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NORTH FACE

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Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Projjwal Chandra Lama, Officer-in-Charge, Darjeeling Government College

The Journal, *North Face* is an interdisciplinary, peer reviewed and refereed academic journal of Darjeeling Government College. It is a noble initiative from the teachers in the academic field. It brings out research based articles/papers on diverse fields comprising of natural science, social science, humanities, commerce and economics, having significant contribution to the development of research and academic activities. Theoretical papers as well as hardheaded papers are welcomed the betterment of academic activities and of research field as well. The essence of journal is to hike up search knowledge with academic rigor.

From the Desk of Editor-in-Chief

It is with great honour and enthusiasm that I extend my gratitude for being entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the publication of North Face, the esteemed academic journal of Darjeeling Government College, for another year.

As we embark on the journey of the 2025 edition of North Face, I am reminded of the rich history and legacy that our college holds in the realm of scholarly publishing. Reflecting on our past endeavors, particularly the publication of the "Journal of Bengal Natural History", underscores our commitment to fostering academic excellence and advancing scientific research in our region.

North Face continues to be a platform that welcomes scholarly contributions from various disciplines. Shedding light on contemporary issues in Natural Science, Commerce, Humanities &

Social Sciences and offering insights into the way of life in the northern parts of India. While this volume focuses on peer-reviewed articles from the fields of Commerce, Social Sciences and Humanities, we remain dedicated to embracing diverse perspectives and facilitating meaningful discourse among our readership.

In today's rapidly evolving landscape of scholarly publishing, it is imperative that North Face adapts to meet the evolving needs and expectations of our authors and readers. As Editor-in-Chief, my foremost objective is to ensure that North Face maintains its flexibility while upholding the highest standards of academic rigour and integrity. By introducing innovative initiatives to our editorial and review processes, we aim to enhance the dissemination of cutting-edge research and contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

The dedication of our renowned editorial board and the commitment of our authors are integral to the success of North Face, I extend my gratitude to all the contributors for their invaluable contributions and invite researchers to continue submitting their work for consideration. Our rigorous peer-review process remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering excellence and scholarly advancement.

As we navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, I am confident that North Face will continue to serve as a beacon of academic excellence, inspiring breakthroughs and shaping the future of scholarly discourse. I extend my best wishes for a promising future to North Face and express my gratitude to all who contribute to its success.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication.
Warm regards,

(Dr. Projjwal Chandra Lama)
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Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

Challenges and Prospects of E-Commerce in India: An Analysis

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

Abstract

India's e-commerce sector is rapidly growing. This growth is due to increased internet use, smartphones, and digital payments. The market is worth approximately \$120 billion in 2024 and might reach \$350 billion by 2030, growing 20% yearly. Even with this growth, India's e-commerce market is only 1.9% of the global market, showing that there is much room for growth. Most orders, approximately 75%, are made on mobile phones, which is higher than the global average of 60%. Key factors driving growth include government programs such as Digital India and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) and changing consumer habits, especially in smaller cities. Important trends include local and quick delivery services, social commerce, direct-to-consumer brands, and the use of local languages and voice commands. There is also a focus on AI personalization and eco-friendly practices. However, this sector faces challenges such as delivery issues in rural areas, complex regulations, cybersecurity threats, payment fraud, tough competition, and profit concerns. There are growth opportunities in smaller cities, new local delivery models, direct-to-consumer brands, and international e-commerce. Big companies such as Flipkart, Amazon, and JioMart have led the market, with new players such as Meesho growing in social commerce. To keep growing, the sector must solve infrastructure problems, close the digital gap, ensure cybersecurity, and balance rules with innovation. The future of e-commerce in India depends on adapting to consumer needs and using new technologies to support growth in the digital economy.

Keywords: *E-Commerce*, *Mobile Commerce, Digital Payments, Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)*, *Logistics*, *Regulatory Challenges, Cybersecurity, Competition, Direct-To-Consumer (D2C) Brands*, *Social Commerce, Quick Commerce*, *Personalization, Sustainability*, *Cross-Border E-Commerce, India, etc.*

1. Introduction:

India's e-commerce sector is growing rapidly owing to new technology and changing consumer habits. Key trends include online shopping, mobile commerce, and social shopping (Akther, 2023). However, the industry faces challenges such as limited resources, complex infrastructure, regulatory issues, and strong competition (Akther 2023). A major development is the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), which aims to prevent monopolies by large companies and protect small retailers, who make up over 80% of India's retail sector (Dash et al., 2022). Although ONDC could help with future challenges, there are concerns about data privacy and security (Dash et al., 2022). To

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

succeed, e-commerce businesses in India should focus on personalized customer experiences, sustainable practices, and international sales (Akther 2023). Investing in infrastructure, better inventory management, and new technologies, such as drones and robots, can improve delivery efficiency and customer satisfaction (Gomes et al., 2023). By tackling these challenges and seizing opportunities, India's e-commerce sector can continue to grow and boost its economy. E-commerce has transformed businesses and shopping worldwide. In India, growth is driven by increased internet use, smartphones, and digital payments. Platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, and JioMart offer convenient shopping at high prices. However, the industry faces challenges, such as regulations, delivery issues, cybersecurity, and competition. Digital literacy, online trust, and urban-rural gaps are also concerns. Despite this, government support and technologies such as AI, blockchain, and AR offer new opportunities. This study examines e-commerce challenges, opportunities, and economic impact in India.

2. Conceptual Framework of E-Commerce in India:

E-commerce refers to buying and selling products online. These include shopping on the internet, paying digitally, and making electronic deals. In India, e-commerce has changed how businesses operate. This helps businesses and customers to connect online by removing distance barriers.

2.1 Important Features of E-Commerce in India:

i. Online marketplaces such as Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, and JioMart serve as platforms to facilitate both B2C (Business-to-Consumer) and C2C (Consumer-to-Consumer) transactions.

ii. Digital payment systems, including the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), mobile wallets such as Paytm and PhonePe, and credit/debit card transactions, facilitate cashless shopping.

iii. Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) brands, such as Mamaearth, Boat, and Lenskart engage in selling products directly to consumers through their websites or applications, thereby eliminating intermediaries in the distribution process.

iv. Social commerce refers to the practice of purchasing goods and services through social media platforms, such as Instagram and WhatsApp, as well as sales driven by influencers.

v. Hyperlocal and quick commerce services such as Blinkit and Zepto are designed to meet the immediate delivery needs of urban consumers.

vi. Government initiatives such as Digital India, the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), and Startup India are instrumental in fostering digital trade.

2.3 Advantages of E-Commerce to Consumers in India:

E-commerce has changed how people shop. This makes shopping easy, offers many choices, and helps to save money. The main benefits are:

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

2.3.1. Convenience and 24/7 Shopping: Online shopping is convenient because one can shop anytime without going to a store. It is open 24/7, so you do not have to deal with long lines, parking problems, or crowded spaces. You can also shop easily on your phone using apps and social media, such as WhatsApp and Instagram.

2.3.2. Wider Product Selection and Availability: People can buy products from other countries using sites such as Amazon Global and Nykaa Luxury. People in smaller towns and villages can obtain items that are not sold nearby. Online stores, such as Flipkart, which has over 150 million products, offer more choices than regular stores because they do not have space limits.

2.3.3. Competitive Pricing and Discounts: When sellers lower their extra costs, they offer better prices to buyers. Special discounts during events such as the Big Billion Days and the Amazon Great Indian Festival help save more money. Tools such as Google Shopping and PriceDekho help find the best deal.

2.3.4. Easy Price and Product Comparisons: Clear Information: Detailed specs, reviews, and unboxing videos on sites like YouTube. AI Suggestions: Personalized tips, like Amazon's "Customers who bought this..."

2.3.5. Doorstep Delivery and Quick Shipping: Using home delivery services for large items, such as furniture and appliances, saves time and effort. Quick commerce platforms such as Blinkit and Zepto deliver groceries quickly, often within minutes. Many platforms, such as Flipkart, offer easy and free return pickups with a ten-day return policy.

2.3.6. Secure and Cashless Payment Options: You pay in various ways. UPI apps such as PhonePe and GPay, credit or debit cards, EMI, and Buy Now Pay Later services such as Simpl and LazyPay. We keep your payments safe with secure gateways such as Razorpay and Paytm, and offer refund guarantees.

2.3.7. Access to Reviews and Community Feedback: Customer reviews provide helpful information from real users, helping them make better choices. Social proof is boosted by influencers showing products on Instagram and YouTube.

2.3.8. Subscription and Personalized Services: Subscription services offer regular deliveries of essential items, such as milk and pet food, at reduced prices. Loyalty programs such as Flipkart Super Coin and Amazon Pay provide reward points.

2.3.9. Eco-friendly and Sustainable Options: Electronic receipts contribute to waste reduction. Platforms, such as OLX and Amazon Renewed, provide cost-effective and environmentally conscious alternatives through refurbished goods.

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

2.3.10. Hassle-Free Gifting and Cross-Border Shopping: Digital gifts can be sent instantly with electronic gift cards from places such as Amazon. You can also shop internationally by buying products from global online stores, such as AliExpress and iHerb.

2.4 Advantages of E-Commerce to Suppliers in India:

E-commerce has changed how suppliers operate. This offers new opportunities for growth, improved efficiency, and reaching more markets. The main benefits for suppliers are as follows.

2.4.1. Wider Market Reach and Customer Base: Suppliers can sell more by using platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart to reach customers all over India or eBay and Etsy to reach international buyers. Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities can also grow by selling to rural and semi-urban areas that require more products. Online stores are open all the time, unlike regular stores, which have set hours.

2.4.2. Lower Operational Costs: Closing physical stores saves a lot of money in rent, utilities, and staff. Using direct-to-consumer (D2C) models, such as those of Mamaearth and BoAt, increases profits by cutting out middlemen. In addition, digital marketing, such as Google Ads and Facebook, and working with influencers, is a cheaper option than traditional advertising.

2.4.3. Efficient Inventory and Order Management: Automated systems such as ERP software (e.g., Zoho and SAP) help track inventory in real time. Drop shipping allows suppliers to sell products without keeping them in stock by using platforms such as Shopify. AI analytics can predict market trends, helping avoid having too much or too little stock.

2.4.4. Faster and Secure Payments: Instant settlement systems such as UPI, Razorpay, and Paytm help process payments quickly, unlike traditional methods that take longer. In addition, using escrow services and platform guarantees, such as Amazon's A-to-Z Protection, significantly reduces the chance of fraud.

2.4.5. Data-Driven Business Decisions: Customer insights involve looking at buying habits, likes, and personal details using tools such as Google Analytics and CRM systems. Personalized marketing uses advertisements based on past purchases to boost sales. Competitor analysis uses tools, such as Keepa, an Amazon tracking tool, to monitor competitors' prices and strategies.

2.4.6. Scalability and Business Growth: The first step in growing the business is to start small, such as opening an Instagram store. Then, a personal website is slowly added, and different marketplaces are joined. In the franchising and white-labelling methods, this means working with larger platforms, such as Nykaa's marketplace for beauty brands. For funding, doing well in e-commerce can bring money from investors, as shown on Shark Tank India.

2.4.7. Logistics and Fulfilment Support: Third-party logistics (3PL) companies such as Delhivery and Shiprocket handle storage, packaging, and shipping. Fulfilment by Amazon (FBA) means that

Amazon manages deliveries and returns for sellers. Hyperlocal networks, through quick commerce partners such as Blinkit and Dunzo, enable fast delivery.

2.4.8. Brand Building and Customer Engagement: To connect with customers directly, businesses use email and SMS marketing as well as loyalty programs. On social media, they build their brands on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. User-generated content boosts organic marketing by encouraging customer reviews and unboxing videos.

2.4.9. Government and Policy Support: The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) helps small suppliers compete with large companies. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) and related tax benefits make it easier for online sellers to follow tax rules. The Startup India Initiative provides financial assistance and advice to new business owners in e-commerce.

2.4.10. Sustainability and Innovation: Eco-friendly packaging saves money and attracts customers who care about the environment. Blockchain technology makes supply chains clearer and safer, as in Lulu Hypermarket's food tracking projects. Using artificial intelligence and automation, such as chatbots for customer service and AI-based pricing, greatly improves business operations.

2.5 Types of E-Commerce in India:

E-commerce in India is characterized by a variety of business models designed to address specific market demands. The primary categories are as follows:

2.5.1. Business-to-Consumer (B2C): Businesses sell products and services directly to consumers. Examples include online stores, such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Nykaa, as well as brand websites, such as Mamaearth, BoAt, and Tata Cliq. These sites offer products, discounts, and home deliveries. These are important in India's e-commerce market.

2.5.2. Business-to-Business (B2B): Businesses buy and sell products with other companies, such as wholesale and manufacturing. Examples include IndiaMART, Udaan, Jumbotail, and Alibaba, which are global B2B platforms used by Indian traders. These deals often involve buying large amounts, getting discounts, and having long-term contracts. This growth is due to the digitization of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

2.5.3. Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C): People buy and sell directly using online platforms. Examples include OLX, Quikr, Facebook Marketplace, CarTrade (for used cars), and Poshmark (for second-hand clothing). These platforms allow people to sell and trade items and conduct local deals.

2.5.4. Consumer-to-Business (C2B): People sell products and services to businesses. For example, freelancers use websites such as Upwork and Fiverr to offer digital services. Influencers and bloggers also generate money by promoting brands. This trend is part of the growing gig economy, in which freelance work is common.

2.5.5. Direct-to-Consumer (D2C): More brands sell directly to customers online, skipping middlemen. Examples include Wakefit, which sells mattresses, and Sugar Cosmetics. This method leads to higher profits and better control of the customer information.

2.5.6. Social Commerce: Social media platforms such as Instagram Shops, WhatsApp Business, and Meesho are used for buying and selling. These platforms often use influencers to boost sales and support regional languages.

2.5.7. Quick Commerce (Q-Commerce): Services like Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart deliver daily essentials quickly, usually in 10 to 30 minutes. They use special stores and local deliveries, and offer fast services.

2.5.8. Subscription E-Commerce: Recurring purchases occur often, such as every week, month, or year. Examples include Licious, which offers meat subscriptions, and Amazon's Subscribe and Save services. These models help retain customers and ensure steady income.

2.5.9. Emerging Models in India: O2O (Online-to-Offline) is when people look at products online but buy them in physical stores. Companies, such as Lenskart and Pepperfry, do this. Live Commerce involves shopping through live videos on sites such as YouTube and Instagram. Voice Commerce involves shopping using voice assistants, such as Alexa and Google Assistant. This trend is growing as more people use smart speakers.

2.6 Impact of E-Commerce in India:

E-commerce has changed how India works in terms of business, society, and technology. This has changed how businesses run and how people buy things. This affects many areas, helping them grow and innovate, but also brings new challenges.

2.6.1. Economic Impact:

i. Boost to GDP and Digital Economy: Digital payments make up approximately 4-5% of India's GDP. By 2030, this will increase to $350 billion. The rise in digital payments is indicated by the UPI, which has over 14 billion transactions each month in 2024.

ii. Job Creation and Entrepreneurship: The logistics, warehousing, digital marketing, and gig economy sectors, including delivery workers and content creators, provide over 12 million jobs. Regarding the growth of small businesses, 60% of sellers on platforms such as Flipkart and Amazon are small businesses. The Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) market is also growing rapidly, with over 800 Indian D2C brands such as Mamaearth, Boat, and Lenskart.

iii. Foreign Investment and Startups: Foreign direct investment in e-commerce has exceeded $20 billion. Companies such as Amazon and Flipkart have invested significantly. In addition, more than 100 Indian startups are worth more than US$1 billion. Some of these start-ups are Meesho, Ola Electric, and Zomato.

2.6.2. Social and Consumer Impacts:

i. Convenience and Affordability: In rural online shopping, 60% of new buyers come from smaller cities. Discounts during big sales, such as the Big Billion Days and the Amazon Great Indian Festival, help more people start shopping online.

ii. Financial Inclusion: UPI and digital wallets, such as Paytm and PhonePe, allow people to pay without cash. Buy Now, Pay Later Services, such as LazyPay and Simple, make things more affordable.

iii. Changing shopping Behaviour: Many people buy things through apps such as WhatsApp and Instagram. In addition, fast delivery services such as Blinkit and Zepto are changing how we shop for groceries by delivering in just 15 minutes.

2.6.3. Technological and Infrastructural Impact:

i. Digital Transformation: Artificial Intelligence and Big Data are used more and more to give personalized suggestions, like Amazon's "Frequently Bought Together" feature. In addition, shopping by voice, using tools such as Alexa and Google Assistant, is increasing by 25% each year.

ii. Logistics and Supply Chain Evolution: Services such as Dunzo and Swiggy Instamart help deliver items to the final destination. Simultaneously, the storage industry is growing rapidly. Companies such as delivery and reciprocket are expanding their services to smaller cities.

iii. Government Initiatives: The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) aims to make e-commerce more accessible to everyone. Programs such as Digital India and Startup India offer financial assistance to online sellers.

2.6.4. Challenges and Negative Impacts:

i. Threat to Traditional Retail: Approximately 30% of Kirana stores are seeing a drop in sales. This is because more people shop online than ever before. Big online companies offer large discounts that hurt small store owners.

ii. Logistics and Fraud Risks: Problems in delivering goods in rural areas are mainly due to bad roads and high costs. Online crime is also a major problem. About 42% of Indian online shoppers have faced scams, such as fake products and phishing.

iii. Regulatory and Tax Complexities: Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rules make it difficult for companies such as Amazon and Flipkart to follow the law. Small sellers also have trouble with Goods and Services Tax (GST) paperwork.

2.6.5. Future Trends and Opportunities: The use of Metaverse and Augmented Reality (AR) in shopping, like Myntra's "Try & Buy" feature, is a big step forward. The use of green packaging and carbon-neutral delivery is important in eco-friendly online shopping. In addition, personalized shopping using AI has become more common.

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

3. Literature Review:

Many researchers have studied the challenges and opportunities faced by e-commerce in India. The most important articles were reviewed to help with the current research. The results are as follows.

Raghunath and Panga (2013) reviewed the opportunities and challenges of e-commerce. E-commerce involves online buying and selling using the internet and electronic payments. The authors discussed e-commerce's global growth and benefits, such as cost savings, consumer choice, and time efficiency. They identified challenges, including ethical, legal, and infrastructural issues. The study examined future technologies, such as mobile services, emphasizing the need to address challenges in making e-commerce accessible.

Chaithralaxmi and Shruthi (2016) found that e-commerce in India offers lower costs, more choices, and convenience. While India has many Internet users, its e-commerce lags behind that of developed countries, but it is growing rapidly. Cash-on-delivery remains the preferred option, although smartphone shopping and rural consumers are increasing. The sector shows potential owing to rising internet use and living standards. However, challenges include limited internet access, infrastructure, cyber laws, security, and delivery problems. India's e-commerce growth depends on resolving these issues and meeting consumers' needs.

Dean and Khan (2016) found that more people are shopping online because it is easy to buy things from anywhere. From 2010 to 2011, online shopping in India grew by 12%, indicating that it might become a large online shopping hub. This study examines different online business models, shows how online shopping is different from regular shopping, and discusses its benefits, new trends, and problems. While online shopping helps many people, it also has legal and technical issues in India. As the world becomes more connected and technology improves, it is important to prepare for online shopping.

Suryawanshi (2017) studied India's e-commerce industry and found rapid online shopping growth due to improved technology and internet access. While people of all ages shop online, the challenges include security issues, payment trust, poor infrastructure, and weak cybersecurity laws. With increasing smartphone usage nationwide, the industry shows growth potential, but it needs government support and stronger laws for security and trust.

Iqbal and Ahmad (2017) examined the growth of e-commerce in India. E-commerce, the online purchase and sale of products, is crucial for Indian businesses. Their study highlighted benefits, such as lower prices and convenience, while noting challenges, including security issues, delivery problems, and low rural awareness. Using existing data, they found that e-commerce will grow in the hardware, electronics, and travel sectors, although addressing these challenges remains important for success.

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

Angadi (2017) analysed e-commerce in global business by comparing traditional and electronic models. This study examines the e-commerce types (B2B, B2C, C2B, and C2C) in India. Advantages include convenience, variety, and lower prices, while disadvantages include poor customer service and inability to inspect products. This study explores technical and security challenges while highlighting opportunities. Successes require IT security and accessibility.

Kumar et al. (2018) examined India's e-commerce growth and challenges in the global economy through a meta-analysis of industry data and expert interviews. The study found that India has advanced in broadband and 4G technology with the growth of e-commerce. However, the challenges include poor infrastructure, weak legal systems, and outdated e-commerce education. The study recommends government-private collaboration to improve infrastructure, legal policies, and education for e-commerce growth.

Murugan and George (2019) revealed that e-commerce has become popular for buying and selling worldwide. India's e-commerce sector grew by USD 795 billion between 2017 and 2018. This study uses a survey to describe e-commerce models, compare them with traditional commerce, and examine their pros, cons, trends, and challenges. E-commerce offers benefits to various groups and represents an important outcome of globalization and technological advancement.

Ahmad and Ghai (2022) looked at e-commerce issues from 2015 to 2022. E-commerce has transformed businesses by making them easier to access and offering a wider range of products. The main problems are security, competition, mobile use, shipping, payment systems, and trade rules. India had additional problems, such as bad infrastructure, payment options, and low Internet access. These issues affect how people buy goods, focusing on trust, delivery, returns, and product quality. Despite these problems, e-commerce is promising for new technologies, such as AI, blockchain, and virtual reality. This study indicates that technology can improve customer experience and growth, but there are limits, and more research is needed.

Khanna and Kalra (2023) examined e-commerce growth and challenges in India and Asia. They highlight how internet adoption, technology, and multichannel retailing drive e-commerce growth. This study discusses opportunities such as personalization and mobile optimization. Key challenges include cybersecurity, competition, delivery, and infrastructure barriers. Despite this, e-commerce continues to grow with the potential for businesses to overcome challenges.

Thete (2024) examined e-commerce in India, which is growing due to Internet use, smartphones, digital payments, and government support. India may become the second-largest e-commerce market by 2034, driven by convenience, trust, and prices. The benefits include lower costs and global access. The challenges include security, privacy, quality, and regulations. Government support through policies and infrastructure. Growth needs to address security and infrastructure issues.

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

Swaty (2024) stated that e-commerce helps rural areas grow economically by changing their business methods. Online platforms have shown great potential in rural economies. Local marketplaces enable the direct sales of farm products and handmade goods, connecting rural sellers with buyers. Mobile e-commerce facilitates transactions in areas with limited banking resources. This study examines the role of e-commerce in rural economic growth through online marketplaces and digital payments and demonstrates its impact on job creation and market access.

4. Research Gap:

This review identified several gaps in the research. Few studies have examined how e-commerce is used or the problems it faces in rural India. Little research has been conducted on how e-commerce growth affects the environment and government projects, such as the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). More studies are needed on Indian sellers who conduct business across borders and how new technologies such as AI, AR/VR, and blockchain are used in Indian e-commerce. Moreover, there is a lack of research on cybersecurity threats and solutions. Additionally, there is insufficient analysis of how e-commerce growth affects society, the challenges for small businesses, the impact on traditional retail and jobs, and the creation of new business models in Indian e-commerce.

5. Sope of the Study:

This study analyses online shopping growth in India, focusing on e-commerce trends and major players such as Flipkart and Amazon. Government initiatives include Digital India and ONDC. The key challenges are infrastructure, payments, GST rules, and FDI limits, whereas fake sellers affect trust. Growth opportunities have emerged from increased Internet adoption, smartphones, and social commerce. AI, blockchain, and UPI payments have shaped the market. This study analyses global comparisons and suggests growth through D2C brands.

6. Significance of the Study:

This study examines the digital economic transformation of India. E-commerce, projected at US$350 billion by 2030, drives GDP, employment, and financial inclusion. The challenges include investment rules, tax issues, and data laws. The market is facing cybersecurity risks and competition. Rural e-commerce shows potential, whereas D2C brands expand via influencer marketing. Government initiatives, such as the ONDC, impact the sector. This research guides policy, helps entrepreneurs, and identifies the growth in quick commerce. It examines e-commerce benefits while addressing privacy concerns. This study analysed AI shopping, blockchain technology, and rural e-commerce challenges.

7. Objective of the Study:

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

This study examines the challenges and opportunities associated with e-commerce in India and explores recent trends in the e-commerce sector along with its economic impact in India.

8. Research Methodology:

This study is both descriptive and analytical, and relies exclusively on secondary data. The data have been sourced from a variety of scholarly research papers, journal articles, and research-based publications authored by distinguished researchers and academics in India over the years. In addition, the researcher utilized web-based resources obtained from various websites. These secondary data were employed to examine the concepts, meanings, current trends, drivers, challenges, and opportunities in e-commerce in India as well as their economic impact.

9. Discussion and Results:

Global e-commerce sales reached $6.3 trillion in 2024. China leads with $2.2 trillion (35% of global sales) through Alibaba and JD.com, followed by the US at $1.1 trillion via Amazon, Walmart, and Shopify. Europe generates $800 billion through cross-border trade with Zalando and ASOS. Current trends include AI integration with ChatGPT-powered assistants and dynamic pricing. Social commerce grows by 40% annually through TikTok Shop and Instagram Checkout, while 60% of EU consumers prefer eco-friendly brands.

9.1 A Comparative View of the E-Commerce Growth of India and the World:

A Comparative View of E-Commerce Growth of India and the World during the year 2024

Table-1

Metric	India	World
Market Size	$120 Billion	$6.3 Trillion
Growth Rate	20% CAGR	10% CAGR
Mobile Shopping	75% of Orders	60% of Orders
Top Players	Flipkart, Amazon, JioMart	Amazon, Alibaba, Shopify

(Source: Statista)

Observation: The key observations from Table 1 are as follows. India's e-commerce market is worth 120 billion USD. This is much smaller than the global e-commerce market, which is worth 6.3 trillion USD. India accounts for only 1.9% of the global market. However, India's e-commerce is growing rapidly, with an annual growth rate of 20 %. This is twice the global average of 10%. This shows that digital technology is spreading rapidly in India. In India, 75% of e-commerce orders come from mobile devices compared to the global average of 60%. This highlights India's focus on the mobile Internet. The main players in India's markets are Flipkart, Amazon, and JioMart. Globally,

Amazon, Alibaba, and Shopify are the leaders. In India, local companies, such as Flipkart and JioMart, compete well with international companies, such as Amazon.

9.2 Market Size and Growth:

The online shopping market in India is growing rapidly. This is because more people use the internet, smartphones, and digital payments. This study examines how big the market is now and how much it might grow.

9.2.1. Current Market Size: India's e-commerce market is expected to be worth approximately $120 billion by 2024 (IBEF, Statista). It is the second-largest online retail market in the Asia-Pacific region, after China. The main parts of this market are Online Retail, with big companies such as Flipkart, Amazon, and Meesho valued at over $70 billion; Food and Grocery Delivery, with companies like Blinkit and Swiggy Instamart, valued at over $15 billion; Fashion and Beauty, with Myntra and Nykaa valued at over $25 billion; and Electronics and Appliances, valued at over $20 billion.

9.2.2. Growth Drivers:

i. Internet and Smartphone Penetration: The country has over 850 million Internet users, making it the second-highest in the world for Internet use. There are also more than 1.2 billion mobile users. The introduction of 5G technology has accelerated digital use.

ii. Digital Payments Revolution: By 2024, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is expected to handle over 14 billion transactions each month. The Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) market is set to grow by 35% each year.

iii. Government Support: The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) wants to make online shopping fair for everyone. Programmes such as Startup India and Digital India are helping people to start new businesses.

iv. Changing Consumer Behaviour: RedSeer states that 60% of new buyers come from the tier 2 and tier 3 areas. In addition, social shopping sites, such as Meesho and WhatsApp Shopping, grew by 50% compared to the previous year.

9.2.3. Future Growth: The market is expected to reach $350 billion by 2030, increasing by 20% each year. Quick Commerce (Q-Commerce) is a key area, likely to grow to over $75 billion, with companies like Blinkit and Zepto leading the way. Direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands are also expected to grow, reaching over $100 billion, including Mamaearth and Boats. Cross-border e-commerce is also set to expand, with Indian sellers on platforms such as Amazon Global and eBay expecting to double their exports.

9.2.4. Regional and Demographic Trends: In big cities, which make up 40% of sales, people want expensive electronics and fashion items. However, in smaller cities, which grew by 60%, people

preferred cheaper fashions and groceries. Most buyers (70 %) are young people from Generation Z and Millennials, and they like shopping on their phones. Women make up 45% of fashion and beauty sales, especially on sites such as Nykaa and Myntra.

9.2.5. Competitive Landscape: Flipkart, backed by Walmart, is a leader in the market, with 38% market share, especially in smaller cities. Amazon has 31% of its market share, and benefits from its prime service and many global sellers. JioMart uses local stores for quick local deliveries. Meesho is large in social commerce with over 140 million users.

9.2.6. Challenges Affecting Growth: Delivering goods to rural areas costs more. Rules for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) make things harder. In addition, quick commerce and direct-to-consumer (D2C) businesses struggle to make profits because they spend a lot of money.

9.2.7. Opportunities for Investors and Businesses: Local and regional shopping is growing with platforms such as Meesho and DealShare. In eco-friendly online shopping, consumers use green packaging and resale platforms. More people are also using AI and personalized technology, such as chatbots and voice tools, such as Google Assistant and Alexa.

9.3 Recent Trends in E-Commerce in India:

The e-commerce industry in India is rapidly changing. This is because of new technology, changes in how people shop, and strong competition. Here are the top ten new trends that are changing online shopping.

9.3.1. Hyperlocal and Quick Commerce (Q-Commerce) Boom: In cities, deliveries often occur within 15–30 minutes. Companies such as Blinkit (Zomato), Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart have led this trend using special storage locations. RedSeer states that this market will be worth more than $5 billion by 2025.

9.3.2. Social Commerce Explosion: Meesho has more than 140 million users. It, along with WhatsApp and Instagram Shopping, helps increase sales in smaller cities. In addition, live shopping on YouTube and Instagram is increasing by 65% each year.

9.3.3. D2C (Direct-to-Consumer) Brands Surge: Invest India says that more than 1,000 Indian brands, such as Boat, Mamaearth, and The Man Company, are expected to help grow a market worth $100 billion by 2030.

9.3.4. Vernacular and Voice Commerce: According to a report by Google-KPMG, 60% of people prefer using apps in their local languages. In addition, the use of voice search for shopping on platforms such as Alexa and Google Assistant is growing by 30% each year.

9.3.5. AI-Powered Personalization: Chatbots such as Myntra's "MyFashionGPT' give fashion tips. In addition, tools such as Amazon's "Just for You' use AI to set prices and suggest products.

9.3.6. Sustainable E-Commerce: Eco-friendly packaging, such as Phool.co's use of flower waste, is becoming more popular. In addition, refurbished marketplaces such as Amazon Renewed and Cashify grow by 40% each year.

9.3.7. Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC): A government-backed platform was ready to challenge Amazon and Flipkart's market control. The ONDC report states that over 5 million sellers will be involved by 2025.

9.3.8. Fintech & BNPL (Buy Now, Pay Later): Forty percent of Generation Z use Buy Now, Pay Later services like Splitit and LazyPay. In addition, Unified Payments Interface Autopay was used for subscriptions to services such as Licious and Netflix.

9.3.9. Metaverse and AR Shopping: Virtual try-on technology is being used more in fashion and in eyewear. Myntra has a "Try & Buy" feature, and Lenskart also uses it. Reliance involves exploring metaverse shopping with its "JioVerse" project.

9.3.10. Cross-Border E-Commerce Growth: A report by PayPal says that the number of Indian sellers on Amazon Global and eBay has doubled since 2022. The main products sold were handicrafts, spices, and jewelry.

9.4 Challenges of E-Commerce in India:

India's e-commerce sector is growing rapidly, but it is facing many problems. These problems have slowed their progress. The main issues for online businesses are as follows:

9.4.1. Logistics and Last-Mile Delivery Issues: High delivery costs in rural areas are worse because of poor roads, especially in smaller cities. In fashion e-commerce, return rates of 30%–40% make it difficult to earn money. In addition, insufficient cold storage for perishable goods causes significant problems for fast business operations.

9.4.2. Regulatory and Compliance Complexities: Rules against inventory-led models due to FDI restrictions hurt companies, such as Amazon and Flipkart. The GST system, with its different tax rates, confuses the small sellers. In addition, the DPDP Act of 2023 increases the compliance costs.

9.4.3. Payment Fraud and Cybersecurity Risks: According to the FIS Global Report, 42% of Indian consumers experience fraud, mostly from phishing scams. Fake product listings, especially in electronics, are also a problem in the online markets. UPI fraud is increasing, with more QR code scams during cash-on-delivery transactions.

9.4.4. Intense Competition and Price Wars: Amazon, Flipkart, and Reliance compete by offering large discounts, which makes it hard to maintain high profits. In addition, many direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands are struggling because 80% find it expensive to attract new customers.

9.4.5. Digital Divide and Trust Barriers: In rural areas, only 38% of villages have good internet access. About 35% of people still prefer to pay cash when they receive their delivery, which leads to

more returns. In addition, many older people and those not using technology are hesitant to use digital payments.

9.4.6. Profitability Challenges: In fast delivery businesses, such as Blinkit and Zepto, about 90% of companies lose money. This is mainly because delivery costs are high. In addition, people expect free shipping and do not want to pay for deliveries.

9.4.7. Talent and Skill Gaps: There are not enough skilled workers in artificial intelligence and blockchain technology, which makes hiring them expensive. Additionally, many small businesses struggle with digital cataloguing because they lack proper education and training.

9.4.8. Environmental Concerns: About 5-10% of returned items from sites such as Myntra and Amazon become electronic waste. New rules for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) have also made plastic packaging more expensive.

9.5 Opportunities of E-Commerce in India:

India's digital commerce sector exhibits considerable untapped potential across various industries. The following are the most promising growth opportunities.

9.5.1. Tier 2/3 Cities and Rural Expansion: The market in small towns is worth over $150 billion, as stated by Bain and Co. Apps such as Meesho and DealShare, which use local languages, grew three times faster than those in big cities. Agri-commerce startups, such as Ninjacart and WayCool, use technology to connect farms directly to consumers.

9.5.2. Hyperlocal and Quick Commerce 2.0: AI technology helps deliver services, reducing the time from 30 minutes to 15 min. New fast delivery models appear in areas such as medicine (e.g., 1 mg, PharmEasy), car parts (e.g., SparePartZone), and office supplies (e.g., Jumbotail).

9.5.3. D2C Brand Revolution: By 2025, more than 200 Indian direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands are expected to earn over ₹100 crore. Fast-growing areas include Ayurveda and wellness, with brands such as Kapiva and Vedix; sustainable fashion, with The Summer House and Doodlage; and pet care, with brands such as Heads-Up for Tails.

9.5.4. Cross-Border E-Commerce: Indian sellers make two to five times more profits in global online markets. They mainly export handicrafts (CraftsVilla and GoCoop), Ayurveda products (Kama Ayurveda), and jewelry (Bluestone and CaratLane).

9.5.5. Social Commerce Innovation RedSeer states that the market will grow to $70 billion by 2030. New platforms use fresh ideas, such as community selling (SimSim), video shopping (Bulbul TV), and group buying (Mall91).

9.5.6. Fintech-Enabled Commerce: Embedded financial solutions include new services such as small loans for small sellers, Buy Now, Pay Later systems that quickly change credit limits, and automatic payment systems for regular subscriptions.

9.5.7. Sustainable Commerce Models: Circular economy platforms use new business ideas to help the environment. These ideas include fixing old electronics, as in Cashify and ReFit. They also include renting clothes, such as Flyrobe and Stage3 offer, and delivering products without packaging, as Bare Necessities does.

9.5.8. AI-Powered Commerce: Generative AI can be used in new ways, such as creating custom catalogues, using data to cut return-to-origin rates by 30%, and improving voice shopping in local languages.

9.5.9. ONDC-Led Democratization: By 2026, over five million small- and medium-sized businesses will be included. New specialized areas include education, shopping, healthcare markets, and professional services.

9.5.10. Metaverse Commerce: Companies such as Tanishq and Raymond were early users of virtual showrooms. They used NFT-based loyalty programmes. Lenskart and Myntra offer AR features that allow users to try products before buying them.

9.5.11. Key Growth Enablers: Government programmes, such as PM Gati Shakti, have improved transport systems. The 5G technology enables AR and VR shopping. With 65% under 35 years of age, youth led to digital adoption. India's online shopping market has the potential of $ 400 billion in local and eco-friendly commerce. Companies that use local strategies and new technologies are expected to grow.

9.6 Key Drivers of E-Commerce in India:

The transformation of India's retail sector is driven by eight fundamental growth factors that reshape the e-commerce landscape:

9.6.1. Digital Infrastructure Boom: 5G technology is used by 900 million people, making it the second-largest technology in the world. This helps with the AR and VR shopping. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is important because it handles over 14 billion transactions each month, which is 85% of all digital payments.

9.6.2. Demographic Dividend: Approximately 65% of the people are younger than 35 years of age. Women make up 45% of the fashion and beauty purchases. In addition, more nuclear families have led to an increase in convenience in shopping.

9.6.3. Mobile Commerce Revolution: There are now more than 1.2 billion smartphone users. Many of them use 5G phones. Apps, such as Paytm and Swiggy, add shopping features. In addition, voice searches in local languages increased by 35%.

9.6.4. Government Catalysts: The ONDC Network is helping to break up big companies that control the market, thanks to DPIIT policies. In 2023, start-ups got $1.3 billion in funding. This was made easier by GST harmonization, which simplifies business operations across India.

9.6.5. Logistics Transformation: Hyperlocal warehouses facilitate deliveries 60% faster. Drone delivery has been approved for medical e-commerce applications. Automated sorting processes result in a 40% cost reduction.

9.6.6. Fintech Innovation: BNPL 2.0, which includes flexible credit limits such as those on Simpl and Lazypay. It also offers small insurance plans to protect against product damage. A test was conducted with a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) to use a digital rupee for business transactions.

9.6.7. Consumer Behavioural Shifts: Social commerce is shown by over 50 million transactions on WhatsApp. Approximately 65% of the respondents prefer eco-friendly brands. The subscription economy saw three times more repeat purchases.

9.6.8. Technological Leapfrogging: AI helps reduce the cost of obtaining new customers by 30%. Blockchain is used to fight for fake products. Companies such as Reliance and Aditya Birla created virtual stores in the Metaverse.

10. Findings of the Study:

Based on the above discussion, the key findings regarding e-commerce in India are as follows:

10.1. Market Size and Growth: By 2024, India's e-commerce market was valued at approximately US$120 billion. It is expected to reach $350 billion by 2030, an increase of 20% each year. Currently, India accounts for only 1.9% of the global e-commerce market. In India, 75% of online shopping is conducted on mobile devices, which is higher than the global average of 60%.

10.2. Key Drivers: The Internet and smartphones have made digital payments grow a lot, especially with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). Government programs, such as Digital India and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), have also helped this change. People are changing how they pay, especially in smaller cities. This is because many people are young, with 65% of the population under 35 years old.

10.3. Major Trends: Shopping close to home is becoming increasingly popular. Thus, more social shopping websites are being developed. Brands sell directly to customers. People shop more using local languages and voice commands. AI makes shopping more personal. There is a greater focus on eco-friendly online shopping. Financial tools such as Buy Now and Pay Later (BNPL) are common. Retailers use augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and the metaverse.

10.4. Key Challenges: Delivering goods in rural areas is challenging. There are also complicated rules regarding Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and data protection. Cybersecurity risks and payment fraud are also important issues. Strong competition and price wars reduce profits. The digital divide and a lack of trust in rural areas are major problems.

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

However, packaging waste is detrimental to the environment. In addition, there is a shortage of skilled workers in technical jobs.

10. 5. Opportunities: Smaller cities and rural areas grow significantly. Therefore, new ideas for local and rapid shopping are required. Brands that sell directly to customers are growing in number. Buying and selling between countries is also increasing. Social shopping is becoming more important. People use financial technology more often in online shopping. Thus, eco-friendly business models are popular. Finally, the use of artificial intelligence and virtual worlds in shopping is a major focus.

10.6. Competitive Landscape: The e-commerce industry is mostly run by large companies, such as Flipkart, Amazon, and JioMart. New social commerce companies such as Meesho have also become popular. The ONDC project aims to make e-commerce easier for everyone to use.

11. Limitations of the Study:

This study mainly used information from previously published sources and did not collect new data. Therefore, it might not have the latest information that new research methods, such as surveys, could provide. This study describes and analyzes existing data but does not include new research, which limits how deeply it can explore some topics. In addition, since it covers many aspects of e-commerce in India, it might not go into detail on specific issues. Because it relies on existing information, it does not create new data. These are the limitations of using only secondary data, which have both advantages and disadvantages for the study's conclusions.

12. Conclusion:

The e-commerce sector in India is growing rapidly. It is expected to reach US$350 billion by 2030, with a growth rate of 20% each year. However, it still constitutes only 1.9% of the global market, so there is room for growth. Most orders (75%) come from mobile devices, which is higher than the global average. Thus, India is a mobile-first market. Changes in consumer behavior due to increased Internet access and digital payments are changing shopping habits, especially in smaller cities. New trends include local commerce, social selling, direct-to-consumer brands, local language interfaces, and AI-driven personalization. Government programs like Digital India and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) are helping more people access e-commerce. Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented and virtual reality, blockchain, and voice commerce are improving user experience and operations. There is also a focus on sustainable practices due to environmental concerns. Challenges like delivery in rural areas, complex regulations, cybersecurity risks, and competition remain. Financial technology solutions, such as Buy Now, Pay Later and the Unified Payments Interface, make transactions easier and reach more consumers. Despite these challenges, the future appears good for this sector. Technology, favorable demographics, and

Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

supportive policies will help it grow. To keep growing, it is important to improve infrastructure, increase digital literacy, ensure cybersecurity, and balance regulation with innovation. The sector's ability to adapt to consumer preferences and use new technologies is key to its long-term success and impact on India's digital economy.

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Dr. Jyotirmoy Koley, Darjeeling Government College, jyotirmoykoley@gmail.com

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Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

From Self-Help to Collective Empowerment: Institutional Patterns of Cooperatives in Darjeeling

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

Abstract

The study starts by listing the different types of cooperatives that are active in Darjeeling. These include housing cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, dairy cooperatives, producer's agricultural cooperatives, federated Self-Help Group (SHG) cooperatives, agricultural cooperatives, and multipurpose cooperatives. Each type serves a different group of people and has a different economic purpose. These groups include small business owners, tribal communities, marginal farmers, and rural women.

One of the primary topics of the paper is the differentiation between active (working) and inactive (non-working) cooperatives. Some cooperatives have prospered due to strong community involvement, competent leadership, and institutional support, while others have failed due to issues like inadequate management, a lack of transparency, dwindling membership, and a lack of outside funding. In order to revive non-performing cooperatives, the study investigates these problems and suggests ways to enhance governance and policy intervention. It concludes that prosperous cooperatives have greatly enhanced rural livelihoods, decreased reliance on outside funding, and encouraged domestic business ventures. Notably, SHG-clustered cooperatives have increased the economic, leadership, and social mobility of women.

The study ends by pointing out that the district's cooperative societies are in two different states: some have become strong economic institutions, while others are still dormant and not being used. To bring the cooperative movement back to life in Darjeeling, government agencies, cooperative leaders, civil society groups, and community members need to work together. With the right reforms and support, cooperatives can become stronger and more open to everyone, making them better tools for changing the economy and society in the region.

Keywords: Cooperatives, Self-Help Groups, Working, Rural livelihoods, Reforms.

Introduction

As of March 2025, India has a total of 8,42,483 registered cooperative societies (Ministry of Cooperation, 2025). The cooperative movement in India began in 1904 with the enactment of the Cooperative Credit Societies Act. Since then, cooperatives have played a significant role in promoting

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

economic development and social welfare by working collaboratively towards a better tomorrow (Dutt, 2018; Kumar et al., 2015). In recent years, cooperatives in India have been brought under the administrative umbrella of the Ministry of Cooperation, which is responsible for the formulation, management, and execution of government policies related to the cooperative sector (Reddy & Yashoda, 2024).

In the state of West Bengal, there are over 30,000 registered cooperative societies functioning under the West Bengal Cooperation Directorate (Government of West Bengal, 2024). This Directorate comprises several important branches: the Registration Department, Audit Department, Cooperative Union, and Cooperative Banks. It has a structured presence across all districts to facilitate the registration, implementation, and monitoring of cooperative activities and policies.

In the Darjeeling district, the cooperative movement traces its origins to the Darjeeling Post and Telegraph Co-operative Credit Society Ltd., which was registered on 24th May 1925 under the West Bengal Cooperation Directorate (Cooperation Directorate, Darjeeling, 2025). Since then, cooperatives have continued to serve as vital institutions for credit facilitation and socio-economic upliftment. As of now, there are 725 registered cooperatives in the Darjeeling district under the West Bengal Cooperation Directorate.

Cooperatives play a vital role in promoting inclusive socio-economic development in the Darjeeling district, a region characterized by its hilly terrain, agro-based economy, and cultural diversity. In an area where access to formal employment and financial services is often limited due to geographic and infrastructural challenges, cooperatives act as grassroots institutions that empower communities, promote self-reliance, and enable collective bargaining (Kharel, 2024; Wenner, 2020). Darjeeling's economy relies heavily on tea, agriculture, horticulture, livestock, and tourism. Cooperatives in the district contribute significantly to these sectors by organizing small and marginal farmers, women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs), artisans, and local entrepreneurs. They facilitate access to credit, inputs, training, and markets (Pradhan, 2018). Notably, multipurpose, credit, dairy, and SHG-clustered cooperatives have enabled communities to engage in income-generating activities such as organic farming, beekeeping, tea honey production, and homestays.

Moreover, cooperatives have become critical instruments of rural development under the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA). They not only contribute to poverty alleviation and employment generation but also foster democratic participation and social cohesion (Ghosh et al., 2023). By

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

operating on principles of mutual help and democratic management, cooperatives strengthen community resilience, especially in remote and underdeveloped areas of the district (Anupama, 2016).

In recent years, the clustering of SHGs into cooperatives and the involvement of women and youth in cooperative enterprises have further increased their relevance. Thus, cooperatives in Darjeeling district are not merely economic entities but pivotal agents of social transformation, local empowerment, and sustainable development.

The primary objective of this research is to study the impact of cooperatives in Darjeeling district. The study aims to explore the types of cooperatives registered over time, analyze the trends in the increase or decline of specific cooperative types, examine the sectoral distribution of cooperatives, and evaluate their socio-economic effects on the region. The data for this research has been collected from the Cooperation Directorate, Darjeeling District. Where necessary, supplementary data has been collected through informal interviews and interactions with cooperative officials and members.

Review of Literature

According to Kumar et al. (2015), cooperatives have the capacity to unite their members and inspire them to pursue sustainable means of subsistence. However, if cooperatives want to adopt the successful model and ensure the livelihoods of their members, they need more support. Examining the cooperative's policies and procedures is also essential to encourage the variety of activities required to improve rural livelihoods and allow for flexibility to suit local circumstances (Kumar et al., 2015). Anupama (2016), social welfare cooperative societies or labor contract cooperative societies are appropriate for constructing infrastructure, especially economic infrastructure, under the current framework. The researcher emphasizes the value of cooperatives operating in the infrastructure sector. Although an infrastructure co-operative society may be registered under the social welfare co-operative category, he finds that a new category for infrastructure co-ops that is similar to the tourism co-op category would encourage co-ops to take a more active role in infrastructure development (Anupama, 2016).

