱাৰী ২০০৮ আৰু ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী-মাৰ্চ ২০০৮ চন।

বৰা, অঞ্জল। লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱা জীৱন আৰু সাহিত্য, কিৰণ প্ৰকাশন, ধেমাজি, প্ৰথম সংস্কৰণ ২০১৪।

বৰা, অপূৰ্ব। অসমীয়া চুটিগল্প-ঐতিহ্য আৰু বিৱৰ্তন, যোৰহাট কেন্দ্ৰীয় মহাবিদ্যালয় প্ৰকাশন কোষ, যোৰহাট প্ৰথম সংস্কৰণ ২০১২।

বৰুৱা, প্ৰহ্লাদ কুমাৰ। অসমীয়া চুটিগল্পৰ অধ্যয়ন, বনলতা, ডিব্ৰুগড়, প্ৰথম সংস্কৰণ ১৯৯৫।

ভট্টাচাৰ্য, পৰাগ কুমাৰ। আধুনিক সাহিত্য চিন্তা আৰু সৃষ্টি, এঞ্জেলিকা ইমপ্ৰিণ্ট, গুৱাহাটী।

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শইকীয়া, চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰসাদ (সম্পাঃ)। লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱা, অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ, চতুৰ্থ প্ৰকাশ ২০০৭

শইকীয়া, তৰুণ; আৰু অন্যান্য (সম্পাঃ)। অসমীয়া ভাষা-সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতি আৰু লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱা, পূৰ্বাঞ্চল প্ৰকাশ, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ ২০১৩।

শৰ্মা, অনুৰাধা (সম্পাঃ)। আধুনিকতাৰ অধিনায়ক সাহিত্যৰথী লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱা, জ্যোতি প্ৰকাশন, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ ২০১৪।

চৌধুৰী, যমুনা শৰ্মা। চুটিগল্প, ময়ূৰ প্ৰকাশন, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ ১৯৯১।

শৰ্মা, মদন। লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱা, সৃজন আৰু মনন, আলিবাট, গুৱাহাটী,
প্ৰথম সংস্কৰণ ২০১৪।

শাস্ত্ৰী, বিশ্বনাৰায়ণ। লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাৰ সাহিত্য প্ৰতিভা, শৰাইঘাট
প্ৰকাশন, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ ১৯৭০।

হাজৰিকা, অতুল চন্দ্ৰ। বেজবৰুৱা গ্ৰন্থাৱলী, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, সাহিত্য প্ৰকাশন,
গুৱাহাটী, দ্বিতীয় সংস্কৰণ ১৯৮৮।

Baruah, Jayanta (Ed.) : *Women in the North-Eastern States
- An Exclusive Study of the Issues of Women,*
APOCCUS Guwahati (Assam) ২০১৫.

প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান :
বেদ, ব্ৰাহ্মণ, উপনিষদ আৰু মহাকাব্যৰ বিশেষ
উল্লিখন সহ

ড° বৰ্ণালী কলিতা

ব্যক্তি নিৰ্মাণৰ পৰা আৰম্ভ কৰি বিশ্ব নিৰ্মাণলৈ নাৰীৰ যি সামাজিক ভূমিকা সি অনস্বীকাৰ্য। সমাজ জীৱনত পৰিয়াল এটিৰ মৰ্যাদা নাৰীগৰাকীৰ ব্যক্তিত্বৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰতিফলিত হয় বুলি কলেও বঢ়াই কোৱা নহয়। ত্যাগ, মনতা, সেৱা আদি উচ্চ মূল্যবোধেৰে নাৰীয়ে পৰিয়াল তথা সমাজলৈ শক্তিশালী অৱদান আগবঢ়াই আহিছে। অথচ যুগ যুগ ধৰি মানবীয় সমাজখন নিয়ন্ত্ৰিত হৈ আহিছে পুৰুষৰ দ্বাৰা। বিশ্বৰ সকলো জাতিৰ ইতিহাস আৰু প্ৰাচীন সাহিত্য সমূহে তাকেই প্ৰমাণ কৰে। বেদ, বাইবেল আদি প্ৰাচীন সাহিত্যত নাৰীক হিতাহিত জ্ঞান শূণ্য, কামাতুৰা, হীনচেতা আদি আখ্যা দিয়া হৈছে। তৎসত্ত্বেও কিন্তু ভাৰতীয় সমাজ জীৱনত অতি প্ৰাচীন কালৰে পৰা নাৰীয়ে সক্ৰিয় ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰি আহিছে। এই প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতত প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতত সমাজ জীৱনত নাৰীৰ স্থান সম্পৰ্কে প্ৰাচীন কালৰে পৰা আগবঢ়াবলৈ যত্ন কৰা হৈছে, প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্যৰ বিশেষ অধ্যয়নে। প্ৰথম অধ্যয়নৰ জৰিয়তে আহৰণ কৰা সমল সমূহৰ সহায়ত

সহযোগী ছপাৰালক

সহযোগী মহাবিদ্যালয়

বিশ্লেষণাত্মক পদ্ধতিৰে গৱেষণা পত্ৰখন প্ৰস্তুত কৰিবলৈ যত্ন কৰা হৈছে।

ভাৰতীয় সমাজ জীৱনত নাৰীৰ সামাজিক স্থিতিৰ ইতিহাস নিমজ নহয়। প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় পৰম্পৰাত নাৰীক মাতৃ, ভগ্নী, জায়া, স্নেহময়ী, ধৰিত্ৰী, ধাতৃ, শক্তিময়ী আদি ৰূপত কল্পনা কৰাৰ লগে লগে আকৌ নাৰীক 'নৰকৰ দ্বাৰ' আখ্যা দি বেদৰ বাহিৰ কৰিও ৰখা দেখা যায়। নাৰীৰ সামাজিক স্থিতিৰ উত্থান পতনৰ এই ইতিহাস প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্যসমূহে বহন কৰিছে। বিশ্বৰ ইতিহাসত নাৰীৰ সামাজিক স্থান সম্পৰ্কত দুই প্ৰকাৰৰ অতিকথা বা Myth ৰ প্ৰচলন আছে।' ইয়াৰে প্ৰথমটো হ'ল মানৱ জাতিৰ জন্ম লগ্নেৰে পৰা নাৰী পুৰুষৰ কৰ্তৃত্বৰ অধীন। ইছলাম, খৃষ্টান আৰু ইহুদী সমাজত এই ধাৰণাটো অধিকতৰ প্ৰচলিত। দ্বিতীয়তে প্ৰাচীন কালত ভাৰতবৰ্ষত নাৰীৰ স্থান আছিল উন্নত। এই ধাৰণাৰ প্ৰতিপত্তি হিন্দু সমাজত সৰ্বাধিক। ভাৰতত নাৰীক দেৱী আখ্যা দিয়া হয়। বিদ্যা ৰূপেন, জ্ঞান ৰূপেন, মাতৃ ৰূপেন, শক্তি ৰূপেন বুলি দেৱী স্তুতি কৰা হয়। ইয়াত অৰ্দ্ধ নাৰীশ্বৰ মূৰ্তিৰ সমাদৰ আছে। কিন্তু সময়ৰ লগে লগে নাৰীৰ সামাজিক স্থিতিৰ ক্ৰম পৰিবৰ্তন ঘটিছে। এই ক্ৰম পৰিবৰ্তনৰ ৰূপ আমি প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্য সমূহৰ মাজত দেখিবলৈ পাওঁ। বেদ, উপনিষদ, মহাকাব্য, স্মৃতি, বৌদ্ধ আৰু জৈন সাহিত্যৰ মাজত নাৰীৰ সামাজিক স্থান, মৰ্যাদা, অধিকাৰ আদি বিভিন্ন দিশ প্ৰতিফলিত হৈছে। লগতে ৰাজনৈতিক, বৌদ্ধিক তথা ধৰ্মীয় দিশত নাৰীৰ সক্ৰিয় ভূমিকাৰ সাক্ষ্য ও প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্য সমূহে বহন কৰিছে।

বৈদিক সাহিত্যৰ চতুৰ্বেদৰ ভিতৰত ঋকবেদে বিশিষ্ট স্থান অধিকাৰ কৰি আহিছে। প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় সমাজৰ সকলো শ্ৰেণীৰ চিন্তা চৰ্চাৰ পৰিচয় ঋগবেদত পোৱা যায়। ঋগবেদৰ যুগৰ ভাৰতীয় সমাজ আছিল পিতৃ প্ৰধান। এই ব্যৱস্থাত পাৰিবাৰিক জীৱনত মাতৃৰ স্থান আছিল অতি

মহত্বপূৰ্ণ। তেওঁ সকলো গৃহকৰ্ম সুচাৰুপে পৰিচালনা কৰাৰ লগে লগে পতিক ধৰ্মীয় কাৰ্যত সহায়তা আগবঢ়াইছিল। সামাজিক আৰু ধৰ্মীয় সকলো কামতে নাৰী এগৰাকীয়ে সক্ৰিয় অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰিব পাৰিছিল।^১ ৰাজনৈতিক আৰু সাংস্কৃতিক ক্ষেত্ৰতো নাৰীয়ে পুৰুষৰ সতে সমানে অধিকাৰ ভোগ কৰিছিল।^২ ঋকবেদৰ সময়ত বিবাহ অতি পবিত্ৰ আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয় কৰ্ম আছিল।^৩ সেই সময়ত সমাজত বিধবা বিবাহ প্ৰচলনৰ ইংগিত পোৱা যায়।^৪ সন্তান হীনা বিধবাই পুত্ৰ লাভৰ হেতু দেৱৰক পতি বৰণ কৰাৰ বাবে সমাজৰ পৰা অনুমোদন লাভ কৰিছিল। অৰ্থাৎ অৱস্থা ভেদে সেই সময়ত বিধবা বিবাহ সম্পন্ন হৈছিল। বৈদিক যুগত মন্ত্ৰ ৰচনা কৰা নাৰীক ‘ঋষিকা’ আখ্যা দিয়া হৈছিল। ঋকবেদ ত বিশ্ববাৰা ; অপালা ; লোপামুদ্ৰা কাম্বিৰতী, ঘোষা ; জাৰিতা, শ্ৰদ্ধা কামায়নী, জুহু পৌলোমী আদি বেদ মন্ত্ৰ ৰচয়িত্ৰী ঋষিকাৰ নাম পোৱা যায়। ঋকবেদ ৰ বাহিৰেও সামবেদ ত নোধা, গোপায়না ; অকৃষ্ট-ভাষা আদি মন্ত্ৰ দ্ৰষ্টা (ব্ৰহ্মবদিনী) নাৰীৰ নাম পোৱা যায়। ঋকবেদ ত যুদ্ধ ক্ষেত্ৰলৈ গৈ অস্ত্ৰধাৰণ কৰা, আৰু ৰণক্ষেত্ৰত অস্ত্ৰ চালনা কৰা বহু বীৰাঙ্গণাৰ নাম পোৱা যায়।^৫ সেই সকলৰ ভিতৰত বিস্পালা, মুদ্গলানীৰ নাম বিশেষ ভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য। গতিকে দেখা যায় যে ঋকবেদ ৰ সময়ত ভাৰতীয় নাৰী মানসিক, শাৰীৰিক, আধ্যাত্মিক আৰু নৈতিক পৰ্য্যায়ত অতি উচ্চ আছিল।

ব্ৰাহ্মণৰ যুগত ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ স্থিতিৰ কিছু পৰিবৰ্তন হয়। বৈদিক যুগ যজ্ঞ আদি ক্ৰিয়া কলাপৰ প্ৰেৰণা যি গ্ৰন্থত পোৱা যায় সেয়ে ব্ৰাহ্মণ।^৬ ব্ৰাহ্মণ যুগত নাৰীৰ পতিব্ৰতা ধৰ্মই আছিল মুখ্য ধৰ্ম। পতি সেৱাই নাৰী জীৱনৰ আদৰ্শ। শতপথ ব্ৰাহ্মণ অনুসৰি সুন্দৰী পত্নীয়েহে পতিৰ প্ৰেম লাভ কৰিছিল।^৭ এই গ্ৰন্থ অনুসৰি পত্নী পুৰুষৰ অনুগামী হ’ব লাগে।^৮ প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় ধৰ্ম গ্ৰন্থত স্ত্ৰী পুৰুষৰ অনুগামী হোৱাৰ অনেক উদাহৰণ আছে।

