



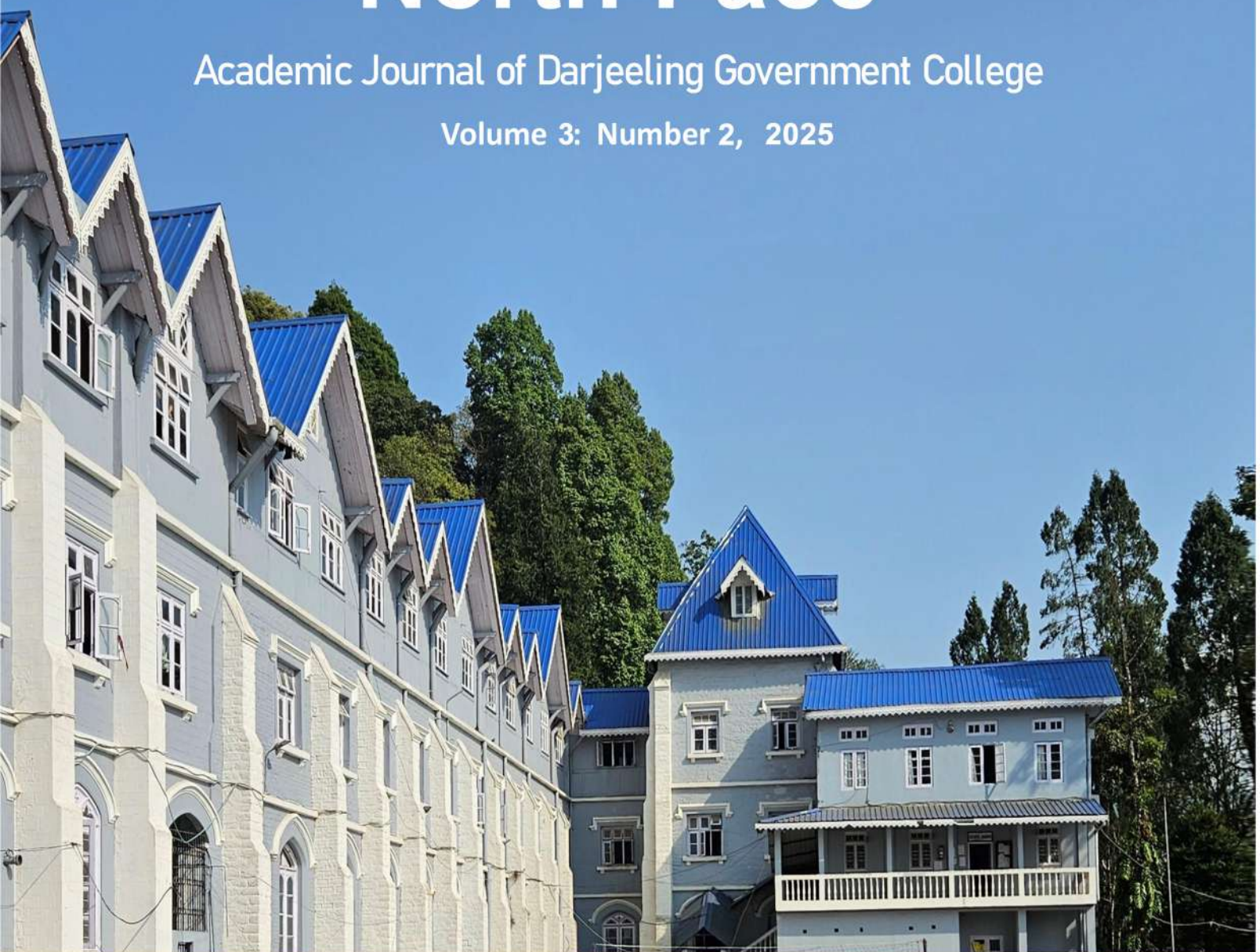
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NORTH FACE

Academic Journal of Darjeeling Government College

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.

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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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North Face

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Performance Evaluation of Select Public Sector Banks with Reference to the State Bank of India and Canara Bank in the Light of ‘Camels’ Model - A Case Study

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Abstract

The public sector bank is a bank in which the stake of the government is more than 50 per cent of the total capital. The Government has drawn up all financial guidelines for public banks. The study, titled “Performance Evaluation of Select Public Sector Banks with Reference to the State Bank of India and Canara Bank in the Light of ‘Camels’ Model - A Case Study”, aims to understand the financial performance of both public sector banks over the five years from 2018-19 to 2022-2023. The study aims at to compare and evaluate the financial performance of the State bank of India and Canara bank. The mechanisms used in this study are the different components of capital adequacy, asset quality, management efficiency, earnings quality, liquidity and sensitivity of ‘CAMELS’ framework. The study is based on secondary data collected from websites of selected banks and websites like „money control’. The study showed that both the public sector banks had good financial performance.

Key words: CAMELS Model, Financial Performance, Capital adequacy, Asset quality, Management efficiency, Earnings, Liquidity, Sensitivity

Introduction

The banking sector is a crucial element in bringing together different sectors around the world and in promoting profitable development. By furnishing fiscal backing to different sectors, various banks have contributed significantly to the enhancement of public and private sector banks. The main function of banks is to advance to different sectors similar as agriculture, industry, personal loans, housing loans, etc. Banks bridge the gap between savors, lenders and act as liquid capital suppliers for the economy. Since banks are liquid finances suppliers to different diligence, there is a possibility that NPA will occur, which in turn will lead to provisional measures relating to that NPA. The banking system is an important element of any economy. Banks play a pivotal part as the backbone of the

country's fiscal system by performing complex functions through liquidity, development. For the current study performance of selected banks was measured through CAMELS model.

Review of Literature:

Vishwakarma and Sharma (2014)¹ have examined the performance of the banking sector in India and suggested the measures for the performance and efficiency of Indian banks. They hinted that public sector banks should simplify and bring transparency to the process of disbursement of loans to each sector at an appropriate rate.

Maji and De (2015)² states that Risk and Capital of Indian commercial banks are inversely related. The impact of productivity of both capital and risk is altogether positive. Besides, human capital effectiveness is adversely related to the undertaking of the risk by the banks. In this context, Indian private segment banks are found to be more effective in utilizing human capital and diminishing credit risk.

Kaur et. al. (2015)³ suggested that CAMEL model is one of the most important models used for studying and comparing financial performance of public sector banks. The data are collected from selected banks' annual reports, and various ratios have been calculated to measure the aspects of CAMEL, including capital, asset quality, management efficiency, profit quality, and liquidity.

Rao and Patel (2015)⁴ state that the increase in advances by banks leads to the possibility of occurrence of NPA. Amongst the various required features of any financial system management of NPA is one of the major important factors.

Mayakkannan R and Jayasankar (2020)⁵ C have stated that considering the global banking crisis in recent years, the CAMEL framework serves as an effective method for assessing the strength and reliability of banks. The paper suggested performance evaluation assessed through statistical data on net margins, total assets, and market position in the light of CAMELS model. The analysis relies entirely on secondary data derived from the financial statements of the chosen banks, with the information examined through different financial ratios and statistical methods.

Thakur and Kashni (2021)⁶ examined that since 1991, the banking industry in India has been under difficult but comprehensive reform and restructuring. The entire banking landscape has changed dramatically in recent years due to the Narasimham Committee's report and other reforms. In addition, the BaseIII standards have been implemented. The

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overall reform effort is aimed at strengthening the stability, efficiency and international competitiveness of the banking system and strengthening its economic links, promoting savings, investment and overall inclusive development. However, it is unlikely that India's banking sector will be completely turned around before the economy recovers and growth resumes.

Tatia and Agarwal (2024)⁷ have suggested that performance analysis is based on the CAMEL model, using key ratios to understand the financial situation of selected PSU banks. The study concludes that maintaining strong capital base, managing credit risk to ensure good asset quality, maintaining efficient cost structures and strategically balancing liquidity and advances contribute significantly to banks' ability to achieve higher returns.

Research Gap:

Regarding the Literature Review, we can thus conclude that throughout the years, there have been many efforts made by researchers and scholars to assess the financial position and evaluation of public sector banks from various facets of the CAMELS framework but, in regard to the select public sector banks scope of the assessment of performance remains. Therefore, this current study needs to emphasize the unexplored area in every aspect of CAMELS framework.

Basis of selection of the PSU Banks:

State Bank of India:

- Largest public sector bank in India and often this bank is considered as an industry benchmark.
- It has the widest branch network spread in India and abroad.

Canara Bank:

- After the merger with syndicate bank Canara bank has become the top four public sector banks.
- Wide spread network including international operations with concentration of branches in south India.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This paper uses Analytical Research through a comparative study of financial statements. Analytical research is a particular kind of research that analyzes information and data in regard to the study being carried out.

Source of Data

Secondary Data

The present study is based on secondary data. The data collected from the annual reports of State bank of India and Canara Bank and websites like „money control“.

Objectives of the Study:

In the light of the CAMELS Model following objectives are formulated:

- To compare and evaluate the financial performance of State bank of India and Canara bank.
- To study the Capital adequacy of State Bank of India and Canara Bank.
- To study the Asset quality of State Bank of India and Canara Bank.
- To study the Management efficiency of State Bank of India and Canara Bank.
- To study the Earning ability of State Bank of India and Canara Bank.
- To study the Liquidity of State Bank of India and Canara Bank.
- To study the Sensitivity of State Bank of India and Canara Bank.

Scope of the Study:

- The present study covers only two public sector banks namely State Bank of India and Canara Bank.

- CAMELS framework used to evaluate the financial performance of selected banks.
- All required data have been collected from the published annual reports of State bank of India and Canara bank in respective banks website.

Period of Study

The study covers five financial years namely 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Tools for Analysis:

CAMELS framework used as a tool for this analysis.

C - Capital Adequacy; A - Asset Quality; M - Management Efficiency; E – Earnings Ability; L – Liquidity position; S – Sensitivity.

Ratio analysis, percentage analysis made on the financial data obtained from the annual reports of State of India and Canara bank in the light of CAMELS framework.

Limitations of Study

- As the study is entirely based on secondary data, it has its drawback.
- Data pertaining to the financial year 2018-19 and 2019-20 in respect of Canara bank represents pre-amalgamation data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Concept: CAMELS Model was developed in the USA to assess the overall condition of banks. Later on it is followed globally for the assessment of performance of banks in the light of this framework. In 1995 the Federal Reserve of USA and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) replaced CAMEL with CAMELS, adding the "S" which stands for sensitivity to market risk.

The analysis of financial performance in the selected banks has been done through the application of CAMELS model in the following parameters.

| Parameter | Ratios | Ranking method using analysis tools |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| C - Capital Adequacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital Adequacy Ratio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio & Percentage Analysis |
| A - Asset Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gross NPA Ratio (i.e. Gross NPA to Gross Advances) Net NPA Ratio (i.e. Net NPA to Net Advances) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio & Percentage Analysis Ratio & Percentage Analysis |
| M - Management Efficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profit Per Employee Business Per Employee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average Average |
| E - Earnings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return on Asset (ROA) Cost to Income Ratio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio & Percentage Analysis Ratio & Percentage Analysis |
| L - Liquidity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government Securities to Total Assets Ratio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratio & Percentage Analysis |
| S - Sensitivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net Interest Income (NII) Net Interest Margin (NIM) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average Ratio & Percentage Analysis |

The findings of the study are as follows:-

C- Capital Adequacy

Capital adequacy assesses a bank's capacity to withstand unforeseen losses which is essential for sustaining depositor confidence and averting bankruptcy. It is crucial for a bank to uphold this confidence, as it reflects the institution's overall financial health and the management's capability to secure necessary additional capital.

In India, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has implemented Basel III standards to strengthen banking stability and resilience. Indian banks must maintain a minimum risk-weighted asset-

capital ratio (CRAR) of 9%, above the 8% stipulated in the Basel III World Standard. In addition, they must maintain a 2.5% capital reserve buffer (CCB), bringing the total capital requirement to 11.5%. The RBI also mandates a higher share of Class 1 Common Equity Capital (CET1) to ensure strong core capital. These stricter standards reflect India's cautious approach to risk management in the banking sector, especially given the past problems with unprofitable assets (NPAs).

C- Capital adequacy ratio (%)

| Year | SBI | Canara Bank |
|---------|--------|-------------|
| 2022-23 | 14.68 | 16.68 |
| 2021-22 | 13.83 | 14.90 |
| 2020-21 | 13.74 | 13.18 |
| 2019-20 | 13.06 | 13.65 |
| 2018-19 | 12.72 | 11.90 |
| Average | 13.606 | 14.062 |
| Rank | 2 | 1 |

Source: Annual Report of Banks

Interpretation:

Both State Bank of India and Canara Bank have a higher average capital adequacy ratio than the threshold limit. Average Capital adequacy ratio of Canara Bank is 14.062% which is higher than State Bank of India's 13.606%. From the results of the above table it is also evident that both the banks complied with the prescribed standard of BASEL III norms. As per the above results investors and depositors would find Canara bank as a marginally stronger capital cushion.

A- Asset Quality

Gross NPA Ratio (i.e. Gross NPA to Gross Advances) (%)

| Year | SBI | Canara Bank |
|---------|-------|-------------|
| 2022-23 | 2.78 | 5.35 |
| 2021-22 | 3.97 | 7.51 |
| 2020-21 | 4.98 | 8.93 |
| 2019-20 | 6.15 | 8.21 |
| 2018-19 | 7.53 | 8.83 |
| Average | 5.082 | 7.766 |
| Rank | 1 | 2 |

Source: Annual Report of Banks

Interpretation:

Average gross NPA to gross advances ratio of the SBI is lower than Canara Bank suggesting better asset quality of SBI compared to Canara Bank. Higher Gross NPA ratio of Canara Bank reflecting higher credit risk. Consistently lower Gross NPA Ratio suggests stronger profitability and higher investor confidence. Improvement of Gross NPA Ratio suggests successful credit risk management policy of the bank.

Net NPA Ratio (i.e. Net NPA to Net Advances) (%)

| Year | SBI | Canara Bank |
|---------|-------|-------------|
| 2022-23 | 0.67 | 1.73 |
| 2021-22 | 1.02 | 2.65 |
| 2020-21 | 1.50 | 3.82 |
| 2019-20 | 2.23 | 4.22 |
| 2018-19 | 3.01 | 5.37 |
| Average | 1.686 | 3.558 |
| Rank | 1 | 2 |

Source: Annual Report of Banks

Interpretation:

Net NPA ratio of SBI is lower than that of Canara bank reflecting strong provisioning and lower credit risk. It shows better protection against loan defaults of SBI than of Canara bank. The above results show that lowering of Net NPA ratio refers to better recovery of loans, better provisioning and credit monitoring.

M- Management Efficiency

Profit Per Employee

| Year | SBI (Rs. in Thousand) | Canara Bank (Rs. in Thousand) |
|---------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2022-23 | 2122.64 | 1200 |
| 2021-22 | 1292.72 | 700 |
| 2020-21 | 828.35 | 300 |
| 2019-20 | 578.98 | (400) |
| 2018-19 | 33.39 | 100 |
| Average | 971.216 | 380 |
| Rank | 1 | 2 |

Source: Annual Report of Banks

[Author's own compilation: Canara Bank data converted from „cr“ to „thousand“.]

Interpretation:

Profit per employee is a productivity and efficiency metric that shows how much profit a company earns for each employee. It helps evaluate how efficiently a business utilises its human resources. Data shows that SBI has the higher average profit per employee indicates strong productivity and cost efficiency compared to Canara bank.

Business Per Employee

| Year | SBI (Rs. in Cr.) | Canara Bank (Rs. in Cr.) |
|---------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2022-23 | 29.78 | 22.45 |
| 2021-22 | 25.74 | 19.91 |
| 2020-21 | 23.73 | 18.14 |
| 2019-20 | 21.05 | 17.63 |
| 2018-19 | 18.77 | 17.07 |
| Average | 23.814 | 19.04 |
| Rank | 1 | 2 |

Interpretation:

This ratio evaluates how effectively all bank employees generate business for the institution. Business refers to the overall total of advances and deposits. Data reflects that SBI is having a higher business per employee ratio which is Rs. 23.814 crores as compared to Canara bank whose business per employee is Rs.19.04 crores. Thus, it can be concluded that employees of SBI generate more business compared to Canara Bank showing higher order efficiency in this aspect.

E- Earnings

Return on Asset (ROA) (%)

| Year | SBI | Canara Bank |
|---------|-------|-------------|
| 2022-23 | 0.96 | 0.81 |
| 2021-22 | 0.67 | 0.48 |
| 2020-21 | 0.48 | 0.23 |
| 2019-20 | 0.38 | (0.32) |
| 2018-19 | 0.02 | 0.06 |
| Average | 0.502 | 0.252 |
| Rank | 1 | 2 |

Interpretation:

Return on assets (ROA) is a metric that evaluates how effectively bank management generates profits overall. A higher ROA indicates that the bank is achieving greater profitability, reflecting a stronger performance in utilizing its assets. Data reflects that SBI is having higher Return on Assets compared to Canara Bank in this parameter.

Cost to Income Ratio (%)

| Year | SBI | Canara Bank |
|---------|--------|-------------|
| 2022-23 | 53.87 | 44.79 |
| 2021-22 | 53.31 | 46.16 |
| 2020-21 | 53.60 | 49.55 |
| 2019-20 | 52.46 | 55.30 |
| 2018-19 | 55.70 | 49.69 |
| Average | 53.788 | 49.098 |
| Rank | 2 | 1 |

Interpretation:

Cost to income ratio depicts operating expenses of a bank in relation to its operating revenue. A lower Cost to Income ratio signifies greater operational efficiency, which is an optimal situation for banks. It quantifies operating expenses as a proportion of operating revenue. The ratio, varying throughout the bank, should be minimized (but not to the extent that it jeopardizes customer service). Banks aim to lower their cost to income ratio as the business expands due to economies of scale. The concept is that extra income from current or new clients carries a relatively low expense, making it more profitable. Data shows that Canara bank is having lower Cost to Income ratio depicting better performance in this aspect.

L-Liquidity

Government Securities to Total Assets Ratio (%)

| Year | SBI | Canara Bank |
|---------|--------|-------------|
| 2022-23 | 22.99 | 23.10 |
| 2021-22 | 23.70 | 22.03 |
| 2020-21 | 23.67 | 21.37 |
| 2019-20 | 20.76 | 22.87 |
| 2018-19 | 21.01 | 20.17 |
| Average | 22.426 | 21.908 |
| Rank | 1 | 2 |

Source: Annual Report of Banks

[Author's own compilation: Data prepared in excel]

Interpretation:

The ratio of government securities to total assets measures the risk associated with the assets held by banks. The government securities are considered risk-free. As a result, higher ratios indicate fewer risks in the investment of banks. SBI's investments are relatively more secure than those of Canara Bank, and the average investment rate of SBI's government securities is 22.426 % compared to that of Canara Bank, which is 21.908 %.

S- Sensitivity

Net Interest Income (NII)

| Year | SBI (Rs. in Cr) | Canara Bank (Rs. in Cr) |
|---------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 2022-23 | 144841 | 31435 |
| 2021-22 | 120708 | 26384 |
| 2020-21 | 110710 | 24103 |
| 2019-20 | 98085 | 13124 |
| 2018-19 | 88349 | 14478 |
| Average | 112538.6 | 21904.8 |
| Rank | 1 | 2 |

Source: Annual Report of Banks

Interpretation: Net interest income (NII) is the difference between interest income from an asset bearing an interest and interest on a deposit. Data shows that SBI is having higher average NII as compared to Canara bank in absolute terms. Higher NII of SBI suggests robust lending business and efficient asset liability management and potential higher profitability.

Net Interest Margin (NIM) (%)

| Year | SBI | Canara Bank |
|---------|-------|-------------|
| 2022-23 | 2.62 | 2.33 |
| 2021-22 | 2.42 | 2.15 |
| 2020-21 | 2.44 | 2.08 |
| 2019-20 | 2.48 | 1.81 |
| 2018-19 | 2.40 | 2.08 |
| Average | 2.472 | 2.09 |
| Rank | 1 | 2 |

Source: Website of Money Control^{8&9} (Detailed url append below)

Interpretation:

Net interest margin ratio expressed as the percentage of net interest income and average earning assets. NIM indicates that a bank is generating more money in interest on its loan earnings than it is paying in interest on its bank deposits. Data shows that SBI showing average NIM higher than that of Canara bank reflecting higher performance of SBI in this regard.

Conclusion:

The financial performance of SBI and Canara Bank is compared and evaluated using the CAMELS model. The study analysis was carried out using secondary data collected from the banks' official websites and the Money Control website. As far as the capital adequacy ratio is concerned, the Canara bank has a better result compared to SBI. With regard to the asset quality parameter, both the gross NPA and the net NPA indicate that SBI performs better than Canara Bank. As for management efficiency, both profit per employee and business per employee show better results for SBI than Canara Bank. The returns on SBI assets are higher than those of the Canara Bank, while the cost to income ratio reflects Canara Bank's higher performance than those of the SBI. In the liquidity parameter, the ratio of government securities to total assets reflects SBI's better performance than Canara Bank's. In the sensitivity parameter, the results of net interest income and net interest margin show that the SBI is performing better than the Canara Bank. The study found that under different parameters, apart from the capital adequacy ratio and the cost to income ratio, the State Bank of India outperformed Canara Bank in all aspects of the CAMELS model during the study period. The study suggests strengthening the banking sector and the growth of the Indian economy.

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Regional Human Development Trends of Tribal People in India

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Abstract

In India, Scheduled Tribes (STs) are the most deprived community and suffer from low level of human development. They lag behind in all the three broad indicators of human development, that is, income, education and health as compared to other social groups in the country. As a result, the tribal populations are among the most marginalised, deprived and exploited section of the society. The poverty rates for the ST community have declined since 1983 but it continues to remain much higher than any other social groups. The headcount ratio, intensity of multidimensional poverty and adjusted headcount ratio for STs are low compared to other social group. The gap between the ST population and 'Other' groups can be gauged by the fact that the severity of malnutrition among STs in 2015-16 was even worse than for other social groups in 2005-06. The extent of stunted growth among ST children was 44 percent in 2015-16 (NFHS-4) and for children of other social groups it was 41 percent in 2005-06 (NFHS-3). Health indicators of the ST population shows that the community lags behind in all the states vis-à-vis Other social groups in India. There is no denying of the fact that developing countries like India are showing positive trends in its economic growth but at the same time, considerable number of its people suffer economically, socially and politically. They have poor accessibility to health services and exhibit high dropout rates. This paper examines trends in education, health and command over resources by ST in India in human development context. These trends are examined using the proxies of human development indicators. Only fourteen States including West Bengal are considered for the study to understand human development in order to examine trends in West Bengal vis-a-vis other States who enjoy special constitutional provision of Fifth and Sixth Schedules.

Keywords: Human Development, Scheduled Tribes, Fifth Schedule, Sixth Schedule, Development Policy.

Introduction

In India, at present there are around 705 individual tribes found in length and breadth of the country (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021-22, p. 48). The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order 1950 identified list of these tribes as the '*Scheduled Tribes*' (ST) for any State. They

have their own language, dress, culture, but among them commonness exists. That common tie is with nature and source of survival: 'Forest' and 'Land', that communities with ethnic diversity are found Worldwide, such as African tribes, tribes of Central, South American and the Caribbean or the tribes of Central Asia with the name 'Indigenous people'ⁱ (IP). This is one characteristic of commonness among tribes of various regions with cultural and ethnic diversity. Another characteristic of commonness is their status of 'marginality' (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2020, p. 9-15). According to *Human Development Report* (2016), the levels of development achieved by different social groups are not the same and there are some well identified marginal groups within the society who continue to suffer due to such disadvantages. Bhuria Commission Report (2004) revealed that STs in India make-up bottom most layer of the Indian society. On economic front, they lack irrigation facilities for agricultural activities, horticulture, and animal husbandry etc. In social front, they have poor levels of health, education, safe drinking water, shelter etc. (GoI, 2004a, p. 3-4). *Action Taken Memorandum on 2nd Report of National Commission of STs 2006-07* presented in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in the year 2013 revealed many State poor performance to eradicate ST problems. In Bihar, the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) like Birjias, Asurs, Sawars and Birhors lack safe drinking water in their residing areas and primary health centre as well. In Tamil Nadu, Kattunayakans PVTGs faced difficulty in getting community certificate that deprives them of obtaining developmental facilities. There are other PVTGs in forest and hilly areas in India who are unable to avail consumer items under PDS and other government initiated benefits due to their location; so there is need to look for other way out so that they can engage themselves in income generating activities supporting their habitat and type of skill they possess. In Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka, there is need to address illiteracy problem of female STs and tribal students' dropout. Tribal children in many villages of Andhra Pradesh suffer malnutrition. In Chhattisgarh, there is need for creating awareness of modern health care system as practices of Jhar-Phook-tona are found among tribal communities (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013a, p. 14-43).

Problem Statement

In India, a considerable gap exists in levels of socio-economic development between STs and other communities. More intensive study to critically evaluate the impact of development policies on tribal communities in India is urgently required. In this context, it will be highly

relevant to study the tribal population who do not enjoy any safeguards under Sixthⁱⁱ Schedule and Fifthⁱⁱⁱ Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Objectives of the Study:

Following objectives are proposed for the study:

1. To examine the gap in human development indicators between STs and other communities,
2. To examine the impact of development policies on tribal communities,

Review of Literature

This section tries to review works on problems and different issues of Scheduled Tribes in India and connect these issues that are similar with the indigenous communities outside from international perspectives. The study attempts to review ideas and views of eminent scholars, philosophers and policy makers regarding tribal development policies.

Literature on Global Perspective of Tribal Development

Patrinos and Skoufias (2007) argued that policies of integration and assimilation which aimed for lowering the gaps and inequality between indigenous and mainstream population have proved to be unsuccessful. Rather, new policies are required for development of indigenous communities. These policies aimed to provide self-autonomy to indigenous peoples in the development process. The shift in development paradigm is mainly because of adoption of an international policy framework for indigenous development as mentioned in ILO Convention No. 169 (Patrinos & Skoufias, 2007, p. 6).

ILO Convention No. 107 which provides for the integrationist approach was widely rejected and protested by the indigenous peoples on the ground that this approach would be a threat to preserving their cultural identity. The adoption of ILO Convention No. 169 in 1989 proved to be more successful. This document focuses least on the integration of indigenous communities with rest of the population, but rather it focuses on the development of indigenous peoples on their own way thereby respecting their tradition, customs and their way of life. Around 14 countries of Latin America have ratified ILO Convention No. 169. However, this convention was not ratified by Asian and African countries as these countries reject the criterion of self-identification as indigenous (Kingsbury, 1998, p. 416; Ormaza, 2012, p. 269-270; Feiring, 2013, p. 62).

Cornell and Kalt (2006) in their study have pointed out two different approaches to the economic development of American Indian reservation. First, is the 'standard approach' which is based on federal and tribal practices developed during the twentieth century. This approach has not proved to be successful in improving the tribal condition. One of the drawbacks of the approach is that people other than Indian community decide the development agenda. The other development approach is commonly known as the 'nation-building approach'. The second approach proved to be successful in the development of American Indian nations, but only a few nations are involved. The principal reason for its success was due to practical sovereignty which gave the tribal people the power of decision-making. (Cornell & Kalt, 2006, p. 3-13).

Davis and Partridge (1999) also found in their study that the different governments in Latin America since the end of World War II could not bring significant improvement in the overall welfare of the indigenous population. However, a new vision emerged among the indigenous people in the past two decades that challenged the existing approach of government to tribal development. By seeking assistance from international agencies, indigenous organizations were formed in which they actively participate in local decision-making and development policies. One of such successful organizations is Shuar Federation in the tropical forests of eastern Ecuador (Davis & Partridge, 1999, p.3).

Uprimny (2011) asserted that vulnerable indigenous communities of many Latin American countries requires special constitutional provision that can protect them. This provision which provides special rights to indigenous peoples is more radical in Bolivian and Ecuadorian constitutions. However, constitutional provisions could not reduce poverty and inequality among these disadvantaged communities due to lack of effective implementation of these provisions in practice (Uprimny, 2011, p. 1589-1591).

The New Economic Policy adopted in Bolivia in 1985 introduced new economic, educational and land reform measures. The policy was recommended by the World Bank and the IMF based on Washington Consensus. This policy had positive impacts on the socio-economic condition of the indigenous people, but this impact did not remain for long-term. Indigenous people started facing problems due to the privatization of mining companies and traditional agriculture sector was affected due to the promotion of export-oriented sectors. Employment increased in the informal sector with a decline in urban indigenous people working in formal sectors (Gigler, B., 2009: 23-27).

McNamara (1985) and Kimeu et. al (2016) showed that in Australia, colonization by the English Crown in the imperial era had deprived mostly the aborigines from their land either by the government action or by the private sectors. However, the first Aboriginal Land Trust Act was enacted in 1966. The purpose of law was to benefit aboriginal people. But it did not provide them legal right to claim their land. In Kenya, 66 percent land belonged to the community and 12 percent belonged to the public. Almost 65 percent community land remained unregistered and hence untitled. Government owned Trust lands and they were managed by municipal or local councils (McNamara, 1985, p. 463-473; Kimeu et. al, 2016, p. 14-18).

Literature on tribal development in India

Rao (1979) argued that India has large cultural diversity and the level of development across the regions is not uniform. Since the beginning of the economic planning, the planners focused on to maximize country's GNP and greater investment in economy and to combat the social phenomenon like poverty, various programmes were initiated through rural development. A single strategy for the entire country may not be appropriate to adopt because not all regions have the same type of problem (Rao, 1979, p. 1307).

Rath (2006) in his study has shown that development of national economy was the top priority for Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and at the same time, he was also responsible to suggest a suitable approach toward tribal development for which he thought to bring tribals out from isolation and to let them develop the way other mainstream population was progressing without undermining their culture (Rath, 2006, p.78).

Aiyappan (1965) argued that the approach to tribal development is very slow to bring tribal upto the level of rest of the population and suggested that in order to make plan and programmes effective the government strategy through plan documents would be such as to focus on rural development. His study on tribes of Orissa reveals that the cultivators engaged in growing commercial crop lacks market strategy and also capital (Aiyappan, 1965, p. 940-950).

Bhowmick (1988) argued that government development strategies were unable to lower poverty gaps between tribal and non-tribals. Efforts are required to focus on tribal problems from ground level and there is a need for region specific plan and development if their problems had to be addressed (Bhowmick, 1988, p. 1005-1007).

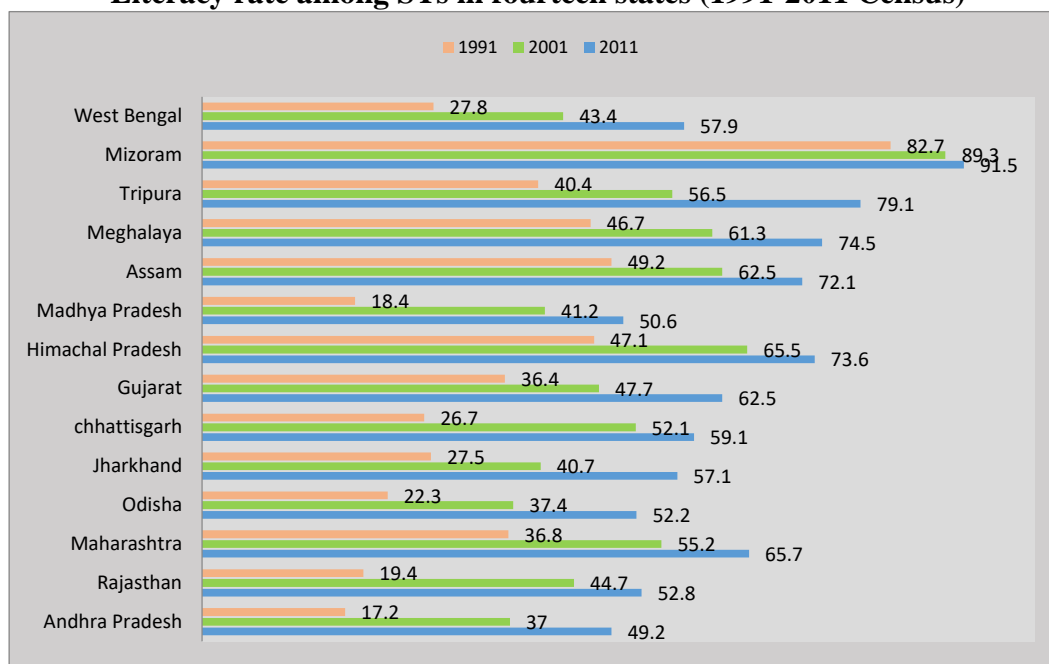
Tagade (2012) identified three factors for underdevelopment of tribal and their growing high incidence of poverty and malnutrition: First, development policy designed and adopted for economic development is not compatible with the tribal development policy; second, encroachment of non-tribal's in tribal territories for livelihood, and third, the violent political movement in tribal areas. Landlessness and land alienation have made tribal living condition even worse (Tagade, 2012, p. 2).

Gupta (1986) & Charsley (1997) argued that Integrated Tribal Development Programmes (ITDP) adopted in the Fifth Five Year plan could not solve tribal problems from grass root levels. The reason behind this is that it could not make structural arrangement for beneficiaries to interact with them directly, no provisions for tribals to participate in decision making and even deficiency in monitoring system. What ITDP was intent to do according to plan documents and proposals had really not worked out. In West Bengal, LAMPS had proved to be node through which tribals become involved with confidence and are aware about the happening the ITDPs. Therefore, what really needed is that STs must be encouraged for their greater involvement in decision making while correcting the loopholes (Gupta, 1986, p. 36-39; Charsley, 1997, p. 5).

Educational Trends among Scheduled Tribes in India

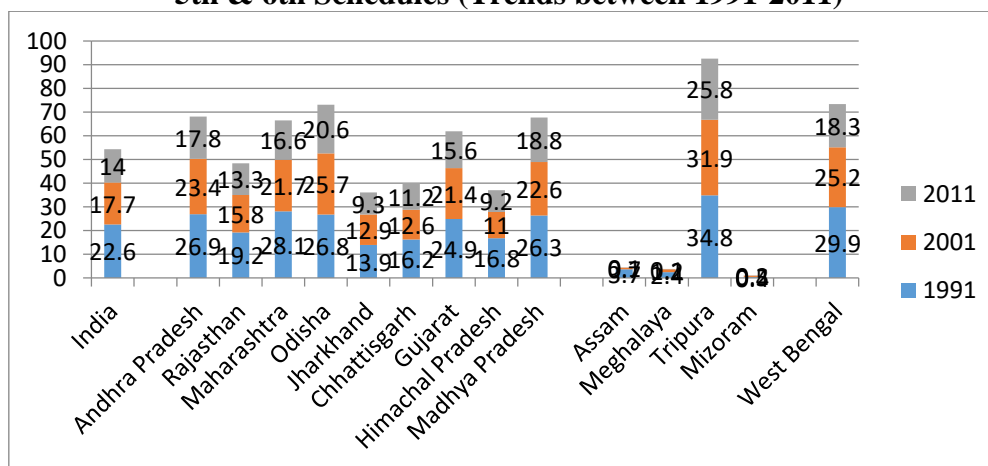
In the past three decades, literacy rate among ST communities shows increasing trends in West Bengal and States with 5th and 6th Schedule. Figure A depicts that States with 6th Schedule, have higher ST literacy rates whereas in States with 5th Schedule, there are variations in ST education that range from low literacy to high literacy level. In comparison to them, West Bengal performance is unsatisfactory that showed low literacy rate. The States of Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram have good proportions of ST literates accompanied by lowest dropout rates from class (I-X) viz. 2.1 percent and 54.1 percent, respectively. Other 12 States have high dropout rates that range from 60-85 percent. Figure B shows the overall literacy gap between ST and total population for fourteen States in India. During 1991, literacy gap remained high in all the fourteen States except Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram. During 2001, the overall gap fell but for 6th Schedule States, gap was negligible except Tripura. In 5th Schedule States, gap remained high in four States. In West Bengal literacy gap was prevalent. During 2011, the gap declined in all fourteen states compared to previous period but performance of States varies because considerable gap still existed in States of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura and West Bengal.

Figure A
Literacy rate among STs in fourteen states (1991-2011 Census)



Source: MoTA, 2013b, p.166.

Figure B
Literacy rate gap between ST and Total Population in States included and not included in 5th & 6th Schedules (Trends between 1991-2011)



Source: MoTA, 2013b, p.166.

Trends in Gross Enrolment Ratio at Primary level (2006-07 to 2015-16)

Table A and Table B provide trends in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of STs children for the period between 2006-07 and 2015-16. Considering the case of 5th Schedule states in Table A, GER at primary level i.e., Classes I – V, rises from 2006-07 to 2010-11 in all nine states. Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh show declining trends from 2010-11 to 2015-16. 6th Schedule States

performed better, but each state shows uneven trends in GER as reflected in Table B. In West Bengal, GER of ST students increases from 105.08 in 2006-07 to 123.86 in 2007-08, then falls to 116.7 in 2008-09. It again rises to 141.7 in 2009-10 and then falls to 118.55 in 2015-16. This shows uneven trends in West Bengal.

Trends in Gross Enrolment Ratio at Upper Primary Level (2006-07 to 2015-16)

The overall GER of ST children at the upper primary level is low compared to primary level for all fourteen States between 2006-07 and 2015-16. Table C shows trends in GER among ST at upper primary level. In 5th Schedule States, GER increases from 2006-07 to 2010-11 and from 2010-11, there is an uneven trend. In Table D, 6th Schedule States show positive trends in GER among ST students. West Bengal shows uneven trends in GER among ST children.

Trends in Gross Enrolment Ratio at secondary (2006-07 to 2015-16)

The overall GER among ST children at the secondary level in all fourteen states shows increasing trends with fluctuating trends in few states. Between 2006-07 and 2015-16, GER increased. Table E has shown that except Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, other states showed fluctuating trends in gross enrolment rate. States with 5th Schedule provisions in Table E shows that gross enrolment ratio among ST students increased from 2006-07 to 2015-16 although GER at secondary level is lower compared to primary and upper primary levels. However, these states performed better than West Bengal.

Trends in Gross Enrolment Ratio at higher secondary level (2006-07 to 2015-16)

At the higher secondary level, Table F shows that ST gross enrolment ratio increased between 2006-07 and 2015-16 in 6th Scheduled states. The GER trend since 2006-07 to 2015-16 is not same in all the fourteen states. In 5th Schedule States, except Jharkhand, all eight States experienced fluctuating trends in ST gross enrolment rate. In case of 6th Schedule States, GER increases in all four States during 2006-07 and 2007-08, after that it declined in 2008-09. Up to 2014-15, all states showed uneven trends and during 2015-16, GER found to increase in four States.

Dropout Rate

In India, dropout rates among ST from classes I to V show declining trends. Dropout rates fell from 62.5 percent in 1990-91 to 29.3 percent in 2009-10 and then it increased to 35.6 percent in 2010-11. Although between 2009-10 and 2010-11, dropout increased by 6.3 percent, but compared to 1990-91, it has shown remarkable decline. Despite decline in dropout rates among ST, overall dropout rates remained high with the exception for

Scheduled Castes (SCs) for the years 2006-07 and 2009-10. In case of primary and upper levels (I-VIII), the dropout rates of ST declined between 1990-91 and 2010-11 from 78.6 percent to 55 percent. In comparison to other social groups, dropout rates of ST remained high and this time, percentage decline of dropout for all social groups has increased compared to primary and upper primary levels. Dropout rate increased further in case of classes between (I-X); ST stood highest. However, in case of all categories and SC, dropout rates declined from 71.3 percent and 77.7 percent in 1990-91 to 49.3 percent and 56 percent in 2010-11, respectively. Dropout among ST population declined from 85 percent to 70.9 percent. Overall, the dropout rates remained more chronic at the higher education level. During 2010-11, the highest dropout rates of ST children from classes I to X were found in the States of West Bengal, Tripura, Rajasthan, Odisha, Meghalaya, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh (MoTA, 2013, p. 180).

Table A
Trends in GER at the Primary Level (Classes I-V) among ST in India
(West Bengal and 5th Schedule States)

| Year/ States | Andhra Pradesh | Gujarat | Himachal Pradesh | Jharkhand | Madhya Pradesh | Maharashtra | Odisha | Rajasthan | Chhattisgarh | West Bengal |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|--------|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| 2006-07 | 102.3 | 130.7 | 146.0 | 131.7 | 167.4 | 134.3 | 126.2 | 110.0 | 132.8 | 105.1 |
| 2007-08 | 100.8 | 125.4 | 143.6 | 191.0 | 151.5 | 131.9 | 125.9 | 107.4 | 132.9 | 123.9 |
| 2008-09 | 113.1 | 118.9 | 138.7 | 180.7 | 156.1 | 120.9 | 131.8 | 122.7 | 123.5 | 116.7 |
| 2009-10 | 117.5 | 130.1 | 138.1 | 165.8 | 149.6 | 120.7 | 131.5 | 127.2 | 113.2 | 141.7 |
| 2010-11 | 122.9 | 130.2 | 140.4 | 164.5 | 152.3 | 123.7 | 135.0 | 132.0 | 114.0 | 122.3 |
| 2011-12 | 113.5 | 117.6 | 94.8 | 131.0 | 128.0 | 107.4 | 111.7 | 111.6 | 103.3 | 135.4 |
| 2013-14 | 114.4 | 104.5 | 90.4 | 122.0 | 113.5 | 101.0 | 116.2 | 103.3 | 105.4 | 123.0 |
| 2014-15 | 80.6 | 102.7 | 88.5 | 119.8 | 102.1 | 98.8 | 116.9 | 99.7 | 103.2 | 119.9 |
| 2015-16 | 98.5 | 101.4 | 87.9 | 119.4 | 93.6 | 98.0 | 113.5 | 103.0 | 98.8 | 118.6 |

Source: GoI, 2014a; GoI, 2014b; GoI, 2014c, GoI, 2006-07; GoI, 2007-08.

Table B
Trends in GER at the Primary Level (Classes I-V) among ST in India
(West Bengal and 6th Schedule States)

| Year/ States | Assam | Meghalaya | Mizoram | Tripura | West Bengal |
|--------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| 2006-07 | 97.84 | 165.49 | 164.64 | 150.81 | 105.08 |
| 2007-08 | 155.91 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 162.87 | 123.86 |
| 2008-09 | 130.10 | 166.10 | 166.90 | 160.50 | 116.70 |
| 2009-10 | 103.50 | 178.30 | 168.50 | 159.00 | 141.70 |
| 2010-11 | 106.00 | 191.80 | 190.60 | 146.70 | 122.30 |
| 2011-12 | 95.40 | 136.80 | 125.30 | 118.60 | 135.40 |
| 2013-14 | 132.15 | 140.26 | 130.04 | 117.37 | 122.97 |
| 2014-15 | 133.71 | 143.12 | 126.44 | 113.19 | 119.91 |
| 2015-16 | 130.46 | 145.61 | 125.90 | 110.70 | 118.55 |

Source: GoI, 2014a; GoI, 2014b; GoI, 2014c, GoI, 2006-07; GoI, 2007-08.

Table C
Trends in GER at the Upper Primary Level (Classes VI-VIII) among ST in India
(West Bengal and 5th Schedule States)

| Year/States | Andhra Pradesh | Gujarat | Himachal Pradesh | Jharkhand | Madhya Pradesh | Maharashtra | Odisha | Rajasthan | Chhattisgarh | West Bengal |
|-------------|-------------------|---------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|--------|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| 2006-07 | 78.62 | 67.53 | 141.17 | 56.21 | 86.46 | 83 | 59.41 | 77.36 | 75 | 58.56 |
| 2007-08 | 80.18 | 67.25 | 150.2 | 51.61 | 63.67 | 83.1 | 64.25 | 84.1 | 91.57 | 87.82 |
| 2008-09 | 84 | 68.5 | 149.1 | 52.7 | 101 | 88.9 | 70.5 | 83.6 | 78.5 | 68.9 |
| 2009-10 | 84.6 | 73.5 | 151.8 | 77.4 | 91.8 | 89.8 | 73.5 | 86.1 | 74.7 | 78.4 |
| 2010-11 | 90.4 | 69.9 | 157.8 | 82.4 | 100.5 | 97.2 | 74.9 | 81.6 | 79.8 | 111.4 |
| 2011-12 | 72 | 57.8 | 99.1 | 75.7 | 81.2 | 80.3 | 60.8 | 74.4 | 78.2 | 81.7 |
| 2013-14 | 81.27 | 87.29 | 91.69 | 89.01 | 94.69 | 87.02 | 80.53 | 80.98 | 98.3 | 97.78 |
| 2014-15 | 57.92 | 89.12 | 95.61 | 94.05 | 93.65 | 93.98 | 86.61 | 83.23 | 98.5 | 102.2 |
| 2015-16 | 79.47 | 92.11 | 94.84 | 97.19 | 91.86 | 96.42 | 93.84 | 91.08 | 99.55 | 105.37 |

Source: GoI, 2014a; GoI, 2014b; GoI, 2014c, GoI, 2006-07; GoI, 2007-08.

Table D
Trends in GER at the Upper Primary Level (Classes VI-VIII) among ST in India
(West Bengal and 6th Schedule States)

| Year/States | Assam | Meghalaya | Mizoram | Tripura | West Bengal |
|-------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| 2006-07 | 81.56 | 92.96 | 89.22 | 80.87 | 58.56 |
| 2007-08 | 145.28 | 0 | 0 | 101.46 | 87.82 |
| 2008-09 | 87.9 | 71.8 | 102.1 | 99.6 | 68.9 |
| 2009-10 | 86.1 | 81.4 | 105.3 | 102.1 | 78.4 |
| 2010-11 | 82.7 | 89.7 | 106.9 | 94.1 | 111.4 |
| 2011-12 | 80 | 85.1 | 95.7 | 92.8 | 81.7 |
| 2013-14 | 114.63 | 111.07 | 121.85 | 108.09 | 97.78 |
| 2014-15 | 116.43 | 122.92 | 130.19 | 114.75 | 102.2 |
| 2015-16 | 112.19 | 137.43 | 137.46 | 123.86 | 105.37 |

Source: GoI, 2014a; GoI, 2014b; GoI, 2014c, GoI, 2006-07; GoI, 2007-08.

Table E
Trends in GER at the secondary (Classes IX-X) among ST in India

| Year/States | Assam | Meghalaya | Mizoram | Tripura | West Bengal |
|-------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| 2006-07 | 64.57 | 46.32 | 70.03 | 50.03 | 36.05 |
| 2007-08 | 66.04 | 0 | 0 | 64.17 | 44.9 |
| 2008-09 | 56.1 | 41 | 71.3 | 61.3 | 37.7 |
| 2009-10 | 56.3 | 42.9 | 77.1 | 71.2 | 43.9 |
| 2010-11 | 51.2 | 49.9 | 78.2 | 72.6 | 61.4 |
| 2011-12 | 76.8 | 54.3 | 82.6 | 78.3 | 51.1 |
| 2013-14 | 93.73 | 70.57 | 102.24 | 105.81 | 64.53 |
| 2014-15 | 96.18 | 79.62 | 105.44 | 110.91 | 69.43 |
| 2015-16 | 99.88 | 87.79 | 110.08 | 115.04 | 74.64 |

Source: GoI, 2014a; GoI, 2014b; GoI, 2014c, GoI, 2006-07; GoI, 2007-08.

Table F
Trends in GER at the Higher Secondary level (Classes X-XII) among ST in India

| Year/States | Assam | Meghalaya | Mizoram | Tripura | West Bengal |
|-------------|-------|-----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| 2006-07 | 16.42 | 23.63 | 26.7 | 13.04 | 16.59 |
| 2007-08 | 16.15 | NA | NA | 32.52 | 20.7 |
| 2008-09 | 14.8 | 10.5 | 36.3 | 20.5 | 13.7 |
| 2009-10 | 15.8 | 10.1 | 42.2 | 21.8 | 17.6 |
| 2010-11 | 15.5 | 11.5 | 41.3 | 20.2 | 30.1 |
| 2011-12 | 13.1 | 14.5 | 47.4 | 19.7 | 29.2 |
| 2013-14 | 44.19 | 21.64 | 49.02 | 27.46 | 36.24 |
| 2014-15 | 44.86 | 35.27 | 51.38 | 30.29 | 38.5 |
| 2015-16 | 50.63 | 42.74 | 57.29 | 32.01 | 39 |

Source: GoI, 2014a; GoI, 2014b; GoI, 2014c, GoI, 2006-07; GoI, 2007-08.

Trends in ST Health in India

Generally, STs in India have poor health condition compared to mainstream population. Despite efforts of the central and state governments to provide health facilities to ST communities, outcome is not satisfactory (GoI, 2001, p. 27-30). Infant mortality rate of ST population is higher in the States of Odisha, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir as compared to all-India level. According to the past four reports of the National Family Health Survey, the mortality rate of Scheduled Tribes shows falling trends. This is shown in Figure 4.3.1. There is fall in all types of mortality rate among ST communities, namely, neo-natal mortality, post neonatal mortality, infant mortality, child mortality and under-five mortality rate shown in Figure 4.3.2, Figure 4.3.3, Figure 4.3.4, Figure 4.3.5 and Figure 4.3.6. However, the proportionate fall in the mortality rate of STs remains low in comparison to other social groups. Child and under-five mortality rates remained high among ST community compared to other social groups (GoI, 1992-93; GoI, 1998-99; GoI, 2005-06; GoI, 2015-16).

Command over Resources

Tribal communities reside mostly in rural areas. For livelihood, they have to depend on rural economy. Therefore, access to natural resources like land, water and other asset holdings is necessary for their livelihood and development. This section discusses trends in different economic activities of ST communities and their access to asset holdings in rural India.

Occupational Trends among STs in India

During 1991, the major proportion of ST workers in farm sector in 6th Schedule States was cultivators. Table G shows that 79.67 per cent of ST workers are cultivators in Assam, 67.25 per cent ST workers in Meghalaya, 86.75 per cent in Mizoram and 58.27 per cent in Tripura while in comparison, proportion of ST workers engaged as agricultural labourers were smaller. In case of 5th Schedule States, proportion of ST agricultural labourers were higher in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. In West Bengal, proportion of ST agricultural labourers is greater than ST cultivators. During 2011, it was found in the 6th States that majority of tribal communities derives their livelihood from agriculture. In all four States of Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura, larger proportions of main ST workers are engaged as cultivators that show they own land. A major part of the population is engaged in non-farming activities as their main activities. Small proportions of ST population are agriculture labourers.