In his research, Dutt (2018) claimed that cooperative law plays a crucial role in laying the groundwork and guiding the cooperative movement in the right directions. The legal framework is a key element and is necessary to guarantee the sustainability of the cooperatives. Since the country's independence, numerous acts have been passed to comply with cooperatives at the local and state levels. The report highlights how urgent it is to establish clear guidelines and rules to protect members' needs as well as

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

those of the poor and destitute. A growth trajectory that bypasses India's rural sector is unlikely to succeed. (Dutt, 2018).

In a paper titled "Cooperatives – Marketing Role in Rural Development," Pradhan, P. (2018) highlighted the crucial marketing roles that cooperatives play in rural economies. The paper examines how cooperatives aid in product aggregation, branding, packaging, and direct-to-consumer sales, thereby increasing the income of farmers and artisans, with a particular focus on rural areas such as the Darjeeling Hills. In order to optimize cooperatives' marketing potential, the report also emphasizes the necessity of government assistance, infrastructure, and training. Understanding how cooperatives can increase rural producers' access to markets and economic opportunities depends heavily on Pradhan's observations (Pradhan, P. 2018).

Wenner, M. (2020) examines how producer cooperatives in Darjeeling provide a more sustainable and equitable option to the conventional plantation-based tea economy in his paper "Towards an Alternative Indian Tea Economy: Examples of Producer Cooperatives from Darjeeling" that was published in Economic and Political Weekly. He emphasizes how these cooperatives provide small tea growers with autonomy in decision-making, ownership of production, and collective bargaining power. The study highlights how cooperative models can support fair trade, ecological balance, and socioeconomic empowerment for underprivileged communities in the hills while also challenging the exploitative dynamics of plantation systems from the colonial era. Wenner's work is especially helpful in highlighting Darjeeling's regional cooperative innovations (Wenner, M. 2020).

The study "Economic Impact of Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS): Findings from Nadia District of West Bengal" was carried out by Ghosh, P. K., Dutta, J., & Mitra, A. (2023) and published in Economic Affairs. The income growth and livelihood security of PACS-affiliated farmers are examined by the researchers using empirical data. Their results show that because PACS members purchase inputs collectively and share infrastructure, they typically have better access to credit, lower transaction costs, and higher productivity. Despite concentrating on a different district, the results offer significant operational and policy lessons relevant to the Darjeeling cooperative movement (Ghosh, P. K., Dutta, J., & Mitra, A. 2023).

In their paper "Cooperative Societies for Sustaining Rural Livelihood: A Recent Literature Review" that was published in the Indian Journal of Natural Sciences in 2024, Reddy, E. E., & Yashoda, K. provide a thorough analysis of cooperative models throughout India. The study details the roles that cooperatives

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

play in marketing, agro-processing, banking, dairy, and creating jobs. Gaps in member participation, accountability, and governance are also identified. In order to make cooperatives sustainable over the long term, their review recommends increased training, policy support, and digitization. This paper offers a framework for analyzing the unique dynamics of Darjeeling cooperatives at the national level (Reddy, E. E., & Yashoda, K. (2024). In the Journal of Durgalaxmi, Kharel, T. R. (2024) wrote a study titled "The Role of Cooperative on the Socio-Economic Growth and Stability." This global study explores how cooperatives foster inclusivity, mutual support, and shared ownership, all of which contribute to long-term economic stability. The study highlights best practices in community engagement, capacity building, and governance while drawing on case studies from various developing nations. Despite having a wider focus, it provides theoretical and practical tools that are directly related to bolstering cooperatives in Darjeeling's socioeconomic context (Kharel, T. R. 2024).

Research Methodology

The cooperative landscape in Darjeeling District is thoroughly examined in this study using a descriptive and analytical research design. Documenting and presenting the current structure, classifications, and operational state of diverse cooperative societies is the goal of the descriptive component of the study. This includes a thorough explanation of how they are distributed among blocks, types, and operational statuses, such as liquidation, non-working, or working.

In order to identify underlying trends, relationships, and sectoral patterns, the analytical component of the study focuses on analyzing this data using the proper statistical tools. By using this method, the study seeks to determine which sectors are more susceptible to failure or inactivity and to comprehend the relative performance of various cooperative types. This approach guarantees that the study not only provides a description of the cooperative sector but also yields significant insights that can guide policy choices and real-world enhancements.

Research Objectives

- To categorize the different types of cooperatives functioning in Darjeeling District.
- To analyze their status—working, non-working, and under liquidation.
- To assess the failure rate of cooperatives across different sectors.

Every available piece of information about cooperatives operating in the Darjeeling District has been taken into account. Agricultural marketing, cold storage, urban credit and Mahila cooperatives, horticulture, primary and wholesale, engineers, labor, housing, service, large area multipurpose, rural credit, multipurpose, industrial, transportation, primary agricultural credit societies, Sangha,

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

Mahasangha, employees' credit, and farmers' producer cooperatives are among the cooperatives (Cooperation Directorate, Darjeeling, 2025).

Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the data after it was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Block-wise and type-wise distributions have been compared using cross-tabulation. Bar graphs have been used to visually represent sector-by-sector breakdown and cooperative status. These resources aid in making sense of the dataset and improve the interpretation of its patterns.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The dataset includes a comprehensive list of cooperative societies across various blocks of Darjeeling District. The blocks are Bijanbari, Sukhia Pokhri, Mirik, Naxalbari, Khoribari-Phansideva, Kurseong, Siliguri Circle, Darjeeling Sadar, Darj Pulbazar, Rangli-Rangliot, Matigara and Jorebungalow. These cooperatives span a wide range of types such as Agricultural marketing, cold storage, Urban credit and mahila cooperatives, horticulture, Primary and wholesale, engineer, labour, housing, service, large area multipurpose, rural credit, multipurpose, industrial, transport, primary agricultural credit societies, sangha, mahasangha, employees credit, farmers producer cooperatives. The diversity reflects the socio-economic and geographical complexity of the district, with cooperatives playing a vital role in both rural and semi-urban areas.

A total of 725 total cooperatives were analyzed in this study. Among these, the most common types were Employees Credit Cooperatives Societies, followed by Sangha Bahudeshiya Mahila Prathamik Sahakari Samity. The classification reveals that financial sectors dominate the cooperative structure, indicating their critical role in local economic development.

1. Table listing the types of cooperatives and number of cooperatives registered.

No	Type of Cooperatives	Number of Registered Cooperatives
1	Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Society ltd.	7
2	Cold storage and Agro Processing Cooperatives	2
3	Urban & Mahila Credit Co-operative Society ltd.	7
4	Horticulture Cooperatives	9
5	Consumers' Co-operative Stores ltd.	31
6	Engineers' Co-operative Society ltd.	60
7	Labour Contract & Construction Society Ltd.	58

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8	Co-operative Housing Society ltd.	58
9	Service Co-operative Society Ltd.	16
10	Large area Multipurpose Cooperative Societies	6
11	Rural Credit Co-operative Society Ltd.	4
12	Multipurpose Co-operative Society Ltd.	12
13	Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd	64
14	Transport Co-operative society ltd.	24
15	Primary Agricultural Credit Societies Ltd.	57
16	Bahudeshiya Mahila Prathamik Sahakari Samity Ltd.	92
17	Mahila Mahasangha Central Co-operative Society Ltd.	9
18	Employees Credit Cooperative Societies	187
19	Others	22

Source : Cooperation Directorate, Darjeeling Range, Darjeeling
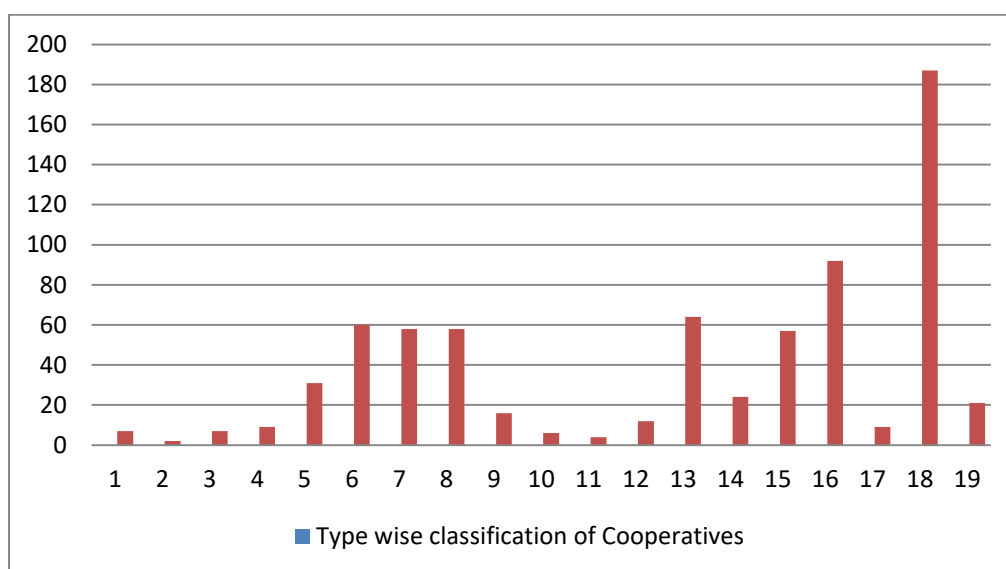
The cooperatives are unevenly distributed across the district's blocks. For instance, blocks like **Siliguri Circle** and **Darjeeling (Sadar)** have a relatively higher concentration of cooperatives, possibly due to better connectivity and administrative infrastructure. In contrast, blocks such as Naxalbari, Mirik have fewer cooperatives, which may indicate either a lack of promotion or geographical constraints.

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

2. Table showing the number of registered cooperatives block wise.

No.	BLOCK	Number of Registered Cooperatives
1	Bijanbari	54
2	Mirik	29
3	Naxalbari	28
4	Khoribari-Phansideva	55
5	Kurseong	71
6	Siliguri Circle	191
7	Darjeeling Sadar	102
8	Darjeeling Pulbazar	35
9	Rangli-Rangliot	48
10	Matigara	37
11	Jorebungalow-Sukhiapokhari	75

Source : Cooperation Directorate, Darjeeling Range, Darjeeling
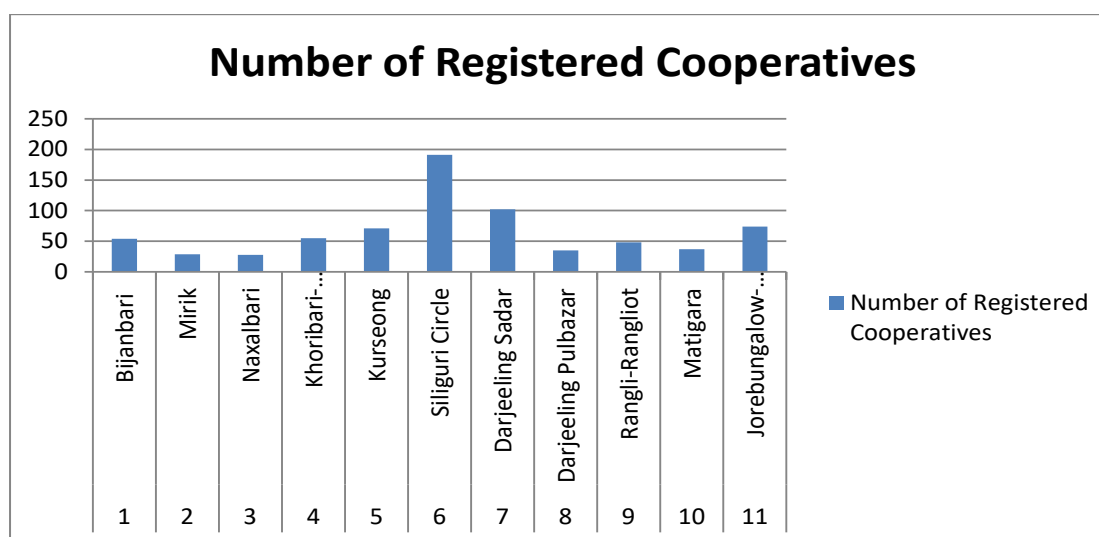
An important aspect of the analysis was to assess the current operational status of cooperatives. It was found that only **55%** of the cooperatives are currently working, while **42%** are non-working and **3%** are under liquidation. This shows a concerning trend, particularly in sectors like Housing, Industrial Transport Co-operative society ltd, where high failure rates were noted.

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

3. Table showing the decade wise registration of cooperatives, working status and success rate.

Year	No of Registration	Working	Success Rate
1921-1930	2	2	100%
1931-1940	2	2	100%
1941-1950	2	1	50%
1951-1960	19	7	37%
1961-1970	53	22	42%
1971-1980	103	35	34%
1981-1990	122	24	20%
1991-2000	130	53	41%
2001-2010	77	52	68%
2011-2020	174	161	93%
2021-2025	41	41	100%

Source : Cooperation Directorate, Darjeeling Range, Darjeeling

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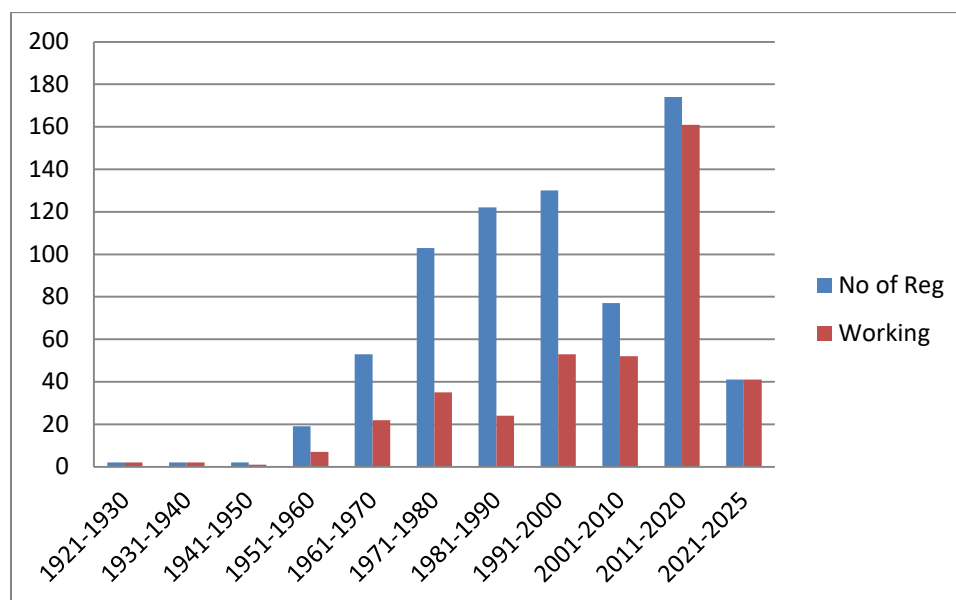
Success Rate

The data reflects the historical progression of cooperative societies over more than a century, highlighting trends in registrations, operational status, and success rates.

A. Early Phase (1921–1950)

The number of registrations was very low (2 societies per decade until 1940, and 2 more in the 1940s). Success rates in the first two decades were 100%, indicating strong sustainability in the formative years. A sharp decline occurred in the 1940s (50%), likely due War impacts and economic instability.

B. Expansion Phase (1951–1980)

Massive growth began in the 1950s (19 registrations), continuing in the 1960s (53) and peaking in the 1970s (103). Despite the growth, success rates fell from 37% (1950s) to 34% (1970s), suggesting quantity over quality and possible resource strain. The decline may be linked to policy expansion without adequate support systems.

C. Saturation & Decline Phase (1981–2000)

Registrations remained high (122 in the 1980s and 130 in the 1990s), but success rates dropped to a historic low of 20% in the 1980s before partially recovering to 41% in the 1990s. This period may reflect poor management, lack of market linkage, political interference, and weaker member participation.

D. Recovery Phase (2001–2020)

The 2000s saw a decline in registrations (77), but success rates improved significantly to 68%. In the 2010s, registrations peaked again (174), and success rates jumped to 93%, indicating better governance,

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

training, and financial support through modern cooperative policies and integration with Self Help Groups (SHGs).

E. Modern Phase (2021–2025)

With 41 registrations in just five years, all are reported working (100% success rate). This suggests selective registration, stronger institutional support, improved technology adoption, and better market linkages. The influence of digitization, e-commerce platforms, and government-backed schemes is likely strong in this era.

4. Table showing the status of cooperatives type wise –working, non-working and under liquidation.

No	Type wise classification of Cooperatives	Total	W	NW	UL	% Decrease
1	Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Society ltd.	7	3	3	1	57.14
2	Cold storage and Agro Processing Cooperatives	2	1	0	1	50
3	Urban & Mahila Credit Co-operative Society ltd.	7	6	1	0	14.28
4	Horticulture Cooperatives	9	2	7	0	77.77
5	Consumers' Co-operative Stores ltd.	31	9	12	10	70.96
6	Engineers' Co-operative Society ltd.	60	12	47	1	80
7	Labour Contract & Construction Society Ltd.	58	19	38	1	67.24
8	Co-operative Housing Society ltd.	58	4	54	0	93.10
9	Service Co-operative Society Ltd.	16	13	3	0	18.75
10	Large area Multipurpose Cooperative Societies	6	6	0	0	0
11	Rural Credit Co-operative Society Ltd.	4	4	0	0	0
12	Multipurpose Co-operative Society Ltd.	12	9	3	0	25
13	Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd	64	1	62	1	98.43
14	Transport Co-operative society ltd.	24	1	23	0	95.83
15	Primary Agricultural Credit Societies Ltd.	57	49	6	2	14.03
16	Bahudeshiya Mahila Prathamik Sahakari Samity Ltd.	92	92	0	0	0
17	Mahila Mahasangha Central Co-operative	9	9	0	0	0

	Society Ltd.				
18	Employees Credit Cooperative Societies	187	153	34	0	18.18
19	Others	22	7	12	3	71.42

Source : Cooperation Directorate, Darjeeling Range, Darjeeling
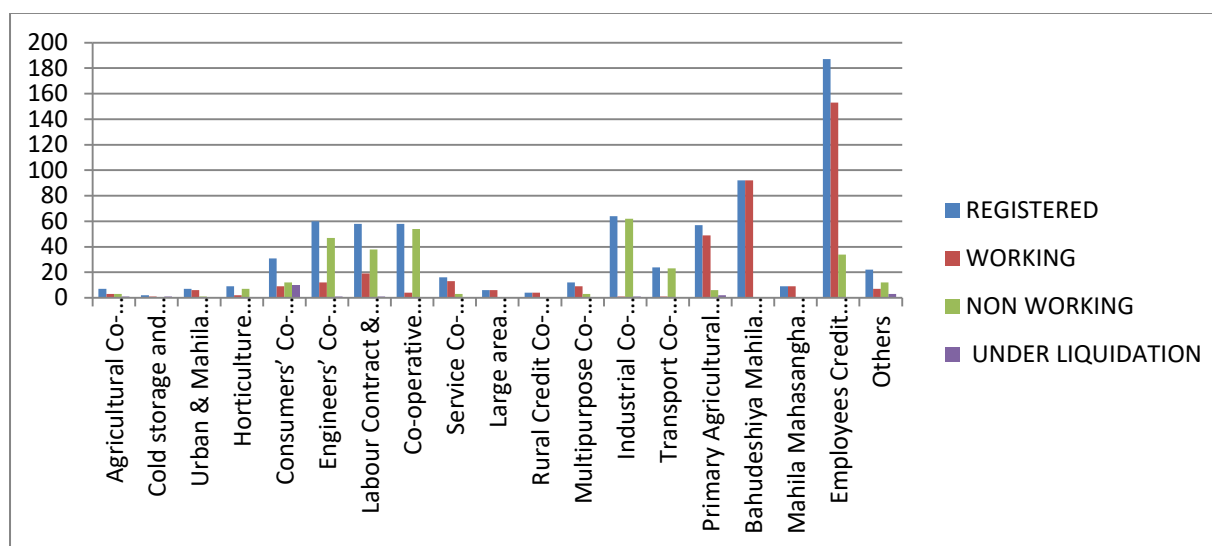
There are notable differences in performance and sustainability when cooperatives are categorized across different sectors. The concerning rate of decline in some categories is among the most startling findings. With 98.44% and 95.83% of them either non-operational or in liquidation, respectively, Industrial Cooperative Societies and Transport Cooperative Societies have suffered significant setbacks. At 93.10% and 80%, respectively, Cooperative Housing Societies and Engineers' Cooperative Societies also exhibit high non-performance rates. These numbers show that capital-intensive cooperatives and those that rely significantly on infrastructure, technical know-how, or extensive coordination are on the decline. On the other hand, women-led cooperatives emerge as a clear success story. Both the Bahudeshiya Mahila Prathamik Sahakari Samity Ltd. and the Mahila Mahasangha Central Co-operative Society Ltd. report 100% operational status. These cooperatives demonstrate the potential of women's participation and leadership in sustaining cooperative movements. Their success suggests that policies aimed at empowering women through cooperatives are yielding positive results and could be further scaled for broader socio-economic impact.

Employees Credit Cooperative Societies and Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) have remained in comparatively strong positions in terms of overall performance. With PACS displaying only about 14% non-performance and Employees Credit Societies about 18%, they maintain high overall

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

functionality despite having a few inactive units. These categories appear to maintain trust and ongoing engagement because of their grassroots presence and direct benefit to members, which makes them viable models for strengthening or replicating in other areas.

It's interesting to note that service societies and multipurpose cooperatives both do fairly well, indicating that offering a variety of services within a single cooperative structure may increase resilience to operational or market difficulties. On the other hand, cooperatives that perform specialized or limited tasks, like cold storage, consumer stores, or horticulture, exhibit signs of difficulty. This could be due to a lack of member participation, operational inefficiencies, or restricted market access. All things considered, the data emphasizes the necessity of focused interventions. Initiatives to increase capacity, enhance governance, and revitalize cooperatives that are in decline may be beneficial. However, the achievements of credit-based and women-led cooperatives present a positive path for future policy attention and planning.

Table 5 classifying the status (working, non-working, under liquidation) block wise

No	BLOCK	Number of Registered Cooperatives	W	NW/UNDER LIQUIDATION	% DECREASE
1	Bijanbari	54	36	18	33.33
2	Mirik	29	25	04	13.79
3	Naxalbari	28	21	07	25
4	Khoribari-Phansideva	55	33	22	40
5	Kurseong	71	47	24	33.80
6	Siliguri Circle	191	57	134	70
7	Darjeeling Sadar	102	53	49	48
8	Darjeeling Pulbazar	35	26	09	25.7
9	Rangli-Rangliot	48	35	13	27
10	Matigara	37	18	19	51
11	Jorebungalow-Sukhiapokhari	75	49	26	34.67
	TOTAL	725	400	325	44.82

Source : Cooperation Directorate, Darjeeling Range, Darjeeling

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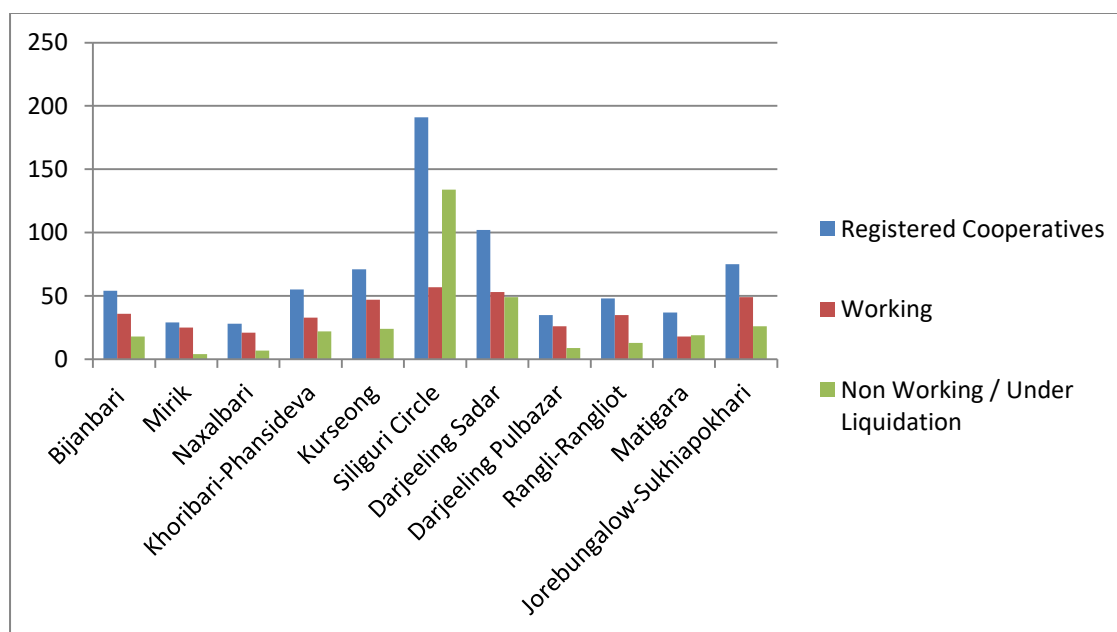
This analysis's goal is to determine whether the decline observed in particular cooperative categories is likewise geographically reflected in particular blocks. Cooperatives in the following types have seen the highest decline rates: industrial (98.44% decrease), transportation (95.83%), housing (93.10%), engineers (80%), and consumer stores (70.97%). Conversely, regions like Siliguri Circle (70% decrease), Matigara (51%), Darjeeling Sadar (48%), Khoribari-Phansideva (40%), Kurseong (33.80%), and Bijanbari (33.33%) also report notably high rates of liquidated or non-functioning cooperatives on a block-by-block basis. This correlation suggests that the majority of non-agricultural cooperative types, such as housing, industrial, and consumer cooperatives, were concentrated in these more urbanized or semi-urban areas, which may have contributed to the higher failure rates in these areas. On the other hand, there has been no decline in cooperative types like Bahudeshiya Mahila Samity, Mahila Mahasangha Central Cooperative, Rural Credit Societies, and Large Area Multipurpose Societies. Only slight declines (14–19%) have been seen in others, such as PACS, Urban & Mahila Credit, and Service Cooperatives. Blocks like Mirik (13.79%), Naxalbari (25%), Pulbazar (25.7%), and Rangli-Rangliot (27%) also exhibit low failure rates when this data is mapped against block-wise performance. The fact that most of these blocks are rural or semi-rural lends credence to the idea that the cooperative forms that are more common in these areas are more stable, particularly those that are credit-based and women-focused.

A wider thematic correlation is thus beginning to emerge: urban blocks with a higher concentration of industrial, housing, and consumer cooperatives show greater vulnerability and decline, whereas rural

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

areas with credit, agricultural, and women-centric cooperatives typically perform better in terms of sustainability.

Findings and Conclusion

Studying cooperative societies in the Darjeeling district reveals a dynamic and complex environment influenced by sectoral variances as well as regional traits. 725 cooperatives of various kinds, including Employees' Credit Societies, Agricultural Marketing, Housing, Industrial, Transportation, Mahila Cooperatives, and more, were examined. These cooperatives are dispersed unevenly throughout the district's eleven blocks, with a comparatively higher concentration in Siliguri Circle, Darjeeling Sadar, Jorebungalow-Sukhiapokhari, and Kurseong. Only 55% of cooperatives are currently operational, 42% are not, and 3% are in liquidation, according to the overall operational status. Intervention and critical evaluation are necessary in light of this inconsistent performance.

The industries that saw the biggest declines were Industrial (98.44%), Transportation (95.83%), Housing (93.10%), Engineers (80%), Labor Contract (67.24%), and Consumer Cooperatives (70.96%). In a geographically demanding area like Darjeeling, these cooperatives usually need capital-intensive operations, technical know-how, or extensive coordination, all of which are challenging to maintain. Additionally, a sizable portion of these cooperatives are found in urban and semi-urban areas with greater failure rates, such as Siliguri Circle, Matigara, and Darjeeling Sadar. According to this correlation, certain cooperative types that are concentrated in specific blocks may be more susceptible to decline as a result of infrastructure constraints, managerial inefficiencies, or market saturation.

The trend in registrations shows distinct phases over the years, with rapid expansion observed between the 1960s and 1990s, followed by a slowdown in the 2000s and renewed growth in the 2010s. The pattern of success rates reveals that they were highest during the earliest and most recent periods, while the lowest figures occurred during the rapid expansion phases, indicating that support and sustainability are far more crucial than merely increasing the number of registrations. The 2000s emerged as a turning point, marking a shift from quantity-driven registration to quality-driven functioning, which ultimately paved the way for the current near-perfect success rates.

On the other hand, cooperatives run by women, like the Mahila Mahasangha Central Cooperative Society Ltd. and the Bahudeshiya Mahila Prathamik Sahakari Samity Ltd., exhibit excellent performance with 100% functionality. These women-led cooperatives demonstrate the benefits of gender-inclusive cooperative development in addition to their effective governance and high member participation rates. With comparatively lower failure rates of 14.03% and 18.18%, respectively, Primary

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) and Employees Credit Cooperative Societies also report impressive performance. This resilience is probably influenced by their grassroots focus and direct benefit to members.

Geographically, rural and semi-rural blocks such as Mirik, Naxalbari, Rangli-Rangliot, and Darjeeling Pulbazar show lower rates of decline, indicating that credit-focused models, SHG-based clusters, and agriculturally based cooperatives function better in less urbanized environments. Comparatively better sustainability has also been demonstrated by multipurpose and service cooperatives, indicating that operational flexibility and resilience against market shocks are provided by diversification within cooperative activities.

Several ideas and policy recommendations are made in light of these findings. First, specific revitalization strategies are needed for cooperatives exhibiting high rates of decline, particularly in the housing, transportation, and industrial sectors. Restructuring their business models, professionalizing management, and incorporating members' digital and financial literacy are a few examples. Programs that increase capacity, particularly for staff and board members, ought to be given top priority in order to enhance operational effectiveness and governance. Second, a scalable model for additional investment is provided by the success of women-led cooperatives. Policy frameworks ought to offer incentives for the establishment of additional women's cooperatives as well as financial and technical assistance to ensure their long-term viability. Women can be further empowered in cooperative leadership through specialized training, easier registration procedures, and access to revolving funds.

Third, the need for block-specific policy interventions is underscored by regional differences in cooperative performance. To find administrative and structural bottlenecks, diagnostic evaluations should be carried out in underperforming blocks such as Siliguri Circle and Matigara. Decentralization of the cooperative support framework is also necessary to enable timely access to market connections, credit, and guidance for rural and semi-rural blocks. Fourth, before approval is granted, the cooperative registration procedure should be reviewed to make sure governance capabilities, business viability, and feasibility studies are taken into account. As a result, there would be fewer weak or unprofitable cooperatives that eventually cease operations. To identify early warning indicators of failure and enable prompt remedial action, existing cooperatives should undergo routine audits and monitoring.

Lastly, the district should promote successful cooperative models like women's cooperatives, multipurpose cooperatives, and PACS as best practices. Platforms for exchanging knowledge, inter-

Prajjawal Pradhan, Darjeeling Government College, prajjawalpradhan@gmail.com

cooperative mentoring, and government-sponsored cooperative expos or conclaves can all encourage creativity, teamwork, and increased involvement.

In conclusion, cooperatives remain essential tools for Darjeeling's socioeconomic development, but their inconsistent performance across industries and geographical areas points to the urgent need for targeted assistance and strategic reform. Cooperatives can be resurrected as powerful catalysts for inclusive growth and local development by enhancing cooperative governance, empowering women and youth, and customizing block-level interventions.

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Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

Assessing Literacy and Educational Attainment among the Tribal population of Dakshin Dinajpur District, West Bengal

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

Abstract

The tribal population of Dakshin Dinajpur District, West Bengal, has historically faced challenges in literacy and educational attainment. This study aims to assess the current literacy levels and schooling patterns among tribal communities, highlighting the factors contributing to their poor performance. Through a comprehensive analysis of primary and secondary data, the research explores socio-economic conditions, institutional barriers, and cultural influences affecting educational outcomes. The findings reveal systemic challenges, including inadequate access to quality education, high dropout rates, and limited governmental interventions. This study seeks to provide insights that can inform policy measures and community-based initiatives to improve literacy and educational achievement among the tribal population in the region.

Key words: Literacy, Educational Attainment, Tribal population, Dropout.

1 Introduction

Education has a variety of important roles in the development of both individuals and societies. It has been proven that an educated farmer is more capable of increasing agricultural productivity (Yasmeen et al. 2011). Education also serves to raise an individual's earnings, redistribute income (Zhang et al., 2002), and reduce poverty (Tilak, 2002). Looking at the good impact of education on an individual, it is possible to conclude that in today's digital and technical world, as well as the impending advanced future, education will be an even more important determinant of an individual's career and income.

The indicators of development like lower fertility, health improvement generally positively associated with education (Drèze & Murthi, 2001; Tilak, 2007). The conventional disparities of caste, class, gender and so on can be overcome through wide spread of education among different segment of population (Tripathi, & Mukerji, 2008). Further, it does not only alter or modify perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, but also facilitates the process of creation of awareness and personality building which is very conducive to promote development and welfare of a nation and its people. The basis of democratic system and social liberties can be fortified by wide spread education among the mass (Almond, 1991).

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

Thus, education is an effective means to comprehend a wide range of social, economic, and other goals. Furthermore, education has inherent value in terms of empowering individuals and communities to achieve efficient nationality, democratic governance, innovation, and a culture of peace (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

After 70 years of independence, India has entered the modern era, establishing a foundation for literacy and educational opportunities. Undoubtedly, enrolment, literacy, and educational attainment have increased gradually over time from the past to the present, but India remains the home of the world's largest illiterate people (Haq and Haq 1998), with more than one-fourth of the population aged 7 years and above unable to read and write (Census 2011); and the worst situation is that approximately 42.7 million out of 233.6 million children aged 6-14 years do not attend school (Census 2011). Furthermore, educational disparities exist across India based on geography, religion, caste, class, and gender (Mukherjee, 2014). In truth, while certain regions and segments of our society have gained prominence in the educational system, others have been left out. Thus, in the realm of education, India exhibits a significant discrepancy. These inequities could not be eliminated, despite multiple constitutional and legislative provisions, as well as numerous reform efforts. The following analysis focuses on identifying and addressing disparities in literacy educational attainment between STs and non-STs, as well as educational backwardness among scheduled tribal people in Dakshin Dinajpur district.

1.1 Location of the Study Area

Dakshin Dinajpur district is located in the northeastern section of West Bengal, India. The district is located between 25°10'00" North to 25°37'00" North latitude and 88°10'00" East to 89°00'30" East longitude. Bangladesh borders the district to the east, with Malda and Uttar Dinajpur districts to the south and north, respectively. The district has two sub-divisions: 1) Balurghat and 2) Gangarampur. The district has eight Community Development (C.D.) Blocks, with Kumarganj, Tapan, Balurghat, and Hilli C.D. Blocks falling under the Balurghat Sub-Division and Kushmandi, Banshihari, Harirampur, and Gangarampur C.D. Blocks falling under the Gangarampur Sub-Division respectively.

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com
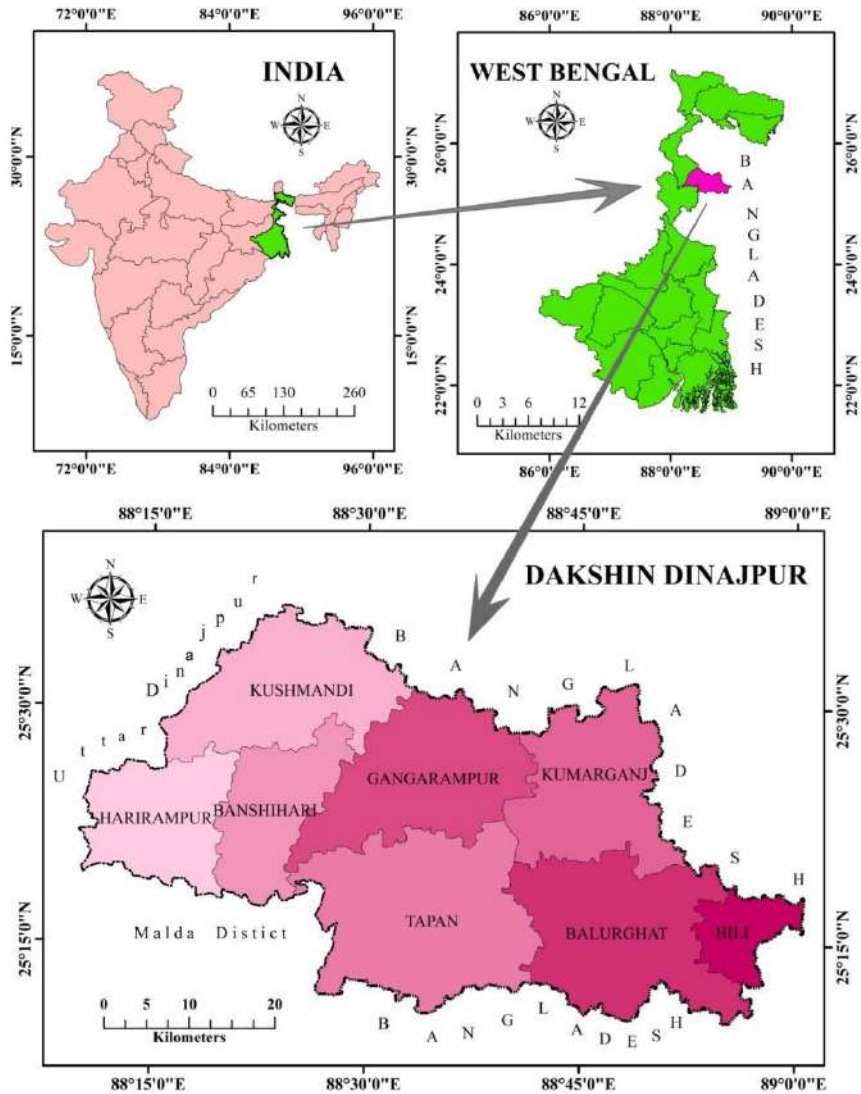
Figure 1 Location Map of the Study Area

This study aims to assess the literacy levels and educational attainment among the tribal population of Dakshin Dinajpur District, West Bengal, where poor performance has been observed. It seeks to identify the key factors influencing literacy rates and schooling outcomes, including socio-economic conditions, institutional challenges, and cultural influences.

2 Status of Literacy

Literacy is a useful indication of a population's socioeconomic condition. A comparative comparison of literacy rates between two groups or portions of the population, as well as the changing pattern of literacy from the previous census year to the present year, can provide a clear picture of their literacy status. In the current study, the literacy rate of scheduled tribe (ST) population was compared to the literacy rate of non-scheduled tribe (non-ST) population

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

in the district of Dakshin Dinajpur, using data from the two consecutive Census years, 2001 and 2011.
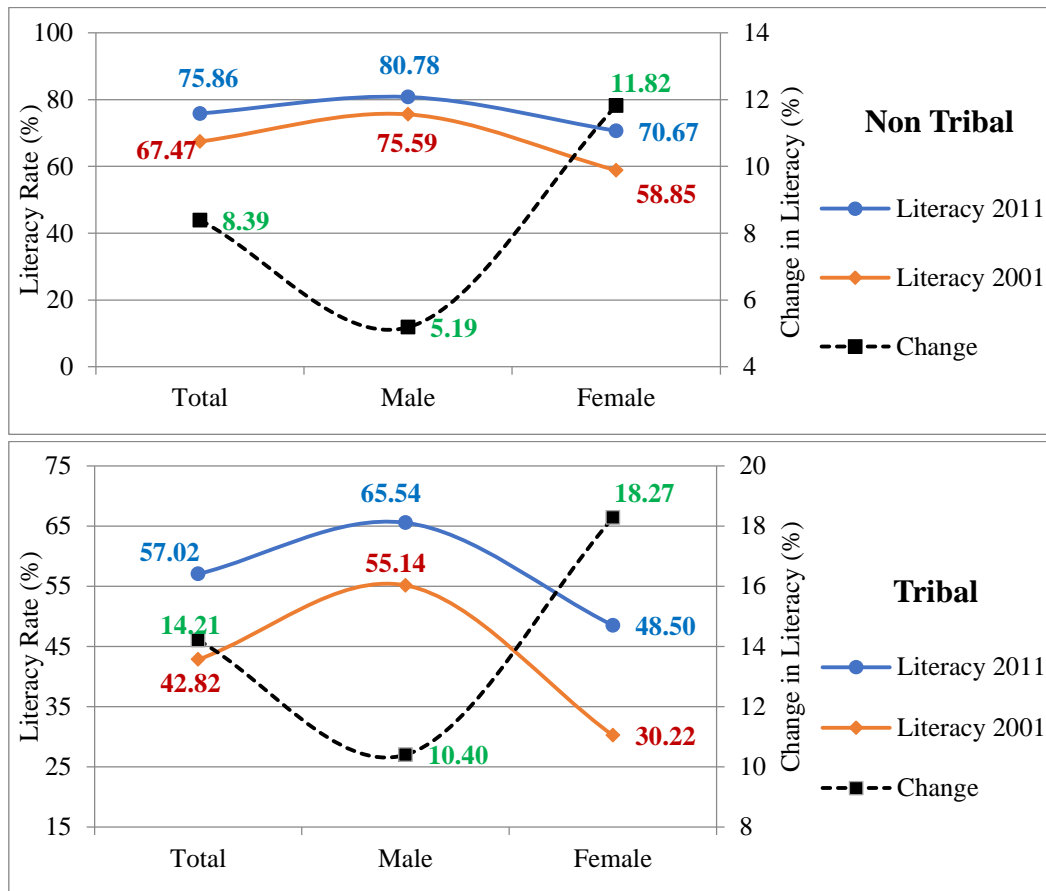
Figure 2 Change in Literacy rate of non-Tribal and Tribal people, Dakshin Dinajpur (2001-2011)

According to the 2011 Census, the literacy rate (excluding children under the age of six) among non-tribal inhabitants in Dakshin Dinajpur is 75.86 percent, with 80.78 percent males and 70.67 percent females. Between 2001 and 2011, the district's overall non-ST literacy rate grew by around 8.40 percent. Female literacy is increasing at a faster rate than male literacy, with male literacy increasing by around 5.19 percent while female literacy climbed by about 11.82 percent. On the other hand, tribal literacy lags substantially behind non-tribal literacy, with tribal literacy in Dakshin Dinajpur at 57.02 percent, 65.54 percent of which is male and only 48.50 percent among ST females (2011). Between 2001 and 2011, the district's overall ST literacy rate improved by around 14.21%. ST persons have a greater increasing literacy rate than non-ST people. And ST females' literacy is risen by 18.27 percentage point, which is significantly bigger than the ST male literacy change (10.40% point) from 2001 to 2011.

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com
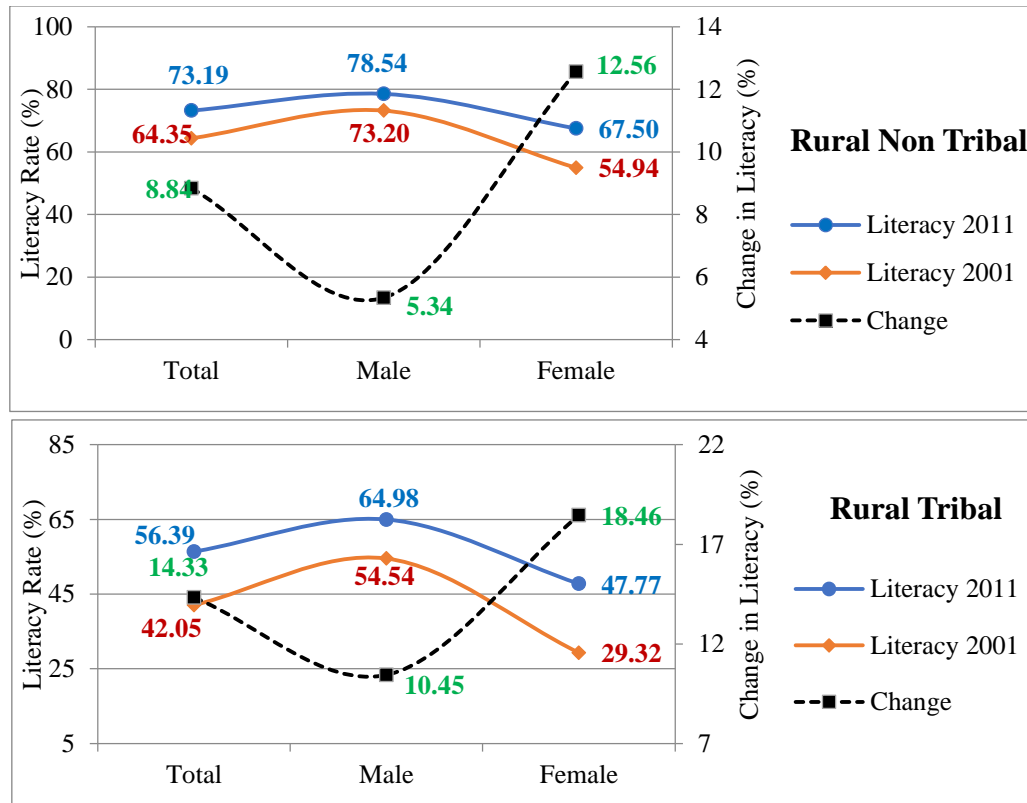
Figure 3 Change in Literacy rate of Rural non-Tribal and Tribal people, Dakshin Dinajpur (2001-2011)

In Dakshin Dinajpur's rural areas, the non-tribal literacy rate (excluding children under the age of six) is approximately 73%, with 78.54 percent male and 67.50 percent female. Between 2001 and 2011, the overall rural literacy rate among the district's non-ST population increased by roughly 9 percentage points. Female literacy has increased by 12.56 percentage points, whereas male literacy has increased by approximately 5.3 percent. In contrast, tribal literacy rates have improved at a faster rate, but they still lag behind, with literacy rates ranging from 42 percent to 56.39 percent, compared to male literacy rates of over 65 percent and female literacy rates of just about 48 percent. From 2001 to 2011, rural ST female literacy increased by 18.46 percentage points, which is much more than the ST male literacy change of 10.45 percentage point.