তাৰেই আদৰ্শত পৰৱৰ্তী সময়ত সতীদাহ প্ৰথাই সমাজত গা-কৰি উঠিছিল। ব্ৰাহ্মণৰ সময়ত ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ স্থান সমাজত কিছু নিম্নগামী হলেও নাৰীয়ে যজ্ঞ আদি কৰ্মত সক্ৰিয় ভূমিকা গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। শতপথ ব্ৰাহ্মণ অনুসৰি পত্নী হ'ল যজ্ঞৰ অৰ্দ্ধাংশ - “অৰ্দ্ধো বা এয যজ্ঞস্য যত পত্নী”। গতিকে পত্নী অবিহনে যজ্ঞ সম্পূৰ্ণ হ'ব নোৱাৰে। সেয়ে যজ্ঞ আদি কৰ্মত নাৰীৰ সক্ৰিয় সহযোগীতাৰ প্ৰয়োজন হৈছিল।^{১০} সেই সময়ত নাৰী সকল আছিল শিক্ষিতা। ঐতৰেয় ব্ৰাহ্মণত “গন্ধৰ্ব গৃহীতা” নামে এগৰাকী শিক্ষিতা নাৰীৰ নাম পোৱা যায়। তেওঁ অগ্নিহোত্ৰ নামেৰে যজ্ঞৰ কাল দুদিন বুলি সিদ্ধান্ত দিছিল আৰু পুৰোহিত সকলে সেই সিদ্ধান্ত গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল।^{১১} সেই সময়ত কন্যা সন্তান আছিল অবাঞ্ছিত। ঐতৰেয় ব্ৰাহ্মণত গৰ্ভৱতী নাৰীৰ পুত্ৰ লাভৰ বাবে পুংসৱন নামে এটি অনুষ্ঠান পালনৰ উল্লেখ পোৱা যায়। পুত্ৰ কামনাই আছিল উক্ত অনুষ্ঠানৰ মূল লক্ষ্য।

বৈদিক সাহিত্যৰ অন্তৰ্গত উপনিষদ সমূহৰ মাজত প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় সমাজ জীৱনৰ অনেক কথাই লিপিবদ্ধ হৈ আছে। উপনিষদ শব্দৰ অৰ্থ কাষত। অৰ্থাৎ জন্ম মৃত্যুৰ কাৰণ অবিদ্যাক নাশ কৰি যি পৰম ব্ৰহ্মৰ কাষলৈ লৈ যায়। উপনিষদৰ কালত নাৰী সকল আছিল কিছু পৰিমাণে বহু স্বামীক। নাৰী সকলৰ প্ৰাধান্যতা সেই সময়ৰ এক লক্ষণীয় দিশ। সন্তান সকলৰ পৰিচয় আছিল মাতৃৰ নামেৰে- অদিতিৰ সন্তান আদিত্য আদি দেৱতা সকল, দিতিৰ সন্তান দৈত্য সকল, দনুৰ সন্তান দানৱ সকল।^{১২} ছান্দোগ্য উপনিষদত বিবৃত সত্যকাম আৰু জাবালৰ কাহিনীয়ে উপনিষদৰ কালত নাৰী স্বেচ্ছা বিহাৰিনী আছিল বুলি প্ৰমাণ কৰে।^{১৩} কিন্তু কোনো কোনো উপনিষদৰ পৰা সেই সময়ত নাৰীৰ স্থান অৱনমিত হোৱা বুলি সহজে অনুমান কৰিব পাৰি। উদাহৰণ স্বৰূপে বৃহদাৰণ্যক উপনিষদ অনুসৰি নাৰী আছিল পুৰুষৰ ভোগৰ সমাগ্ৰী। সেই ক্ষেত্ৰত নাৰীয়ে পুৰুষক সহযোগিতা

নকৰিলে প্ৰথমে উপহাৰেৰে বশীভূত কৰাৰ চেষ্টা আৰু তাতো মান্তি নহলে হাত বা লাঠীৰে প্ৰহাৰ কৰি আয়ত্বাধীন কৰাৰ নিৰ্দেশ এই উপনিষদত আছে।^{১৪}

ভাৰতৰ প্ৰাচীন মহাকাব্য *ৰামায়ণ*ত পুৰুষসকল আছিল বহু পত্নীক। ৰজা দশৰথ, ৰাৱন, বালী, সুগ্ৰীৱ আদিৰ একাধিক পত্নীয়ে তাক প্ৰমাণ কৰে। কিন্তু আৰ্য আৰু অনা-আৰ্য উভয় সমাজতে নাৰী সকলৰ বাবে এক স্বামীৰহে অনুমোদন আছিল। সেয়ে বিধবা শূৰ্পন্যখাই ৰামৰ সান্নিধ্য বিচৰা কাৰ্যক লংকাৰ নাৰী সকলেও নিন্দা কৰিছে।^{১৫} ঘৰত থাকি স্বামীৰ সেৱা আৰু গৃহস্থীৰ কৰ্ম সমাপনেই আছিল স্ত্ৰীৰ সনাতন ধৰ্ম। বাল্মীকিৰ *ৰামায়ণ*ত নাৰী জাতিৰ আদৰ্শ কি হোৱা উচিত, সেই সম্পৰ্কে বহু কথাৰ উল্লেখ আছে।

ভৰ্তা তু খলু নাৰীনাং গুণবান্ নিৰ্গনোহপি বা,
ধৰ্মং বিম্শমানানং প্ৰত্যক্ষং দেৱী দৈৱতম্।।

অযোধ্যা কাণ্ড- ৬২, ৮

অৰ্থাৎ পতি গুণবানেই হওঁক বা গুণহীনেই হওঁক তিৰোতাৰ তেওঁৰেই পৰম দেৱতা। সীতাৰ মুখতো সমকক্ষ উক্তি শুনা যায়। *ভৰ্তাহি পৰং দৈৱতম*। এনে উক্তি প্ৰত্যুক্তিয়ে নাৰী স্থান নিৰূপণ কৰিলেও *ৰামায়ণ*ৰ সম-সাময়িক সমাজখনত স্ত্ৰী সকল স্বাধীন আছিল, যত তেওঁলোকে মুকলি মুৰীয়া জীৱন যাপন কৰাৰ লগতে নিজৰ মনোভাব ব্যক্ত কৰাৰ অধিকাৰ লাভ কৰিছিল। নাৰীক আছুতীয়াকৈ ৰখাৰ প্ৰথা সমাজত প্ৰচলিত নাছিল।^{১৬} এছ এন ব্যাসে এই প্ৰসঙ্গত কৈছে যে *ৰামায়ণ*ত বৰ্ণিত অযোধ্যাৰ নাৰী সকল নিজৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ বলেৰেই সুৰক্ষিত আছিল। ইতিপূৰ্বে কোৱা হৈছে যে বৈদিক যুগত স্বামীৰ মৃত্যুত পুত্ৰ লাভৰ বাবে দেৱৰক দ্বিতীয় স্বামী ৰূপে গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ অনুমোদন সমাজে নাৰীক প্ৰদান কৰিছিল। সম্ভৱত *ৰামায়ণ*

ৰচনাৰ সময়তো এই প্ৰথা প্ৰচলিত আছিল। সেয়ে বনবাসৰ কালত সোণৰ হৰিণ বিচাৰি যোৱা ৰামৰ অন্বেষণত কুটিৰ ত্যাগ কৰিবলৈ অমান্তি হোৱা লক্ষ্মণৰ প্ৰতি সীতাৰ সন্দেহ উপজিছিল— কিজানি ৰামৰ মৃত্যুত সীতাৰ দ্বিতীয় বৰ হোৱাৰ লালসাৰ বাবেই লক্ষ্মণে তেনে আচৰণ কৰিছে।^{১৬} ৰামায়ণ ৰ সমসাময়িক সমাজত সহমৰণৰ ৰীতি প্ৰচলিত নাছিল। কাৰণ দশৰথৰ মৃত্যুত কৌশল্যাই সহমৰণ বাঞ্ছা কৰিছে যদিও সহমৰণ বৰণ কৰা নাই।^{১৭}

পঞ্চম বেদ নামেৰে অভিহিত মহাভাৰত ভাৰতৰ শ্বাশ্বত সংস্কৃতিৰ ইতিহাস স্বৰূপ। এই বৃহৎ গ্ৰন্থখন কোনো এক নিৰ্দিষ্ট সময়ৰ ৰচনা নহয়। ই বহু যুগৰ সাহিত্য কৰ্মৰ সঞ্চয়ন। মহাভাৰতৰ কাহিনীৰ পৰা জনা যায় যে সেই সময়ত সমাজত পুৰুষৰ বহু বিবাহ প্ৰচলন আছিল যদিও তিৰোতাৰ বহু স্বামী স্বীকৃত নাছিল। সেয়ে দ্ৰৌপদীক পঞ্চ পাণ্ডৱে গ্ৰহণ কৰিব বুলি শুনি দ্ৰোপদে যুধিষ্ঠিৰক কৈছে— “হে কুল নন্দন, এজন পুৰুষৰ বহু স্ত্ৰী গ্ৰহণৰ ব্যৱস্থা সমাজত বিহিত আছে; এজনী নাৰীৰ বহু পতি গ্ৰহণৰ ব্যৱস্থা সমাজত শুনা নাযায়।”^{১৮} কিন্তু মহাভাৰতৰ কাহিনীত নাৰী সকলক বহু স্বামিক (কুন্তী) ; দলীয় স্বামিক (দ্ৰৌপদী) আৰু এক স্বামিক (গান্ধাৰী) ৰূপত পোৱা যায়।^{১৯} মহাভাৰতত দ্ৰৌপদীয়ে কৈছে “পত্যাশ্ৰয়োঃ হি মে ধৰ্মোমত স্ত্ৰীনাং সনাতনঃ” অৰ্থাৎ মোৰ মতে পতিৰ আশ্ৰয়েই স্ত্ৰী সকলৰ সনাতন ধৰ্ম। সেই সময়ত স্ত্ৰী সকল স্বামীৰ অনুগামী হৈছিল। মাদ্ৰীৰ সহমৰণে তাকেই সূচায়। বৈদিক যুগত তিনিটা উচ্চ শ্ৰেণীৰ নাৰীক লগুণ দিয়াৰ ব্যৱস্থা আছিল।^{২০} মহাভাৰত ৰচনাৰ কালত এই প্ৰথা বাহাল থাকক বা নাথাকক বনপৰ্বত এজন ব্ৰাহ্মণে পঞ্চ পাণ্ডৱৰ মাতৃ কুন্তীক যজ্ঞসূত্ৰ পৰিধান কৰোৱা আৰু সাবিত্ৰী মন্ত্ৰ শিকোৱাৰ বিৱৰণ পোৱা যায়।^{২১} মহাভাৰতৰ বিখ্যাত পুৰুষ সকলৰ জীৱন আছিল মাতৃ সৰ্ব্বস্ব।^{২২} তেওঁ লোকে জীৱনৰ প্ৰতিটো খোজতে নিঃসংকোচে মাতৃৰ নিৰ্দেশ পালন কৰা

দেখা যায়। নাৰীৰ বা মাতৃৰ এনে মৰ্যাদা মহাভাৰতত চিত্ৰিত হলেও কিন্তু মহাভাৰতত বহু সময়ত বহু ধৰণে নাৰী নিৰ্যাতিতা হৈছে। তেনে নিৰ্যাতনৰ দুটি উৎকৃষ্ট নিদৰ্শণ হ'ল- ১মতে অশ্বিকা আৰু অশ্বালিকাক সন্তান (পুত্ৰ) লাভৰ বাবে ব্যাসৰ শয্যাশায়িনী হবলৈ বাধ্য কৰোৱা ঘটনাটো। দ্বিতীয় বৃহৎ নিৰ্যাতন ৰজঃস্বলা দ্ৰৌপদীক ৰাজ সভাত বিবস্ত্ৰা কৰাৰ আসুৰিক প্ৰচেষ্টা।^{২০} গতিকে ভাৰতৰ ইতিহাস স্বৰূপ মহাভাৰতীয় সমাজত এহাতে নাৰীয়ে মাতৃৰূপে সন্মানীয় স্থান অধিকাৰ কৰিছে, আনহাতে পুৰুষৰ হাতত বিভিন্ন ধৰণে লাঞ্চিতও হৈছে।

বৈদিক যুগত ৰচিত ধৰ্ম শাস্ত্ৰ সমূহক স্মৃতি শাস্ত্ৰও বোলা হয়। এই স্মৃতি শাস্ত্ৰ সমূহত নাৰী সম্পৰ্কীয় নানা বিষয়ে স্থান লাভ কৰিছে। এই স্মৃতি সমূহৰ ভিতৰত খৃঃ পূঃ ২০০-১০০ ভিতৰত ৰচিত মনু স্মৃতি সু-প্ৰসিদ্ধ। মনু স্মৃতিত নাৰীৰ বাবে যি নিৰ্দেশাৱলী দিয়া হৈছে, সেই অনুসৰি ভাৰতীয় পৰম্পৰাত জন্মৰ পৰা মৃত্যুলৈকে নাৰী সদায় পুৰুষৰ অধীন—

পিতা ৰক্ষতি কৌমাৰে

ভৰ্তা ৰক্ষতি যৌবনে

ৰক্ষতি স্থবিৰে পুত্ৰা

ন স্ত্ৰী স্বাতন্ত্রমহতি

৯ ম অধ্যায় ৩ নং শ্লোক

এই স্মৃতি অনুসৰি নাৰী সকলো অনৰ্থক মূল।^{২১} সেয়ে পুৰুষে স্ত্ৰীক দুঃ মঙ্গলৰ পৰা ৰক্ষা কৰিব লাগে। কিয়নো অৰক্ষিত স্ত্ৰীয়ে পিতৃ কুল আৰু স্বামী কুল দুয়োকে। ধ্বংস কৰে।^{২২} আকৌ পতি ৰোগী, জুৱাৰী, মদপী বা দুঃচৰিত্ৰৰ যিয়েই নহওক স্ত্ৰীয়ে তেওঁক দেৱতা ৰূপে গুৰুত্ব কৰাৰ নিৰ্দেশ মনুৱে দিছে।^{২৩} সমাজৰ নিয়ম নিৰ্ণায়ক মনুয়ে তেওঁৰ স্মৃতি শাস্ত্ৰত বল পূৰ্বক নাৰীক আজীৱন পুৰুষৰ পদদলিত কৰি ৰখাৰ চেষ্টা স্পষ্টকৈ পৰিলক্ষিত