Proportions of agricultural labourers are quite lower in States of Assam and Mizoram while larger proportion is cultivators or engaged in non-farm activities. It means that tribal land status in these States is satisfactory comparative to other two States. This is shown in table H. In Fifth Schedule States, the highest proportions of main ST workers as cultivators are found in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. Greater proportions of ST are found to engage in non-farming activities. Very small proportion of population is agricultural labourers. In contrast to these States, it can be seen from the Table 4.6.3 that in States of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, larger tribal population is either cultivators or agricultural labourers, former being greater than later. However, the situation of tribal communities in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh is not good. It is because highest proportions of tribals are agricultural labourers. The Table I also reveals that tribal population in States of West Bengal mainly engaged in occupational activities as agricultural labourers. The majority of populations is also found to be engaged in non-farm activities although their proportion is smaller than the population who is engaged as agricultural labourers.

Table G
Number & Percentage of ST Farm workers in Rural India (1991)

| State Name | Total ST worker | Cultivators | Percentage of Cultivators | Agricultural labourers | Percentage of Agricultural labourers |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Assam | 942974 | 751222 | 79.67% | 99029 | 10.50% |
| Meghalaya | 562872 | 378544 | 67.25% | 78410 | 13.93% |
| Mizoram | 157709 | 136811 | 86.75% | 2478 | 1.57% |
| Tripura | 270629 | 157703 | 58.27% | 82057 | 30.32% |
| Andhra Pradesh | 2014506 | 874312 | 43.40% | 954858 | 47.40% |
| Gujarat | 2350374 | 1148930 | 48.88% | 951325 | 40.48% |
| Himachal Pradesh | 78562 | 57739 | 73.49% | 1812 | 2.31% |
| Madhya Pradesh | 6577860 | 4292436 | 65.26% | 1949847 | 29.64% |
| Maharashtra | 3179072 | 1303612 | 41.01% | 1583406 | 49.81% |
| Orissa | 2708221 | 1424318 | 52.59% | 1054185 | 38.93% |
| Rajasthan | 1832506 | 1437956 | 78.47% | 251438 | 13.72% |
| West Bengal | 1578023 | 484728 | 30.72% | 816821 | 51.76% |
| Source: Census of India, 1991 | | | | | |

Table H
Number & Percentage of ST Farm and Non-Farm workers in Sixth Schedule States (2011)

| Serial no. | States | Total Scheduled Tribe Population | Total Main Cultivators | Total Main Agricultural Labourers | Total Main Non-farming workers* |
|------------|-----------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Mizoram | 1036115 | 197511 (51.33) | 24436 (6.35) | 162822 (42.32) |
| 2 | Tripura | 1166813 | 131683 (40.00) | 95011 (28.86) | 102511 (31.14) |
| 3 | Meghalaya | 2555861 | 393419 (49.96) | 105573 (13.41) | 288450 (36.63) |
| 4 | Assam | 3884371 | 736,130 (65.86) | 91205 (8.10) | 293207 (26.03) |

Sources: Census (2011), Registrar General of India

Note: (i) Figure in parenthesis shows the percentage.

(ii) * Non-farming workers is the sum total husehold industry workers and other workers.

Table I
Number & Percentage of ST Farm and Non-Farm workers in Fifth Schedule States (2011)

| Serial no. | States | Total Scheduled Tribe Population | Total Main Cultivators | Total Main Agricultural Labourers | Total Main Non-farming workers* |
|------------|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Himachal Pradesh | 392126 | 55871 (49.88) | 3307 (2.95) | 52840 (47.17) |
| 2 | Rajasthan | 9238534 | 1723475 (65.29) | 378010 (14.32) | 538281 (20.39) |
| 3 | Jharkhand | 8645042 | 921334 (49.15) | 422286 (22.53) | 530957 (28.32) |
| 4 | Odisha | 9590756 | 942860 (40.45) | 758536 (32.55) | 629301 (27.00) |
| 5 | Chhattisgarh | 7822902 | 1313342 (52.74) | 784929 (31.52) | 391856 (15.74) |
| 6 | Madhya Pradesh | 15316784 | 2017253 (41.46) | 220785 (45.38) | 639920 (13.15) |
| 7 | Gujarat | 8917174 | 1043397 (34.23) | 1363636 (44.74) | 640879 (21.03) |
| 8 | Maharashtra | 10510213 | 1156385 (26.41) | 2405164 (54.92) | 817854 (18.68) |
| 9 | Andhra Pradesh | 5918073 | 762138 (29.70) | 1353645 (52.76) | 450082 (17.54) |
| 1. | West Bengal | 5,296,953 | 222,897 (15.35) | 717,047 (49.39) | 511,827 (35.26) |

Source: Census (2011) Registrar General of India.

Note: (i) Number in the parenthesis shows the percentage.

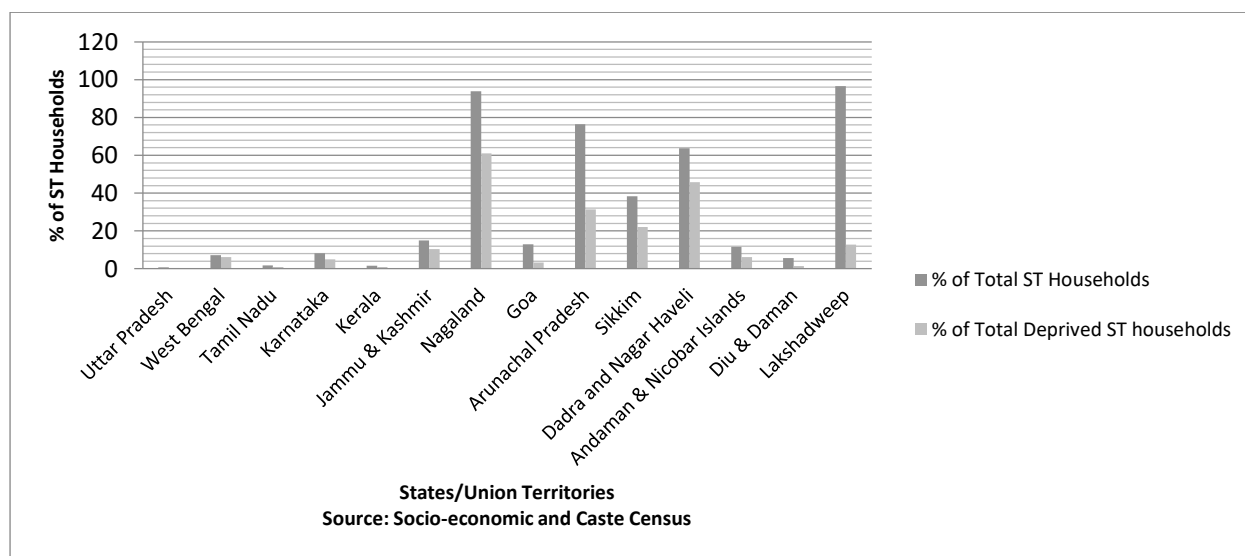
(ii) Non-farming workers is the sum total of household industry workers and other workers.

Extent of Deprivation

There exists considerable number of deprived tribal households across the country. The highest proportions of tribal population are found in the states of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh and Union Territories including Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli as shown in Figure C. There is much difference between the proportion of total tribal households and total deprived tribal households in Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Nagaland and Lakshadweep. However, this difference is negligible in the States of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. This shows that the deprivation of tribal households is much more prevalent in these states. The highest proportions of landless tribal households in these states derive major part of their income from manual casual labour work. The proportions of landless ST households who derive major part of their income from manual casual labor are: West Bengal (54.46%), Kerala (53.47%), Tamil Nadu (52.01%) and Uttar Pradesh (35.29%) (SECC, GoI).

Figure C

Percentage of Total ST Households and Total Deprived ST Households for States and Union Territories without 5th and 6th Schedules



Human Development of STs in West Bengal

According to the West Bengal Human Development Report 2004, nine districts of State have high HDI. They are Kolkata, Haora, North 24 Paraganas, Darjeeling, Bardhaman, Hugli, Medinipur, South 24 Paraganas and Nadia. The districts with low HDI are Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Bankura, Dinajpur, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Purulia and Malda (detail in Appendix

Table 4.6.1). India falls under the medium human development countries and ranks 129 with HDI 0.647^{iv}. India had showed better performance in improving its human development index with its HDI value 0.431 in 1990 which increased to 0.647 in 2018 as shown in Table 4.6. Yet the journey is not over as India still stands in medium human development countries and the country needs more effort to improve the human development of its people particularly the disadvantages section of population that includes ST and SC population who are socially and economically backward. Scheduled Tribes form one of the marginalised groups in the Indian society. A large portion of Scheduled Tribes population lives below the poverty line and inequality exist in terms of economic and social indicators. Also, disparities exist across states and across the social groups^v. They account lower in terms of health, education, economic and other social indicators. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs in its Annual Report 2017-18 has highlighted the indicators of human development for ST and All population groups. Sixteen variables are taken to compare the socio-economic condition of ST population with the total population. And it has been found that in all the variables both the social groups lag behind, but tribal population is more vulnerable. Only 2.6 per cent of ST avails health scheme compared to total population which is 31.9 percent. With such lower human development these communities lag behind in every aspect of their lives and they will not be able to participate in the development process. They will end up with casual employment or in agriculture with less productivity. Hence, efforts are needed to promote human development for marginalised communities (MoTA, 2017-18).

West Bengal consists of 21 districts. Appendix A shows the literacy level among different social groups in 19 districts of West Bengal. Alipurduar district had been bifurcated from Jalpaiguri district in 2014 (Also Kalimpong from Darjeeling). Literacy rate of tribal population in West Bengal was 57.93 percent as per 2011 Census which is lower than Scheduled Castes and total population of the State. Since tribal communities are at different stages of socio-economic and educational development^{vi}, therefore, it can be found from Appendix Table 4.6.2 that there are variations in the literacy rate within tribal communities. ST population in districts of Kolkata, Haora and Darjeeling shows high literacy rate. Kolkata ranks first in terms of Human Development Index with HDI value 0.78, Hoara with HDI value 0.68 ranks second while Darjeeling with HDI value 0.65 ranks fourth as shown in Table 4.3. The nature of tribal population in Kolkata is urban. Hence being urban in nature and with high Human Development Index, it can be seen that educational level of tribals in Kolkata district is in better position. In Hoara also, tribal population is urban in nature but we

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also find tribal in rural areas also. An interesting fact in case of Darjeeling district is that 80 per cent of tribal population lives in rural areas as compared to Hoara and Kolkata districts and even in general, population of the Darjeeling district is rural in nature. But the district has performed well in terms of human development index and this is reflected in Table 4.3 and Table 4.6 that the literacy rate of tribal population is high. Literacy rate of ST population is very low in three districts, namely, Uttar Dinajpur (43.76%), Malda (46.86%) and Birbhum (47.48%). The districts of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Dakshin Dinajpur, Mushidabad, Barddhaman, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Hugli, Bankura, Puruliya, South 24 Parganas, Pachim Medinipur and Purba Medinipur showd medium literacy rate of tribal population. Hence, these districts and the districts with low literacy rate required more stricter measures to reduce the gap in the educational index between ST population and the mainstream population.

Conclusion

The main objective of tribal development policy is to uplift ST and narrow down the gaps between ST and mainstream population. Pradhan et al. (2022) estimated that for the three indicators namely headcount, intensity and adjusted headcount ratio the ST community lags behind the average figures for almost all the States and Union Territories in India. It is only in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland that ST community fares relatively better in the three indicators. These indicators include a large number of factors that contribute to human development. So, deprivation of STs is limited to few indicators but they lag behind in large number of indicators. The implication of this is that a tribal child is already at a disadvantage and exposed to a higher degree of vulnerability vis-à-vis other social groups at the time he/she is born and STs continue to struggle throughout their life to address these gaps. As a result, STs suffer from low level of human development. The deprivation indicators in various States and Union Territories do not follow a similar pattern. Within the vast territory of the various States, each region therefore will require more intensive study to find the extent of deprivation that exists, and identify factors that exposes them to higher degree of deprivation and vulnerability. This calls for formulation of policies to address the deprivation among STs in the various States of India. The State of West Bengal does not have special constitutional provisions. The implementation of tribal development policies in general through various development programmes and schemes had not shown much progress as reflected through human proxies

development indicators. Therefore, there is need for rigorous policy intervention by bringing the deprived ST communities of State under the special constitutional provision such as 6th schedule.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Human Development Indices for Districts of West Bengal, 2004

| S/No. | District | Health Index | Income Index | Education Index | HDI Value | HDI Rank |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | Kolkata | 0.82 | 0.73 | 0.80 | 0.78 | 1 |
| 2. | Haora | 0.77 | 0.53 | 0.75 | 0.68 | 2 |
| 3. | North 24 Paraganas | 0.72 | 0.49 | 0.76 | 0.66 | 3 |
| 4. | Darjeeling | 0.73 | 0.49 | 0.72 | 0.65 | 4 |
| 5. | Bardhaman | 0.74 | 0.47 | 0.71 | 0.64 | 5 |
| 6. | Hugli | 0.77 | 0.46 | 0.67 | 0.63 | 6 |
| 7. | Medinipur | 0.68 | 0.45 | 0.74 | 0.62 | 7 |
| 8. | South 24 Paraganas | 0.71 | 0.40 | 0.68 | 0.60 | 8 |
| 9. | Nadia | 0.65 | 0.41 | 0.66 | 0.57 | 9 |
| 10. | Jalpaiguri | 0.61 | 0.38 | 0.60 | 0.53 | 10 |
| 11. | Koch Behar | 0.50 | 0.41 | 0.65 | 0.52 | 11 |
| 12. | Bankura | 0.67 | 0.26 | 0.62 | 0.52 | 12 |
| 13. | Dinajpur | 0.62 | 0.39 | 0.53 | 0.51 | 13 |
| 14. | Birbhum | 0.53 | 0.27 | 0.61 | 0.47 | 14 |
| 15. | Murshidabad | 0.57 | 0.29 | 0.52 | 0.46 | 15 |
| 16. | Purulia | 0.61 | 0.18 | 0.55 | 0.45 | 16 |
| 17. | Malda | 0.49 | 0.36 | 0.48 | 0.44 | 17 |
| West Bengal | | 0.70 | 0.43 | 0.69 | 0.61 | - |

Source: UNDP, 2004

Source: GoWB, West Bengal Statistical Handbook, 2015, p.73

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End Notes

ⁱ The Indian Government voted in favour of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with a condition that in India, all Indians irrespective of castes, culture and races, considered as Indigenous. The present study used “Indigenous” people to refer to people like STs or *Adivasis*, the vulnerable people in India.

ⁱⁱ Provisions as to the Administration of Tribal Areas in [the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram] under Constitutional Articles 244(2) and 275(1).

ⁱⁱⁱ Provisions as to the Administration and Control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes under Constitutional Article 244(1).

^{iv} HDR, 2019, p.302

^v UNDP, 2010, Human Development in India- Analysis to Action, p.5

^{vi} Tribal Annual Report 2018-19, Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Spatio-Temporal variation of Channel planform indices in alluvial reach of the Chel River, Eastern India

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Abstract

A combined technique using Earth observation data, GIS processing, and fieldwork was employed to reconstruct planform changes in the river Chel from 1976 to 2017. The study assessed variations in multi-temporal Landsat image-based channel planform indices, specifically sinuosity index variation, braiding index variation, and braid-channel ratio variation. Computation of planform indices reveals declining trends in sinuosity and braiding index. The study reveals that the Chel River is progressively transitioning from a braided to a straight channel. Further, reach-B is the most braided, followed by reach-A and reach-C. Throughout the 41-year assessment period, Reach-C has consistently been a nearly straight reach. The study emphasizes the significance of geospatial analysis in generating actionable spatio-temporal variation insights.

Key Words- Chel River, Channel Planform, Landsat, Sinuosity index, Braid-Channel ratio.

1. Introduction

Rivers are highly sensitive to environmental conditions (Eaton et al., 2010; Roza et al., 2014), and especially alluvial channels are inherently dynamic in nature, responding to the variations in water and sediment inputs (Midha and Mathur, 2014). Alluvial rivers can respond and readjust at a variable rate to the variations caused by water and sediment inputs, active tectonics and human activities at a range of spatial and temporal scales (Sinha and Ghosh, 2012; Heitmuller, 2014). Natural or anthropogenic input alterations into the river systems results in changes in the planform/channel pattern, sinuosity, and braiding Index (Knighton, 1989). Any changes, whether natural or anthropogenic, can initiate a departure from a state of dynamic equilibrium (Winterbottom, 2000; Petts and Gurnell, 2005). This may in turn, result in channel instability causing changes in channel form and pattern (Yang *et al.*, 1999; Surian and Rinaldi, 2003,

Wellmeyer *et al.*, 2005; Kummur *et al.*, 2008; Yao *et al.*, 2011; Gupta *et al.*, 2013; Midha and Mathur, 2014).

Channel dynamics represent an integral component in the evolution of vast alluvial floodplain as well as a disturbance regime vital for floodplain patterns and maintenance of high level of biodiversity (Midha and Mathur, 2014). Channel migration with bank erosion, accretion, and down cutting is a natural phenomenon for an alluvial river. However, with the growth of human population world over the impact is evident. Humans are emerging as rather dominating factor than the natural ones. Developmental activities like reservoir construction, restricting the lateral movement of river through embankments, sand and boulder mining, land use alterations and infrastructure construction along the river banks have altered the natural geomorphological dynamics of river (Gregory and Park, 1974; Knighton, 1989; Kondolf, 1997; Surian, 1999; Surian and Rinaldi, 2003; Batalla *et al.*, 2004; Vanacker *et al.*, 2005; Wellmeyer *et al.*, 2005). Channel instability cause damages to riverine infrastructure and also alteration of aquatic and riparian ecosystems. Thus, it poses challenges for engineers, scientists, and managers on how to best accommodate societal needs with the structure and processes of nature. Understanding the planform dynamics of river channels has important implications for maintaining biodiversity (Naiman *et al.*, 1993; Hughes, 1997; Ward *et al.*, 1999) and minimizing flood damage too (Holburt, 1984). Investigations of historical channel change provide insight into how stream channels respond to flood events. With this information, land and resource managers are able to make decisions that minimize social costs (*e.g.*, flood damage to property) and maximize the ecological benefits of flooding (*e.g.*, rehabilitating riparian vegetation and deterring the proliferation of exotic species) (Tiegs and Pohl, 2005). Driven by these objectives channel planform dynamics has been studied world over. Ollero (2010) assessed the channel dynamics and consequent floodplain changes in the middle Ebro River, Spain over 80 years and proposed feasible floodplain management solutions. Similarly, Tiegs and Pohl (2005) studied the response of the Colorado River's planform to the fluctuations in hydrology during the period 1976-2000 and thereby assisted land managers in figuring out an appropriate flow regime for proposed rehabilitation of native riparian vegetation. Within our country, Midha and Mathur (2014) have assessed the planform dynamics along a 60 kms reach of Sharda River during 1977 and 2001 in the Terai region of Northern India and established that the altered dynamics is threatening the future of critical wildlife habitats in Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and North Kheri Forest

Division in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Thus, an improved understanding of river channel change processes is imperative for improving river engineering and environmental management as well. Channel planform indices are numerical numbers that characterize the shape and properties of a river channel when viewed from above. These indices allow to quantify the channel's sinuosity (curviness), braiding (many channels), and other characteristics. Sinuosity, braiding index, and sensitivity index are among of the most important indicators.

The Chel basin is a part of the region popularly known as 'Dooars' which is characterized by channel migration, flooding and avulsion. It falls in the zone of transition between the dissected upper Himalayan hill surface and the lower gently rolling Teesta- Brahmaputra plains, and is popular for notorious incidents of channel avulsion and river capture activities (Chakraborty and Mukhopadhyay, 2014). Because of its straddle like situation with two distinct physiographic units, Chel basin has varied geomorphologic problems. The hilly terrain in the north above the elevation 350m experience rapid overland flow, erosion and landslides whereas its piedmont in the intermediate and alluvial plain in the south are observing large scale sediment deposition, rise in valley floor and consequent shifting of channels (Lama and Maiti, 2019).

In the present paper, an attempt to reconstruct planform changes of the river Chel has been done over the period between 1976-2017 using multi- temporal Landsat images and supplemented by field work. Channel planform dynamics has been attempted to understand through changes in sinuosity index, braiding index and braid-channel ratio.

2. Study Area

The Chel River lies to the left of river Tista after Lish and Gish and joins Neora to become Dharala Nadi at 88° 44' 13"E, 26° 41' 45.6"N which ultimately merges with mighty Tista about 13kms downstream. The study area extends between 26° 41' 30" and 27° 5'15" north latitudes and longitudes 88° 37'00" and 88° 45' 15" east.

The study reach for the present chapter extends from near the confluence point of Manzing and Sukha Khola with Chel River near Putharjhora Tea Garden, near the mountain front below Gorubathan to confluence Point of Chel River with Neora River (Fig. 1). The straight valley length of the reach is 20.93 kms. But for the ease of description and understanding, the study reach was divided into three smaller reaches from north to south:

- Reach-A (Putharjhora Tea Garden to Odlabari rail-road bridge)
- Reach-B (Odlabari rail-road bridge to Nipuchapur Tea Garden)

- Reach-C (Nipuchapur Tea Garden to Kranti)

The divisions of the reaches noted above were based on hard points located along the river. The first hard point was the Odlabari rail-road bridge and the second hard point was near Nipuchapur Tea Garden where channel migration during the entire assessment period of 41 years was observed to be negligible.

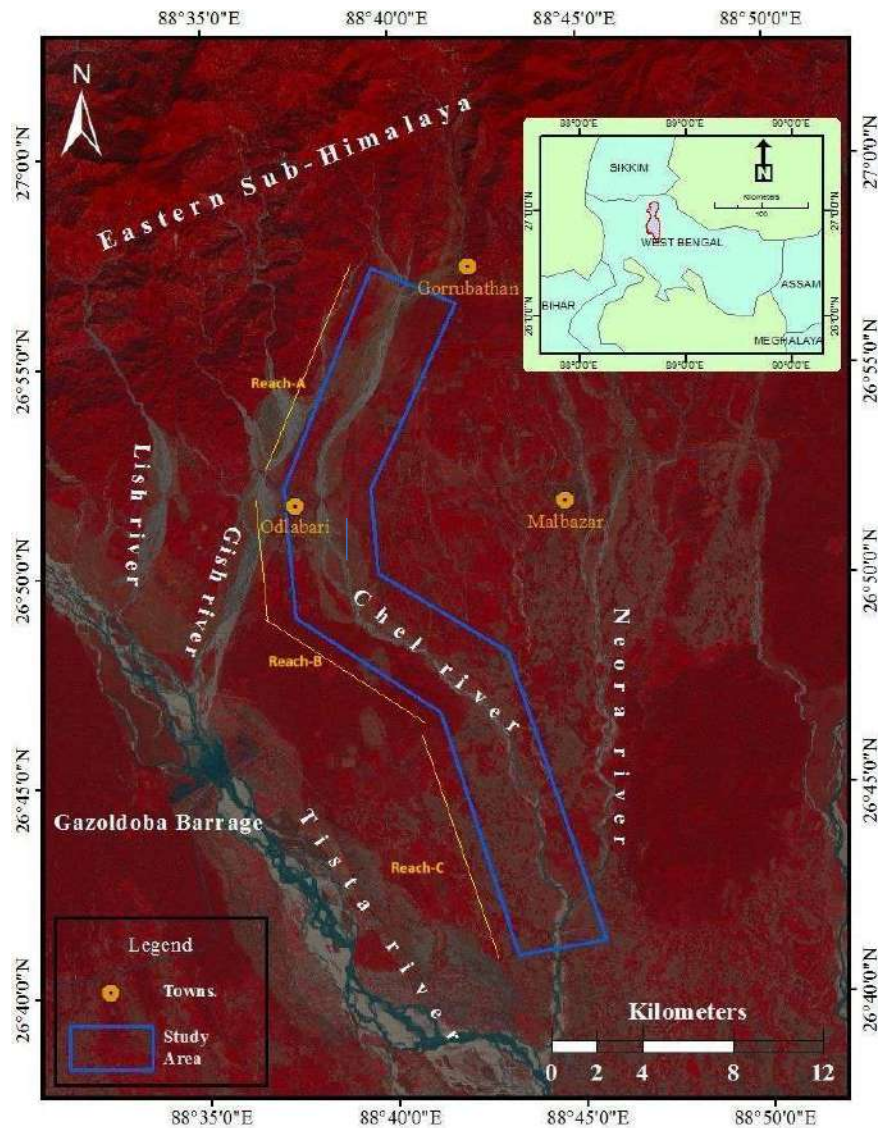


Figure 1- Pan Sharpened Landsat 8 OLI/ TIRS image (1 December 2017, Path and Row- 139/41) showing the study section of river Chel (Map of part North- East India showing location of the Chel River basin in the inset).

Note: The image is a standard false color composite where the red, green and blue band has been assigned Green, Red and Near Infrared colors, respectively.

3. Methodology

Different methods applied for the fulfillment of objectives are discussed below.

3.1 Data and image processing

This study uses multi temporal Landsat data to quantify and analyze the dynamics of River Chel from 1976 to 2017. A single Landsat scene (Path/ Row: 139/41; 149/41 for 1976 image) covers the entire study area. Therefore, six Landsat scenes (of 1976, 1987, 1994, 2005, 2010, and 2017) were collected from the USGS site (<http://earthexplorer.usgs.gov/>). Therefore, the study will confine with four epochs (1976-1987, 1987- 1994, 1994-2005, 2005-2010, and 2010-2017). There exists a large data gap from 1976 to 1987 and from 1994 until 2005. Variation in the length of epochs is due to availability of cloud-free Landsat scenes. All the Landsat scenes were downloaded from the USGS through their data visualization tool GloVis. (Table 1). All the Landsat images were acquired for months of October to December as during this time of the year generally the region is cloud free being dry season and the discharge is sufficient to fill the main channel normal (non-flood water level of the river) and no significant channel variation occur (Fig. 2).

ArcGIS (version 10.1; ESRI, Redlands, CA) software package has been used for preparation of GIS database relating to historical channel position and movement throughout the entire study period of 41 years. All the images were processed through ERDAS imagine (v. 9.0) software and then were georeferenced based on Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) projection system (Northern hemisphere 45 zone and world geodetic system (WGS) 84) manually using GCPs collected during GPS survey. All the GCPs representing permanent features like, road intersections, corners of large buildings, bridges etc were well distributed throughout the scenes, and the registration resulted a Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) of <0.5 pixels. A first-order polynomial transformation with nearest neighbor resampling technique was applied to analyze channel planform dynamics of river Chel from 1976 -2017. Finally, each image was clipped using an area of interest (AOI) file derived from a vector dataset.

Table 1- Details of Satellite images used in the study

| Details of satellite images used in this study | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|-----------|---|
| Types of data | Satellite/sensor | Path/Row | Date of acquisition | Resolution (Meter) | Projection | WRS type | Bit depth | Source |
| Satellite images | Landsat 1-5 MSS | 149/41 | 30.11.1976 | 60 | UTM/WGS 1984 | 1 | 8 | http://earthexplorer.usgs.gov/ |
| | Landsat 4-5 TM | 139/41 | 31.12.1987 | 30 | UTM/WGS 1984 | 2 | 8 | |
| | Landsat 4-5 TM | 139/41 | 18.12.1994 | 30 | UTM/WGS 1984 | 2 | 8 | |
| | Landsat 4-5 TM | 139/41 | 13.10.2005 | 30 | UTM/WGS 1984 | 2 | 8 | |
| | Landsat 4-5 TM | 139/41 | 14.12.2010 | 30 | UTM/WGS 1984 | 2 | 8 | |
| | Landsat 8 OLI/TIRS | 139/41 | 01.12.2017 | 30 (15m for PAN) | UTM/WGS 1984 | 2 | 16 | |

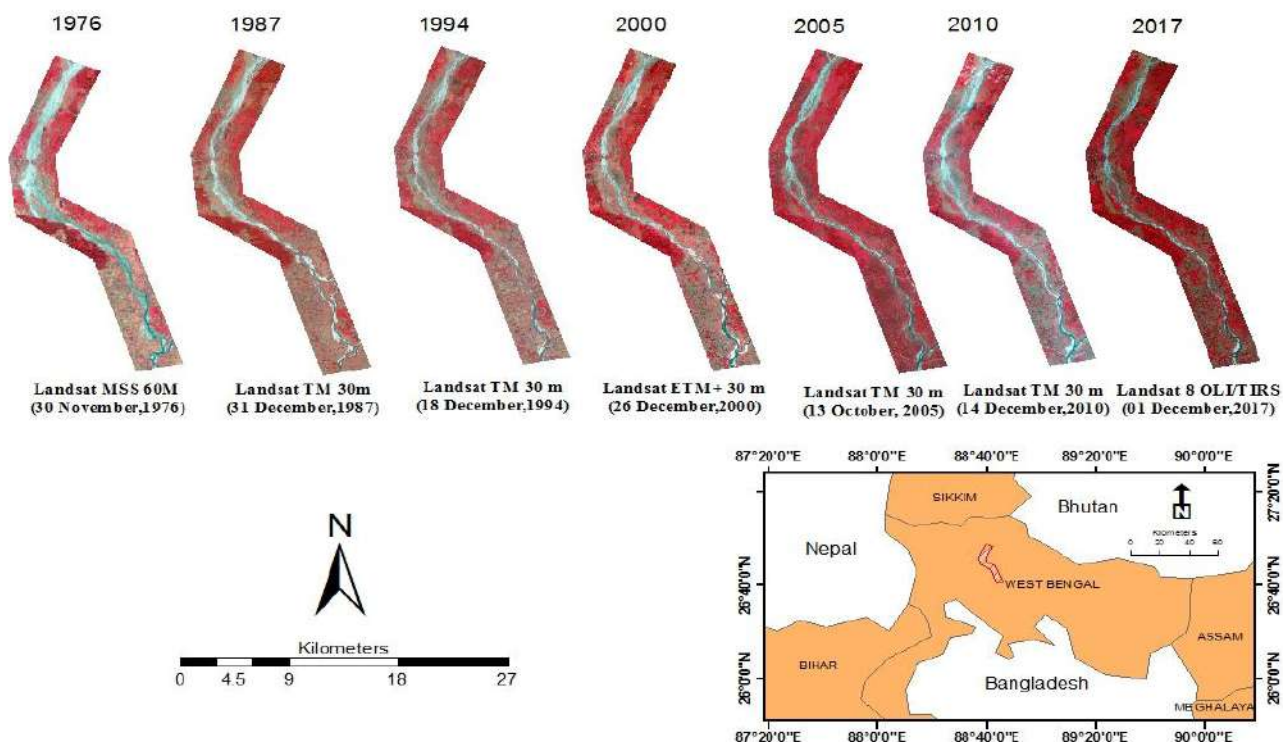


Figure 2. Temporal Landsat images used in the study showing morphological changes over time

3.2 Delineation of channel boundary, length of the channel-belt reach, mid channel bars etc.

For assessing various channel planform characteristics mentioned above delineation of channel boundary and computation of channel-belt reach length, mid channel bars etc. are imperative. Now herein task has been done from Landsat images. A bunch of previous studies demonstrate the availability of techniques ranging from manual digitization to automatic digitization to extract river boundaries from Landsat images. Herein automatic technique for extraction of river banks was attempted but the idea had to be dropped as the results were unreliable due to similarities in spectral reflectance of several riverine features. Studies done in other parts of the world (Yang *et al.* 1999; Gupta *et al.* 2013) have similarly found manual digitalization superior than the automatic digitization for delineation of river bank from Landsat multispectral data. So manual digitization technique was preferred over automatic one and the channel boundaries were digitized from each Landsat image, using a combination of bands (1-6-7) which has been found by Yang *et al.* (1999), an effective band combination to display river channels at normal water level.

Now there is some difference of opinion in defining the channel- bank limit among the geoscientists. Nicoll and Hickin (2010) digitized the channel outlines of confined meandering rivers at 23 locations in Alberta and British Columbia, Canada to understand planform geometry and channel migration using a strict geomorphologic approach wherein boundary of water limit was taken as edge of the channel because this boundary is clearly visible in multispectral Landsat image. However, this approach cannot be used in my study area having low discharge and braiding nature of flow. Almost in entire study reach, the channel cross sections are broad and shallow. So, a small change in water level can therefore give misleading large changes in the positions of the channel boundaries. To avoid this problem, channel bank limits were defined using a non-morphological variable, namely soil-vegetation limit. This method of defining channel bank limits was adopted by Lawler (1993), Gurnell (1997); Yang *et al.* (1999), Tiegs and Pohl (2005), Dewan *et al.* (2017) etc. Soil- vegetation limit approach presume that river channel limit is an elongated area wherein stream flow occurred with sufficient frequency, energy and duration to prevent the incidence of vegetation, and therefore 90% of this area is either bare soil or water (Gurnell, 1997; Yang *et al.*, 1999, Tiegs and Pohl, 2005). This method effectively overcomes the problem of inconsistencies in channel planform delineation due to varying water levels (Gurnell, 1997). Due to its simplicity and practicality, this method has been used successfully and widely in different

climatic regions of the world (Lawler, 1993, Gurnell, 1997; Yang *et al.*, 1999, Tiegs and Pohl, 2005, Midha and Mathur, 2014, Dewan *et al.*, 2017). Author performed digitization of channel boundary on-screen from each Landsat image at 1:5000. Finally, a georeferenced spatial dataset, representing Channel banklines, for each topographical map and Landsat image was created (Fig. 5.5). Bhunia *et al.* (2016) have used single sensor Landsat-Thematic Mapper (TM) of 1989, 1999, 2005 and 2010 to show the channel dynamics of a reach of river Ganga in the southern Vaishali district of Bihar. They argue that observing images of common projection minimizes the error due to temporal changes.

3.3. Channel planform dynamics

Detailed study on planform dynamics has been attempted through application of several Channel planform indices namely Sinuosity Index, Braiding Index, and Braid Channel Ratio for the period 1976-2017 from Landsat Images. Changes in channel Braiding Index was computed adopting method given by Brice (1964). Whereas measurement of changes in channel Sinuosity Index and Braid channel Ratio was achieved through Friend and Sinha's method (1993). Each index has been discussed and calculated below;

Sinuosity Index has been calculated following Friend and Sinha's method (1993). Accordingly, the sinuosity index, P , is defined as

$$P = L_{cmax}/LR, \quad (1)$$

Where LR is the overall length of the channel-belt reach measured along a straight line, and L_{cmax} is the mid-channel length of the same reach, or the mid-channel length of the widest channel, where there is more than one channel. Sinuosity Index in fact is a measure of bending of a river. Lower value of it implies the channel is near to straight course and higher values shows more sinuous course.

There are mainly three indices for estimation of Braiding index, viz. Braiding Index (BI) by Brice, Braiding Parameter (B_o) by Rust and Braid-Channel Length ratio (B) by Friend and Sinha. I have employed braiding index (BI) by Brice, 1964 as:

$$BI = 2(\sum L_i)/L_r \quad (2)$$

Where L_i is the length of all the islands and/or bars in the reach, and L_r is the length of the reach measured midway between the banks of the channel belt (Brice, 1964).

Braid-channel ratio (B) has been measured following Friend and Sinha, 1993 using the relation:

$$B = L_{ctot}/L_{cmax}, \quad (3)$$

Where L_{ctot} is the sum of the mid-channel lengths of all the segments of primary channel in a reach, and L_{cmax} is the mid-channel length of the widest channel through the reach.

A higher value of braid-channel ratio means higher braiding of the river which means multiple numbers of channels. In fact, greater braid index implies an unstable river condition. The lowest value of Braid-Channel ratio is 1 that implies a single channel flow with no mid-channel bars.

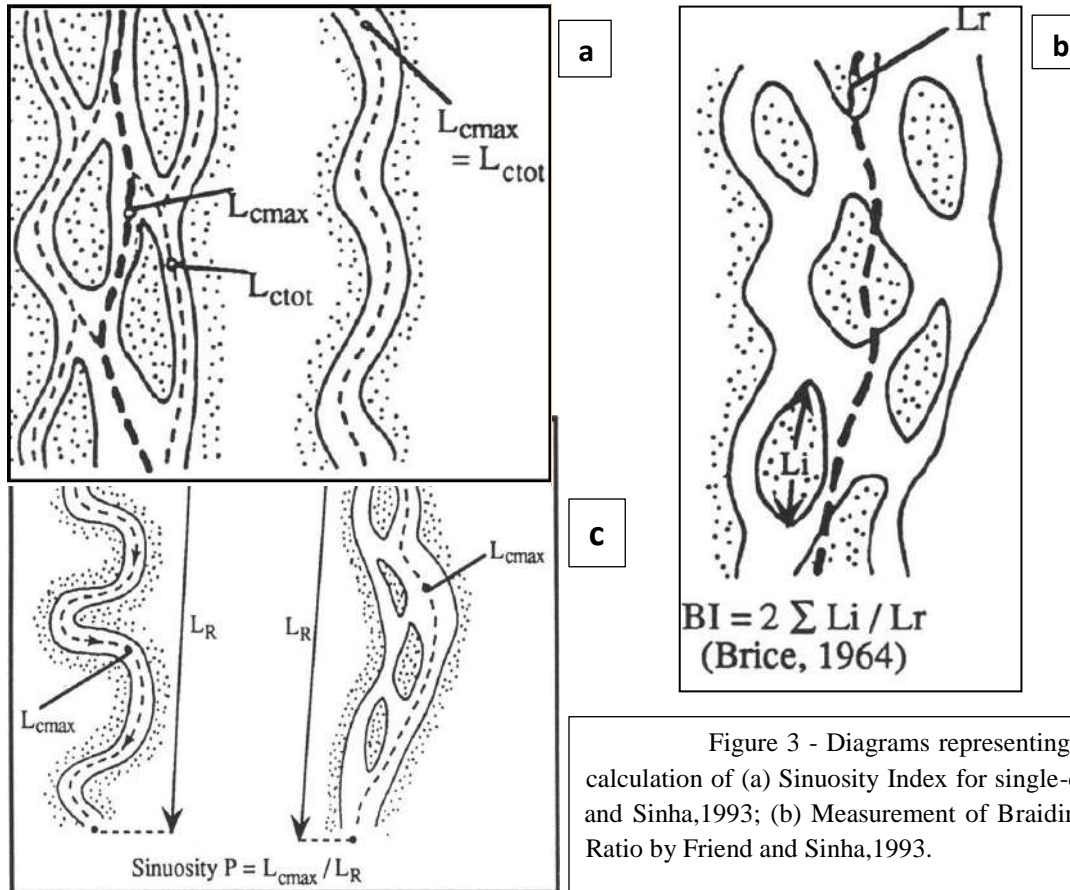


Figure 3 - Diagrams representing the methods employed in calculation of (a) Sinuosity Index for single-channel and multi-channel and Sinha, 1993; (b) Measurement of Braiding Index (Brice, 1964); (c) Ratio by Friend and Sinha, 1993.

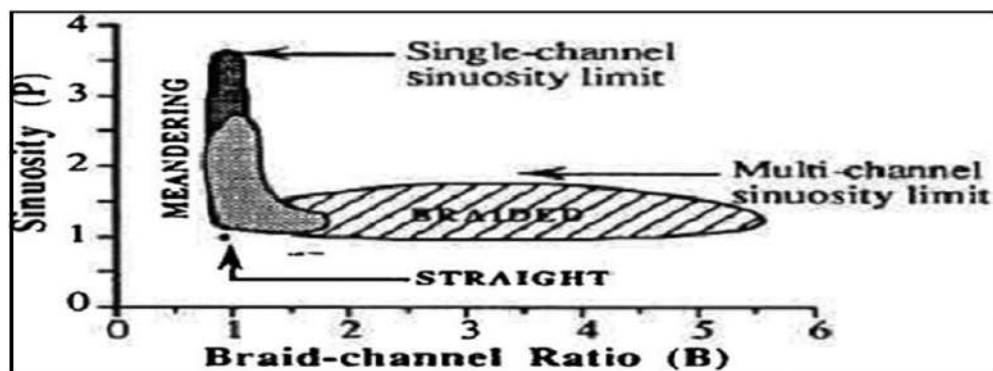


Figure 4 -Determination of channel pattern based on Sinousity (P) and Braid-channel Ratio (B), Friend and Sinha, 1993

4. Results

Computation of planform indices reveals the fact that there are visible trends of decreasing sinuosity and BI of river Chel. This decreasing trend in channel width, sinuosity and braiding index seems to be due to construction of embankment and channelization. There are good number of documented evidences of decreasing width, sinuosity and BI in other parts of the world which validates the fact that channel narrowing begins rapidly after channel confinement.

The sinuosity index and Braid-Channel Ratio values have been computed for each segment or reach of the river for a period of 41 years (from 1976 to 2017) and it reveals the fact that sinuosity values are generally low and constant but Braid-Channel Ratio values are comparatively much variable and horizontally much scattered (Table 2 and Fig.5). Friend and Sinha (1993) have used the similar indices for the study of measuring channel morphological variability of Gandak, Burhi Gandak and Bagmati River of India. A river will be of straight pattern when $B=1$ and $P=1$ (Fig. 4) because a reach with a single channel with no braids will have a value of 1 for B and will be equal to Sinuosity value (P). The horizontally elongated shape of plotted points in a scatter diagram with Braid-Channel ratio values along the abscissa and Sinuosity values along the Ordinate, suggests braided channel pattern, whereas vertically elongated shape points towards the meandering channel pattern (Fig. 4).

In the present study, the plotting of reach wise braid-channel ratio against the sinuosity index (Fig.6) exhibits that sinuosity values are less variable as compared to braid-channel ratio values. The lowest sinuosity value of 0.9 has been observed during 2010 in Segment-B whereas the highest sinuosity value of 1.48 has been observed during 2017 in Segment-C. Similarly, the lowest braid-channel ratio value of 0.96 is observed during 2005 in the Segment-C whereas the highest braid-channel ratio value of 2.27 is observed during 1976 in Segment-B (Table 2). Overall, the horizontally scattered points suggest of moderately braided channel pattern of the river (Fig. 5). The values of braid-channel ratio have consistently decreased since its highest mark of 2.27 in 1976 to lowest value of 0.96 in 2005 and then by 2017, the values in each segment became near 1 which is suggestive of the fact that the Chel River is gradually transforming itself from a braided channel to a straight one. The recent years clustering of points which otherwise were scattered horizontally and elongated further confirms the transition of channel form from braided to straight. The Reach wise plotting of points suggests that Segment-B is the most braided reach followed by Segment-A and Segment-C. Segment-C has always been

a near straight reach throughout the assessment period of 41 years (Fig. 6). The consideration of Sinuosity and Braiding Index for the entire study reach of Chel River reveals the fact that channel configuration dynamics led to an overall decrease of braiding index by 20.6% and a negligible increase of sinuosity index by 4.5% in 41 years i.e., from 1976 to 2017 (Table 3 & Fig.7).

Table 2 Reach-wise temporal dynamics in planform.

| Reach | year | Lctot (km) | Lcmax(km) | Li(km) | Lr(km) | Sinuosity Index (P)= Lcmax/LR | Braiding Index, Brice 1964 (B)=2(?Li)/Lr | Braid-channel ratio, B= Lctot/ Lcmax |
|-------|------|------------|-----------|--------|--------|----------------------------------|---|---|
| A | 1976 | 16.18 | 11.23 | 8.26 | 10.45 | 1.07 | 1.58 | 1.44 |
| | 1987 | 14.19 | 11.6 | 7.08 | 10.46 | 1.11 | 1.35 | 1.22 |
| | 1994 | 12 | 11.83 | 8.83 | 10.8 | 1.1 | 1.64 | 1.01 |
| | 2005 | 22.1 | 11.66 | 14.13 | 10.6 | 1.1 | 2.67 | 1.89 |
| | 2010 | 14.23 | 11.73 | 4.04 | 10.7 | 1.1 | 0.76 | 1.21 |
| | 2017 | 13.76 | 11.8 | 5.25 | 10.84 | 1.1 | 0.97 | 1.17 |
| B | 1976 | 26.1 | 11.5 | 9.69 | 12.24 | 0.94 | 1.58 | 2.27 |
| | 1987 | 24.23 | 11.49 | 8.73 | 11.98 | 0.96 | 1.46 | 2.11 |
| | 1994 | 16.01 | 11.61 | 8.82 | 12.04 | 0.96 | 1.46 | 1.38 |
| | 2005 | 22.32 | 12.32 | 10.96 | 12.2 | 1.01 | 1.8 | 1.81 |
| | 2010 | 21.29 | 11.21 | 12.67 | 12.7 | 0.9 | 2.01 | 1.9 |
| | 2017 | 17.5 | 11.53 | 7.4 | 12.23 | 0.94 | 1.21 | 1.52 |
| C | 1976 | 19.71 | 14.84 | 6.69 | 10.9 | 1.36 | 1.23 | 1.33 |
| | 1987 | 15.34 | 15.34 | 1.65 | 11.29 | 1.36 | 0.29 | 1 |
| | 1994 | 13.98 | 13.98 | 7.6 | 10.81 | 1.29 | 1.4 | 0.98 |
| | 2005 | 14.82 | 14.82 | 5.75 | 11.26 | 1.32 | 1.02 | 0.96 |
| | 2010 | 15.51 | 15.51 | 4.68 | 10.52 | 1.47 | 0.89 | 1 |
| | 2017 | 15.46 | 15.46 | 6.77 | 10.46 | 1.48 | 1.29 | 1 |

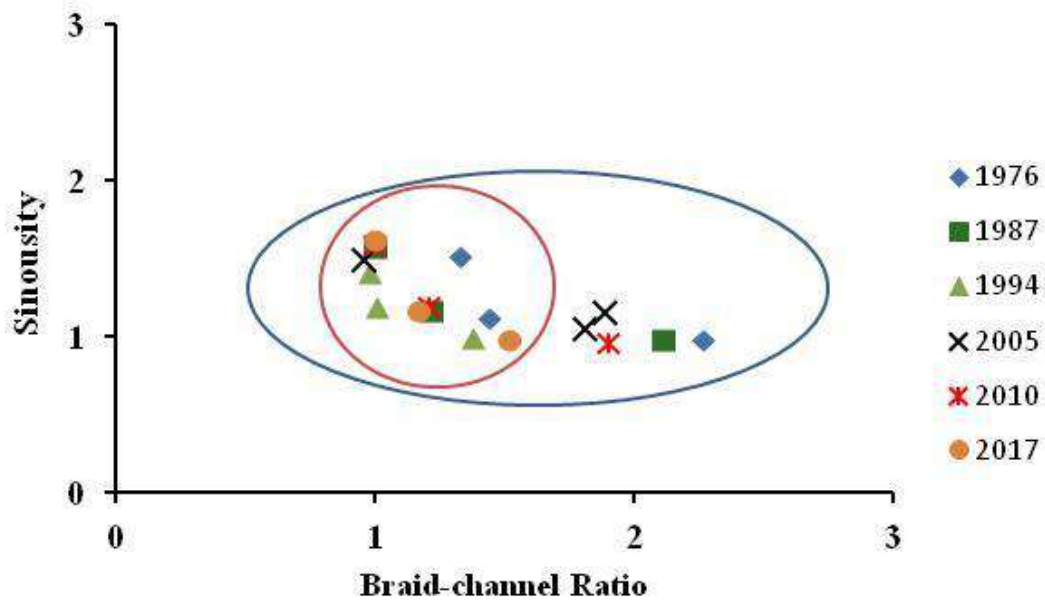


Figure 5 Temporal variability of Sinuosity (B) and Braid-channel Ratio (P) of River Chel.

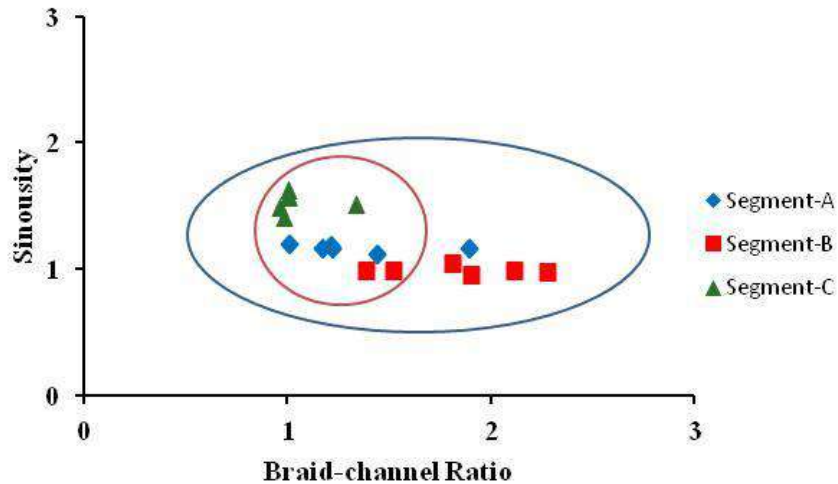


Figure 6 - Reach- wise temporal variability of Sinuosity (B) and Braid-channel Ratio (P) of River Chel.

Table 3 Temporal variation in Sinuosity and Braiding Index values of entire study reach from 1976-2017 (values in the parentheses indicate percentage change from previous year).

| Year | Sinuosity Index | Braiding Index |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1976 | 1.12 | 1.46 |
| 1987 | 1.14 (+1.8%) | 1.03 (-29.5%) |
| 1994 | 1.12 (-1.8%) | 1.5 (+45.63%) |
| 2005 | 1.14(+1.8%) | 1.83 (+22%) |
| 2010 | 1.16(+1.8%) | 1.22 (-33.33%) |
| 2017 | 1.17 (+0.9%) | 1.16 (-4.92%) |
| Overall %age change | (+4.5%) | (-20.6%) |

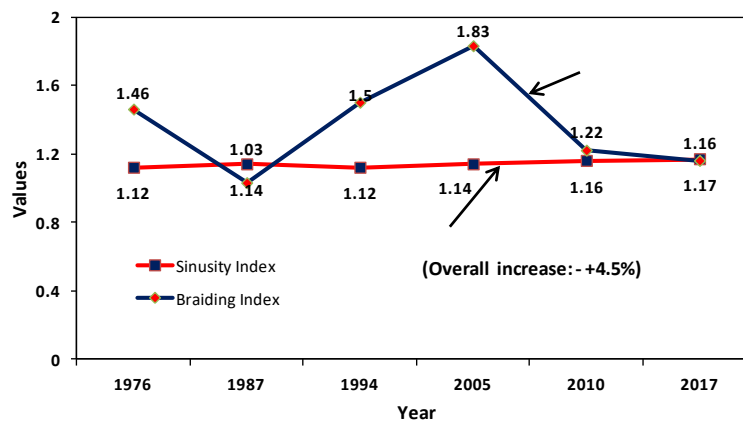


Figure 7 Variation in Sinuosity Index and Braiding Index values from 1976 to 2017 in the Chel River.