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com
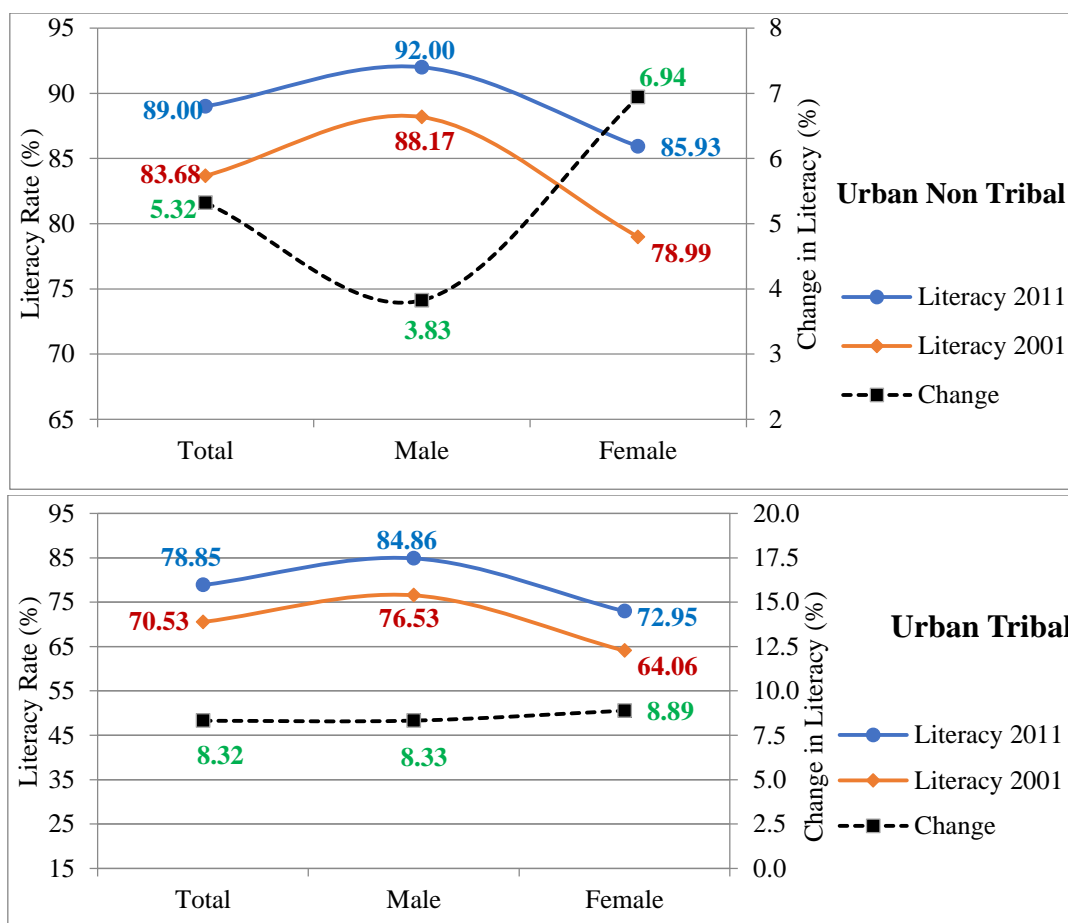
Figure 4 Change in Literacy rate of Urban Non-tribal and Tribal people, Dakshin Dinajpur (2001-2011)

In urban areas, the non-tribal literacy rate (excluding children under the age of six) in Dakshin Dinajpur is 89 percent, with 92 percent males and 85.93 percent females. Between 2001 and 2011, the district's overall urban literacy rate among non-ST people improved by 5.32 percentage points. Female literacy is likewise increasing at a faster rate than male literacy, with male literacy increasing by only 3.83 percentage points while female literacy has climbed by around 7 percentage points. In contrast, the tribal literacy rate in urban areas has increased by only 8 to 9 percentage points, from 70.53 percent to 78.85 percent. The male literacy rate is 84.86 percent, and the female literacy rate is only roughly 73 percent, which is quite good. However, it should be noted that only 2.70 percent of the tribal population lives in the urban areas of Dakshin Dinajpur district, so the rural tribal population is significantly larger in the analysis.

3 Educational Attainment and Status in Higher Education

Educational attainment can give the idea of education level of an individual and only literate people are included in the analysis of educational attainment. According to Indian Census,

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

educational attainments of literate people are levelled in different categories i.e. literate without educational level, below primary, primary, middle, matric/secondary, higher secondary (H.S), Non-Technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree, technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree and graduate and above. In the census year 2001, status of educational attainment among non-tribal people was slight better than the scheduled tribe population. In respect of the educational level from primary to graduate and above the participation and completion status was always low among scheduled tribe population.
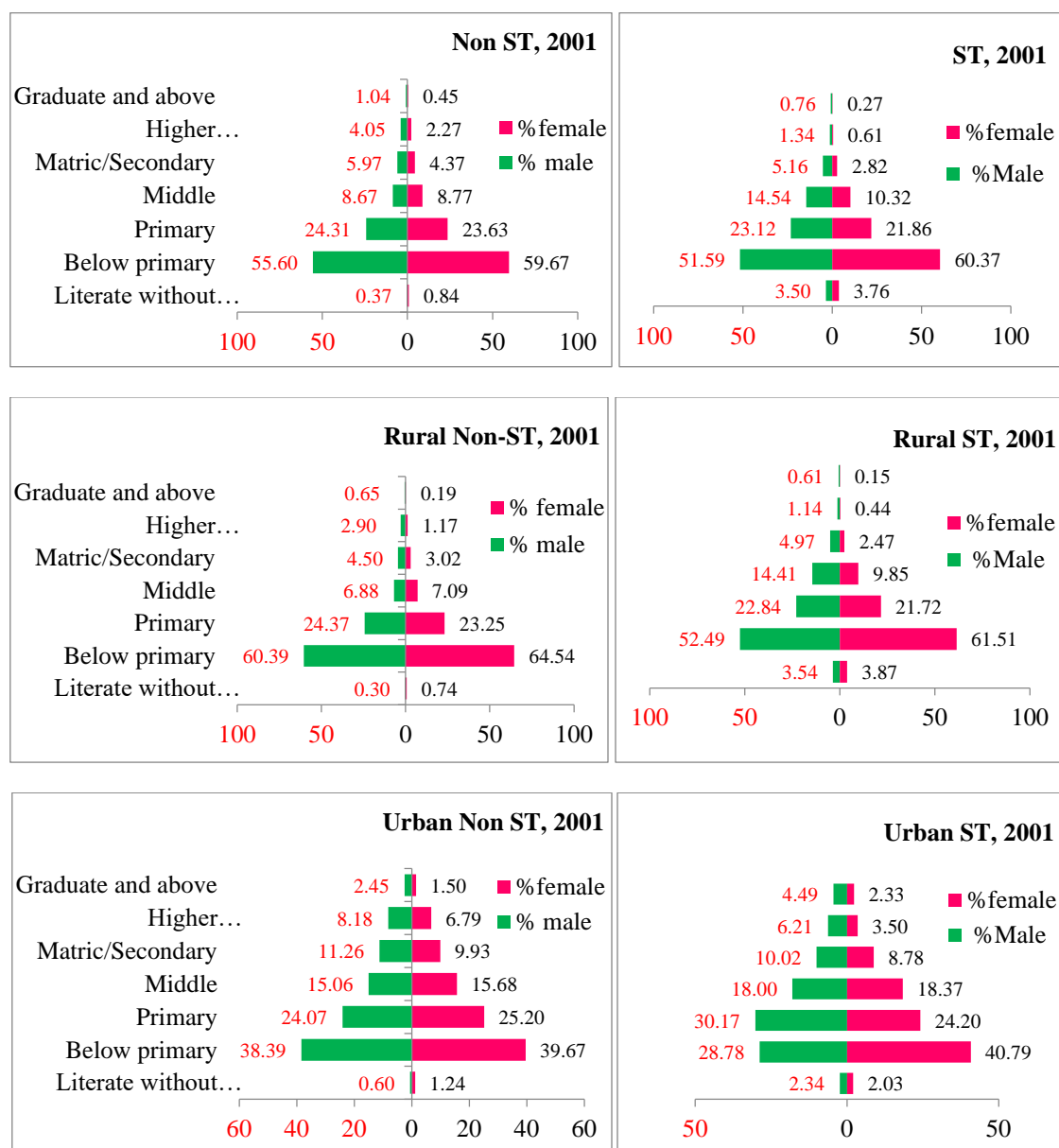
Figure 5 Sex wise Educational Attainment of Non-STs and STs in Dakshin Dinajpur, 2001

And another interesting thing is up to middle or as well as up to matriculation, the condition of tribal people was similar and sometimes quite better to non STs for overall educational

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

attainment accompanied with rural educational attainment. But in respect of higher education i.e. from matric or H.S. to graduate and above, non-tribal people were more ahead than the tribal people (in rural and overall situation, 2001). In urban areas the situation of tribal people was slight better than the non-tribal population. Urban condition cannot be a representative aspect of educational attainment for STs and it should be remembered that a very few (<3%) scheduled tribe people live in urban areas of Dakshin Dinajpur.

Figure 6 Sex wise Educational Attainment of Non-STs and STs in Dakshin Dinajpur, 2011

In 2011, the proportion of educational attainment has increased for both, non- STs and STs. But ST population is not able to increase their education attainment in the pace of like non STs. Matriculation among non-ST male literates was 8.6 percent female literates was 7.18 percent whereas 5.11 percent tribal male literates and 4.15 percent tribal female literates

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

completed their matriculation. Similar situation is prevailed in rural areas of Dakshin Dinajpur (*figure* 6). In respect of higher secondary education, 9.64 percent from male literates and 8.02 percent from female literates have completed their education among all non-ST population and meanwhile only about 5 percent male literate STs and only 3.48 percent female literate STs have cleared their H.S. level. In rural Dakshin Dinajpur the situation is almost similar to the overall condition. The *figure 6* also depict that completion of higher education among scheduled tribe population is much lower (male 1.62%; female 0.78%) than the non-STs (male 6.71%; female 3.83%). In urban areas to achieve the educational level of graduate and above non-ST people are 2-3 times ahead than of the ST population.

In the above discussion, the educational level of non-technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree and technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree are excluded as tribal people are rarely associated with that education level. It should be mentioned that only 14 tribal people (2011 Census) in absolute number have completed technical diploma no one is associated with non-technical diploma among the scheduled tribes in Dakshin Dinajpur.

Therefore, educational attainment of tribal people highly confined in lower level of education i.e. primary, middle/upper primary and hardly in matriculation. Most of them hardly participated and completed the higher level of education i.e. H.S. level and Graduation/Post graduation and tribal women are in the back foot in terms of educational attainment specially in higher level of education.

4 Factors of Low Educational Attainment

To find out the factors of poor performance in education among tribals, a primary survey was conducted during 2017-2018 taking 273 random sample respondents; out of them 155 respondents (56.78%) were found literate and rest (43.22%) were illiterate. Before going through the analysis of low educational attainment among Scheduled Tribe, it is necessary to know the attitude of tribal parents towards education which is in some extent related to the educational condition prevailed among them.

Table 1 #*Parental attitude toward education (%) *

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Education of son is important	34.29	24.29	26.07	10.00	5.36
Education of daughter is important	23.21	17.50	32.86	14.64	11.79

Cont.

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

Education can give better standard of living	16.07	18.57	27.14	21.43	16.79
Domestic work is more important than education	19.64	23.93	33.21	10.71	12.50
Earning money is more important than education	28.57	26.79	20.00	10.00	14.64
Acquire higher education is necessary	12.50	15.36	25.36	23.93	22.86
Only to be literate is enough	22.50	25.00	23.21	17.86	11.43

* Based on field survey (2017-2018)

From the **table 1,** it is noticeable that about 26% and 33 percent parents have remained undecided as well as many of them disagreed or strongly disagreed to the view that education of son and daughter is important or not, where in real both are important. About 34 percent parents believe that education can provide better standard of living whereas about 38 percent disagreed and 27.14 percent is standing on undecided situation. Achieving domestic work and earning money is more important than education to most of the tribal parents according to the study. And many of them do not want to give emphasis on higher education, whereas being literate is enough.

Another noticeable thing is that out of 155 literate respondents, 59 had discontinued or dropped out from education due to various causes or likely say constrains. Here it has been attempted during the field survey to trace the possible causes by which their education has been interrupted. The following table give details (**Table 2**).

Table 2 #*Causes of Dropout/ Discontinuation* (in percentage)*

Items	Male	Female	Total
Attending domestic work	37.29	25.42	62.71
Long distance from school	18.64	18.64	37.29
Participation in paid economic activities	37.29	10.17	47.46
Parents' discouragement	16.95	27.12	45.76
Due to marriage	6.78	28.81	35.59
Failed in examination and lost interest	32.20	18.64	50.85
Lack of hostel facilities	8.47	16.95	25.42

* Based on field survey (2017-2018)

It is found that male respondents basically blame participation in domestic works and paid economic activities, meanwhile due to mainly early marriage and lack of parents'

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

encouragement female respondents discontinue their education at early stage in association with socio-economic and cultural factors.

5 Discussion

Many discussions have been done previously about the factors stand behind the backwardness or stagnancy of the disadvantage sectors of the population in the modernised society. The tribal people mainly remain in excessive stress to preserve daily means of subsistence. And they always give less importance to education and depend on some false notions as well as ill-cultural beliefs (such as witchcraft) which gradually downgrade the tribal society (Mukherjee, 2014). Lack of education positively related with economic poverty of a family. As the social and geographical remoteness prevailed among most of the tribal communities, being the cause of slow educational progress as well as poverty (Dani, 1979). The causes responsible for remaining stagnant or having slow upliftment of the life quality/ style may be severe economic backwardness, inadequate and mediocre quality of food, insanitary life style, lack of safe drinking water, social abuse, lack of consciousness and sensitivity of the policy maker and appropriate authorities towards socio-cultural norms, tradition and custom etc (Mukherjee, 2014). Due to acute illiteracy and unawareness in association with superstitious believes among rural tribal people, the development activities by developmental agendas get not a success, and it is believed that education is the most effectual and avant-garde/ futuristic appliance to eradicate economic backwardness as well social deprivation (Behera, 2014). There are so many factors which are responsible for low level educational attainment and illiteracy of tribal community can be identified such as lack of ample educational environment in their surroundings, acute poverty among the tribal people, deficiency in communication system, and it very common that children in supplementary services which will support the family economically (Behera, 2014). The education among schedule tribe is not quite evenly distributed in the Indian society (Nair, et al. 1979). There are several factors which may affect the educational stagnant of the tribal population. Among various major factors, the high degree of intrinsic integration of the tribal culture and poor economic condition affect the educational achievement of the tribal sector. Educational achievement among tribal communities directly related to socio economic status. And it should be mentioned that size of the family affects the socio-economic status as well as educational attainment (Nair, Fulmali, Mutatkar & Bhanu, 1979). In India tribes are not only lagging behind the general population in respect of literacy and education, but also, they are more backward than other scheduled groups (Sahu, 2014).

Dr. Salim Mandal, Darjeeling Government College, geosalim16edu@gmail.com

6 Conclusion

The assessment of literacy and educational attainment among the tribal population of Dakshin Dinajpur District, West Bengal, reveals persistent challenges that hinder academic progress and overall development. Socio-economic constraints, inadequate access to quality education, and cultural factors contribute to the observed poor performance in literacy levels and schooling outcomes. High dropout rates, limited educational resources, and systemic barriers further exacerbate the situation, necessitating targeted interventions. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, including policy reforms, community-driven initiatives, and improved infrastructure to ensure equitable educational opportunities. By prioritizing education and literacy within tribal communities, stakeholders can work towards bridging the gap and fostering sustainable development, ultimately empowering individuals and strengthening societal progress.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest concerning the publication of this article.

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Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

Balancing Rivalry and Cooperation: The Geopolitical Undercurrents of Sino-Indian Relationships

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

Abstract

The geopolitical connection between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of India is a multifaceted relationship of past legacies, strategic rivalry, and economic support. This study explores the undercurrents of their mutual ties, concentrating on boundary disputes, trade dependencies, and their objectives for provincial and worldwide influence. The paper studies how the 1962 Sino-Indian War formed mutual suspicion and how current issues, such as the Doklam impasse and Galwan Valley clangs, continue to contest diplomatic efforts. Moreover, it analyses the character of multifaceted platforms like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in nurturing discourse. The study seeks to response serious questions: What energies the strategic competition between China and India? How do economic interdependencies impact their conflict resolution apparatuses? What consequences do their relations consume on provincial firmness in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific? This study engages a mixed method, compounding historical study, trade information, and geopolitical concepts to provide a nuanced thoughtful of the China-India dynamic. Eventually, the study highlights the need for confidence-building procedures and sustainable conflict organization strategies to confirm long-term peace and steadiness in Asia.

Keywords: *Sino-Indian relationships, boundary disputes, strategic opposition, provincial firmness and economic interrelationship* etc.

Introduction

The Sino-Indian bond is one of the furthermost critical mutual ties determining the geopolitical site of Asia. By means of two of the world's most crowded states and fastest-developing economies, China and India embrace substantial influence in provincial and worldwide affairs. This bond, though, is marked by both rivalry and cooperation. Past legacies, unsettled border clashes, economic interdependencies, and objectives for provincial dominance form the basis of their multifaceted bonds (Garver, 2001, p. 15).

From a past standpoint, both states share an extensive civilizational past of socio-cultural, economic, and metaphysical exchanges that go back to the olden Silk Road. Though, the rise of modern nation-states has altered these communications into a multifaceted network of strategic rivalries and careful relationships. The common boundary of over 3,400 kilometres has developed a source of recurrent battle and suspicion, predominantly since the 1962 Sino-Indian War, which left a profound

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

watermark on their mutual relationships (Maxwell, 1970, p. 45). This inheritance of mistrust remains to impact their diplomatic arrangements and security positions.

Economically, China and India are amongst the major developing markets, contributing meaningfully to worldwide trade and economic progress. So far, their economic bond is unequal. Though China is India's major trading companion, a considerable trade inequity exists, severely favouring China. India's dependency on Chinese goods, mainly in areas such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and telecommunications, has raised up anxieties about economic susceptibilities (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2021). At the same time, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has keen India's strategic anxieties, as missions like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) pass through Indian claimed territories.

The study investigates into the drivers of planned enmity between China and India. These drivers consist of territorial clashes over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, China's growing influence in South Asia, and India's hard work to counterbalance China through cooperations with the United States and regional influences like Japan and Australia. Moreover, the role of nationalism in both nations often aggravates tensions, with political rhetoric intensifying public sentimentality in contrast to the other (Deshpande, 2021, p. 17).

Economic mutuality between China and India acts a contradictory role in their bilateral relationships. On the one hand, trade bonds act as a steadying force by producing mutual economic risks in peace and stability. On the other hand, these interdependencies also produce vulnerabilities that could be subjugated during times of battle. For example, India's limitations on Chinese investments and apps following the Galwan Valley clashes underscore how economic tools are progressively used as devices of strategic influence (Kumar, 2020, p. 28).

The consequences of Sino-Indian relationships spread far beyond their bilateral scope, disturbing regional solidity in South Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific. In South Asia, China's thickening ties with India's neighbours, such as Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, encounter India's traditional province of influence. In the Indo-Pacific, the rivalry between China's assertive policies and India's 'Act East' strategy highlights their conflicting visions for provincial order. Despite the fact China seeks to control the region through initiatives like the BRI, India champions a multipolar context reinforced by partnerships with ASEAN countries and the Quad (Singh, 2020, p. 33).

This research investigates important questions that reinforce the Sino-Indian relationship: What energies the strategic rivalry between China and India? How do economic interdependencies effect their battle resolution apparatuses? What consequences do their relationships have for provincial firmness in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific? By speaking these questions, the study purposes to

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

provide a inclusive investigation of the Sino-Indian lively. It implies a mixed-methods method, compounding historical analysis, trade data, and geopolitical concepts to offer refined insights into this multifaceted relationship.

Perceiving the Sino-Indian relationship needs recognizing its dual nature - i) rivalry deep-rooted in competition for provincial dominance and ii) partnership dictated by shared economic and international challenges. Though the legacy of battle poses important barriers to belief, the mutuality of their economies and shared apprehensions over global issues like climate change and terrorism propose opportunities for partnership. Eventually, the future of Sino-Indian relationships will rest on the capability of both nation-states to manage their differences despite the fact leveraging parts of mutual interest.

Historical Background: From Cooperation to Rivalry

India and China hold a historical connection that starts since ancient times, with cultural, economic, and metaphysical interactions thriving along the Silk Road. These interactions raised mutual kind and admiration, inducing areas like religion, with Buddhism wandering from India to China, and trade, which witnessed goods and thoughts flow amongst the two nations. In spite of these ancient bonds, the modern association between India and China started to take form only in the mid twentieth century, resulting India's liberation from British rule in 1947 and the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) under Communist headship in 1949.

The initial years of their modern relations were manifested by a sense of companionship. India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and China's Premier Zhou Enlai wanted to furnace a strong company grounded on shared anti-colonial and anti-imperialist principles. This shared vision ended in the Panchsheel Agreement of 1954. Formally titled the "Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India," the Panchsheel Agreement delineated five values of peaceful living: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Maxwell, 1970, p. 32). These principles characterised an determined effort to shape trust and cooperation amongst two newly independent nations directing the difficulties of the post-colonial world.

The Panchsheel Agreement was an important breakthrough, as it not only dignified bilateral relations but also represented a broader image for peace and collaboration in Asia. It reproduced India's policy of non-alignment throughout the Cold War and China's ambitions to arise as a leader of the developing nations. Though, under this surface of harmony lay unresolved problems, mainly relating

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

to territorial boundaries. These latent strains would quickly overshadow the hopefulness of Panchsheel and lead to a worsening of bilateral relationships.

The rapture of the Panchsheel period was short-lived. By means of the late 1950s, the germs of disharmony began to germinate, mainly due to contradictory territorial claims and geopolitical departures. The most combative problems were related to Aksai Chin, a high-altitude desert in the Western Himalayas, and Arunachal Pradesh (then known as the North-East Frontier Agency), a northeastern province demanded by China as share of Tibet.

Aksai Chin converted a flashpoint when India exposed that China had built a strategic highway connecting Tibet with Xinjiang through this province. India's opposition to the highway, joined with its claim of sovereignty over Aksai Chin, was encountered with China's counterclaim that the region historically belonged to Tibet and, by extension, to China. This disagreement was worsened by India's giving way of asylum to the Dalai Lama in 1959 resulting the Tibetan uprising, which China alleged as intrusion in its internal affairs (Guha, 2007, p. 220).

The border clash worsened the relations and turned into full scale war in October 1962. The war was short-lived but strong, lasting just one month. Chinese forces launched instantaneous attacks in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, devastating the weakly prepared Indian military. The war led to the significant territorial losses for India, with China merging its control over Aksai Chin despite the fact declaring a one-sided ceasefire and retreating from Arunachal Pradesh. The emotional impact of the war on India was deep, as it uncovered the weaknesses of its defense infrastructure and devastated the impression of Panchsheel's promise.

The 1962 war sustained a legacy of distrust that continues to outline Sino-Indian relationship. For India, the war was a nationwide trauma that needed a re-examination of its foreign and defense strategies. The government, led by Nehru, confronted severe national criticism for its conduct of the crisis. India's following focus on military reconstruction and strategic independence can be sketched back to this period. In contrast, China observed the conflict as a necessary declaration of its territorial claims and a protest of its resolve to defense national sovereignty.

The outcome of the war witnessed a long embargo in bilateral relationship. Diplomatic ties were relegated, and trade and cultural relations came to a standstill. The Line of Actual Control (LAC), a separation that appeared from the war, converted a de facto border but persisted undefined and contested. This uncertainty has been a determined source of tension, as both sides understand the LAC contrarily, leading to regular clashes and impasses.

The 1962 Sino-Indian War was not simply a border dispute; it was an exhibition of profounder geopolitical and ideological variances. Though India advocated non-alignment and democratic values,

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

China's attachment with the Soviet Union and later with Pakistan supplemented a layer of difficulty to their rivalry. The war also had wider consequences for the Cold War undercurrents, as it inclined the strategic calculus of other major powers, together with the United States and the Soviet Union, in South Asia.

In brief, the historical background of Sino-Indian relationship highlights a transition from initial cooperation to durable rivalry. The Panchsheel Agreement, notwithstanding its noble meanings, failed to discourse the basic territorial and strategic issues that would later explode into open aggression. The 1962 war manifested a turning point, implanting a sense of mutual doubt that continues to delay efforts toward expressive settlement. Understanding this historical background is vital for evaluating the contemporary undercurrents of Sino-Indian relationship and the encounters of building a stable and cooperative friendship in the 21st century.

Contemporary Border Disputes

The 2017 Doklam impasse underscored the strategic understandings of the Sino-Indian border. Doklam, located at the tri-junction of India, China, and Bhutan, developed a focal point of geopolitical strains due to its strategic position. The impasse began when Chinese troops endeavoured to extend a road into the upland, a region that Bhutan claims as its territory but is also asserted by China. India, appealing its treaty responsibilities under the India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 2007, arbitrated to defend Bhutan's sovereignty. The existence of Indian troops obstructing Chinese construction exertions escalated tensions, carrying both countries to a near military conflict (Pant & Joshi, 2017, p. 45).

The Doklam upland holds strategic implication for India due to its closeness to the Siliguri Corridor, a thin strip of land linking mainland India to its northeast states. Every so often mentioned as the 'Chicken's Neck', this corridor is dangerous for India's territorial veracity and logistical connectivity. Chinese building in this area was professed as a direct risk to India's national security. From a strategic viewpoint, the road expansion would have permitted China to increase its military mobility in the region, so increasing its influence over India and Bhutan (Maxwell, 1970, p. 58).

The impasse, which continued for 73 days from June to August 2017, maxim a significant military construction on both sides. The diplomatic bombast was manifested by aggressive self-importance, with Chinese state media delivering warnings and India upholding a firm posture on Bhutan's sovereignty. In spite of the sharp tensions, backchannel talks ultimately led to a mutual removal of troops. The determination of the crisis established the significance of diplomacy, even within mounting nationalistic fervour.

The Doklam impasse also highlighted key features of Sino-Indian relationships:

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

- Strategic Susceptibilities: India's worries over the Siliguri Corridor underlined the susceptibility of its northeast states, making territorial clashes a substance of national security rather than just bilateral difference.

- Character of Smaller States: Bhutan's participation highlighted the challenges smaller states confront when trapped between big powers. It also exemplified India's role as a security benefactor for its smaller neighbours.

- Diplomatic Restrictions: Even though the crisis was determined through negotiation, it uncovered the lack of existing apparatuses to prevent such impasses. The underlying territorial divergence remains unsettled, leaving scope for future conflicts.

The 2020 Galwan Valley event marked a noteworthy escalation in Sino-Indian strains and a turning point in their border undercurrents. Placed in the eastern Ladakh region, the Galwan Valley has long been a disputed area due to overlying territorial claims along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The abrupt trigger for the dispute was China's building of infrastructure in the uncertain area, which India alleged as an attempt to individually change the status quo (Deshpande, 2021, p. 17).

The hostility on June 15, 2020, tangled brutal hand-to-hand battle between Indian and Chinese troops. As per present agreements, weapons were not used, but the physical quarrel caused in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and an unrevealed number of Chinese troops. This regarded the first instance of mortalities in Sino-Indian border battles since 1975, breaking a decades-long model of non-lethal hostilities.

The event had far-reaching consequences for Sino-Indian relationships:

- Military Build-Up: In the repercussion of the clash, both countries knowingly enlarged their military occurrence along the LAC. India arranged additional troops and advanced infrastructure development in border regions to counter potential threats. China likewise reinforced its sites, leading to an extended military stand-off in the region.

- Economic Consequences: The Galwan event led to a flow in anti-China sentimentality in India, prompting demands for economic dissociating. The Indian government barred numerous Chinese apps and levied limitations on Chinese investments, signalling a change in economic relationships (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2021).

- Diplomatic Tension: Bilateral relations touched a new low, with faith amongst the two nations harshly eroded. Following rounds of military and diplomatic meetings yielded limited progress, stressing the challenges of conflict determination in the nonappearance of mutual trust (Brewster, 2018, p. 92).

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

The Galwan clashes also uncovered the inadequacy of present confidence-building measures (CBMs). Agreements like the 1993 Treaty on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the LAC and the 2005 Protocol on CBMs in the Military Field had intended to stop such occurrences. However, the violent battle revealed important gaps in their execution and usefulness. The lack of clear delineation of the LAC and opposing perceptions of territorial restrictions continue to fuel tensions (Deshpande, 2021, p. 19).

Wider Implications of Border Clashes

The Doklam and Galwan events underscore the wider implications of Sino-Indian border clashes for regional constancy. As two nuclear-armed neighbours, any growth in tensions postures an important threat to South Asia's peace and safety. The impasses have also stressed India's relations with its smaller neighbours such as Nepal and Bhutan discover themselves trapped in the antagonism of Sino-Indian rivalry.

Sino-Indian border strains have also influenced their involvement in multilateral settings. While both countries are members of BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), their bilateral disputes frequently spill over into these settings, limiting the usefulness of collective decision-making. For instance, India's protests to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have shaped friction within the SCO, where the BRI is a central agenda (Wilson, 2019, p. 19).

The heightened strains along the Sino-Indian border have provoked India to evaluate its foreign policy. The Galwan event, in particular, augmented India's efforts to reinforce partnerships with other regional powers. Initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) involving India, the United States, Japan, and Australia reproduce India's strategic axis toward the Indo-Pacific to counterweight China's growing influence (Singh, 2020, p. 33).

Economic Mutuality

Despite tenacious geopolitical strains, India and China have developed healthy trade relations over the years, underlining the economic interdependence between the two Asian giants. China remains India's major trading partner, with mutual trade reaching a record $125 billion in 2021. This trade capacity highlights the profound economic connections that exist in spite of political differences. Though, the trade relationship is noticeable by a substantial imbalance that deeply favours China. In 2021, India's exports to China mounted at approximately $28 billion, whereas its imports from China reached to $97 billion, ensuing in a trade deficit of nearly $69 billion (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2021).

India's chief exports to China comprise iron ore, cotton, and other raw materials, whereas China exports an extensive variety of manufactured goods, including electronics, machinery, and chemicals.

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

This form of trade replicates the structural differences in their economies. India's export carrier to China is conquered by primary commodities and raw materials, while China's exports to India contain mostly of value-added products. This imbalance has been a tenacious concern for India, as it not only influences its trade deficit but also increases questions about the long-term sustainability of the economic relationship.

Efforts to talk this disparity have been ongoing. India has pursued to expand its export base and endorse national manufacturing through initiatives like 'Make in India' to lessen its reliance on Chinese imports. Moreover, India has levied anti-dumping duties on certain Chinese goods to defend its domestic industries. Though, these measures have had partial impact due to the modest pricing and value of Chinese goods.

Although bilateral trade forms a serious module of Sino-Indian economic ties, multilateral platforms like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) offer additional paths for economic collaboration. These organizations assist as backgrounds for fostering negotiation and collaboration on shared economic benefits, together with sustainable development, trade, and investment.

BRICS, recognized in 2009, has appeared as a key platform for economic collaboration amongst China and India. The bloc's New Development Bank (NDB), headquartered in Shanghai, finances infrastructure projects in member countries, including India. By combining resources and expertise, BRICS aims to offer an alternative to Western-dominated financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Kumar, 2020, p. 28). In spite of their geopolitical variances, India and China have cooperated on initiatives within BRICS, like the establishment of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, which delivers financial support to member countries facing balance-of-payments crises.

The SCO, primarily created by China, Russia, and Central Asian states, became a broader platform for regional cooperation when India merged as a full member in 2017. The organization emphases on economic, security, and cultural collaboration, with China and India playing crucial roles. Although the SCO has mainly been a security-oriented organization, its space has expanded to comprise economic initiatives. (Singh, 2020, p. 33).

A closer examination of specific sectors highlights the complexities of Sino-Indian economic interdependence:

- Electronics: China dominates India's electronics market, supplying over 70% of its mobile phones and components. This dependency has raised concerns about national security and

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

technological sovereignty, prompting India to promote domestic manufacturing through the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

- Pharmaceuticals: India's pharmaceutical industry, known as the "pharmacy of the world," relies heavily on China for active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). Efforts to reduce this dependency have gained momentum, particularly in the wake of supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic (Patel, 2020, p. 47).

- Renewable Energy: Both countries are major players in the global renewable energy market. While India imports a significant portion of its solar panels from China, there is potential for collaboration in developing green technologies and addressing climate change.

Strategic Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, has emerged as one of the most ambitious global infrastructure projects, directing to connect Asia, Europe, and Africa through a web of trade routes. Although the BRI offers opportunities for greater connectivity and economic growth, it also postures noteworthy strategic challenges for India. One of the most quarrelsome aspects of the BRI is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project that passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). India has fervently opposed the CPEC, observing it as a abuse of its sovereignty (Brewster, 2018, p. 56).

Beyond the CPEC, India observes the BRI as a wider strategy of 'encirclement or the 'string of pearls', in which China pursues to establish a sequence of strategically situated ports and bases everywhere India's border. Schemes like the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, the Gwadar Port in Pakistan, and the Kyaukpyu Port in Myanmar underline China's growing impact in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). These expansions have heightened India's worries about its strategic independence and regional supremacy (Pant & Joshi, 2017, p. 45).

China's economic investments under the BRI also come with geopolitical threads involved. Numerous countries have dropped into debt traps due to unmanageable loans from China, additional worsening India's apprehensions. India's denial to join the BRI mirrors its wider strategy to counterattack China's dominance in the region and endorse alternative connectivity initiatives, like the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), in collaboration with Japan.

India's 'Act East policy, revealed in 2014, characterizes a strategic move from its earlier 'Look East' policy, highlighting deeper engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other Indo-Pacific partners. This policy purposes to counterbalance China's rising influence by consolidating economic, political, and security bonds with key regional companies.

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

The Act East policy emphases on enhancing connectivity, trade, and cultural exchange with ASEAN countries. Initiatives such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project are serious components of this strategy, enabling greater regional integration (Singh, 2020, p. 33). These infrastructure projects are intended not only to increase economic ties but also to assist as strategic counterbalances to China's BRI.

A basis of India's Indo-Pacific strategy is its dynamic participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), comprising India, the United States, Japan, and Australia. The Quad has grown into a noteworthy platform for addressing regional security challenges and promoting a free, open, and all-encompassing Indo-Pacific. Despite the fact not overtly anti-China, the Quad's attention on issues such as maritime security, infrastructure development, and technological relationship is widely observed as a response to China's firm behavior in the region (Brewster, 2018, p. 72).

The Quad's joint military exercises, like the Malabar naval drills, underline its commitment to guaranteeing a rules-based maritime order. For India, the Quad offers an opportunity to improve its naval capabilities, reinforce partnerships with like-minded democracies, and project power in the Indo-Pacific. Though, India has pursued to balance its involvement in the Quad with its broader foreign policy objectives, evading overt antagonism on the way to China while preserving its strategic interests (Gupta, 2018, p. 98).

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is vital to India's strategic intentions, given its location at the junction of major sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). India's maritime strategy emphases on sustaining its dominance in the IOR while opposing China's growing existence. The Indian Navy's modernization hard work, including the attainment of aircraft carriers, submarines, and advanced surveillance systems, purpose to strengthen its maritime capabilities (Patel, 2020, p. 57).

India has also reinforced its partnerships with key IOR states, like Mauritius, Seychelles, and Maldives, to improve its strategic footprint. Agreements like the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with the United States and similar deals with Japan and Australia have further increased India's operational influence and interoperability with its partners (Singh, 2020, p. 65).

In response to China's BRI, India has hurled several regional connectivity initiatives to endorse sustainable and inclusive development. The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), including India, Iran, and Russia, purposes to connect South Asia with Central Asia and Europe, providing an alternative to traditional trade routes subjugated by China. Likewise, the India-Japan AAGC emphases on enhancing connectivity between Africa and Asia through infrastructure development, capacity building, and trade facilitation.

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

India's connectivity projects emphasize transparency, sustainability, and respect for sovereignty, contrasting with the perceived exploitative practices associated with China's BRI. These initiatives underscore India's commitment to fostering regional stability and economic growth while countering China's dominance.

The strategic rivalry between China and India in the Indo-Pacific presents both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, China's firm actions, like its mobilization of artificial islands in the South China Sea and its growing presence in the IOR, posture significant encounters to India's security and regional aims. On the other hand, India's active engagement with regional allies and multilateral stages offers prospects to shape the growing security architecture of the Indo-Pacific (Brewster, 2018, p. 84).

One of the main challenges for India is corresponding its strategic autonomy with its companies in the Indo-Pacific. Although India has extended its ties with the United States and other Quad members, it remains careful about being apparent as part of an anti-China alliance. This careful approach reflects India's wish to maintain its non-aligned practice while protecting its national interests.

Multilateral Arrangements

Although both countries identify the importance of these multilateral settings, their contradictory national interests sometimes limit their usefulness in determining bilateral disputes. For example, India has used BRICS and SCO summits to highlight worries about terrorism emanating from Pakistan, indirectly addressing China's support for Pakistan. On the contrary, China has leveraged its economic thump within these stands to advance its strategic objectives, frequently suspending India's concerns (Wilson, 2019, p. 22).

India and China also involve widely within global institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and the G20. Their association on issues like climate change, trade reforms, and sustainable development underlines their potential for constructive engagement in spite of underlying strains.

At the UN, both nations have backed for a multipolar world order that challenges Western supremacy. China as a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) grants it noteworthy influence in global decision-making, whereas India's long-standing aim for a permanent UNSC seat reproduces its desire for larger representation. Even though China has sporadically supported India's demands for UN reform, it has also represented as a roadblock, mainly in matters including India's candidature for permanent membership (Chandra, 2022, p. 12).

The G20 offers another platform for India and China to cooperate on global economic power. Both countries have highlighted the need for comprehensive growth, financial stability, and climate action.

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

India's presidency of the G20 in 2023 presented a unique occasion for the two nations to find shared ground on unrelenting global challenges, like post-pandemic recovery and the energy change. Though, their differing approaches to issues such as digital governance and trade liberalization frequently highlight the difficulties of their relationship (Gupta, 2018, p. 37).

One area where India and China have established constructive collaboration is climate change. As the world's two major developing economies and important emitters of greenhouse gases, their support is vital for global climate act. Both countries played essential roles in the Paris Agreement conferences, advocating for the value of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' (CBDR). This value identifies the historical responsibilities of developed nations while recognizing the development desires of emerging economies (Chandra, 2022, p. 14).

In spite of their shared promises to renewable energy and emissions decrease, India and China vary in their execution strategies. China's aggressive investments in renewable energy infrastructure, together with solar and wind power, difference with India's focus on harmonizing economic development with environmental sustainability. These differences occasionally lead to strains within global climate discussions, mainly when it comes to funding and technology transmissions (Patel, 2020, p. 49).

In the domain of global trade, India and China have often aligned their positions to challenge the dominance of Western economies. Both nations expressed for reforms in institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) to raise the concerns of developing countries.

Though, their economic association within multilateral settings is not without resistance. India's choice to opt out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a trade agreement severely influenced by China, underlines its concerns about trade inequities and the potential influence on domestic industries. Despite the fact China has sought to enlarge its influence through regional economic arrangements, India has ordered protecting its market and nurturing self-reliance through initiatives like 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) (Singh, 2020, p. 88).

In spite of their active involvement in multilateral stages, India and China face numerous challenges in leveraging these opportunities for bilateral conflict determination. One significant problem is the unevenness in their economic and political thump. China's larger economic capitals and strategic investments frequently enable it to govern multilateral discussions, parting India in a reactive situation (Gupta, 2018, p. 42).

Additional challenge is the opposing strategic significances of the two nations. Though China views multilateral stages as tools to advance its global drives, India frequently focuses on using these opportunities to address regional apprehensions, such as terrorism and development. This deviation

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

in priorities sometimes confines the scope of their partnership and weakens the effectiveness of multilateral activities (Kumar, 2020, p. 50).

Conclusion

The bond between China and India, binary of Asia's most dominant nations, is manifested by a dynamic chemistry of rivalry and cooperation. Historical battles, including the 1962 Sino-Indian War over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, have caused in decades of border clashes and diplomatic strains. In spite of efforts at negotiation, these issues persist unresolved, with armed borders and sporadic clashes, like the 2020 Galwan Valley incident, underlining the contests in their ties.

Economic interdependence, though, offers a counterpoise to these strains. Trade amongst China and India has grown meaningfully, with China becoming one of India's major trading partners. Although India remains worried about its trade deficit and China's BRI, economic relations-spanning sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and agriculture—have raised mutual dependencies that depress open conflict.

Strategic rivalry continues, fuelled by race for regional supremacy in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific. India's friendly relations with the United States and involvement in the Quad disparity with China's expanding impact through infrastructure investments and military occurrence in the Indian Ocean. However, multilateral platforms like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS offer opportunities for support on issues such as security, trade, and climate change.

To guarantee long-term peace and steadiness in Asia, China and India must accept sustainable conflict management tactics and shape mutual trust. Improved communication, transparency, and confidence-building actions are vital. By concentrating on common interests, like regional safety and economic progress, both nations can ease conflicts and back to regional prosperity. Though historical challenges continue, economic ties and multifaceted collaboration offer confidence for a constant and cooperative future amongst the two nations.

The formation of healthy communication devices is critical for preventing errors and mistakes, mainly in the context of complex border areas. Improved communication channels amongst diplomatic and military bureaucrats can ensure sensible resolution of potential battles. Re-entering and firming up existing border arrangements is essential for guaranteeing clarity and compliance. Treaties like the 1993 Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreement and the 2005 Protocol on Modalities for the execution of confidence-building techniques have given frameworks for handling border tensions. Analysts propose renegotiating these arrangements with a focus on defining the Line of Actual Control (LAC) more obviously and launching verification devices to ensure agreement (Singh, 2020, p. 45).

Neelam Sampang, Darjeeling Government College, neelamrai87@gmail.com

Addressing the trade disparity between India and China is additional critical degree for building mutual assurance. In 2021, India's trade shortage with China surpassed $69 billion, mainly due to its heavy dependence on Chinese imports of electronics, machinery, and chemicals (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2021). To decrease this disparity, India could emphasis on expanding its export carrier by promoting sectors such as pharmaceuticals, information technology, and agricultural products. (Kumar, 2020, p. 29). Encouraging cultural, educational, and academic interactions is a long-term policy for nurturing mutual understanding amongst India and China. Initiatives like student exchange curricula, combined research projects, and cultural centenaries can support bridge the perception gap amongst the two nations (Chandra, 2022, p. 18). Moreover, increasing tourism and media interactions can pay to flouting stereotypes and enhancing people-to-people connectivity.

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Sudha Lama, Darjeeling Government College, sudhalama4@gmail.com

Unsung Heroine of the Hills: Revisiting the Legacy of Putalimaya Devi Tamang (Poddar)

Sudha Lama, Darjeeling Government College, sudhalama4@gmail.com

Abstract

The resonance of India's struggle for Independence was felt in every nook and corner of the country and the participation of women was an important aspect of this movement. The women of Darjeeling Hills also took active part in the freedom movement and flared up a trail for others to follow. It also defied the Indian and colonial notion that identified women with quietness and domesticity. However, it is unfortunate that despite of women's great participation and their sacrifice in India's freedom struggle, women's role in the struggle for independence remains a much neglected area of research and study. Keeping in mind the role played by women in freedom struggle, the present paper will try to unravel the role of a woman activist from the Hills of North Bengal, Putali Maya Devi Tamang (Poddar) in India's freedom struggle who remains one of the lesser-known but significant figures in the history of India's freedom struggle, particularly in the context of the Darjeeling Hills and Gorkha Community. Her story represents a powerful yet overlooked narrative of indigenous resistance and ethnic identity within the broader anti-colonial movement. Despite the marginalization of her contributions in mainstream historical discourse, Putali Maya Devi played a critical role in mobilizing local communities, particularly women, against British colonial rule. This present study attempts to record and analyze how Putali Maya Devi Tamang (Poddar), a Gorkha lady and a heroine of the nationalist movement of India challenged not only the imperial order but also the social order of the day and the need to re-evaluate historical narratives to include such forgotten voices.

Keywords:

Putali Maya Tamang, Freedom Fighter, Darjeeling Hills, Women's participation, Forgotten History

INTRODUCTION:

The wave of anti-British movement was felt by every segment of the Indian society irrespective of class, caste, creed, race religion and sex. People from all over the country participated and contributed in this national struggle. Women formed an important section of the population to play an important role in national movements like the Non- Cooperation Movement, Quit India Movement etc. However,it is necessary to understand the origin of the freedom movement in

Sudha Lama, Darjeeling Government College, sudhalama4@gmail.com

Darjeeling Hills. Till the dawn of the twentieth century the mainstream Indian nationalism had practically no effect on Darjeeling Hills. The locals of Darjeeling, regarded as allured people by the British were not to be disturbed by any Indian issues or problems, and thus were watchful for any signs of restlessness[1]. The anti- partition movement of 1905 did not reach Darjeeling Hills.Yet, inspite of this political consciousness was stirred in in the minds and hearts of the people by the publication of Nepali Newspaper called *'GorkhaSathi'* by the people living in Calcutta whose main objective was to spread nationalist awakening among the Nepalese but was soon banned by the British in 1907[2]. As a summer capital, the British Government was extra cautious to keep Darjeeling free from any kind of anti- colonial political disturbances. It was basically due to the fact that Darjeeling provided huge source income for the European planters from tea, cinchona, forest and others[3].

Despite the best efforts by the British Government the people of Darjeeling could not be kept aloof from participating in the freedom struggle. Besides, the inflow of intellectual Nepalese from Benaras to Darjeeling also played a significant role in rousing political interest among the hill Nepalese[4]. So, from the year 1921-1922 we find the politically awakened Nepalese active participation in the movement[5]. In the Hills it was Dal bahadur Giri[6], popularly known as *Paharay Gandhi* (Gandhi of the Hills), an ardent follower of Gandhi and a Gorkha patriot, took the initiative to unite not only the tea garden labourers but the whole region against the colonial rule. He was thrown out of the Sikkim Durbar by the colonial agent on his denial of preparing a false certificate and taking bribe from the colonial agents[7.] He through his spirited personality inspired women to take part in freedom struggle and also recruited them for the purpose. He was also instrumental in building up the Congress organization in Darjeeling.A large number of people followed him and took active part in the Non-Cooperation Movement. He was also admired by nationalist leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subash Chandra Bose etc.But during that time women's participation in political movement was seen with disapproval as it was a complete contrast to the docile placement given to the women in hill within the colonial framework. As a result, many conservative families completely disassociated themselves from such political activities[8]. And also, women in Nepali society at that time hardly received education or any sort of facilities that would develop them. There was no system of inter- caste marriage and if anyone dared to do that then she faced social boycott within thesociety[9]. They were isolated and confined to a room even after marriage. Thus, the women found themselves crushed under the patriarchal structure of the society.Keeping in mind the prevailing situation, the participation of Putali Maya Devi Tamang (Poddar) in the freedom struggle is highly commendable.

Sudha Lama, Darjeeling Government College, sudhalama4@gmail.com

Born on 14th February, 1920 at Burdwan Road (known as Dr. Kumar Road), Kurseong in Darjeeling District, Putali Maya Tamang was thedaughter of Madan Bahadur Tamang, an employee in Kurseong Sub divisional office. Of the four daughters of Madan Bahadur Tamang Putali Maya was the eldest[10]. She received her education at Scott Mission Schoolin Kurseong[11] which she left after standard nine. There are no extensive written documents on her life and her involvement in freedom struggle. Her life story is preserved in a biography written by her husband Sarju Prasad Poddar entitled "*Swatantrata Sangram Darjeeling Oue Ma*" published by himself from Kurseong[12]. Besides, M.P. Rai in his book "*Bir Jati Ko Amar Kahani*" has written a chapter on her, Suryamani Sharma has also written about her in an edited book "*Hamra Swatantrata Senani*". Apart from this the Netaji Institute of Asian Studies situated at Giddhe Pahar, Kurseong has also preserved the life of Putali Maya Tamang Poddar as:

"Putali Maya was born on 14th February at Kurseong. Putali Maya Devi Poddar was attracted towards freedom movement when she was a school student. In 1937 when a branch of All India Congress Committee was formed at Kurseong Putali Devi became its active member. At the instance of Sarju Prasad she formed Harijan Samaj in 1939 and started night school for Harijans. Same year she also formed Mahila Samaj. Om 13th August 1942 while she was leading a procession of Quit India Movement, she was arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one and half years. Having been released from jail she was not allowed to enter her paternal house and Sarju married her and gave her shelter. She passed away in 1st December 1984."[13]

After the death of Dal Bahadur Giri in 1924, the Congress activities in the hills seemed to have subsided. The British Government had now become more vigilant and were ever ready to stop any political movement for independence from entering the hills. As a result the freedom movement had come to a standstill. But the feelings of nationalism had not diminished in the hearts of the people and local leaders like *Janga Bir Sapkota, Gaga Tshering Dukpa, Pushpa Kumar Ghissing, Agam Singh Giri, Ramchandra Giri* and others kept the light of nationalism burning in the hearts of the people and were working in their respective capacities to keep alive the dream of Giri in the region.