হয়। মনুৰ পিছতে আন এগৰাকী স্মৃতি শাস্ত্ৰৰ প্ৰণেতা যাজ্ঞ বৰ্দ্ধ্য। বৈদিক মন্ত্ৰ উচ্চাৰণ নকৰাকৈ ছোৱালীৰ উপনয়ন কৰাৰ পৰামৰ্শ মনুস্মৃতিত দিয়া হৈছে। তাৰ বিপৰীতে যাজ্ঞ বৰ্দ্ধ্যই ছোৱালীৰ উপনয়নকেই নিষেধ কৰিছে।^{২৭} আপদস্তস্ত ধৰ্মসূত্ৰ অনুসৰি নাৰীৰ প্ৰধান কৰ্তব্য পুত্ৰ সন্তান জন্ম দি বংশ ৰক্ষা কৰা। কাৰণ নাৰীৰ আন নাম ধাৰিনী। সন্তান ধাৰণ কৰে বাবেই এই আখ্যা দিয়া হয়।

পালি ভাষাত ৰচিত বৌদ্ধ সাহিত্যৰ অন্তৰ্গত থেৰগাথা আৰু থেৰীগাথা সমূহত বৌদ্ধ ভিক্ষু সকলৰ জীৱন চৰ্যা অংকীত হৈছে। থেৰীগাথা সমূহত বিশেষকৈ বৌদ্ধ ভিক্ষুণী সকলৰ পূৰ্বৰ লালসাময় জীৱন পদ্ধতি সলনি কৰি বৌদ্ধ তথা সংঘই কি দৰে তেওঁলোকক আনন্দময় মুক্তিৰ পথ দৰ্শন কৰায়, তাৰ বিৱৰণ পোৱা যায়। বৌদ্ধ সমাজত মহিলা সকলৰ স্থান প্ৰথমৰাহাত তুলনামূলক ভাবে উন্নত আছিল। তেওঁলোকে উচ্চ আধ্যাত্মিক জীৱন যাপন কৰাৰ লগতে ধৰ্মীয় বানী প্ৰচাৰ কৰা, শিক্ষকতা আদি কামত অংশ গ্ৰহণ কৰাৰ সুবিধা লাভ কৰিছিল। অশোকৰ কন্যা (ভগ্নী) সংঘমিত্ৰাই বৌদ্ধ ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ অৰ্থে শ্ৰীলংকালৈ গৈছিল। কিন্তু বৌদ্ধ ধৰ্মত তান্ত্ৰিকতাৰ প্ৰবেশ ঘটনাৰ পিছত সমাজত নাৰীৰ মৰ্যাদাৰ চৰম অবনতি ঘটে। শূদ্ৰকৰ *মুছকটিকম* নাটকত বসন্ত সেনা আৰু মদনিকা দুগৰাকী গণিকা। জনজীৱনৰ উমৈহতীয়া পত্নী স্বৰূপ গণিকা সকলক সামন্ত প্ৰভু আৰু তেওঁলোকৰ অনুগ্ৰহ পুষ্ট সকলে ভোগৰ সামগ্ৰী ৰূপে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰাৰ কথা গ্ৰন্থখনৰ পৰা জানিব পাৰি। পালি সাহিত্যৰ অন্তৰ্গত *জাতক* আৰু *অট্টকথা*ত নাৰীৰ শাৰীৰিক সৌন্দৰ্যৰ যি পুংখানুপুংখ বিৱৰণ পোৱা যায়, তাৰ পৰাই সেই সময়ত নাৰীৰ বাহ্যিক সৌন্দৰ্য্যই অধিক গুৰুত্ব লাভ কৰাৰ কথা অনুমান কৰিব পাৰি। ধম্মপালৰ আশ্রপালিৰ কাহিনীৰ পৰা জনা যায় যে বৈশালীৰ পৰম্পৰাগত নিয়ম অনুসৰি সৰ্বাঙ্গসুন্দৰী ৰমণী সকল আছিল গণভোগ্য।^{২৮} তেওঁলোকে বিবাহ পাশত আৱদ্ধ হ'ব

নোৱাৰিছিল। সেয়ে আত্মপালিক জোৰকৈ গণিকা বৃত্তি লবলৈ বাধ্য কৰোৱা হৈছিল। প্ৰাক বৌদ্ধ যুগত নাৰীৰ যি সামাজিক স্থান, উত্তৰ বৌদ্ধ যুগত সি সম্পূৰ্ণ ৰূপে সলনি হৈ গৈছিল। বৌদ্ধ ধৰ্মৰ অৱনতি আৰু ব্ৰাহ্মণ্যবাদৰ উত্থানৰ সময়ত তান্ত্ৰিকতাৰ প্ৰভাৱত উত্তৰ বৌদ্ধ যুগত ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ সামাজিক স্থানৰ চৰম অৱনতি ঘটা দেখা যায়।

বৌদ্ধ ধৰ্মক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি পালি সাহিত্যই সমৃদ্ধিশালী হৈ উঠাৰ দৰে, জৈন ধৰ্মক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি প্ৰাকৃত সাহিত্যই পৰিপূষ্টি লাভ কৰে। জৈন সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান তুলনামূলক ভাবে উচ্চ আছিল বুলি প্ৰাকৃত সাহিত্যৰ পৰা জানিব পাৰি। জৈন ভিক্ষুণী সকলে মুক্ত ভাবে বিচৰণ কৰাৰ লগতে ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰৰ স্বাধীনতাও ভোগ কৰিছিল। বৌদ্ধ ভিক্ষুণী সকলেও ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰ কাৰ্যত অংশ লৈছিল যদিও পুৰুষ ভিক্ষুকৰ নিৰীক্ষণতহে তেওঁলোকে সেই কাম সম্পন্ন কৰিছিল। কিন্তু জৈন ভিক্ষুণী সকল এই ক্ষেত্ৰত সম্পূৰ্ণ স্বাধীন আছিল। নিৰগস্থি আৰু পৰিব্ৰাজিকা এই দুটা ভাগত বিভক্ত জৈন ভিক্ষুণী সকলে পুৰুষৰ সমানে স্বাধীনতা লাভ কৰিছিল। আনকি পুৰুষ প্ৰধান ধৰ্মালোচনা আৰু বিতৰ্কতো তেওঁলোকে অংশ গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। ১ম চন্দ্ৰ গুপ্ত মৌৰ্যৰ ৰাণী লিচ্ছবী আছিল উচ্চ শিক্ষিতা। যাৰ ছবি সেই সময়ত প্ৰচলিত সোণৰ মুদ্ৰাত চন্দ্ৰগুপ্তৰ লগত একেলগে অংকীত হৈছিল।^{২০} ব্ৰাহ্মণ্যবাদৰ উত্থানৰ সময়ত বৌদ্ধ ধৰ্মত দীক্ষা লৈ ভিক্ষুণী জীৱন গ্ৰহণ কৰা নাৰীৰ সংখ্যা হ্রাস পালেও জৈন ধৰ্মত নাৰীৰ প্ৰবেশৰ সোঁত তেতিয়াও বন্ধ হোৱা নাছিল। গুণমতী, পটিনা কুৰাটি, বীৰমতি আদিৰ নাম সেই সময়ত জৈন ধৰ্মত দীক্ষা লোৱা নাৰী ৰূপে প্ৰখ্যাত।

গতিকে দেখা যায় যে বেদ ৰচনাৰ সময়ত প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ সামাজিক স্থিতি আছিল যথেষ্ট সৰল। কিন্তু পৰৱৰ্তী কালত, উপনিষদ, স্মৃতি আদি ৰচনাৰ সময়ত ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ স্থান যথেষ্ট অৱনতিত হয়। বাল্য

বিবাহ, বহু পত্নী বিবাহ আদিয়ে নাৰীৰ শিক্ষা দীক্ষাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত প্ৰতিবন্ধকতাৰ সৃষ্টি কৰিছিল। বৈদিক সাহিত্য চৰ্চাত বাধা আৰোপ, উপনয়নৰ পৰা বঞ্চিতকৰণ, সামাজিক নানা নিষেধাজ্ঞা আদি প্ৰবল হৈ উঠাৰ ফল স্বৰূপে নাৰীয়ে প্ৰকৃতিগত ভাবে লাভ কৰা প্ৰতিভাৰ বিকাশত বাধাৰ সৃষ্টি হয়। নাৰী হৈ পৰে পুৰুষৰ অনুশাসিত। ব্ৰাহ্মণ, সংহিতা, ধৰ্মশাস্ত্ৰ আদিৰ ৰচক সকলৰ ৰচনাৰ মাজত নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি অতি তুচ্ছ মনোভাব প্ৰকাশ এক লক্ষণীয় দিশ। এই “..... ঋষি কবি সকল নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি উদাৰ হোৱা হ'লে, নাৰীৰ বাহ্যিক দৈহিক সৌন্দৰ্যক নেদেখি নাৰীৰ মনৰ কথা কানিপাতি শুনিবলৈ পোৱা হ'লে, নাৰীৰ হৃদয়ৰ ঐশ্বৰ্য্যৰো তেওঁলোকে সন্বেদ পোৱা হ'লে, এই ভাৰতবৰ্ষত যুগে যুগে নাৰীৰ অৱস্থা ইমান কৰুণ নহলহেঁতেন।”

পাদটিকা:

১. শিৱনাথ বৰ্মণ, সন্ধ্যা দেৱী, পৰমানন্দ মজুমদাৰ (সম্পাদা) : অসমীয়া নাৰী-ঐতিহ্য আৰু উত্তৰণ; প্ৰাক কথা ; পৃ. ৩
২. ঋগবেদ ; ১০.১৮.৭
৩. নিৰোদ বৰুৱা : ৰাজহুৱা জীৱনত প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় নাৰীৰ ভূমিকা (প্ৰবন্ধ) ; গৰীয়সী, ৭ বছৰ, ৯ম সংখ্যা ; পৃ. ৩১
৪. ঋগবেদ : ১০.৮৫
৫. ঋগবেদ : ১০-৪০ ; ১০.১৮. ৭-৮
৬. যোগী ৰাজ বসু : বেদৰ পৰিচয় ; পৃ. ২৪০
৭. উক্ত গ্ৰন্থ : পৃ. ১০
৮. শতপথ ব্ৰাহ্মণ ৯/৬
৯. উক্ত গ্ৰন্থ : ১২.০২.২৪
১০. উক্ত গ্ৰন্থ : ৫.১-৬১.০
১১. ঐতৰেয় ব্ৰাহ্মণ ৪.৫.২৪

১২. শশী শর্মা : যুগে যুগে নারী (প্রবন্ধ) গৰীয়সী একাদশ বছৰ ; অষ্টম সংখ্যা।
১৩. ছান্দোগ্য উপনিষদ : ৪/৪/২-৫
১৪. বৃহদারণ্যক উপনিষদ : ৬/৪/৭
১৫. শশী শর্মা : উক্ত প্রবন্ধ
১৬. বামায়ণ : অৰণ্য কাণ্ড, ৫৫ সর্গ, ২৬-৬৪
১৭. বামায়ণ : অযোধ্যা কাণ্ড ; ৬৭ সর্গ ; ১১-১২ শ্লোক
১৮. মহাভাৰত : আদি পৰ্ব ; ১৯৪/২৭
১৯. শশী শর্মা : যুগে যুগে নারী ; (প্রবন্ধ) গৰীয়সী একাদশ বছৰ ; অষ্টম সংখ্যা
২০. যোগীৰাজ বসু : বেদৰ পৰিচয় ; পৃ. ২৩১
২১. মহাভাৰত : বনপৰ্ব ; ৩০৫-২০
২২. চন্দ্র প্রসাদ শইকীয়া : মহাভাৰত : বিশ্বাস আৰু বিদ্বেষ (প্রবন্ধ) গৰীয়সী ; নৱম বছৰ, পঞ্চম সংখ্যা।
২৩. উক্ত প্রবন্ধ
২৪. মনুস্মৃতি : ২য় অধ্যায়, ২১৪ নং শ্লোক
২৫. মনুস্মৃতি : ৯ম অধ্যায়, ৫ নং শ্লোক
২৬. মনুস্মৃতি : ৯ম অধ্যায়, ৭৮ নং শ্লোক
২৭. যাজ্ঞবল্ক্য স্মৃতি : ১.১৩
২৮. আপদস্তম্ভ ধর্মসূত্র : ১.১০-৫১-৫৩
২৯. নিৰোদ বৰুৱা : ৰাজহুৱা জীৱনত প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় নারীৰ ভূমিকা (প্রবন্ধ) ; গৰীয়সী, সপ্তম বছৰ, নৱম সংখ্যা।