5. Conclusion

The present paper considerably establishes the fact that Chel River has undergone various phases of planform changes during the assessment period of 41 years from 1976-2017. The significant changes observed were decreasing sinuosity and braiding intensity. The study suggests that, the Chel River is gradually transforming itself from a braided channel to a straight one. Further reach- B is the most braided reach followed by reach-A and reach-C. Segment-C has always been a near straight reach throughout the assessment period of 41 years.

Conflicts of interest: there are no conflicts to declare.

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Bel Bibaha: Preserving Newar Heritage through the Ihi Ceremony in Darjeeling

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Abstract

The towns of the Darjeeling hills have long been inhabited by communities of Nepali descent, including the *Bahun*, *Chhetri*, *Newar*, *Mangar*, *Rai*, *Gurung*, *Tamang*, and others. Although united by a shared Nepali language and the region's broader cultural fabric, each clan maintains its own distinct dialect, customs, and cultural identity. Amongst them, the *Newars* are a culturally complex group speaking Nepali (Indo-Aryan) and Newari (Tibeto-Burmese), though in Darjeeling most use Nepali as the lingua franca. Anthropologically, they represent a mixed ancestry of Mongoloid, Australoid, and Aryan lineages. The Newar community upholds a singular tradition known as *Bel Bibaha* or *Ihi* (marriage in the Newari language), in which preadolescent girls are ceremonially wed to the bel fruit (wood apple). Unlike conventional wedlock, which binds a woman to a human partner, *Ihi* is regarded as a sacred marriage to the divine, who is immortal. Traditionally, the ceremony was marked by elaborate rituals and meticulous observances, yet in contemporary times it has been considerably simplified to accommodate the fast-paced and demanding lifestyle of modern *Newars*. This paper aims to explore the institution of *Bel Bibaha*, trace its divine and historical origins, and examine both the original ceremonial practices and the transformations that have reshaped the celebration of *Ihi* among the *Newars* of Darjeeling today.

Keywords : *Newars, Ihi, Bel Bibaha, preadolescent, belfruit, non-sacramental.*

INTRODUCTION

Darjeeling district in West Bengal is predominantly inhabited by people of Nepalese descent, who constitute nearly half of its population. This diverse group includes communities such as the *Bahun*, *Chhetri*, *Newar*, *Mangar*, *Rai*, *Limbu*, *Gurung*, *Tamang* etc. Though united by the region's cultural fabric and a shared Nepali language, each clan preserves its own distinct dialect, traditional customs, and cultural identity. Likewise, the *Newar* community of Darjeeling upholds a unique tradition called *Bel Bibaha* or *Ihi* (marriage in Newari language),

wherein preadolescent girls are ceremonially wed to the *bel* fruitⁱ (wood apple), symbolizing an eternal and auspicious union that transcends mortal marriage. No other community in the world is found to follow this custom in respect of their daughters. This ritual aligns with the Hindu Brahmanical ideal solely in its emphasis on a pre-menstrual and virginal child bride, who, after undergoing the *Ihi* ceremony, is granted the status of an adult within societyⁱⁱ.

Culturally and linguistically, the *Newars* represent a complex group, speaking both Nepali and *Newari*, which belong to the Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burmese language families, respectively. The *Newars* of Darjeeling mostly speak Nepali, as Nepali is the lingua franca in Darjeeling, very few of the *Newars* can speak *Newari* language. Within the Newar community exist numerous castes such as *Bajracharya*, *Sakya*, *Rajopadhyaya*, and *Shrestha*, each with its own subdivisions; for instance, the *Shrestha* caste is further distinguished into subcaste such as *Pradhan*, *Joshi*, *Malla*, and *Rajbhandari*. It is believed that the *Newars* are a racially mixed community, with Mongoloid, Australoid and Aryan ancestry. Religiously diverse, the *Newars* are divided between followers of Hinduism and Buddhism with a growing presence of *Newar* Christians in recent times. Originally, however, the community was predominantly Buddhist. With the gradual penetration of Hinduism into *Newar* society, a division emerged over time. Yet, what makes this duality unique is the difficulty of drawing a clear line between the two traditions as practiced by the *Newars*. Hindu deities such as Lord Ganesha and Lord Vishnu are frequently enshrined in Buddhist temples, just as images of the Buddha are commonly found in Hindu shrines. Despite this intermingling of traditions, Buddhist *Newars* generally identify themselves as *Buddhamargi*, whereas Hindu *Newars* identify themselves as *Shivamargi*ⁱⁱⁱ.

Bel Bibaha or Ihi

The *Newars* of Darjeeling follow a path of rituals beginning from birth to death, which is distinct from the other Nepali community^{iv}. One such ritual is the *Bel Bibaha or Ihi* ceremony i.e. mock marriage ceremony which is performed before puberty and at the odd age of 5, 7, 9 or 11. The reason behind the odd ages of the girl is related to the nature and gods, such as the number 5 is related to the five elements of the nature- Wind, Water, Fire, Earth, and Sky. The number 7 is related to the Rainbow. The number 9 is related to Brahma Sankhya, and the number 11 is related to Lord Shiva^v. In this ceremony the *Newar* virgin girl ties a marital knot with the *bel* fruit i.e. wood apple. There is a Religious as well as Scientific

reason for the use of wood apple fruit for the ceremony. The Scientific reason for the use of wood apple fruit is that the fruit does not easily rot and hence, it can be preserved for the longer time. The religious reason is that the fruit wood apple is associated with the Lord Shiva. *Ihi* is taken to mean with God *Suvarna Kumar*, who is immortal and son of Lord Shiva. Hence forth the fruit wood apple is seen as an image of the deity and is taken for a witness to the marriage and not in itself an object with which the marriage is performed^{vi}. So, *Belfruit* (wood apple) is considered as the symbolic form of their future husband in *Ihi* ritual. “The girls married to the bel are instructed to nurture and protect it, as the enduring vitality of the *bel* symbolizes the longevity of their future husband. Thus, safeguarding the *bel* becomes one of their foremost responsibilities.”

This traditional marriage ritual is regarded as the most sacred ceremony within the *Newar* community. The *Ihi* ceremony is considered a vital rite of passage, deemed obligatory for every *Newari* girl. The ceremony is looked upon with high veneration by the *Newars*. It is regarded as the most strenuous and sacred of all the other rituals. The ceremony is officiated by a *Gobaju* priest for Buddhist *Newars* and a *Deobaju* priest for Hindu *Newars*. The *Gobaju*(*Bajracharya*) does not have to be a Buddhist priest by birth but is eligible if he is able to function as such through rigorous training and religious initiation.

One of the most striking aspects of contemporary *Newar* society is its unique and intricate fusion of Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions. The rites and rituals associated with the *Ihi* ceremony closely resemble those of an actual marriage. Among the *Newar* community, it is a long-standing tradition for girls to undergo three symbolic marriages over the course of their lives. The first, known as *Ihi*, is a ritual in which the girl is ceremonially married to a Bel fruit symbolizing an eternal, divine union. The *Newari* girls prior to their *Ihi* can consume the *belfruit* but once the *Ihi* is completed then eating this bel fruit is a taboo^{vii}. The second, called *Baraha*, involves a spiritual marriage to the Sun God, signifying a rite of passage into womanhood and spiritual purity. The final marriage is to a human partner, marking the conventional union recognized in society. In *Newar* community *Ihi* ceremony is seen as the first marriage that leaves the real marriage, i.e, with a human in a secondary position. It is the ground on which the marriage of a girl with her social husband is not recognized as a sacrament since the ceremony of *Ihi* is taken to mean with God *Suvarna Kumar*, who is immortal and therefore the girl does not endure the stigma of widowhood, after her husband's death^{viii}. The ceremony of *Ihi* is performed both collectively and individually.

The performance of *Ihi* grants a *Newar* girl the right to remarry, and consequently, she is also permitted to divorce if circumstances demand. In this way, the ritual theoretically creates a society without widows, thereby eliminating the stigma traditionally associated with widowhood or singlehood. A *Newar* girl, upon undergoing the ceremony, is recognized as an adult member of the community and is henceforth entitled to participate in family rituals. Since the ceremony is conducted prior to puberty, it serves as a symbolic initiation into the physical and psychological transformations associated with adolescence. During *baraha*, the elderly women of the household impart knowledge regarding menstruation and the bodily changes that accompany it, while simultaneously preparing the girl for the social responsibilities that await her.

Divine Narratives and historical reasons behind the Genesis of Ihi

Regarding the genesis of *Ihi*, there is a popular legend on the marriage of Mahadev (Shiva) and Sati Devi which is steeped in divine intrigue and symbolic meaning. Sati, the eldest of *Daksha Prajapati's* 33 koti daughters, was initially withheld from marriage to protect the family's wealth, as the rest had been wed to 33 koti gods. When Mahadev requested Sati's hand, Daksha not only rejected him but also insulted and expelled him, deeming him unworthy. Undeterred, Mahadev sought Vishnu's help. To uphold Mahadev's dignity, Vishnu cleverly secured *Daksha's* reluctant consent by first extracting a promise in exchange for an undisclosed request, which turned out to be Sati's hand in marriage. At the engagement, Mahadev appeared disguised as an old ascetic, and through Vishnu's subtle intervention, Sati was gracefully handed over to Shiva. Thus, with Vishnu's strategic aid, the divine union of Shiva and Sati was solemnized. After Sati's self-immolation, she was reborn as Parvati, daughter of the Himalayas, and through intense penance and Vishnu's guidance, she was finally united and married to Mahadev^{ix}. Their divine union, facilitated by Vishnu, is celebrated even today, symbolically preserved through the *Newar* tradition of young girls marrying the sacred *Bel fruit*, representing Vishnu^x.

Another legend from *Bhaktapur* recounts the origin of the *Ihi* ceremony, attributing its inception to the compassionate intervention of the goddess Parvati on behalf of the women of Nepal, particularly widows. According to the legend, Parvati was once walking through the Kathmandu Valley when she came upon an elderly woman in tears. Moved by the depth of her sorrow, Parvati asked the reason for her grief, to which the woman replied that her

husband had passed away. Deeply sympathetic, Parvati appealed to her husband, Lord Shiva, requesting a way to spare *Newar* women from the suffering of widowhood^{xi}. In response, Shiva ordained that *Newar* girls would be symbolically married to the *bel* fruit (wood apple) which represents the deity *Suvarna Kumar*. He declared that by being wedded to a divine and immortal consort, a *Newar* woman would never be considered a widow, even after the death of her human husband. Thus, the *Ihi* ceremony was established.

The ritual practice of *Ihi* is deeply rooted in both mythology and historical context. One widely accepted origin traces back to the Rana regime, a period during which the dignity of *Newar* girls faced grave threats. The Ranas and their men were notorious for casting lecherous gazes upon young girls, instilling fear within the community. In response, the *Newars* devised a protective custom: marrying their daughters to the *bel* fruit (wood apple), a sacred object symbolizing divinity and purity. The *bel* fruit was deliberately chosen not only for its spiritual significance but also because it typically grows singly, reinforcing its sanctity. At that time, the Ranas upheld a cultural tradition of respecting married women and refraining from harming them. Moreover, the religious dimension of the *bel* marriage, being a symbolic union with a deity, discouraged the Ranas from interfering^{xii}. This ingenious strategy preserved the honor of *Newar* girls and safeguarded future generations. As a result, the practice endured, later evolving into a revered symbolic tradition within the community.

Another origin tale of *Ihi* dates back to the fourteenth century, during a violent incursion led by Shams-ud-din Ilyas, a warlord from Bengal^{xiii}. His forces ravaged the region, burning palaces, desecrating temples, and committing atrocities, including the killing of men and boys and the violation of young girls. Notably, however, married women were largely spared. This harrowing event led to the belief that marrying prepubescent girls to divine figures could shield them from dishonor in the face of future invasions. Thus, the custom of *Ihi* emerged as a protective spiritual rite, offering both sanctity and security to *Newar* girls.

Some scholars assert that the tradition of *Ihi* marriage emerged as a means to counter the cruel practice of Sati. Since a girl married through the *Ihi* ceremony is symbolically wedded to an immortal deity, she is never regarded as a widow. Consequently, she is exempt from the tragic fate of self-immolation on her mortal husband's funeral pyre.

According to the Brahmin priest Dahal, the origin of *Ihi* marriage can be traced back to the era of the *Malla* kings in Nepal. He attributes its inception to a religious doctrine known as *Le*

Kanvadana. As per Vedic traditions, Kanyadana, the ceremonial offering of a daughter in marriage, is considered most auspicious when the girl is between the ages of 7 and 10. The act of Kanyadana is intrinsically tied to the concepts of Paap (sin) and Punya (virtue). Failing to perform Kanyadana, according to this belief, results in spiritual transgression for the father, while fulfilling it earns him divine merit^{xiv}.

Regardless of its origins, the tradition of *Bel Bibaha* or *Ihi* serves as a cultural safeguard, aiming to preserve the purity and uphold the social dignity of *Newar* girls.

The early customary practices of Ihi

Once the date of the *Bel Bibaha* is determined by a Brahmin, after consulting the pre-pubescent girl's horoscope, the preparatory rites commence three days prior. On the appointed evening, the girl is ceremonially secluded in a *gufa*(*baraha*) at an auspicious hour and later brought out at another propitious moment. The Nepali Brahmin-Chettri community also observes a Menarche ritual with an individual girl, whereas the *Newar Baraha* ceremony is distinct from the former as it is performed prior to menarche and is observed individually or in groups. The girl is accompanied either by her sibling, cousin or her friend. In the *gufa* or *baraha* ritual the girl undergoes a period of seclusion in a dimly lit, enclosed space, typically a designated room within the house, for a duration of three days. During this period, she must refrain from any interaction with male members of the household and may only engage with female relatives. The space remains completely devoid of sunlight. It is believed that if the girl mischievously peeks out of the room and happens to see a man, her future husband will resemble him for instance, should she see a dumb man, her husband too will be like him. The girl is required to fast throughout the seclusion, breaking her fast only after sunset and upon completion of the day's worship. Even then, her intake is limited to fruits, sweets, and other non-salty foods.

The other presence in the room is a mysterious male ghost called *khya* made of cotton and put up on the wall. The *khya* acts as both protector and disciplinarian to the girls, and the ghost is never seen unless angered^{xv}. Most regard the *khya* as a white *Newari* god who protects the girl in the dark room. The *BarahaKhya*—also known as *KhyaDha*, or identified with figures such as the *Yaksha*, *Gandharva*, or *Devta*—was established to dispel the fear of remaining alone in an enclosed room. Mythology provides no definitive account of its origin, though numerous legends surround it. The ritual may be performed simultaneously for multiple

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daughters within the same household, though tradition prohibits its observance for three daughters of the same mother at once^{xvi}.

The ritual of *Bel Bibaha* is highly elaborate and unfolds over the course of two days. The girls come out of the *gufa* on the auspicious day. On the first day, rituals of worship are conducted for the girls at nearby temples or shrines. Then the ceremony of *Pitrashraddha* is observed, following which the rituals to be performed by the girls commence. The sequence begins with the establishment of a *kalash* and the worship of Lord Ganesha, after which other deities are venerated in succession. At this stage, ritual items such as a ball of raw thread, a knife, a large leaf, a piece of raw turmeric, and betel nut are arranged. When the priest concludes the worship, the girl is bathed and placed at the center of the ritual. Among some *Newar* sects, the girl is encircled one hundred and eight times with sacred yellow thread, a practice known as *KumariSutra*. Instead of this practice, sometimes the girl's head and feet are bound to a stick, and the thread is wound around it one hundred and eight times, with a knife, a piece of turmeric, and a betel nut tied together and suspended^{xvii}.

Following this, the ritual of applying curd-and-rice tika is performed. The girl is then led to worship the Sun God. En route the girl is asked to churn black gram on a stone slab with her feet^{xviii}. Thereafter, the *Kumari Sutra* is removed and placed on a plate, and the Sun God is venerated with incense offerings. Once the Sun Puja concludes, the day's rituals end with the ceremonial distribution of fruits and *chiura* (flat rice). This ritual observance is referred to as *Dusoja Nakegu*.

On the second day, following the girl's daily bath and purification, the *naki* (the eldest female member of the house) welcomes the deities *Ali-dya* and *Inay-dya*. The *Ali-dya* consists of an earthen mound containing rice grains, betel nut, and a coin, surmounted by small flags and adorned with silver eyes. The *Inay-dya* is represented by a water-filled kalash topped with a three-tiered red flag. Both deities are received with the *lasakusa* rite, involving sprinkling water, circling with yellow and black mustard seeds and putting it in fire, applying curd-and-rice tika, fruit offerings, and ritual use of keys and water, before being placed at the fire altar (*yagya-kunda*).

The girl is then brought forward through *lasakusa* rite. After the girl's nails are trimmed with a razor blade and collected by the *nini* (paternal aunt), she bathes and returns back for the rituals. The *sindurarohan* rite follows, in which vermilion (*sindur*) is applied by the *naki* on

the girls parted hair with the stem of the belfruit, and hands over a red sari, a small box of vermilion, and clothing to the bride. She is now dressed in the ceremonial saree, and is adorned with gold ornaments and family heirlooms to exhibit the financial status of the family^{xix}

The priest then resumes the fire ritual, and the girl, seated on her father's lap, is presented with a copper plate bearing the wood apple (*bel*) and a fragment of pure gold, symbolizing the tutelary deities. In the kanyadan rite, her father places grains, sesame, and *kusha* grass in her hand, touches her thumb to the *bel* and gold, while her mother pours milk and water after which the girl is seated on the floor. The *bel*, wrapped with several strands of yellow thread, is ceremonially presented to the girl by her parents which means making the gift of the maiden to the bridegroom (God Narayan), thereby completing the Kanyadan ritual^{xx}. *Goda dhunae* or washing of the feet of the girl is done, by her parents and later by her close relatives. All the girl's relatives gather to witness the ceremony and present her with gifts, money and bestow their blessings upon her.

The priest then ties the *bel* to her hand with sabaigrass rope, after which she circumambulates the fire altar. Thus concludes the *Ihi* ceremony, marking the girl's symbolic marriage to the divine. The day comes to end with a grand feast, and the *Ihi* ritual is carried out with profound enthusiasm. Once the ceremony ends, the *bel* is carefully wrapped in cloth and entrusted to the family elders, who preserve it in a sacred place to safeguard it from harm. Should the *bel* suffer any damage, the girl is thereafter regarded as a widow. In the event of her death before entering into a human marriage, the *bel* is ritually immersed in a river, allowing it to be carried away by the waters.

Recent practices and transformations of Bel Bibaha in Darjeeling Hills

In recent years, intermarriage between *Newars* and other ethnic communities has facilitated the incorporation of cultural practices from other groups, while prompting the gradual abandonment of some of their own elaborate rites. The *Ihi* ritual in Darjeeling is marked by festive joy, with invitations extended beyond kin to include neighbours in the celebration. In contemporary practice, the tradition of printing invitation cards and formally inviting guests has also become customary. Bel Bibaha continues to be conducted either as an individual ceremony, jointly for siblings, or collectively in groups.

For *Bel Bibaha*, the priest determines an auspicious date by consulting the girl's horoscope. On the determined day of *Ihi*, the house is ritually purified by sprinkling Gangajal mixed with gaumutra using sprigs of *titepati* (mugwort)^{xxi}. The girl undergoes ritual bathing and is isolated for twelve minutes for *gufa* or *baraha* ritual, then adorned by the women of the household in a red bridal saree, complemented with gold ornaments and makeup. The girls have to fast and eat only after sunset. A mandap or enclosure is constructed out of banana stems and at the centre is suspended a red square cloth tied to the four corners of the stems.

The ceremony commences with the worship of Lord Ganesha, followed by the recitation of *SivaPatha*. Then, for the Kanyadan ritual the girl worships the fresh *bel fruit* representing *Suvarna Kumar* placed on a plate along with incense, an earthen lamp, and flowers, after which marriage hymns are chanted. After Kanyadan the purohit's daughter takes the bel, and with its twig applies vermilion (sindoor) three times to the bride's hair parting. Following the offering of the bride and the sindoor ritual, the priest places the bel in the bride's hand and secures it with a yellow thread. In this state, the bride circumambulates the sacred fire (yagya), after which the thread is untied. The family members and relatives apply tika to the bride's forehead, and offer money and gifts. The ritual concludes with the showing of the mirror to the bride, signifying the completion of the ceremony, after which a feast is served. *Ihi*, thus functions as a rite of passage into adulthood. Upon completion of the ceremony, a girl is considered an adult, entrusted with familial responsibilities, and permitted to take part in religious rituals.

The most prominent transformation observed in the contemporary days in the *Bel Bibaha* ceremony is the consolidation and simplification of its traditional rites. The rituals of *Ihi* and *Baraha*, have been shortened from three days to now merging into a single day ceremony. The primary reason for this transformation is the changing lifestyle of contemporary hill people of the towns and villages, where people lead busy lives and can no longer afford the leisure to participate in a three day long celebration.

Traditionally, the officiating priests must be either a *Deobaju* or a *Gubaju*. However, owing to the scarcity of *Newar* priests in Darjeeling, the *Ihi* ceremony is often officiated by *Parbatya* Brahmin priests.

During the traditional *Baraha* or *Gufa* ceremony, the symbolic presence of a *Khya* or White Newari god prevailed. However, this practice is largely absent in the contemporary observance of the *Bel Bibaha* ritual among *Newars* of Darjeeling.

Since *Baraha* is now often performed merely for formality, lasting no more than twelve minutes or, in some cases, being omitted altogether, the knowledge traditionally imparted by elderly women regarding menstruation and bodily changes is largely absent in contemporary practice.

Originally, following the *Ihi* ceremony, marriage to a mortal man was regarded as secondary, since the girl was already symbolically wedded to the divine figure, *Suvarna Kumar*. Consequently, women were not considered widows upon the death of their husbands, nor were they required to don the traditional white sari of widowhood. In practice, however, the loss of a husband is deeply felt as a profound bereavement for both the woman and her family^{xxii}. In such circumstances, the significance of *Ihi* appears to have diminished in contemporary society, a stark contrast to its profound relevance in earlier times.

Conclusion

The ritual of *Ihi*, or *Bel Bibaha*, is a distinctive cultural practice unique to the Newar community which sets them apart from the dominant Brahmin-Chettri culture among Nepali speaking populations. Historically, it offered *Newar* women higher social standing at a time when oppressive practices like sati and child marriage were widespread. In Darjeeling, the ritual continues to be performed with reverence. In today's Darjeeling hills, where communities seek to assert their cultural identities, the *Newars* exemplify how tradition can be preserved and celebrated. Although its practice has changed over time and lost some of its earlier importance, it still remains a meaningful symbol of identity and heritage for *Newars* in Darjeeling today.

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ⁱ Gautam Dr. Rajesh & Thapa-Magar Ashoke K, 1994, Tribal Ethnography of Nepal Vol II, Book Faith India, p123-124. The bel is selected from a healthy belpatra (Aegle Mazmelos) tree found

growing at about 1200 1300 meters above sea level in the Himalayan region. A bel fruit is roundish and greyish is colour when raw, but turns yellowish on ripening. It has a hard outer coat which is like the shell of a coconut. The inside of the bel is orange in colour and fibrous and of course sweet, therefore it is sought after as an edible fruit.

ⁱⁱ Interview with Gobaju Alankar Bajracharya at his residence in Upper Dumaram, Kurseong on 25th July 2025.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pradhan Bhaichandra, 1997, Newar Jati, Mani Printing Press ,Kalimpong.p7-8

^{iv} TuladharPrem Shanti and team,2011, Newar Jati koChinari. Adivasi janajatiUthanRashtriyaPratisthan, Nepal.p65.

^v Pradhan Surendra Mani, Dynamics of Ehi ceremony among the Newars of District Darjeeling, Sikkim University,2018,p30. Number 11 is related to Lord Shiva through his 11 Rudra forms (EkadashaRudras), which are divine manifestations of Shiva born to help the gods against demons.

^{vi} The Newars, Compiled by All India Newar Sangathan, Central Committee, Darjeeling.p10.

^{vii} op.cit.Interview with GobajuAlankarBajracharya.

^{viii} Mangar Ritu, Bel Bibaha Among the Newars and its Social Significance. Social Trends, Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University,2019, Vol 6, chapter 16.p223.

^{ix} Dev Jayanta, 1573,Shri SwasthaniVrata Katha DurgaSahityaBhandar, Varanasi, ,p114-133.

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^{xi} Kunreuther Laura, Newar Traditions in a Changing Culture: An Analysis of Two Pre-Pubescent Rituals for Girls, Anthropology of Nepal Peoples, Problems and Processes, Edited by Michael Allen, Kathmandu, 1992,p341.

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^{xiii} MaitiProvatusu, 2000, Medieval India, Calcutta, ,p286. In 1346 Ilyas Shah marched northward to the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal. His earlier conquest of Trihut or Mithila was a stepping stone to his invasion of Nepal. It was a sort of punitive and plundering expedition to warn the hill tribes to keep off the plains of North Bengal. Very often they used to come down and plundered the villages of North Bengal. Ilyas Shah plundered Kathmandu and gathered huge booty. He destroyed the holy temple of Pasupatinath not out of bigotry but as a political and military warning to the people of Nepal.

^{xiv} op.cit, Pradhan Surendra Mani, p34.

^{xv} op.cit. Kunreuther Laura, p343.

^{xvi} op.cit, Dukpa Sangay Doma,p66.

^{xvii} JanmaDekhiSijayas Samna koSanskarPadhati, 2002,Bharatiya Newar Sangathan, Darjeeling,p19.

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^{xix} op.cit,Gautam Dr Rajesh &Thapa-Magar Ashoke K,p124.

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Indian Origin Nepalese in Nepal-Terai: Discriminations and Disparities

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Abstract

The sub-Himalayan tract of Nepal, which is surrounded by the Himalaya, is the neighboring country of India, has been getting a special place in the headlines of print and electronic media for the last few decades. As a result of the Treaty of Sagauli between the British and the Nepal in 1816, the Nepal-Terai region of the Mauryan period became a part of the Nepal forever. The Terai region of Nepal was historically a part of greater India. An important point is that 60 percent of the residents of the Terai region of Nepal are of Indian origin or Madhesi. Different groups of these Madhesis have raised different political demands. Some have demanded an independent state, some have demanded greater autonomy, and some have demanded equality with the Nepalese of the Kathmandu Valley. The discriminations against Nepalese of Indian origin are - firstly, the refusal to recruit Madheshis in the Royal Army of Nepal. Secondly, the indifferent attitude of the Nepal administration to grant citizenship to people of Indian origin. Thirdly, the appointment of people of Indian origin to high administrative positions in the royal government is very insignificant in proportion to the population. Madheshis were not represented in the Nepalee parliament in proportion to the population. The Indian-origin people of Nepal, who were victims of various ethnic and linguistic discriminations, developed various political movements through various organizations, sometimes peacefully and sometimes through armed movements. Since the establishment of the Republic of Nepal, various political parties in Nepal have made various promises to solve these problems of the Madhesis, but they have remained unresolved. That is why there are various movements and unrest related to this problem even today.

Keywords: - Territory, Indian-origin, Terai, Political discrimination, Republic, Protest.

The sub-Himalayan tract of Nepal, which is surrounded by the Himalaya, is the neighboring country of India. As a rich civilization her links more deep rooted to Indian civilization than political and other interactions. This sub-Himalayan tract of Nepal become a headline and burning issue in the printed and electronics media from last decade, particularly after the

abolition of monarchy in Nepal. Though, in this respect the Maoist and Communists of Nepal have been getting importance. Because Maoists are in the front rank against the monarchical system of Nepal; other political parties have engaged themselves in the thinking of Parliamentary Democracy, Republican state, and Constitutional Monarchy etc. Along with these political concepts, ethnic essence also rose among themselves. Regarding this kind of thinking, it can be said without any hesitation that, there is not any concept of these kind of thinking among the outsiders of Nepal. Actually in the Monarchical system king or emperor would be the ultimate authority and the Maoists of Nepal are in against of monarchical system that is why they have become prominent equally in the media. As a result, in front of these two main stream ideological group, the lesser important groups are in some backward condition. In this respect, it can be said by quoting elderly journalist Sunanda Dutta Roy that, “..... Nepalese society remains extra ordinary diverse for the country’s site.”¹ His comment is appropriate. It can be remembered that Prithwi Narayan Shah had given the birth of modern Nepal in 1767² by uniting 60 separate tracts. Within this newly created state of Nepal, there was civilized Newar state, along with that, Bijaypur state of the oldest civilization of the Kirat tribe also. There was situated the birth place of Gautam Buddha, Kapilabastu also. Though, Kapilabastu have got the acquaintance as ‘Terai’ later. This Terai region was part of the territory of Mauryan emperor Great Ashoka. The army of Kirat or Kichak king of that region defeated the king Preethu of Jalpaiguri region and taken possession of his empire. All these incidents were before the advent of Prithwi Narayan Shah.

However, after few time sequence the military forces of Prithwi Narayan Shah established their base in ashore to the river Mahananda acrossing the river Mechi of Nepal. This incident has several historical evidence, along with this there is several evidence of folk and oral history, regarding this issue. As an example we can say about the name of the place of Mechi-Mahananda region. The name of the region of Gangaram of Darjeeling district of West Bengal had come from the name of Gangaram Thapa, who was the Commander-in-chief of Prithwi Narayan. The English had stopped the wheel of expansion of Prithwi Narayan and compelled him to return back to other side of the river Mechi. All these incidents were took its place in between 1767 to 1814. The tensions which were created in between 1814 to 1816 during the time of Anglo-Nepal war, was solved by the treaty of Sagauli.³ After this treaty there were not any clashes in between English East India Company and British-India with the state of Nepal. But

this long term peace pact was losing for India. Because, with the treaty of Sagauli, the Nepal-Terai region of previous Mauryan Empire has become a part of the state of Nepal forever. No one has raised their voice about this in contemporary period as also later on. Reason behind this silent attitude is Indians did think the state of Nepal as a separate country never. Along with that, no one had raised their voice in the context of Mauryan Empire that the Terai region of Nepal was a part of larger India historically. Another important matter is that 60% population of Terai region of Nepal is Indian origin. It is to be mentioned that Madheshis or Indian origin constitutes about 48 percent of the country's population of Nepal.⁴ Actually religious factor is an important issue regarding this silenceness. But question is arising regarding the handover of Terai region. Several demands have arisen by several groups. Some of them said that, they want an independent state, some are demanding greater autonomy, and few are demanding equal rights with the people of Kathmandu Valley or Nepalese. So it is clear that the Indian origins Nepalese are second class citizen in Nepal. Now an attempt will make to discuss about the struggle of equal political rights by the Indian origin Nepalese. Before discussion about it, discussion will make on naming of Terai region and its geographical location.

The term 'Terai' derived from Farsi language. It means damp land or low land region. It can be said from literally aspects that the term 'Terai' was prevailed in Muslim period. Then one question comes to our mind that before the name of Terai, what was the name of that region? But history is silent in this context. Though it is to be remembered that the region of sub-Himalayan tract is called as 'Terai. As a result of that Terai is in the territory of Uttar Pradesh, as well as in Nepal and in Darjeeling district of West Bengal also. Actually the term Terai is a geographical term. This is called same in Nepal. The administrative identity of this Terai region of Nepal is Morang. The local inhabitants of that region also called this region as Morang. Morang district is one of 14 districts of province no. 1 of Eastern Nepal.⁵ There are divisions in the region of Morang. These are, Eastern Morang, Western Morang. The area which is situated in between the river Mahananda of Siliguri, West Bengal and the Mechi river of Nepal is called as Eastern Morang region. Once a time these region of Eastern Morang was part of Raikat imperial family of Baikunthapur, during that time several Koch-Rajbanshi families had settled there. The superior landlord of that region was Jitpal Mallick. But there is few debate that, he belonged to Koch-Rajbanshi or to Dhimal? Because in this said region large number of Dhimal community resided, whose title is Mallick. It is assured that this title was assigned to them as reward. This is

administrative title. This Mallick title holders Rajbanshi community is in Doars of Jalpaiguri district also. It is known that this title was assigned by the state of Bhutan.

There is evidence in Mathbhanga of Cooch Behar that the area of Eastern Morang was governed by Cooch Behar or by Raikats of Baikunthapur. It is to be mentioned that a Maharaja of Cooch Behar had married a princess of Morang. Few people of Morang had come with this princess to assists or given company to her. These people of Morang did not return to Morang. That is why there is Morangiya people inhabited Morangiya Para in Mathabhanga till now. There is mention about the Morangiya people in Koch Behar District Gazetteers also.⁶ The state of Nepal is divided into 14 administrative zone or division. The Morang area is also a division. There are eight districts within this division. The name of this administrative division is Mechi. Jhapa and Morang these two is important district of this Mechi division. The total number of district of Terai region 22.⁷ This Nepal-Terai is geographically better called as South Nepal.

The relation between India and Nepal is of ever. Nature and geography are determinant of this relation. In this respect former Governor of West Bengal. T. V. Rajeswar written that, “Nature and geography had since the dawn of history bound Nepal and India as close knit..... Even within Nepal, the Western and Eastern parts more easily accessible from India than Kathmandu.”⁸ It is to be noted that, the border in between India and Nepal is 1758 kms,⁹ among it 700 kms with state of Bihar, 100 kms with West Bengal and rest with Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim. But an interesting issue is that the effect of India-Nepal border and India-Nepal relation is hampering only West Bengal not the other states. That means the Nepalese of Nepal is choosing West Bengal specially the northern part of West Bengal (Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri mainly) in comparison to other states, for their living and for occupation. Though they are residing in other states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand etc. but their number in these states is so poor in comparison to the total population of these states. They do not get permission to settle in Sikkim. Another important thing is that the Indian origins who lived in Nepal-Terai, among them the number of Bengalis (Rajbanshi) is so poor. Anyway for all these problems of open Indo-Nepal border, Indo-Nepal relation, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal suffering mostly. Once a time, Assam also suffered these types of problems. But the movement of All Assam Students Union (A.A.S.U.), the movement of Khasi-Garo students of Meghalaya had changed the situation of that area in some respects. At this moment the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal are only suffering for Indo-Nepal

peace relation. Anyway this is not our issue, let us describe about the main issue of our discussion.

The Nepal-Terai region is consisted with Jhapa, Ilam, Morang, Biratnagar etc. districts. In this area apart from Indian origins there are Kirat, Limbu etc. ethnic group also. The Indian origins are called as 'Madheshis'. Among them there are Yadav, Kurmi, Mahata, Rajbanshi-Kshatriyas and several other ethnic groups lived there. But the term 'Madheshi' used by the Nepalese of Kathmandu valleys to identify the Indian origin Nepalese. But this term is used by themselves as negligence to the Indian origins. An eminent scholar about Nepal and also journalist-writer Paramananda rightly wrote that, "The problems of the people of Indian origin or Madheshis as they are disparagingly called in Nepal....."¹⁰ Sri Gautam Roy, journalist-writer mentioned that, the Paharia community of Nepal thinks Madheshis as infamy in response to their Nepali egotism. Though there is few thought that they are called as Madheshis as because they lived in 'Madhya Desha' or Pali and Majjhim Desha (middle of state) region. This Madhya Desha area is the Terai region in between the Nepal region in the north to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in the south. During the time of foundation of constitutional democracy in Nepal, these Indian origin residents of Nepal had formed a political party which called as Nepal Sadbhawana Party. This political party was founded in 1985, as the Nepal Sadbhawana Council by Gajendra Narayan Singh, which was turned later into Nepal Sadbhawana Party. In domestic affairs, it aimed at promoting the interests and citizenship of the Madheshi community of Terai region.¹¹ Gajendra Narayan Singh was elected from that political party. He belongs from Rajbanshi community. In spite of these, the discriminative attitude of the Imperial Government of Nepal towards Indian origins did not decrease. The Madheshi community's main grievance is that Indian origins of Nepal are living as second class citizen in Nepal. Renowned writer, Professor Dr. Dipti Tripathi had written about the discriminative attitude of Imperial Government of Nepal towards the people of Terai region that, there was restrictions' regarding the entrance of people of Terai to Kathmandu town. If anyone of Terai region wants to enter in Kathmandu, that person had to take permission from Magistrate. Apart from this, that person should be searched.¹² Though, these incidents are of past Nepal. The grievances of discrimination of present days are of several types.

Firstly, Indian origins were not recruited in imperial military forces of Nepal. Secondly, the administrations of Nepal were indifferent towards Indian origins in respect to give citizenship. Thirdly, in the higher administrative posts of State Government of Nepal the recruitment rate of

Indian origins is very poor in comparison to their total count. In the Parliament of Nepal, there were not representatives of Indian origins in respect to population rate. In Terai region there is lived 40% population of Nepal. Among them only one-fourth people represented in the electorate system. This discriminative attitude can be measured in this way that, in the National Panchayet Election, there was elected one candidate from the Hilly district of Mapang, which consisted of 10,000 population, but in comparison with that in Dhanusha district and in Saptari district of Terai region which consisted of 3,30,601 and 3,12,565 people respectively, they had sent only two representatives from each districts.¹³ This incident looks like the instance of former East Pakistan and West Pakistan. There was also discriminative system that, in spite of more population in East Pakistan there was equal representatives from each part of the state in the parliament of Pakistan. But this is not fare. There is similar situation in Nepal also. Above all Hindi is mother language of the maximum people of Nepal-Terai region. But Government of Nepal did not have given Hindi language as the status of Government language. After so many movements Government of Nepal compelled to give Hindi as the status of Government language. More or less every political parties of Nepal had showed negative attitude in respect the solution of the grievances of Madheshis. The young generation of Indian origins of Nepal-Terai supported the Maoists. But they did not get any positive news from them regarding elimination of those discriminations. In this situation so many radical groups formed in Nepal-Terai region. All these groups is prohibited and banned. Among them four main armed groups are Madhesh Mukti Tigers, Terai Kobra, Sanjukta Terai Mukti Morcha, Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha they were active for long time.¹⁴ Apart from these, the parliamentary parties are Madheshi Janadhikar (Peoples Rights) Forum, Terai Madhesh Loktantrik (Democratic) Party, and Nepal Sadbhawana Party etc. Last one is comparatively primitive political party. Terai Madhesh Loktantrik (Democratic) Party was formed in 2005, Madheshi Janadhikar (Peoples Rights) Forum also formed in same year. But this political party is coalition of few small parties. Most probably Madhesh Janadhikar (Peoples Rights) Forum was elected in most of the seats of Terai region because of this coalition. In the election of Terai region in 2008 the result was come out as:

1. Madheshi Janadhikar (or Peoples Rights) Forum- **30**
2. Terai Madhesh Loktantrik (or Democratic) Party- **09**
3. Nepal Sadbhawana Party- **04**

That means in the parliament out of 240 seats Terai centric 3 parties secured 43 seats. These 3 parties had made an alliance, called United Democratic Madheshi Front. Anyway this Front was formed before the election. It is to be noted that during the time of formation of Government in Nepal the Communist led party Communist Party of Nepal – United Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) called Madheshi parties like Madheshi Janadhikar (Peoples Rights) Forum, Terai Madhesh Loktantrik (Democratic) Party to join a national unity Government under UML. But the Madhesh Janadhikar (Peoples Rights) Forum declared that they would extend support to that party or leadership that would assure them to implement past pacts and address Madheshi issues including the entire Madhesh as single autonomous province.¹⁶ Communist leader Madhab Kumar Nepal was closer to becoming the next Prime Minister with the Nepali Congress and the CPN (UML) alliances set to seal a crucial deal with the Terai based Madheshi parties with a combined strength of 83 seats in the 601 member parliament. At a meeting of 18 parties the Madheshi Front- Madheshi Janadhikar (Peoples Rights) Forum Terai Madhesh Loktantrik (Democratic) Party and Sadbhawana Party extended support to a CPN (UML) led coalition. The Madheshi parties decided to back the CPN (UML) after the CPN (UML), the third largest party in the Constituent Assembly and the main opposition party Nepali Congress, gave a written commitment to address the demands of the Madheshi parties for more economic and political powers, including greater federal autonomy for the Terai plains bordering India.¹⁷

The parliamentary election of Nepal was delayed for three times because of turmoil situations and tensions in Terai region. Radical armed group cum banned group of Terai region such as Terai Tigers, Terai Liberation Force etc. started their movement by kidnapping and killing the Nepali officers of Terai region. Nepal Government had taken strong action against them. Government led security agency had dismantled their bases and either killing or arresting their leaders. They had appointed Armed Police Force personnel in affected areas.¹⁸ Economy of Nepal was disrupted by constant strikes, Hartal, blockage of roads, obstructions in the economy.¹⁹ It is to be remember that Nepal's economy is largely associated with India and it is connected through Terai region. Naturally the economy was in great crisis. During that situation the mission of U.N.O. opined in favor to change the date of election. Anyway Nepal is now Federal Republican state in place of 240 years lasted monarchy. But few questions are raised that, can the Federal Republic of Nepal maintain the unity of Nepal? Because, the monarchical

system had united several groups and regions. The emperor was main force behind this unity. With the absence of that force what will be taken as the responsibility of maintaining unity. Anyway there are few similarities in the demand of Madheshis of Nepal-Terai with the demand of Tamils of Eastern region of Srilanka. In case of Srilanka Tamils are religious minority group, but the Madheshis who are ethnic minority group. We have seen the situation of Srilanka. In Nepal-Terai region a part of Madheshis has taken arms in their hand as the solution of the discrimination towards them. The Maoists had how much possibility to solve these ethnic discriminations, the unity of Federal Democracy is depending largely on it. So no one knows that, in which way the problem of Madheshis might be solved.

But an interesting fact is that, though the Indian origins in Nepal are enjoying second class citizenship, in spite of this the first President and Vice-President of Federal Republic of Nepal elected from Indian origins. They are Sri Rambaran Yadav of Nepali Congress and Sri Parameswar Jha of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum elected as President and Vice-President respectively. No one either Madheshis or Nepalese of Kathmandu valley ever thought that Indian origins would be elected as President and Vice-President of Federal Republic of Nepal. But there were few problems, after the election of Parameswar Jha as Vice-President. Sri Parameswar Jha has taken his oath in Hindi, but there was controversy during that period.²⁰ After lot of controversies and debate a year later Supreme Court has ordered that, he had to take oath in Nepali otherwise he would be removed from the post.²¹ It is to be noted that not only the President and Vice-President were elected from Indian origins, but also Prime Minister of Nepal Madhab Kumar Nepal belongs to Indian origin.²²

Though there are several attempts taken to come to a point of solution of the problem of Madheshis, but it cannot be solved. Till now there are several movements among the Madheshis. Madheshis were organized a demonstration programme of protest outside the British Embassy on 8th December, 2016 after 200 years of the Anglo-Nepalese treaty of 8th December, 1816. In that demonstration they had raised their slogan as “void the treaty- free our land, Madheshis want their land back.”, and “200 years of slavery- now free Madhesh”. This programme was led by the Alliance for Independent Madhesh (AIM) led by C. K. Raut. They have marked the day as a black day in the history of Madhesh. The alliance further demanded entry of Madhesh into the Commonwealth of Nations.²³ So the problem is remained same as earlier. No one knows the fate of the Madheshis.

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The Philosophy of Lalon and Its Implication on Society

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Abstract

It is well known to all of us that, Mahatma Lalon was known as a Socialist and a *Baul* singer. Entire of his life, he was fighting against the unhealthy practices of our society. In this regard, he has written so many songs to awake the peoples. At that time, our society was run by the law of religion. Nobody can arise any questions against the law of religion. By the name of religion, thousands of peoples were humiliated day by day throughout the society. So, Lalon started his movement against these unhealthy practices of Society which was frequently practices in those days. As a *baul* singer he writes so many songs to awake the peoples and tried to understand them to avoid these unhealthy practices of Society, especially of *Brahmanism*. If we going through his writings, we can see that, there are so many songs, which have a moral value. Actually Lalon tried to make a revolution against the prejudices, which have been practices in our society from long time. Not only social revolution but also he tried to solve the Philosophical conflict between the Materialistic and Idealistic views regarding the reality. He tried to connect the both theory in one frame. According to him, through view of materialism we can easily reach the Idealistic view of reality. There is no division about the subject matter of Materialism and Idealism. According to him the *Moner Manus* (Ultimate God) is present in the Materialistic Human Body. Our duty is to realize the *Moner manus* in our own body. Due to ignorance we have avoid the materialistic things and we are always busy to find the *Moner manus* in the Spiritualistic world. So, we can say that the metaphysical concept of Lalon is extremely related with the Vedanta Philosophical concept of *Brahma*. Each and every writings of Lalon's have to teach us the Metaphysical as well as Ethical values.

Introduction:

Lalon Fakir was born on 17th October, 1890 in the village of Kushtia in undivided Bangladesh. He was known not only as a spiritual *Baul* saint, but also as a humanitarian, social reformer and eminent Philosopher. Sometimes he was also known Fakir Lalon, sometimes Lalon Sai, Lalon Shah and Mahatma Lalon etc. Lalon Sai was the lyricist,

composer and singer of numerous songs. It was mainly in the 19th century that the *Baul* *gan* became very popular. He was also known as *Baul Samrat*. In most of his songs, Lalon Sai declared rebellion against discrimination like- religious discrimination, casteism etc. If we going through his writings: we can see that humanism occupies a prominent place in his writings. He composes all his songs from an essentially secular perspective. It is undeniable that his songs and philosophical theories and information deeply influenced thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Allen Ginsberg etc. and also influenced many intellectuals, famous poet writers and philosophers at that time.

Goals of Lalon's life:

Lalon's main goal was to establish humanism in our society. The main objective of Lalon's was to make people aware against these social prejudices. So he tried to bring about the renaissance of humanity and sociality. He said – among all people there lives '*Moner Manus*'. We can find the '*Moner Manus*' only through self-realization. In his writings, he has tried to explain this mindset in very simple terms. He compared '*Moner Manus*' to the '*Achin Pakhi*'. According to him, the pursuit of the materialistic body leads to the discovery of this '*Achin Pakhi*' of prophetic thought. This is called *nirvana*, *moksha* or liberation in *Baul* theory.

Lalon and Philosophy:

We mainly discuss materialism and Idealism as two separate doctrines in western philosophy. In philosophy we often see regular debates between materialism and Idealism. Because the subject matter of Materialism is matter and the subject matter of Idealism is spiritual object. The union of the two is not possible in any way. But Lalon Fakir in his writings built a bridge between the materialist soul and Idealist divine. Basically we also can see many claims against Saiji, that he was a supporter of materialism. Though his songs generally give us the hint like as materialistic thinking, but I think Saiji's main aim is to establish Idealism. He has tried to highlight how to reach from materialism to Idealism in his writings.

It is true that, due to the daily battle of life, people cannot imagine about *Nirvana* or liberation beyond the individualistic thinking. As a result, their narrow thinking admits that, liberation is not possible. Rather practice of Casteism, religion, superstition etc. become more important to them. Lalonji's main aim is to show the way how to get liberation through the practice of self-realization. He wants to teach peoples through songs, how to come out from

the materialistic thinking and immerse oneself in the Supreme Soul. Saiji said that, though the human body (Materialism) and the '*Moner Manus*' (Idealism) are completely separate, but they are related to other. Here we can find the similarity between Saiji's concept of '*Moner Manus*' and the Vedanta concept of '*Brahma*'. We know, according to Vedanta: "*Jiva Brahmaiva Na Para*". That means *Jiva* (materialistic body) and *Brahman* (Idealistic Divine) are identical. The nature of *Brahma* is *Sat*, *Cit* and *Anandam*. Though our body is not *Brahma*, but *Brahma* is present in every living body. The main task of the human being is to realize the knowledge of *Brahma*, which is already present in his/her body. When *Brahma Jnana* is attained, ultimately the human beings attain *Nirvana* or liberation.

So we can say that Vedanta concept of *Brahma* and Saiji's concept of '*Moner Manus*' are essentially the same. Although the human body and mind are completely separate; but all the human bodies are occupied by the mind. *Nirvana* or *Mukti* is known '*Moner Manus*' through self-realization or self-cultivation. According to Saiji, the human soul or mind is mysterious, unknown and untouched entity. Saiji believes that religious dogma, superstition, greed and self-centeredness, prevent people from perusing self realization. As a result the '*Moner Manus*' which is located in the human body are remains unknown to him. Saiji believed that people should be given the knowledge of spirituality for getting *Nirvana* or Liberation. Due to lack of knowledge - we have not followed the right path and always adopt the wrong path. We know that Saiji composed about two thousand songs in his life. The main purpose of his songs was to awaken the thoughts of spirituality in the mind of peoples. In these songs he has to reveal the mystery of human life, humanism and secularism etc. He did not believe the discrimination between peoples. As a Humanist his main focus is people. In his song Lalon equates the Human body with the *Achin Pakhi*:

‘ভেবে অন্ত নাহি দেখি
কার বা খাঁচায় কে-বা পাখি।’

Here the *Khacha* (Cage) means human body and the word *Pakhi* (Bird) means consciousness. What is the noteworthy about the song in question is that, there is some concern express in two stanzas. Because, the *Baul* are generally believed that *Sai*, the master of the universe, has been resided in every human body. But we have to know about the nature and purpose of

him. So, this is the cause of concern of *Baul*. If we go through Lalon's songs, we will see he has mentioned many questions related to reality and existence. He wrote:

‘কে কথা কয়রে দেখা দেয় না
নড়ে চড়ে হাতের কাছে
খুঁজলে জনম-ভর মেলে না।’

Saiji's original philosophy was centered on the body. The main aim of his song was to solve the mystery of catching the elusive. He basically observed and tested the body and mind. He said:

‘আমার এ ঘর খানায় কে বিরাজ করে।
আমি জনম-ভর একদিনও না দেখলাম না রে।।
নড়ে চড়ে ঈশান কোণে
দেখতে পাইনে এ-নয়নে,
হাতের কাছে যার
ভবের হাট বাজার
ধরতে গেলে হাতে পাই না তারে।।’

In this song he arise a question, the mystery of body and mind through music - in the role of a truth seeker. *Baul* present the thoughts of the music or *Bhava* by reading his own body and mind. He basically expressed through music about the philosophy of knowing and understanding the unknown, invisible power correctly and real, pained and shocked. This is an invisible resource for the next *Sadhaka*. He asked:

“খাঁচার ভিতর অঁচিনপাখি
কেমনে আসে যায়?
তারে ধরতে পারলে মনোবেড়ি
দিতেম পাখির পায়—”

He tried to find the answer in this cage of a human body these birds often come and go. But it is out of reach. Catching this bird, that is, realization the knowledge of the bird, is the main task of human life.