During 1934-35, Sarju Prasad Poddar[14], a youth Congress leader adorned with Khaki Kurta pajama arrived at Kurseong from Bihar with a view to mobilize the young generation and to plant the seed of nationalism among them and to revive the nationalist movement in the Darjeeling hills and organize a Congress Committee. He had dedicated his life for the sake of his motherland and set up a Night School in a garage (Near *Dharmasala* -Burdwan Road) with the help of Harish Chettri, friend of Putali Maya Tamang, Badame Ghissing and Kalu Singh Gahatraj. It started with nine poor kids, the main intention of which was to provide knowledge on freedom movement[15]. A girl of 15 years old,

Sudha Lama, Darjeeling Government College, sudhalama4@gmail.com

still studying in Scott Mission School and with the feelings of patriotism stirring in her mind and soul, Putali Maya Devi met Sarju Prasad and expressed her desire to participate in the freedom struggle and work for the emancipation of her motherland. But it was declined by Sarju Prasad as she was too young to join the party and asked her to return to school and continue her studies[16]. Also, during that time Congress Party had no office so could not enroll any members in the organization.

Putali Maya Devi continued developing unwavering inclination of serving the country and was enthusiastic to interact with the Congress leaders. The Congress Party and its members at that time was considered anti- government so the common people avoided it[17]. On 18th November 1937 with the help of local patriots like Pratiman Singh Lama[18], Savitri Deviand others a branch of the Congress Committee was opened in Kurseong with Pratiman Singh Lama as its President. Young Putalimaya Devi became a congress member. Thereafter she started playing an active part in party activities, but her path was not free from hurdles. Firstly, her father was not happy with her association with the party as he was threatened of dire consequences if he failed to keep his daughter away from Congress activities. But as Putali Maya had made up her mind to serve the country, no amount of coercion could deviate her determination. She was also offered a nursing job at a local hospital which she refused to accept[19] and continued with her association with the congress. Secondly, the societal norms at that time was not favourable for women to come out openly in public. Her family members and relatives objected to her outdoor activities and wanted to confine her within the four walls of the house. But nothing could deter her from the path which she had chosen. Her struggle was notmerely to oust imperial subjugation but also against the established social order that she realized was an artificial creation to subjugate a large segment of the society[20].

For the socio- economic upliftment of the Harijans she in 1939 founded the Harijan Samaj where the people were taught about the ill effects if alcohol and also encouraged to give up drinking. She even started a night school at Harijan barrack where the Harijans were inspired to take up education. Howeverher primary objective was to instill in them the feeling of nationalism and to create an awareness about freedom struggle. She also realized that women too needed a platform through which they could participate equally with men in the freedom struggle of the country. She was farsighted enough not to just restrict the fervor of patriotism among the adult men and women but made women the messengers of the message of patriotism to be taken back home and to inspire the minds of the children so that the entire community gets motivated and inspired by the feelings of nationalism[21]. With this objective in mind she formed a women organization called the Mahila Samity/ women's organization that produced khadi clothes and were taught to spread patriotic feelings among the children.It also looked towards the issue of health and hygiene[22]. In the samaj the

Sudha Lama, Darjeeling Government College, sudhalama4@gmail.com

women were also given training in charkha spinning and mother and child care. Women from hilly areas of Darjeeling started to promote the nationalist movement keeping photograph of Gandhiji with them. Along with the Harijan women and their children Putali Maya Devi conducted *Prabhat pheris* before dawn where they used to walk around the town singing "*Raghupati Ragava Raja Ram*" to rouse patriotic feelings of the people. As the time passed a change in people's attitude was visible who previously were scared to even utter the name of Congress, now started becoming its member. Throughout the entire hill region of Darjeeling District, the Congress Party began to hold an important position. All these activities made her notorious to the British Government that she was ordered to put stop to her activities to which she retorted that if the administration thought that her social welfare activities were anti- government, then they could take stern action against her.

On 8th August Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement in Bombay. But Gandhiji and other top leaders of the Congress were arrested on 9th August, 1942[23]. The news of Gandhi's arrest spread like a wild fire and led to widespread movement all over India. Darjeeling too came under the grip of the movement and the Congress activists in different parts of Darjeeling Hills organized a huge protest rally in support of Quit India Movement. In Kurseong on 12th August, a large public meeting was organized in which Sarju Prasad Poddar arrested. After that on 13th August, 22 years old Putali Maya devi led a huge protest procession which started from *haat bazar* and was supposed to end at *chowk bazar*. Huge number of people took part in the procession shouting slogans like '*Bande Mataram*', '*Bharat Mata ki Jai*' and '*Gandhiji ki Jai*'. But the procession was intercepted by the police and Putali Maya devi along with Harish Chettri, Janak Ram Kurmi, Shri Mangal Singh Lama and Shri Chand Gupta were arrested. This incident led to a mass protest by the people who followed them till the police station and surrounded it demanding the release of their leaders or to arrest them too. The startled police administration took the arrested leaders from the backdoor. They were taken to Darjeeling jail where the administration agreed to release them providedthey plead for pardon and sign a bond of acceptance to not participate in any political activity thereafter. Putali Maya devi and Janak Ram Kurmi refused to sign the bond as a result of which they were sent to rigorous imprisonment for 18 months. Initially she was kept with other prisoners and then she started a hunger strike demanding all the provisions that a *Rajnaitik Kaidi* (political prisoner) receives. The jail authorities thought over it and later considered her demands. During her stay in jail she spent most of her time in reciting *Bhagavad Gita* and *charkha Spinning*[24]. Sarju Prasad Poddar was shifted to Rajshahi jail[25].

She was released from jail in 1944 but her health condition deteriorated due to her long stay in jail. But her family did not welcome her out of fear of police raid because of her presence. Her parents

Sudha Lama, Darjeeling Government College, sudhalama4@gmail.com

gave her an ultimatum to either leave the Congress or the family. But since Putali Maya Devi had made up her mind to dedicate her life to the motherland she chose not to disassociate herself from the movement. Sarju Prasad Poddar was also released from jail in the same year in the month of April. It was during this time Harish Chettri, her old friend and other local Congress leaders who were compassionate towards Putali Maya Devi advised Sarju Prasad Poddar to marry her as both followed the same path of fighting against the British. Sarju Prasad hesitated in the beginning since he had dedicated his life for the cause of his country but later agreed. The marriage of this national minded couple became a matter of controversy. Many locals of Kurseong protested against it as it was an inter- caste marriage and believed that it went against their customs and traditions[26]. A large number of people surrounded the *Gorkha Jana Pushtakalaya* (library), Kurseong (1944) holding *Khukuri* (a traditional dagger like weapon) in their hands to stop the marriage ceremony. Putali Maya Devi's parents were also not happy with this marriage as Sarju Prasad Poddar was a Bihari and Putali Maya Devi was a Nepali woman. Two persons by the name of *Hanseh* and *Bhombey*[27] who were the local dadaof the region were instrumental in instigating the people to go against the marriage of Putali Maya Devi and Sarju Prasad Poddar. They said, *"Herui Tyo Madisele Kasari hamro Nepali Cheli lai Biye Gardo Rahecha"* (Let's see how this Bihari marry our Nepali daughter)[28.] From amongst the Nepali community Mrs. B.T. Pradhan supported the marriage and stood outside the library holding a naked *Khukuri* in her hand chasing away all protesters. She said, "*Harau Katiko Babu ko Chora Rahecha, Mopani Gorkha Hui*" (let's see who has so much of courage to stop the marriage, I am also a Gorkha)[29]. On the day of marriage many local people protested and also threatened those who attended the marriage. T.B.Pradhan and her daughter Hira Pradhan and niece Chandra Pradhanplayed an important role in getting this marriage happen but also helped them physically and financially.After their marriage they had to face acute financial crisis and they were involved in national movement without any source of income. There were days when they went without food and yet continued their activities on behalf of freedom movement[30]. On 15th August 1947, Putali Maya's dream became a reality when India became independent from the British. Thereafter, she became engaged in social work in Kurseong for the cause of female tea garden workers. She also took up the task of working for the downtrodden masses who considered her their ray of hope. She was popularly called *"Mataji"* and was respected by all. For her devoted service towards the motherland she was honored by the Government of India with the "*Tamrapatra*" and "*Swatantrata Senani Pension*" until her death[31] on 15th August, 1972. She rightfully deserves all the titles, honors and awards bestowed upon her [32]. In 1984 she became the President of the *Mahakuma Congress Committee* of Kurseong sub- division and the Vice- President of Darjeeling District Committee.

Sudha Lama, Darjeeling Government College, sudhalama4@gmail.com

Dedicated freedom fighter and a social reformer, Putali Maya Tamang died on 1st December 1984 in Siliguri after prolonged ill health.[33]

Conclusion:

The story of Putali Maya Devi Tamang stands as a powerful reminder that the Indian freedom struggle was not solely shaped by the well- documented figures of the plains, but also by brave individuals from the hills, forests, and borderlands whose sacrifices remain largely unrecognized. As a Gorkha woman from the Darjeeling Hills, Putali Maya Devi Tamang defied both colonial oppression and patriarchal norms to become a symbol of grassroot resistance. Her courage and commitment to the cause of freedom inspired many within her community and challenged the dominant narrativesof nationalism that often excluded voices from the margins. Recognizing her contributions is not just about honoring a forgotten heroine, but also about reclaiming a more inclusive, pluralistic understanding of India's path to independence. Her legacy urges us to remember that the spirit of resistance thrived in theevery corner of the sub- continent, including the mist- covered hills of Darjeeling, where woman like PutaliMaya Devi quietly shaped the destiny of the nation.

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Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

Shiv Kumar Rai: A Glance into His Life and Works

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

Abstract

Shiv Kumar Rai was a truly versatile figure — a gifted short story writer, novelist, poet, and the recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978, among many other honours. His career spanned in various fields which included teaching at Pushpa Rani Roy Higher Secondary School in Kurseong, to editing the magazine Himalchuli, and playing a leading role in the early days of the All India Gorkha League. He was also actively involved with Akashvani Kurseong as a producer.

Known for his deep insight into the human mind, Rai was not only a celebrated playwright but also played a significant role in politics. He became a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1948 and later served as Deputy Labour Minister in 1952. Alongside his political and literary contributions, he dedicated himself to social work, especially helping the Nepali refugees from Burma. What sets Shiv Kumar Rai apart from his contemporaries is the wide range of his contributions— in literature, politics, and society. This paper is a modest attempt to explore and highlight the different dimensions of his remarkable life and works.

Key Words- *Shiv Kumar Rai, Nepali literature, Darjeeling hills, politics, social worker, refugees.*

INTRODUCTION

Shiv Kumar Rai was a profound storyteller who defined an entire era in Nepali literature. Although he explored various forms of writing — including poetry, drama, and essays — it is his short stories that truly made him stand out. Known for his powerful narratives and deeper understanding of human emotions, he remains one of the most respected voices in Nepali storytelling. He was not only a writer, a poet, but a multifaceted personality. He was born and brought up in Rhenok, eastern district of Sikkim, on 26th April 1919. Shiv Kumar Rai was the eldest son of late Dhojbir Rai and late Narmaya Rai. His father Dhojbir Rai was a post master during the British era. At that time Sikkim was a separate country. The ancestors of Shiv Kumar Rai were the Dumi Rais who lived along the Rawa River under Khotang District in the mountainous region of eastern, Nepal.[1]

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

EDUCATION: Shiv Kumar Rai's primary education started in Tibet. At that time his father Dhojbir Rai was transferred from Sikkim to Farijong post office in Tibet. His initial education started in a local Tibetan school. As a result of his father's frequent transfer to different places he could not complete his early primary education in one school, he had to change many schools namely Nagari Primary School, Ghoom M.E. School, L.P School Lebong, and Girls School, Kaleybung. He studied from IlI to VI standard at M.E. School in Kurseong and VII and VIII standards in a coaching school run by Atul Vihari Roy.[2] Shiv Kumar Rai also took admission at the prestigious Darjeeling Government High School from IX standard and passed his Matriculation Examination from there. He was lucky enough to come under the guidance of the three jewels of Nepali literature-Dharnidhar Sharma, Surya Bikram Gewali and Dr. Parasmani Pradhan who became a constant source of inspiration throughout his life.[3] He passed his I.A. Examination from St. Joseph's College Darjeeling and B.A. from prestigious St. Xaviers College, Calcutta in 1941.

SOCIAL LIFE: After completing his graduation, Shiv Kumar Rai returned to Kurseong — but his return was far from ordinary. The region was going through a period of turmoil, with the socio-political and economic landscape deeply affected by the ongoing Second World War. Rai, being a keen observer and socially conscious individual, could not remain indifferent to these developments. The whole district of Darjeeling was under the grip of crisis - crisis of food, kerosene and other essential commodities of daily life. To add to the misery of the people, Bengal faced a terrible famine in 1943 - 1944.[4] As a relief measure the government of India had set up Civil Supply Department in different parts of Darjeeling district. Some of the friends of Shiv Kumar Rai joined the Civil Supply Department either as Food Supply Inspector or as short service commissioned officers. But Shiv Kumar Rai chose to devote himself completely to the service of people and along with his few friends started a crusade against those businessmen selling goods of daily necessities in black market.

A new political scenario developed after 1930s when Japan set out to pursue a belligerent foreign policy. She cut off all the railway lines that linked her with China. But its consequence was not in her favour as China was least affected by this. China continued to get necessary supplies via Burma. So, Japan attacked Burma in 1942. This put Burma in a very strenuous position and there was shortage of food everywhere. It became very difficult for the Burmese Government: to cope with problem of food shortage. It was during this time that the Burmese put forwarded the slogan "Burma for Burmese"! [5] This political development in Burma put the Nepalese, who had settled in different parts of Burma in a very difficult position. They were compelled to leave the country and many of them came to India as refugees. They entered India through Nagaland, Assam and from there to

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

Bengal. The Government opened temporary relief camps for such refugees in different parts of the country.

One such relief camp was also set up in Kurseong. Mr. D N Pradhan was its secretary. Shiva Kumar Rai selflessly worked for the resettlement of those refugees who were expelled from Burma. He together with other volunteers provided food, medicine, clothes and other daily necessities to the refugees. One of the victims of the Burmese policy "Burma for Burmese," Mr. Dev Sharma writes, "It was in the month of April 1942, time between 10 am and 11am, a British district official visited our home with Mrs. Albert and a short, fair, handsome, sweet spoken gentleman dressed in kurta pyjama. My uncle's eldest son, Shri Luxman Sharma was also with them. After their visit, we started receiving ration, clothes and medicines for three months. We were also given some financial assistance"[6] It was only in 1945 that Mr. Dev Prasad Sharma, a witness to the above incident realised that the gentleman dressed in kurta pajamas was none other than Shiva Kumar Rai. Even before this, he had been serving people under the umbrella of Gorkha Jan Pustakalaya which was established in 1913.[7]

Later he worked closely with another social organisation called Gorkha Association. Through this association, the young Shiva Kumar Rai became familiar with the problems of the people. He proved himself as a hardworking and selfless servant of the society. He together with other members of the association came forward to solve local problems and made people aware of the necessity to save money as he has seen many Nepalese adopting an extravagant life despite their poverty. This step of Shiva Kumar Rai and his associates greatly arrayed the business community and his associates of misleading the people. They expressed their dissatisfaction by lodging a complaint against Shiv Kumar Rai and his associates of the Gorkha Association to the authorities. The British district magistrate and other district officials summoned Shiv Kumar Rai and his associates and warned them of dreadful consequences if they continued to avert people from making purchase in the market. It was during this time that Shiv Kumar Rai realised the need of a powerful organisation to fight against the injustices meted out against the native people. But it was not an easy task. The people at that time ware very ignorant of their rights and awareness among them was the need of the hour. Shiva Kumar Rai decided to launch an awareness programme in different parts of the district. He accompanied by D. B Lama and D.B Chettri visited Darjeeling and Kalimpong where they met several Gorkha leaders like Damber Singh Gurung, Randhir Subba, Nar Prasad Kumar and Tikaram Sharma etc. Damber Singh Gurung had already became the leader of the Gorkhas. He also played an important role in the formation of All India Gorkha League. He had become so popular among the people that in 1948 he won the MLA elections and was made Deputy Labour Minister in 1952.[8] In 1970, the Kurseong branch of Sri Satya Seva Samiti was established, Shiv Kumar Rai became

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

associated with it and dedicated himself to the service of the people.[9] A person who dedicates their life to serving others holds a special place in society and Shiv Kumar Rai rightfully earned that place through his selfless actions and contributions.

POLITICAL LIFE: Shiv Kumar Rai entered politics with a clear and singular purpose — to serve his people. His involvement in social service had already brought him closer to the struggles and aspirations of the community. As an educated and dynamic young man, he soon realized that working solely through non-political platforms like the Gorkha Association would not be enough to secure the rights and recognition his people deserved. He understood that meaningful change required political engagement, and this insight marked the beginning of his journey into active politics.

The Government of India Act 1935 recognized Darjeeling as a partially excluded area with the provision of a representative from this area in the Bengal Assembly and Damber Singh Gurung was elected as the first Gorkha MLA. But every time his voice remained unheard among the 250 members of the Legislative Assembly. Like Shiv Kumar Rai, Dambar Singh Gurung too felt the need of a forceful organisation to fight for the rights of the Gorkhas. Being an active member of the Gorkha Association, Shiv Kumar Rai played an important role in creating 'All India Gorkha League' under the leadership of Damber Singh Gurung. The proposal for the creation of 'All India Gorkha League' was passed at the historic meeting at Rink Cinema Hall, Darjeeling on 15th May, 1943, which was presided over by Hanjit Dewan Rai. In this meeting Shiva Kumar Rai proposed the formation of All India Gorkha league as –"Since the condition of the Gorkhas scattered in different parts of India is miserable and their political status uncertain, their future is in danger. Hence, I, hereby propose that an organisation by the name of 'All India Gorkha League' be formed so that it can protect the interest and the rights of the Gorkhas in case of a political change in the country."[10] The proposal was seconded by Shri Lal Bahadur Nepali from Mateli.

 Thus Shiv Kumar Rai was not only the member of the Gorkha League but was also one of the main facilitators.[11] The Gorkhas of Assam have not been able to forget him ever today for bringing about political awareness among them through this platform. In 1944 when there was an attempt to drive away the Nepalese from Assam, this political organisation has a history of protecting the self-respect and identity of the Gorkhas. As a result of which the Nepalese could not be deported.[12] In 1948, he was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly in a by-election to the Darjeeling seat of the Bengal Legislative Assembly on the vacancy created after the death of Dambar Singh Gurung. In 1952, he was elected to the post of Deputy Minister of Labour in Bengal Legislative Assembly in a coalition government with the National Congress under Bidhan Chandra Roy's cabinet under the

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

provision that each ministry could send a representative under the constitution of independent India.[13]

Though Shiv Kumar Rai worked tirelessly for the betterment of the people his life was not free from blames and accusations. Around 1953, there was a rise in the price of ration supplied to the workers. As a mark of protest a strike was called jointly by Darjeeling Chia Kaman Sangh and Darjeeling Chia Kaman Majdoor Union. Bidhan Chandra Roy was in favour of rise and Shiva Kumar Rai being a member of his cabinet was suspected in supporting the price rise of the ration. But the strike turned out to be a violent one leaving six workers injured in the police firing that followed. Soon everywhere there were voices demanding the resignation of Shiva Kumar Rai from the post of Deputy Labour Minister.

On 27th May, 1955, Shiva Kumar Rai and three other members of the Legislative Assembly; Shri Shiv Kumar Rai, Shri D.B.S Ghatraj, Shri George Mahbert received an order from the secretary of the All India Gorkha League to break their association with the Congress. But Shiva Kumar Rai had full faith in the Congress Party and refused to comply with the order. As a result, all three members were expelled from the party on the ground of disobedience to the directive of the mandate of the party. Shiva Kumar Rai remained silent and did not say anything against the accusations put forwarded against him. His silence triumphed and he was able to successfully complete his tenure as a Deputy Labour minister from 1952-1957. But in 1957 general election, he was defeated as a Congress candidate from the Jorebunglow Kurseong Constituency.[14] After working with trade unions for a few years, in 1960, Shiv Kumar Rai retired from politics completely. His contemporary party workers felt that considering his personality, talent, nature, ideals and principles towards his life, politics was never his subject.

SHIV KUMAR RAI AS A LITTERATEUR

Shiv Kumar Rai's contribution in the field of literature is noteworthy. Though Shiv Kumar Rai wrote across various genres of literature, it is as a storyteller that he is best remembered and celebrated. Although the writer made his first foray into literature through the poetry genre, he became famous as a remarkable storyteller as three of his early stories were published in 'Sarada' magazine. Later the Nepali literary world recognised him as a storyteller after his stories were published successively in magazines like 'Udaya', 'Sahityasrot', 'Yuguani', 'Bharti' and 'Khoji.'Later the publication of five other story collections made him one of the main pillars of Nepali storytelling.

STORIES: Shiv Kumar Rai is famous in Nepali literary world as storyteller. He came to be recognised as a storyteller with the publication of his first story collection '*Frontier*'(1951). The

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

publication of four other story collections - *Yatri* (1956), *Khare* (1976), *Bada Dinner* (1988) and finally *Saat Katha* (1994) made him one of the main pillars of Nepali fiction. These stories portray social realism and are a blend of romanticism, idealistic joy and give importance to self expression, patriotism, historical consciousness and psychological truth. They relect both contemporary and timeless experiences of joy-sorrow, life-death, hopes, despair, poverty, wealth and the struggles of ordinary people.[15]Apart from these stories, another story titled '*Security Act*' was published in the magazine '*Bharati*' edited by Parasmani Pradhan on Jeth 2007 (Jeth is the name of Nepali month). *Maile Jantu Paleko Thea*[16] and *Anantasita* are his other stories that are found in "*Sai Rupiya ko note.*". '*Anantasita*' is an essay type of narrative. Critics have put forwarded different opinions regarding the story. Jiwan Namding, one of the famous literary figures in Nepali literature has described the story to be a personal essay.[17] Another notable literary figure Dr. Lakhi Devi Sundas is of the opinion that due to pressure of the politics we get more of his stories than poetry. *Anantasita* was published in the first issue of the magazine *Bharati* in 1949. This poem has a mystical spiritual feel and can be called a prose poetry.[18]

In his five stories collection there are forty-two stories and together with the three stories mentioned above a total of forty-five stories are available. His historical story Prithivi Narayan Shah broadcasted by Radio Kurseong is unavailable. Likewise, Asit Rai too thinks that there are many more stories of Shiv Kumar Rai that are not available.[19] His story *Chaata* (to give in a brief sentence -what was its literary merit) won the prestigious *Ratnashri Award* in Nepal in 1969.[20] The story is a satire on contemporary society and it reflects the life and struggle of a teacher who due to his meagre salary is unable to buy even an umbrella. It also portrays the untold miseries and hardships faced by a teacher in the society. It is an ironical story reflecting contemporary truth of the society during that time.

NOVELS: The only novel written by Shiv Kumar Rai is '*Dak Bangla*' published in 1957 from Darjeeling. He has dedicated this novel to his predecessor novelist Rup Narayan Singh . The first edition of Dak Bangla was printed in 1957 and in the second edition was printed in 1963. The novel '*Dak Bangla*' was written taking inspiration from Rup Narayan Singh's '*Bhramar*'. The novel '*Dak Bangla*' has a very sad ending as opposite to Bhramar. The novel Dak Bangla is very popular among the readers. The novelist had worked as a volunteer and lived amongst the Nepalese refugees from Burma. Therefore, he had gained first-hand experience about the trouble and hardships faced by them. The description of the horrors of the Second World War and the hardships of the refugees in the novel '*Dak Bangla*' has made it very touching and extraordinary. Therefore, the novel can be considered a unique achievement of the Nepali literature.

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

POEMS: Shiv Kumar Rai began his literary journey with poetry, marking his first foray into the world of literature. His first printed poem titled '*Birahi Ko Basanta*', is found in the Rup Narayan Singh edited magazine '*Khoji*'.[21] His another poem *Jaba Basanta Pari Vihar Garcha* was published in '*Bharti*'. It describes about the beautiful and blissful spring season. This poem was later published in Sammelan Kavita anthology. He had also composed many songs. His songs have been broadcasted in Akashvani Kurseong. The fact that Shiv Kumar Rai was not only a poet but also a lyricist has been supported by Manbir Singh, one of Rai's colleague and a well-known musician.[22] *Dafay Chari* was the only poetry work that was published in 1954. Its introduction was written by Dharmaraj Thapa. This fragmentary poetry of 60 stanzas written in 'jhyaurechhanda' is the story of two birds (Dafay). Written in very poignant style this short poem reflects the humanist philosophy of the local environment.

DRAMA: Shiva Kumar Rai also excelled in the genre of drama. A total of seven of his plays have been published in various magazines and drama collections. Few of the dramas written by Shiva Kumar Rai are *Swarga ma Hulchul*, *Nefa Morcha, Satya to path tira, Tin Gajadi ko Chandra Lok Yatra, Yamraj to Samayasa, Lule, Holi to ko Goli* etc. These dramas reflected the different problems faced by the tea-garden people and also highlighted the intellectual, physical, socio-political, economic, educational backwardness faced by the contemporary Darjeeling society. By criticizing and highlighting the negativities existing in the society, it did try to bring consciousness among the people and was indeed reformist in nature. Meanwhile it also portrayed the inclusiveness of Darjeeling society where different cultures thrive together.[23] Apart from the above-mentioned drama, few of his dramas were also broadcasted in radio. According to Dr. Jiwan Namdung, a well-known figure in Nepali literature, a total of number twenty plays has been broadcasted in radio[24] -*Bhai Tika, Saheed ko Atma, Tadpe Pachi, Dak Bangla ko Ek Raat, Prem ko Saheed, Purba ko Ujjwal Tara Aaja ko Rip Van Winkle* to name a few. In 1947, the playwright won the hearts of the audience when he wrote a short play, *Yamraj ko Darbar Ma Jiudo Manche* on behalf of Pushpa Rani Roy Memorial School where he was teaching.[25]

He worked as the producer of Akashvani Kurseong from 1962-1982.[26] The successful airing of the programme "Sambhu Dai ko Hulaak&" made him famous among his listeners as 'Sambhudai'.[27] The essays that he has written reflects the special characteristics and achievements of Nepali language and literature. He has presented some interesting and understandable facts about the original characteristics of Nepali language, its usage, diversity and peculiarities, structure and its nature.[28] *Bisauni Thego, Bagdhara ko Prayog, Amukaran Shabda* etc, were a few of his essays. It is

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

impossible to give a detailed and proper presentation of the works of such a talented person, so it is only presented in an introductory form.

From 1982-1991 Shiva Kumar Rai worked as an editor of the only Nepali daily "Himalchuli", and served the society through his writings. He wrote many highly intellectual, profound and equally interesting articles about the political, linguistic and educational problems of the time which greatly attracted the attention of the readers. It also added a new dimension to journalism in Nepali Language.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS: The works of Shiv Kumar Rai have won for him many prestigious awards –

1) Ratna Shri Purashkar - 1968

2) Akashvani Natya Purashkar - 1976

3) Sahitya Academy Purashkar - 1978

4) Diyalo Purashkar - 1979

5) Agam Singh Giri Purashkar - 1995

6) Parijat Smriti Purashkar– 1995

This great writer breathed his last on 22nd July, 1995. Shiv Kumar Rai's sudden demise came as a shock to the entire Nepali-speaking world. Yet, even in death, he remained as revered and impactful as he was in life. His mortal remains covered with the flags of Congress Party as well as that of the Gorkha League which had expelled him in 1995 was kept in Gorkha Jan Pushtakalayaso, Darjeeling, so that the people could pay their last homage to him.[29]

Many eminent personalities paid tribute to the great man. All of them had one unanimous opinion that Shiv Kumar Rai can never die.[30] On 29th July, 1995 a condolence meeting was organised by Nepali Sahitya Sammelan in Darjeeling presided over by Dr. Shri Babulal Pradhan and R.R Lama who spoke about the greatness of Shiva Kumar Rai as a litterateur.[31] Lest people might forget the man who dedicated his whole life to the service of his fellow beings, some of his admirers and well-wishers formed an organisation called Shiv Kumar Rai Smriti Academy.[32] The most important achievement of this Academy was the publication of Shiva Kumar Rai Grantha. Divided into five sections, this book contains 55 articles bringing out into light many aspects of his work and multifaceted personality. This stands as a testament to the lasting place Shiv Kumar Rai has secured in the hearts of all who cherish literature.

CONCLUSION

Shiv Kumar Rai's life stands as a shining example of how literature, politics, and social service can come together to shape the destiny of a community. His literary works continue to resonate with

Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

readers for their depth, sensitivity, and sharp understanding of human emotions, while his political and social engagements reveal a man deeply committed to justice, equality, and the upliftment of the marginalized — particularly the Gorkha and Nepali-speaking populations of India. His contributions have left an enduring impact, and his legacy continues to inspire scholars, writers, and social thinkers alike.

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Sanjogta Bomzan, Darjeeling Government College, sanjogtabomzan85@gmail.com

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Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

Esteem, Confidence, and the Nature of Selfhood: A Philosophical Exploration

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

Abstract

This article explores the multifaceted construct of self-esteem, tracing its conceptual development through philosophical and psychological lenses while situating its relevance within the Indian socio-cultural context. Beginning with a critical examination of the philosophical roots of self-esteem, from classical thought to modern psychological interpretations, the study outlines how self-esteem has evolved as a key component in understanding human motivation, identity, and well-being. The article further provides a detailed classification of self-esteem, distinguishing between the different levels of self-esteem, and related constructs, and examines their manifestations across various stages of development. In doing so, it highlights how self-esteem is not a fixed trait but a dynamic, contextually influenced phenomenon. Special emphasis is placed on the Indian perspective, where self-esteem is understood not merely as an individual psychological attribute but as a culturally embedded construct shaped by family structures, educational systems, social hierarchies, and spiritual traditions. Furthermore, the study aims to identify practical and culturally sensitive guidelines for fostering healthy self-esteem. These recommendations are directed toward educators, parents, and community leaders and emphasize the importance of creating environments that nurture belongingness, personal agency, individual uniqueness, and exposure to positive role models. By integrating theoretical insights with practical applications, this article contributes to a more nuanced and culturally grounded understanding of self-esteem and offers pathways for its positive development in diverse contexts.

Keywords: *self, self-esteem, self-confidence, ātman, being*

Introduction

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda traveled to Chicago to deliver a lecture that would soon resonate across the world. His words, delivered with extraordinary clarity, passion, and conviction, marked a turning point, not only for Indian philosophy on the global stage but also for India's spiritual identity. Despite having limited formal education and no professional training, Vivekananda's magnetic presence and unwavering belief in his message made him arguably the greatest Indian speaker of all time. More than a century later, that iconic moment continues to fill every Indian heart with pride, serving as a timeless

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

reminder of how belief in oneself can move the world. His striking appearance, attitude, and overall performance led to a grand success of his lecture that captured the audience's attention and continues to live in the hearts of millions to this day. Evidently, there are several reasons that make him a person of self-confidence. Firstly, he lives in alignment with his beliefs, even under pressure, which often reflects his inner confidence. Secondly, he is capable of making bold decisions despite fear or uncertainty, an unmistakable sign of self-confidence. Thirdly, individuals like him are able to build a life and uphold beliefs that inspire others to act with bravery and authenticity, which is a strong indication of self-assurance. Even today, his accomplishments are remembered and cited by notable personalities, including the Prime Minister of India, who recalls Swami Vivekananda's Chicago speech with deep respect to inspire and connect with the people of the nation.[1] It is evident that Swami Vivekananda had a spark in his soul capable of igniting the same fire in others. The most profound influence on his thought is unmistakably rooted in the teachings of Swami Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramhaṃsa, his friend, philosopher, and guide, and the philosophical wisdom of the Upaniṣads. To some extent, he was also fascinated with the philosophy of Buddhism and Christianity. Nonetheless, due to his deep interest in the philosophical teachings of Vedānta, he is recognized as a Vedāntist. The philosophical teachings of Vedānta played a transformative role in Swami Vivekananda's intellectual and spiritual development. It first imparted to him the profound knowledge of the '*self*' – the realization of the true, unchanging essence beyond the physical and mental layers of existence. This foundational understanding became the gateway through which he grasped the deeper value of his own being, ultimately fostering a strong sense of self-esteem and inner confidence. In this way, Vedānta not only enlightened him with metaphysical insight but also empowered his sense of purpose and identity.

Henceforth, in the outer world, some people appear positive, confident, successful, influential, and thus inspiring; on the other hand, some lack these qualities. While millions of people lived during the time of Swami Vivekananda, he possessed a unique inner quality that made him stand out. Undoubtedly, he exhibited a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem, which was evident in his demeanor. It is undeniable that concepts like self-esteem and self-confidence have evolved significantly from ancient times to the modern era, shaped by cultural, psychological, and philosophical developments. Nevertheless, the foundational insights offered by traditional philosophers still contain a wealth of untapped wisdom. Their writings contain subtle and profound understanding of the self that go beyond contemporary interpretations, suggesting that many deeper truths about human identity, inner strength,

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

and self-realization remain to be fully explored and appreciated. Therefore, to develop a comprehensive understanding of these concepts, it is essential to begin with a clear examination of their definitions.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is broadly understood as an individual's comprehensive assessment of their own worth, encompassing both cognitive evaluations and affective responses related to the self. It involves one's beliefs about personal abilities and limitations, as well as the emotional significance attached to those beliefs. Self-esteem functions as a central element of the self-concept, integrating thoughts and feelings that individuals hold about them. It significantly influences motivation, behavior, and psychological well-being. In essence, self-esteem reflects the degree to which a person values, accepts and appreciate themselves.

The concept of self-esteem is deeply rooted in both philosophical and psychological traditions. A pivotal maxim that has significantly influenced this discourse is the Delphic injunction "Know thyself" (*Gnôthi Seauton*), prominently inscribed at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Widely regarded as one of the most enduring aphorisms of ancient Greek thought, it exhorts individuals to engage in critical self-reflection concerning their nature, limitations, and role within broader cosmos. Socrates, although not the originator of the phrase, adopted and reinterpreted it as a central tenet of his philosophical practice, employing it as a foundation for his method of inquiry and moral examination. According to both the *Apology* and the *Phaedrus*, this commandment of Apollo served as a foundational principle in the life and philosophy of Socrates.[2] His beliefs are considered a philosophy aimed at shaping a person grounded in a virtuous life. To him, all other kinds of knowledge are comparatively worthless when measured against ethical knowledge and self-knowledge.[3] It is more than just introspection or passive observation; it serves as a foundational act of shaping the self. Rather than merely cataloging internal experiences, it involves active engagement. As Chistopher Moore suggests, though it involves perception or attention but also involves practical and determinative work. When one attempts to "*know oneself*," it is not just a search for pre-existing truths within, but a transformative process in which the individual defines and strives to become a unique kind of person.[4]

The philosophical teachings of Socrates, particularly through the maxim "*Know thyself*," play a vital role in shaping our understanding of self-esteem and the means by which it can be cultivated. This foundational idea laid the groundwork for later explorations into the nature of the self and its value. Building on this legacy, numerous other thinkers have contributed to the discourse, each offering insights into the flourishing of self-esteem. While ancient philosophical and religious traditions, from

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

Greece to India, contemplated concepts of self-worth and personal identity, it was William James, a pioneering American psychologist and philosopher, who first introduced a formal psychological framework for understanding self-esteem within a modern academic context, which makes self-esteem one of the oldest continuous themes in the entire discipline.[5] Thus, the first widely recognized and systematic definition of self-esteem of often attributed to him. In his seminal work "*The Principles of Psychology*", James makes an equation of self-esteem as:

$$\text{Self-esteem} = \frac{\text{Success}}{\text{Pretensions}}$$

This equation means that self-esteem is determined by the ratio of one's actual achievements (success) to one's aspirations or expectations (pretensions). According to James, a person could maintain high self-esteem by either increasing successes or lowering pretensions.[6] The definition has largely been articulated in terms of success and competence. It has served as the basis for significant psychodynamic work on development, mastery, and competence.[7] Critics have pointed out that defining self-esteem primarily in terms of external achievements or success renders it more of a psychological vulnerability than a strength, as it inherently ties one's self-worth to the potential for failure. In response to such concerns, an alternative definition has gained widespread acceptance among social and research psychologists. This perspective defines self-esteem as an individual's overall attitude toward the self, grounded in feelings of personal worth. Among the various definitions proposed, a more nuanced and widely regarded framework by Christopher Mruk defines self-esteem as comprising two interrelated dimensions: competence and worth, a two-factor definition. The competence dimension includes an individual's actual skills, abilities, and perceived self-efficacy, while the worth dimension pertains to feelings of being valued, accepted, and approved by others.[8] Unlike more unidimensional models, this multidimensional approach views self-esteem as the product of dynamic interactions between these internal and external factors, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the construct. For him, the significance of the two-factor model lies not merely in the combination of two elements being more influential than one, as this could potentially compound the limitations associated with each when considered in isolation. Instead, the distinctive strength of this model stems from the dynamic interaction between competence and worthiness, which together form a more integrative and robust conception of self-esteem. It is this interplay that renders the definition both theoretically compelling and practically meaningful.[9] Furthermore, Christopher Mruk notes, a search of the PsychINFO database reveals that, from the time of William James's early contributions to his time of search, scholars, researchers, and practitioners have published over 23,215 articles, book chapters, and books explicitly examining self-

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

esteem as a vital component of human behavior.[10] Remarkably, the sustained scholarly interest in the topic continues to grow, with the number of publications now exceeding 64,000 to date.

An Important question naturally arises in response to the sustained and growing scholarly interest in self-esteem: why does this particular psychological construct continue to attract such widespread attention? One possible explanation is that self-esteem represents a rare dimension of human behavior that spans the entire range of psychological functioning, much like the constructs of personality or identity. At one end of this continuum, low self-esteem is frequently associated with various psychological disorders, including depression, anxiety, and learning difficulties. Closer to the center, self-esteem is linked to everyday challenges, such as coping with failures, loss, and other life setbacks that most individuals encounter. At the opposite end, high self-esteem is often discussed in connection with psychological well-being, personal success, effective functioning, and even the pursuit of what might be termed a contended life.

Foundations of Self-Esteem

A strong foundation for building and evaluating a comprehensive theory of self-esteem lies in identifying consistent and clinically relevant findings across diverse studies. Research has shown that self-esteem is closely linked to mental health outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, and resilience, indicating its importance in psychological well-being. Clinically, individuals with higher self-esteem tend to exhibit more adaptive coping mechanism, greater emotional regulation, and stronger interpersonal relationships. These recurring patterns not only validate the significance of self-esteem in therapeutic contexts but also suggest core components (such as self-worth, self-efficacy, and perceived social value) that any robust theory must integrate. By focusing on findings that persist across populations and research methods, a practical and evidence-based framework for understanding self-esteem can emerge, guiding both future research and clinical practice. Building on these insights, evidence-based research and techniques identified by psychologists further illuminate the development, sources, impact, and enhancement of self-esteem. These studies emphasize how self-esteem is shaped by early life experiences, social interactions, and cognitive processes. Moreover, they highlight effective methods for enhancing self-esteem, such as cognitive-behavioral strategies, self-compassion practices, and supportive therapeutic interventions. Together, these findings contribute to a deeper, clinically grounded understanding of self-esteem and offer practical approaches for fostering it in various settings. Researchers, as Christopher Mruk notes, propose that several key factors play a significant role in the development and enhancement of self-esteem.

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

a) **Parental Factors:** Parental factors play a foundational role in the development of self-esteem; supportive, consistent, and nurturing parenting fosters a secure sense of self-worth in children. When parents provide affirmation, set reasonable expectations, and model healthy self-regard, children are more likely to internalize positive self-evaluations. In contrast, overly critical, neglectful, or inconsistent parenting can undermine self-esteem, contributing to feelings of inadequacy or insecurity.

b) **Personal Values**: Self-esteem is closely tied to personal values, as individuals tend to evaluate themselves based on how well they live up to what they consider important. As discussed by Mruk, when a person's actions align with their core values – such as honesty, competence, or compassion – they are more likely to experience a sense of worth and integrity, enhancing self-esteem. Conversely, failing to meet one's own value standards can lead to self-doubt or diminished self-worth, highlighting the essential role values play in shaping and sustaining self-esteem.

c) **Gender Differences**: Researchers examining the assessment and measurement of self-esteem have observed notable gender differences in responses, leading to the recommendation for separate normative standards for males and females. Multiple studies have further identified gender-based variations in self-esteem levels, which appear to persist throughout the lifespan, although the magnitude of these differences tends to decrease over time.

d) **Racial, Ethnic, and Economic Factors**: Racial, ethnic, and economic factors significantly influence self-esteem by shaping individuals' social experiences and access to resources. Discrimination, cultural marginalization, and socioeconomic disadvantage can contribute to lower self-esteem, while strong cultural identity and supportive community networks often serve as protective factors that promote resilience and positive self-worth.

e) **Cultural Orientation**: Cultural orientation affects self-esteem by influencing how individuals define and evaluate their sense of self. Cultures with an individualistic orientation tend to emphasize personal achievement and autonomy, fostering self-esteem through independence and self-expression. In contrast, collectivist cultures value social harmony and group belonging, linking self-esteem more closely to fulfilling social roles and group expectations. These cultural frameworks shape not only the development of self-esteem but also the ways it is maintained and expressed.

Sources of Self-Esteem

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

Coopersmith was among the first researchers to systematically examine the foundational sources of self-esteem, identifying four key components: power (the capacity to influence or control others), significance (feeling valued and accepted by others), virtue (adherence to moral or ethical standards), and competence (demonstrated success in achieving goals).[11] These dimensions reflect both social and personal domains that contribute to an individual's self-evaluation. Building on this framework, Epstein introduced a more dynamic perspective by emphasizing the inherent duality in each source. He argued that if self-esteem is influenced by success, it must also be vulnerable to failure.[12] Thus, achievement must be understood alongside loss**,** power is balanced by powerlessness**,** acceptance is shadowed by the threat of rejection, and moral self-regard includes the potential for shame or guilt. The convergence between these two independent yet complementary models strengthens the empirical and theoretical foundation of self-esteem research. Together, they offer a comprehensive and balanced framework that underscores the complex, dynamic nature of self-esteem and highlights the importance of integrating both positive and negative experiences in its development and maintenance.

Levels of Self-Esteem

Earlier approaches to self-esteem often categorized it into three broad levels – high, medium, and low; each associated with general characteristics. For instance, high self-esteem was linked to well-being and life satisfaction, while low self-esteem was often associated with anxiety, depression, or poor adjustment. However, contemporary research has revealed significant variability within these categories, suggesting that such simplistic classifications fail to capture the complexity of self-esteem. Individuals with similar levels of self-esteem may still differ in stability, authenticity, or the sources from which their self-worth is derived. This shift in understanding emphasizes the need for more nuanced models that account for both qualitative and contextual differences in self-esteem experiences.

a. Low Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem is consistently linked to a wide range of emotional and behavioral difficulties, even if the strength of these relationships varies. Individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to experience clinical conditions such as dysthymic disorder**,** major depression**,** anxiety disorders**,** eating disorders**,** sexual dysfunction**,** pathological shame, and suicidal behavior. It is also associated with various personality disorders across both childhood and adulthood. These patterns highlight the clinical significance of low self-esteem as a risk factor and underscore the importance of addressing self-esteem issues in therapeutic settings.[13]

b. High Self-Esteem

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

High self-esteem is still strongly associated with a range of positive psychological and social outcomes. Its benefits can be grouped into two primary functions: self-maintenance, which supports consistency and stability in one's self-concept, and self-enhancement, which facilitates personal growth and self-actualization. Individuals with high self-esteem often demonstrate pro-social behavior, uphold moral and health-related standards, experience greater relationship satisfaction, and contribute positively to group performance, particularly in task-oriented settings. These characteristics underscore the constructive role of high self-esteem in both individual well-being and social functioning.

c. Medium Self-Esteem

Medium self-esteem occupies a middle ground between the high and low ends of the self-esteem spectrum and has been interpreted in different ways within the literature. One perspective views medium self-esteem as the result of limited exposure to the key developmental influences that foster high self-esteem, such as consistent validation, achievement, and moral support; while still having sufficient positive experiences to avoid the vulnerabilities associated with low self-esteem. From this viewpoint, it is seen as a transitional or neutral state rather than a fully developed type. However, other scholars argue that medium self-esteem may represent a distinct and stable profile, characterized by a balance of strengths and insecurities. Individuals in this category may function adequately in most areas of life but lack the confidence or resilience typically seen in those with high self-esteem. They may be more susceptible to external influences and fluctuations in self-worth, especially in response to failure or criticism. This nuanced understanding highlights the complexity of self-esteem and the importance of moving beyond binary classifications to appreciate its diverse forms and expressions.

d. Inflated Self-Esteem

Inflated self-esteem, a complicated type of self-esteem, refers to an exaggerated or unrealistic sense of self-worth that often functions as a psychological defense rather than a genuine reflection of personal value. This form of self-esteem may present outwardly as confidence or superiority but lacks the authenticity and stability characteristic of healthy high self-esteem. Individuals with inflated self-esteem may rely heavily on external validation, resist constructive criticism, and display traits such as arrogance or entitlement. This inflated self-image can mask deeper insecurities or unresolved self-worth issues, making it fragile and vulnerable to challenge. Unlike authentic self-esteem, which is grounded in personal achievement, moral integrity, and acceptance, inflated self-esteem tends to be unstable and can lead to maladaptive behaviors, especially when the person's grandiose self-view is threatened.

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

Understanding this distinction is important in both clinical and developmental contexts, as interventions must aim to build authentic self-esteem rather than reinforce superficial or defensive self-perceptions.