সহায়ক গ্রন্থ :

ঠাকুৰ, নগেন। পালি-প্ৰাকৃত-অপভ্ৰংশ ভাষা আৰু সাহিত্য, নিউবুক ষ্টল,

দেৰগাঁও, ১৯৮৩।

বৰ্মণ, শিৰনাথ আৰু অন্যান্য (সম্পা.)। *অসমীয়া নাৰী ঐতিহ্য আৰু উত্তৰণ*, ষ্টুডেন্ট্‌চ্‌ ষ্টৰ্‌চ্‌, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০০১।

বসু, যোগীৰাজ। *বেদৰ পৰিচয়*, অসম প্ৰকাশন পৰিষদ, গুৱাহাটী, চতুৰ্থ সংস্কৰণ, ২০০১।

শৰ্মা, থানেশ্বৰ। *সংস্কৃত সাহিত্যৰ ইতিবৃত্ত*, চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৯৫।

শৰ্মা, হৰকান্ত (অনু)। *মনু সংহিতা*, প্ৰকাশক ৰাতুল শৰ্মা আৰু ৰমণী শৰ্মা, তেজপুৰ, ১৯৯৭।

Nalbari College Teacher's Unit. *প্ৰয়াস*, মহিলা অধ্যয়ন আৰু গৱেষণা কোষ, নলবাৰী মহাবিদ্যালয়, ২০১৩।

শইকীয়া চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰসাদ (সম্পা)। গৰীয়সী সপ্তম বছৰ, নৱম সংখ্যা, ২০০০

গৰীয়সী নৱম বছৰ ; ৫ম সংখ্যা ২০০২

গৰীয়সী নৱম বছৰ, ৬ষ্ঠ সংখ্যা, ২০০২

গৰীয়সী একাদশ বছৰ, অষ্টম সংখ্যা ২০০৪।

অৰুপা পটঙ্গীয়া কলিতাৰ 'অয়নান্ত' উপন্যাসত
 প্ৰতিফলিত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত নাৰীৰ স্থান : এক
 বিশ্লেষণাত্মক অধ্যয়ন

দীপ্তি দাস

অৰুপা পটঙ্গীয়া কলিতা অসমৰ এগৰাকী প্ৰসিদ্ধ উপন্যাসিক তথা গল্পকাৰ। তেওঁ ৰচনা কৰা গ্ৰন্থসমূহ ক্ৰমে মৃগনাভি, অয়নান্ত, মৰুভূমিত মেনকা আৰু অন্যান্য, কাঁইটীয়া কেতেকী ৰঙামাটিৰ পহাৰটো, টেকোৰা বাহৰ সোণৰ বেজী, ফেলানী, জছনাৰ বিটাছ ইত্যাদি। তেওঁ অয়নান্ত নামৰ উপন্যাসখনৰ বাবে 'ভাৰতীয়া ভাষা পৰিষদ বঁটা' ১৯৯৫ চনত লাভ কৰে। তেওঁ একেৰাহে কথা বঁটা, সাহিত্য-সংস্কৃতি বঁটা আৰু 'মৰিয়ম আস্তিন অথবা হীৰা বৰুৱা' নামৰ চুটিগল্প পুথিখনৰ বাবে ২০১৪ চনত 'সাহিত্য অকাডেমী বঁটা' লাভ কৰে। তেওঁ সাহিত্যলৈ আগবঢ়োৱা অৱদানৰ বাবে 'অসম সাহিত্য উপত্যকা বঁটা' লাভ কৰে। তেওঁ গুৱাহাটী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ৰ পৰা পাৰ্ল এছ বাক [Pearl S. Buck] ৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰসমূহৰ ওপৰত গৱেষণা কৰি ডক্টৰেট ডিগ্ৰী লাভ কৰে।

অৰুপা পটঙ্গীয়া কলিতাৰ আন আন নাৰীকেন্দ্ৰীক উপন্যাসসমূহৰ ভিতৰত 'অয়নান্ত' অন্যতম। 'অয়নান্ত' উপন্যাসখনৰ আৰম্ভণি হৈছে মংলু নামৰ কুলীটোক কামলৈ নোযোৱাৰ বাবে বগা চাহাবে চাবুকেৰে কোবাই শাস্তি

সহকাৰী অধ্যাপিকা, অসমীয়া বিভাগ

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দিয়া দৃশ্যৰে। সাঁত-আঠ বছৰীয়া বীণাপানীয়ে মংলুৰ সৈতে হোৱা অত্যাচাৰ সহ্য কৰিব নোৱাৰি চাহাবৰ মূৰলৈ শিল দলিয়াই প্ৰতিবাদ কৰে। উপন্যাসখনৰ আৰম্ভণিতে বীণাপাণিৰ জৰিয়তে নাৰীৰ প্ৰতিবাদী সত্ত্বা ফুটি উঠিছে। 'অয়নান্ত' উপন্যাসখনৰ বীণাপানী এগৰাকী নাৰী হিচাপে নিজৰ পৰিচয় গঢ় দিবলৈ জীৱনৰ প্ৰতিটো খোজতে পৰীক্ষা দিবলগীয়া হৈছে। সমাজৰ পৰা বহুতো বাধাৰ সন্মুখীন হৈছে। তথাপি বীণাপানীয়ে ব্যক্তি তথা সমাজৰ সৈতে সংগ্ৰাম কৰি গৈছে। নিজক পৰিচয় দিবলৈ কোনোদিনে অৱহেলা কৰা নাই। উপন্যাসখনৰ আন এটি নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ বীণাপানিৰ মাক সীতা। সীতা চৰিত্ৰটো বীণাপানি চৰিত্ৰটোৰ বিপৰীত ৰূপত দেখা যায়। সীতাই জীয়েক বীণাপানিৰ স্বাধীন মনটোক কোনো ক্ষেত্ৰতে আশ্ৰয় দিয়া দেখা নাযায়। সীতা চৰিত্ৰটিৰ জৰিয়তে সমাজৰ সংৰক্ষণশীল মানসিকতা ফুটি উঠিছে। য'ত নাৰীয়ে নাৰীৰ শত্ৰু বুলি ক'ব পৰা যায়। সীতা যদিও বীণাপানিৰ মাক তথাপি কোনো দিশতে জীয়েকৰ প্ৰতি সদয় হোৱা দেখা নাযায়। মাকে বীণাপানি নিজৰ ছোৱালী হিচাপে সন্মুখীন হ'ব পৰা সমস্যাসমূহৰ কথা ভাৱি চিন্তিত হৈছে কিন্তু তেওঁ বেছিভাগ সময়তে বীণাপানিৰ স্বাধীন জীৱনটোৰ প্ৰতি ভুল সিদ্ধান্ত লোৱা দেখা গৈছে। যাৰ ফলত বীণাপানীয়ে গোটেই জীৱন বিভিন্ন ঘাট-প্ৰতিঘাটৰ সন্মুখীন হ'ব লগা হৈছে। দেউতাকে মাকৰ কোনো সিদ্ধান্ততে মাত মতা দেখা নাযায়। সকলো দেখিও নেদেখাৰ ভাও জুৰি মানি গৈছে। আনহাতে আইতাক যশোদা চৰিত্ৰটো পৰম্পৰাগত মূল্যবোধেৰে আচ্ছন্ন। তেওঁৰ যোগেদিয়েই পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনত প্ৰচলিত ৰীতি-নীতি ইত্যাদি ঔপন্যাসিকাই ব্যক্ত কৰিছে। আইতাক যশোদা এই ৰীতি-নীতিৰ সৈতে অভ্যস্ত হৈ গৈছে যদিও সুখী হোৱা দেখা নাযায়। তেওঁৰ প্ৰতিটো কথাই পাঠকক সোঁৱৰাই দিয়ে যে নাৰীৰ জীৱন কেৱল পুৰুষে বিচৰা মতেহে চলে। যশোদা চৰিত্ৰটোৰো ভিতৰি ভিতৰি পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজখনৰ প্ৰতি ক্ষোভ দেখা যায়। উপন্যাসখনৰ আন এটি নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ তগৰ। কৰুণা বৰুৱাৰ ছোৱালী ৰুমাৰ অবৈধ সন্তান তগৰ। কৰুণা বৰুৱাই তগৰক জীয়াই জীয়াই পুতিবলৈ বিচাৰিছিল কিন্তু যশোদাই সন্তানটিৰ লালন-পালন কৰাৰ দায়িত্ব লয়। এইখিনিতেই যশোদাৰ মনত মানুহৰ প্ৰতি যি দয়া সেই দয়া শ্ৰেষ্ঠৰূপত ফুটি উঠিছে। গিৰীয়েক নন্দ বৰুৱাই তেওঁৰ কামত খং কৰিছে যদিও যশোদাই গুৰুত্ব দিয়া নাই। তগৰ নামটো দিছে

বীণাপানীয়ে। বীণাপানীয়ে তগৰক বুকুত বান্ধি ডাঙৰ-দীঘল কৰিছে। তগৰক কৰা কোনো অপমানেই বীণাপানীয়ে সহ্য নকৰে। তগৰক মৰম কৰা ভালপোৱা মানুহক বীণাপানীয়েও ভাল পায়। তগৰক পাগলী বুলি তাছিল্য কৰা জয়ন্ত চলিহায়ে তাইক ধৰ্ষণ কৰে। মুখা পিন্ধা ভদ্ৰ সমাজখন তগৰ চৰিত্ৰটোৰ জৰিয়তে উদঙাই দেখুৱাইছে। বীণাপানীয়ে গিৰীয়েক জয়ন্ত চলিহাৰ এই পাপ কৰ্ম সহ্য কৰিব নোৱাৰি ঘৰ-সংসাৰ, ল'ৰা-ছোৱালী সকলো এৰি থৈ গুচি আহিছে। বীণাপানীয়ে জীৱনৰ বাকী থকা দিনকেইটা স্বাধীনমনেৰে জীয়াই থাকিবলৈ শান্তি বিচাৰ গুচি আহিছে যদিও সন্তানৰ প্ৰতি দায়িত্ববোধো প্ৰকাশ পাইছে।

“...বুকুৰ আগমঙহক কোনোবাই পাহৰিব পাৰেনে? সিহঁতকিটালৈ মোৰ কিমান মনত পৰে। সিহঁতৰ মুখকেইখন কেনেকৈ মোৰ লগে লগে থাকে কোনে বুজিব আই? সিহঁতৰ ভালৰ কাৰণে মই মৰিবও পাৰিম। কিন্তু সিহঁতে মোৰ ওচৰলৈ মাকজনী বুলি বিচাৰি আহক। ভাত এমুঠি দি ভৰিৰ তলত ৰাখিব পৰা বুঢ়ী এজনী বিচাৰি আহিলে, সিহঁতে মোক নাপায়।”

‘অয়নাস্ত’ উপন্যাসখনৰ কাহিনী নিৰ্মাণ হৈছে স্বাধীনতাৰ পূৰ্বৰ সময়ছোৱাৰ অসমৰ সামাজিক আৰু ৰাজনৈতিক পটভূমিত। সেই সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত বীণাপানী নামৰ চৰিত্ৰটিৰ মানসিক গঠন আৰু বিকাশক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি উপন্যাসখনৰ কাহিনীভাগ নিৰ্মাণ কৰা হৈছে। উপন্যাসখনৰ কেন্দ্ৰীয় চৰিত্ৰ হ’ল বীণাপানী। উপন্যাসখনত আন আন নাৰীৰো প্ৰসংগ আনিছে। তাৰ ভিতৰত তগৰ অন্যতম। বীণাপানীয়ে কৈশোৰ অৱস্থাৰ পৰা সন্মুখীন হোৱা সমাজৰ শক্তিশালী শ্ৰেণী আৰু পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজখনৰ মাজত প্ৰচলিত যিবোৰ দ্বন্দ, সেই দ্বন্দবোৰ দ্বন্দাত্মক ৰূপতে উপন্যাসখনত উপস্থাপন কৰিছে। উপন্যাসিকাই সমাজত প্ৰচলিত দ্বন্দবোৰ কাহিনী আকাৰে বৰ্ণনা কৰি গৈছে অথচ ক’তো সিদ্ধান্ত দিয়া নাই। উপন্যাসখনৰ মূখ্য চৰিত্ৰ বীণাপানীয়ে এখন সহজ-সৰল জগতত বাস কৰে যাৰ বাবে তাই সমাজৰ কেৰোণবোৰ দেখিলে বিদ্ৰোহী হৈ পৰে আৰু সেইবোৰৰ প্ৰতিবাদ কৰে। যেতিয়া চাহাবে মঙলুক বিনাদোষত চাবুকেৰে কোবাইছে তেতিয়া সাত-আঠ বছৰীয়া বীণাপানীয়ে চাহাবলৈ শিলগুটি মাৰিছে আৰু তায়ে যে শিলগুটি মাৰিছে সেইকথা সাহসেৰে