Lalon's Songs and it's impact on Society:

On the other hand, if we notes, we will see that Saiji not only provided information on spirituality, but also raised his pen against the superstitions of the social system of that time.

We are all aware that in the 18th century, how society was governed by social prejudices across the country. How by *Brahmanism* every man in the society renounced his own existence – dissolved himself in the arranged path of *Manusmriti*. How racism, racial violence, untouchability, patriarchy etc. are killing the sovereignty of the society can be easily understood by observing the social history of eighteenth and nineteenth century. Saiji raised his pen against these superstitions:

‘জাত গেল জাত গেলে বলে
একি আজব কারখানা— ?
সত্য কাজে কেউ নয় রাজি
ভেবে দেখি তানা না না—’

As much as the society of that time was aware of caste, their role in the discussion of spirituality was not noticeable. So Saiji said in the song in question – we have no focus on true work, but we are more occupied with false Casteism. So he asked:

‘জন্মের আগে কি জাত ছিলে
জন্মেই বা কি জাত পেলে ?
কি জাত হবা যাবার কালে ?
একথাটি ভেবে বলো না—’

Indeed there is no caste before the birth of man, again after his death there is no trace of caste. So why do we concern ourselves with caste only in this short time between birth and death?

In this regard Saiji argued: if we are constantly moving away from the true path and running towards falsehood. If we do not follow the true path, then we will never see ‘*Moner manus*’. Saiji said:

‘সত্য-সুফল না চিনিলে

পাবিনে মানুষের দরশন—
ওরে আমার মন।
সত্য বল, সুপথে চল
ওরে আমার মন।’

The '*Moner Manus*' of Baul Sadhana and the search for the *Pakhi* of pray will be found only when he speaks the truth and follow the right path.

We are very much aware of the Jaina philosophical concept of *Panchamahabrata* and Gandhi's theory of truth. The "*Ahimsha*", "*Satya*", "*Asteya*", "*Brahmacharya*" and "*Aparigraha*" of Jaina Philosophy – refers to the five main goals of human life. The first two of which are *Satya* and *Ahimsa* has been take more important role in Lalon's Philosophy. Which in Lalonji's word are *Satya* and *Sufol*. On the other hand Gandhiji's main mantras in his life were *Truth* and *Non-violence*. Gandhi believed that, man can fulfill his moral and practical wisdom through the constant use of truth and non-violence. According to him "*Truth is God*" and "*God is Truth*". To walk in the true path and always speak the truth is to close oneself in God. So the main *Mantra* for attaining God is the use of truth. Similarly, Saiji also wanted to say in the same tone. According to Saiji to catch the '*Moner Manus*' and Gandhiji's main mantra to get God, is to tell the truth and work on the right path. If the main goal of a *Sadhaka* is to attain God or '*Moner Manus*', then he must follow the true path. It is never possible for people guided by false social prejudices to attain God. Because, through practicing these social prejudices we are practicing the wrong path. God never said about the wrong path, his path is running by *Satya* and *Sufol*. So to love God we have to avoid the Social and religious prejudices of our daily practice.

From the above discussion we can say that Saiji basically showed people a golden path to get out of social prejudices through the knowledge of spirituality. People are deluded and unable to free themselves from social reform and consider everything in the world to be honest and as a result of which various contradictions are being noticed in the society. Saiji believed that if people could be more engaged in spirituality, these social ill would one day be vanished from our society.

Conclusion:

Finally it can be said that although Saiji emphasized the practical side of spiritualism, but his aim was not to established spiritualism, rather he was an outstanding social reformer. He was deeply affected by various social prejudices in his life. We know many great men have come to this world through the ages. If we look deeply, we will see that they all had a purpose of their own. But they are all try to eradicate social prejudices and discriminations in their own way. In the same time we find that – *Satidaha pratha*, *Balya bibaha* (Child Marriage) ,

Casteism etc. have affected the life's of common peoples to such an extent that the society is basically run by blind religious superstitions. People follow these superstitions faithfully. As a result, Saiji has shown the way to save all the people of the society by using spiritualism as a tool to save the society from this social degradation.

It is undeniable that saiji has dominated spiritualism in many of his songs. The reason for such prominence is to increase social awareness. Because, it is not possible to eradicate, the social prejudices, without changing the way of life of people using spiritualism as a tool. Society can be saved only if people are engaged in spiritual thinking. So in my opinion Saiji is as much spiritual as a Social reformer.

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Mādhyamika Refutation of Causation, Motion, Āyatana and Skandhas

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explore some main tenets of Buddhism and their intra-school criticism by the Mādhyamika. In this course, we will present some main theses of Vaibhāṣika–Yogācāra traditions of Buddhism. The issues we will consider are causation, motion, āyatana and skandhas. And then we shall consider Nāgārjuna's refutation of them as they are rendered in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Finally, we will attempt to find a common form of argument that Nāgārjuna employs in his manifold refutations. This paper is an attempt to explore some main tenets of Vaibhāṣika–Yogācāra traditions of Buddhism and Mādhyamika criticism of them.

Key words: Origination, Emptiness, Motion, Skandhas

Introduction:

Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (MMK) is regarded as the foundational text of Mādhyamika philosophy. In this paper, we aim to present some main contentions of Mādhyamika philosophy.

In the mangal-śloka of MMK¹, Nāgārjuna exhibits reverence to lord Buddha and designates him as the perfectly enlightened one, and the best speaker and the one who taught the doctrine of dependent origination. In the same śloka, he continues to say that the doctrine of dependent origination has eight qualities, and it leads to the end of the phenomenal world. Since the phenomenal world is necessarily associated with sorrow, its cessation brings about the end of sorrow. Therefore, the dependent origination brings about the end of sorrow, so it is deemed as the Good or śivam. The eight qualities Nāgārjuna attributes to dependent origination are negative. Dependent origination applies to everything, so all eight qualities are attributed to dependent origination as well as to everything. The eight qualities are as follows: non-momentariness, non-origination, non-destructible, non-eternal, non-singularity, non-plural, non-coming and non-going.

One might wonder if Nāgārjuna is violating the law of excluded middle in attributing to the dependent origination four pairs of opposite qualities. He negates both singularity and plurality, both coming and going, both origination and destruction, and both momentariness and eternity. This causes puzzlement. We are puzzled because we do not at first glance see how to understand this opening verse. The MMK is full of such puzzling verses that violate the law of the excluded middle. There are three different ways in which Nāgārjuna's violation of the law of excluded middle can be interpreted in different ways. First, the orthodox thinkers of Indian philosophy have interpreted it in this way. Dependent origination is an illusion without any existent locus or *adhiṣṭhāna*. The people having a particular eye disease are called *taimirika*; they see hairs in empty space. Similarly, all the things we perceive, including ourselves, are illusory, and that which underlies this illusion is pure non-existence. So when the world-illusion gets removed, there is emptiness or pure non-existence, and that is the state of liberation. Mādhyamika thinkers are not violating the law of excluded middle, because there is no opposition between two ultimately non-existent entities.

Second, western scholars like Mark Siderits and J.L. Garfield would explain the puzzle, as I understand them, as follows.² The motivation behind Nāgārjuna's violation of the law of excluded middle is to show us that all talks about ultimate reality (the reality which is supposed as transcending or underlying the conventional reality) lapses into contradiction; accordingly, the ultimate reality is nonsensical. Liberation is attained when we are free from attachment towards our suppositions of what the ultimately real is like. And these suppositions are deemed as the source of all other attachments, which in turn lead to sorrow. In this view, conventional reality exhausts the whole reality. There is no ultimate reality.

Third is Prof. T.R.V. Murti's interpretation.³ According to him, dependent origination evades the law of the excluded middle. This violation implies the indescribability of the ultimate nature of the entities that dependently originate. Dependent origination is such that discursive thought cannot grasp it. It can only be grasped by *prajñā*. *Prajñā* may be understood as non-conceptual intuition. Grasping dependent origination through intuition results in liberation. The state of liberation is unspeakable. However, when the state of liberation is described as dependent origination, or emptiness, or ultimate reality, etc., we must bear in mind that by imposing concepts, which are only conventionally true, we speak about the unspeakable. The second interpretation depicts the ultimate reality as nonsensical, whereas the third interpretation says that it is unspeakable.

Returning to the mangal-śloka, Prasannapada puts forward a query that many other negative qualities could have been attributed to dependent origination, so what is the reason behind

Nāgārjuna's choosing these eight qualities? Prasannapada answers that Nāgārjuna is going to take up these eight qualities as the subject matter of MMK. Again, these eight qualities are chosen as the subject matter because they are the most disputed issues. In this paper, we aim to discuss some of these disputed issues. Let us begin by exploring the quality of non-origination.

Examination of Causes and Conditions

We will present Nāgārjuna's argument against the origination of things. After the *mangal-śloka*, he takes up the question of why he denies the origination of things.⁴ He puts forward an argument to establish the impossibility of origination. And then goes on to claim that non-origination is also not acceptable.

There are three ways in which any entity may be caused. It may either be self-caused, or it may be caused by something else, i.e, non-self, or it may be caused by both self and non-self. Nāgārjuna denies all these three alternatives and assumes that there is no other way in which it may be caused; and goes on to conclude that any entity whatsoever is not caused. And then seemingly violating the law of excluded middle, he says that an entity is not even uncaused.

An entity cannot be self-caused because then the causation or origination of the entity would be superfluous. To explain, if milk is produced out of the self-same milk, then there is no conceivable purpose which production could serve. More importantly, if there is self-causation, then the milk would remain as it is, so causation will bring no change in the milk. Thus, there is no point in admitting self-causation.

An entity cannot be both self-caused and caused by something else. It is false that an entity is self-caused; it implies that it is also false that an entity is caused by both itself and something else. The only alternative remaining is that an entity may be caused by conditions which are distinct from itself. This is not possible as well. We will describe one argument that Nāgārjuna adduces to support this in MMK-1/6.⁵ The verse may be translated as follows:

An absurdity, whether we regard entities to be caused or uncaused.

Four types of conditions are admitted, namely, *hetu-pratya*, *ālambana pratya*, *Samānānta pratya* and *adhipati pratya*. They may be translated as primary cause, objective support, proximate condition, and dominant condition, respectively. All other types of causes can be admitted by other Buddhist schools as responsible for the origination of effects, but Nāgārjuna rejects their causal role. Nāgārjuna advances the following argument to refute the primary cause.⁶ Neither an existent entity nor a non-existent *āyatana* entity can have a cause. For, the cause of a non-existent entity is not a cause, and an existent entity needs no cause. To explain, the effect is either existent or non-existent. If the effect exists, then it cannot be

produced by a cause. For producing what already exists is fruitless. Therefore, the already existent effect does not have a cause. Again, if the effect is non-existent, then its cause cannot also exist. Causality is a relation which implies that something becomes a cause only about something else, which is called the effect. When the effect is non-existent, nothing can have a causal relation with the effect. A cause cannot be regarded as a cause if it does not have a relation to the effect. So when the effect is non-existent, nothing can be regarded as its cause. On the other hand, an entity cannot be uncaused, as Lord Buddha explicitly denies that possibility. We can also adduce some reasons for the denial of uncaused origination. First, if origination were not dependent upon causes, then anything could come into being at any time. Again, in that case, our efforts as agents to produce things would be futile. Therefore, it cannot be reduced to the above-mentioned four types of causes. Although these conditions are those from which the effect can be produced, it makes sense to talk about its primary cause. But neither an existent entity, nor a non-existent entity, nor both existent and non-existent entity can be produced. Firstly, an entity which already exists cannot be produced. Secondly, a non-existent entity cannot be produced for what is non-existent remains so forever. Third, no entity can be both existent and non-existent at the same time because a self-same entity cannot have contrary nature. Moreover, it is false that what is existent can be produced and it is also false that what is non-existent can be produced; it follows that it is false that what is both existent and non-existent can be produced. Therefore, no effect can be produced which implies that there is no primary cause. It seems to me that this argument against primary cause is essentially equivalent to previous argument (kārikā-6) which was against cause in general.

Then Nāgārjuna goes on to say that there is no *ālambana pratya* or objective support. Objective support may be understood as a cause which provides external support for inner mental states, that is, *chitta* and *chaitya*. In Vaibhāṣika school *chitta* is understood as *nirvikalpaka* cognition of an unqualified object. And *savikalpaka* cognition and *vedanā*, which is the experience of pleasure and pain, are regarded as *chaitta*. A *savikalpaka* cognition is one which has as its content something qualified and they alone can be named or spoken of. The external supports of mental states, (i.e, *chitta* and *chaitya*) can be rupa etc. are regarded as *ālambana pratya*. It is to be noted that only *chitta* and *chaitya* have objective support.

Nāgārjuna points out that, mental states cannot have external support. He advances the following argument.⁷ The external support is to be either of existent mental states or of non-existent mental states. The mental states that already exist cannot be produced by external

support. To explain, external support should exist right before the emergence of mental state. But if the mental state exists before the objective support, then the objective support cannot play any causal role in the origination of the said mental state. On the other hand, the mental states that do not exist can have no relation with the external support. Since causality is relational, external support cannot be regarded as cause when the effect is non-existent. Here the question naturally arises: what then is the object of cognition or other mental states like desire? We find most of the mental states as to have an object or *ālambana*; what about that? Candrakīrti answers that this shows no fallacy in the above argument as the reality of the *ālambana* is conventional and not ultimate.

Samānāntara pratya or approximate condition is such an entity which itself gets destroyed but produces a similar entity at the immediately subsequent moment. It is to be noted that only *chitta* and *chaitya* can be and can have approximate conditions. Nāgārjuna criticizes approximate conditions as follows⁸: either the approximate condition co-exists with the effect, or the condition gets destroyed before the effect emerges. If the condition co-exists with the effect, then it cannot be regarded as an approximate condition. On the other hand, if the condition gets destroyed before the emergence of the effect, then the condition becomes nonexistent. Moreover, there is no cause for the destruction of the approximate condition itself. As a result, accepting an approximate condition leads us to accept an uncaused destruction as well as an uncaused effect.

When the existence of something gives rise to the existence of another thing, the former is called the *adhipati pratya* of the later.⁹ Since all entities are dependently originated, everything borrows its essence or nature from that thing out of which it originates. And whatever has borrowed its nature does not have intrinsic nature. Again, what lacks intrinsic nature is not ultimately real. To explain, a chariot is made out of its parts, so it borrows its nature from its parts. Since according to Buddhism parts do not produce a whole, so a chariot is not made out of its parts. Instead, the chariot is nothing but a definite bundle of its parts. Consequently, a chariot is not ultimately real. This applies even to the parts of the chariot. So everything borrows its nature from something else, and nothing is ultimately real. Everything is denied of existence so the existence of both cause and effect is denied.

Now Nāgārjuna renders his ultimate criticism against causation or causal origination.¹⁰ Before the emergence of the effect, it is either existent in the causes or it is nonexistent in the causes; there is no third alternative. He then argues that both the alternatives are unacceptable so origination of an effect from a cause is impossible. Now let us consider why the first alternative, which is before its emergence the effect exists or preexists in the cause, is

unacceptable. An effect is not produced by a single cause; instead it is produced out of a collection of causes. Now the question is whether the preexisting effect resides in each individual cause or in the collection of causes. The effect cannot preexist in each individual cause because it is not cognized to be so existent. Again, if the effect were present in each cause separately, then many effects would have produced out of one collection of causes. Thus the effect cannot reside separately in each cause. On the other hand, the effect cannot reside in the collection of causes, for the reason that the effect as a whole is not present in any single cause. And if different parts of the effect were present in each cause, then an effect would emerge part by part. An effect does not emerge part by part. Thus before the emergence of the effect, it cannot exist in the causes. On the other hand, if the effect is nonexistent before its emergence, then what is not a cause of that effect can also give rise to that effect. As a result, there shall be no distinction between a cause and a non-cause. To explain, the non-existent effect cannot have a relation with anything. For the existence of a relation depends upon the existence of its relatums. Thus the non-existent effect is unrelated to its cause as well as to everything else. This implies that the non-existent effect can be brought to existence by anything. As such anything could produce anything which is not the case. Thus, it is not the case that before emergence the effect is nonexistent in its cause. Accordingly, the effect neither exists in the conditions nor it is absent in the conditions. Since there is no other alternative, there exists no effect. As a cause is relative to an effect, and there is no effect, so there is no cause as well. Likewise, something becomes a non-cause only relative to causes; as there is no cause, there is no non-cause.

Examination of Motion:

Here we will try to paraphrase only one argument against motion. This argument is rendered in the first *kārikā* of *gatāgata parikṣā prakaraṇa* of MMK.¹¹

Motion is not possible in the path which is already traversed. Motion is also not possible in the path which will be traversed in future. There is no other path besides the path which was traversed and which will be traversed. Therefore, there is no path where motion is possible. Here it might be objected that motion is possible in the path that is now being traversed. However, such an objection is not plausible because there is no such path which is being traversed at the present moment. Now it might be retorted that the part of the road, where the foot is at present, is the path being traversed at the present. But this is not an acceptable solution as well. The finger fingertips of the advanced foot, which is now on the road, demarcate the path that will be traversed from the path that is already traversed. In other words, the path which is under the foot and the path that is on the back side of the foot are

considered to be the path traversed. Whereas the path that is on the front side of the fingertips of the advanced foot is regarded as the path that will be traversed.

Here, it may also be objected that the given refutation of motion is self-defeating.¹² This is because the conclusion that motion does not exist depends on the premises, which presuppose the existence of motion. The premises talk about the path that was traversed and that will be traversed. But if there were no motion, which is the conclusion, then traversability in the past and future would also be impossible. Accordingly, there could be no path that was traversed or that will be traversed. Therefore, if the conclusion of the argument is true then its premises become false and the argument turns out to be unsound or self-defeating.

Such a response does not get rid of the force of the refutation. Although the response rightly shows that the refutation is self-defeating, the refutation does not lose its force; because it enables us to see that one who endorses motion also holds a self-defeating position. This is because those who admit motion will also have to admit the premises of the above argument. And the conclusion that motion does not exist logically follow from those premises. Thus the position of the supporter of motion is also self-defeating. This we think paves the way to *śūnyavāda* as it shows that neither accepting nor denying the existence of motion is consistent. Accordingly, we are neither entitled to say that motion exists nor motion does not exist.

Examination of Āyatanas:

Some Buddhist schools except Mādhyamika have admitted the ultimate reality of the twelve *āyatanas*. The twelve *āyatanas* are six sense organs and their six different objects.¹³ It is to be remarked that in Buddhism sense organs are regarded as physical in nature. Here *Nāgārjuna* attacks the visual sense organ, i.e, the eyes and says that in the similar manner other sense organs can also be refuted. If sense organs do not exist, then their objects do not exist. Therefore, the twelve *āyatanas* do not exist.

Eyes cannot see itself and what cannot see itself cannot see others. So eyes can neither see itself nor others.¹⁴ this implies that eyes cannot see anything whatsoever. Here it may be retorted that though the eyes cannot see itself it can see others. As fire does not burn itself but burns others, eyes cannot see itself but see others. However, *Nāgārjuna* states that this reply is not satisfactory because the example of fire is itself not established.¹⁵ The impossibility of burning or combustion can be shown in the same manner in which the impossibility of motion has been demonstrated. In short, fire cannot burn what was burnt in the past; again fire cannot now burn what will be burnt in future. There is no entity besides what was burnt and what will be burnt. Therefore, as fire does not burn itself, fire does not burn other things.

So, fire does not burn anything whatsoever. Here it might be objected that it is false that fire does not burn anything. For, I can see in front of me some combustible oil which is not yet burnt, but if fire comes into contact with it, the oil will burn it out. The combustible material, which is not already burnt, can be burnt by fire. However, this example does not serve as a counter example because the oil which will be burnt cannot burn at the present moment. At the present moment there are entities which are already burnt and which will be burnt. And there are no entities besides them; thus, burning is impossible. The same argument also applies to visual sense organs. The eyes cannot see what it saw in the past; the eyes cannot now see what it will see in the future. Both past and future exhaust all observable things, so there is no entity which can be seen at present. Thus there is neither any visible object nor any visual organ.

Nāgārjuna advances another argument against visual sense organs.¹⁶ There are times when the eyes do not perceive anything. At those times eyes cannot be regarded as a visual sense organ because then the eyes are like stumps which do not see. On the other hand, when the eyes perceive, the act of perceiving must get related to the visual sense organ. The question is whether eyes are by nature visual sense organs or they become visual sense organs when the act of perceiving comes into relation with it. Nāgārjuna rejects both alternatives.¹⁷ Firstly, if the eyes were by nature a visual sense organ, then the act of perceiving would not be required for perception to arise. Furthermore, the eyes could not have remained visionless even for a while since the intrinsic nature of an entity never leaves it. Secondly, if eyes are not a visual sense organ by nature, then you have to say that by virtue of getting related to the act of perception, eyes become visual sense organs. But the act of perception cannot have a relation with the eyes. The act of perception does not get related to a stump. Why would it get related to the eyes? It would not, because eyes and stump do not have any relevant difference. Again, if eyes are not by nature a visual sense organ then their capacity for vision is originated depending on causes and conditions. And what is dependently originated is not ultimately real.

Now it may be responded that there is a visual organ because there is a perceiver. The perceiver must use sense organs in order to see things. So the existence of the perceiver implies the existence of eyes. Nāgārjuna retorts that it has been shown that the visual sense organ does not exist; it follows that the perceiver does not exist as well. However, the question is how we can deny the existence of a perceiver. This is evident that *viññāna* etc. exist. And the sense organs and their objects are cause of *viññāna*, *sparśa*, *vedanā*, *triṣṇā*, which are parts of the cycle of *bhava*. Since *sparśa* etc. exist, we can safely conclude that

their cause eyes etc. must also exist. Nāgārjuna's response to this objection is that neither the object of perception nor perceptual cognition exist because eyes etc. do not exist. Likewise, *vijñāna*, *sparśa*, *vedanā*, *triṣṇā* do not exist, for sense organs do not exist. Accordingly, *upādāna* etc., which are regarded as the result of *sparśa* etc., do not exist as well. It is to be noted that other five sense organs should be understood as refuted in the manner in which eyes are refuted.¹⁸ Therefore, the twelve *āyatana*s which consist of six sense organs and their respective objects, cannot be regarded as ultimately real.

Examination of Skandhas:

If the *skandhas* exist, then sense organs must also exist. This is because sense organs are classified under *skandhas*. So, Nāgārjuna also directs his criticism against the *skandhas*. There are five *skandhas*, namely, *rupa*, *vedanā*, *sanjñā*, *saṃskāra* and *vijñāna skandha*.

The Five Skandhas:

Rupa skandha includes five external sense organs and their five types of objects (namely, visible, audible, tangible, taste and smell) and five types of cognition associated with them.¹⁹ These fifteen types of *dharma*s are regarded as *rupa skandha* in *Vaibhāṣika śāstra*. It is to be noted that in *Vaibhāṣika* philosophy sense organs are made out of five elements and they are perceivable. For example, the eyes are perceptible by touch. On the contrary, in the *Vaiśeṣika* philosophy sense organs are regarded as imperceptible; though they are by nature elements, they are imperceptible because they are subtle. Again, in *Vaiśeṣika* philosophy the term *rupa* refers only to seven types of colours. Whereas in *Vaibhāṣika* philosophy the term *rupa* designates not only colours but also other entities like shape, arrangement etc.

When one experiences some *dharma*, one either finds the experience to be pleasurable or painful or neither. So pleasure etc., are associated with the experience of every *dharma*. The experience of pleasure, pain and dis-attachment is regarded as *vedanā skandha*.

Kalpanā or construction is employed to classify *dharma*s that enable us to use words for them. The construction of these classes is called *sanjñā skandha*.

Any *dharma* which is outside the scope of *rupa*, *vedanā*, *sanjñā* and *vijñāna skandha* is classified under *saṃskāra skandha*.

Vijñāna is *nirvikalpaka* cognition of objects. It is that which grasps only the essence or *svarupa* of the object and words cannot be applied to them. The *savikalpaka* cognition can be couched in words, so it comes under *sanjñā skandha*. There are six types of *vijñāna*,

associated with the six different senses. Each of them continues as a series. That is to say that there is a series of visual *nirvikalpaka* cognition. And these series are called *vijñāna skandha*. Now let us see what Nāgārjuna has to say about the refutation of *skandhas*. Nāgārjuna criticizes *rupa skandha* as follows:²⁰ *Rupa* is not cognized independently of its causes. Likewise, the causes of *rupa* are not cognized independently of *rupa*. *Rupa* as an effect has its cause as four elements. Colour, shape etc. which are *rupa* cannot be cognized separately from four elements because a pot can be cognized separately from a cloth. Likewise, the causes of *rupa*, that is, the four elements are organized along with colour, shape etc, that is *rupa*. So the four elements cannot be cognized without *rupa*. Moreover, *rupa* is not distinct from its causes, that is *rupa* does not exist independently of its causes.²¹ A pot is distinct from a cloth so there cannot be a causal relation between a pot and a cloth. If *rupa* were distinct from the four elements, then *rupa* would not be an effect of them. So whatever is the cause of *rupa* has to be identical with it. On the other hand, if *rupa* is regarded as uncaused then it would lead to some unacceptable consequences. As we have previously mentioned the problem in accepting uncaused origination is twofold. Anything can originate at any time and place and every effort from a conscious agent to produce anything must be regarded as futile. On the other hand, *rupa* cannot have a cause. If *rupa* is already existent, then having a cause is futile. Again if *rupa* is non-existent, then nothing can be regarded as a cause of *rupa*.²² Thus whether *rupa* is existent or not, it cannot have a cause. Therefore, we cannot admit that *rupa* is caused nor can we admit that *rupa* is uncaused. So it is impossible to conceptualize the nature of *rupa*.²³ Hence it may be said that *rupa* is ultimately empty. Like *rupa* all the other *skandhas* are to be understood as neither caused nor uncaused.²⁴ Thus, emptiness of all *dharma*s are shown. All *dharma*s are included in the five *skandhas*. The same point can be made in another way. If one wants to criticize or reject the emptiness of *rupa*, one has to come up with some evidence. For example, one may take *vedanā* as evidence and argue that since *vedanā* exists and it cannot exist without *rupa*; hence *rupa* must also exist. Now Nāgārjuna states a general method to answer such criticism.²⁵ He asserts that all such evidence to refute the emptiness of *rupa* is equivalent to *rupa* itself. Thus the evidence, which may be *vedanā*, is itself empty because the same argument that proves the emptiness of *rupa* also proves the emptiness of *vedanā*.

A Common form of argument:

I would like to claim that many arguments of MMK boil down to one argument. That one argument is as follows: Past and future time does not exist. Whatever exists, exists in the present. There is no present time because the total time is exhausted by past time and future

time. As there is no present time, nothing exists. Nāgārjuna employs this argument with slight variations against motion, causality, sense organs, combustion etc. For example, Nāgārjuna states that motion does not exist because there is no path that can be traversed at the present. There is no present path as the path that was traversed and the path that will be traversed exhausts the whole path. Now I want to make a claim: Nāgārjuna's denial of the existence of the path which is currently being traversed is ultimately dependent on the denial of present time. This is because Nāgārjuna's attack is not on an unqualified path but it is on the path that is qualified by present time. And the qualification, which is present time, does not exist. Thus the path which is qualified by present time also does not exist. But what follows from it? It follows that there is no path which is being traversed at present. It implies that there is no motion at the present. And from this Nāgārjuna concludes that there is no motion at all. Thus it is arguably the case that (at least in this argument or for the sake of this argument) Nāgārjuna assumes that the present time is existent and denies the reality of past and future. Similarly, Nāgārjuna argues that what was seen and what will be seen exhausts all observable entities. Thus there is nothing which is being observed at the present. Here also we can see that Nāgārjuna denies the observable entity qualified by present time. And his implicit denial of the present time enables him to deny the existence of observable entities whatsoever. An equivalent argument is being used against causality. Nāgārjuna claims that what was produced cannot be produced again. And what will be produced is now non-existent. Thus there is nothing which is being produced at the present. We can see that Nāgārjuna is denying origination qualified by present time. And his implicit denial of present time leads him to conclude that there is no origin.

It may be replied that the actions referred to by the present tense qualify a portion of time. That time portion is to be regarded as present relative to that action. Likewise, the present, past and future times are regarded therefore always relative to some action. Here we are understanding the present time in terms of the present tense of a verb. But Mādhyamika would ask: what makes the present tense present? Any answer to this question will be either circular or based on an arbitrary assumption. The Nyāya thinker might object that denial of present time entails the denial of the past and future time. This is because only with reference to the present can something be regarded as past or future. If there were no present time, then there would be nothing that could distinguish the past from the future. As a result, there would be neither past nor future time. So if we deny the present, we deny the past and future. But Mādhyamika has no problem denying the present along with the past and future. A Mādhyamika thinker would agree that we experience time as past, present and future, but

given that all entities presented by experience are contradictory, experience does not represent the truth.

References:

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- ¹ *Anirodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāśvatam | anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam ||*
² *yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śivam | deśayāmāsa sambuddhas taṃ vande vadatām varam ||* See Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā Prasannapadā* Of Chandrakirti Vaidya P. L. Mithila Institute Darbhanga. 1960
- ³ Siderits, Mark, and Jay L. Garfield. "Defending the semantic interpretation: A reply to Ferraro." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 41 (2013): 655-664.
- ⁴ Murti, Tirupattur Ramaseshayyer Venkatachala. *The central philosophy of Buddhism: A study of the Madhyamika system*. Routledge, 2013
- ⁵ *na svato nāpi parato na dvābhyāṃ nāpy ahetutaḥ | utpannā jātu vidyante bhāvāḥ kva cana ke cana ||*
1/1 || MMK
- ⁶ *Naivāsato naiva sataḥ pratyayo 'rthasya yuyjate | asataḥ pratyayaḥ kasya sataś ca pratyayena kim ||*
1/6 || MMK
- ⁷ *na san nāsan na sadasan dharmo nirvartate yadā | katham nirvartako hetur evaṃ sati hi yuyjate ||*
1/7 ||MMK
- ⁸ *anālambaṇa evāyaṃ san dharma upadiśyate | athānālambaṇe dharme kuta ālambaṇaṃ punaḥ ||* 1/8
//MMK
- ⁹ *anutpanneṣu dharmeṣu nirodho nopapadyate | nānantaram ato yuktaṃ niruddhe pratyayaś ca kaḥ ||*
1/9 || MMK
- ¹⁰ *bhāvānāṃ niḥsvabhāvānāṃ na sattā vidyate yataḥ | satīdam asmin bhavatīty etan naivopapadyate ||*
1/10 ||MMK
- ¹¹ *na ca vyastasamasteṣu pratyayeṣv asti tat phalam | pratyayebhyaḥ katham tac ca bhaven na pratyayeṣu yat ||* 1/11 || MMK
- ¹² *gataṃ na gamyate tāvad agataṃ naiva gamyate | gatāgatavinirmuktaṃ gamyamānaṃ na gamyate ||*
2/1 || MMK
- ¹³ "A self-defeating argument is an argument that, if taken to be sound, shows itself to be unsound" Baggini, Julian, and Peter S. Fosl (2020). *The philosopher's toolkit: a compendium of philosophical concepts and methods*. John Wiley & Sons, *darśanaṃ śravaṇaṃ ghrāṇaṃ rasanāṃ sparśanaṃ manaḥ | indriyāṇi ṣaḍ eteṣāṃ draṣṭavyādīni gocaraḥ ||* 3/1 || MMK
- ¹⁴ *vaṃ ātmānaṃ darśanaṃ hi tat tam eva na paśyati | na paśyati yad ātmānaṃ katham draṣyati tat parān ||* 3/2 || MMK
- ¹⁵ *na paryāpto 'gnidrṣṭānto darśanasya prasiddhaye | sadarśanaḥ sa pratyukto gamyamānagatāgatāiḥ ||* 3/3 || MMK
- ¹⁶ *nāpaśyamānaṃ bhavati yadā kiṃ cana darśanam | darśanaṃ paśyatīty evaṃ katham etat tu yuyjate ||* 3/4 || MMK
- ¹⁷ *paśyati darśanaṃ naiva naiva paśyaty adarśanam | vyākhyāto darśanenaiva draṣṭā cāpy avagamyatām ||* 3/5 || MMK
- ¹⁸ *vyākhyātaṃ śravaṇaṃ ghrāṇaṃ rasanāṃ sparśanaṃ manaḥ | darśanenaiva jānīyāc chrotrśrotavyakādi ca ||* 3/8 || MMK

¹⁹ Bhattachārya, Anantakumar Nyayatarkatirtha (1955), *Vaibhāṣika darśana* (Bengali), Orient Book Company,

²⁰ *rūpakāraṇanirmuktaṃ na rūpaṃ upalabhyate | rūpeṇāpi na nirmuktaṃ dṛśyate rūpakāraṇam || 4/1 ||*
MMK

²¹ *rūpakāraṇanirmukte rūpe rūpaṃ prasajyate | āhetukaṃ na cāsty arthaḥ kaścid āhetukaḥ kva cit ||*
4/2 || MMK

²² *rūpe saty eva rūpasya kāraṇam nopapadyate | rūpe 'saty eva rūpasya kāraṇam nopapadyate || 4/4 ||*
MMK

²³ *niṣkāraṇam punā rūpaṃ naiva naivopapadyate | tasmād rūpagatān kāmścin na vikalpān vikalpayet*
|| 4/5 || MMK

²⁴ *vedanācittasaṃjñānām saṃskārāṇām ca sarvaśaḥ | sarveṣām eva bhāvānām rūpeṇaiva samaḥ*
kramaḥ || 4/7 || MMK

²⁵ *vigrahe yaḥ parihāraṃ kṛte śūnyatayā vadet | sarvaṃ tasyāparihṛtaṃ samaṃ sādhyena jāyate || 4/8*
|| MMK

কোচ-কামতা রাজ্যে বাংলা সাহিত্যের ধারা : একটি সংক্ষিপ্ত অন্বেষণ

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Abstract

সময়ের বিপরীত অভিঘাতে একটি প্রসিদ্ধ জনপদ আজ ঐতিহ্যহীন। অথচ একটি সময় কোচ-কামতা জনপদ ছিল সাহিত্য, সংস্কৃতিতে উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতের মধ্যে সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ জনপদ। এখানে রচিত এবং চর্চিত সাহিত্য শুধু কোচ-কামতা জনপদের মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ ছিল না। বাংলা এবং অসম উভয় প্রদেশেই এর ব্যাপকতা এবং বিস্তৃতি ছড়িয়ে পড়েছিল। কিন্তু আজ কোচ-কামতা জনপদের স্মৃতি-চিহ্ন ছাড়া তেমন কোন গৌরব নেই। সাহিত্য চর্চার যে ঐতিহ্য এই জনপদ জুড়ে বজায় ছিল তা কিছু কিছু পণ্ডিতের শুভ দৃষ্টির অভাবে চর্চার আড়ালে থেকে গেছে। যদিও একটি বড় প্রশ্ন সময়ের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে দেখা দিয়েছে? কোচ-কামতায় রচিত এবং চর্চিত সাহিত্যের ভাষা বাংলা না অসমীয়া? না অন্য কোন আঞ্চলিক ভাষায় রচিত? আর যে কারণে দু-একজন বাঙালি পণ্ডিত ছাড়া কেউ এই মহামূল্যবান মধ্যযুগের সাহিত্যের ধারা নিয়ে চর্চা বা আলোচনা করেননি। অথচ যদি দেখা যায় কোচ-কামতা রাজদরবারে যে ধরনের এবং যে পরিমাণে পুরাণ, রামায়ণ, মহাভারত এবং অন্যান্য সাহিত্যের চর্চা হয়েছে তা শুধু বাংলা বা অসমীয়া নয়; উত্তরপূর্ব ভারতের অন্যকোন রাজসভায় এত পরিমাণে সাহিত্যালোচনা হয়েছে কিনা সন্দেহ রয়েছে। তাই স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই কোচ-কামতা রাজসভার সাহিত্য নিয়ে জানার ইচ্ছে বা খিদে একজন সাহিত্যের পাঠক হিসেবে বেড়ে যায়। আর এই খিদে থেকেই কোচ-কামতা রাজ্যে যে বাংলা সাহিত্যের ধারা প্রবাহিত হয়েছে এখানে তা সংক্ষিপ্ত আকারে অন্বেষণের চেষ্টা করা হয়েছে মাত্র।

Key words: কোচ-কামতা, জনপদ, কামরূপ, ভুইয়া, ভক্তীগীতি, শঙ্করদেব, মাধবদেব।

উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতের একটি প্রসিদ্ধ জনপদ হল কোচ-কামতা জনপদ। খ্রীষ্টীয় ষোড়শ শতকের প্রথমার্ধে এই কোচ-কামতা জনপদ একটি স্বতন্ত্র রাজ্য হিসেবে গড়ে ওঠার পূর্বে এই অঞ্চল কামরূপ রাজ্যের অধীন ছিল। বর্তমান অসম, কোচবিহার, জলপাইগুড়ি এবং বাংলাদেশের রংপুর নিয়ে এই বিস্তৃত অঞ্চলই ছিল কোচ-কামতা জনপদ। ভারতের এই উত্তর-পূর্ব ভূ-খণ্ড যা একসময় প্রাগ-জ্যোতিষপুর নামে পরিচিত ছিল, পরবর্তীকালে তা কামরূপ নামে পরিচিতি লাভ করে। রামায়ণ, মহাভারত, হরিবংশ, মহাপুরাণ, রঘুবংশ এবং বৃহৎসংহিতা ইত্যাদি গ্রন্থে প্রাগ-

জ্যোতিষপুর নামের উল্লেখ আছে। কামরূপ রাজ্য চারটি পীঠে বা বিভাগে বিভক্ত ছিল। এই চারটি পীঠ যথাক্রমে— কামপীঠ, রত্নপীঠ, সুবর্ণপীঠ ও সৌমার পীঠ। বর্তমান কোচবিহার রত্নপীঠের অন্তর্গত ছিল। কামরূপ রাজ্য এই চারটি পীঠে কেন বিভক্ত ছিল? তা অনুমান করলে বোঝা যায়, কামরূপ রাজারা তাঁদের শাসন-ব্যবস্থা সুবিধার জন্যই এই চারটি পীঠে রাজ্যকে ভাগ করেছিলেন।

পৌরাণিক সূত্র থেকে জানা যায় কামরূপ রাজ্য বিভিন্ন সময়ে বিভিন্ন রাজবংশ শাসন করেছিলেন। দানববংশ, কিরাতবংশ, নরক এবং তাঁর বংশধরদের কথা এর মধ্যে উল্লেখযোগ্য। খ্রীষ্টীয় প্রথম অথবা দ্বিতীয় শতাব্দীতে শূদ্রবংশীয় দেবেশ্বর কামরূপের রাজা ছিলেন। তাঁর পুত্র শূদ্রবংশীয় পৃথু সে সময় পশ্চিম কামরূপে রাজত্ব করতেন। এরপর পালবংশীয় প্রথম রাজা গোপালদেব কামরূপের একটি অংশ দখল করেন। এবং পরবর্তীকালে গোপালদেবের পৌত্র পালবংশীয় তৃতীয় রাজা দেবপাল (৮১৫-৮৫০) প্রাগ-জ্যোতিষপুরে পাল অধিপত্য স্থাপন করেন। কামরূপে পাল রাজবংশের আধিপত্যকালে (খ্রিস্টীয় অষ্টম থেকে একাদশ শতাব্দী) কোচরাজ্য তাদের নজরানা ভুক্ত রাজ্য ছিল। এরপর একেএকে পালবংশীয় চতুর্দশ রাজা রামপাল, তার পুত্র কুমার পাল কামরূপ-কামতা শাসন করেন। এবং অবশেষে রাজা মদনপালকে পরাজিত করে সেন বংশীয় স্বনামখ্যাত বল্লাল সেন (১১১৯-১১৬৯) পশ্চিম কামরূপকে নিজেদের অধিকারভুক্ত করেন। বল্লাল সেনের পুত্র লক্ষণ সেনের (১১৬৯-১১৯৮) সময় থেকে গৌড় রাজ্য মুসলমান অধিকারের সূত্রপাত হয়। এরপর থেকে দুর্লভনারায়ণের রাজত্ব স্থাপনের পূর্ব পর্যন্ত কামরূপ কামতায় বিভিন্ন আরও কয়েকজন রাজা সময়ে সময়ে রাজত্ব করেছিলেন। মানিকচন্দ্র, গোপীচন্দ্র, হরচন্দ্র এদের মধ্যে উল্লেখযোগ্য। এই সময় একটা অরাজকতার মধ্য দিয়ে চলতে থাকা কামরূপ রাজ্যে বিভিন্ন ক্ষুদ্র ক্ষুদ্র ভুইয়া রাজবংশের একাধিপত্য বাড়তে থাকে।

আনুমানিক ত্রয়োদশ শতাব্দীর শেষ ভাগে দুর্লভনারায়ণ কামতাপুরে রাজত্ব স্থাপন করেন। পশ্চিমে করতোয়া হইতে পূর্বে বড়নদী (কামরূপ জেলায়) পর্যন্ত তাঁর রাজ্যসীমা বিস্তৃত ছিল। দুর্লভনারায়ণ প্রতাপধ্বজ রাজার পুত্র ছিলেন। প্রতাপধ্বজ প্রথম জীবনে সিংহধ্বজ রাজার মন্ত্রী ছিলেন। রাজা সিংহধ্বজকে হত্যা করে তিনি সিংহাসনে বসেন। দুর্লভনারায়ণের পর কামতা রাজ্যে রাজনৈতিক অস্থিরতা তৈরী হয়। এই সময় খান বাখেন নামক এক নতুন রাজবংশ কামতার সিংহাসনে বসেন। এই বংশের প্রথম রাজা ছিলেন কান্তেশ্বর। তিনি নীলধ্বজ নাম ধারণ করে সিংহাসনে আরোহণ করেন। নীলধ্বজের মৃত্যু হলে উত্তরাধিকার সূত্রে তাঁর পুত্র মহারাজ চক্রধ্বজ কামতাপুরের সিংহাসনে বসেন। প্রবাদ আছে রাজ্যের অধিষ্ঠাত্রী দেবী কামতেশ্বরী তাহারই প্রতিষ্ঠিত। ১৪৮০ খ্রিস্টাব্দে চক্রধ্বজের

মৃত্যুর পর এই রাজবংশের তৃতীয় এবং শেষ রাজা নীলাম্বর সিংহাসনে বসেন। তার রাজত্বকালে গৌড় রাজ্যে রাজনৈতিক এবং প্রশাসনিক দুর্বলতার সৃষ্টি হলে নীলাম্বর তাঁর রাজ্য বিস্তারে সফলতা লাভ করেন। পশ্চিমে করতোয়া থেকে পূর্বে ব্রহ্মপুত্র পর্যন্ত এবং উত্তরে ভূটান পর্বত পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত অঞ্চল তাঁর অধিকারে আসে। কোচ-কামতা রাজসভার এই বিস্তৃত পরিধিতে সাহিত্যের তেমন কোন নিদর্শন পাওয়া না গেলেও প্রত্যেক সভায় সভাকবিদের উপস্থিতি বর্তমান ছিল। যা রাজবংশের আভিজাত্যের পরিচায়ক। গৌড়ের পাল এবং সেন রাজাদের মতো কামরূপের রাজারাও সংস্কৃত ভাষা ও সাহিত্যের অনুরাগী ছিলেন।

খ্রিস্টীয় চতুর্দশ-পঞ্চদশ শতকে কামতার কবিদের মধ্যে হেম সরস্বতী, রুদ্র কন্দলী, হরিহর বিপ্র, কবিরত্ন সরস্বতী এবং মাধব কন্দলী বিখ্যাত। কোচ-কামতার অধিপতি দুর্লভনারায়ণ এবং ইন্দ্রনারায়ণের পৃষ্ঠপোষকতায় সেই সময় সাহিত্যচর্চার একটি পরিবেশ তৈরী হয়। দুর্লভনারায়ণের পৃষ্ঠপোষকতায় হেম সরস্বতীর ‘হরগৌরী-সংবাদ’, ‘প্রহ্লাদ চরিত’, কবিরত্ন সরস্বতীর ‘জয়দ্রথ বধ’ কাব্য এবং হরিহর বিপ্রের অনুবাদ কাব্য ‘বরবাহনের যুদ্ধ’ ও ‘লব-কুশের যুদ্ধ’ কাব্য কয়েকটি শিল্পমূল্যের দাবী রাখে। এই সময়ের শ্রেষ্ঠ কবি যদি কাউকে বলতে হয় তিনি হলেন মাধব কন্দলী। মাধব কন্দলী রামায়ণের পাঁচটি কাণ্ড (অযোধ্যা থেকে লঙ্কাকাণ্ড) অনুবাদ করেন। কৃত্তিবাস ওঝার মতোই তিনি ভক্তির দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে রামকাহিনী রচনা করেছিলেন এবং প্রভু রামচন্দ্রকে বিষ্ণুর অবতার হিসেবে গ্রহণ করেন।

মহারাজ বিশ্বসিংহের সময়কাল (১৪৯৬-১৫৩৩) থেকে কোচ-কামতা রাজসভা সাহিত্যে সুবর্ণ যুগের সূচনা হয়। বিশ্বসিংহের পিতা হরিদাস মণ্ডলের সময় চিকনা নামক স্থানে রাজধানী ছিল। পরবর্তীকালে মহারাজ বিশ্বসিংহ স্বকীয় রাজধানী কামতাপুরে স্থানান্তরিত করেন। কবি দুর্গাদাস তাঁর ‘হরিভক্ত তরঙ্গে’ লিখেছেন—

‘কামতা নগর মাঝে পুরি করি মহারাজে

জেন ওরপতি পৃথিবিত।।”

এই কামতা নগরে বসেই বিশ্বসিংহের সভাকবিরা তাদের কাব্য রচনা করেন। বিশ্বসিংহের রাজসভার বিখ্যাত দু'জন কবি হলেন মনকর ও দুর্গাবর। এছাড়া বল্লভাচার্য নামক একজন কবি ‘কামাখ্যাতন্ত্র’ রচনা করেন। বিশ্বসিংহের সমসাময়িক ও কিছুটা পরবর্তী কালের আর একজন বিখ্যাত কবি হলেন পীতাম্বর। পীতাম্বর ভাগবতের দশম স্কন্ধের অনুবাদ, মার্কণ্ডেয় চণ্ডী-আখ্যান, উষা পরিণয় এবং ‘নলন্দময়ন্তী’ সহ চারটি কাব্য রচনা করেন।

বিশ্বসিংহের পর তাঁর দ্বিতীয় পুত্র নরনারায়ণ (১৫৩৩-৩৪) কামতার সিংহাসনে বসেন। ‘কোচবিহারের ইতিহাস’ থেকে জানা যায় নরনারায়ণের সময় কোচ-কামতা রাজসভায় সাহিত্যচর্চা অনন্য মাত্রা লাভ করে। এই সময় সভাকবি এবং পণ্ডিতদের আগমনে রাজসভা ছিল জমজমাট। মহারাজ নরনারায়ণের রাজসভার মধ্যমণী ছিলেন শ্রীমন্ত শঙ্করদেব। শঙ্করদেব এই সময় বসে ‘বলিছলন’, ‘অনাদিপাটন’, ‘কীর্তনঘোষা’ ভাগবতের প্রথম, দ্বিতীয়, নবম, দশম, একাদশ এবং দ্বাদশ স্কন্ধের অনুবাদ, উত্তরকাণ্ড রামায়ণের অনুবাদ, নাট-ভটিমা, বরগীত সহ একাধিক কাব্য রচনা করেন। শঙ্করদেবের প্রধান শিষ্য মাধবদেবও এই সময় বসে রামায়ণের আদিকাণ্ড, রাজসূয় (ভাগবতের দশম স্কন্ধের অনুবাদ), জন্মরহস্য, নামঘোষা, নাট, বরগীত ইত্যাদি কাব্য রচনা করেন। নরনারায়ণের রাজসভার আর একজন কবিরত্ন রাম সরস্বতী। কবির পিতার নাম ভীমসেন চূড়ামণি। তিনি কবিচন্দ্র, ভারতচন্দ্র, ভারতভূষণ প্রভৃতি উপাধি লাভ করেন। কবির আত্মপরিচয় থেকে জানা যায় মহারাজ নরনারায়ণ তাঁকে রাম সরস্বতী এবং সেনাপতি বীর চিলারায় তাঁকে কবিচন্দ্র উপাধি প্রদান করেন—

“হেন নারায়ণ নৃপতি প্রধান ।

তাহান অজ্ঞাত ভারত উপাখ্যান ।।

.....