An Observation in the Indian Socio-Cultural Context

While India is home to a vast and diverse population, encompassing a wide range of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, it would be overly simplistic and inaccurate to make generalized claims about the self-esteem of all Indian youth at present days. However, existing research and survey data reveal mixed findings regarding the understanding of self-esteem and its influence on the lifestyles of children, adolescents, and adults. In one study involving over 400 school-going adolescents, results indicated that a majority of the participants (84%) exhibited moderate levels of self-esteem, while 53.75% reported scores reflecting average levels of happiness. Notably, the mean self-esteem scores demonstrated a positive trend with increasing age. Additionally, female students were found to have higher self-esteem scores compared to their male counterparts. The study also reported a statistically significant positive correlation between self-esteem and happiness scores, suggesting that higher self-esteem is associated with greater subjective well-being among adolescents.[14] Another research conducted over 220 Indian youths reveals that people having high body dissatisfaction have lower self-esteem. Additionally, females showed greater dissatisfaction; males exhibited higher self-esteem scores.[15] In a different article, "*An Indian Perspective of Self-Esteem*", Floy C. Pepper and Steven L. Henry emphasize that educators and parents can play a crucial role in nurturing self-esteem by fostering a sense of connectiveness (belonging and acceptance), encouraging a sense of power (competence and autonomy), affirming each child's uniqueness (individual worth), and providing strong models (guiding values and behaviors rooted in culture). These conditions, represented through the symbolism of the Medicine Wheel, serve as a framework for helping children feel respected, capable, and connected to their communities and heritage.[16]

Some Critical Remarks

Self-esteem remains a complex and multifaceted construct that holds significant value across psychological, philosophical, and social domains. Critically, while it is often celebrated for its role in promoting mental health, motivation, and social functioning, self-esteem is not universally beneficial in all forms, particularly when inflated or unstable. Philosophically, it reflects deeper questions of self-worth, identity, and human dignity, anchoring the individual's sense of meaning and purpose. Practically, self-esteem influences everyday behavior, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships, making it a vital focus in education, therapy, and personal development. Despite decades of research, the

Dr. Safin Pramanik, Darjeeling Government College, safin.pramanik@gmail.com

nuances of self-esteem (such as cultural variation, developmental origins, and its interaction with other psychological processes) continue to demand rigorous, context-sensitive investigation. Advancing our understanding of self-esteem is essential not only for theoretical refinement but also for creating more effective interventions that foster authentic, resilient, and balanced self-worth in diverse populations.

From the Indian philosophical perspective, self-esteem is closely linked to the deeper understanding of the Self (*ātman*) – a concept rooted in self-inquiry and spiritual realization. Rather than relying solely on external achievements or validation, Indian thought, especially the teachings of the Vedānta, emphasizes inner awareness, self-discipline, and the recognition of one's divine nature as the foundation for true self-worth. Swami Vivekananda echoed this view, urging individuals to "*arise, awake, and stop not*" until they realize their inner strength and potential. For Vivekananda, self-esteem was not merely psychological but spiritual, emerging from the realization that the *Self* is inherently complete, powerful, and sacred. This approach offers a profound, holistic path to cultivating authentic and enduring self-esteem.

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Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

Kantian Categorical Imperative and Jain Ethics: A Comparative Study

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that there are striking similarities between Jaina ethics and the Kantian categorical imperative. I will begin by expounding on the different aspects of Jaina ethics. Transcendental morality and the three jewels of Jaina ethics are explored. I then highlight the philosophically significant similarities between Jaina and Kantian ethics. Simultaneously, this study acknowledges and examines the important differences in their underlying metaphysical assumptions and ethical frameworks. By undertaking this comparative analysis, this study aims to offer a deeper understanding of both Jaina and Kantian ethics, enriching contemporary discussions in cross-cultural moral philosophy.

Key words: Transcendental, Morality, Duty, Liberation, niścaya-mārga, vyavahāra-mārga

Introduction:

Jainism, an Indian philosophical tradition separate from the Vedic mainstream, holds to distinct ethical principles. These principles were developed independently of the Vedic authority. Jain ethics are centered on the ultimate goal of liberation from the cycle of existence (samsara). According to Jainism, liberation cannot be achieved through mundane pleasures or a virtuous life alone. It requires awareness of the distinction between good and evil, as well as the cessation of all activities that bind an individual to the material world. An ordinary individual engaging in daily activities faces obstacles to liberation due to their attachment to these.

Jain ethics distinguishes between two moral codes: "The Practical Path" (vyavahāra-mārgaḥ) and the 'transcendental path.' The practical path, designed for ordinary individuals engaged in everyday life, emphasizes fulfillment of mundane duties and responsibilities. However, this does not lead to the ultimate goal of pure consciousness. Adherents of this path may not fully transcend the duality of good/bad or virtue/vice, as it is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

Despite its limitations, the practical path is a foundation for accessing a higher plane of existence, allowing individuals to gradually step away from their normal duties. As humans are inherently social beings with obligations, a balance between the practical path and a higher plane is essential. The

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

practical path's value lies in its potential to lead individuals towards the transcendental path; without this connection, it becomes insignificant.

In contrast, the transcendental path is inherently superior. It requires no external support and directly leads to the supramoral plane of existence. Through this path, individuals achieve spiritual perfection, transcending ordinary consciousness and gaining the ability to fully discern good from bad, and vice from virtue.

Ultimately, both practical and transcendental moralities are indispensable for aspiring perfection seekers. The practical path provides a necessary foundation, paving the way for the transformative experience offered by the transcendental path. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these two paths forms the core of Jain ethics and offers a comprehensive framework for achieving spiritual liberation. This study examines the core ethical principles of Jainism and their points of convergence and divergence with Kant's categorical imperative.

Transcendental Morality

Jaina morality aspires to transcend passion and attain pure consciousness. It distinguishes between three types of actions. First, śubhopāyoga (auspicious): actions that promote worldly well-being; Second, aśubhopāyoga (inauspicious): actions that hinder worldly well-being. Third, śuddhopāyoga (pure): actions characterized by the soul's pure and passionless cognition or actions that awaken the true nature of the soul. Pure actions are supreme because they allow the soul to realize its essence. In contrast, auspicious and inauspicious actions engage the soul with the external world, obscuring its potential to transcend. From a practical perspective, auspicious and inauspicious actions are necessary for daily survival. However, from a transcendental perspective, distinctions between good and bad deeds become blurred. Both types involve external engagement and contribute to the accumulation of karma that binds the soul. Consequently, neither is considered truly 'good' and cannot lead to liberation (Mahayana Buddhism). As such, Dayanand Bhargava asserts that true morality lies in transcending the dichotomy of good and bad actions and recognizing that all actions have consequences and ultimately lead to the need for spiritual purification. According to Jain ethics, all actions lead to karmic consequences, whether positive ('auspicious') or negative ('inauspicious'). However, both types of actions are ultimately not paths to liberation, as attachment to actions reinforces the cycle of rebirth.

Practical morality dictates that we distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' actions, as 'auspicious' and 'inauspicious' actions generally lead to happiness and misery, respectively. However, transcending this practical morality requires engaging in 'transcendental actions' or śuddhopāyoga, whichere the mind is

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

immersed in pure consciousness. Although this is not always feasible, it is the ultimate goal for those seeking liberation. In practical life, Jain ethics emphasizes 'auspicious actions' (śubhopāyoga) over 'inauspicious actions' (aśubhopāyoga), as these actions are believed to promote happiness and well-being. However, it is important to note that even 'auspicious actions' are not without attachment, and true detachment can only be achieved through 'transcendental actions' that lead to the realization of a pure consciousness. Achieving pure consciousness requires complete detachment from the worldly affairs. While Jaina teachers advocate for śubhopāyoga (auspicious activities) as the path to higher consciousness, they recognize that most individuals live social lives and engage in worldly activities. For these individuals, śubhopāyoga (beneficial activities) that promote happiness are preferable to aśubhopāyoga (unfavorable actions) that lead to suffering. Those aspiring for self-elevation must transcend the duality of good and bad actions, embracing niścaya-mārgaḥ (transcendental morality), which aligns with śuddhopāyoga (pure state). This differs from vyavahāra-mārga (practical morality), which makes distinctions between good and bad actions.

Jaina ācāryā advise shubhopayog because humans naturally live in societies and assume social responsibility. Practical activities are necessary to fulfil these responsibilities. Among these activities, prioritizing śubhopāyoga over aśubhopāyoga is recommended. However, śubhopāyoga stands on a higher plane than both, representing the ultimate goal of spiritual development.

The Three Jewels of Jaina Morality: A Path to Transcendence

Jain ethics emphasizes the importance of living according to either śubhopāyoga (auspicious action) or aśubhopāyoga (inauspicious action). While distinctions between good and bad actions exist in the practical realm, these concepts lose relevance transcendentally. The ultimate goal of Jainism is liberation or self-realization, transcending the duality of good and evil.

Jaina teachers recommend śubhopāyoga for those living in society, while emphasizing aśubhopāyoga for advanced seekers. However, Jain philosophy focuses on a transcendental understanding of morality (niścaya-mārga) through vyavahāra-mārga (practical path). This transcendental morality is epitomized by the Three Jewels: Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct. These three jewels are interconnected and inseparable, paving the way for ultimate liberation. This liberation, termed "self-absorption," is achievable through transcendental morality, not through practical ethics. This represents the ultimate aim of the Jaina path.

Right Faith (Samyagdarśana)

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

Jaina ethics presents two distinct moralities: transcendental and practical morality. Similarly, right faith (samyādārśana) comprises two perspectives: transcendental and practical. Transcendental right faith refers to the realization of the true self, which transcends the worldly dualities of good and bad. It involves a deep understanding of one's innermost essence. Practical right faith, on the other hand, entails a firm belief in the fundamental principles of Jainism. It includes belief in divine beings, scriptures, and teachers, as opposed to false beliefs in other deities, doctrines, or teachers. While various scholars have defined right faith differently, our focus is on its transcendental dimension. Transcendentally, right faith encompasses a belief in the inner soul, or true self. Without a profound recognition of this true self, it is impossible to fully comprehend the true nature of existence itself. This realization transcends worldly dualities and allows individuals to attain inner peace and understanding.

The Pillars of Right Faith (Samyagdarśana) in Jainism:

Jainism outlines the specific conditions necessary for attaining 'right faith' (samyagdarśana). These conditions are not mere external practices but deep-rooted qualities of the soul.

1. Niḥsaṅkita (Absence of Doubt):

A seeker must be completely free of doubt. Doubt hinders moral progress and obstructs understanding of one's true self. This applies to both questioning the teachings of spiritual masters and scriptures and doubting one's inherent nature.

2. **Nihkāṅkṣitā** (Absence of Worldly Desires):

Craving worldly pleasure attracts karmic matter to the soul and hinders spiritual growth. Aspirants must detach themselves from such desires, recognizing their impermanence and the inevitable miseries and sins they entail.

3. Nirvicikitsā (No doubts About the Transcendental Path):

One must have unwavering faith in the path leading to liberation (mokṣa). Doubting the Three Jewels (right faith, knowledge, and right conduct) obstructs the ability to overcome life's challenges.

4. Amūḍhadṛṣṭi (Negation of Confusion about the Ideal):

Strong believers steadfastly follow the right path, undeterred by worldly temptation. They avoid associating with those who deviate from the ideal and lead others astray.

5. Upabṛṁhaṇa (Cultivation of Spiritual Qualities):

Aspirants must consistently cultivate these spiritual qualities within themselves. They abstain from self-promotion or criticizing others' shortcomings.

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

6. Sthirīkaraṇa (Re-establishment):

This condition involves reinvigorating those who have strayed from the path of truth and fostering their return to the right way.

7. Vātsalya (Brotherhood):

A spirit of brotherhood among aspirants is crucial for supporting each other's spiritual journeys.

These conditions form the bedrock of right faith in Jainism, guiding aspirants towards liberation. Reverence is due to all those who dedicate themselves to principles and live righteously. Prabhāvanā, the act of preaching and emphasizing the importance of truth, is the aspirant's paramount duty. They must teach and disseminate the essence of truth to those seeking higher goals in life. This also entails acts of charity, devotion, austerity, and learning, which cultivate respect for and the propagation of truth.

Right Knowledge (Samyag-jñāna):

In Jainism, right knowledge (Samyag-jñāna) is considered the cornerstone of ethical conduct. It is the foundation upon which all virtuous actions are built, and without it, no conduct can be deemed good. An aspirant's journey towards liberation remains incomplete without attaining the right knowledge. The right knowledge and right conduct are intrinsically linked, working in tandem to guide individuals towards spiritual enlightenment.

As Bharghava states, 'Knowledge is a means to something higher, which is emancipation.' However, mere intellectual understanding is insufficient for this purpose. This knowledge must be accompanied by the right faith to be truly beneficial.

Jainism recognizes five distinct types of right knowledge:

1. Mati-jñāna (Sensory and mental Knowledge):This is knowledge obtained through the senses (indriya) and the mind (manas). These include perception, memory, inference, and recognition. This is the most common and basic form of knowledge.

2.Śruta-jñāna (Scriptural Knowledge): Acquired through instruction and study.

3. Avadhi-jñāna (distinct knowledge): The ability to perceive distant objects and events.

4. **Manaḥparyāya-jñāna** (paranormal knowledge): The power to perceive the thoughts and feelings of others.

5. Kevala-jñāna (absolute knowledge): The ultimate form of knowledge, providing complete understanding and liberation.

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

All other forms of knowledge that do not fall under these categories are considered erroneous and invalid (mithyājñāna). It is through the pursuit of the right knowledge and embracing its various forms that a Jain strives to progress towards liberation.

Mati-jñāna, or mental knowledge, is the product of our minds' inherent abilities: perception, memory, cognition, and analysis. This is considered inherently justified, with no further validation. Mati-jñāna is categorized into four types:

1. Smṛti (remembrance): Recalling past experiences and memories.

2. Pratyabhijñā (recognition): Identifying something as previously familiar.

3. Tarka (inductive): Reasoning from specific observations to general principles.

4. Abhinibodha (deductive): Drawing logical conclusions from known facts.

Crucially, all forms of Mati-jñāna originate in sensory experience. Our senses provide raw data that our minds process into knowledge. Sensory knowledge precedes mental understanding.

In contrast, Śruti-jñāna is knowledge acquired through verbal or non-verbal communication – words, signs, and symbols. This knowledge is gained through listening, learning and studying. Mati-jñāna forms the foundation for Śruti-jñāna because it provides the initial sensory experiences.

Imagine this: when someone directly encounters an object (Mati-jñāna) and then conveys that experience through language (Śruti-jñāna), the recipient receives a secondary understanding. Initial sensory knowledge becomes raw material for communicated knowledge.

Śruti-jñāna is further categorized into four types based on its acquisition:

Labdhi (contact): The initial encounter with knowledge.

Bhāvanā (attention): Conscious engagement with knowledge.

Upayoga (utility): Practical applications of knowledge.

Naya (perspective): A unique viewpoint or interpretation of knowledge.

Matijñāna represents a direct experience of the world, whereas Śruti-jñāna represents a shared and communicated understanding of that experience.

Jain philosophy distinguishes between three distinct types of knowledge, each with unique characteristics and attainment.

1. Avadhi-jñāna: Distinct Knowledge: Avadhi-jñāna grants the ability to perceive distant or future events, transcending the limitations of physical senses and mental faculties. This knowledge can be innate or acquired through a lifetime of virtuous actions. It operates independently of external influences, revealing itself directly and undeniably to the user.

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2. Manaḥparyāya-jñāna: Telepathic Knowledge: Manaḥparyāya-jñāna allows individuals to access the thoughts and mental impressions of others, akin to telepathic communication. This ability is exclusive to humans, giving them a window into the minds of others and revealing their current thoughts and intentions. Similar to Avadhi in its directness, Manaḥparyāya-jñāna differs in its focus on accessing the mental landscape of others rather than distinct events.

3. Kevala-jñāna: Absolute Knowledge: Kevala-jñāna represents the pinnacle of knowledge, encompassing perfect and unconditional understanding. It transcends all limitations of perspective, time, and condition, offering glimpses into eternal and transcendental realms. This knowledge is unattainable by ordinary individuals and is only accessible after achieving Nirvāṇa, liberation from the cycles of saṃsāra. The path to Kevala-jñāna lies in the practice of transcendental morality, where the soul purifies itself becoming absorbed in its own inherent nature

Right Conduct (Samyag-cāritra)

In Jainism, Right Conduct (Samyag-cāritra) is the embodiment of self-absorption, a state of equanimity free from delusion and agitation. As Bhargabva states, 'conduct is dharma, dharma is equanimity, and equanimity means the condition of atma free from delusion and agitation.' This self-absorption, which is the ultimate goal of Jain transcendental morality, serves as the bedrock for both Right Knowledge and Right Faith. Without Right Conduct, knowledge cannot be considered truly 'right, and faith remains hollow.

Jain ethics emphasizes the three-fold path of Right Belief, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct. This path serves as a practical manifestation of Right Conduct, making knowledge meaningful and complete. Without the discipline of right conduct, knowledge remains incomplete and its true potential remains unrealized.

Jaina Ethics and the Kantian Categorical Imperative:

Jaina ethics proposes two paths towards perfection: the practical path (vyavahāra-mārga) for ordinary individuals and the transcendental path (niścaya-mārga) for advanced practitioners.

The practical path focuses on the fulfillment of daily duties and the mitigation of karmic consequences but does not lead to complete freedom from worldly desires or imperfections. It involves distinguishing between good and bad actions, allowing for some flexibility in the choice of means.

In contrast, Kant's categorical imperative is an unconditional objective principle that guides rational agents, regardless of their personal desires or circumstances. It demands that actions be performed solely from a sense of duty without regard to possible benefits or consequences. The categorical imperative is

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

incompatible with the practical path of Jaina ethics because it rejects the distinction between good and bad means, considering only the intrinsic value of the action itself emphasizes unconditional obedience to duty, regardless of personal inclinations or circumstances.

While the practical path of Jaina ethics may guide daily living, it ultimately falls short of the unconditional and rational demands of Kant's categorical imperative. The Jaina doctrine of vyavahāra-mārgaḥ (practical path) is flexible and adaptable to promote well-being in daily life. It is characterized by a focus on achieving specific ends rather than adhering to rigid moral principles, such as those advocated by the categorical imperative. Similar to the hypothetical imperative, which is conditional and driven by desired outcomes, the practical path of Jainism allows for expectations and modifications to accommodate a path that is not an ultimate destination but rather a means to an end, guiding ordinary individuals in navigating the challenges of everyday life. Ethical principles are contingent on the desired outcomes. However, Jain ethics acknowledges the significance of practical morality within its systems. According to Bhargava, individuals require guidance in distinguishing between morally acceptable and unacceptable actions until they transcend their ordinary consciousness. Jaina ethics encompasses both practical morality, which is necessary for individuals engaged in worldly pursuits, and transcendental morality. Both aspects are interconnected and indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of morality.

Although Kant emphasizes categorical imperatives as unwavering moral principles, he exhibits some flexibility regarding 'practical love.' He deems actions performed as philanthropic gestures to promote contentment as lovable and appropriate, classifying love as either 'pathological love' (based on affection) or 'practical love' (derived from a sense of duty). Actions motivated by practical love are deemed commendable, whereas those driven by pathological love are not. Additional focus should be placed on discussing problematic and assertoric imperatives within Kant's ethical system. Both problematic and assertoric imperatives, which are categorized as hypothetical imperatives, share a common characteristic: they are conditional. Problematic imperatives view actions as means to achieve specific goals, focusing on skills and abilities. Assorteric imperatives, on the other hand, frame actions as ends in themselves, seeking happiness or fulfillment.

This flexibility is a hypothetical imperative, where actions are guided by desired outcomes, which bears resemblance to the practical morality of Jainism, known as vyavahāra-mārga. Within this framework, the concepts of śubhopāyoga (conducive actions) and aśubhopāyoga (nonconducive actions) are not rigidly enforced.

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

However, it is important to note that while this comparison highlights similarities, Kant himself never accepted hypothetical imperatives as moral imperatives. His ethical system revolves around categorical imperatives that are universal and unconditional. The purpose of outlining problematic and assertoric imperatives here is simply to draw a parallel between hypothetical imperatives and the less stringent practical morality of Jainism, specifically its concepts of subhopayog and asubhopayog. Both, to some degree, emphasize actions as a means to achieve the desired ends.

Jainism offers two distinct paths: vyavahāra-mārga (practical path) for those deeply engrossed in worldly affairs, and niścaya-mārga (transcendental path) for those seeking spiritual liberation. The transcendental path, leading to ultimate self-realization, involves transcending the influence of external factors and realizing the pure essence of one's soul. This concept bears a striking resemblance to Kant's categorical imperative. Both Jaina transcendental morality and Kant's categorical imperative emphasize the importance of freeing oneself from the influence of external factors. In Jainism, the transcendental path aims to stop the influx of external matter, or karma, into the soul, thereby liberating it from the shackles of both virtues and vices. This state of pure consciousness, as described by Bhargava, is characterized by the absence of desires and inclinations towards worldly ends.

The parallel between the two philosophies lies in their shared emphasis on the role of desire in moral actions. Just as Kant argues for the universality of moral principles based on reason, Jainism highlights the transcendental path, where the soul, freed from desires, inherent in both philosophies, underscores the common ground between Jain transcendental morality and Kant's categorical imperative. In Jainism, transcendental morality rejects the influence of passion, emphasizing self-denial and negating desires. This principle aligns with Kant's categorical imperative, which differentiates actions based on intent. Actions performed purely for duty, without personal desires or inclinations, possess true moral worth. This universal concept is congruent with both Kant's ethical framework and that of Jainism. Kant's categorical imperative adheres to the notion that the intrinsic value of an action lies solely in its adherence to duty, free from any external factors or qualifications. In the same vein, Jainism promotes the idea that transcendental morality involves the soul's purification, whereby it remains uncontaminated by external influences and shines in its innate purity. Additionally, both Kant's categorical imperative and Jainism's transcendental morality apply universally, guiding ethical conduct regardless of individual circumstances. Categorical imperative transcends both universal applicability and unconditionally. Their universal nature means that every rational can adopt them in their moral decision-making. Similarly, transcendental morality in Jainism is accessible to anyone seeking higher states of existence.

Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

A comparative analysis of Jainist ethics and Kant's categorical imperative theory reveals a key difference. Jainist ethics offers different moral principles for individuals in various stages of spiritual development, recognizing that not everyone aspires to the same level of self-realization. Kant, however, advocates for a single categorical imperative that applies to all individuals, regardless of their aspirations. According to Kant's theory, the categorical imperative theory reveals a key difference. Jaina ethics offers different moral principles for individuals in various stages of spiritual development, recognizing that not everyone aspires to the same level of self-realization. Kant, however, advocates for a single categorical imperative that applies to all individuals, regardless of their aspirations.

According to Kant's theory, the categorical imperative is universally binding under all circumstances. It is unconditional, absolute, and free from all personal inclinations and desires. In contrast, Jainist ethics addresses the differing moral needs of individuals, providing practical guidance for daily life and transcendental principles for those pursuing higher spiritual goals.

Conclusion:

Comparing Kant's categorical imperative with Jaina moral theory offers a valuable framework for integrating Eastern and Western philosophical perspectives on morality. Jaina ethics emphasizes transcendental morality, a path for those seeking higher spiritual goals. Kant's categorical imperative, however, presents a more rigid framework, demanding unwavering obedience to a universal principle. This leaves little room for individuals unable to meet its demands. In contrast, Jaina ethics offers 'practical paths' as an alternative for those who cannot fully embrace transcendental morality.

Both Jaina morality and Kant's categorical imperative hold unique significance within the realm of ethics. While sharing some similarities, they also diverge in their approach. Both systems provide moral guidelines for living a virtuous life. Studying Kant's categorical imperative sheds light on the concept of transcendental morality in Jaina thought, and conversely, Jaina philosophy illuminates an alternative to the strictness of Kant's framework.

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Dr. Gambhir Dhoj Subba, Darjeeling Govt. College, gambhir.subba@gmail.com

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Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

করম পূজা :উৎসপ্রসূত মানস-কীর্তি

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

সারসংক্ষেপ

ভাদ্র মাসের শুক্ল পক্ষের একাদশী তিথিতে করম পূজার অনুষ্ঠান হয়।প্রধানতঃ শস্য ও সন্তান কামনায় কুর্মী উপজাতি সেই সঙ্গে মুণ্ডা,ভূমিজ,সাঁওতাল,বাউরি,মাহাত,ডোম ,বাগাল,কামার প্রভৃতি জনজাতি করম পূজা করে থাকে।সাধারণতঃ গ্রাম প্রধানের গৃহের আঙিনায় উৎসবের স্থান নির্বাচিত হয়।অনুষ্ঠান শুরুর চার পাঁচদিন আগে থেকে মেয়েরা নদী খাল পুকুর থেকে ভেজা বালি নতুন বাঁশের ডালিতে ভরে তাতে পাঁচ, সাত বা নয় রকমের স্থানীয় কৃষিযোগ্য শস্যবীজ বপন করে প্রতিদিন হলুদ জলের ছিটা দেয়।একে জাওয়া ডালি বলে।জাওয়া পাতার দিন থেকে ব্রতিনীরা সাবান, তেল কিছু ব্যবহার করে না।প্রচলিত বিশ্বাস তারা এসব ব্যবহার করলে বীজের অঙ্কুর গুলি সঠিক ভাবে বৃদ্ধি পাবে না।

করমের দিন কুমারি মেয়েরা সারাদিন উপবাসে থাকে।লায়া অর্থাৎ পুরোহিত উপোস থেকে নতুন বস্ত্র পরে জঙ্গল থেকে দুটি শাখা সমন্বিত ইংরাজী Y আকৃতির একটি করম ডাল কেটে আনেন।লায়া বা পুরোহিত ডালটি গ্রাম প্রধানের গৃহ প্রাঙ্গণে বা কোন নির্বাচিত স্থানে স্থাপন করেন।এই সময় কিশোরীরা করম গাছকে ঘিরে নাচে।এরপর মেয়েরা করম গাছের সামনে তাদের জাওয়া ডালি এবং অন্যান্য পূজার উপকরণ সাথে নিয়ে বসে।লায়া তাদের ধর্মু, কর্মুর কাহিনী বলেন অর্থাৎ করম ব্রতকথা শোনান।ব্রতকথা শোনার মাঝে মাঝে লায়া করম ঠাকুরের চরণে ব্রতিনীদের ফুল অর্পণ করার নির্দেশ দেন।ব্রতকথা সমাপ্তির সঙ্গে সঙ্গে পূজারও সমাপ্তি ঘটে। পরদিন সবাই সম্মিলিত ভাবে নিকটবর্তী নদীতে করম ডালা ভাসিয়ে দিয়ে আসে।জাওয়া ডালির অংকুরিত চারাগুলি মেয়েরা মুঠোভরে নিয়ে গিয়ে কেউ বাড়ির চালে ,কেউ বাগানে,কেউ পুকুরের জলে ছুড়ে দেয়।এরপর স্নান সেরে আহার করে।

সূচক শব্দ

করম,জাওয়া ডালি, ব্রতকথা,কর্মু,ধর্মু,তাহিরে প্রভৃতি।

প্রতিপাদ্য বিষয়

“আজ তরে করম রাজা ঘরে দুয়ারে।/কাল তরে করম রাজা কাঁসাই নদীর ধারে।।/করম কাটটে জায়েঁছিলি করম টলমল।/রাজার বেটি দুলালী টাঙি ঝলমল।।

লোকসংস্কৃতির ভাবগত ধারা (non- meterial) র একটি বিশিষ্ট দিক লোক উৎসব।এই গ্রামীন লোক উৎসবগুলির মধ্যে দিয়ে মানুষের জীবনদর্শন, অর্থনীতি,আধ্যাত্মিক চেতনা উন্মীলিত হয়।বাংলার দক্ষিণ পশ্চিম প্রান্তে অবস্থিত ঝাড়গ্রাম জেলার সংস্কৃতির সঙ্গে জড়িয়ে আছে লৌকিক দেব দেবীর পূজা তথা বিবিধ লোকউৎসব।লোকউৎসবের অফুরন্ত ভাণ্ডারে সমৃদ্ধ লোকায়ত সংস্কৃতির উজ্জ্বল আলোয় উদ্ভাসিত এই জেলার কুর্মী জনগোষ্ঠীর একটি জনপ্রিয় উৎসব করম।ভাদ্রমাসের শুক্লপক্ষের একাদশী তিথিতে এই উৎসব পালিত হয়।মূলত শস্য উৎপাদন ও রক্ষা,সন্তানের মঙ্গল এবং অপদেবতার হাত থেকে সমগ্র পল্লী বা গ্রামের রক্ষাকল্পে কিশোরীরা এই পূজা করে।হিন্দুদের ভ্রাতৃদ্বিতীয়ার

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

মত ভ্রাতৃমঙ্গল কামনাও এই ব্রতের একটি মুল উদ্দেশ্য।করম শব্দটি এসেছে সংস্কৃত কর্ম শব্দ থেকে।কর্ম অনুযায়ী ফল অর্থাৎ শুভ কর্ম সম্পাদন এবং ভক্তি অর্ঘ্য নিবেদনে করম দেবতাকে তুষ্ট করতে পারলে শষ্য উৎপাদন বহুগুণ বাড়বে এবং সন্তান সন্ততিতে ঘর ভরে উঠবে।করম পূজার নেপথ্যে এই কামনা নিহিত।আদিবাসী সমাজে করম ঠাকুরের ব্যাপক প্রভাব পরিলক্ষিত হয়।মেদিনীপুর,বাঁকুড়া,পুরুলিয়া,জেলার আদিবাসী ও কুর্মী অধ্যুষিত পল্লীতে এই পূজার বেশ জনপ্রিয়তা আছে। এছাড়াও মাহাত, ভূমিজ, বাউরি, বাগাল, ডোম, কামার প্রভৃতি উপজাতি, অনুপজাতি গোষ্ঠীর সমাজে করম পূজার প্রচলন বিশেষভাবে লক্ষণীয়। মূলত অন্ত্যজ শ্রেণীর কৃষিজীবী সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যেই অধিক শষ্য কামনায় এই করম উৎসব পালিত হয়ে থাকে। ঝাড়গ্রাম জেলার বিভিন্ন স্থান যেমন জামবনি, চিচিড়া, গিধনি, রঘুনাথপুর, গাইঘাটা, ধরমপুর, বেলেডিহি প্রভৃতি স্থানে করম পূজা অনুষ্ঠিত হয়।

করম পূজা যেখানে অনুষ্ঠিত হয় সেই স্থানকে 'করম স্থান' বলে।মোড়লের গৃহের আঙিনায় কিংবা কোন গৃহস্থের ঘরের প্রাঙ্গণে করম পূজা অনুষ্ঠিত হওয়ার স্থান রূপে নির্বাচন করা হয়।

বিভিন্ন নামে করম দেবতাকে অভিহিত করা হয়ে থাকে।যেমন "করম ঠাকুর", "করম গোঁসাই", "করম রাজা", "করম"।ছোটনাগপুরের বীরহোড়রা বলে "করম ভূত"।যে সব স্থানে করম গাছ পাওয়া যায় না সেখানে শাল,নিম,গম্ভীরা,সিজ গাছের ডাল করম ডেবতার প্রতীক রূপে পূজিত হয়।কুমারী কন্যার দলই সাধারণতঃ করম পূজার ব্রতিনী হয়ে কোথাও বিবাহিতা রমনীরাও এই পূজায় অংশগ্রহণ করে থাকে। উৎসবে কুমারীদের যোগদানের পশ্চাতে প্রজনন ও উর্বরতার দিকটি বিদ্যমান।

করম পূজার উপকরণ ও পূজা পদ্ধতি

করম পূজায় "জাওয়া ডালি" লাগে যা কুমারী মেয়েরা পূজার কয়েকদিন আগে থেকে তৈরী করতে শুরু করে। এছাড়া লাল বর্ণের বুনো হলুদের ফুল, জিরুল নামক এক ধরণের লতানে গাছ, আমলা, বেলপাতা, দুর্বাঘাস, কাদো ফুল, যব, সাদা শাপলা ফুল, তুলসীপাতা, শালপাতার প্রদীপ, হরিতকি, আতপচাল, নতুন চিড়ে, বাতাসা, কলা, আলোচাল, আমলকী, দুধ, দৈ, একটি সুস্পষ্ট বৃন্তযুক্ত কাঁকুড় বা শশা ইত্যাদি উপকরণ সহযোগে করম ঠাকুরের পূজা হয়।কোথাও কোথাও হাড়িয়াও দেওয়া হয়।করম দেবতাকে অন্ন ভোগও দেওয়া হয় অনেক স্থানে। করম খিচুড়ি খেতে ভালোবাসে। তবে এ খিচুড়ি তৈরী হয় একটু অন্যরকম ভাবে।ডাল চাল ,বলির পশু পক্ষীদের মাথা দিয়ে। ওই অঞ্চলের লোকেরা একে "তাহিরে" বলে।

ধলভূম,মালভূম,ঝাড়গ্রাম অঞ্চলে করম পূজার যে বিশেষ বৈশিষ্ট্য পরিলক্ষিত হয় তাতেও থাকে শষ্যোৎপাদন প্রক্রিয়ার অগ্রাধিকার।উৎসবের কয়েকদিন পূর্বেই মেয়েরা নিকটবর্তী নদী বা খাল থেকে থেকে ভেজা বালি নতুন বাঁশের ডালিতে করে ভরে আনে।এই বালি মিশ্রিত মাটিতে স্থানীয় পাঁচ,সাত বা নয় প্রকার কৃষিযোগ্য বীজ যেমন যব-হলুদ-মাষকলাই-ডাল-ধান ইত্যাদি শস্যবীজ ছড়িয়ে দেওয়া হয় এবং অপেক্ষা করা হয় চারাগাছের জন্মলগ্নের জন্য।মালভূমের এই অনুষ্ঠান রীতির নাম "জাওয়া"।যে সমস্ত চারাগাছ আলোকের স্পর্শ লাভ করে উর্দ্ধগতি লাভ করতে থাকলো ক্রমশ তাদের নাম "জাওয়া"বলা বাহুল্য "জাওয়া" মানেই জন্ম, জাত।এই জাওয়ার দেবতা হলেন করম গোঁসাই। প্রতিদিন হলুদ জলের ছিটা দেওয়া হয় শষ্যে যাতে শষ্য হলুদ বর্ণের হয়ে অঙ্কুরিত হয়।।এটা চলে প্রায় তিন থেকে সাত দিন।করম পূজার দিন উপবাসী কিশোরীরা আশ পাশ থেকে ধান পাতা,কাদো ফুল,জবা ফুল,তুলসী পাতা,দুর্বাঘাস,বেলপাতা ইত্যাদি সংগ্রহ করে আনে।এগুলি দিয়ে তারা ফুলঝুড়ি তৈরী করে। করম পূজায় কোন ফুটন্ত

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

ফুলের ব্যবহার চলে না।এমন কলি নির্বাচন করতে হয় যাতে ফোটার সম্ভবনা রয়েছে।প্রতিদিন সকালে তারা জাওয়া ডালিকে মাঝখানে রেখে হাত ধরাধরি করে জাওয়া গীত গেয়ে নাচ করে।সদ্য বিবাহিত মেয়েরা যারা ঐ সময় বাপের বাড়িতে থাকে তাদেরও ব্রতিনীদের সঙ্গে যোগ দিতে দেখা যায়।করম পূজার দিন ব্রতিনীরা সারাদিন নির্জলা উপবাসে থেকে সন্ধ্যার প্রাক্কালে পার্শ্ববর্তী বন থেকে দুতি শাখা সমন্বিত একটি করম ডাল কেটে আনে।তবে ঝাড়গ্রামের কোন কোন গ্রামে বড়, মাঝারি, ছোট আকারের তিনটি ডাল এনেও পূজা করা হয়। মেয়েদের হাতে থাকে কুড়ুল আর কুলোতে রাখা তেল, সিঁদুর, দুর্বা ঘাস, সুতো, গুড়, ধান, হাঁড়িয়া। মেয়েরা প্রদীপ জ্বালিয়ে দেয় হলুদ রঙে ছাপানো কাপড় জড়িয়ে দেয় ডাল দুটিকে একত্রে সুতো দিয়ে বেঁধে। অবশ্য এর পূর্বে লায়া অর্থাৎ পুরোহিত জঙ্গলে গিয়ে ডাল নির্বাচন করে আসেন। কোথাও কোথাও আবার পুরোহিতকে পাহান বলা হয়।এই সময় করম গাছকে ঘিরে তারা নাচ করে।পুরোহিত করম ডালটি এনে মোড়ল বা গ্রাম প্রধানের গৃহ প্রাঙ্গনে বা কোন পূর্ব নির্ধারিত স্থানে স্থাপন করেন।এরপর ব্রতিনীরা পুকুরে যায় স্নান করতে।ঘাটের উপর একজন ব্রতিনী পাঁচতি ঝিঙে পাতার উপর পাঁচটি শাল দাঁতন রেখে আসে।এটি এখানকার স্থানীয় লোকাচার। আসার সময় পুকুরের ধার থেকে কিছু বালি একটি শালপাতার খোলায় ভরে নিয়ে আসে।সঙ্গে আনে কালচে রঙের মালতি ধানের একটি চারা।এরপর তারা জাওয়া ডালি নিয়ে এবং পূজার যাবতীয় উপকরণ নিয়ে করম ঠাকুরের পুজা করে।কোথাও কোথাও গ্রামপতি মাহাত,পাহান এবং তার সহকারী পূজা আরম্ভ করেন। এই পূজায় বিশেষ কোন মন্ত্রের ব্যবহার নেই বললেই চলে।পূজার পর জাওয়া ডালির সামনে দাঁড়িয়ে ব্রতিনীরা সারারাত ধরে নৃত্য,গীত করে।এই নৃত্য ভঙ্গিমার মধ্যে যেমন শষ্য রোয়ার এবং ক্ষেত্র নিড়ানোর মুদ্রা ফুটে ওঠে তেমনি সঙ্গীতগুলির মধ্যে কৃষি ভাবনার প্রকাশ ঘটে।মেয়েদের জাওয়া নাচ গান শেষ হলে করম ডালকে ঘিরে সারা রাত্রি ব্যাপী চলে ছেলেদের করম নৃত্য গীতের অনুষ্ঠান।করম ডাল প্রতিষ্ঠার পর লায়া ধর্ম ও কর্মের ব্রতকথা বলেন।অঞ্চল ও সম্প্রদায় ভেদে এই ব্রত কাহিনীর রূপভেদ থাকলেও মূল কাঠামোটি একই থাকে।লায়া ব্রত কথার মাধ্যমে এই ব্রত উদ্‌যাপনের গুণাগুণ পার্বতীদের কাছে ব্যক্ত করেন এবং এই ব্রত থেকে ভ্রষ্ট হলে কি দুরবস্থার মধ্যে পড়তে হয় তাও ব্রতিনীদের জানিয়ে দেন।বেলা বাড়লে ওই করম গাছটিকে নিকটবর্তী কোন নদী বা পুকুরের জলে ভাসিয়ে দেওয়া হয়।তাদের রোপণ করা হলুদ রঙা চারাগুলো ডালা থেকে তুলে নিয়ে ব্রতিনীরা ঘরে ফেরে এবং চারাগুলোকে ধানের গোলায় ভক্তি করে ছড়িয়ে দেয়।প্রচলিত বিশ্বাস এর ফলে পরের বছর তাদের শষ্যের ভারে গোলা ভরে উঠবে।কোন কোন স্থানে রাতের প্রথম প্রহরে পূজা শুরু হয়।করম শাখা দুটিতে লাল সুতো ও গামছা জড়িয়ে বেদিতে প্রোথিত করা হয়।প্রথমে পাহান একতি ফুল নিয়ে গ্রাম অধিষ্ঠাত্রী দেবীর উদ্দেশ্যে শূন্যে নিক্ষেপ করেন।তারপর কয়েকটি ফুল ও তুলসী পাতায় সিঁদুর মাখিয়ে করম শাখা দুটিতে অর্পণ করা হয়। সমবেত ভক্তরা বেদিতে ফুল নিক্ষেপ করে।তারপর বলি আরম্ভ হয়।ছাগ ও পায়রা বলিই বেশী হয়।এক হাতে বলির পশু,পক্ষী আপর হাতে একমুষ্টি আতপ চাল দেবতাকে নিবেদন করা হয়।পরে ঐ চাল বলির পশু পক্ষীকে খাওয়ানো হয়,তারপর বলি দেওয়া হয়।এই বলি প্রথা প্রাচীন রীতিকেই স্মরণ করিয়ে দেয়।

করম উৎসবের প্রকৃত উদ্দেশ্য

পশ্চিম প্রান্তিক রাঢ় ভূমিতে ছোটনাগপুরের অরণ্য পর্বতের উপত্যকায় বর্ষা যখন যাই যাই করছে,শরতের কাশের নির্মলতা যখন উঁকি দিচ্ছে সর্বত্র ঠিক সেই সময় আউশ বা আশু ধান ঘরে তোলার উৎসব।আউশের মোটা ধানের চাল দিয়ে কোন কোন অঞ্চলে নবান্ন উৎসব হয়।ভাদ্র মাসের করমের উৎসব এই ফসল তোলারই উৎসব।শুধু তাই নয়,সঙ্গে

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

আগামী আমন ধানের কামনায় করম দেবতাকে সন্তুষ্ট করার উৎসব।এ সম্পর্কে মতভেদ থাকলেও প্রায় সকলেই স্বীকার করেছেন এই উৎসব শস্য উৎসবই ।করম দেবতার স্থায়ী বেদীও আছে। যে অঞ্চলে করম উৎসবে আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে করম রাজা ও রানীর বিবাহ দেওয়া হয় সে সকল স্থানে দু এক ক্ষেত্রে দুটি করম বা অন্য গাছ স্থায়ী ভাবে থাকে,পল্লীর লোকেরা রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ করে।তার ফলে গাছ দুটি বেশ বড় হয়।কিন্তু তার পূজা হয় উৎসবান্তে ঠিক নির্ধারিত সময়ে।করম উৎসবে দুটি করম ডালকে পাশাপাশি রেখে পূজা করার রীতি প্রচলিত আছে,অনেকেই বলেন এ হল করম রাজা ও করম রানীর বিবাহ অনুষ্ঠান। বলা বাহুল্য করম রাজা সূর্য আর করম রানী পৃথিবীর প্রতীক।প্রত্যেক জাতির শষ্যোৎসবেই সূর্য ও পৃথিবীর প্রতীকে আনুষ্ঠানিক বিবাহ সম্পন্ন হয়ে থাকে।কেননা আদিম কাল থেকে মানুষের মনে বিশ্বাস এদের মিলনে পৃথিবী শষ্যে পরিপূর্ণ হয়ে উঠবে।শশাকে ব্যাটা মনে করা হয়তো সন্তান কামনার মোটিভকেই সূচিত করে।অল্প বয়সে উর্বরতা শক্তি বেশি থাকে বলে কোথাও অবিবাহিত কুমারী কোথাও আবার কিশোর কিশোরীদের দিয়ে এই ব্রত পালন করানো হয়।

করম গাছে দেবত্ব আরোপের কারণ

আর্যপূর্ব ভারতবর্ষে আদিম সমাজে যে সব আচার অনুষ্ঠান প্রচলিত ছিল তাদের নেপথ্যে একধরনের দার্শনিকতা ,সৃষ্টি রহস্য সম্পর্কে কৌতুহল ছিল।এই দার্শনিকতাকে কেউ কেউ উর্বরতাবাদ নামে অভিহিত করেছেন।জন্ম রহস্য তাদের কাছে তমসাচ্ছন্ন ছিল বলেই তারা বৃক্ষলতা,কীট,পশুপাখি সকলের জন্ম,বৃদ্ধি,মৃত্যুর মধ্যে এক অভাবনীয় শক্তির কথা ভেবেছিল।ঘরের চারিদিকে অগন্য গাছপালার জন্মবৃদ্ধিতে তারা তাই বিস্ময়াভিভূত হয়ে নানা উপাচারে পূজা করেছে। হিন্দু সংস্কৃতিতেও সেই আদিম বৃক্ষপূজার আচার অনুষ্ঠান নিহিত আছে।বট,অশ্বথ,বেল,পলাশ,তুলসী,শাল,করম,নিম প্রভৃতি গাছ হিন্দু সংস্কৃতিতে এবং বর্তমানের আদিবাসী সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যেও সমানভাবে পূজিত।

সাঁওতালী লোককথা অনুসারে করম পূজার প্রবর্তক ধর্মুকে করম ঠাকুর প্রথম দেখা দিয়ে ছিলেন।করম গাছ থেকে মাটিতে নেমে এসে ধর্মুকে তিনি বলেন করম গাছের ডাল কেটে মাটিতে পুঁতে তাকে তিনবার প্রণাম করে পূজা করতে হবে এবং করম গাছের চওড়া পাতা দিয়ে তুমুদা অর্থাৎ মাদল তৈরী করে সদ্য পোতাঁ করম ডালটিকে প্রদক্ষিণ করে নাচ করতে হবে।নাচের তালে তালে তাদের প্রার্থনা তারা দেবতার কাছে নিবেদন করবে।এতে তাদের দুঃখ কষ্ট দূর হয়ে জীবন কল্যাণময় হয়ে উঠবে।এই সময় থেকেই সাঁওতাল সমাজে করম পূজা প্রচলিত হয়ে আসছে।কিন্তু ঝাড়গ্রাম জেলার কুর্মী ও মুণ্ডা সমাজে করম পূজার মূলে একতি প্রচলিত লোকবিশ্বাস আছে যে দেবস্থানের বৃক্ষেই দেবতাদের বাস।করম গাছ অত্যন্ত পাতাবহুল এবং পাতাগুলিও অন্যান্য গাছের তুলনায় অনেক বড় হয়।তাই এই গাছের আড়ালে আত্মগোপন করা অনেক সহজ।তাছাড়া এই গাছ যত্রতত্র জন্মায় এবং বিনা পরিচর্চায় দ্রুত বৃদ্ধি পায়।তাই রোপণ করা গাছের চারাগুলি যাতে করম গাছের মত তাড়াতাড়ি বেড়ে ওঠে এই আকাঙ্ক্ষায় হয়তো মানুষ এই গাছকে দেবতাজ্ঞানে পূজা করে আসছে।

করম সঙ্গীত ও নৃত্য শৈলী

বর্ষাকালীন শষ্যোৎসব করম উৎসব।এই উৎসবে করম ঠাকুরকে উদ্দেশ্য করে সারা রাত্রি ধরে নাচ,গান চলে।এই গানকে করম গান বলে।কিশোরীরা গেয়ে ওঠে ,''করম কাটিকুটি আখড়া থাপনা করি,/সখী সব করে একাদশী/আজরে করম ভেল রাতি''।এছাড়াও তারা বড় ভাই এর উদ্দেশ্যে গায় "বিবি কলাই দালাই মেশাই রাঁধিব/বড়দাদা ভাঙিতে গেলে মু/ডুবি ভরাই দিব গো/ভাইকে খাওয়াব গুঝি গুঝি পান গো,পান গো"।তারা আরো গায় "আয়রে করম রাজা