তাই ব্যক্ত কৰিছে। বীণাপানিক স্কুলত দিবৰ বাবে মাক-দেউতাকে তাইক মোমায়েকৰ ঘৰলৈ লৈ যায়। বীণাৰ ককাদেউতাক নন্দ বৰুৱাৰ ঘৰখন পৰম্পৰাগত মূল্যবোধেৰে আচ্ছন্ন, এটা নিৰ্দিষ্ট পৰিসৰত আৱদ্ধ। মাকে যেতিয়া বীণাক ককাইদেউতাকক সেৱা কৰিবলৈ কৈছিল, তেতিয়া বীণাই মাকক প্ৰশ্ন

কৰিছে— “মানুহকনো কিয় সেৱা কৰিব লাগে?” প্ৰশ্নটিৰ জৰিয়তে বীণাই সমগ্ৰ পৰম্পৰাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে প্ৰতিবাদ কৰিছে। নন্দ বৰুৱাই কোনোবাখিনিত ক্ৰুদ্ধ হৈছে। যি নন্দ বৰুৱাৰ আদেশ বিভিন্ন মানুহে, পত্নী হৈ, পুত্ৰ হৈ, বোৱাৰী হৈ, নাতি হৈ, কৰ্মচাৰী হৈ, ভূত্য হৈ পালন কৰিছে, সেই বৰুৱাৰ আদেশ কনমানি বীণাপানিয়ে অমান্য কৰিছে। বীণাপানি চৰিত্ৰটিৰ জৰিয়তে ঔপন্যাসিকাই পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজখনৰ বিৰোধিতা কৰিছে। ঔপন্যাসখনৰ শেষত বীণাপানিয়ে কোৱা কথাৰ যোগেদি পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজখনৰ পৰিচয় দাঙি ধৰিছে—

“এৰা মাজনী! নিজৰ কথাই ভাবিছে। তিৰোতাৰ জীৱন বহুত দেখিলো। তিৰোতাৰ জীৱন বোলে পিতৃ, স্বামী আৰু পুত্ৰৰ তল। পিতৃৰ তলৰ তোৰ মাৰক দেখিলো, স্বামীৰ তলৰ মোক দেখিছাই, পুত্ৰৰ তল আইতাক দেখিলো। মোৰ তিতা লাগিছে আই।”

যেতিয়া বীণাপানিয়ে উপেন শৰ্মাৰ ঘোৰাটো লৈ গৈ ঘৰ পাওঁতে সন্ধিয়া হয় তেতিয়া তাই গোটেই ঘৰখনৰ প্ৰশ্নৰ সন্মুখীন হ'ব লগা হয় আৰু আইতাকে পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজৰ প্ৰতিমূৰ্ত্তি ৰূপে কৈ উঠিছে যে- “মাইকী ছোৱালীৰ এই তেজ ভাল নহয়। ঘোৰাত উঠে!”

“আই! আগলৈ এনেবোৰ কাম কেতিয়াও নকৰিবা। মাইকী মানুহৰ বহুত বিপদ।” (কলিতা, অৰুপা পটঙ্গীয়া, অয়নাস্ত, পৃঃ ২৪)

“আমি তিৰোতা মানুহে কি কাম নিজৰ হেঁপাহ মতে কৰিব পাৰো।”

“মাজনী জুই দেখিলে নিজে নিজে আঁতৰি আহিবি। জুই লৈ খেলিবলৈ মন নেমেলিবি। তিৰীজনম লৈছ, জুয়ে এনেয়ে আঙুৰি থাকে।”

“স্বামীয়ে তিৰীৰ সকলো, স্বামী নহ’লে তিৰীৰ একো নাথাকে।”

এনেদৰে ঔপন্যাসিকাই আইতাকৰ চৰিত্ৰটিৰ জৰিয়তে নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি সমাজখনত প্ৰচলিত পৰম্পৰাগত মানসিকতাৰ পৰিচয় দিছে।

স্বাধীনতাৰ পূৰ্বৰ সময়ছোৱাত সৰু বিয়া হোৱাৰ পিছত ছোৱালীক শিক্ষাৰ বাবে পঢ়াশালিলৈ যোৱাত সমাজে বাধা প্ৰদান কৰিছিল। এনেধৰণৰ মানসিকতা পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজখনত প্ৰচলিত হৈ আছিল। নন্দ বৰুৱাৰ নিচিনা শক্তিশালী শ্ৰেণীটোৱে এনেধৰণৰ নীতি-নিয়ম পালন কৰিবলৈ সমাজখনক আদৰ্শ দেখুৱাছিল আৰু সমাজখনৰ প্ৰায়খিনি লোকেই সেই আদৰ্শ গ্ৰহণ কৰিছিল। দুই-এজন লোকে তাৰ বিৰোধিতা কৰাৰ দৃষ্টান্তও উপন্যাসখনৰ জৰিয়তে দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়।

“তাইৰ সৰু বিয়া হোৱাৰ পিছত কি কৰিবা? তাইক তোমালোকে ডিঙি চেপি নামাৰিবানে?”

“কৰ চাৰি চুক চিনিলে, কিতাপ পঢ়িব পৰা হোৱাৰ পিছত তিৰীক কিয় পঢ়াব লাগে?”

“ঘৰেই ছোৱালীৰ পঢ়াশালি। মুনিহ ল’ৰাৰ দৰে ছোৱালীক মহলাত উঠিবলৈ দিলে ছোৱালীৰ বৰ অপকাৰ হ’ব।”

“ডাক্তৰৰ ব্যৱসায় যেনে আন আন মুনিহৰ ব্যৱসায় তিৰোতাৰ পক্ষে হানিকৰ। ইমান কষ্ট কৰিলে তিৰোতাৰ স্বাস্থ্য থাকিব পাৰেনে? স্বাস্থ্য নাথাকিলে তেওঁ কিদৰে ঘৰ চলাব, কিদৰে ল’ৰা তুলিব।”

“অসমক মানে লগু-ভগু কৰিছিল, কিন্তু সভ্যতাই কৰা লগু-ভগু তাতকৈয়ো ভয়ানক হ’ব, যদিহে তিৰোতা পণ্ডিত হ’ব খোজে।”

এনেদৰে সমাজখনে নাৰী শিক্ষাৰ বিৰোধিতা কৰি তিৰোতাৰ কাম কেৱল ঘৰ চলোৱা আৰু ল’ৰা-ছোৱালী ডাঙৰ কৰাই বুলি গণ্য কৰি আহিছে। সাম্প্ৰতিক সময়তো ইয়াৰ প্ৰভাৱ কম-বেছি পৰিমাণে দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। উপন্যাসখনত বীণাপানি চৰিত্ৰটিকো সৰু বিয়া হোৱাৰ পিছত স্কুললৈ যোৱা

বন্ধ কৰি দিয়ে। বীণাপানিয়ে ইয়াৰ বিৰুদ্ধে প্ৰতিবাদ কৰে যদিও তাইক স্কুললৈ যাব দিয়া নহয়। অৱশেষত বীণাপানিয়ে সেই সিদ্ধান্ত মানি ল'বলৈ বাধ্য হয়। আমাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত তিবোতাসকলক সদায় পুৰুষৰ তল বুলি গণ্য কৰা হয় সেই কথা পৰম্পৰাগত মূল্যবোধেৰে আচ্ছন্ন আইতা চৰিত্ৰটিৰ জৰিয়তে উপন্যাসখনত দেখুৱাইছে।

“জীয়ৰী কালত তিবোতাক বাপেকে চায়, সেন্দূৰ পিন্ধাৰ পিছত স্বামীয়ে, পাছৰচোৱাত পেটৰ পোৰে চায়।”

“তিবোতা মানুহৰ বহুত বিপদ।”

কিন্তু বীণাপানিয়ে এইবোৰ কথাৰ বিৰোধীতা কৰি আইতাকক প্ৰশ্ন কৰিছে—
“তিবোতাকনো কিয় চাব লাগে।”

বীণাপানি মেলেচ চাহাৰ ৰতন মেকফাৰলীনৰ প্ৰেমত পৰে যদিও ঘৰৰ বাধ্যত তথা মোমায়েকৰ হেঁচাত জয়ন্ত চলিহাৰ সৈতে বিবাহ পাশত আৱদ্ধ হ'বলৈ বাধ্য হয়। বীণাপানিয়ে বাৰে বাৰে পৰম্পৰাগত ৰীতি-নীতিৰ বিৰোধীতা কৰিছে যদিও সমাজখন ভেদি ওলাই আহিব পৰা নাই। বীণাক স্বামী জয়ন্ত চলিহাই শাৰীৰিকভাৱেই হওঁক বা মানসিকভাৱেই হওঁক অপদস্থ কৰিছে। স্বাধীনচেতীয়া বীণাৰ জীৱনলৈ যেন বিয়াৰ পিছত অমানিশা নামি আহিছে। বীণাৰ শাহুৱেক ৰায়বাহাদুৰণী এগৰাকী নাৰী হৈ পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজখনৰ প্ৰতি উৎসুকতা প্ৰদান কৰিছে—

“পাটীলৈ নিলেই পুৰুষে তিৰীক একেদিনাই বলাই পেলাব পাৰে।”

বীণাক শুশ্ৰূষা কৰিবলৈ আহি কন্যাসম তগৰ জয়ন্ত চলিহাৰ দ্বাৰা ধৰ্ষিতা হৈছে। এই কথা বীণাই সহ্য কৰিব নোৱাৰিলে। বীণাই সকলো বান্ধোন ছিঙি সন্তানৰ মমতা, সমাজৰ ৰঙা চকু ভেদি ঘৰৰ পৰা ওলাই আহিছে। ইয়াৰ দ্বাৰা ঔপন্যাসিকাই নাৰীৰ মুক্তি ঘোষণা কৰিছে। পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনৰ পৰা আঁতৰি আহি নাৰীয়ে যে মুক্ত ৰূপত বিচৰণ কৰিব পাৰে তাৰ প্ৰতিভূ বীণাপানি চৰিত্ৰটো। উপন্যাসখনত বীণাপানি চৰিত্ৰটোৰ আমি দুটা ৰূপ দেখিবলৈ পাওঁ। এটা হ'ল পৰম্পৰাগত মূল্যবোধেৰে আচ্ছন্ন আইতাৰ দৰে চৰিত্ৰ আৰু আনটো

হ'ল সমাজৰ বাধা নেওচি সাহসেৰে আগুৱাই যাব পৰা সাহসী নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ।

উপন্যাসখনৰ আন এটা নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ তগৰৰ যোগেদিও নাৰী মুক্তি ঘোষণা হৈছে আৰু পুৰষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজখনক ভেদি নাৰী মুক্ত হৈ ওলাই অহাৰ ইংগিত দেখা যায়। যেতিয়া তগৰ জয়ন্ত চলিহাৰ দ্বাৰা ধৰ্ষিতা হৈ গৰ্ভবতী হয় তেতিয়া তগৰে সন্তানটোক পৃথিৱীলৈ আনি বীণাৰ মাজত লুকাই থকা বিদ্রোহী চেতনাৰ বীজৰ বাস্তৱত ৰূপ দিবলৈ মানসিকভাৱে সাজু হৈছে- “মই কিয় অশুচি হ'ম?” মই কি নিজে গৈ বোকাত জঁপিয়াই পৰিছো? মোক ঠেলা মাৰি পেলাইছে। মই কিয় অশুচি হ'ম?”

বীণাই যেতিয়া তগৰক প্ৰশ্ন কৰিছিল তেওঁৰ যদি কিবা হয়, কি কৰিব? তেতিয়া তগৰে বিনাদ্বিধাই পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনৰ বিৰোধিতা কৰি কৈছে যে -

“কি কৰিম আৰু? তুলি-তালি ডাঙৰ-দীঘল কৰিম?”

“তই সমাজলৈ ভয় নকৰ?”