পিতৃয়ে মাতৃয়ে অনিরুদ্ধ নাম দিলা ।

কবিচন্দ্র নাম গোট দেওয়ানে বুলিলা ।।

রাম সরস্বতী নাম নৃপতি দিলন্ত ।

ভারতর পদ মোক করা বুলিলন্ত ।।”

রাম সরস্বতী ষোড়শ শতাব্দীর একমাত্র কবি যিনি সংস্কৃত মহাভারতের সমস্ত পর্ব অনুবাদে কৃতিত্ব অর্জন করেন। আদি, বন, ভীষ্ম, বিরাট, কর্ণ, উদ্যোগ, অশ্বমেধ, দ্রোণ, গদা ও শান্তি পর্ব ছাড়াও তিনি লক্ষ্মীচরিত, ভীমচরিত, বকাসুরবধ, জটাসুরবধ, খটাসুরবধ, পুষ্পহরণ পর্ব, পাঞ্চালী বিবাহ প্রভৃতি আখ্যান রচনা করেন।

নরনারায়ণের সভাকবি এবং অন্যতম সভাসদ অনন্ত কন্দলী মহাভারত অবলম্বনে ‘সাবিত্রী উপাখ্যান’ রচনা করেন। এছাড়া তিনি ভাগবতের চতুর্থ ও ষষ্ঠ স্কন্ধের অংশ বিশেষ অনুবাদ করেন। তিনি কীর্তনের ঢঙে ‘শ্রীরামকীর্তন’ রচনা করেন এবং সীতার অনুবাদ করেন। কোচবিহার স্টেট লাইব্রেরীর উপর ভিত্তি করে লেখা ‘A Descriptive catalogue of Bengali Manuscript’ থেকে জানা যায় অনন্ত কন্দলী মহাভারতের কাহিনী অবলম্বনে ‘রাজসূয়’ নামক একটি গ্রন্থ রচনা করেন। যা কোচবিহার স্টেট লাইব্রেরীতে রক্ষিত আছে (পুথি নং ১০২)। কংসারি কবি

মহাভারতের বিরাট ও কিরাত পর্ব রচনা করেন। কিরাত পর্বে কবির সমকালীন কামতার পরিবেশ এবং জনজীবন সম্পর্কে অভিজ্ঞতার পরিচয় ফুটে উঠেছে।

‘কটিত মেঘলা বস্ত্র বাঘছাল কাটা ।

বিজলি চমক জেন নারায়ণের ছটা।।

পীনস্থন উরুজঙ্ঘা খুলন্ত আকারা ।

সবারে পিঠিত এক সাক লোড়া লোড়া।’

নরনারায়ণের মৃত্যুর পর তাঁর পুত্র লক্ষ্মীনারায়ণ (১৫৮৭-১৬২১) কোচ-কামতার সিংহাসনে বসেন। ইনি ইন্দ্রিয়াসক্ত, সুদর্শন এবং বহুস্ত্রীবল্লভ ছিলেন। শারীরিক শক্তি, সামর্থ্য এবং মানসিক বলে তিনি পিতৃ-পিতামহের মতো রাজোচিত গুণগ্রাহের সম্পূর্ণ অধিকারী ছিলেন না। তবে তিনি সাহিত্য ও জ্ঞানচর্চার পৃষ্ঠপোষক ছিলেন। তাঁর রাজত্বকালে বৈষ্ণবধর্ম সংস্কারক মাধবদেব ও দামোদরদেব কামরূপ ও অহোম রাজার উৎপীড়ণে কামতা রাজ্যে পুনরায় প্রত্যাবর্তন করলে মহারাজ লক্ষ্মীনারায়ণ তাঁদের সসম্মানে গ্রহণ ও আশ্রয় দান করেন। রাজমন্ত্রী বিরূপাক্ষ কাষীর অনুরোধে মাধবদেব ‘নামমালিকা’ গ্রন্থের অনুবাদ করেন। মহারাজ লক্ষ্মীনারায়ণের আদেশে সিদ্ধান্তবাগীশ নামক জনৈক পণ্ডিত ১৫৩৮ শকে (১৬১৬ খ্রী:) শিবরাত্রিকৌমদী, একাদশীকৌমদী এবং গ্রহণকৌমদী সঙ্কলন করেন। এই সময়ে বিপ্র বিশারদ বা বিশারদ চক্রবর্তী নামক একজন ব্রাহ্মণ মহাভারতের বিরাটপর্ব, বনপর্ব ও কর্ণপর্বের অনুবাদ করেন। মহারাজ লক্ষ্মীনারায়ণের রাজত্বকালে আর একজন শক্তিশালী কবি হলেন গোবিন্দ মিশ্র। ইনি দামোদর দেবের নির্দেশে শ্রীমদ্ভাগবদগীতার আঠারো পর্বের অনুবাদ করেন। গোবিন্দ মিশ্রের পুঁথি এখনো কোচবিহারে প্রাপ্ত হয়। (উত্তরবঙ্গ রাষ্ট্রীয় গ্রন্থাগার, পুঁথি নং ৩০ এবং উত্তরবঙ্গ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে অক্ষয়কুমার মৈত্রেয় মিউজিয়ামে দুটি পুঁথি রয়েছে, পুঁথি নং ১৪ ও ১৮)।

পিতা লক্ষ্মীনারায়ণের পরলোক প্রাপ্তির পর কুমার বীরনারায়ণ (১৬২৭-১৬৩২) সিংহাসনে আরোহণ করেন। মহারাজ বীরনারায়ণের নির্দেশে কবিশেখর নামক একজন ব্রাহ্মণ মহাভারতের ‘কিরাতপর্বের’ অনুবাদ করেন। উত্তরবঙ্গ রাষ্ট্রীয় গ্রন্থাগারে কবিশেখরের একটি হস্তলিখিত পুঁথি এখনও রক্ষিত আছে। (পুঁথি নং ৯০)। মহারাজ বীরনারায়ণের পুত্র মহারাজ প্রাণনারায়ণ (১৬৩২ খ্রী:) নিজে সংস্কৃত ভাষার ব্যাকরণ ও সাহিত্যে সুপণ্ডিত ছিলেন। কবিতা রচনায় এবং গীতবাদ্যেও তিনি দক্ষতা অর্জন করেছিলেন। তার সভাকবি শ্রীনাথ ব্রাহ্মণের কথ্যে মহারাজ প্রাণনারায়ণের কবিত্ব শক্তির প্রমাণ পাওয়া যায়।

‘কবিতা অমৃতবৃষ্টি করে অনুক্ষণ।

সকল কলায় অলঙ্কৃত বিচক্ষণ।।’

সপ্তদশ শতকের কবি শ্রীনাথ ব্রাহ্মণ মহাভারতের আদি পর্বের অনুবাদ করে দ্রোণপর্বেরও অনুবাদ শুরু করেন। তবে সমাপ্ত করতে পারেননি। সহজ-সরল সাবলীল ভাষার ব্যবহার তাঁর কাব্যে প্রাঞ্জল করে তুলেছে। কবি শ্রীনাথ ব্রাহ্মণ যে মহারাজ প্রাণনারায়ণের রাজসভায় বসে আদিপর্বের অনুবাদ করেন তার প্রমাণ পাওয়া যায় কাব্যের মধ্যে-

‘প্রাণনাথ দেব আজ্ঞা পরমাণে।

ভারতের পয়ার রচিলা সুবন্ধনে।।

আদিপর্ব মহাভারতের কথাচয়।

শ্রীনাথ ব্রাহ্মণে পদবন্ধে বিরচয়।।’

মহারাজ প্রাণনারায়ণের আর একজন সভাকবি রামেশ্বর ও মহাভারতের কয়েকটি পর্ব অনুবাদ করেছিলেন বলে অনুমান করা হয়।

মহারাজ প্রাণনারায়ণের পর সিংহাসনে বসেন তাঁরই জ্যেষ্ঠ পুত্র মোদনারায়ণ (১৬৬৫ খ্রী:)। তিনি পনেরো বৎসর ১৬৮০ খ্রী: পর্যন্ত রাজত্ব করেন। মোদনারায়ণের কোন পুত্র-সন্তান ছিল না। তাই এই সময় রাজ্যে জ্ঞাতি বিরোধ প্রবল হয়ে ওঠে। কোন শুদ্ধচিত্তা বা সাহিত্যচর্চার কোনরূপ বিকাশ এই সময় লক্ষ করা যায় না। মহারাজ প্রাণনারায়ণের রাজসভার কবি দ্বিজ কবিরাজ মোদনারায়ণের রাজসভায় বসে শ্রীনাথ ব্রাহ্মণের অসম্পূর্ণ মহাভারতের দ্রোণ পর্বের অনুবাদ সম্পূর্ণ করেন। তিনি দ্রোণ পর্বের ১১৪ নং অধ্যায় থেকে ২০৮ নং অধ্যায় পর্যন্ত অনুবাদ করেন।

মহারাজ মোদনারায়ণের পরলোক প্রাপ্তির পর তার ভ্রাতা বসুদেব নারায়ণ সিংহাসনে বসেন। তিনি দু-বছর (১৬৮০ থেকে ১৬৮২ খ্রী:) মাত্র রাজত্ব করেন। এই সময় রাজ্যে চরম অস্থিরতা শুরু হয়। সেই কারণে বসুদেব নারায়ণের রাজত্বকালে সাহিত্যচর্চার কোন নিদর্শন পাওয়া যায় না। বসুদেব নারায়ণ অপুত্রক ছিলেন। তাই বসুদেব নারায়ণের মৃত্যুর পর প্রাণনারায়ণের প্রপৌত্র এবং বসুদেব নারায়ণের ভ্রাতা বিষ্ণুনারায়ণের পৌত্র তথা মালনারায়ণের পুত্র মহীন্দ্রনারায়ণ সিংহাসনে বসেন। সিংহাসনে আরোহণ কালে তার বয়স হয়েছিল মাত্র পাঁচ বছর। তিনি ১৬১৩ খ্রী: পর্যন্ত রাজত্ব করেন। মহারাজ মহীন্দ্রনারায়ণ তরুণ হলেও অতি বলিষ্ঠ এবং ধর্মাচরণে পরম বৈষ্ণব ছিলেন। এই

সময় রাজসভা কবি দ্বিজরাম কবিরাজ বা রামসরস্বতী মহাভারতের ভীষ্মপর্বের অনুবাদ করেন। কাব্যের ভণিতায় রয়েছে—

“কমতার প্রতি মহিন্দ্র নৃপতি

তার আঙা পরমাণে।

নিদগতি রাম ছাড়ি আনকাম

রাম বল জত জনে।।’

মহীন্দ্রনারায়ণের আমলে দেবনাথ দ্বিজ নামে জনৈক কবি ‘জন্মাষ্টমী’ নামে একটি কাব্য রচনা করেন।

১৫৯৩ খ্রী: মহারাজ মহীন্দ্রনারায়ণ পরলোক গমন করেন। এই সময় রাজসিংহাসন নিয়ে পুনরায় একটি অরাজকতার সৃষ্টি হয়। অবশেষে ১৭০৪ খ্রী: ছত্রনাজীর মহীন্দ্রনারায়ণের চারপুত্রের মধ্যে জ্যেষ্ঠ জগৎ নারায়ণের পুত্র কুমার রূপনারায়ণকে সিংহাসনে বসান। মহারাজ রূপনারায়ণ ধর্মালোচনা বিষয়ে খুবই আগ্রহী ছিলেন। শাস্ত্রজ্ঞ এবং সুপণ্ডিত হিসেবেও তিনি খ্যাতি লাভ করেন। তবে মহারাজ রূপনারায়ণের রাজত্বকালে সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির কোন নজির পাওয়া যায় না। মহারাজ রূপনারায়ণ দেহত্যাগ করলে মহারাজ উপেন্দ্রনারায়ণ পিতৃসিংহাসনে বসেন (১৭১৪ খ্রী:)। এই সময় শ্রীনাথ ব্রাহ্মণ নামক অপর একজন কবি মহাভারতের বিরাটপর্ব অনুবাদ করেন। তাছাড়া মহারাজ উপেন্দ্রনারায়ণের ভ্রাতা কুমার খঙ্গনারায়ণের আঙায় নারায়ণ দ্বিজ নামক জনৈক ব্রাহ্মণ ‘নারদীয় পুরাণের’ পদ্যানুবাদ করেন। মহারাজ উপেন্দ্রনারায়ণের পর তারই পুত্র দেবেন্দ্রনারায়ণ মাত্র পাঁচ বৎসর বয়সে ১৭৬৩ খ্রী: সিংহাসনে বসেন। তিনি মাত্র দুই বৎসর রাজত্ব করেছিলেন। দেবেন্দ্রনারায়ণের মৃত্যুর পর মহারাজ উপেন্দ্রনারায়ণের ভ্রাতুষ্পুত্র এবং দেওয়ান খনারায়ণের তৃতীয় পুত্র কুমার ধৈর্যেন্দ্রনারায়ণ ১৭৬৫ খ্রী: সিংহাসনে বসেন। এই সময় কোচ-কামতা রাজ্যে বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক অস্থিরতা দেখা দেয়। অল্প সময়ের মধ্যে চারবার রাজসিংহাসন পরিবর্তন হয়। অবশেষে মহারাজ ধৈর্যেন্দ্রনারায়ণের পুত্র হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণ ১৭৮৩ খ্রী: থেকে ১৮৩৯ খ্রী: পর্যন্ত মোট ছাপ্পান্ন বৎসর রাজত্ব করেন। এই সময় কোচবিহার রাজসভার সাহিত্যে যেন এলিজাবেথীয়ান যুগের সূচনা হয়। মহারাজ স্বয়ং নিজে একজন কবি ও সাহিত্যরসিক ছিলেন। মহারাজা নরনারায়ণ ছাড়া কোচবিহার রাজসভায় আর কোন নরপতি হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণের মতো এত পণ্ডিত ও কবিদের পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা করেননি। সাহিত্যরসিক মহারাজ হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণ নিজে সংস্কৃত পুরাণ, উপ-পুরাণ, মহাভারত ও রামায়ণ ইত্যাদির অনুবাদ করে প্রচার করার জন্য বিশেষ আগ্রহী ছিলেন। তাঁর রাজত্বকালে একাধিক কবি ও সভাকবি তাঁর আদেশে বা

অনুপ্রেরণায় প্রাচীন সাহিত্যের অনুবাদে প্রবৃত্ত হন। মহারাজ হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণের সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির একটি চিত্র নিম্নে তুলে ধরা হল—

১. পুরাণের অনুবাদ—

ক. পদ্মপুরাণ – ক্রিয়াযোগসার

খ. স্কন্দপুরাণ— ব্রহ্মোত্তর খণ্ড

গ. বৃহদ্রম পুরাণ— মধ্য খণ্ড ও উত্তর খণ্ড

২. মহাভারত— সভাপর্ব, শল্যপর্ব, ঐষিক পর্ব, শান্তি পর্বের উপাখ্যান।

৩. রামায়ণ— সুন্দরকাণ্ড

৪. উপকথা— দু'খণ্ড

৫. ভক্তি সংগীত— গীতাবলী

মহারাজ হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণ ছাড়াও আরও একাধিক কবি এই সময় রামায়ণ ও মহাভারতের অনুবাদ করেন। যেমন—

রামায়ণ—

দ্বিজ রঘুরাম— কিষ্কিন্ধ্যাকাণ্ড, উত্তরকাণ্ড, অযোধ্যাকাণ্ড

দেবীনন্দন— কিষ্কিন্ধ্যাকাণ্ড

শ্রীনাথ দ্বিজ — কিষ্কিন্ধ্যা কাণ্ড ।

সারদানন্দ— উত্তরকাণ্ড ।

শতানন্দ— উত্তরকাণ্ড ।

ব্রজসুন্দর— লঙ্কাকাণ্ড ।

দ্বিজ রুদ্রদেব – অরণ্যকাণ্ড ।

মহাভারত-

দ্বিজ রঘুরাম— ভীষ্মপর্ব (আংশিক), আদিপর্ব ও শান্তিপর্ব।

ব্রজসুন্দর— সভাপর্ব (আংশিক)।

বৈদ্যনাথ— মুসলপর্ব, শান্তিপর্ব ও বনপর্বের অংশ বিশেষ।

রুদ্রদেব— আদিপর্ব।

মহীনাথ— মহাপ্রস্থানিকপর্ব, অশ্বমেধ পর্ব ও বনপর্ব।

লক্ষ্মীরাম— কর্ণপর্ব।

মনোহর দাস— কর্ণপর্ব।

দ্বিজ কীর্তিচন্দ্র — আশ্রমিকপর্ব। জয়দেব— সভাপর্ব (আংশিক)।

দ্বিজরাম নন্দন— শল্যপর্ব।

এছাড়া মহারাজ হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণের অন্যতম সভাকবি মহীনাথ মার্কণ্ডেয় চণ্ডীর অনুবাদ করেন। সভাকবি রিপুঞ্জয় এবং রঘুরাম অনুবাদ করেন পদ্মপুরাণ। রাজার আদেশে নৃসিংহ পুরাণের অনুবাদ করেন ব্রজসুন্দর ও রামনন্দন। এই সমস্ত পুরাণ চর্চা ছাড়াও এই সময় কিছু ইতিহাস চর্চারও নিদর্শন পাওয়া যায়। রাজার আদেশে জগদ্যদুর্লভ বিশ্বাস লিখেছিলেন ‘সঙ্গীতশঙ্কর’। এতে কোচবিহার রাজবংশের পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়। এছাড়া দুর্গাদাসের রচিত ‘হর-ভঞ্জিতরঙ্গ’ গ্রন্থটিও হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণের রাজত্বকালে রচিত রাজবংশের ইতিহাস। হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণের রাজসভার কবি মুঙ্গী জয়নাথ ঘোষ লেখেন ‘রাজোপাখ্যান’; যা কোচ-কামতা রাজাদের ইতিহাস।

১৮৩৯ খ্রী: মহারাজা হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণ কাশীধামে পরলোক গমন করেন, এবং এই সময় কুমার ব্রজেন্দ্রনারায়ণ সিংহাসন লাভের চেষ্টা করেন। কিন্তু কুমার শিবেন্দ্রনারায়ণ ভূপ স্বকীয় বুদ্ধি এবং প্রধান প্রধান রাজকর্মচারীদের সহায়তায় সিংহাসনে আরোহণ করেন। এবং ১৮৪৭ খ্রী: পর্যন্ত রাজত্ব করেন। মহারাজ শিবেন্দ্রনারায়ণ একজন সুকবি ছিলেন। তিনিও পিতার মতো কিছু শ্যামাসঙ্গীত রচনা করেন। শান্তপদ রচনায় তিনি পিতা হরেন্দ্রনারায়ণের মতো সৃজনশীলতার পরিচয় দিতে না পারলেও বাংলা শাস্ত্রসঙ্গীতের ধারায় তার অবদান কম নয়। তিনি মোট সাতচল্লিশটি গীত রচনা করেন। তার গানের মধ্যে আগমনী, শ্যামামায়ের জগৎজননী রূপ, মনোদীক্ষা এবং ভক্তের আকৃতির সংখ্যা বেশি। নিম্নে মহারাজ শিবেন্দ্রনারায়ণের ২৮ নং গীতের কয়েকটি চরণ তুলে ধরা হল—

এ দুঃখ সময় তারা

ডাকি মা তোমারে তারা,

পেঁড়াছি দুস্তরে দেখলা মা।

পদাশ্রিত জনে কৃপাবিলোকনে

ও রাঙ্গা চরণে স্থান দিও মা।’

মহারাজ শিবেন্দ্রনারায়ণের রাজত্বকালে বৈদ্যনাথ বিদ্যানিধির পুত্র সাধরচন্দ্র শর্মা ‘চণ্ডীকার ব্রতকথা’ রচনা করেন। এছাড়া মহারাজ শিবেন্দ্রনারায়ণের মহিষী কামেশ্বরী দেবীর আদেশে সভাকবি রিপুঞ্জয় দাস ‘রাজবংশাবলী’ নামে গদ্যে কোচবিহারের ইতিহাস রচনা করেন। গ্রন্থটি সমকালীন গদ্য রচনার একটি প্রকৃষ্ট উদাহরণ।

যাইহোক কোচ-কামতা রাজসভা সাহিত্যের প্রধান বৈশিষ্ট্য হল ব্যাপক পুরাণচর্চা। খ্রীষ্টীয় চতুর্দশ শতকের প্রথমার্ধে দুর্লভনারায়ণের সময় থেকে ঊনবিংশ শতকের দ্বিতীয়ার্ধে পর্যন্ত প্রায় পাঁচশ বৎসর ধরে রামায়ণ-মহাভারতের ক্লাসিকচর্চা ও বিবিধ পুরাণ চর্চার এতবেশি নিদর্শন বাংলাদেশে আর কোন রাজসভায় দেখা যায় না। এর প্রধান কারণ মূলত নরনারায়ণের রাজসভার শ্রেষ্ঠ কবি শঙ্করদেব। কেননা শঙ্করদেবের রচিত সাহিত্য এবং সৃষ্ট ধর্মীয় প্রভাব সে সময় সমগ্র কোচ-কামতা রাজ্যজুড়ে জনমানসে ব্যাপক প্রভাব ফেলেছিল এবং পরবর্তীকালে তাঁরই দুই শিষ্য মাধবদেব এবং দামোদরদেব সেই প্রভাবকে আরও বিস্তৃত এবং স্থায়ীত্বদান করেন। এই ভক্তিরসবাহী পৌরাণিক ধারার ঐতিহ্য কোচবিহার রাজসভায় সবচেয়ে বেশি ফলপ্রসূ হয়েছিল। যার প্রভাব বর্তমান সময়েও উত্তরবঙ্গ ও নিম্ন অসমে লক্ষ করা যায়।

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২. ঘোষ, ড. আনন্দগোপাল ও দাস, ড. নীলাংশুশেখর— উত্তরবঙ্গের ইতিহাস ও সমাজ-১, দীপালী পাবলিশার্স, চাঁচল, মালদহ, প্রথম প্রকাশ, এপ্রিল- ২০০৯, পৃ. ২১।
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Language, Ritual and Continuity: The Literary and Cultural Positioning of the Limbu Community

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Abstract

Language and culture serve as essential tools for forming an identity, particularly for the indigenous population navigating marginality within pluralistic nation-states. This article addresses the literary and cultural positioning of the Limbu people by applying frameworks of cultural representation and language politics. Despite their deep-rooted presence in the Himalayan regions of North Bengal and Sikkim, the Limbus have often been misrepresented or subsumed under the homogenised category of the dominant Nepali-speaking communities in both colonial and postcolonial narratives. The resultant erasure has contributed to a persistent identity crisis, exacerbated by state and scholarly discourses that conflate ethnicity, language and political affiliation.

If analysed closely culture and traditions that were believed to be practised by only the Limbus were being shared among different communities. The social, cultural and linguistic uniqueness of the tribe seemed threatened in the wake of what seems to be fluid and liable to change through the processes of assimilation, acculturation, as well as modernisation. It is only while struggling for their rights and resources that this tribe has started specifying their cultural and religious symbols along with their separate language and script as their primary motive for the preservation of their distinct culture and identity. Drawing upon the cross-cultural, continuously changing societal scenario, fluid boundaries and fluid identities, this paper attempts to examine the ongoing degenerative status of the Limbu identity and highlights the attempts made for its preservation through language and culture.

Key words: Literary, Cultural positioning, Cultural representation, Language politics, Modernisation, Continuity.

INTRODUCTION

The tiny mountainous state of Sikkim and the Himalayan region of North Bengal is a small region but rich in natural and cultural resources due to the blending of diverse tribes and native cultures, variegated bio-natural landscapes, snow-capped mountains and indigenous wonders. The varied population has fraternised this small region, making it a home for different tribes and indigenous ethnic people by cultivating distinctive culture, language, religion, history, tradition and mythology. One such distinctive populace is the Limbus. Hidden among this varied population is the history of this fringed tribe, their resistance, struggle, and survival. This marginal indigenous tribe was traditionally known as wanderers and hunters, hill and mountain dwellers, indigenous knowledge holders, users of medicinal herbs, physicians, nature worshippers, and animists who have had a strong attachment to the agro-pastoral tradition. They are one of the ethnic groups of Central and Eastern Himalayas living scattered in the erstwhile *Libuwan* country, the area of which extended from the western border of the Arun river to the eastern border of the Tista river, and the greater Himalayas in the North to the Terai area of the northern India, now mainly confined to the six districts of Nepal (Dhankuta, Teherathum, Sankhuvasobha, Tapleyjong, Panchthar and Ilam), parts of Darjeeling district and the western part of Sikkim. A series of political antagonism and peace treaties resulted in their land being divided further and further, thereby making the Limbus a community that struggled to keep their rich indigenous identity alive.

The ethnic groupings in the hill region of North Bengal are tribe based, where tribal groups are divided based on deep-rooted history and cultural division. One can see in recent times the formation of numerous tribal-based associations that seem busy reviving their lost tradition and culture. It is not that the issue of ethnicity was not felt as important in the past, but the emergence of ethnic identity as a major social and political issue in neighbouring Sikkim, especially, led to the emergence of various ethnic groupings trying to revive their old forgotten traditions. There are stories which attempt to show that the ethnic groups in Sikkim and the Himalayan region of North Bengal are more interrelated than divided. The process of synthesis and acculturation has been going on between people for centuries. The study of ethnicity and identity, therefore, becomes relevant in the light of modernisation and globalisation for understanding the emerging need felt among the members of this marginalised tribe to preserve and reconstruct their identity.

The Limbu population, which lives in areas of the Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim is an outstanding illustration of cultural endurance and historical marginalisation in the modern conversation about identity, heritage and determination. Kirati communities of the Eastern Himalayas have traditionally relied on their language, customs and oral traditions for political assertion, communal solidarity and cultural expression. The Limbu people's cultural identity is made apparent by their continuous ways of preserving and modifying their language and ritual practices, which stand in contrast to the homogenising efforts of the Nepalese state and also to the Indian state's disparate approach to multiculturalism. Their independent knowledge theory, too, which is based on memory, kinship and ecological balance, is revealed by their literary output, particularly through oral traditions and written forms.

This essay uses the three concepts of language, ritual and determination to examine the literary and cultural significance of the Limbu community. Using information gathered from ethnolinguistic studies, oral literature and recent institutional changes in both India and neighbouring Nepal, the essay tries to examine how the community navigates modernity without sacrificing its cultural roots. Furthermore, the essay also tries to examine the importance of the *Mundhum*, the sacred, oral Limbu scripture, as a means of transmitting indigenous knowledge and how its formalisation and recent documentations serve as both a way to keep the culture alive and subtly reject any form of integration. A shift from cultural anonymity to collective affirmation is indicated by the revival of the *Yakthungpan* language, modifications in the script and the inclusion of Limbu language in formal education.

LANGUAGE AS RESISTANCE AND IDENTITY MARKER

Language is one of the most effective identifiers, especially for indigenous groups that are either stateless or are only partially recognised. *Yakthungpan*, considered as the mother tongue of the Limbus is frequently referred to as the Limbu language. It is now essential to their cultural and ethnic rebirth. Rooted in the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of Sino-Tibetan languages, *Yakthungpan* carries deep cosmological and sociocultural significance of the Limbu worldview. As a linguistic system, it includes not only dialectical diversity such as *Panchthare*, *Tamarkhola*, *Phedape* and *Chhathare* but also a complex web of oral narratives and sacred epistemologies preserved through oral transmission across generations.ⁱ

The Limbu language was for centuries sidelined in the Nepali-dominated linguistic and educational landscape. While Nepali became the lingua franca of Nepal and the hill regions of

India through state institutions and military expansion, *Yakthungpan* remained primarily oral and localised. However, the post-1990 era witnessed a burgeoning ethno-linguistic consciousness among Limbu intellectuals, many of whom began to regard language revival as central to resisting cultural assimilation. At the school and university levels, movements to incorporate *Yakthungpan* in the educational curriculum gained traction in states like Sikkim.ⁱⁱ

The introduction of the *Sirijunga* script, an indigenous writing system revived in the 18th century by the legendary Limbu scholar Te-ongsi Sirijunga Xin Thebe, has added a textual dimension to what was predominantly an oral culture. Although influenced by Tibetan and Devanagari scripts in its evolution, *Sirijunga* remains a unique cultural symbol of Limbu identity. As a visual artefact, the script is often mobilised in protests, banners and community publications to assert indigenous authorship and cultural autonomy.ⁱⁱⁱ

THE CENTRALITY OF MUNDHUM: RITUAL LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE

The *Mundhum* functions as the theological, mythological, and ethical corpus of the Limbu people. Unlike sacred texts in literate traditions, the *Mundhum* has primarily been transmitted orally through performance, particularly by ritual specialists such as the *phedangmas*, *sambas* and *yeba-yemhas*. Scholars have long recognised that the linguistic landscape reflects diglossia—with the everyday vernacular (*Yakthungpan*) functioning alongside a form of Limbu used exclusively in ceremonial contexts.^{iv}

The ritual language of the *Mundhum* is characterised by symbolic parallelism, archaic vocabulary, and a performative rhythm. It not only narrates the origin of the cosmos but also regulates social conduct, defines moral norms, and offers interpretive frameworks for illness, death, and kinship. The *Mundhum* is recited during births, weddings, healing ceremonies, funerals, and seasonal transitions, thereby embedding the sacred in the everyday. However, the *Mundhum* is also not confined to sacred ceremonies alone but permeates everyday life and moral reasoning. It provides instructions on farming cycles, kingship obligations, ecological stewardship and healing practices. The knowledge embedded in *Mundhum* thus constitutes an alternative epistemology that challenges dominant Western or State-centered knowledge systems. In many ways, the *Mundhum* can be seen as a decolonial archive oral library that defies the erasures of colonial modernity and national homogenisation.^v

Mundhum is not merely descriptive but cosmogenic speech that enacts, transforms, and affirms the world.^{vi} In this sense, the *Mundhum* resists reduction into modern text-based epistemologies.

As George van Driem argues, the Limbu oral tradition represents a non-Western epistemic model in which language is “incantatory” rather than expository, aiming not to explain but to activate spiritual forces.^{vii} Thus, preserving the *Mundhum* is not only a cultural imperative but an epistemological one: it sustains a worldview distinct from both Brahmanical Hinduism and Western rationalism.

Efforts to transcribe, translate and teach the *Mundhum* in schools and colleges represent both a cultural revival and a political act. In Sikkim, the language has been formally included in the syllabus; leading to preservation and legitimisation in the eyes of the state. Such developments reflect the growing recognition of oral literature as a legitimate form of knowledge system.^{viii}

PRESERVING ORAL TRADITION: MUNDHUM AND THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF IDENTITY

At the core of Limbu cultural continuity is the oral tradition of the *Mundhum*. The preservation of Limbu identity is largely dependent on the generational transfer of cultural information. Through rituals, oral storytelling and everyday activities influenced by ancestral values, children in family and community framework not only learn the *Yakthungpan* language but also develop a profound awareness of their heritage. Younger generations might internalise the ethical and symbolic framework that determines their place in the world through this type of informal teaching, which is mostly conducted by elders and ritual practitioners. In contrast to traditional education frequently placing a higher priority on standardised information, intergenerational learning is personal, contextual and emotionally charged. It ties together the mundane with the sacred, the private with the public. In the words spoken at naming ceremonies, funerals and harvest festivals, children recognise their responsibilities to kin, land, and community. However, many of these conventional routes of transmission have been disrupted due to migration, linguistic shift and urbanisation.

In response, the restoration of these are being done through community-led efforts, including the creation of cultural centers, language immersion programs and the incorporation of rituals in official education. These initiatives aim to revitalise the continuity, where identity is actively and socially reproduced. They maintain cultural continuity requires intentional nurturing through shared practices, storytelling and symbolic belonging rather than passively through heredity alone.^{ix}

THE SIRIJUNGA SCRIPT AND THE POLITICS OF LITERACY

The Limbu script *Sirijunga*, embodies not just a mode of writing but also stands as a symbol of political and cultural independence. Often attributed to the 9th-century sage Sirijunga Hang and revived in the 18th century by Teongsi Sirijunga Xin Thebe, the Limbu language was brutally suppressed by the rulers of the Gorkha region in Nepal because they thought it was a threat to the dominance of the Nepali language. In the modern period, Iman Xin Chemjong's 20th-century scholarship revitalised the script from imminent extinction. He used the script to turn oral traditions, genealogies and cosmologies into written texts. This gave the Limbus access to a literary tradition that had long been denied institutional legitimacy.^x

The *Sirijunga* script is believed to represent Limbu phonology, including tones and glottal stops quite accurately. This is not possible with the Devnagiri or Roman scripts used by the dominant languages of the region. But more importantly, it performs a symbolic task: writing in the *Sirijunga* script gives the Limbus back control over their stories. In Sikkim, this has led to institutional gains with the language being taught in schools, colleges and universities with textbooks and qualified educators. However, in Nepal and the Darjeeling Hills the implementation of education has remained inconsistent or non-existent, highlighting the larger issues around the acknowledgement of indigenous people.^{xi}

The cultural impact of the *Sirijunga* script is significant, especially now that online platforms, mobile applications, and community-led workshops have expanded access and made it easier for young people to get involved. Digital literacy in *Sirijunga* has allowed diasporic Limbus to maintain cultural connections while resisting the linguistic homogenisation associated with national or state educational systems. This revival of the script is more than just a change in spelling; it has also changed how people live and know the Limbu way of life.

RITUAL AS PERFORMANCE AND RESISTANCE

Limbu rituals continue to be a sphere of cultural resilience. For the Limbus, rituals are not merely symbolic gestures but performances of memory, resistance and communal togetherness. For example, in the chantings of the Sam Mundhum during the burial ceremony, the story of the soul's journey through the spiritual worlds, naming ancestors and calling on the safe passage of the soul and seeking protection from the gods is observed. These rites serve not just as spiritual obligations but also as reservoirs of genealogical and mythological heritage.^{xii}

Additionally, healing rituals performed by the *phedangmas* or *sambas* offer indigenous diagnostic and therapeutic frameworks. They interpret illness not simply as a physiological disturbance, but as a spiritual imbalance often linked to violating community taboos or ancestral neglect. The ritual performances include chants, trance, offerings, and sometimes symbolic sacrifice, all structured through language that embodies metaphysical connections with forests, rivers and spirits.

These kinds of performances oppose biomedical systems and contest the idea that “modernity” requires secularisation or homogenisation. In actuality, they uphold an ecological ethic that views nonhuman beings as active participants in a world of relationships rather than as resources. In doing so, Limboo rituals counter both the caste-based ritual systems of South Asia and the anthropocentrism of Western modernity.

GENDER, KNOWLEDGE AND THE ROLE OF FEMALE RITUALISTS

A less frequently addressed yet important aspect of Limbu ritual life is the inclusion of female ritualists, known as *yemha*, who function as healers, mediums and custodians of *Mundhum* knowledge. Their role makes it harder to believe that religious authority in indigenous communities is always male-centric.

Ethnographic studies from Taplejung and Ilam in Nepal suggest that *yemha* frequently inherits spiritual roles through matrilineal lines and undergoes stringent initiation processes, including fasting, trance states and the memorisation of chants. These women not only perform healing rituals, but they also pass down family histories and tribal narratives through songs and chants. Their power does not come from written proof but from the trust of the community and the effectiveness of their spiritual practices. In this sense, they embody a feminist epistemology that privileges relational knowledge, intergenerational continuity and non-coercive pedagogy.

Recognising the role of *yemha* offers a corrective to both nationalist and anthropological narratives that overlook indigenous women as knowledge producers. Their marginalisation in formal institutions mirrors the broader invisibility of indigenous epistemologies in academia- a gap that this essay seeks to address.

LITERATURE, TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Limbu literature, both oral and written, functions as a counter-archive that resists dominant narratives of history, nation and identity. Writers like Bairagi Kainla, R.K. Limbu and D.D. Chemjong have reimagined traditional myths into poetry, short stories and critical essays.

Through literary form, they have both preserved and transformed the *Mundhum*, making it accessible to younger generations and non-Limbu readers.^{xiii}

The act of translation- from Limbu to Nepali to English plays a double role. On one hand, it facilitates cultural transmission; on the other, it risks epistemic flattening. Translating *Mundhum* into national languages often strips it of its rhythmic cadence, tonal variation and performative context. Scholars have warned that translation, if done uncritically, can turn a living tradition into text devoid of life.^{xiv}

Nonetheless, Limbu writers have innovated with genre and form. They combine personal narrative, mythology and political commentary to interrogate land dispossession, state violence and cultural alienation. In this way, literature becomes a mode of resistance writing- an aesthetic act that asserts presence where there has been erasure.

LITERARY DEVELOPMENTS AND THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

Although there is a continuous cultural renaissance taking place within the Limbu community, institutional support still remains insufficient. The usage of mother tongue education policies in Nepal is legally protected but rarely implemented. Furthermore, national censuses are usually seen to undercount ethnic minorities or group them under general headings like Nepali speakers, making it difficult to allocate resources for this tribe's development. Indigenous activists have criticised these practices, arguing that they are tools used to exclude them rather than include them. Therefore, state recognition, community agency, diaspora solidarity and scholarly engagements are essential for the survival of the Limbu language, literature and traditions.

Sikkim, on the other hand, has included the Limbu language in its state curriculum, which shows how important political will is. This formal inclusion reflects a larger effort to bring back Limbu identity within the Indian multicultural system of government. The addition of the *Sirijunga* script, the creation of textbooks and the works of people like B.B. Muringla in putting together dictionaries and grammar books are all examples of active literary activism. The publication of textbooks in the *Sirijunga* script, along with audio-visual media and community newspapers, has made Yakthungpan more accessible to younger generations who had been previously disconnected from their linguistic heritage.

Since the 1970s, a host of Limbu literary works in the form of stories, poems, epics and plays have been written. These works not only keep the oral stories alive but also serve as source texts for translation purposes. The establishment of the "Sukim Yakthung Sapsok Songchumbho," a

Limbu literary association from Sikkim, has been instrumental in organising seminars, publishing works and archiving the oral stories. Such literary endeavours are thus fostering a new generation of Limbu writers who are simultaneously experimental and rooted in their culture and traditions.

TOWARD AN INDIGENOUS MODERNITY

The case of the Limbus exemplifies the fact that preserving tradition is not the only way to ensure cultural survival, rather it requires a balancing act between past, present and future. For the Limbus, language, ritual and script are more than just identity markers; they are the sites of memory, and sites of resistance. The *Mundhum*, for instance, continues to deliver cosmological and moral frameworks to the Limbus, the *Sirijunga* script continues to assert scriptural sovereignty, and ritual performances continue to maintain intergenerational ties within the community.

In an era of globalisation, digital disruption and ecological crisis, indigenous epistemologies like those of the Limbus provide alternative models of sustainability, relationality and resilience. Their story is one of ongoing drama, movement and transformation rather than of disappearance. To comprehend and engage with these alternative models, one must develop an intellectual and moral sensibility. As researchers, authors and community members continue this work, they remind us that the goal is to listen, learn and amplify rather than to “save” a culture.

While continuing to engage with modern institutions, digital platforms, and governmental policies, the Limbu community also bases its activism on firmly rooted traditional customs. This two-way interaction represents what could be referred to as indigenous modernity- a state in which the community reframes modernity to fit its epistemic framework rather than rejecting or submitting to it. This strategy is evident in the way social media is used for sharing *Yakthungpan* poetry, Limbu culture and traditions, the digitisation of *Mundhum* recitations and the emergence of Limbu blogs and YouTube channels. Instead of undermining oral culture and traditions, technology is being used to preserve and spread them. The youth in spite of being bilingual or trilingual, are increasingly becoming more proactive in how they express their linguistic and cultural identities.

The Limbus, like other indigenous groups, also face challenges of being standardised. The risk of essentializing culture, internal hierarchies within the community and the marginalisation of indigeneity in tourism development discourse remain pressing concerns. Nonetheless, the vitality

of cultural production and the resilience of communal institutions point towards a future where cultural survival is not just about preservation but about critical transformation.

LANGUAGE, RITUAL AND RESISTANCE AS CULTURAL PRAXIS

Language and rituals are essential tools of resistance, cultural continuity and epistemic autonomy as established by the Limbu community. *Yakthungpan* and *Mundhum* are not some remnants of a past culture or custom; rather, they are active practices that help the community make its mark in a world that is changing rapidly. Through ritual recitations, literary publications, educational inclusion and digital activism, the Limbus present an alternative narrative to dominant historiographies that have long silenced and marginalised indigenous voices.

What then emerges is a model of cultural resilience that is dialogic, adaptive and forward-looking. Thus, the Limbu community's literary and cultural positioning challenges us to reevaluate the conceptual frameworks that govern language, literature and identity in the Himalayan region and beyond. Critical insights into the potential of indigenous modernities and the lasting power of oral knowledge systems are continuously being provided by the Limbu experience, even as local traditions continue to be challenged by global pressures.

CONCLUSION

The count of speakers in a populated area and, most significantly, the number of young speakers are factors that affect a language's health. A healthy language is not only spoken by the majority of people but is also used in the majority of communication-related contexts. This is the most crucial metric while determining the future of a language. The Limbus are a tribe very rich in their culture and tradition, and they believe that their ancestral tradition and culture are slowly starting to wither away. This fear of disintegration and subsequent marginalisation made the community members focus more on the preservation of their language, as it is also remarkably well attuned to their ways of life and value systems. The most important area of any language is kinship, and families speak the language for many generations. Loved ones speak to their children in the language and teach them in the language. As they learn the language, they learn all the morals and the teachings that go with it. All the endearments, all the nurturing, that is kinship, is tied into a living organism of a community by people who know each other, and they know they belong together. As stated earlier, the *Mundhum* (oral literature) is a source of inspiration, information and enlightenment for the Limbus. It is a source of the Limbu language, literature, culture and tradition. It is pertinent for the Limbus to rediscover their *Mundhum* and its

indigenous way of living. If it dies, the language and literature of the Limbu tribe face the risk of becoming extinct in the near future. Every recitation or narration of *Mundhum* must be preserved through recording, documenting, interviewing and published. The *Mundhum* teaching should be included in the academic curriculum, for in it lies the essence of being a Limbu. Institutions should be established for teaching and learning of *Mundhum* for the Limbu priest and common people for its development, promotion and conservation. The community itself, society and various associations should play a vital and most importantly an honest role rather than only mobilizing the community members for vested political interest, only then they would be able to make people aware and conscious of the rich culture and heritage that the Limbus once had and rightly understand the importance of preservation of their language, faith, way of life and belief system.

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^{vi} Gaenzle, Martin. *Ancestral Voices: Oral Ritual Texts and Their Social Contexts among the Mewahang Rai of East Nepal*. LIT Verlag, 2002.

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^{vii} Van Driem, George. *Languages of the Himalayas: An Ethno linguistic Handbook of Region*. Brill, 2001. Van Driem discusses the unique tonal and semantic complexity of the Limbu language and its ritual function.

^{viii} Limbu, Ramesh. “*Codifying the Sacred: Transcription of Mundhum in Modern Syllabi.*” *Himalayan Journal of Indigenous Literatures*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2015.

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Analyses epistemological loss through translation.

Literary Cartography of Kalimpong in Christopher K. Ahoy's *The Boy from Kalimpong*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Chuden Kabimo's *Faatsung*

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Abstract

Examining Kalimpong through various literary representations of the town transforms into a peculiarly intriguing effort at capturing the elusive spirit of the place. Christopher K. Ahoy gives us a different if rather conventional take on Kalimpong in his novel, *The Boy from Kalimpong* (2018). He gives a nostalgic perspective of a narrator far from the place he is writing about and looking at it not only from across that distance but also back in time. His novel is a microcosm of the real Kalimpong, captured in a particular moment in time. The wonder of the weekly haats, the old McFarlane Church building all merge together in this pseudo-fiction to create a fusion of disparate scenes. Michel Foucault in *Of Other Spaces* calls such a work a 'Persian rug', a carpet onto which a scene of a real Persian garden is enacted upon. Ahoy's work is one such 'rug', a minuscule encapsulation of life in the Kalimpong of a certain time and spirit. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) is as conventionally an accurate description of the hill town as one can find in contemporary literature. Desai's Kalimpong is a bubble, ever fluid, expanding-contracting, a space that constantly adjusts and readjusts itself to accommodate the young protagonist's journey. It is a traditional exploration of a place like in any other work of fiction. Chuden Kabimoo's *Faatsung* (2019) on the other hand executes the literary rejection of the Kantian division between space and society transforming space from mere geography into a vitally constitutive element of society and politics. His exploration of places long obscured in shadows, of the dozens of 'Kalimpongs' in Kalimpong shifts the focus from *Faatsung* being simply an ego-centric story to one involved in telling the tale of the land itself. This paper intends to explore the literary cartography of Kalimpong in select texts.

Keywords: Kalimpong, Representation, Space, Place, literary cartography

“This symbol of soil is something that has been embedded into my mind. I feel that generations of my family, both paternal and maternal, have held onto this concept of soil, of what becomes a house of what you can call a home.” - Aanchal Malhotra

The map, though a rather rudimentary device, can be a powerful conceptual tool when deployed with efficiency. Although most know the definition and the purpose of a map, this meagre tool continues to be a much-contested object or metaphor in critical theory and beyond. Mapping is therefore crucial to know and understand the geographical, cultural, economic and political knowledge of a place.

“Literary cartography examines mapped courses through not only their narrative strategies, but also through reading landscape as both a product of real (topography) and imagined (memory) places.¹ History, culture and identity are enclosed in the names of places. Kabimo through this narrative is attempting to disorient the readers of the evolved and Westernized names that these places are now identified by. Robert Tally writes, “Narrative itself is a form of mapping, organizing a data of life into recognizable patterns within understood the a result is a fiction, a mere representation of spaced place, whose function is to help the viewer or mapmaker, like the reader or writer, make sense of the world.”²

Convincing cases have been built upon the fact that the tradition of western cartography originated from the desire to systematically document and control the expansion of empires during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During the Renaissance, and into the following centuries, the ways in which European powers perceived and steadily charted the so-called "blank spaces" of the globe fundamentally changed with the advances of cartography. Some of these advances were because cartographers in the seventeenth century solved the problem of calculating longitude, which provided fixed coordinates predominantly in colonial zones and resulted in easier forms of navigation. In this sense, then, the western history of colonization and cartographic practice as employed by imperial powers were problematically interconnected. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, as Joseph Conrad's character Marlow laments in *Heart of Darkness*, the world "was not a blank space any-more.", While the imperial desire to traditionally map the blank spaces of the globe ostensibly ended after the Second World War, this vacuum allowed for more alternative forms of cartography that explored the multitudinous methods of experiencing space, rather than merely collecting data about such space. Here, in what the postmodern geographer

Edward Soja has called the "spatial turn," space contains meaning and creates a "place-based identity" that is, according to Joan Schwartz, "generated, negotiated, confirmed and contested" within various methods of mapping?"³

Faatsung, often interpreted as 'Story of the Soil' is one such map of the land. For a long period, in critical theory, time was given prominence whilst space was relegated to a background. However, in the postmodern era, space has emerged to occupy a central and important place in cultural and literary studies. History can now be read in relation to and on par with geography. Based on this, the history of Kalimpong, thus (as presented in *Faatsung*) cannot be isolated from the land-Kalimpong. To understand time and product-of-time, it is imperative to understand space and place and Kalimpong with its unique history and topography, raises curiosity among both travellers and scholars, becoming an enigmatic backdrop for many narratives. Numerous writers have presented and represented Kalimpong, its people, its culture and its topography through such lenses.

Christopher K. Ahoy in *The Boy from Kalimpong* traces the pre-1986 Kalimpong. According to him, Kalimpong town's first recorded mention was a fleeting reference by Ashley Eden (1831-1887) in the year 1860. A government official with the Bengal Civil service, Ashley Eden, arrived with the force that was ordered to invade the hill state of Sikkim in the Himalayas. In March 1861, he signed the Treaty of Tumling with Raja Sidkeong Namgyal, as a political agent of the British, securing protection to travelers in addition to free trade. Eden was appointed special envoy to the hill state of Bhutan in 1863 after his successful venture in Sikkim. However, his demands were rejected as no force accompanied him. He signed a somewhat fair treaty with the Bhutanese but the British Government did not ratify this treaty which resulted in a war. In fact, the Anglo-Bhutan war of 1864 ended only after the signing of the Treaty of Sinchula (1865) that ensured the Bhutanese-held territory to the East of the Teesta River was ceded to the British East India company. The region was sparsely populated then and it was divided into a subdivision of the Western Duars district, and within the next year, it was integrated into the district of Darjeeling. Kalimpong was to become a subdivision only in 1916.

This is the region that the author of "A Boy" takes his readers to - from misty Lava, 35 kilometres away from the main town Kalimpong to the bucolic locale of Loleygaon, 20 kilometres away, with the altitude of 4970 feet. For Ahoy, the latter sits in the lap of nature "illuminated by subdued sunlight filtering through the maze of pristine tall trees unsullied by humans."⁴ Meanwhile, he crowned the breathtaking view of Kanchenjunga range from

Loleygaon to be a worthy rival to the panorama of Darjeeling's Tiger Hill. Ahoy also mentions that landscapes of Mount Simvo, Mount Sinclu and others visible from Samthaar fondly remembers walking uphill to Dr. Graham's Homes School with his teacher A.R. Foning, the author of *Lepcha-My Vanishing Tribe* (1987)

This connection is crucial as Ahoy is fascinated by the Lepchas or the "Rongkup" or "Rong" - a tribal community composed of four main distinct communities: 'Renjongmu' of Sikkim; 'Tamsangmu' of Kalimpong, Kurseong and Mirik; 'Ilammu' of Ilam District of Nepal and the 'Promu' of Bhutan.

Lepcha land, or 'Mayel Lyang' was considered "the land of hidden paradise or the delightful region or abode", where Lepchas are autochthones. Their population began in the Neolithic (10,800-3,300 BC) age. Much of this information about these people has been determined from the vast documented information being discovered in the inscriptions on 'Long Choks' ('made to stand upright stones'). An article published in the Cultural Institute Government of West Bengal says, "Occurrence of Neolithic Implements on West Bengal" further establishes this reality.

Located off the National Highway 31-A which links Siliguri to Gangtok, "Kalimpong is at an approximate distance on a straight line as the crow flies 100 miles (162 kms) towards southeast" of Mount Everest. It is located approximately 80 kilometres from Siliguri town. Geographically, Kalimpong is situated east of Nepal, west of Bhutan, south of Tibet and north of Bangladesh, in the province of West Bengal, India. "Kalimpong's centre straddles on a ridge between Deolo Hill and Durpin Dara, situated at an altitude of 4,091 feet above the sea level...Deolo is located towards the east of the town." River Relli and River Teesta are two important rivers of Kalimpong.

The British General Mainwaring in the grammar of the Lepcha 'Rong' Language (1875) claimed that 'Rong Aring' or the Lepcha language was the oldest language in existence. He compiled the *Dictionary of the Lepcha Language* which was published posthumously in 1898. Impressively, Ahoy states that the Lepchas have given names for each and every species of butterfly found in the 'Mayel Lyang' region. General Mainwaring has included several such names of the flora and fauna in his dictionary.

Using these data, Christopher K. Ahoy presents a microscopic exploration of the Kalimpong of the Pre-Agitation Era - before the Gorkhaland movement that swept the place in the year 1986. For him, Kalimpong is a town of moderation, of balance. For example, Ahoy states that Kalimpong, unlike its neighbours, has a moderate, pleasant climate with five distinct seasons:

spring, summer, autumn, winter and the monsoons. This balance is reflected in its community and culture as well. Ahoy's novel places central focus on the marketplace commonly known as the 'Haat Bazaar' as one of the most exciting spots in Kalimpong. Held twice in a week- Wednesdays and Saturdays - the Haat runs from sunrise to sundown offering what the author calls, "the best organic agricultural and farming items, fresh vegetables, clothes, bags, umbrellas and spices are available...You may see a huge compound packed with people playing carrom boards...they may be enjoying Darjeeling tea, or local liquor... it is always an adventure walking through mixed traffic."

Literary cartography also questions the structure of the society. In the second chapter of Kabimo's novel, we find an episode that shows caste distinction. In this context, the landslide also can be read to be an indication of the changing societal norms leading to division in the caste system.