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

হাসি চাপি আয়/আয়রে করম রানী ঘোড়া চাপি আয়”।করম নাচের গান বিভিন্ন নামে পরিচিত।দাঁড়শাল,দাঁড়শাল্যা,দাঁড় ঝুমুর,দাঁড়ীগীত,পাতাশাল্যা,ঝিঙাফুল্যা,পাতা নাচের গান প্রভৃতি।একদল গোল হয়ে হাত ধরাধরি করে দাঁড়িয়ে পড়ে পূজা প্রাঙ্গণে।বেজে ওঠে মাদল আর নাকাড়া।একজন মূল গায়েন শুরু করে করম গান।মূল গায়েন গান শেষ করলেই গান ধরে নাচের দলের সবাই।তারপর বাজনা বেজে ওঠার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই নাচ গান শুরু হয়।এই নাচ সবসময় অনুষ্ঠিত হয় না কেবল করম উৎসবেই হয়।এ নাচের বিশেষত্ব এই যে ডান পা টি যথাসম্ভব উপরে তুলতে হবে,তারপর নিচে নামিয়ে আনতে হবে।সাঁওতাল মেয়েদের নাচের মত এতে সুষ্ঠ সংযম নেই তবে তাল আছে নিশ্চয়ই।এই পূজায় একটি বিশেষ ধরণের নাচ আছে একে “পাতা নাচ “বলে।করম পূজায় আখড়া বন্দনা করে ঝুমুর গীত হয়।“আখড়া বন্দনা করি,আখড়া বন্দনা করি নারী/আজরে করম একাদশী”।ধামসা,মাদল নাকাড়ার বোলে এবং সমবেত গীত মাধুরীর মধ্যে দিয়ে করম রাজার অভিষেক হয়।প্রথমে ডান পা পরে বাঁ পায়ের সঙ্গে তাল মিলিয়ে নৃত্য শিল্পীর সমস্ত শরীর আন্দোলিত হয়।ঝাড়গ্রামের বিনপুর অঞ্চলে শোনা যায় “খোলা চাচরে দাদ মাচিয়া বুনরে/আসিবেন করম রাজা বসিবেন রে।“

প্রধানতঃ করম নাচ কুমারী নৃত্য।অবিবাহিত মেয়েদের অবাধ স্বাধীনতা থাকে করম পরবে।তবে সধবা মহিলারাও এই নৃত্যে অংশগ্রহণ করে।পরবের প্রায় দশ দিন আগে থেকে প্রতি সন্ধ্যায় গ্রামের পথে মেয়েরা মিলিত হয়ে হাত ধরাধরি করে গায়ে গা ঠেকিয়ে মৃদু তালে সুর করে নাচে।“সাঁঝে ফুটে ঝিঙা ফুল সকালে মলিন/আজ কেন বঁধূর বদন মলিন হে”।বুনো ফুলের গন্ধ বনের সীমা ছাড়িয়ে মাঠে প্রান্তরে ছড়িয়ে যায়।সে সুবাস বয়ে আসে প্রতি গৃহকোণে।রমনীর মন উন্মনা হয়ে ওঠে।

“বনে ফুটিল ফুল গাঁকে আল্য বাসরে/পথে চলিতে মন করে টলমল”।সাধারণতঃ নারীরাই এসব গান করে।এই সঙ্গীতগুলি নারী মনের চিরন্তন অভিব্যক্তিকে প্রকাশিত করে।এইসব গানে বিরহের কথা অনেক বাশি প্রানবন্ত হয়ে উঠেছে।সারি সারি ঝিঙা ফুল দেখে বিরহিনী নায়িকার তার প্রণয়ীর জন্য নিদারুণ ব্যাকুলতা প্রকাশ পেয়েছে লোককবির গানে।“ঝিঙাঁ ফুল সারি সারি বঁধু বিনে রইতে নারি/--সখি গ আজ আমি রহব কন খানে”।আবার দয়িতের প্রতীক্ষারত শবরী বিভিন্ন শব্দে সচকিত,সতৃষ্ঞ হয়ে ওঠে অথচ সামনে দয়িত নেই,শুধু তার কণ্ঠের শিষ ভেসে আসে।শবরীর মন অধীর হয়ে ওঠে।“তাল পাতের আগুড়টি হাড়াক ভুড়ুক করে।/আমার বঁধু শিশিক মারে মন কেমন করে”।কোন কোন করম গানে আধ্যাত্মিকতার স্পর্শও পাওয়া যায়।“মানুষ জনম ঝিঙা ফুলের কলি রে/সাঁঝে ফুটে সকালে যায় ঝরি।/তবু ফুটে নাচে হাঁসে পিঘিমকে ভালোবাসে/যাবার বেলায় কাঁদে না রে ভরসা শুধু হরি।“জাওয়া ডালিকে কেন্দ্র করেও গান হয়ে থাকে।কারোর জাওয়া ডালিতে ভালো চারা হয়েছে দেখলেই হলুদ গোলা জলের কথা মনে পড়ে।“জাওয়া যে দিলি তাহারা হলুদ কুথায় পালে গ/তাদের জাওয়া লহকে বাড়িল”।জমিতে ভালো ফসল হলে কৃষক পত্নী আনন্দে মেতে ওঠে।চুলে খোঁপা বেঁধে,কপালে সিঁদুর দিয়ে পাড়া বেড়াতে বের হয়।“ধান কা টলম হালা মাথা বা ধলম ডাগাল/এক খাঁড়ি ঝুরা সিঁদুর পুরে বাইবার পাড়া”।

এই করম পুজায় যারা উপবাসী থাকে তারা প্রত্যেকে অঞ্জলি দেয়।পূজা শেষে উপবাসীরা পিঠা,চিড়ে,ফলমূল খেতে পারে কিন্তু ভাত খেতে পারে না বিসর্জন না হওয়া পর্যন্ত।করম ডাল বিসর্জনের পূর্বে সবাই আনন্দে মেতে ওঠে,করম শাখা দুটিকে কাঁধের উপর তুলে উৎসবরত দলটি পার্শ্ববর্তী নদী,খাল বা পুকুরে গান করতে করতে হাজির হয়।এতে অকল্যাণ অপদেবতাকে বিতাড়িত করা হয় বলেই এদের বিশ্বাস।“আজ রে করম ঠাকুর ঘর এ দুয়ারে /কাল রে করম

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

ঠাকুর শাঁখ নদীর পাড়ে"।নদীতে করম ডাল ,জাওয়া ডালি ভাসিয়ে দিয়ে স্নান সেরে একগাছি ধানের চারা এনে তার সামনে একটি কচু পাতায় পান্তাভাত,ভেজা মুগ ডাল সহযোগে আহার করে এবং ধানের গোছাটিকে ক্ষেতে রেখে আসা হয়।

করম ব্রতকথা

নিম্নে বর্ণিত কাহিনীর অঞ্চলভেদে বিভিন্ন রূপ আছে।তবে মূল কাহিনীর কাঠামোটি একই।সীমান্ত বাংলার সর্বত্রই এই ব্রতকথা প্রচলিত আছে।রাঁচির ওঁরাও ,মুণ্ডদের মধ্যেও এই কাহিনী প্রচলিত আছে।এছাড়া মালভূম,ধলভূম,ঝাড়গ্রাম অঞ্চলের ভূমিজ,মাহাত,বাগালদের মধ্যেও এই কাহিনী শোনা যায়।সাঁওতালদের মধ্যেও এর রূপান্তরিত উপাখ্যান আছে। অনেক দিন আগের কথা।এক গ্রামে কর্মু ও ধর্মু নামে দুই ভাই ছিল।তাদের সুখের সংসার।তারা চাষাবাদ করে ফসল ঘরে তুলতো এবং খুব জাঁকজমক করে করম ঠাকুরের পূজা করতো।পূজা শেষ করে করম ঠাকুরকে শাঁখ নদীর জলে বিসর্জন দিয়ে নিজেদের ধানের ক্ষেতে দুই ভাই বাসি ভাতে পান্না করতো।

একবার বড়ভাই কর্মু বাসি ভাতে পারণ না করে গরম ভাতে পারণ করলো।এর কুফল কর্মুর জানা ছিল না।এতে করম দেবতার গায়ে অসহ্য জ্বালা করতে শুরু করলো। "গরম ভাতে পান্না কেনে করলি বাছাধন/করম ঠাকুর গায়ের জ্বালায় মইরছে অকারণ।"তিনি কর্মুর উপর রাগ করে তাকে ছেড়ে চলে গেলেন।ফলে কর্মুর কপাল মন্দ হতে শুরু করলো।তার সংসারে দুঃখ,যন্ত্রণা অশান্তি বেড়েই চলল।ক্রমে দুই ভাই ভিন্ন হল।এদিকে ধর্মুর ধনসম্পত্তি দিন দিন বাড়তে লাগল।নিরুপায় কর্মু আর তার বউ ধর্মুর বাড়িতে মজুর খাটতে এল।স্বামী স্ত্রী দুজনে পরামর্শ করে সেই আলটি কেটে ফেলতে গেলো যে আল তারা সারাদিন ধরে পরিশ্রম করে ধর্মুর জমিতে তৈরী করেছে।আলের উপর কোদালের চোট হতেই দৈববাণী হল,তার দুরবস্থার জন্য ধর্মু বা তার বউ এর কোন দোষ নেই।করম পূজার দিন কর্মুর গরম ভাতে পান্না করার জন্য করম ঠাকুরের গায়ে অসহ্য জ্বালা শুরু হয়।তিনি সেই দিন থেকে গায়ের জ্বালা জুড়াতে সাত সমুদ্র তেরো নদী পারের অমৃত কুণ্ডের ঠাণ্ডা জলে ক্রমাগত ডুবছেন আর উঠছেন।কর্মু যদি সেখানে গিয়ে করম দেবতাকে সন্তুষ্ট করতে পারে তবেই সে পূর্বের অবস্থায় ফিরতে পারবে।সারারাত ধরে স্বামী স্ত্রীতে মিলে পরামর্শ করে ঠিক করলো পরদিনই কর্মু সাত সমুদ্র তেরো নদীর পারে গিয়ে করম ঠাকুরকে সন্তুষ্ট করে আসবে।

কত মাঠ,ঘাট,পাহাড়,বন পেরিয়ে কর্মু চলছেতো চলেইছে।ক্রমে বেলা বেড়ে সূর্য মাথার উপরে এল।খিদের জ্বালায় সে অস্থির হয়ে পড়ল।একটা জায়গা দেখে সে বিশ্রাম নিতে চাইলো।কিন্তু "যেমনি বসা অমনি ছাঁইরা চৈলতে লাগেঁছে/করম কপাল বাম হামার ছাঁইরাও পালাচ্ছে।"বিধি তার বাম মনে করে সে এগিয়ে চলেছে। এগিয়ে যেতে যেতেই শুনতে পেলো সেই ছায়া কর্মুকে উদ্দেশ্য করেই বলছে কর্মু কোথায় যাচ্ছে?কর্মু ভালো করে দেখে বুঝতে পারলো খড়ের বোঝা মাথায় একটি লোক রাস্তা দিয়ে হেঁটে চলেছে।ছায়াটি আসলে সেই খড়ের বোঝার।কর্মু উত্তর দিল "করম কপাল বাম" তাই করম ঠাকুরকে সন্তুষ্ট করতে যাচ্ছে।লোকটি খুশি হয়ে কর্মুকে বলে করম ঠাকুরের কাছে সে যেন একটা আদ্দাশ নিয়ে যায়।কর্মু তার আদ্দাশ জানতে চাইলে বলে সে বারো বছর ধরে খড়ের বোঝা মাথায় নিয়ে পথ হেঁটে চলেছে,কিছুতেই নামাতে পারছে না।এই বোঝা নামানোর উপায় যেনো সে করম ঠাকুরের কাছ থেকে জেনে আসে।লোকটির আদ্দাশ নিয়ে কর্মু এগিয়ে চলে।যেতে যেতে পথের ধারে একটি পুকুর দেখে কর্মু ভাবল এই জল দিয়ে ক্ষুধা,তৃষ্ণা মেটাবে।কিন্তু"মু হাত ধুয়ে তার পরে উজাব/বাসি মুহে আঁজলা জল খায়ে লিব/এই কথাতা ভাঁভে কর্মু নামহেঁ গেল/জলের ভিতর পকা দেখে ডাঙ্গায় উঠে আইল"। জলে পোকা বিজ বিজ করছে দেখে কর্মু মনের দুঃখে

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

কপাল বাম মনে করে এগিয়ে যেতে শুরু করলো।পুকুরটি তার গন্তব্য স্থল সম্পর্কে জানতে চাইল।কর্মু করম ঠাকুরের কাছে যাচ্ছে শুনে সে তার এই আদ্দাশ নিয়ে যেতে কর্মুকে অনুরোধ করল কেনো গরু,বাছুর,মানুষজন,পশুপাখি তার জল খায় না? কেনই বা তার জলে এত পোকা?"হামার একটা আদ্দাশ তুমি বৈলবে থাকুরে/জলে কেনে পোকা হয় বলেছে পৌখরে।"কর্মু তার আদ্দাশ নিয়ে এগিয়ে চলে এবং পথে পাকা ফলে ভরা একতি ডুমুর গাছ দেখতে পায়।খিদে মেটাতে যেমনি সে ডুমুরে মুখ দিতে যাবে দেখে ডুমুর ফল পোকায় ভর্তি।কর্মু এবারেও তার কপাল মন্দ মনে করে এগিয়ে যেতে চাইলে ডুমুর গাছ বলে,"ও আদ্দাশ টুকু নিয়ে যানা ভাই/বার বছর হামার ফল কিসেও খায় নাই"।পথশ্রান্ত কর্মু তার গন্তব্যের দিকে এগিয়ে চলেছে।একস্থানে পথের ধারে সে দেখল এক কুঁড়ে ঘরে এক বুড়ি উনুনে তার পা ঢুকিয়ে বসে আছে।উনুনটি দাউ দাউ করে জ্বলছে তবুও বুড়ির পা পুড়ছে না।বুড়ি চিংড়ি মাছ ভাজছে ও ধান সেদ্ধ করছে।কিন্তু মাছ ভাজছে না,ধান সেদ্ধও হচ্ছে না।এই অবাক কাণ্ড দেখে কর্মু বিড়িতে আগুন ধরাতে ভুলে গিয়ে এগিয়ে যেতে চাইলে বুড়ি তার আদ্দাশ নিয়ে যেতে বলে কর্মুকে,কেনো বারো বছর ধরে তার এই অবস্থা?আরও যেতে যেতে সে পথে একপাল গাভী দেখতে পায়।।গাই এর দুধে তৃষ্ণা মেটাবে এই ভেবে গাইএর কাছে যেতেই গাই শিং উঁচিয়ে তেড়ে আসে।এও তার কপালের দোষ মনে করে সে চলতে শুরু করে।তখন এই গাভীর দলের শির গাই কর্মুর মাধ্যমে তাদের আদ্দাশ পাঠায় কেনো যুগ যুগ ধরে তাদের কেনো কোনো মালিক জোটে না,একথা করম ঠাকুরের কাছে নিবেদন করতে।আরও কিছুদূর যাওয়ার পর পথে সে কতগুলি ঘোড়া দেখতে পায়। এগিয়ে যেতে যেতে পথে কতগুলি ঘোড়া দেখে যেই ঘোড়ার পিথে চড়তে যাবে তখনই,"চাপাইব বলে ঘড়ার পিঠে হাতটা বাড়ায় দিল/করমুকে কামড়াতে ঘোড়া হাঁফড়ে আসিল"।তখন কর্মু ঘোড়ার এবং আরও পথ চলতে চলতে এক মহিলার আদ্দাশ নিয়ে চলল।ওই রমনীর গলায় একটা পাই আটকে আছে কেনো আর কেনই বা সে পিঁড়িতে বসেই আছে,উঠতে পারছে না? কর্মু আরও অনেকদূর এগিয়ে গেলো কিন্তু যেতে যেতে এক সময় দেখল সামনে এগোনোর আর পথ নেই।,শুধু জল আর জল।এই সমুদ্র পেরিয়ে কিভাবে করম ঠাকুরের কাছে পৌঁছাবে একথা চিন্তা করে কর্মু কান্নায় ভেঙে পড়লো।এমন সময় জলের ভিতর থেকে কে যেন সহানুভূতি মাখা স্বরে তার কান্নার কারণ জানতে চাইল।কর্মু ভালো করে তাকিয়ে দেখে বিরাট এক বোয়াল মাছ জলের ভিতর থেকে তার সঙ্গে কথা বলছে।কর্মু মাছকে তার দুঃখের কথা খুলে বললে বোয়াল মাছ তাকে আশ্বস্ত করে বলে সে তাকে করম ঠাকুরের কাছে পৌঁছে দেবে।তবে তাকে জেনে আসতে হবে যে কেনো বারো বছর ধরে জলের উপরে ভেসে রয়েছে,কিছুতেই ডুবতে পারছে না।"ভালই হইল দেখা হইল ঠাকুরকে শুনাবি/হামি কেনে ভইসে বুলি এই টুকু জানাবি"।বোয়াল মাছ তাকে পিঠে চাপিয়ে সাত সমুদ্র তেরো নদীর পারে করম ঠাকুরের কাছে পৌঁছে দিলো এবং কর্মুর ফেরার অপেক্ষায় রইল।কর্মু দূর থেকে দেখতে পেলো করম ঠাকুর তাঁর সুন্দর সাজানো বাগানে কুণ্ডের জলে ক্রমাগত ডুবছেন আর উঠছেন।কর্মু ছুটে গিয়ে করম ঠাকুরের পা জড়িয়ে ধরল।"কর্মু যাএঁ পায়ে ধরে দোষ স্বীকার লিল।/পরম দয়াল করম ঠাকুর কোলে উঠায়ে লিল।" দিনটি ছিল ভাদ্র মাসের শুক্লা একাদশী।চোখের জলে ঐ অমৃত কুণ্ডের তীরেই সে করম ঠাকুরের পূজা করে তাঁকে সন্তুষ্ট করে তুলল।তিনি আশীর্বাদ করলেন কর্মু তার হারানো সব সম্পদ ফিরে পাবে।তবে শুক্লা একাদশী তিথিতে করম ডাল কেটে এনে পূজা করতে হবে এবং পূজার শেষে পান্তাভাতে পারণ করতে হবে,গরম ভাতে কখনই নয়।এই বলে করম ঠাকুর পুনরায় কুণ্ডের জলে প্রবেশ করতে যাচ্ছিলেন কিন্তু কর্মু তখনই তাঁর পথ আগলে পথের সবার সমস্যার কথা বলল।করম দেবতা সবার আদ্দাশ শুনে তাদের উদ্ধারের পথ বলে দিলেন।কর্মু বোয়াল মাছের পিঠে চড়ে সমুদ্র পেরালো এবং বোয়াল মাছকে বলল সে কোন

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

এক দেশের কোন সুন্দরী রাজকন্যাকে খেয়েছিল তাই তার এই অবস্থা।ঐ রাজকন্যার মণি মুক্তা খচিত হারতি উগরে ফেলে কোন বামন বৈষ্ণবকে দান করলেই সে জলে ডুবতে পারবে।মাছটি তখন কর্মুকেই বামন,বৈষ্ণব মনে করে তাকে হারটি দিলো এবং সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ডুবে গেলো।এবার হাঁটতে হাঁটতে কর্মু সেই কুঁড়ে ঘরের কাছে আসতেই গলায় পাই আটকানো মহিলাকে তার সমস্যার সমাধানের কথা বলে।কর্মু বলে সে কখনও কাউকে পিঁড়িতে বসিয়ে কাউকে চিড়ে,মুড়ি খেতে দেয়নি বলে তার এই অবস্থা।এই শুনে ওই মহিলা কর্মুকেই পিঁড়িতে বসিয়ে চিড়ে,মুড়ি খেতে দিল।অমনি তার কণ্ঠের পাই ও পশ্চাতের পিঁড়ি ছেড়ে গেলো।আবার যেতে যেতে ঘোড়ার দলের সাথে দেখা হলে কর্মু জানালো যেখানে তারা চরে বেড়াচ্ছে তার উত্তর পূর্ব কোণে মাটির তলায় মণি মাণিক্য পোঁতা আছে,এগুলো কোন বামন,বৈষ্ণবকে দান করলেই তারা মনিব পাবে।তারা কর্মুকেই এসব দান করল।কর্মু সবকিছু ঘোড়ার পিঠে চাপিয়ে বাকি সমস্ত ঘোড়াদের নিয়ে চলতে শুরু করল।একইভাবে গাভির দলের থেকেও সে মোহর পেলো।শির গাই তাকেই প্রভু হিসাব মনে করে তার সঙ্গে চলল।ব্রতিনীরা এই সময় করম গাছের গোড়ায় দুধ ঢেলে দেয়।আবার পুরোহিত ব্রতকথা শুরু করেন।এর পর পথে দেখা হওয়া বুড়িকে কর্মু বলে অনেক দিন আগে উনুনের জ্বলন্ত কাঠে সে লাথি মেরেছিল,সেই পাপে তার এই দশা।উনুনের তলায় ধন সম্পদ আছে।সেগুলি বামন,বৈষ্ণবকে দান করতে হবে।বুড়ি কর্মুকে সব দান করতেই বুড়ির পা উনুন থেকে বেরিয়ে এল এবং তার ধানও সেদ্ধ হয়ে গেল।এই সময় ব্রতিনীরা করম গাছের গোড়ায় ফুল দেয়।এরপর ডুমুর গাছের সঙ্গে দেখা হলে কর্মু তাকে বলে ,"তুমার গোঁড়ায় মোহর আছে ঠাকুরে বলেছে/মোহর গিলা দিতে হবেক বামহনদের কাছে"।ডুমুর গাছ কর্মুকেই সব দান করল।অমনি তার সব পোকা চলে গেলো।পার্বতীরা এই সময় করম গাছের গোড়ায় ফল নিবেদন করে।এর পর পুকুরের সাথে দেখা হলে সে বলল যে তার সিঁড়ির শেষ ধাপে সাত রাজার ধন মানিক লুকানো আছে।তা বামুন,বৈষ্ণবকে দান করলে সে শাপ মুক্ত হবে।পুকুর সব কর্মুকে দান করতেই তার সব পোকা চলে গেলো।লায়া ব্রতিনীদের বলে তারা যদি করম দেবতাকে সন্তুষ্ট করতে পারে তবে তারাও কর্মুর মত ধন সম্পদের অধিকারী হবে।ব্রতিনীরা তখন গাছের গোড়ায় জল নিবেদন করে।ঝাড়গ্রামের কোথাও কোথাও কাহিনী পরিবেশনের মাঝে মাঝে করম দেবতাকে ডুমুর,মাটির ঘোড়া,চিড়েঁ,দুধ ইত্যাদি উৎসর্গ করা হয়।

আবার পুরোহিত ব্রতকথা শুরু করেন।এরপর মাথায় খড় বোঝাই লোকটার সাথে দেখা হলে কর্মু তাকে বলে সে কোনদিন কারো মাথায় খড়কুটো পড়ে থাকতে দেখলেও তাকে কিছু বলেনি,তাই তার এই অবস্থা।"সৎ হও ধার্মিক হও ভাল কর মন/কোন বোঝাই মাথার উপর থাকবেক নাই তখন।" ।লোকটা নিজের ভুল বুঝতে পারলো এবং তার খড়ের বোঝা খসে পড়লো।সব কিছু নিয়ে কর্মু একসময় বাড়ি ফিরে এল এবং পাড়া প্রতিবেশী,আত্মীয়স্বজন সবাইকে ডেকে ভাদ্র মাসের শুক্ল পক্ষের একাদশী তিথিতে খুব ধূম ধাম সহকারে করম ঠাকুরের পূজা করল।

ব্রতকথা সমাপ্তির সাথে সাথে পূজারও সমাপ্তি হয়।এর পর ব্রতিনীরা তাদের ডালির সমস্ত ফুল করম ডালের গোড়ায় ঢেলে দিয়ে করম ঠাকুরকে প্রণাম করে।করম ডালকে জড়িয়ে তিনবার বলে,"আমার করম তোমার ধরম।" ব্রতের মূলে নিহিত থাকে কামনা।করম ব্রত কাহিনীর মধ্যেও দেখা যায় কর্মু কিভাবে দেবতাকে সন্তুষ্ট করে প্রভুল বৈভবের অধিকারী হয়ে উঠল।ব্রতিনীদেরও কামনা থাকে যাতে করম ঠাকুরের কৃপায় তারা ধনবতী,পুত্রবতী হয়ে উঠতে পারে।এই আখ্যানে দেখা যায় মনুষ্যেতর জীবেরা মানুষের ভাষায় কথা বলছে,আচার আচরণ করছে।অর্থাৎ করম

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

আখ্যান যমন ব্রতকথা তেমনি উপকথাও।যুগ যুগ ধরে এই প্রসিদ্ধ লোককথা মৌখিক ঐতিহ্যবাহিত হয়ে বহু রূপান্তর ঘটিয়েছে,যদিও কাহিনীর উদ্দেশ্য সব স্থানেই এক।

উপসংহার

" Henry Bompas এর "Folklore of The Santal Parganas" গ্রন্থে সীমান্ত বাংলার কিছু জন গোষ্ঠীর মধ্যে প্রচলিত করম পূজার কাহিনী সংযোজিত হয়েছে।প্রখ্যাত নৃতত্ত্ববিদ শরৎচন্দ্র রায় এই উৎসবকে হিন্দু উৎসবের পর্যায়ে ফেলেছেন।হিন্দুদের নিকট থেকেই আদিবাসী জনগোষ্ঠী করম পূজার উৎসবকে গ্রহণ করেছে একথা একাবারেই নিশ্চিত করে বলা যায় না।তুলসী,অশ্বথ,বেল প্রভৃতি গাছের মাহাত্ম্যকে যেভাবে স্বীকার করেছে হিন্দু সমাজে,সেভাবে করম গাছকে গ্রহণ করা হয়নি।ব্রতকথায় কর্ম গাছের কথা উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে বটে,কিন্তু কর্ম বৃক্ষটি আসলে কোন্ বৃক্ষ তা চিনতে না পেরে কেউ কেউ একে শ্রীকৃষ্ণলীলার "কেলি কদম্ব" বৃক্ষ বলেই ধরে নিয়েছেন।

গ্রাম বাংলার প্রাকৃতিক সৌন্দর্যের সাথে গ্রাম বাংলার লোকসংস্কৃতি ওতপ্রোত ভাবে জড়িত।শান্ত নিবিড় ছায়াঘন পরিবেশে দূর থেকে ভেসে আসা একটি গ্রাম্য সুর পথিকের মনে শীতলতার আবেশ বয়ে আনে।গ্রাম বাংলায় প্রচলিত পূজা পার্বণ গুলির মধ্যে আমরা খুঁজে পাই সংস্কৃতির সমন্বয় এবং সমকালীন সমাজ বিন্যাসের কাহিনী।"বাঙালীর ইতিহাস" গ্রন্থে নীরার রঞ্জন রায় এই প্রসঙ্গে বলেছেন "বাংলাদেশে হিন্দু ব্রাহ্মণ্য সমাজের মেয়েদের মধ্যে বিশেষতঃ পাড়াগাঁয়ে গাছ পূজা এখনও বহুল প্রচলিত,বিশেষভাবে তুলসী গাছ,শেওড়া গাছ ও বট গাছ।অনেক পূজায় ও ব্রতোৎসবে গাছের একটি ডাল আনিয়া পুঁতিয়া দেওয়া হয় এবং ব্রাহ্মণ্য ধর্ম স্বীকৃত দেবদেবীর সঙ্গে সেই গাছটিরও পূজা করা হয়"।এমনই একটি গাছ হল করম গাছ যার উপর দেবত্ব অর্পণ করে বিশেষ উপলক্ষে পূজা করে ভারতবর্ষের কিছু সম্প্রদায়ের মানুষ।

করম উৎসব লোকায়ত জনজীবনে এক মহামিলনের ক্ষেত্র রচনা করে।বৃহত্তর সামাজিক পরিমণ্ডলেও এর প্রভাব অনস্বীকার্য।ঝাড়গ্রাম জেলায় করম উৎসবের সময় করম কমিটির সদস্যবৃন্দ এবং ভক্তরা পূজার স্থানে উপস্থিত হয় এবনহ শোভাযাত্রার মাধ্যমে পূজার প্রচার করে থাকে।এইদিন গরীব,দুঃখীদের মধ্যে খাদ্য ও বস্ত্র বিতরণ করা হয়।ঝাড়গ্রাম জেলা হাসপাতালে সব রোগীদের জন্য খাবারের বন্দোবস্ত করা হয়।সমাজের সম্মানীয় অতিথিবৃন্দকে আহ্বান করা এবং বর্ণাঢ্য সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানও হয় এই পূজা উপলক্ষে।

যে আচরণ,বাক্য এবং কর্ম জীবনের অস্তিত্ব ও বর্দ্ধনার পথের উৎস হয় তাই ধর্ম।প্রকৃত ধর্মীয় জীবন মানুষ তখনই পালন করে যখন সে নিজে বেঁচে থাকে এবং অন্যের বাঁচা বাড়াকেও যোগান দিয়ে চলে।লোকায়ত জনজীবনের বিবিধ ধারায় এই বাস্তব সত্যের প্রতিফলন যেনো বেশি মাত্রায় পরিলক্ষিত হয়।এ সমাজ সংঘবদ্ধ ভাবে পরস্পরের সাহায্যে পরস্পরকে সাথে নিয়ে বেঁচে থাকে।যা কিছু প্রাচীন অথচ একান্ত নিজস্ব তাকে আঁকড়ে থাকার সম্মিলিত প্রয়াস ফুটে ওঠে লোকমানসে।লোকসমাজের দ্বারা পালিত লোকউৎসবগুলিও সমবেত ভাবে পালিত হয় যা প্রাণন রঞ্জনায় উদ্দীপ্ত করে তোলে প্রতিটি সত্ত্বাকে।

উল্লেখপঞ্জি

১।বসু,গোপেন্দ্রকৃষ্ণ/বাংলার লৌকিক দেবতা/দে'জ পাবলিকেশন,২০০৮/পৃষ্ঠা-৪৬

Dr. Aditi Bera, Darjeeling Government College, aditibera1987@gmail.com

২।ভারতকোষ/বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষদ প্রকাশিত ৩য় খণ্ড/পৃষ্ঠা-১০০-১০১

৩।মুখোপাধ্যায়,সুব্রত/জঙ্গলমহলের লোকসংস্কৃতি/'ঋভাষ' চতুর্থ সংখ্যা/শ্রাবণ ১৪২২/পৃষ্ঠা-৪-৫

৪।ঘোষাল,ছন্দা/লোকসংস্কৃতি বিচিত্রা/বাঁকুড়া লোকসংস্কৃতি একাডেমি/পৃষ্ঠা-১১

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, <u>kumudmallik@gmail.com</u>

উনিশ শতকীয় বাংলায় রেনেসাঁ ও নারী সংস্কার আন্দোলন এবং মধুসূদনের 'বীরাঙ্গনা'

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, <u>kumudmallik@gmail.com</u>

সংক্ষিপ্তসার

পাশ্চাত্য শিক্ষার অভিঘাতে উনিশ শতকে বাংলাদেশে যে রেনেসাঁ বা নবজাগরণ সংঘটিত হয়েছিল,তার অন্যতম লক্ষণ ছিল রিফরমেশন বা সংস্কার আন্দোলন। সেই সংস্কার আন্দোলনের মধ্যে আবার অন্যতম ছিল নারীমুক্তি বা নারী-সংস্কার আন্দোলন। সহস্র বছর ধরে চলে আসা নারী-নিপ্পেষণের বিরুদ্ধে নিরন্তর সংগ্রামে রত হয়েছিলেন এই শতাব্দীর যুগপুরুষেরা। রামমোহন রায়,ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর,স্যার ড্রিঙ্ক ওয়াটার বেথুন বা ডেভিড হেয়ারের মতো মনীষীদের মাধ্যমে সূচিত হচ্ছিল নারীমুক্তির নতুন ভোরের। সমাজক্ষেত্রে যখন এই লড়াই চলছে,তখন বাংলা সাহিত্য-অঙ্গনেও এই নবোন্মেষিত চেতনাকে প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে তৎপর হলেন মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত, তাঁর 'মেঘনাদবধ' বা 'বীরাঙ্গনা' কাব্যে নারীকে আপন ভাগ্য জয় করবার,অন্তত নিজের কথা নিজে বলার জায়গাটুকু করে দিলেন তিনি। 'বীরাঙ্গনা' কাব্যে প্রাচীন ভারতীয় পুরাণ,ইতিহাস থেকে কাহিনি গ্রহণ করে নবজাগরণের আলোয় তার নতুন সংজ্ঞা,নতুন ব্যাখ্যা উপস্থিত করলেন তিনি। পুরাণের নারী চরিত্রগুলির মধ্যে স্বাধিকার অর্জনের,মুক্তির যে সম্ভাবনা ছিল, কিন্তু পুরাণকারদের রক্ষণশীলতায় যা বাস্তবায়িত হতে পারেনি,রেনেসাঁর দীপ্তিতে তাকেই সম্ভব করে তুললেন তিনি। পুরাকালের নারী চরিত্রগুলির মধ্যে আধুনিক দ্বিধা,সংশয় এবং সমকালজনিত ইতি-নেতির দ্বন্দ্বকে এনে এবং শেষপর্যন্ত সবকিছুকে অতিক্রম করে নারীমুক্তির, নারীস্বাধীনতার নতুন পরিসর তৈরি করলেন মধুসূদন। পুরাণের স্থবির চরিত্রগুলির মধ্যে তিনি আনলেন জঙ্গমতা, একরৈখিক চরিত্রগুলি আক্ষরিক অর্থেই হয়ে উঠল বহুরৈখিক। নিজের জীবনে,সমকালীন সমাজজীবনে নারীর যে রূপ ঈপ্সিত ছিল মধুসূদনের মানসে, পুরাণ থেকে সংগৃহীত কাহিনিতে সেই মানসিকতারই প্রতিফলন ঘটালেন তিনি। পুরাণের হয়েও এই নারী চরিত্রগুলি তাই নিঃসন্দেহে রেনেসাঁজাত বোধিরই ফলশ্রুতি; যারা অস্ত্রের ঝলসানিতে নয়,প্রেমের বীর্যে নিজেদের প্রাপ্য মর্যাদা আদায় করে নিতে চেয়েছিল।

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

মূল প্রবন্ধ

দিব্য চেতনার পরিবর্তে মানবিক চেতনা,ব্রহ্মজ্ঞানের বদলে বস্তুজ্ঞান, পারলৌকিক বা অলৌকিক কার্যকারণ পরম্পরার জায়গায় ঐহিক বা প্রাকৃতিক কার্যকারণ পরম্পরা,ভক্তির স্থানে যুক্তি,আপ্তবাক্যের পরিবর্তে প্রমাণসিদ্ধ বাক্য,অথরিটির পরিবর্তে লিবার্টি – পঞ্চদশ শতাব্দীতে প্রথমে ইতালি ও পরে প্রায় গোটা পশ্চিম ইউরোপে ঘটে যাওয়া রেনেসাঁসের প্রধানতম লক্ষণ ছিল এই বৈশিষ্ট্যগুলি। পৃথিবীর একপ্রান্তের ঐতিহাসিক পরিবর্তন অপর প্রান্তের ঐতিহাসিক পরিবর্তনের উদ্বোধন করতে পারে। 'বণিকের মানদণ্ড... পোহালে শর্বরী রাজদণ্ডরূপে' দেখা দিলে -বিদেশি শাসন শোষণ নিঃসন্দেহে বৃদ্ধি পায়। কিন্তু যেটা অস্বীকার করার কোনো জায়গা নেই,সেটা হল সেই বিদেশি শাসনের শত-সহস্র মন্দ দিকের মধ্যেও আমাদের দেশে মধ্যযুগীয় কুসংস্কারের অবসানে জ্ঞানের আলোকের বিচ্ছুরণ ঘটেছিল। সহস্রাব্দের অমানিশার অবসানে নতুন অরুণোদয় হয়েছিল। জগদ্দল কালাপাহাড় সদৃশ যা কিছু নেতিবাচকতার ধ্বজাধারী,পরাগতির লক্ষণাক্রান্ত তাকে সমূলে উৎপাটিত করার সংকল্প নিয়েই বাংলা তথা ভারতবর্ষে উনিশ শতকের আবির্ভাব। বাংলা তথা ভারতের এই নবজাগরণ যাকে রেনেসাঁস বলা হচ্ছে, ইয়োরোপের মতো আমাদেরও তা মধ্যযুগের অন্ধকার থেকে আলোকে উত্তরণের চাবিকাঠি। ইউরোপের ইতিহাসে রেনেসাঁস, রিফরমেশন, এনলাইটেনমেন্ট একসঙ্গে ঘটেছিল বা বলা ভালো চার শতাব্দীর ধারাবাহিকতায় ক্রমান্বয়ে ঘটেছিল। রাজা রামমোহন রায়, প্রিন্স দ্বারকানাথ ঠাকুর,ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর,মহাত্মা ডেভিড হেয়ার,স্যার ড্রিঙ্ক ওয়াটার বেথুন,আলেক্স্যান্ডার ডাফ প্রমুখের সম্মিলিত বা ব্যক্তিগত প্রচেষ্টায় যে রেনেসাঁস বাংলাদেশ দেখেছিল, তাতে স্ববিরোধ থাকতে পারে, তার কোনো ক্লাসিক্যাল বুনিয়াদ না থাকতে পারে,কোনো দেশীয় দৃঢ় ভিত্তিভূমি না থাকতে পারে, কিন্তু যেগুলোর কোনো অভাব ছিল না,সেগুলোই এর নতুন সাম্রাজ্য,পাকা ইমারত গড়ে দিয়ে গেল। নতুন বিদ্যা,নতুন ভাব, নতুন আইডিয়া,নতুন প্রকাশভঙ্গি,নতুন জীবনযাপনের ধারা- নতুন যুগের ভোর আনার এই মূল কথাগুলি প্রতীচ্যের মতো বাংলাদেশের এই রেনেসাঁসেরও চালিকাশক্তি ছিল।

ভারত তথা বাংলার এই রেনেসাঁসের সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই এসেছিল 'রিফরমেশন' বা সংস্কার আন্দোলন। এই সংস্কার একদিকে যেমন সমাজের নানা কুসংস্কার,কূপমণ্ডূকতাকে নির্মূল করতে চেয়েছিল,তেমনি ছিল নারীকে তার অর্ধেক আকাশ ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার জন্য আন্দোলন। ঋগবেদ-এর স্বাধীনচেতা নারী পরবর্তী প্রায় দুহাজার বছর যেভাবে নির্যাতিত,নিষ্পেষিত হয়েছিল,সমাজ কাঠামোয় যেভাবে ক্রমাগত অবনমিত হয়েছিল, তার প্রায়শ্চিত্তের জন্যই যেন উনিশ শতকে আবির্ভূত হয়েছিলেন রাজা রামমোহন রায়,ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর এবং অবশ্যই ইয়ং বেঙ্গল আন্দোলনের পুরোধা পুরুষেরা।

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

রেনেসাঁসের অন্যতম লক্ষণ যে নতুন শিক্ষার বিস্তার,তার ভিত্তিপ্রস্তর স্থাপিত হয়েছিল ১৮১৭ সালের ২০ জানুয়ারি - কলকাতায় হিন্দু কলেজ প্রতিষ্ঠার মধ্য দিয়ে। উনিশ শতকের পরবর্তী আট দশকের ইতিহাস, নবজাগরণের ইতিহাস এই কলেজ এবং তার ছাত্রদের দ্বারাই মোটামুটিভাবে পরিচালিত হয়েছিল। একটা যুগান্তকারী ঘটনা হিন্দু কলেজ স্থাপনার অব্যবহিত পরেই সংঘটিত হয়েছিল,যেটা পরবর্তী রেনেসাঁসকে অন্য খাতে প্রবাহিত করেছিল। সে ঘটনা একজন ব্যক্তির যুগপ্রতীক হয়ে ওঠার কাহিনি বা বলা ভালো এক ব্যক্তির যুগপরিবর্তনের প্রোটোটাইপ হয়ে ওঠার কাহিনি। ১৮২৬ সালে হেনরি লুই ভিভিয়ান ডিরোজিও সাহিত্য ও ইতিহাসের শিক্ষকরূপে হিন্দু কলেজে যোগদান করেন এবং ১৮৩১ সালের এপ্রিল মাসে ছাত্রদের মধ্যে মুক্তচিন্তার বিকাশ ঘটিয়ে পদচ্যুত হন। কিন্তু এই মাত্র ক'বছর সময়কালের মধ্যেই যে ঝড় তিনি তাঁর ছাত্রদের মধ্যে তুলে দিয়ে গেলেন,তার প্রভাব হয়েছিল সুদূরপ্রসারী। একজনমাত্র শিক্ষককে আবর্তন করে,তাও মাত্র এই ক'বছরের মধ্যে সামগ্রিক সমাজ পরিবর্তনের এই নজির সারা বিশ্ব ইতিহাসে হাতে গোনা। ডিরোজিওর শিষ্য, যাঁরা পরিচিত হয়েছিলেন 'ইয়ংবেঙ্গল' নামে, তাঁদের দ্বারাই নিয়ন্ত্রিত হয়েছিল এই শতকের বাকি সময়ের অনেকটা।

'ইয়ংবেঙ্গল' বা 'নব্যবঙ্গীয়'-দের ভূমিকাটা এই প্রসঙ্গে আরও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ যে এদের দ্বারাই প্রভাবিত হয়েছিলেন মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত, আরও নানা প্রভাবের সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই। ১৮২০ সালে ইয়ংবেঙ্গল সোসাইটি প্রথম মহিলাদের জন্য সমান অধিকার দাবি করল। এই সময়ের ইংরেজি শিক্ষিত সমাজ টম পেইন, রিচার্ড কার্লাইল,বেন্থাম,ওয়েন প্রমুখের রচনা দ্বারা যথেষ্ট প্রভাবিত ছিলেন। এঁদের প্রভাবে ইংরেজি শিক্ষিত সমাজে সভ্যতা সম্বন্ধে এক নতুন ধারণার সৃষ্টি হয় এবং নারীর সম্বন্ধে এক নতুন মূল্যবোধের সূচনা হয়। যে শিক্ষিত পুরুষেরা এতদিন অশিক্ষিত স্ত্রী নিয়ে সুখী ছিলেন, তাঁরা স্ত্রীদের সঙ্গে এক ধরনের যোগাযোগের অভাব অনুভব করলেন। মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত – রেনেসাঁর সবকটি লক্ষণই যাঁর মধ্যে ফুটে উঠেছিল, নবজাগরণের অমৃত এবং হলাহল যিনি একই অঙ্গে গ্রহণ করেছিলেন, বলা বাহুল্য তিনিও এই ভাবনার দ্বারা বিশেষভাবে চালিত ছিলেন।

এই সময় যে আদর্শ নারীর ভাবমূর্তি কল্পনা করে তাদেরকে মূলত শিক্ষাগ্রহণে উৎসাহিত করা হচ্ছিল,সেই ভাবমূর্তি গড়ে উঠেছিল ইংল্যান্ড থেকে আমদানি করা এক নারী কাঠামোর দৃষ্টান্তের সঙ্গে চিরাচরিত ভারতীয় নারীত্বের আদর্শের সংমিশ্রণে। এক্ষেত্রে উল্লেখ্য যে উনিশ শতকের রেনেসাঁর পাশাপাশি ধর্মান্তরিত হওয়া সত্ত্বেও শৈশবে মাতা জাহ্নবী দেবীর কাছে কৃত্তিবাসী রামায়ণ এবং কাশীদাসী মহাভারতের পাঠ মধুসূদনের মধ্যে ভারতীয় পুরাণ-ইতিহাসের প্রতি তাঁর ভালোলাগাকে নস্যাৎ করতে পারেনি। 'মেঘনাদবধ' বা 'বীরাঙ্গনা'-য় বাংলার রেনেসাঁ পুরুষের সেই প্রেমই মূর্ত হয়ে উঠেছে।

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

স্যার ড্রিঙ্ক ওয়াটার বেথুন, রাজা রামমোহন রায়, প্যারীচরণ সরকার,কালীকৃষ্ণ মিত্র, ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর প্রমুখ উনিশ শতকের যে সমস্ত মনীষী স্ত্রী শিক্ষার বিস্তারে যুক্ত ছিলেন, তাঁরা সামাজিক সংস্কারের মাধ্যমে নারীর স্বাধিকার রক্ষায়ও সচেষ্ট হয়েছিলেন। সেই উদ্দেশ্যে একদিকে তাঁরা যেমন শাস্ত্র আলোচনার মাধ্যমে নারীর অধিকারের পুনঃপ্রতিষ্ঠায় ব্রতী হয়েছিলেন, অন্যদিকে ছিলেন ইয়ংবেঙ্গল গোষ্ঠী, যাঁরা ধর্মীয় বিধি বিধানের অসঙ্গতি প্রকাশ করে মানুষ হিসাবে নারীর উত্থানে সচেষ্ট হয়েছিলেন। উনিশ শতকের নারী মুক্তি আন্দোলনের, তার স্বাধিকার আদায়ের লড়াইয়ের এই দুই পুরোধা গোষ্ঠীকেই খুব কাছ থেকে পেয়েছিলেন হিন্দু কলেজের মেধাবী ছাত্র মধুসূদন দত্ত। উনিশ শতকের রেনেসাঁর প্রেক্ষিতে বীরাঙ্গনা কাব্যে পুরাণের যে নব রূপায়ণ ঘটালেন তিনি, পৌরাণিক নারীর যুগান্তর সঞ্চিত যে স্বপ্ন আর স্বাধিকার আদায়ের কথা বললেন,সেই অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠার কথা বলতে গিয়ে খুব প্রয়োজনীয় ছিল এই উপক্রমণিকা।

হিন্দু কলেজে পড়াকালীন যে মধুসূদন স্ত্রী শিক্ষা বিষয়ে বলিষ্ঠ প্রবন্ধ লিখে প্রথম পুরস্কার পেয়েছিলেন,জননী জাহ্নবীর স্নেহচ্ছায়াকাতর সেই মধুসূদন; রেবেকা ও হেনরিয়েটার স্বামী মধুসূদন সেই আদর্শ নারীর স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন যে নারী বীর্যবতী, কিন্তু তার বীর্য সৌন্দর্যবিবিক্ত নয়। শক্তি ও সৌন্দর্যের ,ঐশ্বর্য ও মাধুর্যের যে সমন্বয় ছিল তাঁর আকাঙ্ক্ষা-তারই নাম বীরাঙ্গনা। ছাত্রজীবনে স্ত্রী শিক্ষা বিষয়ক যে নিবন্ধটি রচনা করেছিলেন মধুসূদন-তাতে বলেছিলেন এদেশে প্রাচীনকালে নারীর যে মূল্য ছিল কালক্রমে তার বিলোপে নারী কেবল বংশরক্ষার উপকরণরূপে বিবেচিত হয়েছিল, শিক্ষার আলোক থেকে বঞ্চিত করে,স্বাধীন মতপ্রকাশের অধিকার থেকে তাকে দূরে সরিয়ে নারীকে দীর্ঘদিন বন্দী করে রাখা হয়েছে অন্ধকার এক প্রকোষ্ঠে। মৃত্যুপথযাত্রী বৃদ্ধের সঙ্গে বিবাহ নামক প্রহসনের পর অসহায় বালিকাকে ছুঁড়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে প্রজ্জ্বলিত চিতায়, বালবিধবাকে হিন্দু সমাজের অন্ধ গোঁড়ামি দিয়েছে একাদশীর দিন নিরম্বু উপবাসের যন্ত্রণা, দিয়েছে অসংখ্য সপত্নী নিয়ে গৃহস্থালির দণ্ড। অর্থাৎ ভারতীয় জীবনে, চেতনায় এককালের গৃহদীপ্তিস্বরূপ নারীর মূর্তি নানা সামাজিক ও অর্থনৈতিক কারণে তার স্বাতন্ত্র্য হারিয়ে পরিণত হয়েছিল নিছক এক জড়পিণ্ডে। উনিশ শতকের রেনেসাঁ তথা সংস্কারমুখী আন্দোলনের মূলে ছিল নারীকে তার অপহৃত মূল্য ফিরিয়ে দিয়ে সমাজে মানুষ হিসাবে তার স্থানটিকে ,অধিকারকে পুনর্বার প্রতিষ্ঠা করা।

উক্ত নিবন্ধে মধুসূদন বলছেন –" In a country like India, where the nurseship (if I may so call the office of a nurse) generally devolves on the mother, the importance of educating the females, (the sources from which man gather the first rudiments of knowledge) is very great: for unless they are enlightened, they spread the infection of their ignorance in the minds of those they bring

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

up. Extensive dissemination of knowledge amongst women is the surest way that leads a nation to civilization and refinement, for it is woman who first gives ideas to the future philosopher and the would–be poet." [১]

ভবিষ্যৎ প্রজন্মের যোগ্য ধাত্রী যে জননী শিক্ষার আলোক তারই প্রাপ্য হওয়া উচিত বলে মনে হয়েছিল মধুসূদনের। তাঁর মনে হয়েছিল - " The happiness of a man who has an enlightened partner is quite complete."[২] এতদিন ধরে নারীজাতির প্রতি যে অবিচার ও অপমান করা হয়েছে, তা-ই আমাদের সামাজিক ও পারিবারিক জীবনের যাবতীয় দুর্গতির মূল, সুতরাং সেই সংকীর্ণতার মূলোৎপাটন করতে না পারলে সভ্যতার অগ্রগতি সম্ভব নয়।

মধুসূদন দেখেছিলেন তাঁর জননী জাহ্নবী দেবীর দুর্দশা। পুত্র ধর্মান্তরিত হওয়ার পর পিণ্ডলোপের আশঙ্কায় কবির পিতা রাজনারায়ণ পরপর তিনটি বিবাহ করেছিলেন। মধুসূদন জননীর এই বেদনার শরিক হয়েছেন, তাঁর রচনায় তাই বারবার বেদনাহত এক নারীমূর্তির দেখা মিলেছে – যে মূর্তি তার অধিকার খুঁজেছে। হিন্দু শাস্ত্রে ধর্মান্তর পাপ, কিন্তু বহুপত্নীকতা পাপ নয় – এই ধারণা তাঁকে ক্লিষ্ট করেছিল। প্রকৃতপক্ষে রেনেসাঁসের এই কবির মনে নারীর স্বাতন্ত্র্য ও মূল্য সম্বন্ধে নিজস্ব একটি ভাবনা গড়ে উঠেছিল। কল্পলোকবাসিনী সেই নারীকেই তিনি খুঁজতে চেয়েছেন জীবনে এবং কাব্যেও।

এই প্রসঙ্গে আরও একবার উল্লেখ্য যে সমকালীন কিছু আন্দোলন যা মূলত নারীকে তার অপহৃত মূল্য প্রত্যর্পণের চেতনাতেই সংগঠিত হয়েছিল- মধুসূদনকে বিশেষভাবে প্রভাবিত করেছিল। রাজা রামমোহন রায়, ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর কিংবা স্যার ড্রিঙ্ক ওয়াটার বেথুন – যাঁরা সেই নারীকল্যাণমূলক আন্দোলনকে যুক্তিবুদ্ধি দিয়ে গ্রহণ করে তাকে সাফল্যের পথে নিয়ে গিয়েছিলেন, মধুসূদন তাঁদের ভাববলয়ের মধ্যেই বেড়ে উঠেছেন,দেখেছেন তাঁদের কর্মকান্ড এবং তিনি সেই নারী আন্দোলনের প্রতিনিধিত্ব করেছেন সাহিত্যে। ইতিহাস-পুরাণের নারী তাই রেনেসাঁসের অ-পূর্ব আলোকধারায় স্নাত হয়ে অপরূপ দ্যুতিতে ভাস্বর হয়ে ধরা দিয়েছে মধুসূদনের কাব্যসাহিত্যে।

ইউরোপীয় নারীর মতো ভারতীয় নারীরও পরিপূর্ণ মুক্তির স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন মধুসূদন। কিন্তু তাঁর যুগপরিবেশে কোথাও সেই স্বাধীনচেতা নারীর সন্ধান পাননি তিনি। দীর্ঘকাল অবরোধবাসিনী নারী তখন সবেমাত্র পৃথিবীর আলোকিত আঙিনায় পা রেখেছে, বাইরের অর্গল তখনও সে ভাঙতে পারেনি। কিন্তু মধুসূদন তাঁর সময়কে পিছনে ফেলে অনেকদূর এগিয়ে গেলেন। বাস্তবে যা তখনও অপেক্ষিত,কাব্যে সেই নারীর ছবি আঁকলেন তিনি। সে নারী প্রমীলা বীরাঙ্গনা। শক্তি ও সৌন্দর্যের সংমিশ্রণে সে নারী কবিমানসী। লক্ষণীয়, এই নারী স্বাধীনচেতা, স্বাধিকারপ্রমত্ত প্রেমের শক্তিতে, প্রেমই তার জীবনে

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

একমাত্র চালিকাশক্তি। সেই প্রেমের দায়েই সে কখনও কোমলা কুলবধূ , কখনও আবার রণরঙ্গিনী মূর্তিতে প্রদীপ্ত বহ্নিশিখা।

স্মরণে আসতে পারে মেঘনাদ জায়া প্রমীলার কাহিনি। মেঘনাদবধ কাব্যের প্রথম সর্গে প্রমোদ-উদ্যানে প্রমীলাকে দেখা যায় স্বামীর প্রণয়িনী নর্মসহচরী রূপে বিমোহিনী মূর্তিতে। লঙ্কাপুরীর দুঃসংবাদ শুনে মেঘনাদ যখন প্রমীলার কাছ থেকে বিদায় নিয়ে গেছেন তখন মহীরুহতলে ব্রততীর মতো স্বামীকে জড়িয়ে থাকতে চেয়েছে সে। পরে মেঘনাদের বিলম্বে সে উপস্থিত হতে চেয়েছে লঙ্কাপুরীতে স্বামী সমাগমে। কিন্তু শত্রুসৈন্যবেষ্টিত সে নগরে কীভাবে প্রবেশ করবে প্রমীলা ? সখী বাসন্তী এই প্রশ্ন উত্থাপন করলে সরোষে গর্জে ওঠে বাসববিজয়ী মেঘনাদের যোগ্য সহধর্মিণী প্রমীলার প্রত্যয়ী কণ্ঠস্বর –

“কি কহিলি, বাসন্তী? পর্বত-গৃহ ছাড়ি

বাহিরায় যবে নদী সিন্ধুর উদ্দেশে,

কার হেন সাধ্য যে সে রোধে তার গতি? দানবনন্দিনী আমি; রক্ষঃকুল-বধূ;

রাবণ শ্বশুর মম,মেঘনাদ স্বামী;-

আমি কি ডরাই, সখি, ভিখারী রাঘবে?