“সমাজ.....? তগৰে হাঁহিছে।”

তগৰ চৰিত্ৰটিৰ জৰিয়তে ঔপন্যাসিকাই অনাগত সময়ৰ পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ সূচনা কৰিছে।

বীণাপানি চৰিত্ৰটো বিকাশশীল চৰিত্ৰ। ঔপন্যাসিকাই আইতা, বীণাপানি, তগৰ এই তিনিওটা চৰিত্ৰৰ যোগেদিয়ে সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান চিত্ৰিত কৰিছে। এই চৰিত্ৰসমূহৰ মাজেদি উপন্যাসখনৰ দুটা প্ৰজন্মৰ মাজৰ নাৰীৰ মানসিকতা স্পষ্টৰূপত তুলি ধৰিছে। এটা প্ৰজন্মই সমসাময়িক সমাজখনৰ পৰিচয় দাঙি ধৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে আৰু আনটো প্ৰজন্মই সেই পৰম্পৰাগত সমাজখনৰ সকলো বান্ধোন ছিঙি ওলাই আহিছে।

এনেদৰে ঔপন্যাসিকাই উপন্যাসখনত তগৰ, বীণাপানি আদি চৰিত্ৰ সমূহৰ মাজেদি স্বাধীনতাৰ পূৰ্বৰ সময়ছোৱাত সমাজত নাৰীৰ স্থান আৰু জীৱনৰ প্ৰতিটো মুহূৰ্ততে নাৰীয়ে পোৱা ঘাট-প্ৰতিঘাটৰ ছবি সুন্দৰ ৰূপত চিত্ৰিত

কৰিছে। উপন্যাসখনত বিভিন্ন নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ মাজেদি প্ৰাক্‌স্বাধীন যুগত অসমত নাৰীৰ ওপৰত হোৱা শোষণ-শাসন, নাৰীৰ প্ৰতি সমাজৰ অৰহেলা ইত্যাদি চিত্ৰ দাঙি ধৰা হৈছে। উপন্যাসখনত বিভিন্ন সংঘাতৰ মাজেদি হ'লেও নাৰী চেতনাৰ উত্তৰণ দেখুওৱা হৈছে। এই নাৰী চেতনাৰ উত্তৰণেই উপন্যাসখনক নাৰীবাদী উপন্যাসৰূপে পৰিচয় কৰাইছে।

প্ৰসংগ টোকা :

১. কলিতা, অৰুপা পটঙ্গীয়া, অয়নান্ত , পৃঃ ২৬৩
২. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ৯
৩. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ২৬৩
৪. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ২৩
৫. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ৬৩
৬. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ৩০
৭. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ৩১
৮. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ৩১
৯. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ৮০
১০. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ৮০
১১. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ২০০
১২. পূৰ্বোক্ত গ্ৰন্থ, পৃঃ ২৫৮

গ্ৰন্থপঞ্জী

কলিতা, অৰুপা পটঙ্গীয়া। অয়নান্ত। লয়াৰ্ছ বুক ষ্টল, পানবজাৰ, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৯৪। মুদ্ৰিত।

ঠাকুৰ, নগেন (সম্পা.)। এশ বছৰৰ অসমীয়া উপন্যাস। জ্যোতি প্ৰকাশন, পানবজাৰ, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০০০। মুদ্ৰিত।

ডেকা, ৰাতুল। সাহিত্য সমালোচনা তত্ত্ব পৰিচয় আৰু প্ৰয়োগ। সম্প্ৰীতি, জালুকবাৰী, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ২০১৭ মুদ্ৰিত।

নেওগ, মহেশ্বৰ। অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ ৰূপৰেখা। চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, টিহু, সপ্তম তাণ্ডৰণ,

১৯৮৭। মুদ্রিত।

বৰগোহাঞি, হোমেন(সম্পা.)। *অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ বুৰঞ্জী*, ষষ্ঠ খণ্ড। আনন্দৰাম বৰুৱা ভাষা-কলা-সংস্কৃতি সংস্থা, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৯৩। মুদ্রিত।

বৰপূজাৰী(বৰঠাকুৰ), জিতাঞ্জলি। *অসমীয়া উপন্যাসত জনজাতীয় জীৱন*। চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, পাণবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৯৩। মুদ্রিত।

ভট্টাচাৰ্য, পৰাগকুমাৰ। *আধুনিক উপন্যাস*। অসম পাবলিচিং কোং, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৯৯। মুদ্রিত।

ভৰালী, শৈলেন। *অসমীয়া ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস*। চন্দ্ৰ প্ৰকাশ, পাণবজাৰ, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৯৬। মুদ্রিত।

শৰ্মা, গোবিন্দ প্ৰসাদ। *উপন্যাস আৰু অসমীয়া উপন্যাস*। ষ্টুডেন্টছ ট্ৰ'বচ, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৯৩। মুদ্রিত।

শৰ্মা, সত্যেন্দ্ৰনাথ। *অসমীয়া উপন্যাসৰ ভূমিকা*। সৌমাৰ প্ৰিণ্টিং এণ্ড প্ৰাইভেট লিমিটেড, গুৱাহাটী, প্ৰথম প্ৰকাশ, ১৯৬৫। মুদ্রিত।

উনবিংশ শতিকাৰ নাৰীৰ স্বাধীন মনোভাৱৰ প্ৰকাশ, প্ৰসঙ্গ
মধুসূদন দত্তৰ 'বীৰাঙ্গনা কাব্য' এটি অধ্যয়ন

মৌচুমী কংসবনিক

ভূমিকা :

মধুসূদন দত্ত উনবিংশ শতাব্দীৰ বাংলা সাহিত্যৰ নৱ জাগৰণ যুগৰ মহাকাবি। তেওঁ কেৱল বাংলা সাহিত্যতে নহয়, ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্যতও তেওঁৰ নিছিনা কবি পোৱা দুষ্কৰ। মধ্য যুগৰ জীৱন ধাৰাৰ সংকীৰ্ণতাক পৰিত্যাগ কৰি বৃহত্তৰ জীৱন লাভৰ যে আশ্বাদন এই যুগৰ মূল প্ৰৱনতা আছিল, মধুসূদন দত্তৰ কাব্যত ইয়াৰ সাৰ্থক প্ৰতিফলন ঘটিছে। বিশেষত নাৰী জীৱনৰ নতুন বোধশক্তিৰ উন্মেষ মধুসূদন দত্তৰ কাব্যত ধুনীয়াকৈ চিত্ৰিত হৈছে। তেখেতৰ 'বীৰাঙ্গনা' কাব্যও ইয়াৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম নহয়। তেওঁৰ 'বীৰাঙ্গনা' (১৮৬২) কাব্যৰ নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ বিলাক পৌৰাণিক হ'লেও স্বকীয় কল্পনা শক্তিৰ দ্বাৰা কবিয়ে সেই বিলাক নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ সৈতে পাশ্চাত্য মানসিকতা, আধুনিক যুক্তিবাদ আৰু ব্যক্তি স্বাতন্ত্ৰৰ ধাৰণা যুক্ত কৰিছে।

উদ্দেশ্য :

মধুসূদন দত্তৰ প্ৰতিটো সৃষ্টিয়েই অভিনব সৃষ্টিৰ ৰূপত গণ্য। তেওঁৰ

সহকাৰী অধ্যাপক

বাংলা বিভাগ

মঙ্গলদৈ মহাবিদ্যালয়

কাব্য চৰ্চাৰ মাজেদি বাংলা কাব্য সাহিত্যৰ নৱ জন্ম ঘটিছে। তেওঁৰ 'বীৰঙ্গনা' বাংলা সাহিত্যৰ প্ৰথম আৰু শেষ পত্ৰ কাব্য। ৰোমান কবি অভিডৰ [Ovid] 'The Heroicides or Epistle of Heroins' কাব্যৰ অনুসৰণত এই কাব্যখনি ৰচিত হৈছে। অভিডৰ কাব্যত বিভিন্ন শ্ৰেণীৰ নাৰীয়ে নিজ নিজ প্ৰেমিকৰ উদ্দেশ্যে পত্ৰ লিখিছে। সাধ্বী পেনিলোপি, কলঙ্কিণী, ক্যানেস, প্ৰেম উন্মাদিনী দিদো প্ৰভৃতি একৈশজনী নাৰীয়ে লিখা পত্ৰ এই কাব্যত আছে।

মধুসূদনেও প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতীয় সাহিত্য (পুৰাণ, ৰামায়ণ, মহাভাৰত) ৰ পৰা একৈশজনী নাৰীৰ দ্বাৰা পত্ৰ ৰচনাৰ পৰিকল্পনা কৰিছিল। কিন্তু এঘাৰখনি পূৰ্ণপত্ৰ ৰচনাৰ পিছত তেওঁ বাকী পত্ৰ বিলাক সম্পূৰ্ণ কৰিব পৰা নাছিল। এই এঘাৰখনি পত্ৰই 'বীৰঙ্গনা' কাব্যৰ মূল বিষয় বস্তু। পত্ৰ লেখিকা বিলাক হৈছে- কৈকেয়ী, শূৰ্পপশা, ৰুক্মিণী, শকুন্তলা, উৰ্বশী, তাৰা, জনা ইত্যাদি। তেওঁৰ জীৱন আৰু সাহিত্যত নাৰীয়ে এটি বিশেষ স্থান অধিকাৰ কৰি আছে। তেওঁ তেওঁৰ ৰচনাত নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ সৃষ্টিত বিশেষ কৃতিত্বৰ পৰিচয় দিছে। বাস্তৱিকতে ইয়াৰ পিছত আছে, আধুনিক যুক্তিবাদ আৰু পাশ্চত্য মানসিকতা। এই গ্ৰন্থৰ প্ৰত্যেকজনী নাৰী চৰিত্ৰ আপোন মনৰ ভাব সুক্ষ্মভাবে প্ৰতিটো পত্ৰত প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। সকলো নাৰীয়েই বিশেষ পৰিস্থিতিত স্বকীয় মনোভাব প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে আৰু সেই মনোভাব প্ৰকাশ হোৱাত তেওঁলোকৰ চৰিত্ৰ বৈশিষ্ট পাঠকৰ ওচৰত উদঘাটিত হৈছে।

মূলশব্দ : বীৰঙ্গনা, শকুন্তলা, জনা, নাৰী, তাৰা, পত্ৰ।

বিশ্লেষণ :

মধুসূদনে 'বীৰঙ্গনা' কাব্যত পৌৰাণিক বিষয়বস্তু গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে যদিও এই কাব্যখনত তেওঁ আধুনিক মনোভাবৰ পৰিচয় দিছে। এঘাৰজনী ভাৰতীয় পৌৰাণিক ৰমণীয়ে আপোন আপোন (নিজ নিজ) প্ৰেমিকৰ উদ্দেশ্যে নিজৰ মনৰ ভাব জনাই পত্ৰ ৰচনা কৰিছে।

'বীৰঙ্গনা' কাব্যৰ এঘাৰখন পত্ৰক চাৰিটা শ্ৰেণীত বিভক্ত কৰিব পাৰি। প্ৰথমতে - স্মৰণ পত্ৰিকা - শকুন্তলা, দ্ৰৌপদী, ভানুমতী, দুঃখলা, দুৰস্থিত

স্বামীৰ উদ্দেশ্যে পত্ৰ লিখিছে। দ্বিতীয়তে, প্ৰেম পত্ৰিকা —তাতে আছে তাৰা, শূৰ্পনশা, উৰ্বশী আৰু ৰুক্মিণীৰ পত্ৰ। তেওঁলোকে নিজ প্ৰেমিকৰ উদ্দেশ্যে প্ৰেম নিবেদন কৰি পত্ৰ লিখিছে। তৃতীয়তে, পত্যাখান পত্ৰিকা - একমাত্ৰ জাহ্নবীৰ পত্ৰ এই শ্ৰেণীৰ পত্ৰ। চতুৰ্থতে, অনুযোগ পত্ৰিকা - কৈকেয়ী আৰু জনাই নিজ নিজ স্বামীৰ কাৰ্যত অভিযোগ প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। মধুসূদনৰ 'বীৰাঙ্গনা' কাব্যৰ প্ৰতিটো অঙ্গনাৰ মাজেদি আধুনিক নাৰী জীৱনৰ প্ৰতিচ্ছবিক ফুটাই তুলিছে।

আধুনিক যুগত নাৰীৰ মনোভাব হ'ল সৰ্বপ্ৰকাৰ বন্ধনৰ পৰা মুক্তি লাভ কৰি নিজৰ অধিকাৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰা। যুগ যুগ ধৰি পুৰুষ শাসিত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত নাৰীৰ জীৱন আছিল বন্দিণীৰ নিছিনা। উনবিংশ শতাব্দীত গোটেই বিশ্বত নাৰী জাগৰণৰ যি উদ্যম দেখা দিছিল, 'বীৰাঙ্গনা' কাব্যৰ নায়িকা বিলাক আছিল সেই নৰ জাগৰণৰ আলোকেৰে আলোকিত।

'বীৰাঙ্গনা' কাব্যত শূৰ্পনখা বিধবা হৈও লক্ষ্মণৰ প্ৰতি আপোন অন্তৰৰ প্ৰেম নিবেদন কৰিছে। তেওঁক বিবাহ কৰাৰ ইচ্ছাৰ কথা জনাই পত্ৰ লিখিছে। ভাৰতবৰ্ষত বিধবা ৰমণীৰ পুনৰ বিবাহ ৰীতি নিন্দনীয় আছিল। উনবিংশ শতাব্দীত বিদ্যাসাগৰৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাত বিধবা ৰীতি আইন সিদ্ধ হয়। ঈশ্বৰ চন্দ্ৰ বিদ্যাসাগৰৰ দ্বাৰা অনুপ্ৰাণিত হৈ মধুসূদনে এই পত্ৰিকাৰ অবতাৰণা কৰে। বিধবা ৰমণীৰও যে নিজস্ব ইচ্ছা থাকে এই কথা শূৰ্পনখাৰ মাজত প্ৰকাশিত হৈছে। শূৰ্পনখাই ৰাজগৃহৰ সুখ শান্তি পৰিত্যাগ কৰি লক্ষ্মণৰ বনবাসী জীৱনৰ দুঃখ গ্ৰহণ কৰিবৰ কাৰণে প্ৰস্তুত। শূৰ্পনখাৰ মাজত আদৰ্শ প্ৰেমিকাৰ ৰূপ প্ৰকাশিত।