"...the Aleph, then constitutes a kind of deictic centre of the story: it is the place where the subjectivity of the narrator meets the objective reality of the universe at the moment when a key event takes place, when the narrator's vision occurs."⁵ In the same manner, Kalimpong is one such aleph, a didactic centre of the story becomes such a centre for the narrator in *Faatsung*.

"To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know your place." - E. Relph.

For Kabimo, Kalimpong and the dozens of mini Kalimpongs are the significant places, the ones that he strives to know and explore. Kalimpong recurs throughout the text and functions as locations of death and destruction, a site of revolution, a maze of colliding political ideologies and activities and a hub of multiculturalism, a landscape of memories or even as a space to call his own. Kalimpong, therefore becomes the protagonist of the text. The place where the violence takes place is the Kalimpong town and its periphery that gives a sense of a concrete location of the town, like the other places that are mentioned in the text.

Foucault's version of the history of space is divided into three epochs, which can be summed up as a movement from place (*lieu*), to space (*éten-due*), to something that he at first calls "the site" before settling on the more explicitly structuralist notion of a "set" or "bundle" of "relations" (*ensem-ble/faisceau de relations*). In the Middle Ages, he tells us, space was organized into "a hierarchical ensemble of places," with, for example, "sacred places and profane places; protected places and open, exposed places," and so on. He uses the word

"place" (lieu) no less than thirteen times in this passage (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 22). The Middle Ages, then, is the era of "emplacement" (emphasis added).? The following epoch, which he calls the era of "space" or "extension" (espace/étendue) begins in the seventeenth century with Galileo, who enables "the constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open space" (23). This rationalist conception of space is corrosive (In such a space the place of the Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved, as it were") but is characteristic of rationalist thought and will make possible the scientific progress that came in its wake. This characterization of the rationalist era's foregrounding of abstract space, we should note, corresponds precisely with Casey's account, except that Casey interprets this turn of events negatively (as a loss of place) and Foucault interprets it positively." Foucault refrains from making any explicit value judgments but clearly implies a preference for rationalized space. There is, at any rate, no indication of nostalgia for the loss of place during the Middle Ages. Indeed, Foucault's third stage in the history of space makes it clear that he believes the trend is toward increasing abstraction, an increasing distance from the kinds of medieval places that came preloaded with meaning, and that this is a good thing. Struggling at first to explain the third era of his informal chronology (the era of "the site"), Foucault tells us, somewhat obscurely, that it is defined by "relations of proximity between points or elements" (23). He then seeks to clarify his meaning by explaining that he means not geographical sites, nor even points in an abstract, geometrical space, but "relations" that can be described in terms of "series, trees, or grids" (23)⁶

The mini Kalimpong- Malbung was home to the narrator, where his childhood was spent; a site for memory and a place devoid of basic facilities, almost neglected and unnoticed. Due to this condition, the inhabitants of Malbung wanted to migrate to semi urban Kalimpong for better opportunities, transforming the place into a land of fulfilled dreams. Meanwhile urbanized, politically-charged Kalimpong is another maze for the narrator to explore the ideologies and activities that boils into the agitation movement of 1986. The narrator recounts the different groups functioning and fighting against each other - the CRPF sent to control anarchy in Kalimpong, another led by a local monikered "Captain", as well as another faction founded by a certain N.B. "Two complementary processes great work here, one being the process of establishing in the reader's mind an absolute frame of reference based on location of places that can be identified in terms of a map, the other being a concretisation of the location, sense of it as a real physical entity."⁷

The narrator also subtly gives an account of the local rebels like Norden, Naseem, Surya, Ramprasad among many who operated a code of honour and comradeship during the agitation based on the demand for a separate state, evoking in the readers the feeling of pity and fear. Through the character of the Leader, who is often referred to as Captain, as well as Nasheem, Norden and others, a true zeal for the land is shown. Till date, the fateful day of July 27, 1986, when many people were killed, is observed as Martyrs' Day (Shahid Diwas) in the Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts. The narrator narrates the incident of the day. "Thus, the historical dimension of outlives is complemented by a geographical awareness..."⁸

"Place places man in such a way that it reveals the eternal bounds of his existence and at the same time the depths of his freedman reality." - Martin Heidegger

As a sounding board for his individual and collective sense of life, death, memory and culture, history and the present, Kabimo's *Faatsung* engages with his native place, bringing to life the land, structures, streets and corners. The text addresses different sites and places of Kalimpong, initiating a dialogue between the author and the reader; acknowledging the significance of the place and of spatial location. The concrete and specific places he mentions, when Norden and his comrades go to trap the CRPF soldiers, their desire to take control of the place indicate the deeprooted link between identity and place. The sense of belonging as if land is embedded in the body is strongly presented in the narrative.

"The death [of Ripden] is associated from the beginning with the place, with particular locations, as is the notion of identity itself."⁹ Ripden is swept away by the landslide and his body is never found. Is Kabimo indicating the loss of identity of his community through the death of Ripden? There is a subtle echo of A.R. Foning's *Lepcha: My Vanishing Tribe* in this episode of the text. "What to do with this sense of loss, how to mourn it, rectify it, remains incomplete business"¹⁰ in *Faatsung*.

"Could fulfilment ever be felt as deeply as loss?"¹¹ is the question that is asked in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*.

"...Memory permeates places and attaches itself onto things, big and small... In memory, time becomes place... memory is 'living history', the remembered past that exists in the present" writes Sarah De Nardi et al and William Faulkner argues that "The past isn't dead. It's not even past." The past is also a social and mental construction, a personal and intimate perception, it has history that is diverse and varies from one person to another, one community to another. It has changed over time as well. Memory is a tool that connects individuals and society to the past and fuels their present and future. It holds, binds and

protects the reality that can often be altered by human intentions and it is these memories people ultimately run to in order to experience the past. It is instrumental in connecting people with place. Kalimpong, a secluded hill town in West Bengal, unfamiliar to many, is remembered mostly for the 1986 agitation. The place has largely been represented as a fertile ground for revolution. Most of the contemporary Indian fictions find Kalimpong and its neighbouring towns caught in the endless flux of protracted time, a time loop. Nonetheless, it would be unfair to remember Kalimpong for only its traumatic pasts and its afterlife. Though the blood-bath of 1986 is a memory that fuels its people every day, yet Kalimpong can be constructed through memories of the pre-1986 and post-1986 including that fateful year.

Literary cartography is an exploration of both physical (exterior) and psychological (interior) topographies” the boundaries and limitations of spaces function culturally through memory and history and not just geographically. How consistently memory and place serve to question how well one really knows history, a given landscape, and ultimately oneself. “The memory maps are not description of the land as much as cartographic expressions of sense of place, mediated by, reinforced by and shaped by memory.”

In Ahoy’s *The Boy from Kalimpong*, Kalimpong has been constructed through the memory of the narrator who was born and brought up in Kalimpong. The Kalimpong that the narrator Nigel Kenchinz Lai discusses is a land of ‘Mr. Karamkurung’ which he later came to realise was thunder and lightning, informing the climatic condition of the place. His memory of the lights going off, and the usage of kerosene lamps inform that Kalimpong town was yet to be completely developed. The poor medical facilities that caused the death of his friend Mary Maung Lai also talks about the state of Kalimpong during those times. To the narrator the people of the place are synonymous to the place itself. He refers to the Lepchas, the Tibetans, the Bhutanese and the Nepalese people. In his narration, he talks about Chyu-Rum-Fat’ a ritual performed by the Lepcha community to appease the gods. “Despite the influence of Hindu religion, ...the Lepcha people are continuing year-round festive activities and doing their best to keep up close to their traditions through many annual festivities.”¹² Through this memory he constructs a Kalimpong that has sacred spaces and culture that flourish. He remembers his grandfather and father building godowns for their Marwari clientele to store raw wool. It indicates that Kalimpong had become a trade centre and it accommodated people of various ethnicities. He also remembers the place as an enchanting one, where people of different religions rubbed shoulders with each other. The Christian churches of many denominations, Buddhist monasteries, Hindu temples coexisting in a single space along with

‘hava ghar’ or ‘wind shelter’ and eight-foot Queen Victoria statue shows Kalimpong as a town expanding to accommodate the inhabitants’ culture, beliefs and lifestyles. The narrator gives a tour of ‘haat-bazaar’ (market place) that excited him the most. For him, the ‘haat-bazaar’ was a place of unions and reunions. “Hence, going to the market was an occasion to wait but cherished, to meet good friends and renew acquaintances.”¹³ The periphery of Kalimpong, the mini Kalimpongs were showcased in the stalls at ‘Haat Bazaar’. It also is a symbol of diversity as it caters to the unique diverse ethnicities found in Kalimpong. The narrator frequently made trips to the ‘Haat’ with his mother. Enjoying the privilege of a citizen in America, he still recalls the customer-centric vendors who had knowledge about relationship building. The motor stand, Gompu’s restaurant, however informs about the urbanization of the town. “Although, the Dench’s home was not as equally magnificent as compared to the more well-to-do residents in Kalimpong, it was still one of those beautiful Colonial English Bungalows that mimicked the gardens of the South of England.”¹⁴ It signifies the impact British colonialism had upon Kalimpong. Ahoy, therefore constructs a Kalimpong that is semi-urban, silent yet accommodating people and cultures of different ethnicities as well as a town that is accommodative of change and growth.

In Kabimo’s *Faatsung* the journey from the landscape to the mindscape and vice-versa without effort. There are instances where the memory of the narrator and his friends along with his grandfather goes to attend a wedding of the couple belonging to the Chettri clan. Subtly, the narrator reveals how caste discrimination had crept even in Malbung. During the wedding feast the it was announced by the host of the wedding that the people belonging to the Lepcha tribe as well as the members of the *sanai* band (lower caste according to the Caste system) should go to the lower place and the people belonging to the Chettri clan should come up for the marriage feast. The social evil and its claws upon society is evoked while the narrator is unfolding the narrative. Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* also talks about the problem in society especially intercaste marriages. Sai’s mother was disowned by her parents, when they eloped indicating mixed marriages are not accepted easily in society. Though the place accommodated people of different ethnicities, yet the social, religious, economic and political spaces were too rigid and narrow to accommodate people of all faith, caste and religion. The echo of disparity, discrimination is runs as an undercurrent in these selected texts.

In the chapter titled ‘The Dream of the Village’, the narrator goes down the memory lane and gives different opinions through different characters, indicting the Kalimpong they would like

to see in the coming future. The school teacher who arrived in the village saw Malbung as a place where there is no “motorable road, no electricity supply, no hospital or health centres, no shops”. She gives a task to her students about sharing their visions about the future Mabung - the mini Kalimpong. The young narrator says that he does not want his village people to be drunkards but that the village produce people who will serve the nation. He wants a pitched road to his village. Juniram, another young character complains about the road, electricity. He finds the village empty. He wants to build a bridge over Ghis khola. He wishes to be a political leader and bring about the change. Then Hariprasad went up the stage and unveils about the social evil- caste discrimination. He also informs that he finds Christianity a safe space where he is accepted.

The narrator through memory of Nasim narrates the events that occurred in the year 1986 in Kalimpong. Nasim gives an account of how Norden and Nasim met Raju Sir with whom they started the agitation along with other insurgents. The Kalimpong constructed through the memory of Nasim is a Kalimpong burning with passion, aggression to demand their own land, where people from all ethnicities belonging to the region of Darjeeling district, were fighting for. The series of events are narrated through memory of Nasim. The individual and collective memory that Nasim unfolds talks about that fateful day the 27th of July, 1986 where many people were killed/martyred, when Kalimpong becomes the fertile ground for revolution. Like the fading image of Norden limping into disappearance, the cause of Gorkhaland movement of 1986 have faded from people’s memories, however, the land still feels the tremors and trauma of the revolution.

“All day, the colors had been those of dusk, mist moving like a water creature across the great flanks of mountains possessed of ocean shadows and depths. Briefly visible above the vapor, Kanchenjunga was a far peak whited out of ice, gathering the last of the light, a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summit.”¹⁵

Kiran Desai introduces Kalimpong in this manner to her readers in the beginning of the text. Though markedly different from Kabimo, these few lines, as in *Faatsung*, sets the tone for the rest of the novel. Unlike the former, “Inheritance,” portrays a more romanticised vision of Kalimpong. In Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, the romantic colonial hill town still exists, as do tales of love and loss.

However, hers is a more nuanced take on the age-old take, and in the process, the author presents us with an enduring portrayal of the landscape of Kalimpong, one that closely mirrors the trajectory of a young woman’s journey from adolescence into womanhood. While

Faatsung takes the Agitation movement head-on, *The Inheritance of Loss* skirts the subject, choosing to forgo the issue to focus on the internal mindscape of Sai's Kalimpong. However, several parallels do exist between the two novels, primarily in the theme of claiming. For example, like the narrator of *Faatsung*, Sai attempts to negotiate the space handed to her. While hers is not the dream-like city of the former, her Kalimpong is no less nuanced. She lives with her maternal grandfather Jemubhai Patel, a former judge with a penchant for Westernised habits. In the small town they live in, they are outsiders, both ethnically and culturally. The community of peers around them are exclusively non-local and the only contact Sai has with the ethnic Nepali population is through her domestic help, who remain a stratum below her. In this context, the attempt to name their house Cho Oyo can be read to be a half-hearted attempt to reconcile their identities with the place they reside. Thus, Sai's Kalimpong is a very restricted vision of the actual place - her contact to the actual places filtered through the allegiances of class and economic differences. Even Gyan, whom she considers to be her equal, is later revealed to be on a much lower societal rung. So, her experience of the town is coloured by this lingering feeling of distance - the Kalimpong she knows exists purely in her mind with the actual reality divided from her experience by position.

The novel, therefore, can be read to be an attempt to renegotiate her place in the community. This reading also enables us to see her attachment to Gyan himself as an effort to claim or at the very least immerse herself into the unfiltered experience of the place. The absence of belonging, or "loss" as the novel iterates, is the motor guiding her motivations in her relationship with Gyan. Her desire to be with him can be understood as a desperate wish to connect with the social fabric of the place. Sai, unlike the narrator of *Faatsung*, has inherited no palpable vision of Kalimpong. Instead, her experience of the place comes from her grandfather, and so, her Kalimpong is one of distance, difference, and a general withdrawal from the experience of the community.

However, her grandfather, despite his aversion to Indian customs, has somewhat managed to negotiate a space for himself within Kalimpong, and Sai must do the same. Therefore, Sai's yearning for Gyan and her consequential entry into the red-zone of Bong Busty can be read to be a desperate attempt at claiming this space for herself. She imprints on her tutor her longing to connect with the place, even to the point of endangering herself.

The narrator in *Faatsung* recounts that there is a dozen mini Kalimpongs within Kalimpong, locating the places that are otherwise invisible and hidden. *Faatsung* thematically revolves

around the places that are devoid of basic facilities like health centers, electricity and proper educational institutions. The novel draws a fine line between the rural and the urban Kalimpong, highlighting the differences between these two places. Faatsung is thus a true story about the soil, with Kalimpong as its central, non-human protagonist. Meanwhile in Sai's journey, the readers often encounter the familiar as well as the unfamiliar places of Kalimpong. *The Inheritance of Loss* sketches an outsider's perspective of Kalimpong, creating a map that tells the story of a young girl's yearning for a place of her own. The authors therefore, are the cartographers, with their narratives forming a map of Kalimpong.

In the selected texts the narrators often highlight history from below. The rural areas of Kalimpong are given preeminence. The marginalised places have been the focal points. The history of the ordinary people is told. In Kabimo's *Faatsung* the stories of the insurgents who fought in the field are highlighted instead of the leaders. Their stories are written. The story of Ram Prasad's wife, daughter of Buddhathoki who visited the insurgents' camp at Rousey daily in the hope of meeting her husband is told. Her efforts to meet her martyred husband, of whose demise she was unaware of eventually is drowned in the river. In the same manner the story of Ripden's mother and Norden's wife is also told. How she gave birth to a child out of wedlock and had to raise him until she disappeared without the physical, emotional and financial support of her husband because he was fighting for a greater cause. The Story of Rachel who died on that fateful day (27th July 1986) because she was invited by Nasim to support the cause, is told. Ripden, who was orphaned at a tender age and who was buried in the landslide at the prime of his youth, a casualty of the revolution, is also heard and seen in the novel.

The names of the martyred men are often remembered, their statues and busts erected in every nook and corner but the people who fought in the field and who suffered and sacrificed their lives are often forgotten. Nevertheless, the novel tells the history from below, commemorating most of the unsung heroes.

Not only so places that are usually unheard of are brought to light. Rousey, a mile away from Kalimpong becomes a centre or the camp for the insurgents. River Relli, many miles away from the urban Kalimpong becomes a training centre for the insurgent. Malbung, becomes a place where social, political, economic conditions of Kalimpong in the 1980s are represented. Places like 13th Mile, Pedong, Pudung, Sindepong, Topkhana, Bom Busti are highlighted.

While Desai's novel reveals the brewing tension that gave birth to the revolution. There were reports of "new dissatisfaction in the Hills, gathering insurgency, men and guns" and informs

the readers that Sai, an outsider who was yearning to belong to the place through her connection to the cook of Cho Oyu and Gyan, came across the deserted classrooms of Kalimpong College. She looked at Relli River and Bong Busti where Gyan was from and these places were unfamiliar or alien to her. Thus, the selected texts foreground the centering of the periphery and subtly represent the familiar spaces while mapping Kalimpong.

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Poetics of Displacement: Diaspora, Memory, and Home in the Poetry of Rohan Chhetri

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ABSTRACT

Rohan Chhetri is an Indian-Nepali poet and translator originally from the Dooars region of West Bengal, situated along the India-Bhutan border. This region is marked by geopolitical turmoil, linguistic syncretism, and ongoing identity crises, both historically and in contemporary times. His poetry collection *Lost, Hurt or In Transit Beautiful* has received international recognition for its evocative exploration of these themes. Through his work, Chhetri reconnects with his roots and expresses a deep love for his homeland and its essence. The poems reflect his personal journey of migration—from Dooars to Delhi, then to the U.S.—and the emotional weight of displacement and identity struggles. His writing invites readers to engage with a polyphonic narrative that captures the complex textures of borderlands, cultural dislocation, and the persistent longing for home. Rohan Chhetri uses his memories as a tool to weave personal and collective narratives, situating his work within the broader framework of *In Transit Beautiful*. As a poet deeply connected to the soil he comes from, Chhetri possesses the rare ability to articulate pain and loss with profound sensitivity. His language is vivid and enduring, and his expressions resonate like moving images. This paper aims to analyze a selection of his poems—including *Father, Farther: 1986*, *Singing Bone*, *Lamentation for a Failed Revolution*, *Bordersong*, *Dasai*, *The Intelligence of Hunger*, *Raidak River Thimphu* and *Grief Deer*—through the lens of diaspora, migration, memory, and home. By applying these theoretical frameworks, the paper seeks to trace Chhetri's poetic journey from the foothills of his hometown to the United States, presenting a compelling narrative of personal struggle, displacement, and creative triumph.

KEYWORDS: diaspora, memory, migration, home, Rohan Chhetri, Dooars, Houston

INTRODUCTION:

Rohan Chhetri is an Indian-Nepali poet and translator whose work is deeply rooted in the geopolitical, cultural, and linguistic complexities of the Dooars region in West Bengal—a borderland shared by India and Bhutan. This region, marked by historical and contemporary

turbulence, embodies a distinctive narrative of linguistic syncretism, socio-political marginality, and identity dislocation. Chhetri's poetic oeuvre reflects these entanglements, drawing upon personal and collective experiences of displacement, migration, and memory. Recipient of the Emerging Poets Prize (2015) and the Kundiman Poetry Prize (2018), Chhetri is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Houston, USA. His critically acclaimed collection, *Lost, Hurt, or In Transit Beautiful*, has garnered international recognition for its lyrical engagement with questions of belonging, cultural memory, and the poetics of exile. In this work, Chhetri reclaims his ancestral and geographical roots while simultaneously tracing the trajectory of his migration—from the Dooars to Delhi, and eventually to the United States. His poems are not merely personal reflections; they articulate the diasporic condition, the trauma of dislocation, and the enduring search for a home. Through a polyphonic and sensuous evocation of landscapes, border towns, and cultural memory, Chhetri's poetry explores themes of liminality, cultural hybridity, and the mythos of nationhood. His work offers critical insights into the lived realities of borderland communities, challenging dominant narratives of identity and national belonging. The poems serve as both artistic expressions and cultural documents, foregrounding the intersection of personal memory with collective history. This paper undertakes a close reading of selected poems from *Lost, Hurt, or In Transit Beautiful*—specifically “Father, Farther: 1986”, “Singing Bone”, “Lamentation for a Failed Revolution”, “Bordersong”, “Dasai”, “The Intelligence of Hunger”, “Raidak River, Thimphu” and “Grief Deer”. It aims to trace the interwoven voices of diaspora, migration, and home, while contextualizing these themes within broader frameworks of regional history, cultural values, and linguistic identity. Anchored in migration theory and diaspora studies, this qualitative study draws upon both primary texts and relevant secondary literature to examine how contemporary regional writers, such as Chhetri, employ poetry as a mode of cultural preservation, resistance, and reconstruction. Ultimately, Chhetri's poetic voice resonates as a collective lament and assertion—from the Himalayan foothills to transnational diasporas—on the meanings of loss, memory, and the enduring desire for return.

DISCUSSION:

Rohan Chhetri in conversation with his editor Kristina Marie Darling once had mentioned that, “My poetic impulse is a baroque one which is well suited to the syncretic, non-linear, anti-neocolonial poetics that can accommodate politics and revolution from the margins, the fabular, folk horror and mythology, the motif of katabatic descent the marriage of the

classical and the local etc. -all of this prised through the multiple poetic traditions I write out of as a Nepali-Indian Anglophone writer”¹. His poetic practice, as articulated in his conversation with Darling, reflects a consciously layered and politically resonant aesthetic. His baroque impulse, commitment to syncretism, and grounding in postcolonial resistance mark him as a significant voice in contemporary Anglophone poetry exemplifying how poetry can function as both personal expression and cultural critique bridging the intimate and the historical, the mythical and the political. Rohan Chhetri’s poetics subtly but powerfully reflect the emotional and cultural landscape of diaspora and migration. Migration plays a central, though often nuanced and metaphorical, role in his poetry. While he may not always foreground literal migration in his work, it deeply informs his themes of displacement, identity, language and cultural hybridity.

“The term diaspora is referred as a forced dispersal and displacement, collective trauma, cultural flowering, a troubled relationship with the past, transcending frontiers etc. However, the term diaspora has been expanded to incorporate situations that are not associated with forced dispersal or a desire to return.”² (Agnew, 04). While Rohan Chhetri’s migration may be categorized as voluntary rather than forced, his poetry reveals the affective dimensions of displacement that accompany even non-coercive migratory movements. Drawing from the emotional geography of migration, his work foregrounds the psychological dislocation, identity negotiation, and lingering sense of estrangement that characterize the migrant condition, ensuring that the pain of migration is neither overlooked nor unacknowledged by his readers. Rohan Chhetri’s poetry reflects a deeply transnational sense of self and community, engaging with themes of ethnicity, ancestral memory, and a shared past marked by displacement and longing. His work captures the diasporic tension between the place of his birth in the Dooars region of India and his current life abroad, weaving these dual realities into a rich poetic tapestry. Chhetri draws upon personal memories and lived experiences to create evocative verses that speak to both individual and collective histories. His poetry explores the conflict between a metaphorical notion of home and the tangible, remembered homeland, highlighting the complexities of identity shaped by migration. By integrating intellectual, cultural, and emotional resources, Chhetri constructs a poetic voice that transcends geographic and social boundaries, resonating with a global audience.

Rohan Chhetri’s poetry can be critically situated within Pierre Nora’s conceptual framework of *lieux de mémoire*³—sites of memory that arise where living memory fades and history begins. While Chhetri’s migration is voluntary, his poetic engagement with the past reveals the affective residues of displacement and a deep entanglement with collective memory. As

Nora argues in “*Between Memory and History*,” (Nora, 1989) memory is selective, emotionally charged, and rooted in the personal and collective consciousness, while history is a distanced, objective reconstruction. Chhetri’s verses often inhabit this liminal space between memory and history, transforming his recollections of home, familial ties, and cultural dislocation into symbolic sites of memory. These poetic spaces—infused with nostalgia, grief, and longing—act as *lieux de mémoire*, preserving fragments of identity and belonging that resist the flattening tendencies of historical narration. Through this dynamic, Chhetri not only chronicles a diasporic experience but also critiques the erasures and silences within official histories, asserting the Rohan Chhetri’s poetry collection *Lost, Hurt, or in Transit Beautiful* is structurally and thematically divided into four sections, with the opening section titled **Katabasis**. While katabasis traditionally refers to a descent into the underworld in classical literature, Chhetri adapts it through a Nepali linguistic and cultural lens to mean “Where have you stayed?”—a phrase that evokes self-interrogation and existential displacement. This title signals a journey inward, marked by longing and an acute awareness of being unmoored from a stable sense of home. The poet, now residing far from his place of origin, engages memory as both a navigational tool and an emotional repository in his effort to reimagine and reconnect with his homeland. The joy of return is palpably rendered in his verse, yet it is inextricably intertwined with the melancholia of lost dreams and the trauma embedded in the very idea of home. This ambivalence is especially evident in the poem “*Lamentation of Failed Revolution*”⁴, from the Katabasis section, where Chhetri reflects on the unfulfilled promises of political and personal histories. He writes;

“Another afternoon a fifteen -year -old boy
Hear the bullet thud to breast like second heart
Pain’s rubbery percussion the way he looked sup
Mouth a shucked-oyster wobble alive
In the elongating horror A nurse dressing a medieval coin-
sized chunk of skin fallen off the areola
where a round radiating wound his mother
beside him beside herself you’re lucky they didn’t
shoot you with lead Every failed revolution is a child
learning the edge of himself Every revolution is a child grown before the fire” (Chhetri, 2021)

This excerpt encapsulates the loss of innocence, the personal toll of political upheaval, and the intergenerational trauma of failed social movements. Chhetri does not glorify revolution;

instead, he reveals its cost—especially for the young and vulnerable. The poem turns the revolutionary child into a tragic symbol: both witness and victim of historical failure. It also functions as a *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora’s “site of memory”), preserving the emotional truth of forgotten or failed struggles, giving voice to those marginalized by both history and politics.

“Every revolution is a child grown before the fire”⁵

This final line creates a poignant contrast. While the previous line focused on the pain of failed revolutions, this one reflects on revolutions in general—how they often demand the premature maturation of youth. “Before the fire” symbolizes exposure to danger, violence, and ideological struggle. Children must grow up too quickly in the shadow of political conflict. Through this lamentation, Chhetri transforms personal grief into collective memory, aligning with Pierre Nora’s notion of *lieux de mémoire*, where poetry becomes a site of emotional and historical convergence—preserving what lived experience alone can no longer sustain.

Toni Morrison (1990)⁶ compellingly likens memory to water—fluid, temporal, and dynamic rather than fixed or stable. Memory, in this sense, does not merely preserve the past but actively shapes and reshapes it, often igniting the imagination and enabling individuals to reconstruct home as either a sanctuary imbued with longing and nostalgia or a contested site marked by vulnerability and trauma. This conceptualization is particularly resonant in Rohan Chhetri’s “*Lamentation of Failed Revolution*,” where memory serves as both a refuge and a reckoning. The poem channels a profound sense of pathos, rooted in the collective and inherited trauma of the failed Gorkhaland revolution of 1986—a historical moment characterized by state violence, broken promises, and political betrayal. Chhetri’s poetic memory revives not only his own past but that of his father, grandfather, mother, and countless other Nepali youths who bore the brunt of that brutal suppression. This intergenerational memory gains renewed urgency in the context of the 2017 unrest, when the imposition of Bengali as a mandatory language in schools by the Bengal government became a symbol of neo-colonial domination. Language, weaponized as a tool of cultural erasure, functioned to further marginalize the Indian-Nepali community, pushing them further down the socio-political hierarchy. The revolution, which had once aspired to assert the identity and recognition of Indian-Nepalis within the Indian nation-state, ultimately culminated in chaos, despair, and widespread displacement. What it yielded instead was a legacy of bloodshed, shattered aspirations, and forced migration—especially among the youth.

The **Katabasis** section of Chhetri's *Lost, Hurt, or in Transit Beautiful* thus emerges as a poetic lineage into the underworld of collective memory and political disillusionment. It renders the inescapable losses—of people, relationships, and a stable notion of home—as central to the diasporic experience. In invoking memory as both burden and inheritance, Chhetri aligns with Morrison's vision, revealing how the recollection of past traumas can simultaneously haunt the present and anchor a resistant sense of identity.

In Chhetri's poetry, there are numerous references to his familial history, particularly the lives and deaths of his ancestors. This recurring motif reveals how deeply rooted his poetic imagination is in personal and ancestral memory. Chhetri positions his lineage not merely as background material but as a foundational source of knowledge and creative inspiration. His engagement with familial history becomes a means of self-definition, allowing him to explore questions of identity, memory, and belonging. The act of remembering becomes both personal and political, linking individual experience with collective memory. In the poem "*The Singing Bone*"⁷, for instance, he writes;

"I held my insides, bile-soaked, where joy
Trembled. Prospect of home washed in the retch
Of anxiety. My history of nausea in the cold half-
Light of childhood, where did it come from? Mother,
Or the long descent in the old manner of hell-
The asphalt frozen, slippery all the way home." (Chhetri, 2021)

"*The Singing Bone*" vividly conveys the poet's intense emotional and physical distress, intertwining personal history with visceral bodily sensations. The phrase "I held my insides, bile-soaked, where joy / Trembled" suggests a profound internal conflict: he experiences a fragile, trembling sense of joy that is immediately undermined by nausea and discomfort. Bile, traditionally associated with bitterness and sickness, symbolizes the corrosive emotional weight the speaker carries—possibly the inherited trauma or anxieties passed down through familial history. The "Prospect of home washed in the retch / Of anxiety" frames the idea of "home" as simultaneously a place of potential comfort and deep unease. The home, often considered a site of safety and belonging, here is disrupted by the speaker's internal turmoil, suggesting that the familial past is fraught with painful memories or unresolved tensions. "My history of nausea in the cold half-Light of childhood" explicitly connects the physical sensation of nausea to a formative period, implying that the poet's emotional responses are not isolated but rooted in childhood experiences.

The poem evokes the poet's memory of a shaman playing a bone instrument at midnight—a haunting auditory image that becomes a gateway into a layered excavation of personal, familial, and historical pasts. Through this act of remembrance, the poet unravels the colonial history of his border-town birthplace, the ancestral struggles that shaped his lineage, and the intimate narratives of his own family. Interwoven with these are the nostalgic textures of childhood experiences, which collectively form the imaginative and emotional foundation of his poetic practice. Memory and nostalgia are not mere sentimental gestures in this context; rather, they operate as epistemological tools—means by which the poet accesses deeper truths about self and place. It is through this retrospective gaze that the poet draws closer to a long-lost sense of home and homeland, suggesting that reconciliation and joy are made possible through the act of remembering.

The figure of the shaman in Chhetri's "*The Singing Bone*" carries profound symbolic and cultural significance. Traditionally, the shaman acts as a mediator between the physical and spiritual worlds, a conduit through which ancestral voices, communal memory, and healing practices are transmitted. In the poem, the sound of the bone played at midnight by the shaman becomes a sonic emblem of ancestral presence and spiritual continuity. This auditory memory is not merely a personal recollection but a ritualistic invocation—one that enables the poet to access suppressed or forgotten histories. The shaman's presence gestures toward indigenous epistemologies that resist colonial erasure, positioning oral tradition and ritual as legitimate sources of knowledge and identity. In this way, the shaman becomes a symbolic guide for the poet, facilitating a journey inward to recover fragments of self and lineage lost to time, displacement, or historical violence. By anchoring the poem in this moment of ritual sound, Chhetri not only honors his cultural heritage but also underscores the transformative power of memory, where poetry itself becomes an act of shamanic retrieval and healing.

The second section of Chhetri's collection is titled **Locus Amoenus**, a Latin term traditionally denoting a "pleasant place" or an idealized landscape of safety, love, and repose. Rooted in classical literature, the **locus amoenus** often signifies a pastoral, utopian retreat from the chaos of the world. However, Chhetri radically reconfigures this trope. His vision of utopia is destabilized and paradoxical—imbued not only with intimacy and beauty, but also with violence, vulnerability, and unease. In his poetic reimagining, love becomes entangled with danger, peace is shadowed by pain, and beauty exists alongside grotesqueness. This duality resists idealization, offering instead a complex emotional geography in which opposites coexist and often collide. Chhetri's utopia is not an escape from reality, but a deeply personal terrain marked by memory, displacement, and loss. His past is not one of singular clarity or

comfort, but rather one in which the sublime is inseparable from the traumatic. These tensions are most compellingly explored in the poem “*Bordersong*”⁸, where the interplay between yearning and threat, beauty and violence, finds its fullest expression. He writes:

“In the night fragrant with the tea gardens’ first flush
We heard the pain-astonished men thrashing upside down
As a baton tore welts into their calves.
Our tall house stood downwind of a peaceful kingdom’s border.
Odor of fermented betelnut. What the Rimpoche once
Bestowed to the cannibals in lieu of their blood-
Rimmed thirst & craving of gnawbone.” (Chhetri, 2021)

The poem explores the persistent undercurrents of violence and moral disengagement within a landscape marked by sensory beauty and spiritual heritage. Through the stark juxtaposition of the “tea gardens’ first flush” with the brutal image of “pain-astonished men thrashing upside down,” the speaker evokes a world where pastoral serenity coexists uneasily with systemic cruelty. The spatial positioning of the observer— “our tall house stood downwind”—underscores a thematic concern with passive complicity, as those at a remove from violence remain sheltered yet silently implicated. The reference to the Rimpoche and the offering of fermented betelnut invokes a memory of cultural and spiritual attempts to mediate human savagery, yet this gesture is rendered futile in the face of unrelenting “thirst & craving of gnawbone.” Here, the poem critiques not only the failure of moral and spiritual interventions but also the enduring presence of primal, dehumanizing impulses beneath the surface of civilization. The poem confronts the reader with the uncomfortable proximity between beauty and brutality, and the ease with which violence can be normalized or ignored when witnessed from a distance.

In the same section, there is another poem titled “*Father, farther: 1986*”⁹, which transports us to the significant historical moment of 1986, when the agitation for a separate state was at its peak—marked by widespread turmoil and violence. The poem opens with the evocative line, “**Feed them the land, that is what they’re fighting for**”¹⁰, setting the tone for a vivid depiction of generational identity crises and the continuous sacrifices made in the pursuit of recognition and belonging. It portrays the severe atrocities—violence, brutal rapes, hunger, and systemic manipulation—inflicted upon the Indian Nepali-speaking people of the region. These acts are shown as deliberate attempts to suppress their voices and distort their struggle. The poet retreats into a period of introspective hibernation to craft this poignant work, aiming to immortalize his people’s history, memory, and wounds. His current life in the United States

provides him the distance to reflect deeply on the meanings of migration and home, themes that resonate powerfully throughout his poetry.

This poem presents a poignant meditation on familial fragmentation and the sociopolitical turmoil underlying personal experience. The father's increasing intoxication functions as a metaphor for his emotional and psychological withdrawal, distancing himself not only from the immediate domestic sphere but also from the intimate bond with the mother. The mother's presence, marked by her solitary movements in an "unheated quarter-house" and her ritualistic gesture of adjusting the bindi, evokes themes of endurance and cultural identity amidst hardship. The reference to the unborn child, "not there yet" yet simultaneously "stilled on arrival," encapsulates the trauma of loss and the rupture of generational continuity. The father's whispered response to an outsider's question— "this country of savages"— underscores the intersection of private grief with broader national or colonial violence, suggesting that the family's discord is emblematic of systemic brutality and displacement. The poem thus intertwines intimate domesticity with historical trauma, illuminating how personal narratives are inextricably linked to collective memory and political struggle.

Jeffrey K. Olick's¹¹ theorization of collective memory as both shared representation and social practice provides a compelling framework for understanding the function of memory in Rohan Chhetri's poetry. Chhetri's work engages with collective memory not merely as a static repository of shared narratives but as a dynamic and performative process through which histories of displacement, migration, and identity are actively negotiated and reimagined. In alignment with Olick's first concept, Chhetri's poems invoke collective memory as a field of common symbols and narratives that articulate the experiences of diasporic and cultural communities, grounding individual subjectivities within broader sociohistorical contexts. Simultaneously, Chhetri's poetic practice embodies Olick's second concept by treating memory as an active social process—his language and form disrupt linear historical accounts and official historiographies, thereby foregrounding memory's mutability and the contested nature of historical knowledge. Through this dual engagement, Chhetri's poetry exemplifies how collective memory functions both as a repository of communal identity and as a site of continual reinterpretation, enabling a poetics that challenges, reconstructs, and revitalizes collective understandings of the past.

The poet's depiction of poem "*Dasai*"¹² functions as a potent site of collective and personal memory, where ritual and celebration converge to reinforce cultural identity within the Indian Nepali community. By invoking vivid sensory details—such as the application of the Tika made from rice beads, vermilion, and curd—and the communal activities of singing, dancing,

and sharing traditional cuisine, the poem articulates how festival practices serve as embodied enactments of cultural continuity. These ritualized celebrations are not merely festive occasions but act as mnemonic devices that preserve and transmit cultural knowledge across generations, particularly for diasporic communities geographically distanced from their homeland. The nostalgic recollections of **Dasai** in the poem reveal the festival as a temporal portal, enabling the speaker and community to access fragments of a shared past that affirm identity, belonging, and resilience amidst displacement. Thus, the poem foregrounds how the memory of festival celebration becomes a crucial means of negotiating cultural survival and intergenerational connection in contexts of migration and cultural hybridity. He very fondly writes;

“We’ll forget the way to the homestead. But today, we’re going there, swaying in the black of this truck, singing, foreheads itchy and fragrant in a pink crust of vermilion, yogurt, rice beads. This is the day that brings the branches back to seed, the blood back to the hearth.” (Chhetri, 2021)

The poem uses the festival of **Dasai** to show how memories of cultural celebrations help keep a community’s identity alive, especially when people live far from their homeland. The details about the Tika (a special mark made from rice, vermilion, and curd) and the joyful activities like singing, dancing, and eating traditional food highlight how these rituals are important ways of remembering and passing on culture. These celebrations aren’t just parties—they’re like a bridge to the past that connect people to their heritage and each other.

The third section of the collection, titled **Erato**—named after the Greek muse of lyric poetry—explores the emotional landscape of the poet’s diasporic existence, particularly his experiences in New Delhi and Los Angeles. This section is marked by a lyrical introspection that bridges memory, displacement, and artistic creation. In the poem “*The Intelligence of Hunger*”¹³, the poet reflects on his early life in the Himalayan foothills, invoking vivid recollections of natural and political disturbances—earthquakes, gunfire, and rampaging elephants—that defined his sense of home. These memories stand in stark contrast to the structured, urban realities of his present life, forming a psychological and emotional tension between a tormented past and a seemingly progressive present. The space between these two worlds becomes the fertile ground for poetic expression, a liminal zone where trauma transforms into lyricism. Through this continuous act of writing, the poet reshapes absence and dislocation into beauty and meaning. His phrase “**in transit beautiful**” encapsulates this dynamic: it suggests that in moments of fragmentation and spatial disjunction, there exists the potential for renewal, creativity, and forward movement. The poem thus affirms that poetry

itself becomes a vessel for navigating identity, reconciling memory, and imagining possibility. He writes;

“The homeless outside their bright tents
Camped on the pavement along Cesar Chavez pouring
Water over their napes in the heat. A brush fire
Spread down the barren hills that afternoon, greasy
Orange glow across the LA skyline. A small poem
Gets written in our sleep beneath the din
of enormous questions stomping the streets.” (Chhetri, 2021)

In these lines, the poet juxtaposes the stark visibility of homelessness against the backdrop of urban affluence and environmental degradation in Los Angeles. The “bright tents” pitched along Cesar Chavez Avenue highlight both the resilience and marginalization of the unhoused, who attempt to maintain dignity by pouring water over their bodies under oppressive heat. The brush fire that “spread down the barren hills” and cast a “greasy orange glow” across the skyline becomes a metaphor for both environmental collapse and the broader instability pervading urban life. Amid this turmoil, the poet introduces the idea of a “small poem” written in sleep—an unconscious or quiet act of resistance and creation. This poetic gesture exists beneath “the din / of enormous questions stomping the streets,” evoking the overwhelming scale of societal issues such as inequality, displacement, and ecological crisis. In this tension between fragility and chaos, the poem asserts the quiet, enduring power of art to bear witness, to endure, and to distill meaning from fragmentation.

Another significant poem that contributes to the exploration of memory and loss in the collection is “*Raidak River Thimphu*”¹⁴, which is imbued with a poignant elegiac tone. The poem memorializes the poet’s late childhood friend, whose untimely death is attributed to the overwhelming force of the Raidak River—a symbol of nature’s indifference and uncontrollable power. The river, described in both its visual grandeur and its treacherous unpredictability, becomes a central image through which the poet grapples with the emotional weight of personal grief. The landscape, viewed from the border city, is rendered with both awe and sorrow, emphasizing the tension between beauty and danger. Through this juxtaposition, the poem meditates on the fragility of human life in the face of nature’s vast and often destructive scale. The Raidak River thus serves not only as a geographical marker but as a metaphor for the uncontainable forces of loss, memory, and mortality that shape the poet’s inner world.

“In my language there is a name for this music

This shape this integritas
But standing there the dusk and the gray fog gulping in
I shivered and couldn't remember a thing" (Chhetri, 2021)

In these quoted lines, the poet alludes to an unspoken cultural or linguistic reservoir that once offered meaning, now obscured by "dusk" and "gray fog." The inability to recall a word in his own language signifies a deeper estrangement, a disconnection from the very roots that once grounded him. The poem reveals poet's effort to navigate this space between remembrance and loss, between the instinct to name and the failure of language to fully recover what has been lost. Nature, whether in the form of a river or an encroaching fog—serves as a powerful symbol of the unknowable, and it is precisely in this space of unknowing that the poet's lyrical imagination finds its most poignant expression.

The final section of the collection, titled **Grief Deer**, delves into the multiplicity of griefs through an elevated lyrical register, functioning as both a culmination and transformation of the themes explored in the preceding sections. The poet himself identifies this segment as the "**last dark point of the circle**,"¹⁵ suggesting a symbolic movement toward resolution or emerging light. The title evokes an image of vulnerability and flight, encapsulating the fragile beauty of sorrow as well as the instinctual impulse to survive it. Thematically, *Grief Deer* resonates with earlier sections through its meditation on memory, displacement, and loss, yet it elevates these motifs into a more distilled poetic mode. This section also underscores the poet's internal struggle, a battle between what he refers to as his "two shelves"—perhaps symbolic of divided identities, cultures, or emotional states. Through this conflict and its resolution, the poet achieves an aesthetic synthesis, wherein lyricism becomes both a vehicle of healing and a site of transformation. Thus, *Grief Deer* not only enhances the collection's thematic unity and formal sophistication but also affirms poetry's redemptive power to transmute sorrow into artistic revelation.

In "*Grief Deer*"¹⁶, Chhetri crafts a dense and visceral poetic landscape where bodily imagery, animal metaphor, and mythic undertones converge to depict a profound emotional and existential struggle. The poem opens with a haunting emergence "out of the tide of good flesh & long / days' steady water," suggesting a birth or re-birth steeped in both vitality and sorrow. The poet conjures an ambiguous, wounded creature—perhaps part animal, part man—whose journey through pain is both physical and symbolic. The reference to an "old hound plugging the civet / of a small mammal nimble & lactating" evokes a scene of primal violence or consumption, where hunger, motherhood, and vulnerability collide. This act is not just literal but deeply metaphorical, touching on themes of exploitation, loss of innocence, and violated

nurture. The “dark teat distended mewling inside / him” merges external action with internal consequence: the pain of others becomes internalized, forming a kind of psychic burden or trauma that “mewls” within the poet. The river-dark, chaotic, and unclean might represent the unconscious, history, or suffering. The pole, once a tool for navigation and control, becomes a device of restraint, suggesting that the very means of survival or agency has become a source of imprisonment. This transformation of tool into torment signals a cyclical trap, a “cycle of blight” the poet can only escape through self-sacrifice: “stave his limbs into the spokes.” The poem concludes with a poignant reflection on the futility of forced piety: “cords where hands make obsolete / anyone’s need to beggar a devotion.” This closing line critiques hollow gestures of faith or suffering performed for redemption, implying that genuine devotion or release must come from within, not through submission or inherited ritual. The poem explores themes such as trauma, guilt, ancestral burden, and the search for agency amid inherited violence. The bodily metaphors evoke an embodied grief, linking internal emotion to external struggle. Like much of Chhetri’s work, *Grief Deer* draws upon ritualistic, spiritual, and mythic imagery to frame individual suffering within larger, often historical or communal frameworks. The figure of the deer, though unnamed, may gesture toward vulnerability, hunted-ness, or spiritual sacrifice, echoing mythological and folkloric traditions where the deer often symbolizes innocence or transcendence through pain.

A close reading of Chhetri’s poetry reveals that his conception of *home* transcends its material or geographical boundaries and evolves into an affective, mythic construct. His verses often register a sense of estrangement, displacement, and yearning, the emotions that echo Avtar Brah’s theorization of home as a “mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination.” In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Brah distinguishes between the *homing desire* and the desire for a *homeland*, emphasizing that diasporic consciousness is marked less by the impulse to return than by the search for belonging as he says; “Home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin.’” (Brah, 1996), p. 192. Similarly, Chhetri’s poetic imagination locates home in memory, language, and emotional inheritance rather than in territorial rootedness. Thus, his work inhabits what Brah calls the diaspora space, a zone where identities are interplay of memory, loss, and cultural translation.