পশিব লঙ্কায় আজি নিজ ভুজ-বলে;

দেখিব কেমনে মোরে নিবারে নৃমণি?" [তৃতীয় সর্গ][৩]

প্রেমের বীর্যে সদা অশঙ্কিনী প্রমীলা এই দৃপ্ত অগ্নিময়ী রূপে যথার্থই ‘বীরাঙ্গনা’, বস্তুত পরবর্তী ‘বীরাঙ্গনা’ পত্রকাব্যে প্রদীপ্ত এই স্বাধিকারই ধরা পড়েছে-তবে অন্যভাবে।

‘বীরাঙ্গনা’ কাব্যে কবি মধুসূদন প্রেমের, নারীর স্বাধীন মনোবৃত্তির এক নতুন রূপ অঙ্কন করেছেন। কাব্যের নায়িকারা সকলেই পৌরাণিক, বিশেষ কোনো উপলক্ষে তারা পত্রপ্রেরণ করেছে তাদের কাঙ্ক্ষিত পুরুষের কাছে। সে পুরুষ কখনো স্বামী,কখনো বা প্রেমিক, এবং যে কেন্দ্রীয় ভাব প্রায় সব পত্রিকাকেই একসূত্রে গেঁথেছে তা হল প্রেম। পুরাণবৃত্ত থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে এইসব নায়িকারা যে এত মুক্তকণ্ঠে নিজেদের প্রেমকে ঘোষণা করেছে, তা মুখ্যত মধুসূদনেরই সমকালজাত বোধির ফলশ্রুতি। ‘লক্ষ্মণের প্রতি শূর্পণখা’ পত্রিকায় শূর্পণখা তাই প্রেমের ঐকান্তিকতায় উচ্চারণ করেছেন ভালোবাসার অমোঘ বাণী –

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

"কায়,মনঃ, প্রাণ আমি সঁপিব তোমারে!

ভুঞ্জ আসি রাজ-ভোগ দাসীর আলয়ে;

....

প্রেমাধীনা নারীকুল ডরে কি হে দিতে

জলাঞ্জলি,মঞ্জুকেশি,কুল,মান, ধনে

প্রেমলাভ-লোভে কভু?"[৪]

রামায়ণের নিতান্ত স্থূলবুদ্ধিসম্পন্না বিকটা শূর্পণখাকে এখানে রেনেসাঁর দীপ্তিতে স্বাতন্ত্র্যময়ী উজ্জ্বল করে তুলেছেন মধুসূদন। অদৃষ্টকে হয়তো তারা মাঝেমাঝে দোষারোপ করেছে, ভাগ্য বিপর্যয়ে দিশেহারা হয়েছে; শকুন্তলার মতো অভিমানে বেরিয়ে এসেছে তীব্র আক্ষেপসূচক বাক্য-

"হে বিধাতঃ, এই কি রে ছিল তোর মনে?

এই কি রে ফলে ফল প্রেমতরু-শাখে?" [৫]

কিন্তু তা ক্ষণিকের জন্য, কোনো অবস্থাতেই তারা সেই অমোঘ বিধির বিধানের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণ করেনি। বরং ভেবেছে 'জীবনের আশা, হায় কে ত্যজে সহজে!' অনসূয়া বা প্রিয়ম্বদার মাধ্যমে নয়, মধুসূদনের শকুন্তলা তাই স্বকণ্ঠে নিজের প্রেমের উদাত্ত ঘোষণা করেছে। নবজাগরণের ফলশ্রুতিস্বরূপ উনিশ শতকীয় নারীর সামাজিক অবগুণ্ঠন মোচন ব্যতীত সম্ভব ছিল না পৌরাণিক চরিত্রের এই প্রত্যয়ী আত্ম-উচ্চারণ। তারা রেনেসাঁজাত ব্যক্তিস্বাতন্ত্র্যে উদ্বুদ্ধ। সব দ্বিধা-সংশয়কে নস্যাৎ করে, রুক্ষ দিনের সব দুঃখকে হরণ করে নিয়ে তারা তাদের প্রেমকেই জয়যুক্ত করতে চেয়েছে। দৃপ্ত, মুক্ত, স্বাধীনচেতা এ নারী বাংলা কাব্যে আগে আসেনি। তারা প্রত্যেকে বীরাঙ্গনা, অস্ত্রের প্রদর্শনীতে নয়, প্রেমের বীর্যে।

রোমান কবি ওভিদের লাতিন ভাষায় লেখা বীরপত্রাবলী' 'Heroic Epistles'-এর আদর্শে মধুসূদন তাঁর 'বীরাঙ্গনা' নামক পত্রকাব্য (১৮৬২-প্রকাশিত) রচনা করেছিলেন। লক্ষণীয়, গ্রন্থটি উৎসর্গ করেছেন 'বঙ্গকুলচূড়া' শ্রীযুক্ত ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগরকে –এদেশে নারীসমাজের সার্বিক উন্নয়নে, স্ত্রীশিক্ষা বিস্তারে ও সামাজিক প্রতিষ্ঠায় যে ব্যক্তির নাম সর্বাগ্রে স্মরণীয়। একদিকে ওভিদের কাব্যাদর্শ,অন্যদিকে প্রাচীন ভারতীয় নারীত্বের ঐতিহ্য এবং তারপরও সেদিনের নব্যশিক্ষিত বাঙালির নারী সম্বন্ধে নবোন্মেষিত মর্যাদাবোধ সক্রিয় হয়ে মধুসূদনকে বীরাঙ্গনা - কাব্য পরিকল্পনায় প্রাণিত করেছে। বস্তুত কোমলে-কঠোরে, শক্তিতে-সৌন্দর্যে প্রাণময়ী এক নারীর স্বপ্ন দেখেছিলেন মধুসূদল। তারই নাম বীরাঙ্গনা। যদিও মধুসূদনের

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

এই কাব্যে একমাত্র জনা ব্যতীত অন্য নায়িকারা কেউই সে অর্থে বীর নন। পুত্র প্রবীর ক্ষাত্রধর্ম পালন করে যুদ্ধক্ষেত্রে প্রাণবিসর্জন দিয়েছে। তার জন্য অশ্রুত্যাগ নিরর্থক, বরং হত্যাকারী অর্জুনকে নিধনের মাধ্যমেই পুত্রশোকের জ্বালামোচন এবং ক্ষাত্রধর্মের প্রকাশ সম্ভব। নীলধ্বজের প্রতি জনার উক্তিতে তাই ক্ষত্রিয় নারীর ভাষা প্রতিশোধের স্পৃহায় উদ্দীপিত হয়ে উঠেছে –

> "টুট কিরীটীর গর্ব আজি রণস্থলে!
>
> খণ্ডমুণ্ড তার আন শূল-দণ্ড-শিরে!
>
> অন্যায় সমরে মূঢ় নাশিল বালকে;
>
> নাশ, মহেষাস,তারে! ভুলিব এ জ্বালা,
>
> এ বিষম জ্বালা, দেব, ভুলিব সত্বরে!" [৬]

মহাভারতের ঘটনা থেকে জনার এই কাহিনি নির্বাচন বিশেষ উদ্দেশ্যবাহী। যে নারী অবলা,দুর্বল বলে ভারতীয়, বাঙালি সমাজে বরাবর ঘোষিত, সেই নারীকে বিপ্রতীপ দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে দেখা এবং দেখানোর এই মানসভাবনা নিঃসন্দেহে নারীসংস্কার এবং রেনেসাঁজাত উপলব্ধিরই পরিণাম।

জনার পুত্রশোকের যে দাহ তাকে যুদ্ধযাত্রার উদ্যোগে নিযুক্ত করেছে; তার মধ্যে সেই বীররসের ব্যঞ্জনা রয়েছে। নাহলে শকুন্তলা কিংবা ভানুমতি কিংবা দ্রৌপদী কেউই বীরাঙ্গনা অভিধায় ভূষিত নয়। আসলে এই কাব্যের নায়িকারা যেভাবে মুক্তকণ্ঠে নিজের প্রেমের জয় ঘোষণা করেছে, তার মধ্যেই তাদের বীরত্ব নিহিত। বাস্তবিক, এই নায়িকারাও যুদ্ধ করেছে, তাদের যুদ্ধ কখনও সমাজের নীতির বিরুদ্ধে, কখনও ভবিতব্যের বিরুদ্ধে, কখনও আবহমান সংস্কারের সঙ্গে হৃদয়ধর্মের কখনো বা নিজের সঙ্গে নিজের। এবং এই সংগ্রামের জন্য কোনো বিশেষ রণক্ষেত্রের প্রয়োজন হয়নি, প্রতিকূল পরিস্থিতির সঙ্গে দ্বৈরথ-সমরে তারা নিজেরাই রক্তাক্ত হয়েছে, তবু নিজের বক্তব্যকে প্রতিষ্ঠিত করতে চেয়েছে। এই আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠার প্রয়াসেই তারা বীরাঙ্গনা। অর্থ বিশ্লেষণ করলে 'বীরাঙ্গনা'-র অর্থ হয় শ্রেষ্ঠ নারী। স্বাতন্ত্র্যদীপ্ত শোভন-সৌন্দর্যময়ী নারীই হল 'বীরাঙ্গনা' শব্দের ব্যঞ্জনা। মধুসূদন নিছক 'নারী' থেকে 'নারীত্বে' উত্তীর্ণ নায়িকার ছবিই আঁকতে চেয়েছিলেন। নারীর যে শোভনতা, সৌন্দর্য, স্বাতন্ত্র্যচেতনা, স্বাধিকারের কথা কবি বারবার বলেছেন, রেনেসাঁসের কালে নারীর ব্যক্তিত্বের যে রূপ তাঁর মননে নির্মিত হয়েছিল- তাই মূর্ত হল বীরাঙ্গনা কাব্যে। কাব্যের নায়িকারা যদিও পুরাণবৃত্তের ,কিন্তু তাদের মধ্যে তিনি সঞ্চারিত করলেন মানবতাবাদী যুগচৈতন্য। তাই পুরাণের অস্পষ্ট ধূসর জগতে সংস্কারের প্রাচীরে যে নারী মাথা কুটে

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

মরেছে, বাধ্য হয়েছে সমাজের রক্তচক্ষুর কাছে হৃদয়কে জলাঞ্জলি দিতে; সেই নারীই এখানে তার সমস্ত সম্ভাবনা আর শক্তি নিয়ে উপস্থিত হয়েছে, এই আত্মবিশ্বাসই তার সামগ্রিক অবয়বে এনেছে সৌন্দর্য। তুলনা করলে প্রত্যক্ষগোচর হবে ওভিদের নায়িকাদের বিশেষ কোনো ভাবের উচ্ছ্বাস তাদের ব্যক্তিত্বে একধরনের সীমাবদ্ধতা দিয়েছে। কিন্তু মধুসূদনের নায়িকাদের অন্তর্জীবন অনেক বেশি ঘাতপ্রতিঘাতে আলোড়িত। তারার অসংবরণীয় প্রেম সতীত্ব সংস্কারের উপলখণ্ডে প্রতিহত হয়ে অন্য মাত্রা পেয়েছে।

একদিকে ভারতীয় নারীর চিরাচরিত সতীত্বের সংস্কার, অন্যদিকে কামনা-বাসনাময় প্রেম,একদিকে জাতি-কুল-মান বজায় রাখার ইচ্ছা, অন্যদিকে হৃদয়ের আকুতি তারাকে পৌরাণিক চৌহদ্দির বাইরে এনে নবীন চেতনার আলোকে ইতি-নেতির দ্বন্দ্বে যথার্থ আধুনিক চরিত্রে রূপান্তরিত করে তুলেছে। একদিকে দেহ মন সমস্ত নিয়ে দয়িতের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণের আতিতি তারার মধ্যে সক্রিয় থেকেছে-

> "এ নব যৌবন, বিধু,অর্পিব গোপনে
>
> তোমায়, গোপনে যথা অর্পেন আনিয়া
>
> সিন্ধুপদে মন্দাকিনী স্বর্ণ,হীরা,মণি!" [৭]

অন্যদিকে রয়েছে কৃতকর্মের জন্য গভীর অনুশোচনা –

> "হা ধিক্, কি পাপে;
>
> হায় রে, কি পাপে, বিধি, এ তাপ লিখিলি
>
> এ ভালে? জনম মম মহা ঋষিকুলে,
>
> তবু চণ্ডালিনী আমি?" [৮]

পুরাণের নীতিধর্মী প্রাণহীন চরিত্রটিকে সংস্কার ও অবাধ্য হৃদয়াবেগে দীর্ণ প্রেমপীড়িতা সজীব রমণীতে পরিণত করে মধুসূদন বাংলা সাহিত্যে নারীর স্বাধীন অবৈধ প্রেমের সূচনা করেছেন। উনিশ শতকের নবজাগরণ ছাড়া এটি সম্ভব ছিল না। প্রতিটি পত্রিকার ভূমিকারূপে কবি পুরাণ কাহিনি লিপিবদ্ধ করেছেন। এগারোটি পূর্ণ পত্রিকার ছয়টি (শকুন্তলা, দ্রৌপদী,ভানুমতী,দুঃশলা, জাহ্নবী,জনা) মহাভারত থেকে, দুইটি(কেকয়ী,শূর্পণখা) রামায়ণ থেকে এবং বাকি তিনটির কাহিনি (তারা,রুক্মিণী,উর্বশী) অন্য পুরাণাদি থেকে গৃহীত।

Kumud Mallik, Darjeeling Government College, kumudmallik@gmail.com

পাশ্চাত্যের অভিমতে, থিম কিংবা আঙ্গিক বিদেশি সাহিত্য থেকে গ্রহণ করলেও তাকে নিজের সাংস্কৃতিক উত্তরাধিকারে জারিত করে, কখনও মূলের সমান্তরালে কখনও বৈপরীত্যে তাকে চিহ্নিত করে মৌলিকত্ব দানই অনুস্রষ্টার কাজ এবং মধুসূদন সে-কাজ যথাযথ পালন করেছিলেন, ইউরোপ প্রীতি আর স্বদেশপ্রীতির যে যুগ্মবেণী মধুসূদনের কাব্য শরীরে প্রলম্বিত, তার উৎসে উপনিবেশ-পীড়িত স্ব-বিরোধী এক যুগচৈতন্য সবসময় বিরাজমান ছিল। সুদূর অতীতের গর্ভ থেকে পুরাণ ও পুরাণকল্প ঐতিহ্যকে জীবন্ত ও অর্থবহ করে তোলে রেনেসাঁস। কিন্তু ঐতিহ্যের সাফল্যের অন্যতম প্রধান শর্ত তার মধ্যে মানবতাবোধের সঞ্চার করে,যেটাও রেনেসাঁজাত। মধুসূদন ভারতীয় বীর নারীর অন্বেষণে প্রাচীন পুরাণাদিতে গিয়েই ক্ষান্ত হননি, তিনি সেই চরিত্রগুলির মধ্যে সঞ্চার করেছেন বহুরৈখিক দৃষ্টিকোণ। ফলে রামায়ণ মহাভারত বা পুরাণের একরৈখিক চরিত্রগুলির মধ্যে দ্বিধা, দ্বন্দ্ব, সংশয়ের যে বীজ উপ্ত ছিল, তার মধ্যেই রেনেসাঁর আলো বিচ্ছুরিত হয়ে তৈরি হয়েছে অনন্ত সম্ভাবনা। সেকালের হয়েও তারা হয়ে উঠেছে আধুনিক কালের। এভাবেই পৌরাণিক চরিত্র আধুনিক কালের আততিতে দীর্ণ হতে হতে খুঁজে পেতে চেয়েছে তার অস্তিত্বের সামিয়ানা।

তথ্যসূত্র:

১) ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত (সম্পাদিত) মধুসূদন রচনাবলী,সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলিকাতা-৯, পঞ্চম সংস্করণ, জুন,১৯৯৯, পৃষ্ঠা-৫৯৫

২) ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত (সম্পাদিত) মধুসূদন রচনাবলী,সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলিকাতা-৯, পঞ্চম সংস্করণ, জুন,১৯৯৯, পৃষ্ঠা-৫৯৫

৩) ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত (সম্পাদিত) মধুসূদন রচনাবলী,সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলিকাতা-৯, পঞ্চম সংস্করণ, জুন,১৯৯৯, পৃষ্ঠা-৫৫-৫৬

৪) ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত (সম্পাদিত) মধুসূদন রচনাবলী,সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলিকাতা-৯, পঞ্চম সংস্করণ, জুন,১৯৯৯, পৃষ্ঠা-১৪৩

৫) ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত (সম্পাদিত) মধুসূদন রচনাবলী,সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলিকাতা-৯, পঞ্চম সংস্করণ, জুন,১৯৯৯, পৃষ্ঠা-১৩৪

৬) ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত (সম্পাদিত) মধুসূদন রচনাবলী,সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলিকাতা-৯, পঞ্চম সংস্করণ, জুন,১৯৯৯, পৃষ্ঠা-১৫৫

৭) ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত (সম্পাদিত) মধুসূদন রচনাবলী,সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলিকাতা-৯, পঞ্চম সংস্করণ, জুন,১৯৯৯, পৃষ্ঠা-১৩৭

৮) ক্ষেত্র গুপ্ত (সম্পাদিত) মধুসূদন রচনাবলী,সাহিত্য সংসদ, কলিকাতা-৯, পঞ্চম সংস্করণ, জুন,১৯৯৯, পৃষ্ঠা-১৩৭

Dr. Shraddhanjali Singh, Darjeeling Government College, singh.shraddhanjali@gmail.com

भाषाओं पर संकट और विश्वभाषा हिंदी

Dr. Shraddhanjali Singh, Darjeeling Government College, singh.shraddhanjali@gmail.com

Abstract

भाषा पर संकट मनुष्य के अस्तित्व का संकट है। उसकी हजारों वर्षों की संचित विरासत के नष्ट होने का संकट है, क्योंकि हवा या पानी की तरह भाषाएं प्रकृति प्रदत्त नहीं होतीं। ये मनुष्य की अर्जित संपत्ति हैं। मनुष्य का सामाजिक अस्तित्व और सांस्कृतिक पहचान का निर्धारण भाषा के जरिए होता है, उसकी हजारों वर्षों की संचित ज्ञान संपदा भाषा में अभिव्यक्त होकर संरक्षित होती है। जब कोई भाषा अपने में संचित ज्ञान-भंडार के समुचित दस्तावेजीकरण के बिना विलुप्त होती है, तो उसका पूरा मौखिक साहित्य, मौखिक इतिहास और मौखिक परंपरा भी हमेशा के लिए नष्ट हो जाते हैं। यह पूरी मानवता के लिए ऐसी क्षति होती है, जिसकी भरपाई कभी नहीं की जा सकती। हालांकि प्राचीन काल से ही कुछ भाषाओं के विलोप और उनके स्थान पर नई भाषाओं के विकास की प्रक्रिया चली आ रही है। कई भाषाविदों ने भाषा-विलोप को मनुष्य की मृत्यु के समान एक स्वाभाविक और प्राकृतिक प्रक्रिया माना है। लेकिन वर्तमान समय में जिस दर से भाषाएं विलुप्त हो रही हैं वह निश्चय ही चिंताजनक है। इन बढ़ते खतरों के मद्देनजर यह जरूरी है कि संकटग्रस्त भाषाओं की पहचान कर उनके संरक्षण की समुचित व्यवस्था की जाए।

बीज शब्द (Key Words): भाषा सर्वेक्षण, संकटग्रस्त भाषाएं, भाषा विलोप, भाषाई अल्पसंख्यक, भाषाई समाज

भाषाएं मनुष्य के अस्तित्व की पहचान हैं। मानव-जाति को सृष्टि के अन्य प्राणियों से अलग और विशिष्ट बनाने वाले कारकों में भाषा एक मुख्य तत्व है। व्यक्ति के जीवन मूल्य-मान्यताएं, उसकी इच्छाएं, भावनाएँ, आदतें सब भाषा में व्यक्त होती हैं। इसे महज अभिव्यक्ति का उपकरण मानना इसके महत्व को कम करके आंकना है। भाषा के विकास के साथ मानव सभ्यता के इतिहास में एक क्रांतिकारी परिवर्तन की शुरुआत होती है। इसलिए भाषा पर संकट महज अभिव्यक्ति का संकट नहीं है। यह मनुष्य के अस्तित्व का संकट है। उसकी हजारों वर्षों की संचित विरासत के नष्ट होने का संकट है, क्योंकि हवा या पानी की तरह भाषाएं प्रकृति प्रदत्त नहीं होतीं। ये मनुष्य की अर्जित संपत्ति हैं। प्रख्यात भाषाविद गणेश एन.देवी के शब्दों में,'भाषा मानव निर्मित होती है और महान मानव श्रम का परिणाम है। किसी भाषा के पैदा होने में हजारों साल लग जाते हैं। आज अगर हम अपनी कोई भाषा खो देते हैं, तो यह हमारा अपने पूर्वजों के प्रति गंभीर अन्याय होगा।'[1]

भाषाओं का विलोप इतिहास की नई घटना नहीं है। प्राचीन काल से ही कुछ भाषाओं के विलोप और उनके स्थान पर नई भाषाओं के विकास की प्रक्रिया चली आ रही है। कई भाषाविदों ने भाषा-विलोप को मनुष्य की मृत्यु के समान एक स्वाभाविक और प्राकृतिक प्रक्रिया माना है। लेकिन वर्तमान समय में जिस दर से भाषाएं विलुप्त हो रही हैं वह निश्चय ही चिंताजनक है। एक अनुमान के अनुसार विश्व की वर्तमान 7000 भाषाओं में से लगभग 4000 भाषाओं पर विलोप का खतरा मंडरा रहा है और तय है कि आने वाले समय में यह आंकड़ा बढ़ेगा। कई विद्वानों का मत है कि भाषायी संकट के सबसे बुरे परिदृश्य में करीब 90 प्रतिशत भाषाएं अगले सौ सालों में विलुप्त हो जाएंगी, सबसे बेहतर स्थिति में केवल 50 प्रतिशत भाषाएं बचेंगी और केवल 10 प्रतिशत भाषाएं ही अगली सदी के लिए पूरी तरह सुरक्षित हैं। यह भी अनुमान किया जा रहा है कि कई भाषाएं हमारे अपने जीवनकाल में ही विलुप्त हो जाएंगी अगर उन्हें बचाने के लिए समुचित प्रयास नहीं किए गए।

भाषायी संकट के भारतीय परिदृश्य पर बात करते हुए डॉ. गणेश एन. देवी स्पष्ट करते हैं कि विश्व की जिन चार हजार भाषाओं पर नष्ट होने का खतरा मंडरा रहा है, उनमें लगभग 10 प्रतिशत भाषाएँ अकेले भारत की हैं। यानी भारत की वर्तमान 780 भाषों में से 400 भाषाएं अगले पचास सालों में विलुप्त हो जाएंगी। इनमें भी तटीय क्षेत्र की भाषाओं पर संकट अधिक है, क्योंकि विभिन्न कारणों से इन क्षेत्रों में पलायन और विस्थापन की समस्या जटिल रूप में सामने आई है। गणेश एन. देवी भाषाओं के विलोप को एक महान सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक-आर्थिक क्षति के रूप में देखते हैं। उनके शब्दों में, 'भाषाओं को खोने का अर्थ है विशाल मानव पूंजी, सांस्कृतिक पूंजी और यहां तक कि वास्तविक पूंजी से हमेशा के लिए हाथ धो बैठना क्योंकि भाषाएं आर्थिक दृष्टि से भी बहुत लाभदायक सिद्ध हो सकती हैं, अगर तकनीक के विकास में उनका कल्पनाशील ढंग से इस्तेमाल किया जाए।"[2]

Dr. Shraddhanjali Singh, Darjeeling Government College, singh.shraddhanjali@gmail.com

भाषाओं पर संकट के सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक-ऐतिहासिक निहितार्थों को समझने की जरूरत है। किसी समाज की मिथकीय धारणाएं, पौराणिक विचार, नैतिक मूल्य, मान्यताएं उसकी भाषा के जरिए व्यक्त होती हैं। इस अर्थ में भाषाएँ मनुष्य की जीवंत विरासत का हिस्सा होती हैं। इनके जरिए वह अपनी भावनाओं-इच्छाओं को व्यक्त करता है, अपने अस्तित्व की पहचान करता है, अपने सामाजिक संबंधों को मजबूत करता है, सांस्कृतिक अभिव्यक्तियों को साझा करता है और सामाजिक प्रथाओं का निर्माण और प्रसार करता है। यही कारण है कि समकालीन विमर्शों में सामाजिक अस्तित्व और सांस्कृतिक पहचान के निर्माण में भाषा की केंद्रीय भूमिका को स्वीकार किया गया है। 2001 में यूनेस्को ने भाषायी विविधता को सांस्कृतिक विविधता की तरह मानवता की साझी विरासत के रूप में देखे जाने की वकालत करते हुए यह घोषणा की कि सभी व्यक्तियों को अपनी रुचि की भाषा में, विशेष रूप से अपनी मातृभाषा में खुद को अभिव्यक्त करने का अधिकार मिलना चाहिए।(यूनेस्को यूनिवर्सल डिक्लेरेशन ऑन कल्चरल डाइवर्सिटी, 2001)[3] ।

ऐतिहासिक जानकारियों के लिहाज से भी भाषाओं का अध्ययन बहुत उपयोगी होता है। भाषा-परिवारों के वर्गीकरण और भाषा-परिवर्तन के अध्ययन के जरिए मानव-सभ्यता के इतिहास और विकास से जुड़ी कई महत्वपूर्ण जानकारियाँ मिलती हैं। सभ्यता के विकास क्रम में किस तरह विभिन्न मानव समूह एक दूसरे से जुड़े हुए थे, विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में सभ्यता और संस्कृति का विकास-दर कैसा था, वहां का जीवन-स्तर कैसा था, किस तरह विभिन्न संस्कृतियाँ एक-दूसरे को प्रभावित करते हुए विकसित हुईं, ये सभी बातें भाषाओं के अध्ययन से जानी जा सकती हैं। भाषा-परिवारों की विभिन्न भाषाओं के अध्ययन के जरिए उनके बोलने वाले समूहों और उनकी संस्कृतियों के आपसी संबंधों को पहचाना जा सकता है।

कई विद्वानों का विचार है कि मानव-सभ्यता के विकास की जानकारी में भाषाओं का वही महत्व है, जो कई महत्वपूर्ण प्राणियों का प्राणिजगत के विकास को समझने में है। जिस तरह प्राणीजगत के कुछ महत्वपूर्ण प्राणियों जैसे बंगाल टाइगर, सफ़ेद ह्वेल के विलोप से प्राणी जगत का सम्यक इतिहास नहीं जाना जा सकता उसी तरह विभिन्न भाषाओं के विलोप से मानव-जाति और उसकी भाषाओं का इतिहास समझना असंभव है। विशिष्ट भाषाओं का लोप अपने में एक बड़ी क्षति है, लेकिन जब पूरा भाषा-परिवार विलुप्त होता है तो जैसे सभ्यता के विकास का एक पूरा अध्याय नष्ट हो जाता है। उसके बारे में तब अनुमान लगाने के अलावा कोई चारा नहीं बचता । यह वैसी ही क्षति है जैसे डायनासोर, बेलेन्नी या सीटेसियन जैसे प्राणी पूर्णतः विलुप्त होकर अब केवल तस्वीरों में बचे हैं। दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि भाषाओं के संदर्भ में अपनी पूरी विकरालता के साथ यह संकट हमारे सामने है। एक अध्ययन के अनुसार विश्व के 402 भाषा परिवारों में से करीब 108 परिवारों की सभी भाषाएँ विलुप्त हो चुकी हैं। यानी दुनिया की भाषायी विविधता का 26 प्रतिशत हमेशा के लिए नष्ट हो चुका है।

भाषाएं साहित्य, दर्शन, कला, चिकित्सा-शास्त्र आदि से जुड़ी बहुमूल्य जानकारियों और सूचनाओं के खजाने की तरह होती हैं। यह देखा गया है कि दुनिया के कई छोटे भाषायी समुदाय अपनी भाषाओं में अक्सर विशिष्ट ज्ञान संरक्षित रखते हैं, मसलन औषधीय पौधों और इलाजों से संबंधित ज्ञान, अज्ञात वैज्ञानिक पौधों और जानवरों की पहचान, नई फसलों आदि की जानकारी। जब कोई भाषा नई पीढ़ी द्वारा नहीं सीखी जाती है, तो स्वाभाविक रूप से उस भाषा में संरक्षित प्राकृतिक और सांस्कृतिक दुनिया का ज्ञान भविष्य में संचारित होने में विफल हो जाता है। उल्लेखनीय है कि भाषाओं में संचित ज्ञान संपदा और सांस्कृतिक निधि केवल लिखित रूप में ही संचित नहीं होती, उसकी एक लंबी और समृद्ध मौखिक परंपरा भी होती है। जब कोई भाषा अपने में संचित ज्ञान-भंडार के समुचित दस्तावेजीकरण के बिना विलुप्त होती है, तो उसका पूरा मौखिक साहित्य, मौखिक इतिहास और मौखिक परंपरा भी हमेशा के लिए नष्ट हो जाते हैं। यह पूरी मानवता के लिए ऐसी क्षति होती है, जिसकी भरपाई कभी नहीं की जा सकती ।

आमतौर पर यह माना जाता है कि जब किसी भाषा को सौ या हजार सालों तक कोई बोलने वाला नहीं होता, तो वह विलुप्त भाषाओं की श्रेणी में रखी जा सकती है । हालांकि इस तरह का आकलन पूरी तरह से निर्विवाद नहीं होता । कई बार लंबे समय तक किसी भाषा के ज्ञात सदस्यों का पता नहीं होने पर भी एक संकुचित स्थान और छोटे समुदाय में वह बची रहती है। भविष्य में उसके प्रयोग क्षेत्र में विस्तार या सदस्यों की संख्या में वृद्धि संभव होता है। इसलिए भाषा के विलोप के संबंध में कोई अंतिम निर्णय देना प्रायः कठिन होता है। इन्हीं असुविधाओं के मद्देनजर दुनिया भर की मुख्य भाषाओं की स्थिति और उनमें से अधिकांश पर मंडराने वाले संकट का जायजा लेने के लिए यूनेस्को ने 2003 में कुछ ऐसे मानदंड तय किए, जिनके आधार पर इस दिशा में वैज्ञानिक ढंग से विचार किया जा सकता है। यूनेस्को द्वारा जारी दस्तावेज़ 'भाषायी प्राणशक्ति और खतरे की अवस्था' (लैंग्वेज भाइटलिटी एंड एनडेंजरमेंट, 2003)[4] में उन नौ कारकों का उल्लेख किया गया, जिनके आधार पर किसी भाषा की शक्ति अथवा उसके संकट का आकलन किया जा सकता है। इस आधार पर यूनेस्को ने भाषा की छह श्रेणियां निर्धारित कीं, 1)

Dr. Shraddhanjali Singh, Darjeeling Government College, singh.shraddhanjali@gmail.com

सुरक्षित, 2) असुरक्षित, 3) संकटकाल से गुजरती, 4) विलोप होने के गंभीर खतरे से गुजरती, 5) लुप्तप्राय, 6) लुप्त । यहाँ हमारा उद्देश्य भाषायी संकट के खतरों की पहचान करना है, इसलिए केवल संकटकाल से गुजरती अथवा लुप्त होने वाली भाषाओं की स्थितियों का विश्लेषण उक्त नौ कारकों के आधार पर किया जा रहा है ।

1. **पीढ़ी-दर-पीढ़ी संचार** : पीढ़ियों के बीच भाषा का संचार जब बहुत सीमित होता है, भाषा अपने संकटकाल से गुजर रही होती है। इस अवस्था में बहुत कम बच्चे पहली भाषा के रूप में उसका प्रयोग करते हैं । यह प्रयोग भी कुछ विशिष्ट सामाजिक घेरों, जैसे परिवार आदि तक सीमित रहता है । यह स्थिति तब गंभीर हो जाती है यानी भाषा पर लुप्त होने का खतरा मंडराने लगता है जब नई पीढ़ी तक उस भाषा का संचार नहीं होता, पुरानी पीढ़ी उसे समझती तो है, लेकिन स्वयं उसका व्यवहार नहीं करती । जब बोलने वालों में सबसे छोटी उम्र के सदस्य बुजुर्ग यानी परदादा-परदादी रह जाते हैं, तब भाषा लुप्तप्राय मान ली जाती है, क्योंकि उस पीढ़ी के अंत के साथ भाषा की मृत्यु तय हो जाती है। हिन्दी की कई बोलियाँ इसी तरह सिमटती जा रही हैं ।

2. **बोलने वालों की संख्या** : जहां तक किसी भाषा के बोलने वालों की संख्या का सवाल है, इस संबंध में कोई निश्चित आंकड़ा देना प्रायः असंभव होता है। फिर भी, एक छोटे भाषायी समूह पर हमेशा विलोप का संकट मंडराता रहता है। अपनी अल्पसंख्या के कारण किसी महामारी, युद्ध या प्राकृतिक आपदाओं का शिकार होकर इसके पूरी तरह नष्ट हो जाने की आशंका बनी रहती है। कई बार अल्पसंख्यक भाषायी समूह का किसी वर्चस्वशाली समूह में विलय हो जाता है और इस तरह धीरे-धीरे उसकी भाषा और संस्कृति हमेशा के लिए नष्ट हो जाती है। कई जनजातीय भाषाओं के साथ यह घटा है।

3. **कुल आबादी में बोलने वालों का अनुपात** : जब किसी भाषायी समूह के सभी सदस्य मुख्य भाषा के रूप में अपनी भाषा का प्रयोग नहीं करते, लेकिन फिर भी अधिकांश लोग उसका प्रयोग करते हैं, भाषा तब संकट काल में होती है। धीरे-धीरे यह भाषा जब प्रयोग कम होते हुए अल्पसंख्यक लोगों तक सीमित हो जाती है, भाषा के विलोप की स्थिति बनने लगती है। सांख्यिकी दृष्टि से आमतौर पर माना जाता है कि अगर किसी भाषा के बोलने वालों की संख्या दस हजार से कम है तो उस पर विलुप्त होने का गंभीर खतरा रहता है।

4. **विविध क्षेत्रों में भाषा का प्रयोग:** जब भाषा का प्रयोग मुख्यतः अनौपचारिक कामों के लिए होता है, वह संकट में होती है। इस स्थिति में औपचारिक क्षेत्रों में भाषा की सांकेतिक उपस्थिति ही रहती है, जबकि काम-काज के लिए किसी अन्य प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा का प्रयोग होने लगता है। अगले चरण में भाषा केवल पारिवारिक स्तर पर प्रयोग में सीमित हो जाती है और उसमें भी प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा का दखल होने लगता है। माता-पिता अपनी भाषा अच्छी तरह से बोल और समझ सकते हैं लेकिन बच्चों से बातचीत में मुख्य रूप से प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा का प्रयोग करते हैं। बच्चे एक हद तक अपनी भाषा समझ पाते हैं, लेकिन खुद को अभिव्यक्त करने के लिए प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा का प्रयोग अधिक करते हैं।। धीरे-धीरे जब भाषा केवल रीति-रिवाजों और धार्मिक कर्मकांडों, अवसरों तक सीमित हो जाती है और आम बोलचाल से उसका संबंध टूट जाता है, यहाँ से उसके विलुप्त होने के संकेत मिलने लगते हैं। हम संस्कृत के संबंध में यह स्थिति पाते हैं।

5. **नए क्षेत्रों और संचार माध्यमों में भाषा की स्थिति** : किसी समाज के जीवन स्तर में विकास के साथ उसकी भाषा के प्रयोग -क्षेत्रों में भी बढ़ोत्तरी होती है और नए-क्षेत्र खुलते हैं। यूनेस्को ने भाषा के नए प्रयोग क्षेत्रों में रोजगार, शिक्षा के साथ आधुनिक संचार माध्यमों जैसे टी वी, इंटरनेट आदि का उल्लेख किया है। जो भाषा इन क्षेत्रों में अपनी प्रभावशाली उपस्थिति बनाने में सफल होती है, वह भविष्य के लिए सुरक्षित हो जाती है। जो भाषाएं आधुनिकता की चुनौतियों का सामना नहीं कर पातीं, वे नई दुनिया के लिए तेजी से अप्रासंगिक और अनुपयोगी हो जाती हैं। वैसे इन क्षेत्रों में भाषा के प्रयोग के साथ उसके स्तर को समझना भी जरूरी है। उदाहरण के लिए आधुनिक संचार माध्यमों, जैसे टी वी या रेडियो पर किसी संकटपूर्ण भाषा पर कोई कार्यक्रम दिन भर में आधे या एक घंटे के लिए प्रसारित होता है, तो उसे महज सांकेतिक उपस्थिति ही माना जाना चाहिए । इसी तरह प्रशासन अथवा शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में भी कोई भाषा किस स्तर तक और कितने रूपों में प्रयुक्त होती है, इसके आधार पर ही उसकी स्थिति तय होती है । महज सांकेतिक या प्रतीक रूप में उपस्थिति किसी भाषा का बहुत दूर तक भला नहीं कर सकती । हम कई भारतीय भाषाओं के संदर्भ में, जो राष्ट्रीय भाषाएं नहीं हैं, यह स्थिति पाते हैं।

6. **भाषा में शिक्षा के लिए सामग्री की उपलब्धता :** शिक्षा का संबंध सामाजिक और आर्थिक विकास से है। किसी भी भाषा के भविष्य में सुरक्षित रहने के लिए जरूरी है कि वह शिक्षा का माध्यम भी हो। शिक्षा का माध्यम बनने के लिए संबंधित भाषा में ज्ञान के विभिन्न अनुशासनों के विविध विषयों आदि पर सभी आयु वर्ग के विद्यार्थियों के लिए अद्यतन पाठ्य-सामग्रियों की उपलब्धता जरूरी है। यूनेस्को की रिपोर्ट में उन भाषाओं को संकटकालीन माना गया है, जिनका समृद्ध साहित्यिक-वैचारिक परंपरा के बावजूद शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में प्रयोग सीमित है। इस स्थिति में अधिकांश विद्यालयों में शिक्षा का मुख्य माध्यम कोई अन्य प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा होती है। केवल कुछेक विद्यालयों में अपनी भाषा में शिक्षा दी जाती है। हम हिन्दी और अन्य राष्ट्रीय भाषाओं के संदर्भ में देखते हैं कि उच्च शिक्षा अथवा ज्ञान के नए अनुशासनों से वे बहिष्कृत हैं और केवल पारंपरिक शिक्षा का माध्यम रह गई हैं। प्रशासकीय कामों के लिए इन भाषाओं का विशेष प्रयोग नहीं होता। धीरे-धीरे प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा अंग्रेजी अपना प्रभाव-विस्तार करते हुए विद्यालयी शिक्षा का भी मुख्य माध्यम हो गई है, और मातृभाषा केवल प्राथमिक स्तर तक या एक विषय के ज्ञान के सांकेतिक रूप तक सीमित हो गई है। यहाँ आकर प्रिंट मीडिया के जरिए उस भाषा में साक्षरता का प्रचार नहीं किया जाता, पहले से मौजूद विपुल साहित्यिक-वैचारिक सामग्री का अधिकांश लोगों के लिए या तो कोई महत्व नहीं रहता या महज सांकेतिक अर्थ रह जाता है।

7. **सरकारों और संस्थानों का भाषा के प्रति रवैया और नीतियाँ :** अल्पसंख्यक या गैर-महत्वपूर्ण भाषाओं के संरक्षण, विकास अथवा विनाश की नियति अक्सर प्रभुत्वशाली भाषायी समाज के इनके प्रति रवैये से तय होती है। किसी राज्य की भाषायी विचारधारा भाषाई अल्पसंख्यकों को अपनी भाषा के विकास और समृद्धि के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर सकती है या उन्हें अपनी भाषा छोड़ कर किसी अन्य प्रभुत्वशाली भाषायी समाज में विलय के लिए बाध्य भी कर सकती है। इन्हीं दोनों नीतियों के आधार पर किसी समाज में भाषा का विकास अथवा विनाश तय होता है। यूनेस्को ने उन समाजों में भाषाओं की स्थिति संकटपूर्ण मानी है, जहां अल्पसंख्यक भाषाओं के प्रति सरकार की नियत और नीति अप्रत्यक्ष अथवा प्रत्यक्ष आत्मसातीकरण की होती है। अप्रत्यक्ष आत्मसातीकरण में जहां सभी औपचारिक क्षेत्रों में प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा का कब्जा रहता है और अल्पसंख्यक भाषाओं के लिए प्रत्यक्ष नीति का आभाव होता है। वहीं प्रत्यक्ष आत्मसातीकरण की नीति के तहत सरकार द्वारा अल्पसंख्यक भाषाओं को कोई संरक्षण नहीं दिया जाता, बल्कि उनके प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा में विलय को प्रोत्साहित किया जाता है। आगे चलकर जब प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा ही एक मात्र सरकारी भाषा रह जाती है और अल्पसंख्यक भाषाओं को न मान्यता मिलती है न ही संरक्षण, तब उनके विलोप की शुरुआत हो जाती है। इस संबंध में देखा जा सकता है कि 1957 से भारत में 'द कमिश्नर फॉर लिंग्विस्टिक माइनरिटी इन इंडिया' नाम से एक सरकारी संस्था काम कर रही है, लेकिन वह कितनी प्रभावी है – यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है।