উৰ্বশী স্বৰ্গৰ অঙ্গনা, তেওঁ মত্যাৰ ৰজা পূৰ্বাৰ প্ৰতি আকৃষ্ট হৈছে। উৰ্বশী বীৰাঙ্গনা হ'লেও পূৰ্বাৰ প্ৰতি প্ৰেমত তেওঁৰ নিষ্ঠাৰ পৰিচয় পোৱা যায় "দেহ আঞ্জা, নৰেশ্বৰ, সুৰপুৰ ছাড়ি পড়ি ও ৰাজীব-পনে।" পূৰ্বাৰ যথার্থতে বীৰ, তেওঁ দৈত্যৰ হাতৰ পৰা উৰ্বশীক ৰক্ষা কৰিছে। এই বীৰত্বৰ প্ৰতি উৰ্বশীৰ আছিল অগাধ শ্ৰদ্ধা। এই শ্ৰদ্ধাই পিছত উৰ্বশীৰ অন্তৰত প্ৰেমাগ্নি ৰূপত প্ৰজ্বলিত হৈছে। উৰ্বশীৰ মাজেদি প্ৰেমৰ যি ৰূপকল্প প্ৰকাশিত হৈছে উপভোগ কৰাৰ অভিলাষ।

‘দ্বাৰকা নাথৰ প্ৰতি ৰুক্মিণী’ পত্ৰত ৰুক্মিণীৰ মাজেদি মধুসূদনে নাৰীৰ স্বাধীনভাবে নিজৰ প্ৰেম নিবেদনৰ অধিকাৰৰ মৰ্যদা দিছে। ৰুক্মিণীৰ ভাতা চেদিৰাজ শিশু পালন লগত ৰুক্মিণীৰ বিবাহৰ ব্যৱস্থা কৰে, কিন্তু ৰুক্মিণীয়ে এই ব্যৱস্থা মানি ল’ব পৰা নাই, কাৰণ তেওঁ মনে মনে দ্বাৰকা নাথ কৃষ্ণৰ প্ৰতি আসক্ত। সেই কাৰণে ৰুক্মিণীয়ে তাক উদ্ধাৰৰ কাৰণে কৃষ্ণক পত্ৰ লিখিছে। এনে অভিলাষৰ মাজত তেওঁৰ প্ৰেম নিষ্ঠাৰ পৰিচয় আছে। ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীত নাৰীৰ মাজত এনে মনোভাবৰ প্ৰকাশ লক্ষ্য কৰা যায়।

‘বীৰাঙ্গনা’ কাব্যৰ ‘দুগ্ধন্তৰ প্ৰতি শকুন্তলা’ পত্ৰত শকুন্তলাই ৰাজ ঐশ্বৰ্য প্ৰত্যাশা নকৰে। তেওঁ বিচাৰিছে কেবল মাত্ৰ দাসী ভাবত স্বামীৰ পদসেৱা কৰাৰ অধিকাৰ। কিন্তু এয়া তেওঁৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ বিনম্ৰ মাধুৰ্যৰ পৰিচায়ক। ‘কিঙ্কৰী কৰিয়া ৰাখ ৰাজ পদে’ কিন্তু আত্মমৰ্যদাৰ বিনিময়ত তেওঁ এয়া প্ৰত্যাশা কৰা নাই, তেনেহ’লে তেওঁ ৰাজৰাণী হ’ব বিচাৰিলেহেতেন, তেওঁৰ চিত্তৰ স্বাধীনতা আছে কাৰণে তেওঁ ৰজাক দোষাৰোপ কৰি কৈছে, ‘কেন ব্যাধ বেশে আসি বধিলে তাহাৰে, নৰাধিপ?’ তেওঁৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ কোমলতাৰ মিশ্ৰিত হৈছে জীৱনৰ মূল্যবোধৰ উপলব্ধি, নিজৰ অধিকাৰ ঘোষণা।

‘বীৰাঙ্গনা’ কাব্যৰ প্ৰতিটো পত্ৰৰ মূলভাব প্ৰেম। এই কাব্যৰ নায়িকা বিলাক আক্ষৰিক অৰ্থত বীৰাঙ্গনা নহয়, কিন্তু এই প্ৰেম প্ৰকাশত বিভিন্ন বাধা বিপত্তি উত্তৰণৰ প্ৰচেষ্টাৰ মাজত তেওঁলোকৰ বীৰাঙ্গনা ৰূপত পৰিচয় পোৱা যায়। এই বিলাক নায়িকাৰ মাজত ‘সোমেৰ প্ৰতি তাৰা’ পত্ৰত তাৰাৰ অৱস্থা সবতকৈ জটিল।

দেবগুৰু বৃহস্পতিৰ স্ত্ৰী তাৰাই স্বামীৰ শিষ্য সোমদেবৰ প্ৰতি প্ৰেম নিবেদন কৰিছে। বিবাহিত স্ত্ৰীৰ বেলেগ পুৰুষৰ প্ৰতি আকৰ্ষণ সমাজ নীতি বিগৰ্হিত। এফালে প্ৰেমৰ ঐকান্তিকতা, আনফালে সমাজ চিন্তা, এই উভয় বিষয়ে চৰিত্ৰটিক দ্বন্দ্ব মুখৰ কৰি তুলিছে।

সোমদেব গুৰু অৱস্থাত নিজৰ অন্তৰৰ অভিলাষ ব্যক্ত কৰাৰ অভিপ্ৰায়ে সোমদেবলৈ পত্ৰ লিখিছে, প্ৰথমতেই তাৰাৰ মাজত আপোন অৱস্থা সম্বন্ধে সচেতনতা লক্ষ্য কৰা যায়। “গুৰুপত্নি আমি তোমাৰ, পুৰুষত্ব।” উক্তি

আসনত থাকিও তেওঁ নিজকে সোমদেবৰ প্ৰেমিকা ৰূপত পৰিচয় দিবলৈ আগ্ৰহী। “ইচ্ছা কৰে দাসী হয়ে সেবি পা দুখানি।” মধুসূদনে এই দ্বিবিধ মনোভাবৰ সাৰ্থক ৰূপায়ণ কৰিছে। তাৰাই লিখিছে —

“কি লজ্জাঙ্গ কেমনে তুইৰে; পোড়া লেখনি, লিখিলি ও পাপ কথা,
- হায়ৰে কেমন।” (সান্যাল, ১৯৮৫ পৃঃ ৭) মধুসূদনে তাৰাৰ মানসিকতাক বাস্তবতাৰ উপৰত স্থাপন কৰিছে। তাৰাই নিজৰ অভিলাষক একেবাৰে অবদমিত কৰিব পৰা নাই। সেই কাৰণে তেওঁ মনৰ কথা প্ৰকাশ কৰিবৰ কাৰণে স্বতঃ প্ৰবৃত্ত হৈছে। উনবিংশ শতাব্দীত বাংলা দেশৰ নাৰীৰ মাজত ও এই ৰূপ আত্মবোধৰ পৰিচয় পোৱা গৈছিল।

বিদ্যাভ্যাসত সদা নিযুক্ত স্বামীৰ ওচৰত উপেক্ষিত হোৱাৰ ফলত তাৰাই সোমদেবৰ ৰূপ সৌন্দৰ্যৰ প্ৰতি আকৃষ্ট। এই আকৰ্ষণ অযুক্তিকৰ নহয়। কিন্তু তাৰা সামাজিক জীৱ এই কাৰণে তাৰাৰ মাজত সহজতে পাপবোধ দেখা দিছে -

‘হে স্মৃতি, কুৰ্মে ৰত দুস্মৃতি যেমতি
নিবায় প্ৰদীপ আজি চাহে নিবাইতে
তোমায় আত্ম প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ দুৰ্বাৰ আগ্ৰহত আপোন প্ৰেমক সৰ্বোপৰি
ঘোষণা কৰিছে -
‘দিনু জলাঞ্জলি;
কুলমানে তবজন্যে, - ধৰ্ম, লজ্জা, লয়ে।’
(সান্যাল, ১৯৮৫, পৃঃ ৭)

তাৰাই যেনে ভাবত আপোন কৰ্মধাৰা বিশ্লেষণ কৰিছে তাত তেওঁৰ প্ৰেমৰ একনিষ্ঠতাই প্ৰকাশিত হৈছে। তাৰাই সোমদেবৰ লগত বহুপূৰ্ব যুগৰ যোগ অনুভব কৰিছে। তাৰাই আপোন কৰ্মৰ মাজেদি প্ৰেমৰ পৰিচয় দিছে। প্ৰথম দৰ্শনতেই তেওঁ সোমদেবৰ প্ৰতি আকৃষ্ট হৈছে। সোমদেবৰ গুৰু গৃহৰ কাৰ্যৰ পৰিশ্ৰম লাঘব কৰাৰ কাৰণে তাৰাই গোপনে বহুতো কাৰ্য কৰি দিছিল। সোমদেবৰ কৰ্তব্য কৰ্ম সম্পাদনে দূৰলৈ গ’লে বিৰহ যন্ত্ৰণাত জৰ্জৰিত হৈছিল। সোমদেবে যেতিয়া গুৰুপত্নী হিচাবে সেৱা জনাইছিল, তেতিয়া

তাৰাই ভাবিছিল “তুমি প্ৰণপতি, মানভঙ্গ - আশে নত দাসীৰ চৰণে।” এনে ভাবত তাৰাই প্ৰচলিত সংস্কাৰক জয় কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰিছে। সোমদেবৰ সুখৰ কাৰণে তাৰা সোমদেবৰ শয্যাক কুসুমাতীৰ্ণ কৰিছিল। সোমদেবে কেতিয়াও তাৰাৰ অভিলাষ বুজিব চেষ্টা কৰা নাছিল। গুৰু পত্নী হৈও তাৰাই সোমদেবৰ ওচৰত ভিক্ষা আশা কৰিছে - “দেহ ভিক্ষা ছাৰাকপে থাকি তব সাথে দিবানিশি।” গুৰু পত্নী হৈ শিষ্যৰ ওচৰত নিজকে উৎসৰ্গ কৰাৰ মাজত যি পাপবোধ নিহিত আছে, সেই বোধেও তাৰাক পীড়িত কৰিছে, “জনম মম মহাঋষিকূলে, তবু চণ্ডালিনী।” তাৰাৰ মাজত প্ৰেমবোধ ইমানেই প্ৰবল যে তেওঁ সামাজিক বিধি-বিধানক অগ্ৰাহ্য কৰাৰ শক্তি লাভ কৰিছে। তাৰাই সোমদেবৰ ওচৰত সম্পূৰ্ণভাবে আত্মসমৰ্পণ কৰি কৈছে - “জীৱন মৰণ আজি তব হাতে।”

‘সোমেৰ প্ৰতি তাৰা’ পত্ৰটি বিশ্লেষণ কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে, তাৰাৰ প্ৰেমাকান্ধাৰ প্ৰকাশ এই পত্ৰৰ মূল বিষয়। ‘বীৰাঙ্গনা’ কাব্যৰ অন্য নায়িকা আপোন স্বামী অথবা অবিবাহিত নায়িকা বিলাকে আপোন প্ৰেমিকৰ উদ্দেশ্যে পত্ৰ লিখিছে। একমাত্ৰ শূৰ্পনখা বিবাহিত হৈও লক্ষ্মণৰ ওচৰত পত্ৰ লিখি প্ৰেম নিবেদন কৰিছে, কিন্তু শূৰ্পনখা বিধবা। সেই ফালৰ পৰা একমাত্ৰ তাৰাই স্বামী বৰ্তমান থকা অৱস্থাত পৰপুৰুষৰ প্ৰতি প্ৰেম নিবেদন কৰি সাহসৰ পৰিচয় দিছে। মধুসূদনে তাৰাক যেনে ৰূপত প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত কৰিছে, এই তাৰাই যেন পৰৱৰ্তী কালৰ বাংলা সাহিত্যৰ শৈবলিনী, চাৰুলতা, কিৰণময়ী ৰূপত আত্ম প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। তাৰাৰ মাজেদি মধুসূদনে নাৰীৰ স্ব-অধিকাৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ সাৰ্থক ৰূপ দান কৰিছে।

প্ৰাচীন ভাৰতত নাৰীয়ে স্বামীৰ আদেশক শিৰোধাৰ্য কৰি চলিছিল, তেতিয়া এই ধাৰণা প্ৰচলিত আছিল যে, ‘পতিৰ পূণ্যে সতীৰ পূণ্য’। কিন্তু ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীত নাৰীয়ে স্বামীৰ অনুচিত কাৰ্যৰলীক নিৰ্বিবাদে গ্ৰহণ কৰা নাছিল। কৈকেয়ী আৰু জনাৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ মাজত এনে প্ৰতিবাদী চৰিত্ৰৰ পৰিচয় পোৱা যায়। কৈকেয়ীয়ে ৰজা দশৰথক ৰামচন্দ্ৰক ৰজা ঘোষণা কৰাৰ আয়োজনক সমৰ্থন কৰিব পৰা নাছিল। ইয়াত যে ৰজাৰ সত্যভঙ্গৰ অপৰাধ আছে এই কথাও তেওঁ ঘোষণা কৰিছে। তেওঁ দশৰথক অধৰ্মাচাৰী বুলিও