8. **भाषायी समाज का अपनी भाषा के प्रति रवैया :** आमतौर पर कोई भी व्यक्ति अपनी भाषा के प्रति पूरी तरह तटस्थ नहीं होता। उसका अपनी भाषा के साथ कई तरह का संबंध हो सकता है, वह इसे अपने सामाजिक अस्तित्व और सांस्कृतिक पहचान के रूप में देखते हुए इसके विकास के प्रति जागरूक हो सकता है, किसी प्रकार के भावात्मक संबंध के बिना स्वयं को अभिव्यक्त करने के एक उपयोगी साधन के रूप में इसका प्रयोग कर सकता है, इसके प्रति हीनताग्रंथि के कारण इसके उपयोग से परहेज कर सकता है या इसे बढ़ावा नहीं देना चाह सकता और अंततः इसे सर्वथा अनुपयोगी और सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक पिछड़ेपन का प्रतीक मानकर सचेत रूप से इसका विरोध कर सकता है। कहा जा सकता है कि किसी भी भाषा की नियति उसके बोलने वालों की नियत पर निर्भर करती है। यूनेस्को ने उन समाजों की भाषाओं को असुरक्षित और लुप्त होने वाली माना है, जहां अपनी भाषा के प्रति बेपरवाही, हीनताबोध से लेकर एक प्रकार की वितृष्णा की भावना मिलती है। कई ज्यादा शिक्षित हिन्दी भाषियों में अपनी भाषा के प्रति इस तरह का रवैया मिलता है। अपनी जातीय स्मृतियों से विच्छिन्नता और विभिन्न आर्थिक-सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक-बौद्धिक कारणों से प्रभुत्वशाली भाषा के प्रति तीव्र आकर्षण इसकी मुख्य वजह होती है।

9. **दस्तावेज़ों की किस्म और गुणवत्ता :** किसी भी भाषा की समृद्धि उसमें उपलब्ध लिखित सामग्री की मात्रा, प्रकार और गुणवत्ता के आधार पर तय होती है। जिन भाषाओं में कई महत्वपूर्ण कोश, व्याकरण ग्रंथ, सृजनात्मक और विचारात्मक साहित्य तथा विभिन्न विषयों पर विस्तृत पठन-सामग्री

Dr. Shraddhanjali Singh, Darjeeling Government College, singh.shraddhanjali@gmail.com

उपलब्ध होती है और निरंतर इनका विकास और विस्तार होता रहता है, उन भाषाओं के भविष्य में लंबे समय तक बचे रहने की पूरी संभावना रहती है। जिन भाषाओं में ये कमोबेश अनुपलब्ध होते हैं,उनका दीर्घकाल तक संरक्षण नहीं हो पाता और वे धीरे-धीरे लुप्त हो जाती हैं।

यूनेस्को द्वारा निर्धारित इन मानदंडों के आधार पर हिन्दी सहित विभिन्न भारतीय भाषाओं का आकलन करें तो कई तरह की स्थितियाँ सामने आती हैं। एक तरफ जहां कई भाषाएँ अपनी समृद्ध ऐतिहासिक-सांस्कृतिक-साहित्यिक परंपरा के बावजूद लगातार संकट काल से गुजर रहीं हैं और इतिहास के अँधेरों में गुम हो रही हैं, तो वहीं कुछ ऐसी भाषाएं भी हैं,जो अपना प्रभाव विस्तार करते हुए विकास के पथ पर हैं। इन भाषाओं की शक्ति और प्रभाव में पिछले कुछ सालों में काफी वृद्धि हुई है : संथाली, गोंडी (ओडिशा, छत्तीसगढ़, महाराष्ट्र), भेली (महाराष्ट्र, राजस्थान, गुजरात), मिज़ो (मिजोरम), गारो और खासी (मेघालय) और कोटबरक (त्रिपुरा) जैसी भाषाएं। इन भाषाओं के विकास का कारण है कि इनका शिक्षित समुदाय अपने लेखन में इनका प्रयोग कर रहा है। पिछले कुछ सालों में इन भाषाओं में प्रचुर कविता,कहानी, नाटक आदि जैसा साहित्यिक सृजन हुआ है। इनमें कुछ भाषाओं को जनसंचार माध्यमों का भी सहयोग मिल रहा है। इसका एक उदाहरण तेजी से विकसित होता भोजपुरी मीडिया है।

इस पूरे परिदृश्य में अगर हिन्दी का आकलन किया जाए, तो वर्तमान समय में उसकी दशा और भविष्य में उसकी दिशा के बारे में काफी हद तक एक स्पष्ट रूपरेखा तैयार की जा सकती है। हिन्दी भारत के दस राज्यों की मातृभाषा और राजभाषा होने के साथ भारत संघ की राजभाषा और संपर्क भाषा भी है। वैश्विक स्तर पर इसकी उपस्थिति से जुड़े आंकड़ों की बात करें तो यह दुनिया की चौथी सबसे बड़ी भाषा है। अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन, जर्मनी, फ्रांस, स्वीडन, हंगरी, इटली, पोलैंड, रूस, चीन, कनाडा, श्रीलंका सहित साठ से अधिक देशों और सौ से अधिक विश्वविद्यालयों में हिंदी का पठन-पाठन होता है। अंग्रेजी में आत्मविमुग्ध रहने वाले पश्चिमी देशों में जिन जरूरी भाषाओं को सीखने के लिए हर साल करोड़ों रुपये खर्च किए जाते हैं उनमें रूसी, चीनी, अरबी, उर्दू के साथ हिंदी भी है। निश्चय ही हिंदी को सीखने के पीछे उन देशों का अपना हित है, वे हिंदी के प्रति किसी आत्मीय लगाव या उसके विकास की चिंता लेकर इसे नहीं सीख रहे, लेकिन इससे हिंदी का वैश्विक विस्तार हुआ है, उसकी बहुराष्ट्रीय और बहुक्षेत्रीय उपयोगिता उजागर हुई है, यह निर्विवाद है।

जनसंचार के आधुनिक माध्यमों में हिंदी की बहुआयामी उपस्थिति उल्लेखनीय है। विश्व में बॉलीवुड सिनेमाजगत का लगातार विकास हो रहा है। हिंदी फिल्मों का अनुवाद दुनिया की लगभग सभी प्रमुख भाषाओं में किया जा रहा है। इसी तरह हिंदी के टी वी धारावाहिक, मनोरंजन और समाचार चैनल दुनिया भर में लोकप्रिय हो रहे हैं। इंटरनेट पर हिंदी का प्रसार तेजी से हो रहा है। गूगल, यू ट्यूब आदि पर हिंदी से जुड़े या हिंदी में खोज बड़ी मात्रा में हो रही है, हिंदी के वीडियो, गाने जम कर देखे जा रहे हैं। हिंदी के प्रमुख राष्ट्रीय और क्षेत्रीय दैनिकों के अंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्करण इंटरनेट पर उपलब्ध हो रहे हैं। दुनिया भर की बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियां अपने विज्ञापन हिंदी में भी जारी करती हैं, अपने उत्पादों जैसे मोबाइल आदि में हिंदी के प्रयोग की सुविधाएं देती हैं। हिंदी का एक विस्तृत बाजार है और लगातार इसका विकास हो रहा है। किसी भी उद्योग या निगम के लिए अब हिंदी को नजरंदाज करना संभव नहीं है। दरअसल जब नई वैश्विक आर्थिक और जनसंचार शक्तियाँ हिंदी से जुड़ती हैं तो स्वाभाविक रूप से उनकी पहुंच भारत के साथ-साथ पूरे दक्षिण एशिया तक हो जाती है। कहना होगा कि वर्तमान समय में जहां स्थानीय और राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर हिंदी की क्षमता में वृद्धि हुई है, वहीं वैश्विक स्तर पर उसकी शक्ति प्रमाणित होने के साथ ही उसके लिए संभावनाओं के नए द्वार खुले हैं।

आज विश्वमंच पर हिन्दी अपनी उल्लेखनीय उपस्थिति दर्ज कराने में सफल हुई है, उसके सामने अनंत संभावनाएं खुली हैं, लेकिन चुनौतियाँ भी कम नहीं हैं। हिन्दी के सामने सबसे बड़ी चुनौती अपनी ही जमीन पर राजनीतिक-सामाजिक रूप से लगातार कमजोर होते जाने की है। ब्रिटिश उपनिवेशवाद के खिलाफ भारत की आजादी की लड़ाई में हिन्दी राष्ट्रीय एकता और संघर्ष की भाषा के रूप में विकसित हुई। लेकिन आजादी के बाद अंग्रेजी को अपदस्थ कर देश की प्रमुख राजभाषा बनने की लड़ाई वह लगातार हारती गई। आज कहा जाता है कि जब तक देश के सभी राज्य राजभाषा के रूप में हिंदी को नहीं अपना लेते, देश की एकता और अखंडता के हित में यही सही है कि अंग्रेजी का प्रयोग होता रहे।

इस विचारधारा का एक सामाजिक पहलू भी है। लंबे समय तक सामंती शोषण और घरेलू उपनिवेशन के शिकार समुदायों को अंग्रेजी अपनी मुक्तिदात्री के रूप में दिखाई देती रही है। कई दलित लेखकों का मानना है कि सदियों के शोषण और अत्याचार के शिकार हो रहे दलित वर्ग को मजबूती देने का काम अंग्रेजी ने किया है और आगे भी इसके लिए विकास के रास्ते यही भाषा खोलेगी। आमतौर पर उनमें लॉर्ड मैकाले के प्रति एक प्रकार का कृतज्ञता भाव रहा है जिसके कारण देश में

Dr. Shraddhanjali Singh, Darjeeling Government College, singh.shraddhanjali@gmail.com

पहली बार अछूतों को शिक्षा पाने का अधिकार मिला। निश्चित ही दलित लेखकों की पीड़ा गहरी है और परेशान करने वाली है । लेकिन इस पर भी सोचने की जरूरत है कि क्या सचमुच उनकी मुक्ति का रास्ता अंग्रेजी के होकर ही गुजरता है और हिंदी का काम इसमें बाधा पहुंचाने का है?

पिछले दिनों आई फिल्म 'हिंदी मीडियम' का यह टैग लाइन बहुत चर्चित हुआ कि इस देश में इंग्लिश जबान नहीं, क्लास है । कहा जा रहा है कि आज देश में जाति, धर्म, लिंग, स्थान आदि आधारित सारे विभाजनों को निरस्त कर केवल एक भेद बचा है, अंग्रेजी जानने वालों और न जानने वालों का । निश्चित ही पिछले तीन दशकों में अंग्रेजी का प्रचार-प्रसार बढ़ा है, वह व्यापार-व्यवसाय और रोजगार की एक मुख्य भाषा के रूप में उभरी है । अंग्रेजी का बढ़ा प्रभाव इस विडंबना को उजागर करता है कि किस तरह औपनिवेशिक शासन और वर्चस्व की भाषा अंग्रेजी आज राष्ट्रीय एकता, शांति और सामाजिक समानता की भाषा मानी जा रही है और साम्राज्यवाद विरोधी संघर्ष, जातीय प्रतिरोध और आत्मसम्मान की विरासत समेटे हिंदी विद्रोह और वैमनस्य की भाषा के रूप में देखी जा रही है । यह हिंदी का अपने घरेलू मैदान पर खेले गए मैच में बुरी तरह हारना है ।

भाषा मात्र अभिव्यक्ति का उपकरण नहीं, संस्कृति की एक मूलभूत घटक भी होती है । इसलिए कहा जाता है कि अगर किसी संस्कृति को नष्ट करना हो तो सबसे पहले उसकी भाषा नष्ट कर दीजिए । इसका उल्टा भी उतना ही सही है कि किसी समाज में अपनी संस्कृति का प्रसार करना हो तो सबसे पहले वहाँ अपनी भाषा प्रचारित कर दीजिए । वैश्वीकरण के वर्तमान दौर में अंग्रेजी का साम्राज्यवादी प्रसार इसी अर्थ में केवल एक भाषायी मुद्दा नहीं है, सांस्कृतिक संकट का प्रश्न भी है । हालांकि सांस्कृतिक अंतरमिश्रण मानव सभ्यता के विकास की एक सामान्य प्रक्रिया रही है । लेकिन आज जिस तरह अंग्रेजी पढ़े-लिखे वर्ग में अपनी भाषा, संस्कृति और कुल मिलाकर अपनी जातीय पहचान के प्रति उपेक्षा और एक हद तक वितृष्णा का भाव दिखाई दे रहा है वह सांस्कृतिक क्षय और आत्मपालयन का लक्षण है ।

हिंदी के सामने एक बड़ी चुनौती शिक्षित वर्गों द्वारा इसकी उपेक्षा की भी है । हिन्दी सिर्फ बाजार की भाषा बनी हुई है, यह ज्ञान की भाषा नहीं बन पा रही है । वैज्ञानिक खोजों और ज्ञान के नए अनुशासनों के क्षेत्र में यह लगातार पिछड़ती जा रही है । यह दुखद है कि आज पूरी दुनिया में जो तत्व चिंतन, दार्शनिक या काव्यशास्त्रीय सिद्धांत भारतीय चिंतन और सिद्धांतशास्त्र के रूप में प्रचारित है वह सैकड़ों साल पुरानी संस्कृत साहित्य परंपरा की विरासत है । भारत जैसे देश में जहां गणित, ज्योतिष, खगोलशास्त्र, अर्थशास्त्र, आयुर्वेद और शल्य चिकित्सा जैसे ज्ञान के अनुशासनों का जन्म और विकास हुआ, वहां इन क्षेत्रों में पिछले सौ सालों में हिंदी की पृष्ठभूमि लेकर कोई विद्वान आगे नहीं आया । समाजशास्त्र और मानविकी की समृद्ध परंपरा के बावजूद सबाल्टर्न स्टडीज, संस्कृति समीक्षा या स्त्री, आदिवासी और पर्यावरण जैसे समकालीन विमर्षों में हिंदी लेखकों ने अपनी भाषा में सोचकर क्या लिखा है, उनका मौलिक योगदान कितना है, यह एक बड़ा सवाल है । यह ठीक है कि दुनिया भर का वैज्ञानिक और वैचारिक साहित्य अनुवाद के जरिए हिंदी पाठकों तक पहुंच रहा है और हिंदी इससे समृद्ध हो रही है लेकिन सिर्फ अनुवाद की बदौलत कोई भाषा बच नहीं सकती या ज्ञान के विकास में अपना मौलिक योगदान नहीं दे सकती । हिंदी को ज्ञान-विज्ञान की भाषा बनाना, साहित्यिक अभिव्यक्ति के समानांतर वैचारिक साहित्य के क्षेत्र में उसकी क्षमताओं का पुनराविष्कार और विकास करना एक बड़ी चुनौती है ।

यह भी कहना है कि हिंदी को बाजार के हाथों सौंपकर उसके भविष्य के लिए निश्चिंत हो जाना एक बड़ी मूर्खता होगी । भूलना नहीं चाहिए कि बाजार केवल मुनाफे की भाषा समझता है । यह हिंदी का प्रयोग केवल वहीं तक करेगा जहां तक उसे मुनाफा मिलेगा । ध्यान दें, बड़ी-बड़ी कंपनियों के विज्ञापन भले हिंदी में हों, उनकी नीतियों और शर्तों की भाषा आमतौर पर अंग्रेजी ही होती है । आप साबून, तेल, दवा आदि चीजों से लेकर टी वी, फ्रीज, वॉशिंग मशीन खरीदिए, कार या ट्रैक्टर खरीदिए या फिर बीमा पॉलिसी लीजिए, सबके निर्देश अंग्रेजी में लिखे होंगे । इसके दो कारण होते हैं, एक तो कंपनियां बहुभाषी समाज की जरूरत के हिसाब से भाषाओं के इस्तेमाल के झंझट से बच जाती है, दूसरे आम ग्राहक यह नहीं जान पाता कि उसके अधिकार क्या हैं और इसलिए असंतुष्ट होने पर दावे क्या हो सकते हैं । विचित्र विडंबना है कि जिस देश में व्यापार हो रहा है उसके लिए वहीं की भाषाओं का इस्तेमाल नहीं हो रहा । दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा उभरता हुआ बाजार होकर भी हिंदी और अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं को कम से कम भारत में ही व्यापार की भाषा नहीं बनाया जा सका, यह खोखली नीति और बेईमान नियत का परिणाम है ।

यह भी कम चुनौतीपूर्ण नहीं है कि बाजार के हाथों में पड़कर हिंदी बुरी तरह विरूप हुई है । आज जिस तरह हिंदी में अंग्रेजी के शब्दों का बेमेल, अतार्किक और अंधाधुंध प्रयोग हो रहा है, उसकी जातीय पहचान धुंधली हुई है । उसे अंग्रेजी का मुंह जोहने वाली दरिद्र दासी बनाने की साजिश-सी चल रही है । बेशक यहाँ भाषा के मामले में किसी शुद्धतावादी आग्रह या संकुचित दृष्टि के तहत बात नहीं की जा रही । भाषाओं का मेल एक स्वाभाविक और जरूरी प्रक्रिया है । लेकिन यह मेल

Dr. Shraddhanjali Singh, Darjeeling Government College, singh.shraddhanjali@gmail.com

परस्पर और बहुस्रोतपरक होना चाहिए, एकतरफा और एकस्रोतपरक नहीं । हिंदी की स्थिति दुर्गा की तरह है, जिसके सारे हथियार, सारी शक्ति उसकी बोलियों से, जातीय परंपराओं से आए हैं । आज अगर दुर्गा अपने जातीय हथियारों को छोड़कर ए. के 47 की मोहताज हो जाएँ तो यह उनकी शक्ति और अस्मिता दोनों पर खतरा है ।

पिछले कुछ सालों में एक नई स्थिति बोलियों के अस्मिता विमर्श के रूप में सामने आई है। इसमें दो पक्ष आमने-सामने हैं, एक तरफ इस विमर्श के समर्थक लोग हैं जो हिंदी की बोलियों जैसे भोजपुरी, राजस्थानी, अवधी, ब्रज आदि को आठवीं अनुसूची में शामिल करने के लिए संघर्ष कर रहे हैं । उनके लिए हिंदी एक वर्चस्ववादी भाषा है, जिसने सारी बोलियों को दबा रखा है। हिंदी के पंजे से मुक्त होकर उन बोलियों के लिए विकास के नए रास्ते खुलेंगे। दूसरी तरफ वे लोग हैं जो इन विमर्शों को हिंदी के अस्तित्व के लिए खतरा मान रहे हैं, क्योंकि इससे हिंदी में बिखराव आएगा । हमें समझना होगा कि आठवीं अनुसूची में जगह पा लेने से किसी बोली या भाषा के राजनीतिक वर्चस्व में थोड़ी वृद्धि भले हो जाए, उसकी गुणात्मक समृद्धि और आंतरिक शक्ति का विकास इस पर अनिवार्यतः निर्भर नहीं है । दूसरे, अपनी लोकतांत्रिक और सर्वसमावेशी प्रवृत्ति के कारण हिंदी हमेशा से सबके साथ कदम ताल करते हुए चलने वाली भाषा रही है। यह बैताल की तरह किसी के कंधे पर सवार होकर नहीं चलती। यह सत्ता के वर्चस्व की नहीं, जनता के प्रतिरोध और संघर्ष की भाषा है। इसने हमेशा अन्य भाषाओं को दबाने की नहीं, उनके विकास की चिंता की है। हिंदी को किन्हीं असुरक्षा ग्रंथियों या पूर्वाग्रहों के कारण वर्चस्वशाली और दमनपरक भाषा के रूप में बरतना इसके साथ अन्याय करना है। उदारीकरण के वर्तमान दौर में हिंदी को उदार हृदय की भी भाषा बनना होगा । आज हिंदी की लड़ाई उसकी अपनी बोलियों या अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं से नहीं है। बल्कि इन सबका साझा संघर्ष अंग्रेजी के खिलाफ है, जो वस्तुतः आठवीं अनुसूची में शामिल नहीं है ।

हिंदी के वैश्विक विकास में एक मुख्य समस्या उसके लैंगिक और जातिगत पूर्वाग्रहों के संदर्भ में भी है। कई स्त्रीवादियों ने यह रखांकित किया है कि हिंदी की प्रकृति मूलतः पुरुषवादी है। हिंदी में जब किसी वस्तु का दीर्घ रूप दिखाना हो तो उसे पुलिंग और निकृष्ट रूप दिखाना हो स्त्री लिंग बना देना एक आम प्रचलन है, जैसे डब्बा-डिबिया, लोटा-लुटिया, कटोरा-कटोरी आदि। इनसे स्त्री के प्रति उपेक्षा भाव और उसे दोयम दर्जे का मानने वाली समझ की व्यापकता और गहराई का पता चलता है। इसी तरह भाषा के जातिगत पूर्वाग्रह भी होते हैं। संस्कृत नाटकों में ब्राह्मण संस्कृत बोलता था, जबकि स्त्री और शूद्र पात्र अपभ्रंश में बातें करते थे। हिंदी में भी निकृष्ट कामों के लिए जातिगत पूर्वाग्रह वाली भाषा आमतौर पर बोली जाती है, जैसे चोरी-चमारी करना या कंजूसी के लिए 'चमरई करना' जैसे शब्दों का व्यवहार। यह है जाति व्यवस्था से प्रभावित भाषा की प्रकृति। इसलिए हिंदी को अगर विश्व मंच पर पूरे सम्मान और गरिमा के साथ स्थापित होना है, उसे दुनिया भर के हाशिए के लोगों की भावनाओं को जोड़ने वाली भाषा बनना है तो उसे अपने इन लैंगिक-जातिगत पूर्वाग्रहों से मुक्त होना होगा ।

वैश्वीकरण के दौर में हमारे अस्तित्व पर चौतरफा हमले हो रहे हैं। हमारी अभिव्यक्ति ही नहीं, हमारी संस्कृति और पहचान भी हमसे छीनी जा रही है। अंग्रेजी का साम्राज्यवादी प्रसार हिंदी समेत सभी भारतीय भाषाओं के लिए एक बड़ी चुनौती है। लेकिन यह एकमात्र चुनौती नहीं है। हमारी अपनी गुलाम मानसिकता, प्रतिरोधहीनता, अंधानुकरण की प्रवृत्ति, स्वार्थ और स्वकेंद्रीयता ने भी हिंदी को कम नुकसान नहीं पहुंचाया है। एक भयंकर सांस्कृतिक-सामाजिक आर्थिक के साथ बौद्धिक आपदा सामने है। देश की सबसे बड़ी संपर्क भाषा होने के कारण निश्चित ही हिंदी के लिए खतरे ज्यादा हैं, लेकिन अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं पर कोई संकट नहीं है, वे सुरक्षित हैं अथवा हिंदी के नष्ट होने से अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं के सामने विकास के नए रास्ते खुल जाएंगे, इन गलतफहमियों से निकलने की जरूरत है। यह समझना होगा कि हिंदी को नष्ट करने में अगर वैश्वीकरण की नीतियाँ सफल ही गईं तो अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं को नष्ट करना उनके लिए बहुत आसान हो जाएगा ।

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Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

A Study of Tibetan Writing System: Exploring Its Connection with Ancient Indian Knowledge System

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

Abstract

The Tibetan language is one of the most significant languages used across the Himalayan region, which plays a vital role in preserving its culture and traditions. The development of Tibetan writing from the seventh century onward draw one of most remarkable examples of deliberate language planning and cultural preservation. The language in general has always played a crucial role in terms of cultural identity, however Tibetan language also act as a rich repository of Himalayan culture and ancient knowledge, which perhaps reflects across various periods in Tibetan history. An interesting and captivating part of Tibetan language is its relation with Indian Knowledge, their connection is not merely about language, it also involves through philosophical concepts, religious practices, and epistemological structures.

This article is an attempt to explore the diverse connections between Tibetan language and Indian knowledge systems, examining how Tibetan scholars and translators not simply adopted and accepted Indian concepts but also adapted and transformed them through a process of assimilation, which ultimately led to the development of a distinct tradition that has preserved countless Sanskrit texts, which was lost in their homeland. Since from the formation of the Tibetan script based on Indian Gupta-Brahmi script to the complex translation methods developed over centuries, the narration of Tibetan language reveals how one can learn from the past and build upon old ideas, which can inspire change and modernization**.**

Keywords: History, IKS, Philosophy, Tibetan writings.

Origins of the Tibetan Writing System

The formation of the Tibetan writing system is one of the greatest achievements in the history of Tibet, without this writing it was not possible to transform oral tradition into written form. This remarkable development occurred during the seventh century under the visionary leadership of Chogyal Songtsen Gampo,[1] the Tibetan ruler who ruled from c617 to 698 C.E. He had perceived that for his kingdom to flourish and modernize, a written language was essential as the foundational root of progress.

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

Understanding that literacy would be crucial for administrative efficiency and cultural preservation, Chogyal Songtsen Gampo took the charge to develop a script for the Tibetan language. This decision would prove transformative for Tibetan civilization, allowing the preservation of Buddhist teachings, historical records, and literary works for future generations.

In 633 A.D., Songtsen Gampo selected remarkable young scholars for this important task.[2] Thonmi Sambhota, son of Thonmi Anu Ragata (a minister in Songtsen Gampo's court), was among the chosen, who was merely fifteen years old. However, his exceptional knowledge, unwavering loyalty, and remarkable courage made him the ideal candidate for this mission. Hence under the patronage of Chogyal Songtsen Gampo, Thonmi Sambhota was sent to India along with other sixteen to master the art of writing and acquire the knowledge necessary to create a Tibetan writing. Further Thonmi Sambhota studied under distinguished scholars, including the Brahman Lipi Kara and Pandit Devidsimha widely known as Pandita Lha Rigpa Sengge.[3] From these great masters, he acquired comprehensive knowledge in orthographies, grammar, lexicography, poetry, and various sciences. His education was thorough and systematic, preparing him not only to understand existing writing systems but to transform and design for Tibetan linguistic needs

When Thonmi Sambhota returned to Tibet, he brought with him several important Sanskrit texts that would serve as foundational resources. Further it is said that after arriving in Tibet, he along with Chogyal Songtsen Gampo (c.617 to 698 CE) translated *Mahasannipataratnaketudharani* (dus pa rin po che'i tog/དུས་པ་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་ཏོག,) the *Ratnakarandasutra* (za ma tog bkod pa· mdo/ཟ་མ་ཏོག་བཀོད་པའི་མདོ), twenty-one Sutras and Tantras of Avalokiteshvara, and the Sutra on Ten-virtues, from Sanskrit into Tibetan after developing the Tibetan script. Thus Thonmi Sambhota became the first Lotsawa in Tibet.

Upon his return, Thonmi Sambhota undertook an intensive three-year retreat at Kukarmaru palace in Lhasa (present-day Phabong Kha), where he dedicated himself entirely in developing the Tibetan script. Hence the dedicated work ended in c.646 CE. with the successful invention of the Tibetan writing system, marking a significant phase in the history of Tibet.

The great Tibetan scholar Thonmi Sambhota skillfully transformed Tibetan script from both Kutil and Gupta-Brahmi scripts while simplifying their complexity for Tibetan use. Where devanagari used thirty-four consonants and sixteen vowels, Thonmi Sambhota simplifies this to thirty consonants and four vowels, making the system more accessible while maintaining linguistic precision. Twenty-three sounds and the vowel "ah" were borrowed directly from Sanskrit letters, while six entirely new letters were created specifically for Tibetan phonetics: ཙ་ tsa, ཚ་ tsha, ཛ་ dza, ཞ་ zha, ཟ་ za, and འ་ 'a. From

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

devanagari's (successor of Kutil script) sixteen vowels, four were selected ཨི་ (I), ཨུ་ (U), ཨེ་ (E), ཨོ་ (O) pronounced in Tibetan as གི་གུ་ (gi-gu), ཞབས་ཀྱུ་ (shab-khu), འthis (dreng-bu), and ན་རོ་ (na-ro) respectively.

Further Thonmi Sambhota developed two distinct calligraphic styles for Tibetan writing. The U-chen script/དབུ་ཅན་ (with a head) was based on the ancient Sanskrit Lanza script, while the U-med script/དབུ་མེད་ (headless) drew from the Vartu script. These styles provided flexibility for different types of writing.

It is stated that Thnomi Sambhota composed eight comprehensive treatises on grammar covering all aspects of Tibetan linguistics. Unfortunately, during King Langdharma Udumtsen's[4] /གླང་དར་མ་འུ་དུམ་བཙན་ (c.838-842CE.) reign, when Buddhism faced severe suppression, six of these invaluable works were lost. Only two survive today: *Thirty Verses on Tibetan Grammar*/ལུང་སྟོན་པ་སུམ་ཅུ་པའི་རྩ་བ་ and *The Application of Gender Signs*/ལུང་སྟོན་པ་རྟགས་ཀྱི་འཇུག་པའི་རྩ་བ་ which still continue to serve as fundamental resources for Tibetan language.

When Thonmi Sambhota presented his completed script to Chogyal Songtsen Gampo in a formal royal assembly attended by all ministers, it was received with great honor. Further he became the emperor's personal tutor, teaching him reading, writing, and grammar. In recognition of his extraordinary contribution, he received the title Lopon Thonmi/སློབ་དཔོན་ཐོན་མི (Master Thonmi) and was honored as the fourth among the seven wise ministers in the royal court.

The emperor himself dedicated four years to mastering this new script and grammar. Legend suggests that after achieving proficiency, Chogyal Songtsen Gampo may have contributed to composing the Mani Kabum, though scholars debate whether this text had multiple authors over time. Despite his immense contributions to Tibetan civilization, remarkably little is recorded about Thonmi Sambhota's later life or death, leaving his final years shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, his legacy endures through the writing system that continues to preserve Tibetan culture, religion, and literature more than thirteen centuries after its creation.

Beginning of Translations

The creation of the Tibetan script opened the door for the translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan, a process began during the reign of Songtsen Gampo's period, however progressed swiftly during the reign of 38th King Trisong Detsen (c742-800 CE) around seventh-ninth centuries CE. This initial systematic phase of translation activities was supported by the Tibetan emperors, who invited renowned Indian Buddhist master such as Acharaya Śāntarakṣita and Guru Padmasambhava to Tibet. During his reign, the first Buddhist monastery was established in Tibet known as Samye[5] (བསམ་ཡས་); it was

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

designed by Acharaya Śāntarakṣita, who based its model on Bihar's Otantapuri monastery. This monastery was constructed in the Drakmar region and said to have taken twelve years to complete. It was known as *Samye Migyur Lhungi Dubpai Tsukla-Khang*/བསམ་ཡས་མི་འགྱུར་ལྷུན་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པའི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་ translated as the temple that is an unchangeable, perfect mass. This monastery became a center for translation activities. This translation work brought together several scholars from India and Tibet to work on translating Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Tibetan, which needed teamwork with clear methods for translation and the use of consistent terms, hence, led to the creation of the first Sanskrit-Tibetan lexicon known as the *Mahāvyutpatti*/བྱེ་བྲག་ཏུ་རྟོགས་པར་བྱེད་པ་ which standardized the Tibetan equivalents for thousands of Sanskrit Buddhist terms.[6]

The transmission of Indian knowledge systems to Tibet was supported by refined translation methodologies that evolved over centuries. The translation is said to be started out simple but later transformed into more rigorous, with clear guidelines and careful quality checks to ensure the quality of the work by the royal edict.

Between seventh to ninth centuries, the early translations were often the works of Indian masters working with Tibetan lotsāwas,[7] where the Indian master perhaps explains the text and the Tibetan lotsāwa translating it into their native language. As translation activities expanded, more formalized methods developed. The Tibetan King Trisong Detsen established a translation branch where the Indian and Tibetan scholars assembled and worked jointly on translation work.[8] According to the text *The Blue Annals*, the early translation works faced numerous challenges. The languages were structurally very different, and many Sanskrit terms had no equivalent in Tibetan. Furthermore, Buddhist texts often employed specialized vocabulary and complex philosophical concepts that required careful explanation. To address these challenges, translators began developing lexicons and establishing standardized equivalents for technical terms.

As mentioned earlier the most famous of these glossary works is the *Mahāvyutpatti*, compiled in the early ninth century CE under the patronage of king Tri-Ralpacan (c.806-838CE). This Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary provided standard translations for over 9,500 terms, categorized by subject matter. It represents one of the earliest and most comprehensive attempts at terminological standardization in translation history. Alongside it, a set of guidelines known as the སྒྲ་སྦྱོར་བམ་པོ་གཉིས་པ་/drajor bampo nyipa (The Two-Volume Lexicon) was created, outlining principles for translating Sanskrit into Tibetan. However just as Buddhist tradition emphasizes in impermanence, similarly, the translation of Buddhist texts ended when King Langdarma was assassinated in 842 CE and the Tibetan Empire fell apart. However, the

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

foundation had been laid for what would eventually become one of history's most extensive and systematic translations.

Later period of Translation

After the downfall of the Tibetan Empire in the mid-ninth century, translation activities were halted for about a century. The later development of Buddhism in Tibet, known as (ཕྱི་དར/phyi-dar), which is believed to have begun in the late tenth century, brought again an interest in translating Indian texts and refining earlier translations. This period saw the development of even more systematic approaches to translation. Prominent translators like Lotsāwa Rinchen Zangpo[9] (c. 958-1055CE) traveled to India to study with Indian masters and brought back texts for translation. The arrival of the Indian scholar Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (c.982-1055CE) in Tibet in 1042 CE further stimulated translation activities and led to methodological alterations.[10]

During this period, the process of translation became more of a joint work. The standard procedure involved an Indian paṇḍita working together with a Tibetan lotsāwa (translator). The quality of translations improved significantly, with greater attention to accuracy and stylistic considerations. Translators developed conventions for handling Sanskrit syntax, compound words, and metrical compositions. They also began including colophons that documented the translation process, naming the individuals involved and sometimes describing the circumstances of the translation.[11]

Formation of the Tibetan Canon

A fact known to many that the lost Indian cultural Heritage particularly Nalanda traditions are and still preserved and practiced by Tibetans. It is further stated that the lost palm-leaf Buddhist scriptures which were lost from India are said to be preserved in several monasteries in Tibet. The most practical manifestation of Tibetan involvement with Indian knowledge systems is found in the formation of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, comprising the Kangyur/བཀའ་འགྱུར[12] and Tengyur/བསྟན་འགྱུར[13] This vast collection of treaties were translated primarily from Sanskrit over a period of more than six centuries, represents one of the most extensive and systematic translation projects in Tibetan history.

The Kangyur contains translations of texts attributed to the Buddha, including sūtras and tantras, while the Tengyur consists of commentarial literature by Indian Buddhist masters. Together, they comprise over 5,000 texts and more than 300 volumes in modern printed editions. The compilation of these collections began in the thirteenth century and continued with various revisions and expansions over the following centuries.

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

What makes the Tibetan canon (Kangyur & Tengyur) particularly valuable is that, it preserves several texts which were lost in India. Due to the political and religious shifts in India, mainly Buddhist tradition in its homeland after the twelfth century, that led to the loss of many original Sanskrit manuscripts. The Tibetan translations, meticulously executed and preserved, thus serve as crucial witnesses to the Indian Buddhist tradition. It is believed that the compilation of the canon also engaged crucial editorial decisions. Further the translators and compilers had to verify the authenticity of the text, resolve challenges among diverse versions, and arrange the extensive body of literature into a clear and logical structure. This process reflected Tibetan understandings of Indian Buddhist literature and contributed to the formation of distinctively Tibetan interpretations of Indian traditions.

The transmission of Indian knowledge systems does not end with canonical text, but went far beyond linguistic borrowing to include entire philosophical frameworks. Tibetan scholars did not merely translate Indian philosophical texts, but they engaged deeply with the ideas they contained, developing their own interpretations and eventually creating distinctively Tibetan philosophical traditions which has preserved and transformed their Indian sources. During the initial period of diffusion, the Tibetan towards Indian philosophy was open, focused on understanding and precisely representing the Indian systems of thought. The works of major Indian Buddhist philosophers like Arya Nāgārjuna, Arya Asaṅga, Arya Vasubandhu, Arya Dignāga, and Arya Dharmakīrti were translated into Tibetan and studied intensively. These translations were not only preserved in Buddhist text but moreover the Tibetan scholars practice the Buddhist philosophy as matter of examining.

With the translation process the Tibetan scholars became more familiar with Indian philosophical systems; they initiated their own tradition of explanation. This practice advanced during the later period of dissemination around tenth to thirteenth centuries, when Tibetan thinkers started developing original commentaries on Indian texts and engaging in sophisticated philosophical debates about their proper interpretation. The philosophical text of Arya Nagarjuna the Mulamadhyamakakarika/དབུ་མ་རྩ་བ་ཤེས་རབ་[14] which mainly emphasizes on the emptiness of all phenomena became one of the most influential schools of thought in Tibet. Different interpretations of Madhyamaka gave rise to different philosophical schools among Tibetan scholars. Furthermore, Buddhist logic and the epistemological traditions emerging from Dignāga and Dharmakīrti were intensively studied and developed in Tibet.

Over time, Tibetan scholars developed innovative approaches to philosophical problems and created new blend of different strings of Indian thought. One of the notable instances is the interpretation of Mādhyamika in the fourteenth to fifteenth century by (Gelug/དགེ་ལུགས་) school. The founder of the Gelug

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

tradition, Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa (1357-1419), introduced a distinctive creation of Madhyamaka philosophy, epistemology, and tantric practice. His interpretation emphasized the role of logical analysis in understanding emptiness and insisted on the compatibility of emptiness with conventional reality. While drawing extensively on Indian sources, particularly the works of Arya Nāgārjuna, Acharya Candrakīrti, and Acharaya Dharmakīrti, Tsongkhapa's creation represented a novel approach that became hugely influential in Tibetan intellectual history.[15]

In the same context, the Nyingma/རྙིང་མ་ school[16] developed the philosophical system known as Dzogchen·/རྫོགས་པ་ཆེན་པོ་[17] which presents a unique approach to Buddhist practice and theory. As Dzogchen ultimately links to Indian tantric traditions, the full systematic development occurred in Tibet, resulting in a distinctive tradition that cannot be reduced to its Indian antecedents. Hence Tibetan philosophical developments were not merely derivative of Indian traditions but represented the creative adaptations that responded to new cultural contexts and intellectual concerns. Tibetan philosophers engaged in strong debates among themselves about the correct interpretation of Indian sources, which lead to a rich internal dialogue that both preserved and transformed the Indian knowledge systems they had inherited.

Development of Tibetan Literary Writing Style

The relation with Indian literary structures that led to the development of new literary outline in Tibetan that reflected Indian influences while altering to Tibetan cultural contexts. This integration gave rise to a rich literary tradition that compound from different sources into unique Tibetan expressions. Consequently the development of Tibetan poetry was composed based on Sanskrit poetics named the "Kāvyādarsha (སྙན་ངག་གི་མེ་ལོང་) of Dandin with advanced statistical figures of sound and meaning, metrical patterns based on Sanskrit models, and literary conventions drawn from Indian traditions. For instance works like Sakya Paṇḍita's *Legs shad rin-po che'i gter*/ལེགས་བཤད་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་གཏེར་ (Treasury of Elegant Sayings) widely known as Sakya Legshad, represent the style, exhibiting refined literary work well-versed in Indian aesthetic principles.

Another important form influenced by Indian was the mahākāvya a great or classical epic; it is an elaborated narrative poem with religious or historical themes. Tibetan authors composed their own mahākāvyas, such as Tsangyang Gyatso's *Dri med kun ldan*/དྲི་མེད་ཀུན་ལྡན་ The profound virtues of selfless giving and altruism, which draws inspiration from jātaka tale representing the connection to the narrative of Prince Viśvantara, the ancient tale featuring the Buddha's previous lives. Simultaneously, Tibetan literature maintained distinctive features that reflected indigenous cultural patterns. Folk poetry,

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

songs, and popular literature often showed less direct Indian influence, preserving uniquely Tibetan aesthetic sensibilities and formal structures.

Though the continuity of knowledge from India to Tibet was the prevailing structure, however there are also instances where works by Tibetan authors were translated into Sanskrit. For example, some philosophical works by Sakya Paṇḍita particularly Tshad-ma rig-ter/ ཚད་མ་རིགས་གཏེར the famous Treasure of Valid Reasoning were translated into Sanskrit and used by contemporary Indian paṇḍitas. Though these instances are rare, they indicate that the intellectual exchange between Tibet and India was not entirely one-sided. Furthermore, Tibetan preservation of Indian Buddhist texts sometimes led to these works being reintroduced to regions where they had been lost. In the modern period, Tibetan translations have been invaluable in reconstructing lost Sanskrit works, with scholars sometimes restoring Tibetan text back into Sanskrit to recover texts which no longer exist in their original language.

Conclusion

In the current era, the connection between Tibetan writings and Revival of Ancient Indian knowledge systems has entered a new phase that is defined by modern academic research, Diaspora experiences, and globalization. These developments have both challenged and enriched the traditional connections between both the intellectual traditions. Modern scholarly approaches to Tibetan language and literature have brought new methodologies and perspectives to understanding the historical connection with Indian traditions. Analytical research has enlightened the precise mechanisms of textual transmission and translation, while linguistic analysis has revealed implicit aspects of how Indian conceptual frameworks shaped Tibetan expression.

The development of scholarly editions of Tibetan texts has facilitated direct comparison with surviving Sanskrit manuscripts, allowing scholars to assess the precision and system of Tibetan translators. Restoring Sanskrit texts from Tibetan translations have revealed the significant dedication of Tibetan versions. These studies reveal that Tibetan translators maintained remarkable consistency in technical terminology and philosophical variation, while their translations often derive from earlier, the complete Sanskrit sources which are lost. This relative analysis has greatly enhanced the understanding of Buddhist textual transmission and the intricate translation techniques developed in medieval Tibet. Today, several organizations continue the work of translation, with institutions such as 84000, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, several Buddhist universities, and specialized research centers actively engaged in translating and publishing scholarly

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

editions of non translated Tibetan texts, maintaining the rich scholarly tradition by preserving and continuing this tradition of knowledge.

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[1] He was the son of King Namri Songtsen and also known as Tride Songtsen. He was enthroned at the age of thirteen. In his later age, he introduced ten moral principles and sixteen rules of public conduct for his nation. He was the first Tibetan ruler to embrace Buddhism. He took as wives the princesses from China, Nepal, and Tibet, the name of the Chinese princess was Wench'eng Kung-chu and also known as Gyasa which mean The Chinese Consort, the Nepalese princess Brikhuti Devi known as Belsa which means The Nepalese Consort, and the Tibetan queen was Mongsa Tricham, (Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, *Tibet A Political History,* New Delhi: Paljor Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2010:34-38).

[2] It is said that Thonmi Sambhota travelled to India with sixteen other students, (*Ibid*.12).

[3] Thonmi Sambhota thoroughly studied the alphabet and the Sanskrit language with Ācārya Devavitsimha/Lha'I rig-pa seṅ-ge. (George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals,* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976:39, 218).

[4] He reigned as the forty-second and final king of Tibet. Although his formal name was Tri-Udumtsen, he became widely known by the epithet Lang-Dharma, where "Lang" means bullock and "Dharma" signifies religion. He was the persecutor of the Buddhist Sangha in central Tibet, later he was assassinated by Lhalung Palgyi Dorje. (Shakabpa, *Op. Cit.,* 71).

[5] Samye monastery was situated fifty miles away to south-east of Lhasa. It is an oldest monastery which has a history of more than 1200 years. This monastery represents Buddhism and its faith to set its root in Tibet, (Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present,* New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1992:26).

[6] Mahāvyutpatti, a renowned glossary of Sanskrit and Tibetan terms undertaken during the reign of King Tri Ralpachen, this glossary consist of 9,500 words according to colophon. This vocabulary was prepared by the ācārya Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, Sīlendrabodhi, Dānaśīla abd Bodhimitra of Mi-'og (Aparānta), upādhyāya Ratnarakṣita and Dharmatāśīla. (Alaka Chattopadhyaya, *Atīśa and Tibet*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1999:261- 62.)

[7]The one who is fluent in two languages, usually the title Lotsāwa used for Tibetan translators who contributed in transmitting Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan. (Tsepak Rigzin, *Tibetan- English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2023:270.)

[8] SEE George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals,* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1976:102-203.

[9] Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo also known as Ratnabhadra. The first translator of the New Translation period. Under the patronage of Yeshe 'Od, he was sent to India to study, where he learnt all aspect of tantras. Upon returning to Tibet, he invited several scholar like Shrassha Karavarma, Padmakara Gupta, Buddhashri Shanti and Kamala Gupta. (Roerich, , *Op. Cit.,*115-120.)

[10] (Chattopadhyaya, *Op. Cit.,* 286-287)

[11] SEE Shedup Tenzin, *Indo-Tibetan Studies A Cultural Hertiage of Ancient Nalanda University,*Kolkta: Maha Bodhi Book Agency,2019: 46-47.

[12] It is the collection of Buddha's teaching translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. The first compilation of Kangyur was finalized by Butön Rinchen Drup, author of history of Buddhism written in 1322 or 1323. Generally Kangyur consit of 108 volumes, however it varies according to different editions. (Rigzin, *Op. Cit.,*11)

[13] Tengyur is the commentarial canon/ translation of the treaties. It comprises of Tibetan translations of early Indian commentaries to Buddha's teachings. Tengyur consist of 225 volumes with slight variations with

Dr. Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, Darjeeling Government College, lhundup.bhutia@gmail.com

different editions. (John Powers: *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism,* New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2007:162.)

[14] Mādhyamaka is a Sanskrit term refers to a school of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, which emphasize on the ultimate emptiness and conventional reality of all phenomena. The followers of this school are known as Mādhyamikas. It is one of the principal school of Mahayana Buddhist tradition in India

[15] SEE R. Thurman, *Life &Teachings of Tsong Khapa,* Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1990:96-98.

[16] Nyingma is also known as old school, begins in the eighth century by great Indian pundits like Acharya Śāntarakṣita and Guru Padmasambhava. This schools is classified into three that is Kama/བཀའ་མ། or oral lineage and Terma/གཏེར་མ། or spiritual treasure and Dagnang/དག་སྣང་། the lineage of profound pure visions. (Lhundup Tsomo Bhutia, *Tibetan Buddhism*, Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research, May 2019, Volume 6, Issue 5: ISSN-2349-5162:412-414.)

[17] Dzongchen denote the Great Perfection/Atiyoga. A term exclusive to Nyingma doctrine and meditation. The spontaneous and natural perfection of fully enlightened qualities possessed by the three kāyas within the reality of mind. Atiyoga is the highest of all the nine vehicles. In Tibetan it is known as Dzogpa Chenpo, (Rigzin, *Op.Cit.,* 226).

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