উল্লেখ কৰিবলৈ এৰা নাই। ইয়াতে কৈকেয়ীৰ পত্নী ৰূপতকৈ মাতৃ ৰূপৰ পৰিচয় অধিক পোৱা যায়। 'নীলধ্বজৰ প্ৰতি জনা' পত্ৰত পুত্ৰ হত্যাকাৰী অৰ্জুনক স্বামী নীলধ্বজই যে সংবৰ্ধনাৰ আয়োজন কৰিছে তাক জনাই সমৰ্থন কৰিব পৰা নাছিল। তেওঁ নীলধ্বজৰ বিৰোধিতা কৰিছে।

'নীলধ্বজৰ প্ৰতি জনা' পত্ৰৰ বিষয় বস্তু মহাভাৰতৰ অশ্বমেধ পৰ্বৰ পৰা সংগৃহীত কুৰুক্ষেত্ৰ যুদ্ধৰ পিছত পাণ্ডৱে অশ্বমেধ যজ্ঞৰ আয়োজন কৰিছে। মাহেশ্বৰী পুৰীৰ যুৱৰাজ নীলধ্বজ জনাৰ পুত্ৰ প্ৰবীৰে যজ্ঞাশ্ব ধৰিলে অৰ্জুনৰ লগত প্ৰবীৰৰ যুদ্ধ হয় আৰু প্ৰবীৰ নিহত হয়। নীলধ্বজই পুত্ৰ মৃত্যুৰ প্ৰতিশোধ লোৱাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে অৰ্জুনৰ লগত সন্ধি কৰে আৰু তাক সম্বৰ্ধনাৰ আয়োজন কৰে। এই অৱস্থাত প্ৰবীৰৰ মাতা জনাই নীলধ্বজক এক পত্ৰ প্ৰেৰণ কৰে, পত্ৰত স্বামীৰ কাৰ্যৰ সমালোচনা কৰে। এইৰূপ সমালোচনাৰ মাজেদি মধুসূদনে আধুনিক নাৰীৰ স্ব-অধিকাৰ প্ৰতিষ্ঠাত গুৰুত্ব দিছে।

মধুসূদনে অত্যন্ত নাটকীয়তাৰ মাজেদি জনাৰ মনোভাবৰ প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে। জনা এফালে মাতা আনফালে স্ত্ৰী। সেই কাৰণে পুত্ৰ হত্যাকাৰী বিৰুদ্ধে প্ৰতিশোধ লোৱাৰ কাৰণে নীলধ্বজক জনাই ক্ষত্ৰিয়চিত বীৰ ভাবত উদ্ধুদ্ধ কৰিবৰ বাবে চেষ্টা কৰিছে। পুত্ৰ হত্যাকাৰীক উপযুক্ত শিক্ষা দান যথার্থ বীৰৰ কৰ্তব্য। সেই কাৰণে জনাই লিখিছে - "পাল মহীপাল ক্ষাত্ৰ ধৰ্ম, - ক্ষাত্ৰ ধৰ্ম সাধ ভুজবলে।" ৰাজ্যত উৎসৱ আয়োজনক জনাই ব্যঙ্গ কৰিছে, পত্ৰ হত্যাকাৰীক মিত্ৰ ৰূপত গ্ৰহণ কৰি নীলধ্বজই যি কাৰ্য কৰিছে জনাৰ ওচৰত সেয়া অত্যন্ত লজ্জা আৰু দুখৰ বিষয় অথচ নীলধ্বজৰ মাজত যথার্থ বীৰত্ব আছিল জনাই স্বামীক এই বীৰত্বৰ কথা স্মৰণ কৰাই দিছে —

“কেমন তুমি, হয় মিত্ৰভাবে
পৰশ সে কৰ, যাহা প্ৰবীৰে লোহে
লোহিত? ক্ষত্ৰিয় ধৰ্ম এই কি,
নৃমনি?” (সান্যাস, ১৯৮৫, পৃঃ ৫৬)

জনা নিজে বীৰভাবত উদ্দীপ্ত কাৰণেই স্বামীৰ বীৰত্বক তেওঁ উৎসাহিত কৰিছে আৰু নীলধ্বজৰ শত্ৰুৰ ওচৰত নিজক সমৰ্পণ কৰা কথাটো ভৱিষ্যতত

যে নীলধ্বজ 'কাপুৰুষ' হিচাবে জনাজাত হ'ব এই কথাও স্মৰণ কৰাই দিছে।

জনা একমাত্ৰ পুত্ৰৰ মৃত্যুত দিশহাৰা। পুত্ৰ হত্যাকাৰীৰ বধৰ মাজেদি তেওঁ চৰম শান্তি লাভ কৰিব বিচাৰিছে। সেই কাৰণে অৰ্জুন সম্পৰ্কে তেওঁ কটুক্তি কৰিছে। যি বেদব্যাसे মহাভাৰতত অৰ্জুনৰ গুণগান কৰিছে তাৰ সম্পৰ্কতও জনাই বিৰূপ মন্তব্য কৰিবলৈও কুঠাবোধ কৰা নাই, অৰ্জুনে যে ন্যায় নীতি অবলম্বন নকৰে তাৰ উদাহৰণও জনাই দিছে। ভীষ্মৰ শৰশয্যা, দ্ৰোণাচাৰ্য বধ, কৰ্ণক হত্যা প্ৰভৃতি কাৰ্যত অৰ্জুনে ন্যায়নীতিক গ্ৰহণ কৰা নাছিল। তেওঁ অন্যায় ভাবে প্ৰবীৰক হত্যা কৰিছে। সুতৰাং ন্যায় নীতিহীন অৰ্জুনক মিত্ৰ ৰূপত গ্ৰহণ নকৰিবলৈ জনাই যুক্তি দিছে।

জনা আপোন ক্ষমতাৰ সীমাবদ্ধতা সম্পৰ্কে সচেতন। গুৰুজনক গৰ্জন কৰা যে অনুচিত সেই সম্বন্ধে তেওঁ অবহিত, “গুৰুজন তুমি, পড়িব বিষম পাপে গঞ্জিলে তোমাৰে।” জনা বাস্তববোধ সম্পন্ন নাবীও। মধুসূদনে জনা চৰিত্ৰৰ স্বাভাৱিকত্ব বজাই ৰাখিছে। জনাই নিজক শক্তিহীনা বুলি জানে, নহ'লে তেওঁ নিজেই উপযুক্ত ব্যৱস্থা গ্ৰহণ কৰিলেহেঁতেন। “নাহি শক্তি মিটাই স্বৰলে এ পোড়া মনেৰ বাঞ্জা।” জনাই এয়াও জানে যে নীলধ্বজক উপদেশ দিব যোৱা বৃথা। কাৰণ তেওঁ সম্পূৰ্ণ ৰূপত পাণ্ডৱহঁতৰ ওচৰত অনুগত্য স্বীকাৰ কৰিছে। সেই কাৰণে জনাই ক্ষোভ প্ৰকাশ কৰি কৈছে - “মহাযাত্ৰা কৰি চলিল অভাগী জনা পুত্ৰৰ উদ্দেশ্যে”। জনাই জানে ক্ষত্ৰিয় কুলবালা আৰু ক্ষত্ৰকূল বধূৰ এই অৱস্থা অসহনীয়। “কেমনে এ অপমান সব ধৈৰ্য্য ধৰি?” জনা যথার্থতে বীৰাঙ্গনা এই কাৰণে এনে উক্তি কৰিছে।

শেষত জনাই অত্যন্ত সুকৌশলে তেওঁৰ আত্মবিসৰ্জনৰ প্ৰতিফলন এনে ভাৱত প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে যে, নীলধ্বজই যেতিয়া হস্তিনাপুৰৰ পৰা নিজ ৰাজ্যলৈ ঘূৰি আহি ‘কোথা জনা’ বুলি মাতিব, তেতিয়া উত্তৰিবে প্ৰতিধ্বনি ‘কোথা জনা বলি’।

জনা পত্ৰিকা বিশ্লেষণ কৰিলে দেখা যায় যে পুত্ৰ শোকাকুলা জনাৰ

বীৰত্ব ভাব এই পত্ৰিকাত প্ৰকাশিত। কৈকেয়ীয়েও স্বামীৰ কাৰ্যৰ সমালোচনা কৰিছে, তাৰ মাজত অভিমান থাকিলেও বজাক বীৰত্ব ভাবত উদ্দগু কৰাৰ কোনো প্ৰয়াস নাই। 'বীৰাঙ্গনা' কাব্যৰ কোনো নাৰীৰ মাজতেই এনে প্ৰতিবাদ বা সংগ্ৰামী মনোভাবৰ প্ৰকাশ পোৱা নাযায়। সেই কাৰণে জনা যথার্থ অৰ্থত বীৰাঙ্গনা। উনবিংশ শতাব্দীৰ নৱ জাগৰণৰ ভাবাদৰ্শত দীক্ষিত হৈ মধুসূদনে জনা চৰিত্ৰটো সৃষ্টি কৰিছে।

'বীৰাঙ্গনা' কাব্যৰ এঘাৰজনী নায়িকা আপোন অধিকাৰবোধ সম্বন্ধে সচেতন, এই অধিকাৰক প্ৰতিষ্ঠিত কৰাৰ কাৰণে তেওঁলোকে যেনে ভাবত পত্ৰ ৰচনা কৰিছে তাত তেওঁলোকক যথার্থতে বীৰাঙ্গনা ৰূপত অভিহিত কৰিব পাৰি।

পদ্ধতি : এই আলোচনা পত্ৰখনিত বিশ্লেষণাত্মক পদ্ধতি গ্ৰহণ কৰা হৈছে।

উপসংহাৰ : মধুসূদনে নাৰীৰ আত্মবোধ প্ৰতিষ্ঠাত যি আদৰ্শ 'বীৰাঙ্গনা' কাব্যত প্ৰকাশ কৰিছে, পৰৱৰ্তী কালত বাংলা সাহিত্যত তাৰ ক্ৰম বিকশিত ৰূপ দেখা পোৱা যায়। 'বীৰাঙ্গনা' তাৰা চৰিত্ৰ যেন ৰবীন্দ্ৰ নাথৰ 'নষ্টনীড়ৰ' চাৰুলতা আৰু শৰৎ চন্দ্ৰৰ 'চৰিত্ৰহীন' উপন্যাসৰ কিৰণময়ীৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ লগত সাদৰ্য্য লক্ষ্য কৰা যায়।

'বীৰাঙ্গনা'ৰ প্ৰতিটি চৰিত্ৰ দুৰ্জন মনোবল, স্বাধীন চিন্তা আৰু বলিষ্ঠ কৰ্ম প্ৰয়াসত মানবতাবাদৰ এক সমুজ্বল আৰু গৌৰবদীপ্ত প্ৰকাশ। অথচ অঙ্গনা বিলাকৰ আত্মিক মনোবল ভাৰতীয় ঐতিহ্যৰ সম্পূৰ্ণ অনুকূল। নাৰীৰ সাৰ্থকতা পুৰুষৰ নম্ৰ সহচাৰী ৰূপত নহয়, পুৰুষৰ সমব্ৰত ধাৰিনী ৰূপত। নৱ যুগৰ এই বাণী মধুসূদনৰ 'বীৰাঙ্গনা' কাব্যৰ সকলো নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ মাজেদি পৰিস্ফুট হৈছে। একবিংশ শতিকাত নাৰীৰ যি ক্ৰমবৰ্দ্ধমান প্ৰগতি পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে তাৰ শুভ সূচনা যেন আমি মধুসূদনে সৃষ্টি কৰা এই নাৰী চৰিত্ৰৰ মাজত দেখা পাওঁ। স্বতন্ত্ৰতাত দীপ্ত, স্বাধীন মনভাবাপন্ন চৰিত্ৰ বিলাকৰ মাজত ৰোপিত হৈছে যেন বৰ্তমান যুগৰ নাৰী স্বাধীনতাৰ বীজ।

সহায়ক গ্রন্থপঞ্জী :

- (১) চৌধুরী, ভূদেব, বাংলা সাহিত্যেৰ ইতিকথা দ্বিতীয় পৰ্যায়, কলিকতা
ঃ দে'জ পাবলিছিং ২০০৯।
- (২) বসু, বিষ্ণু, চিৰন্তন নাৰী, কোলকাতা : দে'জ পাবলিছিং ২০০৯।
- (৩) চট্টোপাধ্যায়, হীৰেণ, বীৰাঙ্গনা কাব্য, কোলকাতা : বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য
পৰিষদ।
- (৪) বন্দোপাধ্যায়, অসিত, বাংলা সাহিত্যেৰ সম্পূৰ্ণ ইতিবৃত্ত, কোলকাতা :
মডাৰ্ণ বুক এজেণ্টি প্ৰাইভেট লিমিটেড, ১৯৯৩।
- (৫) বন্দোপাধ্যায়, দাস ব্ৰজেন্দ্ৰ নাথ, সজনী কান্ত বীৰাঙ্গনা কাব্য, কোলকাতা
ঃ বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পৰিষদ।
- (৬) সান্যাল, ভবানী গোপাল, মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্তেৰ বীৰাঙ্গনা কাব্য,
কোলকাতা : মডাৰ্ণ বুক এজেণ্টি প্ৰাইভেট লিমিটেড, ১৯৮৫।