CONCLUSION

Informed by the rich tapestry of memory studies, Chhetri’s poetic oeuvre can be situated within a scholarly lineage that underscores the transformative power of recollection in

diasporic literature. Tony Morrison has consistently argued that memory especially in contexts shaped by violent or conflicted histories enables writers to reclaim silenced narratives and forge new collective identities. Expanding on this, Vijay Agnew's *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity* posits that diasporic voices inhabit a "double consciousness," where memory provides the connective tissue between lost origins and emerging belonging. Chhetri similarly weaves between Himalayan foothills and urban exiles, his memory serving as a dynamic locus for negotiating displacement, identity, and the quest for poetic home, what he terms in transit beautiful. Pierre Nora's notion of **lieux de mémoire** sites of memory that crystallize communal histories distinct from linear historiography illuminates Chhetri's recurrent engagement with geographic and emotional landmarks, whether in the rapids of Raidak River or the encroaching fog on an L.A. dusk. These liminal spaces become charged with mnemonic resonance, transcending their physicality to become symbolic anchors of cultural and personal memory. Jeffrey K. Olick's concept of collective memory as an ongoing, dialogic process further supports Chhetri's poetic method. His poems do not merely recollect; they enter into a conversation with loss, trauma, and the rupture of diaspora, continuously reordering past and present in search of meaning. Together, these critical perspectives underscore that Chhetri's poetry is not merely an archive of personal memory but an active cultural engagement. Through mnemonic excavation and lyrical form, he contests the finality of loss, reclaims the sanctity of his fragmented home, and offers a diasporic poetics in which memory becomes a site of resilience, creativity, and reconnection. In connection to Chhetri's poetry American author Daniel Handler very aptly states that, "Chhetri's poems are like tiny sharp pinholes exposing a bright strobe of world just under the one we're wandering around."¹⁷

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खड़ी बोली : नामकरण, उद्भव एवं विकास

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शोध सार

भाषा समाज और संस्कृति का आधारभूत तत्त्व है, जो संवाद के साथ-साथ सांस्कृतिक धरोहर को संरक्षित करती है। खड़ी बोली शौरसेनी अपभ्रंश से विकसित होकर दिल्ली और मेरठ क्षेत्र में प्रारंभिक रूप में प्रचलित हुई और कालांतर में भारत की प्रमुख साहित्यिक और संपर्क भाषा बन गई। खड़ी बोली का विकास संस्कृत, पाली, प्राकृत और अपभ्रंश के साहित्यिक परंपराओं से प्रेरित रहा है, किंतु इसका मूल स्वर जनसामान्य की बोली में निहित रहा है। खड़ी बोली के विकास की प्रक्रिया में अमीर खुसरो, संतकवि कबीर, भारतेन्दु हरिश्चंद्र और प्रेमचंद जैसे साहित्यकारों ने उल्लेखनीय योगदान दिया। स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद खड़ी बोली हिंदी को भारत की राजभाषा का दर्जा प्राप्त हुआ। यह शोध आलेख खड़ी बोली के ऐतिहासिक विकास, सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक प्रभावों और साहित्यिक योगदानों का समीक्षात्मक अध्ययन प्रस्तुत करता है।

बीज शब्द : खड़ी बोली, भाषा, अपभ्रंश, अमीर खुसरो, सामाजिक संदर्भ

भाषा किसी भी समाज के जीवन और संस्कृति का अभिन्न हिस्सा है। यह न केवल संवाद का माध्यम है, बल्कि समाज की सांस्कृतिक धरोहर को संरक्षित करने का एक प्रभावी साधन भी है। भाषा का विकास समाज के सांस्कृतिक और ऐतिहासिक संदर्भों से गहराई से प्रभावित होता है। प्रत्येक काल में भाषा के दो रूप प्रचलित होते हैं: एक, अभिजात वर्ग की भाषा और दूसरा, जनसामान्य की भाषा। अभिजात वर्ग की भाषा, जो केवल शिक्षित लोगों तक सीमित रहती है, समाज के अधिकांश लोगों का प्रतिनिधित्व नहीं करती। इसलिए, जब कोई नवोदित साहित्यकार या समाज सुधारक अपनी बात को व्यापक जनसमूह तक पहुंचाना चाहता है, तो वह जनसामान्य की बोलचाल की भाषा में अपनी भावनाओं और विचारों को व्यक्त करता है। इस प्रक्रिया में बोलचाल की भाषा का लोकप्रिय रूप साहित्य में स्थान पाता है। इस दौरान बोलचाल की भाषा के अन्य रूप जनसामान्य के दैनिक जीवन में विचारों के आदान-प्रदान और भावनाओं के संप्रेषण का कार्य करते रहते हैं। यही कारण है कि बोलचाल की भाषा साहित्य में प्रवेश कर एक नई पहचान स्थापित करती है।

भाषाओं का विकास सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक संदर्भों से गहराई से प्रभावित रहा है। वैदिक संस्कृत को भारत की प्राचीनतम भाषा माना जाता है। वैदिक संस्कृत में क्रमिक परिवर्तन हुए और यह लौकिक संस्कृत के रूप में दैनिक जीवन में प्रचलित हो गई। बाद में लौकिक संस्कृत में साहित्य रचना भी शुरू हुई। हालांकि संस्कृत का प्रभाव मुख्यतः अभिजात वर्ग तक सीमित रहा। समय के साथ-साथ आम बोलचाल की भाषाएँ विकसित हुईं, जिससे पाली और प्राकृत जैसी भाषाओं का उदय हुआ। इन भाषाओं को धार्मिक और साहित्यिक क्षेत्रों में महत्वपूर्ण स्थान प्राप्त हुआ। पाली में बौद्ध साहित्य की रचना हुई और मौर्य सम्राट अशोक के शासनकाल में यह व्यापक रूप से प्रचलित हुई। इस काल में विभिन्न बोलियाँ भी उभरीं, जो शिष्ट वर्ग की भाषा और साहित्यिक अभिव्यक्ति का माध्यम बनीं।

शौरसेनी अपभ्रंश से उत्पन्न खड़ी बोली पश्चिमी हिंदी की उपभाषाओं में से एक है। मेरठ और उसके आसपास के क्षेत्रों में बोली जाने वाली इस भाषा का प्रयोग पूरे देश में साहित्य, प्रशासन और संपर्क भाषा के रूप में किया जाता है। प्रारंभिक काल में, यह भी ब्रज और अवधी की तरह एक जनपदीय बोली थी, जिसमें कुछ लोक साहित्य मिलता था। हालांकि, गद्य के विकास और लोक जीवन से जुड़े रहने के कारण आधुनिक हिंदी साहित्य में यह ब्रजभाषा को पीछे छोड़ते हुए साहित्यिक भाषा के रूप में स्थापित हो गई। आज खड़ी बोली केवल एक बोली नहीं, बल्कि गद्य और पद्य सृजन की मुख्य भाषा बन चुकी है।

सामान्य तौर पर खड़ी बोली उस भाषा या बोली को कहा जा सकता है, जो खड़ी हो अर्थात् जो जीवित हो, पौरुष युक्त हो और जिसमें गौरव तथा श्री-सौंदर्य हो। इस संदर्भ में, संसार की सभी वर्तमान भाषाओं को खड़ी बोली कहा जा सकता है, क्योंकि प्रत्येक जाति के लिए अपनी बोली या भाषा में गौरव, सौंदर्य, सम्मान और जीवन का अनुभव होता है। हालांकि, हिंदी में खड़ी बोली का प्रयोग एक विशिष्ट अर्थ में किया जाता है। हिंदी में खड़ी बोली से तात्पर्य उस बोली से है, जो मूल रूप से उत्तर भारत के दिल्ली और मेरठ क्षेत्र की पुरानी भाषा या वर्तमान में प्रचलित जनभाषा है। यह वह परिनिष्ठित भाषा है जो पूरे हिंदी भाषी क्षेत्र, जैसे- दिल्ली, हरियाणा, राजस्थान, मध्य प्रदेश, उत्तर प्रदेश और बिहार इत्यादि में फैली हुई है एवं एक जातीय भाषा के रूप में स्थापित हो चुकी है।

विभिन्न भाषा वैज्ञानिकों ने खड़ी बोली को अपने-अपने ढंग से परिभाषित किया है। ललित मोहन अवस्थी खड़ी बोली को परिभाषित करते हुए लिखते हैं कि – “वह भाषा जो हिंदी भाषी प्रजाति एवं विशाल प्रदेश की सीमाओं के बाहर भी संपूर्ण भारत में आज प्रायः बोली और समझी जा सकती है और जो भारत में पूंजीवादी संबंधों के प्रसार और भारतीय महाजाति के गठन के साथ-साथ एक राष्ट्रीय भाषा के रूप में उदित हो रही है।”¹ अवस्थी जी का विचार है कि खड़ी बोली केवल उत्तर भारत के हिंदी

भाषी क्षेत्रों तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि इसका प्रभाव पूरे भारत में है। यह भाषा न केवल व्यापक रूप से बोली और समझी जाती है, बल्कि भारत में पूंजीवादी संबंधों के विकास और एक राष्ट्रीय संस्कृति के गठन के साथ एक राष्ट्रीय भाषा के रूप में उभर रही है। खड़ी बोली का नामकरण इसके विशेष गुणों को दर्शाता है। 'खड़ी' शब्द का प्रयोग यहाँ उसके सीधापन, स्पष्टता और मजबूती को इंगित करता है, जो इसे अन्य क्षेत्रीय बोलियों से अलग और विशिष्ट बनाता है। इस नामकरण के पीछे यह धारणा है कि खड़ी बोली में वह शक्ति और सामर्थ्य है जो इसे समकालीन साहित्य, प्रशासन और संचार की प्रमुख भाषा बना रही है। यह भाषा पौरुषपूर्ण है अर्थात् इसमें शक्ति और ओज है और इसका प्रयोग करते हुए भाषा की गरिमा और सौंदर्य का अनुभव होता है। इस दृष्टिकोण से खड़ी बोली ने ब्रजभाषा, अवधी और अन्य पुरानी बोलियों को पीछे छोड़ते हुए हिंदी साहित्य और आधुनिक संचार का प्रमुख माध्यम बनकर अपनी अलग पहचान स्थापित की है। इस प्रकार खड़ी बोली का नामकरण उसकी जीवंतता और व्यापकता को दर्शाता है।

प्रसिद्ध फ्रांसीसी भाषा वैज्ञानिक गार्सा द तासी ने फ्रेंच भाषा के अपने मूल ग्रंथ 'इस्तवार द ला लितरेत्युर ऐंदुई ऐंदुस्तानी' में लिखा है- "उत्तर और उत्तर-पश्चिम प्रांत में जिस भाषा का विकास हुआ है, जो केवल 'भाषा' या 'भाखा' (सामान्य भाषा) नाम से पुकारी जाती है, वह हिन्दुई या हिंदी के विशेष नाम से प्रचलित है।"² यहां उत्तर तथा उत्तर पश्चिम प्रांत से तासी का अभिप्राय हिंदी प्रदेश के उत्तर-पश्चिम प्रांत अर्थात् दिल्ली-मेरठ के क्षेत्र से ही है। भाषाविद सर जॉर्ज अब्राहम ग्रियर्सन ने खड़ी बोली को 'हिंदुस्तानी' नाम से अभिहित करते हुए लिखते हैं- "हिंदुस्तानी के संबंध में दो दृष्टिकोणों से विचार आवश्यक है- (1) पश्चिमी हिंदी के स्थानीय बोली के रूप में, (2) हिंदुस्तान की विख्यात साहित्यिक भाषा तथा संपूर्ण भारत में प्रचलित (अंतर्प्रान्तीय भाषा) के रूप में।"³ ग्रियर्सन के खड़ी बोली को पश्चिमी हिंदी का एक रूप मानने के मत का अनेक भारतीय भाषाशास्त्रियों ने समर्थन किया है। श्यामसुंदर दास ने लिखा है- "आधुनिक विद्वान पश्चिमी हिंदी को ही हिंदी कहना शास्त्रीय समझते हैं.... पर इसका मूल अर्थ लें तो खड़ी बोली उस बोली को कहते हैं, जो रामपुर रियासत, मुरादाबाद, बिजनौर, मेरठ, मुजफ्फरनगर, सहारनपुर, देहरादून, अंबाला तथा कलसिया और पटियाला रियासत के पूर्वी भागों में बोली जाती है।"⁴ डॉ. धीरेंद्र वर्मा लिखते हैं- "पश्चिमी हिंदी मनुस्मृति के 'मध्यदेश' की वर्तमान भाषा कहीं जा सकती है। मेरठ तथा बिजनौर के निकट बोली जाने वाली पश्चिम हिंदी के ही एक रूप खड़ी बोली से वर्तमान साहित्यिक हिंदी तथा उर्दू की उत्पत्ति हुई है।"⁵ इन उक्तियों से यह स्पष्ट है कि खड़ी बोली वह भाषा है जो दिल्ली-मेरठ जनपद की जन बोली है, हिंदी प्रदेश की जातीय भाषा है, हिंदी, उर्दू और हिंदुस्तानी का आधार है।

भाषाशास्त्रीय आधार पर जिस भाषा के लिए 'खड़ी बोली' शब्द रूढ़ हो गया है, उसका यह नाम कब और कैसे पड़ा? यह अभी तक स्पष्ट नहीं है। 'खड़ी बोली' नाम का सबसे प्राचीन एवं सर्वप्रथम प्रयोग हमें सन् 1803 ई० में प्राप्त होता है, जब फोर्ट विलियम कॉलेज, कलकत्ता के दो अध्यापकों लल्लू लाल और सदल मिश्र ने अपने ग्रंथों में इसका प्रयोग किया था। फिर उसी वर्ष अर्थात् 1803 ई० में ही फोर्ट विलियम कॉलेज, कलकत्ता के संचालक जान गिलक्रिस्ट ने भी इन्हीं प्रयोगों के आधार पर खड़ी बोली नाम का चार बार प्रयोग किया। इन प्रयोगों से यह स्पष्ट प्रमाणित होता है कि जिस समय सबसे पहले लल्लू लाल और सदल मिश्र ने उपर्युक्त भाषा (दिल्ली-आगरे की खड़ी बोली) के लिए इस शब्द का प्रयोग साहित्य में किया, उस समय तथा उसके कुछ पहले से ही यह नाम बोलचाल में अवश्य प्रचलित रहा होगा, जिससे 'खड़ी बोली' शब्द कहने मात्र से लोग उस विशिष्ट भाषा का आशय लगा लेते होंगे, जिसके लिए यह नाम अज्ञात व्यक्तियों द्वारा गढ़ा गया था।

खड़ी बोली जिस भाषा का नाम है, उसके लिए लल्लू लाल और सदल मिश्र से पहले भी अन्य अनेक नाम प्रचलित रहे हैं और उनके बाद भी विभिन्न विद्वानों ने विभिन्न नाम इस भाषा के लिए प्रयोग किए हैं, जैसे- हैदवी, हिंदुई, हिंदी, हिंदुस्तानी, हिंदुस्थानी, ठेठ बोली, निर्मल भाषा, नागरी भाषा, आर्य भाषा, नई भाषा, गूजरी, दिल्ली की बोली, इंद्रप्रस्थ की बोली, शुद्ध हिंदी, उच्च हिंदी इत्यादि। खड़ी बोली कि इन नामों में कुछ नाम तो देश बोधक हैं, जैसे- हैदवी, हिंदुई, हिंदी, हिंदुस्तानी इत्यादि। कुछ नाम स्थान बोधक हैं, जैसे- कौरवी, मेरठी, दिल्ली की बोली इत्यादि। कुछ नाम जाति बोधक हैं, जैसे- मुर्ज, आर्यभाषा, गूजरी आदि। कुछ नाम गुण बोधक हैं, जैसे- ठेठ बोली, खरी बोली, ठाठ बोली, सूखी हिंदी, शुद्ध हिंदी, उच्च हिंदी, साधु हिंदी और निर्मल भाषा इत्यादि। खड़ी बोली के इन नामों के संबंध में ललित मोहन अवस्थी लिखते हैं- "ये नाम भाषाशास्त्रियों की उपज नहीं हैं, वरन साहित्यकारों और साधारण जनों द्वारा समय-समय पर प्रदान एवं प्रयोग किए गए हैं। इनमें से कुछ नाम विदेशियों द्वारा दिए हुए हैं।"⁶

यद्यपि खड़ी बोली के लिए इतने विभिन्न नाम विद्वानों ने प्रयोग किए हैं, किंतु 'खड़ी बोली' के अतिरिक्त अन्य कोई नाम इस भाषा के लिए रूढ़, सर्वग्राह्य या स्थायी नहीं हो सका। इस भाषा (दिल्ली-मेरठ जनपद की बोली) का नाम खड़ी बोली क्यों पड़ा? इसके कारणों की विवेचना करते हुए पंडित किशोरीदास वाजपेयी ने जो मंतव्य प्रकट किया है, वह उल्लेखनीय है। वे लिखते हैं- "कुरु जनपद (उत्तर प्रदेश के मेरठ डिवीजन) की बोली को 'खड़ी बोली' नाम भाषाशास्त्रियों ने नहीं, साधारण साहित्यिकों ने दिया। परंतु इसकी व्युत्पत्ति के बारे में लोग भटकते रहे। प्रारंभ में तो खड़ी बोली नाम इसलिए पड़ा कि इसमें कवियों को मधुरता न जान पड़ी।"⁷ भारतेन्दु हरिश्चंद्र ने भी इसमें खड़खड़ाहट

पाई। जब दाल पकती नहीं, कच्ची रह जाती है, तो लोग कहते हैं—‘दाल खड़ी रह गई।’ इसी सादृश्य से लोग इसे ‘खड़ी बोली’ कहने लगे होंगे। परंतु इस चीज को न समझ कर कई विद्वानों ने लिख दिया कि ‘खरी बोली’ का रूपांतर ‘खड़ी बोली’ है।

पंडित किशोरीदास वाजपेयी खड़ी बोली को भाषा विज्ञान की दृष्टि से खरा मानते हैं। वे कहते हैं—“परंतु खड़ी बोली नाम भाषा विज्ञान की दृष्टि से भी खरा उतरता है। ‘मीठा’, ‘जाता’, ‘खाता’ आदि में जो खड़ी पाई आप (अंत में) देखते हैं, वह हिंदी के अतिरिक्त इसकी किसी भी दूसरी ‘बोली’ में न मिलेगा। ब्रज में ‘मीठो’ और अवधी में ‘मीठ’ चलता है—‘मीठो’, ‘मीठ पानी’। इसी तरह ‘जात है’, ‘खात है’ आदि रूप होते हैं।.... इस खड़ी पाई के कारण इसका नाम ‘खड़ी बोली’ बहुत सार्थक है।”⁸ वाजपेयी जी का उपर्युक्त मत अत्यंत तर्कसंगत है। पंडित चंद्रबली पांडेय के अनुसार सर्वश्री मौलाना हक, डॉ. धीरेन्द्र वर्मा एवं कामताप्रसाद गुरु भी इस मत के समर्थक हैं। किंतु खड़ी बोली नाम केवल उसके खड़ेपन या इस खड़ी पाई की विशेषतावश ही नहीं पड़ा, वरन इसके पीछे कुछ सामाजिक कारण भी थे। वस्तुओं के नामकरण पर भौतिक व सामाजिक परिस्थितियों या कारणों का सदैव ही प्रभाव पड़ता रहा है।

खड़ी बोली का विकास कुरु जनपद की स्थानीय लघु बोली से शुरू होकर; हिंदी क्षेत्र की परिष्कृत जातीय भाषा के रूप में और फिर मध्य भारत की भाषा से लेकर संपूर्ण भारत की राष्ट्रीय स्तर की भाषा के रूप में एक लंबी ऐतिहासिक प्रक्रिया का परिणाम है। इस विकास को आकार देने में कई सामाजिक और भौतिक कारकों ने योगदान दिया। इनमें से दो प्रमुख कारक थे: दिल्ली का भारत की राजधानी बने रहना और व्यापारिक विस्तार। डॉ. धीरेन्द्र वर्मा ने खड़ी बोली के विकास की मुख्य तीन अवस्थाएँ मानी हैं- प्राचीन, मध्य और वर्तमान। उन्होंने लिखा है—“हिंदी भाषा के विकास की अवस्थाएँ साधारणतया तीन मुख्य कालों में विभक्त की जा सकती हैं:-(क) प्राचीन काल (1100 ई० से 1500 ई०) जब अपभ्रंश तथा प्राकृतों का स्वाभाविक प्रभाव हिंदी भाषा पर मौजूद था तथा साथ ही हिंदी की बोलियों वाले बाद के निश्चित स्पष्ट रूप नहीं मिलते। (ख) मध्य काल (1500 ई० से 1800 ई०) जब हिंदी से अपभ्रंश का प्रभाव बिल्कुल हट गया था और हिंदी की बोलियाँ, विशेषतया ब्रज और अवधी, अपने पैरों पर स्वतंत्रतापूर्वक खड़ी हो गई थीं। (ग) आधुनिक काल (1800 ई० से आज तक) जब से हिंदी की बोलियों के मध्यकाल के रूपों में परिवर्तन आरंभ हो गया है तथा साहित्यिक दृष्टि से खड़ी बोली ने हिंदी की अन्य बोलियों को दबा दिया है।”⁹ किंतु डॉ. धीरेन्द्र वर्मा द्वारा प्रस्तावित खड़ी बोली की इन अवस्थाओं को ललित मोहन अवस्थी ने खारिज किया है। उनका कहना है- “डॉ. धीरेन्द्र वर्मा द्वारा प्रस्तावित इन अवस्थाओं को स्वीकार करने में कई आपत्तियाँ हैं। एक तो यह कि यह अवस्थाएँ केवल खड़ी बोली के विकास की अवस्थाएँ नहीं हैं। यह हिंदी के अंतर्गत आने वाली अन्य उपभाषाओं व

बोलियों के विकास की अवस्थाएँ भी मानी गई हैं। दूसरी यह कि जिसे डॉ. वर्मा ने हिंदी भाषा का प्राचीन काल (1100 ई० से 1500 ई०) माना है वह केवल मात्र अपभ्रंशों का ही युग नहीं था और न यह कहना ही सही है कि इस युग में हिंदी की बोलियों वाले बाद के निश्चित स्पष्ट रूप नहीं मिलते। जहाँ तक खड़ी बोली का संबंध है, हमें उसके निश्चित स्पष्ट रूप के दर्शन इसी युग के मध्य चरण में अमीर खुसरो (1253 ई०-1325 ई०) की रचनाओं में प्राप्त होते हैं। खुसरो ने जिस भाषा का प्रयोग किया है, वह तत्त्वतः आज की खड़ी बोली से अभिन्न है।¹⁰

भाषाविदों के मतानुसार, जन भाषाओं के रूप में अपभ्रंश का युग 1200 ई० से समाप्त मान लिया जाता है। तथापि, 1200 ई० के बाद भी अपभ्रंश में अनेक ग्रंथ लिखे गये। इसी कालखंड में आधुनिक देशज भाषाओं की प्रारंभिक रचनाएँ अपभ्रंश साहित्य में प्रचुर मात्रा में मिलने लगे। इसके अतिरिक्त, इसी युग के अंतिम चरणों में कई निर्गुण संत कवियों ने अपनी रचनाओं में खड़ी बोली का भी प्रयोग करना प्रारंभ कर दिया था। अतः खड़ी बोली के विकास को समझने के लिए हमें नए आधारों पर विचार करना चाहिए। भाषा के विकास या परिवर्तन को सामाजिक और भौतिक परिवर्तनों के संदर्भ में देखना अधिक उपयुक्त प्रतीत होता है, क्योंकि भाषा एक सामाजिक वस्तु है और उसका समाज के विकास से गहरा संबंध होता है। इसलिए सामाजिक इतिहास और परिवर्तनों के विभिन्न चरणों के आलोक में भाषा के इतिहास और उसमें हुए परिवर्तनों का अध्ययन करना न्यायसंगत है। इन्हीं आधारों पर हम खड़ी बोली के विकास की विभिन्न अवस्थाओं या चरणों को निम्नलिखित कालखंडों में विभाजित कर सकते हैं:

- (1) आदिकाल (1000 ई० से 1200 ई० तक)
- (2) पूर्व मध्य काल (1200 ई० से 1500 ई० तक)
- (3) उत्तर मध्य काल (1500 ई० से 1800 ई० तक)
- (4) आधुनिक काल (1800 ई० से 1947 ई० तक)
- (5) वर्तमान काल या स्वातंत्र्योत्तर युग (1947 ई० से वर्तमान समय तक)

खड़ी बोली का आदिकालीन रूप हमें लगभग 1000 ई० से 1200 ई० के बीच देखने को मिलता है। इस कालखंड में साहित्यिक क्षेत्र में मुख्यतः अपभ्रंश का वर्चस्व था। उस समय शौरसेनी और मागधी अपभ्रंश प्रचलित थे। इन्हीं अपभ्रंश भाषाओं से आधुनिक आर्य भाषाओं, विशेषतः हिंदी की विभिन्न बोलियों का रूपांतरण प्रारंभ हुआ। इसीलिए इस युग को आधुनिक आर्य भाषाओं का पूर्व युग भी कहा जाता है। इस काल के उपलब्ध अपभ्रंश साहित्य को दो प्रमुख वर्गों में विभाजित किया जा सकता है—पहला वर्ग, नाथ पंथ और सिद्धों के धार्मिक साहित्य तथा जैन धर्म से संबंधित ग्रंथों का है। दूसरा वर्ग राजदरबारों में रचित वीरगाथा काव्य से संबंधित है, जिनका सृजन राजदरबारी कवियों द्वारा किया गया

था। इन दोनों ही साहित्यिक धाराओं में खड़ी बोली के आदिकालीन स्वरूप स्पष्ट रूप से दिखाई देते हैं।

खड़ी बोली का पूर्व मध्यकालीन दौर भारत में इस्लामी शासन के प्रारंभिक चरण से संबंधित था। इस अवधि में खड़ी बोली का प्रौढ़ रूप सर्वप्रथम अमीर खुसरो की रचनाओं में दिखाई देता है। खुसरो का जीवनकाल 1253 ई० से 1325 ई० माना जाता है। उन्होंने तुगलक शाह के समय में खड़ी बोली का एक संक्षिप्त व्याकरण 'खालिक बारी' के नाम से लिखा। आचार्य रामचन्द्र शुक्ल का मत इस संदर्भ में दृष्टव्य है- "वीरगाथा-काल के समाप्त होते-होते हमें जनता की बहुत कुछ असली बोलचाल और उनके बीच कहे सुने जाने वाले पद्यों की भाषा के बहुत कुछ असली रूप का पता चलता है। पता देने वाले हैं दिल्ली के खुसरो मियां...।"¹¹ खुसरो की रचनाओं में प्रयुक्त खड़ी बोली के कुछ उदाहरण निम्नलिखित हैं:

पहेलियाँ: आवे तो अंधेरी लावे, जावे तो सब सुख ले जावे।

क्या जानूँ वह कैसा है, जैसा देखो वैसा है।।

मुकरी: खा गया पी गया

दे गया बुत्ता।

ऐ सखि साजन?

ना सखि कुत्ता!

इन उदाहरणों से स्पष्ट होता है कि खुसरो ने खड़ी बोली को जनसामान्य की बोलचाल के करीब रखते हुए अपनी रचनाओं में सहजता और सरलता के साथ प्रस्तुत किया। आमीर खुसरो के पश्चात खड़ी बोली का सर्वाधिक प्रयोग निगुण संत कवियों के साहित्य में दृष्टिगोचर होता है। इन संतों में कबीर, दादू, रैदास, नानक आदि प्रमुख थे।

मुगल काल के अंतिम चरण में, जिसे साहित्य के इतिहासकारों ने रीतिकाल की संज्ञा प्रदान की है, अनेक हिंदू और मुसलमान कवियों ने खड़ी बोली में साहित्य रचना की। डॉ. शितिकंठ मिश्र ने लिखा है – "रीतिकाल की साहित्यिक ब्रजभाषा में अनेक प्रचलित भाषाओं का मिश्रण था। शब्दों की तोड़मरोड़ भी खूब होती थी। फिर भी इस काल में बहुत से कवियों ने खड़ी बोली में स्फुट रचनाएं की, जिनमें कुलपति, सूदन, आलम, शेख, नागरी दास, रसिक गोविंद ग्वाल, ललित किशोरी, ललित माधुरी और मुसलमान कवियों में रसरंग, कारे खां, तुराब, जफर तथा अख्तर विशेष उल्लेखनीय हैं। इनके अलावा रीतिकाल में कुछ ऐसे भी कवि हैं जिन्होंने खड़ी बोली में किसी संपूर्ण ग्रंथ की रचना की। इनमें घनानंद, रघुनाथ, बेनी, शीतल आदि के स्वतंत्र खड़ी बोली के काव्य ग्रंथ उपलब्ध हैं। घनानंद ने खड़ी बोली में

‘विरह लीला’ ग्रंथ की रचना की। इन्होंने सर्वप्रथम उर्दू छंदों का हिंदी में प्रयोग किया।”¹² खड़ी बोली के उत्तर मध्यकाल(1500 ई०–1800 ई०) अर्थात् मुगल काल में मध्य देश में साहित्य की प्रधान भाषाएं ब्रजभाषा व अवधी रहीं और शासन में फारसी का बोलबाला रहा। किंतु मुगल दरबार के संपर्क एवं दिल्ली के राजनीतिक– व्यापारिक महत्त्व की वजह से खड़ी बोली बोलचाल की भाषा के रूप में उत्तरोत्तर फैलती जा रही थी। उधर सुदूर दक्षिण में खड़ी बोली का विकास दक्खिनी हिंदी के रूप में जारी रहा।

खड़ी बोली का आधुनिक काल एक नए ऐतिहासिक परिवर्तन के साथ आरंभ होता है, वह है भारतीय समाज का सामंती व्यवस्था से पूंजीवादी व्यवस्था में संक्रमण। यह महत्त्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन भारत में आंग्ल शासन की स्थापना एवं प्रसार के साथ संपन्न हुआ। खड़ी बोली का संपूर्ण आधुनिक काल राजनीतिक दृष्टि से आंग्ल शासन का ही युग था, जो सन 1800 ई० से लेकर 1947 ई० तक रहा। आंग्ल शासन के संपूर्ण आधुनिक काल की अवस्था में खड़ी बोली के विकास की कई स्पष्ट अवस्थाएं अथवा चरण रहे हैं। मुख्यतः भारतेन्दु हरिश्चंद्र के युग से ही इतिहासकारों ने हिंदी साहित्य में खड़ी बोली का युग माना है। किंतु भारतेन्दु हरिश्चंद्र के पूर्व भी ऐसे साहित्यकार रहे हैं, जिन्होंने खड़ी बोली के विकास में अपना योगदान दिया है। ऐसे साहित्यकारों में सैयद इंशा अल्लाह खां, मुंशी सदासुख लाल, पंडित सदल मिश्र, लल्लू लाल, राजा शिवप्रसाद सितारेहिंद और आर्य समाज के संस्थापक स्वामी दयानंद सरस्वती के नाम विशेष उल्लेखनीय हैं।

खड़ी बोली के विकास के आधुनिक काल का द्वितीय चरण (1850 ई० से 1900 ई०) 19वीं शताब्दी का द्वितीय अर्धभाग है। यह काल देश में राष्ट्रीय जन जागरण का प्रथम चरण था। इसी समय भारतेन्दु हरिश्चंद्र का प्रादुर्भाव हुआ। उन्होंने तथा उनके समकालीन अन्य लेखकों ने इसी राष्ट्रीय जागरण की अभिव्यक्ति व्यंग्य और हास्य–मिश्रित शैली में बड़ी जिंदादिली के साथ इस युग के हिंदी साहित्य में की। भारतेन्दुकालीन लेखकों में भारतेन्दु जी के अतिरिक्त पंडित बालकृष्ण भट्ट, पंडित प्रताप नारायण मिश्र, पंडित भीमसेन शर्मा, पंडित गोविंदनारायण मिश्र, बालमुकुंद गुप्त आदि लेखकों की गणना की जा सकती है। इन सभी लेखकों ने खड़ी बोली को हिंदी साहित्य की मुख्य भाषा मानकर उसके विकास में अपना योगदान दिया।

खड़ी बोली के विकास के आधुनिक काल का तृतीय चरण(1900 ई०–1925 ई०) अत्यंत महत्त्वपूर्ण राजनीतिक सामाजिक घटनाओं का युग था। भाषा और साहित्य के क्षेत्र में भारतेन्दु के बाद इस अवधि में एक अन्य प्रतिभासंपन्न व्यक्तित्व का अभ्युदय हुआ; वे थे आचार्य पंडित महावीर प्रसाद द्विवेदी। आचार्य रामचंद्र शुक्ल ने पंडित महावीर प्रसाद द्विवेदी के योगदान को रेखांकित करते हुए लिखा है

कि- “व्याकरण की शुद्धता और भाषा की सफाई के प्रवर्तक द्विवेदी जी ही थे। सरस्वती के संपादक के रूप में उन्होंने आई पुस्तकों के भीतर व्याकरण और भाषा की अशुद्धियां दिखा-दिखाकर लेखकों को बहुत कुछ सावधान कर दिया।”¹³ शुक्ल जी का यह कथन द्विवेदी जी के महत्त्व को उद्घाटित करता है कि किस प्रकार उन्होंने भाषा के शुद्धिकरण और साहित्यिक अनुशासन के माध्यम से हिंदी को एक सुदृढ़ और समृद्ध रूप प्रदान किया। खड़ी बोली के विकास के आधुनिक काल के इस तृतीय चरण(1900 ई०-1925 ई०) के गद्यकारों में आचार्य महावीर प्रसाद द्विवेदी, पंडित अयोध्या सिंह उपाध्याय हरिऔध, बाबू श्यामसुंदर दास, आचार्य रामचंद्र शुक्ल, बाबू गुलाब राय आदि विद्वान मुख्य हैं। आचार्य द्विवेदी की भाषा का उदाहरण प्रस्तुत है— “ज्ञान राशि के संचित कोश का नाम साहित्य है। सब तरह के भावों को प्रकट करने की योग्यता रखने वाली और निर्देश होने पर भी यदि कोई भाषा अपना निज का साहित्य नहीं रखती तो वह, रूपवती भिखारिनी की तरह, कदापि आदरणीय नहीं हो सकती।”¹⁴ यह द्विवेदी युग की भाषा का साहित्यिक प्रमाण एवं स्वरूप है।

खड़ी बोली के विकास के आधुनिक काल का अंतिम चरण 1925 ई० से 1947 ई० तक रहा है। यही भारत में अंग्रेजी राज्य का भी अंतिम चरण था। इस समय राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन जनता के निकट आया था या जनता के हाथों में इसकी बागडोर आई, उसी प्रकार साहित्य और भाषा भी जनजीवन के निकट आए। प्रेमचंद का साहित्य और उनकी भाषा इस कथन का स्पष्ट प्रमाण है। इसीलिए इसे प्रेमचंद युग की संज्ञा प्रदान की गई है। प्रेमचंद तथा उनके समर्थक अनुयायी लेखकों की भाषा आम जनता के दैनिक व्यवहार की वह खड़ी बोली है, जो हिंदुओं और मुसलमान द्वारा समान रूप से बाजारों, सार्वजनिक स्थलों व सामाजिक-राजनीतिक जीवन में नित्य व्यवहार की जाती है, जिसे अपढ़ लोग भी बोलते समझते हैं और जिसमें अरबी, फारसी, संस्कृत तथा अंग्रेजी आदि भाषाओं के सर्वप्रचलित सामान्य शब्द व्यवहार किए जाते हैं। इस युग की भाषा संबंधी प्रवृत्तियां हमें जिन लेखकों की रचनाओं में प्राप्त होती है, उनमें प्रेमचंद के अतिरिक्त महापंडित राहुल सांकृत्यायन, भगवती प्रसाद वाजपेयी, भगवती चरण वर्मा, यशपाल, नागार्जुन आदि तमाम गद्यकारों, कवियों एवं नाटककारों के नाम उल्लेखनीय हैं।

खड़ी बोली के वर्तमान काल से तात्पर्य उसे युग से है जो 1947 ई० से आरंभ होता है और आज भी जारी है। यह ब्रिटिश साम्राज्य की समाप्ति और राष्ट्रीय स्वाधीनता का युग है। इसीलिए इसे स्वातंत्र्योत्तर युग कहा गया है। स्वातंत्र्योत्तर युग की प्रमुख विशेषता है- खड़ी बोली हिंदी को भारत की राजभाषा या संघीय भाषा स्वीकार किया जाना अर्थात् संवैधानिक और कानूनी रूप में खड़ी बोली हिंदी को भारत सरकार के कामकाज की भाषा घोषित करना ।

उपर्युक्त विवेचन के आधार पर यह कहा जा सकता है कि खड़ी बोली का विकास भाषा, संस्कृति और समाज के गतिशील संबंध को दर्शाता है। दिल्ली-मेरठ क्षेत्र की स्थानीय बोली से शुरू होकर यह हिंदी साहित्य और भारत की राष्ट्रीय स्तर की भाषा बन गई। अपभ्रंश और प्राकृत से होते हुए मध्यकाल में अमीर खुसरो और संत कवियों ने इसे लोकप्रिय बनाया। आधुनिक काल में भारतेन्दु हरिश्चंद्र, महावीर प्रसाद द्विवेदी और प्रेमचंद ने इसे साहित्यिक और प्रशासनिक भाषा के रूप में स्थापित किया। स्वातंत्र्योत्तर युग में खड़ी बोली को राजभाषा का दर्जा प्राप्त हुआ, जो इसकी व्यापक स्वीकार्यता को दर्शाता है। इसका नामकरण इसकी स्पष्टता, शक्ति और जीवंतता को प्रतिबिंबित करता है। सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिवर्तन, जैसे दिल्ली का राजनीतिक महत्त्व और व्यापारिक विस्तार, ने इसके विकास को गति दी। खड़ी बोली आज हिंदी साहित्य और संचार का आधार है, जो भारतीय संस्कृति की एकता को मजबूत करती है।

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अध्ययनसार

भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यासमा सहरीकरणको प्रभाव लेखमा नेपाली उपन्यासमा चित्रित सहरको परिवेशलाई गहन अध्ययनको रूपमा लिइएको छ। आजको जीवन सहरकै भौतिक सुख सुविधामा बाँच्न र रमाउन चाहन्छन्। वाह्य दृष्टिले अवलोकित सहरीय जीवन भौतिक रूपमा भव्य र सभ्य, शिक्षित, बौद्धिक देखिए तापनि यथार्थमा मानव सोंचको विपरीत देखिन्छ। सहरीय जीवन परिस्थितिअनुसार अनुकूल र प्रतिकूल, सकारात्मक र नकारात्मक दुवै रूपमा पाइन्छ। भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यासमा सहरीकरणको परिवेशको प्रभाव एउटा अनुसन्धानको विषय रहेको छ। वर्तमानको सहरको परिवेश विगतको सहरको परिवेशको तुलनामा धेरै भिन्न रहेको पाइन्छ। नेपाली उपन्यासमा वर्णित सहरीकरणको प्रभावमा मानवीय भौतिक सुविधाका अतिरिक्त जीवनगत जटीलता पनि अधिक देखिएको छ। यस लेखमा सहरीकरणको अर्थ, परिभाषा र अवधारणामाथि प्रकाश पारिएको छ। प्रायः दश वर्षअघिसम्म लेखिएका भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यासहरूमा वर्णित सहरीकरणको परिवेशलाई आधार बनाइएको छ। बौद्धिक, शैक्षिक, आर्थिक, भौतिक सुख सुविधा र रोजगारका उपलब्धिका निम्ति सहरमा प्रवास गरिएका नेपाली उपन्यासका जीवन, सय प्रतिशत सफल देखिएको पाइन्छ। पछिल्ला उपन्यासहरूमा सहरीकरणको सन्दर्भअन्तर्गत उत्तराधुनिकताका पक्षहरू जस्तै नारीवादी चेतना, पाठक अभिग्रहण चेतना, विनिर्माण सिद्धान्त पनि प्रयोग भएको पाइन्छ।

प्रमुख शब्दावली: सहरीकरण, महानगरी, परिवेश, शैक्षिक अभिवृद्धि, सङ्कटग्रस्त, विस्थापित।

१. विषय परिचय:

भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यासको आधुनिककाल सन् १९३५ मा लेखिएको भ्रमर उपन्यासबाट शुरू हुन्छ। अतः भ्रमरदेखि आजसम्म लेखिएका उपन्यासहरूमा सहरीकरणको प्रभाव तीव्र र आंशिक दुवै रूपमा रहेको पाइन्छ। मानव जति सचेत, शिक्षित, सभ्य र सम्पन्न हुन्छ उति उसलाई मनोरञ्जन, सुख-सुविधा र भौतिक साधनहरूको ज्यादा आवश्यकता पर्छ। यी सुख-सुविधाहरू गाउँमा उपलब्ध हुँदैनन्। समयको निरन्तर प्रवाहसँगसँगै मानिसका जीवन-शैली पनि परिवर्तन हुँदै जान्छ। शिक्षा, व्यापार-व्यवसाय, पेसा अनि भौतिक सुख-सुविधा आदिका निम्ति मानिसहरू सहरमा आफूलाई स्थापित गर्छन्। सुख सुविधा उपलब्ध सहर सधैं मानिसहरूको आकर्षणको केन्द्र बनेको छ। सहर मानवका जटिल संरचनाहरूमध्ये एक मानिन्छ, यो एउटा यस्तो यात्रा हो जो कहिले समाप्त हुँदैन। सहरमा व्यवस्था र अव्यवस्था दुवै एक साथ चलिरहेको हुन्छ। वास्तविक रूपमा सहरलाई विकासको इन्जिन मानिन्छ। प्रायः नेपाली उपन्यासहरूमा सहरीकरणको प्रभावजन्य कथानक र चरित्रहरू पाइन्छन् तर सहरीकरणकै सिद्धान्तमा आधारित उपन्यासहरू त्यति पाइँदैन।

सहरीकरणको अवधारणा विस्तृत छ। सहरीकरणबारे अनेक अवधारणा पाइन्छन्। सहरमा जीवन जिउने तरिकाको रूपमा सहरलाई परिभाषित गर्न सकिन्छ। सहरीकरणको शब्दको पहिलो प्रयोग उन्नाइसौं शताब्दीको अन्तमा स्पेनिस इंजिनियर साथै वास्तुकार इडल्फोन्सले गरेका थिए, त्यसपछि लुई विर्थले 'सहरीकरण एक जीवन शैली' शीर्षकको शोधपत्र प्रकाशित गरेपछि यो शब्द लोकप्रिय र प्रचलित बनेको पाइन्छ। सहरीकरणका नकरात्मक र सकारात्मक दुवै पक्षहरू छन्। सहरी क्षेत्रको भौतिक विस्तार नै सहरीकरण हो, यो एक वैश्विक परिवर्तन हो। संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघको परिभाषाअनुसार ग्रामीण क्षेत्रका मानिसहरू सहरमा गएर बस्नु अनि काम गर्नु पनि सहरीकरण हो।^१ भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यासमा ग्रामीण इलाकाका मानिसहरू सहरमा गई जीवन आर्जन गरेर भौतिक सुख-सुविधा प्राप्त गर्ने अभीष्ट लिएका कथानकहरू उपलब्ध भएकाले संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघले प्रस्तुत गरेको सहरीकरणबारे परिभाषा नै नेपाली उपन्यासको सन्दर्भमा पनि उपयुक्त हुन्छ। सहरीकरणको मुख्य आधार उत्पत्ति स्थानदेखि लक्ष्य स्थानतिरको बसाई सराई हो। वृहत रूपमा ग्रामीण क्षेत्रदेखि सहरी क्षेत्रमा बसाई सराई मानवसभ्यता जत्तिकै पुरानो भएको प्रमाणित हुन्छ (पी. अगस्ती, एन. पात्र २०१९, पृ. १४)। वर्तमान समयमा सहरीकरणको वृद्धि धेरै राष्ट्रहरूमा तीव्र गतिले भइरहेछ। औद्योगीकरण नै सहरीकरणको मूलधार हो, सहरी क्षेत्र ग्रामीण जनसंख्याको परिणाम हो, प्रवासी वा बसाई सराईले सहरी क्षेत्रको विकासमा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्छ। आधुनिक समयमा बसाई सराई प्रायः सबै देशहरूको सहरी विकासमा सहायता पुर्याउने कारक तत्त्व मानिन्छ। सामान्यतः बसाई सराई ग्रामीणको निम्न सांस्कृतिक केन्द्रहरूबाट सहरी क्षेत्रको उच्च सांस्कृतिक केन्द्रहरूमा हुने गर्दछ। बेरोजगार, सहरी जीवनको आकर्षणजस्ता विविध कारणले सहरीकरण हुँदछ (कुमार २००५-०६, पृ. २४४)। चौथो शताब्दी ईशाई पूर्व शुरू भएको सहरीकरणको प्रक्रिया व्यापार र उद्योगको कारण थियो भन्ने तथ्य कौटिल्यको अर्थशास्त्रबाट ज्ञात हुन्छ। उद्योगले रोजगारी, तलबयुक्त जागिर प्रदान गर्छ यसलाई ग्रामीण मानिसहरूलाई आकर्षित गर्ने मुख्य तत्त्व मानिएको छ (रामाचन्द्र २००८, पृ. ८५)। बसाई सराई एक महत्वपूर्ण गतिशील जनसांख्यिकीय प्रक्रिया हो, जसमा व्यक्ति, परिवार, समूह एक ठाउँदेखि अर्को ठाउँमा जाने क्रममा संलग्न हुन्छ यसले परिस्थितिअनुसार भौगोलिक क्षेत्रमा मानिसहरू विशेष रूपले श्रमिकहरू वितरण गर्ने काममा प्रभावित पार्छ। सहरीकरणको सन्दर्भमा पुश-पुल (push-Pull) सिद्धान्त मुख्य आधार मानिन्छ। लुई विर्थले सन् १९६६ मा रेमिन्स्टीनका नियमहरूसित मिल्ने बसाई सराईका एक सिद्धान्त पुश-पुल थ्योरी प्रतिपादन गरेका छन्। बसाई सराईमा पुश र पुलले एकै साथ काम गरिरहेको हुन्छ। यसले मानिसहरूको स्थानिक आवगमनलाई उत्पत्ति र गन्तव्य स्थानहरू सम्बन्धित तत्त्वको रूपमा व्याख्या गर्छ। जुन उत्पत्ति क्षेत्रबाट मानिस बाहिरिन्छन् वा बसाई सन्धन् त्यसलाई चित्रण गर्ने कारक तत्वलाई नकरात्मक वा माइनस (-) अथवा पुश मानिन्छ। जनसंख्या वृद्धि, जमीन र प्राकृतिक स्रोतको अभाव, कठिन जीवन शैली अनि कम ज्याला आदि यसका आधारभूत कारण मानिएको छ (अगस्ती, पात्र २०१९ पृ, २३-२४)। जसले मानिसहरूलाई कुनै स्थानिक क्षेत्रतिर आकर्षित गर्छ वा बसाई सरेर जहाँ मानिस स्थापित हुन्छन् त्यसलाई सकारात्मक वा प्लस (+) पुल वा आकर्षण शक्ति मानिन्छ। औद्योगिक विकास, धेरै अर्थप्राप्ति, उच्च ज्याला, यातायत र संचार सुविधा, स्वास्थ्य र शिक्षा अनि भव्य जीवन-शैली पुलका कारणहरू हुन सक्छ (अगस्ती, पात्र २०१४ पृ, २४)। नेपाली उपन्यासमा उपलब्ध सहरी जीवनको प्रभाव निम्न देखिन्छ।

२. शैक्षिक अभिवृद्धि बौद्धिक र आस्तित्वात्मिक सङ्घर्ष: भ्रमर

उपन्यासमा रूपनारायण सिंहले सन् उन्नाइसौं तीसको दशकका नेपाली जन-जीवन, शैक्षिक, बौद्धिक र आस्तित्वात्मिक क्षेत्रमा देखिएका सहरीकरणको प्रभावलाई स्वच्छन्तावादी प्रवृत्तिमा

प्रस्तुत गरेका छन्। दार्जिलिङको शेखर बी. ए. प्रथम दर्जामा उत्तीर्ण भएपछि पनि एम. ए. का निम्ति अनि माया डक्टरी पढ्न कल्कत्ता र मोहन बनारस हिन्दू विश्वविद्यालय गएका छन्। मोटा राईका छोरी श्यामा र गौरी दुवै शिक्षित छन्। अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा जान्दछन्, गौरीलाई नेपालीमा प्रथम लेडी वकिल बनाउने शेखरको अभिप्राय छ। अतः भ्रमरका पात्रहरू मोटा राई र उसकी गृहणी, रणवीर सिंह, रूपादेवी, वीणा, शेखर, मोहनविक्रम, तुलसी बाजे, माया सबै शिक्षित र सभ्य छन्। विक्रमवीर थापाको **टिस्टादेखि सतलजसम्म** उपन्यासको पात्र कमल विष्णुपुरदेखि शिलाङ सेहर गएर सेन्ट एन्थोनी कलेज पढ्छन्। **नयाँ क्षितिजको खोज** उपन्यासमा सन् १८६९ मा म्याकफार्लेन मिशनरीले शिक्षाको व्यवस्था गर्न दार्जिलिङका बीसजना ठिठाहरूलाई गयामा पठाएका अनि उनीहरू फर्केपछि दार्जिलिङका सहर र कमानमा सन् १८७३ सालभित्र २५ वटा प्राथमिक पाठशालाहरू खोलिएका उल्लेख छन्। शिक्षाको व्यवस्थाले नेपाली नव पिँढीका आँखा खोल्ने काम भएको छ। प्रेम प्रधानको **उदासीन रुख** उपन्यासका पात्रहरू रूपादेवी दार्जिलिङको लोरेटो कन्भेन्टबाट र भास्कर काठमाडौँबाट कल्कत्ता पढ्न आएका छन्। सहरका जीवन सहज, सुगम मात्र हुँदैन तर संकटमय पनि हुन्छ। विजयाको पति रमानन्द गिरी अस्वस्थ भएदेखि कल्कत्ताका गुण्डाहरू उसको पछि लागेका छन्। विजयाको रक्षा गर्न उसलाई बस्नेतको घरमा लाँदा शिखर र मुस्लमान गुण्डाहरूले शेखरलाई आक्रमण गरी घाइते बनाएका छन्। भ्रमरमा दार्जिलिङ, बनारस, कल्कत्ताजस्ता सहर र महानगरीहरूको परिवेश, वातावरण वा पर्यावरणको उल्लेख पाइन्छ।

३. विस्थापित र विसङ्गतपूर्ण जीवनको प्रस्तुति:

दार्जिलिङको सहरीय जीवनको कटु र तिक्त अनुभव अनि अनुभूतिहरू **आज रमिता छ** (१९६३) उपन्यासको कथ्य बनेको छ। स्वतन्त्रपूर्व र स्वतन्त्रोत्तर युगीन समस्याले स्थानीय नेपालीहरूको जीवनमा पारेको सहरीय प्रभावहरूमा प्रमुख आर्थिक, राजनैतिक, प्रशासनिक पक्ष द्वन्द्वपूर्ण र चुनौतिपूर्ण रहेका छन् भने गौण प्रभावहरू सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक, शैक्षिक र यौन पक्ष सक्रिय देखिन्छन्। आर्थिक प्रभावका रूपमा उपन्यासका प्रमुख पात्र जनकमान योञ्जनले गरेको संघर्ष अनि त्यसको नकारात्मक परिणति विश्लेष्य बन्छ। जनक शिक्षित र सम्पन्न छ, पिताले वैभवस्वरूप कमाईदिएका अस्टिन कार र चियादोकान उसित छ। पितृहस्तन्तरित व्यवसायको क्रममा कन्ट्रोल दोकान, लुगादोकान र एउटा ट्रक उपलब्धस्वरूप कमाएको जनक उदार, शिक्षित व्यवसायिकसचेत व्यक्ति हुँदाहुँदै पनि जयविलासजस्तो मारवाडीको षड्यन्त्रमा परी घर, गाडी बेच्न बाध्य छ। कतैबाट पनि आर्थिक मनोबल र सहयोग पाउन नसकेको जनक इज्जत र शान्तिका निम्ति दार्जिलिङ छोडेर अन्यत्र जाने निर्णयमा पुगेको छ। आर्थिक संकटको भारले थिचिएर एम. के. आत्महत्या गर्न बाध्य छ। राजनैतिक समस्याको प्रभाव उपन्यासमा छ। नेताहरू सचेत भएको भए दार्जिलिङको राजनैतिक समस्या पहिल्यै समाधान हुन्थ्यो भन्ने उपन्यासकारको चिन्तन छ। भूदेव, यशराज, कृष्णलाल जस्ता स्वार्थी र षड्यन्त्रकारी नेताकै कारण नेपाली जातिको राजनैतिक अस्तित्व अहिले पनि संकटग्रस्त छ। प्रशासनिक प्रभावका रूपमा कमानका व्यवस्थापक, पुलिस, कचहरीका कर्मचारीहरूको कुकृत्यहरू उल्लेखनीय छन्। ईर्ष्या, डाह, षड्यन्त्र, आँखा लगाउने मनोवृत्ति, सहयोगिताको भावना, यौन समस्याहरू सामाजिक प्रभावान्तर्गत रहेका छन्।

मत्स्येन्द्र प्रधानको **नीलकण्ठ** (१९८४) उपन्यासलाई सहरी जीवनको प्रभावबारे लेखिएको उत्कृष्ट उपन्यास मानिन्छ। शहरीय वातावरणले सचेत, इमान्दार मानिसलाई अर्धमृत तुल्याएको छ। पारिवारिक, सामाजिक, कार्यलीय अहम्, निन्दाले आजका मानिसलाई पीडा पुर्याएको छ। बलात्कार, यौन सम्पर्कद्वारा उत्पन्न समस्याले आत्महत्या र यौनव्यभिचारलाई प्रोत्साहित

गरेको प्रसङ्ग नीलकण्ठ उपन्यासमा पाइन्छ। सहरीकरणको सामाजिक प्रभाव परिवार, जाति, महिलाको सामाजिक स्थिति र ग्रामीण जीवनमा परिरहेको हुन्छ। पारिवारिक ढाँचा, आन्तरिक परिवारको सम्बन्धलाई सहरीकरणले प्रभावित पार्छ भन्ने विचार यस उपन्यासमा पाइन्छ।

४. ग्रामीण-सहरी बसाई सराई:

हट्टाबाहिरको परिणामस्वरूप सहरमा स्थापित नेपाली जनजीवनको सन्दर्भ जुनेली रेखामा (१९७९) उपन्यासमा पाइन्छ। कमानको जीवनलाई नजीकबाट हेरेर, छामेर, चिन्तन गरेर उपन्यास लेख्ने उपन्यासकार इन्द्र सुन्दासले उपनिवेशिककालीन हट्टाबाहिर प्रथालाई जुनेली रेखामा प्रस्तुत गरेका छन्। जसले पात्रको हट्टाबाहिर उत्पत्ति स्थानको विकर्षण पुश अथवा नकारात्मक (-) कारक तत्त्व बनेको छ। पछि जसले दार्जिलिङ सहरमा पुगेर जीवन शुरू गर्नु लक्ष्यस्थान प्रतिको आकर्षण, पुल अथवा सकारात्मक (+) तत्त्व बनेको पाइन्छ। अङ्ग्रेजहरूकै आश्रयमा एङ्ग्लो इन्डियन रेल ड्राइभरको नोकर भएर उनले आफूलाई सहरमा स्थापित गर्छ। एङ्ग्लो इन्डियन रेल ड्राइभरको स्थानान्तर तीनधारेमा हुँदा उनले जसलाई सोल्जर्स कल्बको चौकीदारमा नियुक्तिको व्यवस्था गरिदिन्छ। चियाकमानको मेनेजरको यौन शोषणबाट बाँच्न मालिनी पछि दार्जिलिङ सहरमा आएर जससितै घरजाम गरेर बस्छे। ब्रिटिशकालीन दार्जिलिङमा अङ्ग्रेजको संस्कार, सभ्यता, रहन-सहनको यथार्थिक वर्णन जुनेली रेखा उपन्यासमा सजीव रूपमा चित्रित छ।

इन्द्र सुन्दाको सहारा (१९९४) जुनेली रेखाकै परिपूर्तिस्वरूप लेखिएको दोस्रो उपन्यास हो। चियाकमानमा हुने अङ्ग्रेज म्यानेजरहरूको अत्याचार र शोषण सहन नसकी भाइमान जीविका उपार्जनका निम्ति दार्जिलिङ सहरमा आउँछ। जुनेली रेखा उपन्यासको पात्र जसले उसलाई सहारा दिई राख्छ। चिनीया घडी दोकानमा काम गरी भाइमानले दार्जिलिङ सहरमा आफूलाई स्थापित गर्छ। रोजगार सहरीकरणको प्रमुख कारण मानिन्छ। रोजगारका निम्ति ग्रामीण क्षेत्रबाट सहरमा स्थायी रूपले स्थापित हुनु नै सहरीकरण हो भन्ने विचार यी दुई उपन्यासमा चरितार्थ भएको छ।

५. औद्योगीकरण र सहरको स्थापना:

असीत राईको नयाँ क्षितिजको खोज (१९८०) भारतीय नेपाली ऐतिहासिक उपन्यास मानिएको छ। दार्जिलिङ सहरको स्थापनामा नेपाली पुर्खाहरूले दिएका योगदानको महत्त्व र वर्तमान नेपाली जातिको मूल्याङ्कनको सन्दर्भ यस उपन्यासमा पाइन्छ। अटब्बे जङ्गल र गौचरण भूमिलाई सहरीकरण गरिएको ऐतिहासिक तथ्य उपन्यासमा निहित छ। दार्जिलिङमा अङ्ग्रेजको आगमनसितै सहरको स्थापनाले नेपाली जनजीवनमा सहरीकरणको प्रभाव सकारात्मक र नकारात्मक दुवै रूपमा परेको छ। सन् १८४० मा कहचरी र तीसवटा विल्डिङ बनिपछि बेलाइती साहेबहरूका मिशी र बाबाहरू पढ्ने स्कूल सन्त पॉल, लोरेटो कन्भेन्ट, फौजी रोडको विकल्प गिद्दे महानदी रोड अनि सन् १८७९ मा रेल लाईन, पिक्चरहलको स्थापना भएपछि नेपाली जन-जीवनमा त्यसको प्रत्यक्ष-परोक्ष प्रभाव परेको छ। सहरीकरणको परिणामस्वरूप नेपालीहरू साहित्यिक, राजनैतिक, शैक्षिक दृष्टिले सचेत र सभ्य भए तापनि युगीन समस्यासितको संघर्षमा सफल हुन नसकेको निष्कर्ष प्रस्तुत उपन्यासमा रहेको छ। सन् १९८१ सालको साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कारले पुरस्कृत नयाँ क्षितिजको खोज उपन्यासमा सहरीकरणको स्थापना र त्यसको प्रभाव रोचक र विश्वसनीय छन्। धेरै कारणहरूमध्ये औद्योगीकरण सहरीकरणको मुख्य कारक तत्त्व मानिएको छ। शान्ति थापाको मोहनी. कम (२००९) उपन्यासमा पूर्वोत्तर भारतको आसाम राज्यको डिगबोइ सहरको परिवेश अन्तर्गत तेल औद्योगीकरण र संशोधनको चर्चा छ। मानिसहरू साइरेनको नियन्त्रणमा बाँच्न बाध्य छन्। लोकनाथ उपाध्याय चापागाईको आँधी उपन्यासमा तीन सुकियामा तेल रिफाईनेरी औद्योगीकरणको स्थापनार्थ ठूला ठूला मशिनहरू स्थापित गरिएको उल्लेख छ।

६. संस्कृतिको विघटन र हार्दिकतोको अभाव:

सांस्कृतिक एकताको विलय र मिश्रित संस्कृतिको जन्म सहरीकरणको कारण मानिन्छ। **आज रमिता छ** उपन्यासमा हिन्दू, बौद्ध, ईसाइ र इस्लाम धर्मका झलक अनि संस्कार-संस्कृतिहरूको प्रसङ्ग छन्। यसै सन्दर्भमा डा. मोहन पी. दाहाल लेख्छन्-“ वस्तुतः दार्जिलिङ सहर नेपाली जाति बहुल स्थान हो तापनि यो सहर विभिन्न जाति, धर्म, सम्प्रदाय एवम् संस्कृतिको सङ्गमस्थल भएको छ र यहाँ विभिन्न जाति, सम्प्रदायमाझ सम्प्रीति एवं सहिष्णुता रहेको; अन्तर्जातीय, अन्तर्गोष्ठीय र अन्तर्धर्मीय विवाहले सामाजिक मान्यता पाएको, नेपालीहरूले विभिन्न धर्म (हिन्दू, ईसाई, बुद्धिष्ट, इस्लाम) ग्रहण गरेको तथा जातपात, धर्म, खानपिन, भेषभूषाजस्ता व्यक्तिगत वा सामाजिक विषयहरूप्रति दार्जिलिङको नेपाली समाजको मनोभाव कट्टर हुनको सट्टा उदार रहेको छ (दाहाल २००१, पृ. ७३) नेपाली, बिहारी, बङ्गाली, मारवाडी जातिका स्वभाव, मनोवृत्ति र आनुवांशिक परम्पराहरू प्रस्तुत उपन्यासमा जीवन्त बनेको छ।

सहरीकरणको स्थापनाको सान्दार्भिक उल्लेख **विक्रमवीर थापाको टिस्टादेखि सतलजसम्म (१९८६)** उपन्यासमा रहेको छ। शिलाङ सहरको स्थापनामा नेपाली पुर्खाहरूको योगदान रहेको छ। त्यहाँका युवतीहरूमा संकोचताको अभाव रहेको उपन्यासको पात्र कमलले बसमा कलेजका निम्ति यात्रा गर्दा भेटिएकी युवतीबाट अवगत हुन्छ। ‘यो तिम्रो गाउँ होइन शिलाङ सहर हो। सहरको सभ्यता पनि यही हो-निर्लज्ज भएर लाजलाई पचाउनु। लाज पचाउन नसक्ने मानिस सहरमा बाँच्न सक्दैन’ (थापा सन् १९८६ पृ. ३१)। सहरीकरणपछि रीति-रिवाज, परम्परा र जातीय पोशाक अनि गर गहनाको अवहेलना गर्दै फेसनका निम्ति आमासित जबर्जस्तीसित तर्क गर्ने युवतीहरू सहरीकरणकै प्रभाव मानिन्छ। उपन्यासकार सहरीकरणको प्रभाववारे गम्भीर चिन्तन गर्दै लेख्छन्- “हो सहरिया जिन्दगीको खास्टो ओढेर बाँचिरहेका हाम्रा दिदी बहिनीहरूले आधुनिक संसारमा साँच्चिकै पाइलो टेकिसकेका छन्। वास्तवमा सहरिया जिन्दगीमा बाँचिरहेका मानिसहरू व्यक्तिवादी भइसकेका छन्; यसैकारण यहाँका मानिसहरू आफ्नै स्वार्थमा लीन छन्। कसैलाई सेनिमा हेर्ने कामले फुर्सत दिन्न; कसैलाई कल्ब र पार्टीले नै फुर्सत दिँदैनन्, कसैलाई भने सम्मेलन र भाषणले फुर्सत दिँदैनन्; यसैकारण यहाँ आत्मीयताको हास हुँदैछ। आफ्नो मान्छे अचिनारू हुँदैछ (थापा, सन् १९८६, पृ. ८१)। सहरीकरणका कारण सामाजिक र पारिवारिक नियन्त्रणमा हास आउँछ, पारिवारिक सम्बन्धले परम्परागत मूल्य गुमाएको छ, सहरमा आएपछि उनीहरू अनैतिक व्यवहारमा संलग्न हुन्छन् कारण उनीहरूलाई नियन्त्रण गर्ने कोही हुँदैनन् फलतः उनीहरू सिनेमा, होटल अनि वर्जित स्थानतिर पनि जाने गर्छन् (कुमार सन् २००५-०६ पृ. २२३)। निर्वैयक्तिकता सहरीकरणको प्रभाव हो।

७. नेपाली उपन्यासमा राष्ट्रिय र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय सहरीकरणको प्रभाव:

मणिकुमार प्रधानको **फर्कि आए मुना मदन (२०१५)** उपन्यासमा राष्ट्रिय र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय सहरीकरणको प्रभाव पाइन्छ। बसाई सराईमा पुल (आकर्षण) शक्तिले मानिसलाई औद्योगिक विकास, उच्च ज्याला, संचारसुविधा, यातायात सुविधा, स्वास्थ्य सुविधाका निम्ति आकर्षित गर्छ भन्ने लुई विर्थको भनाई रहेको छ (अगस्ती, पात्र २०१४ पृ. २४)। सहरीकरणको मूल कारण बेरोजगारको उन्मुलन हो। रोजगारका निम्ति अमेरिकाको फिलाडेल्फिया सहरमा एन.जी.ओ मा कार्यरत मदन अमेरिकाको इण्डो जर्मन सोसियल सर्भिसबाट थाइलेण्ड पुग्छ। राँचीमा आयोजित अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय गैरसरकारी संस्थाहरूको जमघटमा यौनकर्मिका समस्या र समाधानमाथि वार्ता राख्छ। इण्डो अमेरिकन क्याथलिक विमेन्स लिगमा परियोजना संयोजकका निम्ति मदनले आवेदन गर्दा नियुक्ति पाउँछ। नैनी, मुना अनि अरू

युवतीहरू रोजगारका निम्ति ब्यङ्कक पुग्छन्। सहरमा चिकित्साको सुविधा उपलब्ध हुन्छ, मुनाको उपचार कल्कत्तामा हुन्छ, ब्रेन ट्युमरको अप्रेशन बेङ्गलोर अपोलोमा हुन्छ, मदनको उपचार अमेरिकामा हुन्छ। पात्रहरू कल्कत्ता, दिल्ली, अमेरिका र ब्याङ्कक, बेङ्गलोर जस्ता ठाउँहरूमा फ्लाइटमा यात्रा गर्छन्। साइबर क्याफेबाट फ्लाइटको टिकट काटिन्छ। अमेरिकाबाट मदनले इमेल गर्छ। इन्टरनेट, मोबाइल, कम्प्युटरले संचार माध्यमलाई सहज, सुगम र सशक्त बनाएको छ। प्राविधिक संस्कृतिको विकासले विश्व एउटा सानो गाउँ झै भएको छ। भूमण्डलीकरण पनि सहरीकरणकै परिणति मात्र सकिन्छ। अतः **फर्कि आए मुना मदन** उपन्यासमा सहरीकरणको तीव्र प्रभाव पाइन्छ। स्नेहलता राईको **कथाव्यथा** उपन्यासमा अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय प्रवासनको आंशिक चित्रण पाइन्छ। डी. एस. पी. बाबूको अवकासपछि छोरोले घर पैतृक भव्य दार्जिलिङको जबरजस्ती बेच लगाने नियोकमा घर किनी आमा बाबुलाई पनि लगेर चार दिवारभित्र राखी उनीहरूलाई निसार्सिँदो जीवन जिउन बाध्य बनाएको चित्रण पाइन्छ।

८. सहरी जीवनको चित्रण:

प्रेम प्रधानको **उदासीन रूख** (१९९९) उपन्यासमा दार्जिलिङ र कल्कत्ता महानगरीको उराठलाग्दो जीवनको प्रस्तुति छ। आर्थिक सम्पन्न र विपन्न दुवै वर्गका मानिसहरूको जीवन अवसादपूर्ण र एक्लो देखिन्छ। कल्कत्ताको सहरीय परिवेश मानिसका निम्ति झिजोलाग्दो बनेको छ “-कल्कत्ताको त्यो कोलाहलमय मानिसको भीड, मोटर गाडी, ट्राम, कलकारखाना आदिले सृष्टि गरेको प्रदूषित वातावरण केवल आवाजै आवाजले भरिएको त्यो सहरमा मैले कतै शान्ति देखिनँ” (प्रधान, १९९९ पृ. २८)। उपभोक्तावादी संस्कृतिको प्रभावस्वरूप प्रेम प्रधानको **प्रयोगको मेशिन** (२००९) दोस्रो उपन्यासमा सहरीकरणको नकरात्मक प्रभावको छाप छ। उपभोक्तावादी संस्कृतिले जन्माएको भोग विलास, तृष्णाले समकालीन सहरको परिवेशलाई नर्क बनाएको छ। सहरमा नारी सुरक्षित छैन। सन्तानका निम्ति प्रभाको कोख खरीद गरेर नानीको तलतल पुरा गर्ने डा. पाण्डेले प्रभालाई सरोगी मदर बनाउने आग्रह गरेको छ। दार्जिलिङ, सिलगडी, कल्कत्ताका सहरीय परिवेशले मानवमाथि पारेका प्रभावहरूको उल्लेख छ। शिक्षा, नोकरी र कृतिम पद्धतिद्वारा टेस्टट्युबमा गर्भ राखेर नानी जन्माउने सहूलियतको चर्चा यस उपन्यासमा छ। गाउँबाट आएको प्रभाले दार्जिलिङमा बी. ए. सम्म अध्ययन गर्छ, नर्सिङ होम र पाँच तारे होटलमा काम पाउँछे। सहरको जीवन निस्सारिँदो छ, आजको युगमा सहरमा भौतिक विलाशिताका रूपमा यौन शोषण, नशाखोर, ड्रग्स सेवन, ड्रग्स व्यापार, सरोगी मदर अनि हत्याजस्ता अपराधहरू सहरीकरणको नकरात्मक प्रभावका उपज हुन्। सहरका यी नकरात्मक प्रभावहरू **प्रयोगको मेशिन** उपन्यासमा प्रस्तुत छन्।

९. दुर्व्यसन र ट्राफीकीकरण:

भमर उपन्यासमा कल्कत्ताकी विजयलाई गुण्डाहरूले अपहरण गरेका वर्णन छ। लोकनाथ उपाध्याय चापागाईंको **आँधी** (१९९९) उपन्यासमा पूर्वोत्तर आसामका विविध जिल्ला र शिलाङ सहरको परिवेश अनि वातावरणले त्यहाँका मानिसहरूमाथि पारेको नकरात्मक प्रभावलाई देखाइएको छ। उपन्यासकी नायिका नम्रताकी आमा बस्नेतसित साझैदारी अफिम र रक्सीको व्यापार गर्छे। टाडाका धेरै मानिसहरू अफिम लिई त्यहाँ आउँछन्। गुवाहाटीको सहरीय परिवेशले पाठकलाई आँधीले झैं त्रस्त बनाएको छ। बाबुको निधनपछि नम्रताका काका-काकीले बाबुको पैसामा आँखा गाडी गुण्डा लगाई नम्रताको अपहरण गर्न बनाएको षड्यन्त्र सहरीकरणका परिणति हुन्। कामको प्रभोलन देखाई नम्रताजस्ता युवतीहरूलाई बङ्गलोमा बोलाई बलात्कार गर्ने धनञ्जय, गौहाटीको होटलमा प्रत्यक्ष वेश्यालयमा काम गर्न बोलाउने नेपाली आइमाई, तेजपुरमा पनि बल्त्कारको प्रयास गर्ने ईश्वरीहरू सहरीय परिवेशकै

विकृत उपज हुन्। आजको सहरमा हाम्रा चेलीहरू हाम्रै मानिसहरूबाट असुरक्षित रहेको तथ्य उपन्यासमा पाइन्छ। **उदासीन रूख** उपन्यासमा साँझमा बार र रेस्टुराँतिर गएर रक्सी पिउनु सहरको संस्कार बनेको उल्लेख छ। अमिल्दो उमेरका पतिको अनुपस्थितिमा बस्नपर्दा रूपादेवी यौन असन्तुष्टि र एकलोपनले छटपटाएकी छ। हिस्टोरिया र मनोरोगले ग्रस्त रूपादेवी मदमदिराको सेवनमा जीवन बिताउँछे। दार्जिलिङको मेघराजको छोरो आग्निराज ड्रगको शिकारले हिंसात्मक बनेको गुनासो मेघराज मनोहरसँग प्रकट गर्छ। कल्कत्ता महानगरीमा देवराज र मालतीको जीवन विपरित दिशाको धुर्व झैं बनेको छ। मालतीलाई दिनोदिन आधुनिकताले प्रभाव पारेको छ। एकापछि अर्को इच्छा पूर्तिका निम्ति पतिलाई असक्षम ठान्दै सहरीय वातावरणमा मालतीले पत्नीत्वको लगाम चुडाएर उन्मुक्त बनेकी शङ्का देवराज गर्छ। **उदासीन रूख** उपन्यासमा सहरको दुर्व्यसन र यौन अपराधलाई जीवन्त प्रकारले प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ। **प्रयोगको मेशिन** उपन्यासमा सम्पत्तिको आडमा आर्थिक सहयोग गरेर शारीरिक, यौन शोषण गर्दै अनौपचारिक बिहे गर्ने, तास-जुवा, नशा र यौनानन्दमा बाँच्ने शिवराजजस्तो अनैतिक पुरूषले प्रभाकी आमालाई बलत्कार गर्दा बाबुले देखेर विरोध गरेकोले शिवराजले प्रभाको बाबुको हत्या गरेको छ। एच. आइ. भी. रोगग्रस्त देवेन ड्रग्सको व्यापारमा पटक पटक पक्रा परी अन्तमा आजीवन कैदमा परेको प्रसङ्ग छ। स्नेहलता राईको **कथाव्यथा** उपन्यासमा दार्जिलिङका युवाहरूमा देखिएको दुर्व्यसनको समस्यालाई कारुणिक रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ।

१०. सहरीकरणमा नारी समस्या र निराकरण:

विन्दा सुब्बाको **अथाह** (१९९९) उपन्यासमा कल्कत्ता महानगरीमा अवस्थित मानसिक चिकित्सालयको परिवेश छ। महानगरीका परिवारहरूमा हुने बलात्कार, धनी परिवारको छोरोको असीमित आवश्यकता र त्यसको परिपूर्तिको अभावमा ध्वंसात्मक क्रियाकलाप गर्ने मानसिकता आदिको रोचक प्रस्तुति **अथाह** उपन्यासमा पाइन्छ।

पुष्प राईका **मध्यान्तर र भोलिको प्रतीक्षा** दुवै उपन्यासमा सहरीकरणको आंशिक प्रभाव पाइन्छ। सहरका सम्पन्न पुरूषहरूले नारीलाई यौन तृष्णाको साधन मात्र मान्छन्, यौन तृष्णा मेटेपछि विभिन्न प्रकारका दोषारोपण गरी त्याग्ने गर्छन्। रामले पूर्णिशालाई यस्तै व्यवहार गरेको छ तर आजका सहरका नारीहरू पुरूषसत्तात्मक समाजको विरोधी देखिन्छन् अनि उनीहरू प्रत्येक कुरामा सचेत छन्। आजको परिवारमा हैकमवादी पुरूषसत्ताको अन्त भएको छ। मानसिक, यौनिक, सामाजिक शोषण गर्ने लोग्नेसित स्वास्नीले सम्बन्ध विच्छेद गर्छे। सहरका कलेज पढ्ने सम्पन्न युवाहरू ड्रगको सेवनमा लागेका छन्। यही यथार्थलाई **मध्यान्तर** उपन्यासमा देखाइएको छ। दोस्रो उपन्यास **भोलिको प्रतीक्षा** (२०१०) उपन्यासमा दार्जिलिङ र काठमाडौँ सहरको परिवेशको प्रभाव रहेको छ। उपन्यासकी पात्रा शान्तिकी आमा दार्जिलिङमा वासनाको शिकार बनी बाबुबिनाको छोरी शान्तिलाई जन्म दिन्छे। सहरमा बाबुबिनाको छोरी भएर बाँच्नुपर्दाको पीडा अनुभव र अनुभूति गर्ने शान्ति अर्थशास्त्रमा एम. ए. गरेकी छन्। नारीप्रति पुरूषको व्यवहार र सम्बन्ध स्वार्थपूर्ण हुन्छ भन्ने यथार्थसित अवगत हुँदा हुँदा पनि काठमाडौँमा शैलेन्द्रको प्रेमको जालमा परी दोजिया बन्छे। शैलेन्द्रले शान्तिको बिहेको प्रस्ताव टाँदै लान्छ पछि शान्तिले शैलेन्द्र विवाहित पुरुष हो भनेर थाहा पाउँछे।

११. सहरीकरणमा राजनैतिक प्रभाव:

सिक्किमका भीम दाहालको **अभीष्टको खोज** (१९९२) उपन्यासमा गान्तोकको सहरीय परिवेशमा पुगेकी शान्ति बलात्कृत भएपछि, खुल्ला यौन व्यभिचारी बनी मदमदिरामा लाग्छे। यस उपन्यासमा सहरीय समाज, संस्कृति, राजनीति आदिको प्रभावमाथि प्रकाश पारिएको छ। उनकै दोस्रो उपन्यास **द्रोह** (२००२) मा गान्तोक सहरमा स्थापित सिक्किमका विधायकहरूको चुरीफूरीलाई देखाइएको छ। राजनैतिक शक्तिको दुरूपयोग गर्ने नेता

विचारलाल र इमान्दारी नेता स्याङ्देन साहेबको (मुख्यमन्त्री) भविष्यको परिणतिलाई गम्भीर चिन्तनका रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ।

१२. भौतिक भोगविलासिता जीवन पद्धति:

स्नेहलता राईको मनु (२०१३) उपन्यासमा रोजगारका निम्ति विदेशिएकी मनुकी आमाको चरित्रमा आएको परिवर्तनलाई देखाइएको छ “-बारूलो कम्मरकी आमा! कम्मर नै नभएकी कत्रो ढोइ शरीरकी भएकी छिन्। त्यही शरीरमा पनि स्किनटाइट जीन्सप्यान्ट, रातो टल्कने जम्पर, खुट्टामा लामो ब्राउन बूट साइडमा लहरै लेस बाँधेको। केश त मनुको भन्दा छोटो। बान्की परेको, सुन्दर चेहेरा पनि मोटोपनले हरेर लाँदो रहेछ। सुन्दर प्रतिमाझैँ शरीर विदेशमा विसर्जन भएछ। (राई, २०१३, पृ. ९७)। मदमदिरा मन नपराउने उसलाई अचेल बेलुकी सधैं भोडका, वाइन र सिग्रेट नभइ नहुने हुन्छ। पत्नीको अस्वाभाविक परिवर्तन देखेर लोभ्र अवाक् हुन्छ, ग्लानी र विस्मय उत्पन्न हुन्छ। यस्तो अवस्थाबाट उसलाई बचाउँन विदेश नजाने आग्रह गर्दा एकपल्ट मात्र गएर फर्किहाल्ने प्रयुत्तर दिने मनुकी आमा कहिले पर्केर आउदिन। प्रस्तुत उपन्यासमा मनुकी आमाको अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय बसाई सराई छ। रोजगारका निम्ति विदेशिने मानिसहरूको जीवनमा सहरीकरणका विविध प्रभाव परेको छ। मनुकी आमा भौतिक भोगविलासमा डुबेर आफ्नो छोरी, लोभ्रसहितको राम्रो परिवारलाई भुल्न सक्षम भएकी छ।

उपसंहार:

गाउँ बस्तीका अधिकांश मानिसहरू जीविका उपार्जनका निम्ति सहरमा बसाई सरेका छन्। शिक्षा, रोजगार, व्यापार-व्यवसाय, चिकित्सा सुविधा, सहज जीवनको निर्वाह, भोग-विलास, यतायात सहूलियत आदिका कारणले सहरमा जनसंख्याको वृद्धि भएको हुन्छ। सहरीकरणको जीवन शैली प्रत्येक मानिसका निम्ति आकर्षणको कारण हुन्छ। सहरीकरणको प्रभाव मानिसमा नकरात्मक र सकारात्मक दुवै रूपले परेको हुन्छ। स्थानीय सहरदेखि महानगर अनि विदेशी सहरमा पनि नेपालीहरू विशेष रोजगारका निम्ति सहरमा बस्दा भोगेका तीता-मिठा अनुभवहरू नेपाली उपन्यासहरूमा वर्णित छन्। **भ्रमर, आज रमिता छ, नीलकण्ठ, उदासीन रूख, प्रयोगको मेशिन, फर्कि आए मुना मदन, भोलिको प्रतीक्षा, आँधीजस्ता भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यासहरूमा सहरीकरणको अधिक प्रभाव रहेका छन् भने जुनेली रेखा, सहारा, मोहनी. कम, मध्यान्तर, द्रोह, अभीष्टको खोज, मनु, कथाव्यथा** आदि उपन्यासहरूमा सहरको परिवेश वा भावपरिमण्डल कम देखिए तापनि सहरीकरणको कम तर सशक्त प्रभाव रहेको पाइन्छ। सहरीकरणको सकारात्मक प्रभावका रूपमा रोजगार, शिक्षा, चिकित्सा, सहजजीवन, औद्योगीकरण आदिको उल्लेख भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यासमा पाइन्छ भने नकरात्मक प्रभावको रूपमा सबैभन्दा ज्यादा प्रभाव यौन समस्या र बलात्कार त्यसपछि अहम्, हत्या, षड्यन्त्र, भोगविलास, नशा-ड्रग, अफीमको सेवन र धन्धा, राजनैतिक शक्तिको दुरुपयोग, तनावजस्ता आदि समस्याहरूले आजको मानिसलाई पीडा प्रदान गरेको पाइन्छ।

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भारतमा लेखिएका समकालीन नेपाली कथामा उत्तरआधुनिक सन्दर्भ

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अध्ययनसार

प्रस्तुत अध्ययन पत्रमा समकालीन शब्दको प्रयोग इसाब्द १९९०-देखि हालसम्म प्रकाशनमा आएका कथाकृति तथा कथालेखन यात्रामा स्थापित र नवोदित कथालेखकहरूका लागि प्रयोग गरिएको छ । इसाब्द ९० को दशकयता भारतमा लेखिंदैआएको नेपाली कथाको सर्वेक्षणात्मक अध्ययन-अनुशीलन गर्दा विशेषगरी कथ्यप्रयोग, परिवेश-योजना, रूपविन्यास, समयचेतना तथा जीवनदृष्टि जस्ता सन्दर्भहरू रेखाङ्कन गर्न खोज्दा यस समयावधिका अधिकांश कथाकारहरूले पूर्वकालीन कथासर्जकहरूले भन्दा अलिक भिन्न प्रकारले लेखनलाई आत्मसात् गरेको देखिन्छ । उत्तरआधुनिक लेखनले सिर्जना र समालोचनाको स्पष्ट भेदलाई त्यति नमान्ने हुनाले समकालीन कथालेखनमा पनि धेरथोर रूपमा विनिर्माणवाद, विपठन, अन्तरपठन, पुनर्सृजन, पुनर्लेखन, विधामिश्रण, विधाभञ्जन, विधान्तरण, अन्तर्पाठीयता, स्वैकल्पनाको प्रयोग, अन्तरविषयकको अध्ययन, पाठक प्रतिक्रियावादी अर्थात् पाठकीय अनुक्रियापरक सिद्धान्त, अभिघात चेतना, परालैङ्गिक, समलैङ्गिक अध्ययन, भयवादी अध्ययन, परोक्ष (भर्चुअल), अतिशय (हाइपर) र मायिक (म्याजिकल) यथार्थवादी चिन्तन, सांस्कृतिक र जनजातीय चेतनाको अध्ययन, साइबर संस्कृतिले धेरथोर प्रत्यक्ष-परोक्ष रूपमा प्रभाव पारेको देखिन्छ । अतः भारतमा लेखिएका नेपाली कथामा नवप्रयोग अर्थात् वस्तु-शिल्पशैली र प्रवृत्तिमा नवलेखन के कसरी भित्रिएको छ, पारम्परिक कथा लेखनपरिपाटीभन्दा के कस्तो रूपमा आजको कथालेखन भिन्न हुन खोजेको छ भन्ने कुरोको अध्ययनअनुशीलन गर्नु नै प्रस्तुत अध्ययन पत्रको उद्देश्य रहेको छ । भारतीय नेपाली कथालेखनको समृद्ध परम्परामा विगतदेखि आजसम्म अनवरत रूपमा समर्पित सशक्त कथासर्जकहरूदेखि लिएर आजका साहित्य लेखनमा उज्याला सम्भावना बोकेर देखापरेका नवोदित कथाकारका कथाहरूको साङ्गोपाङ्ग मूल्याङ्कन एउटै अध्ययन पत्रका निर्दिष्ट सीमा र पृष्ठहरूमा सम्भव हुने कुरो होइन । यसर्थ समकालीन भारतीय नेपाली कथालेखनमा स्पष्ट रूपमा देखा परेका मूलभूत प्रवृत्ति र विशेषताहरूलाई सङ्केपमा प्रकाश पार्ने अभिप्रायः रहेको छ ।

प्रमुख शब्दावली (key words)-

अन्तरपठन, अन्तरविषयक अध्ययन, अन्तर्पाठीयता, अभिघात चेतना, परालैङ्गिक, रूपविन्यास, विपठन, विनिर्माणवाद, विधान्तरण, विधाभञ्जन, विधामिश्रण, समलैङ्गिक अध्ययन, सांस्कृतिक चेतना ।

प्रस्तावना-

साहित्य लेखनलाई समकालीन स्वर दिन तथा लेखनलाई अझ गतिशील, प्रभावकारी तथा जीवन्त बनाउनका लागि समय समयमा नवीन चिन्तन एवम् नयाँ नयाँ विचार अवधारणाहरूको प्रादुर्भाव भएको देखिन्छ । समयको प्रवाह सँगसँगै सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक, राजनैतिक-अर्थनैतिक मूल्य-मान्यतामा पनि सानो-ठूलो परिवर्तन देखापर्छ । नेपाली साहित्येतिहासको विभिन्न कालखण्डमा निकै उत्साह र जोशका साथ देखा परेका विभिन्न तरेलीका साहित्यिक लेखन, अभियानको आ-आफ्नै किसिमको मूल्य-मान्यता, अवधारणा र महत्व रहेको देखिन्छ । समाजमा धेरैवटा विचार-चिन्तनहरू एकैसाथ घोषित-अघोषित रूपमा उठिरहेका हुन्छन् । ती प्रत्येक विचार-चिन्तनबाट प्राप्त शक्तिले समाजलाई कुनै न कुनै रूपमा धेरथोर प्रभावित तुल्याउँछन् । समाजमा कलागत चिन्तनको स्रोत र शक्ति कुनै पनि वस्तु र कोही पनि हुनसक्छ । त्यस शक्तिलाई समाजोपयोगी बनाउनका निम्ति के के कुरा मात्र ग्रहण गर्ने, त्यो कुरा महत्वपूर्ण होइन् तर ती कुरालाई के कसरी र कुन ढाँचामा लेख्ने, के कसरी समाजमा प्रभावकारी ढङ्गले प्रस्तुत गर्ने भन्ने विषय नै महत्वपूर्ण कुरा हो । आज भारतमा लेखिएको नेपाली कथा लेखनमा नेपाली संस्कृति, जातीयता, स्थानीयता, राजनीति, मानवशास्त्र, समाजविज्ञान, बहुसंस्कृतिवाद, उपभोक्तासंस्कार जस्ता विषय र सन्दर्भहरू कतै पनि त्याज्य र अछुत बनेका छैनन् । आजको कथा लेखन वैश्विक चेतना र स्थानीय रङ्गसित समसामयिक अभिव्यक्तिसित हातेमालो गरेर अघि बढेको देखिन्छ ।

प्रस्तुत लेखमा प्रयुक्त 'समकालीन नेपाली कथा' पदावलीले इसाब्द १९९० देखि अहिलेसम्मको समयावधिलाई बोध गर्न खोजेको छ । यस कालावधिमा भारतबाट प्रकाशनमा आएका कथाकृति तथा कथालेखन-यात्रामा स्थापित र नवोदित कथालेखकहरूको निम्ति प्रयोग गरिएको छ । इसाब्द ९० को दशकयता भारतमा लेखिँदै आएको नेपाली कथाको सर्वेक्षणात्मक अध्ययन-अनुशीलन गरी कथामा प्रयुक्त कथ्यप्रयोग, परिवेश-योजना, रूपविन्यास, समयचेतना तथा जीवनदृष्टि आदि सन्दर्भहरूको गहिरो अध्ययन-अनुशीलन गरी रेखाङ्कन गर्न खोजिएको छ । यस समयावधिका अधिकांश कथाकारहरूले पूर्वकालीन कथासर्जकहरूले भन्दा अलिक भिन्न प्रकारले आफ्नो लेखनलाई आत्मसात् गरेको भेटिन्छ । उत्तरआधुनिक साहित्य लेखनले सिर्जना र समालोचनाको स्पष्ट भेदलाई त्यति मान्दैन । भारतमा लेखिएका समकालीन नेपाली कथामा पनि धेरथोर रूपमा विभिन्न सिद्धान्तको प्रयोग र प्रभाव परेको देखिन्छ ।

सामाजिक पृष्ठभूमिलाई बलियोसित पक्रेर यथार्थवादी समाज-सांस्कृतिक तथा नेपाली लोकसांस्कृतिक परिप्रेक्ष्यलाई औल्याएर कथा लेख्नेहरूमा इन्द्रबहादुर राई, असीत राई, आइ के सिंह, धनहाङ सुब्बा, बसन्तकुमार राई, सानु लामा, कालुसिंह रनपहेंली, खड्कराज गिरी, धनवीर पुरी, मणिकुमार सुब्बा,

भीम 'सन्तोष', भानु छेत्री, प्रदीप गुरूङ, कमल चामलिङ, ज्ञान सुतार, प्रेम गुरूङ, एम.पथिक, पूर्ण सुब्बा, गोपीचन्द्र प्रधान, शारदा छेत्री (रायामाझी), इन्द्रबहादुर छेत्री, राजेन मोक्तन प्रभृति कथाकारहरू मुख्य रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । नारीवादी लेखन-चिन्तन अर्थात् नारीविमर्शतिर पनि केही सीमासम्म चासो राखेर टेवा पुऱ्याउने नारी कथाकारहरूमा कमला 'आँशु', मटिल्डा राई, विन्ध्या सुब्बा, इन्द्रमणि दर्नाल, शान्ति छेत्री, शान्ति थापा, उषा शर्मा, साङ्मु लेप्चा, निना राई आदि मुख्य रूपमा देखापर्छन् । प्रायडीय र उत्तरप्रायडीय चेतनाले नारी यौनमनोविश्लेषण तथा नारी मनको सूक्ष्मतिसूक्ष्म विश्लेषण गर्नतिर विशेष अभिरूचि राखेर कथालेखेहरूमा गुप्त प्रधान, प्रेम प्रधान, विन्ध्या सुब्बा, जगत छेत्री, चन्द्र शर्मा, हरिश मोक्तान 'अल्लरे' आदि कथाकारहरू मुख्य छन् ।

समकालीन विश्वसमाज, भूमण्डलीकरण तथा साइबर संस्कृति आदि आजको समयसित महत्त्व राख्ने विषयहरूमा कुनैकुनै अङ्गमा छोएर लेख्ने कथाकारहरूमा राजबहादुर राई, शान्ति थापा, पेम्पा तामाङ, विक्रमवीर थापा, सिद्धार्थ राई, वीरभद्र कार्कीढोली, साङ्मु लेप्चा, नीना राई, थीरूप्रसाद नेपाल, माधव बुढाथोकी आदि मुख्य नामहरू हुन् । यसका साथै स्वैरकल्पना, वैचारिकता, असित व्यङ्ग्यको प्रयोग र यथार्थवादी लेखनको मिश्रित प्रवृत्तिलाई कथ्याधार बनाउँदै लेखनमा सक्रियतापूर्वक देखा पर्ने कथाशिल्पीहरूमा शरद् छेत्री, सूर्यकुमार सुब्बा, जीतबहादुर सुनार, होमबहादुर क्षेत्री, भविलाल लामिछाने, रूद्र पौड्याल, डिल्लीराम नेपाल, रूद्र बराल प्रभृति कथाकारहरूलाई लिन सकिन्छ । युद्धको विभीषिका, अभिघातका चेतनाले उत्प्रेरित भई कथा लेखेहरूमा गुप्त प्रधान, समीरण क्षेत्री 'प्रियदर्शी', नन्द हाङखिम, बी. योजन, शमसेर अली, प्रकाश हाङखिम आदिलाई प्रतिनिधि कथाकारको रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । समकालीन भारतीय नेपाली कथालेखनमा उत्साह र नयाँ जोशका साथ नवीन शिल्प-शैली र नयाँ चेतनालिएर राम्रा कथालेखे उदीयमान युवा कथाकारहरूमा युवा बराल, निरङ्कर थापा, सञ्जीव छेत्री, निरज अयोग्य, छिरिङ पाञ्जो शेर्पा, राजेन्द्र ढकाल, राहुल राई वोगिको, कौशिल्या मुखिया, विनीता छेत्री, सन्ध्या आचार्य, अमर शर्मा प्रभृति कथाकारको नाम सगर्व लिन सकिन्छ ।

समकालीन भारतीय नेपाली कथामा उत्तरआधुनिक लेखनगत चेतनाको प्रेरणा र प्रभाव, युक्ति र जुक्ति, प्रवृत्ति र प्रकृतिलाई अध्ययन-अनुशीलन गर्दा आधुनिकतावादका सबै अभिलक्षणहरू प्राप्त नहुन सक्छन् तर पनि आङ्गिक रूपमा कुनै न कुनै अभिलक्षणहरू भने आजको लेखनमा अन्तर्निहित रहेको हुन्छ । कथाको वस्तु र रूप (शिल्प)-पक्ष दुवैमा प्रत्यक्ष-परोक्ष रूपमा उत्तरआधुनिक चेतनाले प्रभाव पार्न थालेको देखिन्छ । नेपाली साहित्यमा उत्तरआधुनिकताबारे केही वर्षयतादेखि मात्र गहिरो चिन्तन र विमर्श हुन थालेको हुँदा यसबारे तर्कवितर्क, अन्योल र अस्पष्टताहरू देखिनु कुनै अस्वभाविक कुरो अवश्य पनि होइन । उत्तरआधुनिक लेखनलाई कतिपय विद्वान् चिन्तकहरूले यथार्थविरोधी लेखन,

उत्तरसमसामयिक लेखन, हिस्टोरियोग्राफिक मेटाफिक्सन, सरफिक्सन आदि शब्दहरूद्वारा समेत सम्बोधन गरिएको भेटिन्छ । आज भारतमा लेखिँदै आएका समकालीन नेपाली कथामा समाज-सांस्कृतिक विसङ्गति र विडम्बना, सामाजिक विकृति तथा राजनैतिक संस्कृतिको विनाश, पर्यावरण चेतना अनि साइबर संस्कृतिले प्रत्यक्ष-परोक्ष रूपमा सामाजिक जनजीवनमा पुऱ्याएको विभिन्न प्रभावको धेरथोर छाप परेको देखिन्छ । भारत जस्तो बहुभाषिक, बहुजातीय र बहुसांस्कृतिक देशमा बसेर लेख्ने भारतेली नेपाली कथाकारहरूबाट समसामयिक समाज र जीवनको व्यापकतालाई समेट्न सक्ने सबल कथाहरू के कस्तो रूपमा लेखिँदैछ र लेखिएको छ, यसबारे साँच्चै गम्भीर विमर्श हुन आवश्यक छ । यस समयावधिमा भारतमा लेखिएका नेपाली कथाको कथ्य परिवेश निकै विस्तृत भएर गएको देखिन्छ । एकाध कथाकारहरू आफ्ना कथाहरूमा स्वैकल्पनाको प्रयोग गरि जीवन-जगतको गुद्दतम अर्थ खोज्ने प्रयासमा सक्रियतापूर्वक लागेका देखिन्छन् भने ती कथासर्जकको कथामा प्रयुक्त स्वैकल्पना कोरा काल्पनिक मात्र नभई जीवनगत क्रियाकलापलाई गहिरो ढङ्गबाट परीक्षण गर्दै वस्तुसापेक्ष मूल्यनिरूपण गर्ने प्रवृत्ति अङ्गालेको स्पष्ट देखिन्छ । यस अध्ययनपत्रको निम्ति मैले समकालीन भारतेली नेपाली कथाकार र तिनीहरूका प्रतिनिधि कथाकृतिको रूपमा इन्द्रबहादुर राई- **कठपुतलीको मन** (१९८९), प्रवीण राई 'जुमेली'- **ऋतुखेल** (२००७), उदय थुलुङ- **एकान्तवास** (२००९), सञ्जय विष्ट- **अस्ताचलतिर** (२००७), र **जूनजस्तै घाम** (२०१५), सतीश रसाइली-**ऐनाको मेघ** (२०११), निमा निची शेर्पा- **दम्को गाउँ** (२००७), प्रकाश हाङखिम- **सुनपसिना** (२०१२), र **ह्याङ-मेनको चिट्ठी** (२०१४), सुरज धडकन- **घर** (२०१०), ध्रुव चौहान- **खोल** (२०११), शमसेर अली- **बीउ भाले** (२०१०), र **सोल्दाती गोर्खा मोल्तो ब्योनी** (२०१४), र छुदेन काविमो- **१९८६** (२०१५) शीर्षक केही कथाकृतिहरूलाई मात्र साक्ष्य र सूच्य(सूचक) सन्दर्भको रूपमा लिइएको छ ।

उत्तरआधुनिक लेखन र भारतीय नेपाली कथाको समकालीन सन्दर्भ-

पश्चिममा साठीको दशकबाटै साहित्यमा उत्तरआधुनिकतावादको विमर्श आरम्भ भएको देखिन्छ । यो चिन्तनको केन्द्रबिन्दु फ्रान्सबाट विस्तारै बेलायत, अमेरिकाहुँदै विश्वमा सर्वत्र फैलियो, कालान्तरमा यो एउटा विश्वदृष्टिकोण बन्न पुग्यो । उत्तरआधुनिकलाई कुनै एउटा निश्चित समयसीमा र परिभाषामा बाँधेर कुँजो बनाउन सकिँदैन । बहुल अर्थबोध युक्ति र जुक्ति नै यसको मुख्य लक्ष्य र अभिप्राप्ति हो । बहुल अर्थबोधको अवधारणा तथा बहुलवादी चिन्तन-दर्शनलाई आत्मसात् गरेकाले उत्तरआधुनिक लेखनले ज्ञानको प्रामाणिकता, दर्शनको वैधता, कुनै निश्चित सिद्धान्तलाई यसले मान्दैन । ज्ञान-विज्ञान, विचार-दर्शन, इतिहास-महाआख्यान सबैको अन्त भएको ठान्छ साथै यस सिद्धान्तले विपठन, विनिर्माण, विधाभञ्जन, विधान्तरण, विधामिश्रण, अर्थभिन्नताको धारणालाई विशेष महत्व दिन्छ ।

उत्तरआधुनिकतावादका चिन्तकहरूमध्ये विशेष गरी ज्याक डेरिडा, ज्याँ फ्रेंकोज, मिशेल फुको, फान्सिस फुकोयामा, रोलॉ वार्थ, मिखाइल बाख्तिन आदिको नाम लिने गरिन्छ । डेरिडाले आफ्नो **अफ् ग्रामोटोलोजी** (१९६७) र **राइटिङ एण्ड डिफरेन्स** (१९६७) शिरोनामित कृतिहरूमा विशेष गरी विनिर्माण, पठन-विपठन तथा भाषाखेललाई मान्यता दिएका छन् । डेरिडा अर्थ र शब्द-केन्द्रिकताका विरोधी भएकाले भाषाको बहुलवादी सिद्धान्तमा विश्वास राख्छन् । उनको विपठन र विखण्डन भाषाको भेदबाट प्रारम्भ हुन्छ अनि यसको सोझो सम्बन्ध लोगो (शब्द)-सँग रहेकोले शब्दकेन्द्रवाद (लोगोसेन्ट्रिक)-लाई सदैव अमान्य ठहराउँछन् । शब्द वा पाठका धेरै अर्थ लाग्ने हुनाले प्रत्येक पाठक पाठको चयनको लागि अनेक विकल्प रोज्छन् । भाषामै अर्थको सत्य र सार खोज्नु नै डेरिडाको विचारमा भाषा खेल हो । सबै कृति वा लेखन भ्रम वा लीलाका उपज हुन् र लेखनको बहुअर्थी तथा पाठको विपठन नै त्यसको सही मूल्याङ्कन हो, यथार्थ र इतिहास सबै भ्रम, त्यी सबै भाषिक खेल मात्र हुन् । (बराल: २०६६, पृ.३१)

मिशेल फुकोले ज्ञान हुनेसित नै शक्ति पनि हुन्छ भन्ने विचारलाई अघि राख्दै ज्ञान र शक्तिको सिद्धान्तको व्याख्या गरे । फुकोको मतानुसार शक्तिको प्रयोग विमर्शको माध्यमबाट गरिन्छ, कुनै पनि कुरोको बारेमा आफूसित भएका अवधारणाहरू समयसमयमा बदलिँरहन्छ । यसर्थ शक्ति बहुकेन्द्रित र विकेन्द्रित हुन्छ । ल्योटाडले अझ आफ्नो **द पोस्टमर्डन कन्डिसन: अ रिपोर्ट अन् नलेज** (१९७९) पुस्तकमा महाआख्यानभित्र जुन ज्ञान र शक्ति छ त्यसको सार्वभौमिक वैधतामाथि सवाल उठाउँदै आजको युगमा महाआख्यानका अवधारणाहरू विखण्डित भएको अनि महाआख्यानको स्थानमा सूचना नै सबैथोक हो भन्ने विचार अघि सार्छन् । उनको विचारअनुसार जोसित जति धेरै सूचना छ त्यो नै शक्तिशाली हुन्छ र पूर्ण ज्ञान कुनै पनि अवस्थामा सम्भव छैन भन्ने कुरोलाई नै उनले आफ्ना कृतिहरूमा व्याख्या गरे । मिशेल फुकोले मानेको *महाआख्यानको अन्त*लाई अझ विस्तार गर्दै लगेर फ्रान्सिस फुकोयामाले *इतिहासको अन्त*मा पुऱ्याए । फ्रेडरिक नित्सेले गरेको *ईश्वरको मृत्युको घोषणा*लाई रोलॉ बार्थले अझै विकास गरेर *लेखकको मृत्युको घोषणा* गर्दै पाठकीय उपस्थितिको सिद्धान्तलाई अघि सारे । (ल्योटाड: सन् १९७९)

साहित्यलेखनलाई चिन्ह, सङ्केत र शब्दको खेलमात्र मान्ने उत्तरआधुनिक लेखन सिद्धान्तभित्र एउटा लेखकको मृत्यु हुन्छ अनि एउटा मात्र होइन तर धेरैवटा सचेत पाठकको जन्म हुन्छ र त्यो पाठक अर्थबहुलताको अगोचर चक्रव्यूहमा स्वतः फस्दछ भन्ने मान्यता राख्छ । यसर्थ एउटा लेखकको मृत्युले अर्को एउटा पाठकले जीवन पाएको हुन्छ । उत्तरआधुनिकताले अनिश्चय र अनिर्धारण जस्ता धारणालाई आत्मसात् गर्ने हुनाले यसले कुनै पनि सत्यलाई शाश्वत र स्थिर मान्दैन, मान्ने सक्तैन । वास्तवमा कुनै पनि सत्य सन्दर्भसापेक्ष, समयसापेक्ष, समाज र व्यक्तिसापेक्ष हुनेगर्छ र सत्य कहिल्यै पनि सार्वभौमिक,

सर्वकालिक, सर्वजनीन र परमसत्य हुनै सक्तैन । द्वितीय विश्वयुद्धपछि विश्वसमाजमा जुन किसिमले सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक, आर्थिक-राजनैतिक, वैचारिक-बौद्धिक परिवेशको विकास भयो, त्यसलाई ज्याक डेरिडा, ल्योटाई, लकान, मिशेल फुको, रोलाँ वार्थ आदि चिन्तकहरूले आ-आफ्नै युक्तिले उत्तरआधुनिक विमर्शमा सहभागिता जनाएपछि नै नवमार्क्सवाद, नारीवाद, उत्तरऔपनिवेशिकतावाद, विनिर्माणवाद, नवइतिहासवाद, पाठक प्रतिक्रिया सिद्धान्त, सांस्कृतिक र जनजातीय, समलैङ्गिक, भयवादी र अभिघात जस्ता सिद्धान्त र अवधारणाहरूलाई आफूभित्र समेट्यो ।

आजको समय बहुलवादी चिन्तनको युग भएकोले कुनै एउटा विधालाई बुझ्न पर्दा त्यस विधाभन्दा इतरका अन्य विभिन्न ज्ञानानुशासनका चिन्तन, धारणा र मान्यताहरूलाई समेत हेर्नु पर्ने हुन्छ । यसलाई अन्तर्विषयक संवाद (इन्टर डिसिप्लिनरी डिस्कोर्स)-को रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । इम्बाटो इकोले प्रत्येक पाठले अर्को कुनै पाठकै कुरा गरिरहेको हुन्छ भने झैं प्रस्तुत कार्यपत्र वा आलेखमा पनि अन्य विभिन्न पाठ वा आलेखहरूकै कुरा विभिन्न प्रसङ्गहरूमा आइराखेको भेटिन्छ । वास्तवमा उत्तरआधुनिक लेखन मूलतः प्रयोगमूलक लेखन भएको हुनाले यो एकप्रकार अनेक सम्भावनाहरूको बौद्धिक अभ्यास पनि हो । कुनै एउटा पाठमा विभिन्न पाठबाट विभिन्न सन्दर्भ-प्रसङ्ग टिपेर, जोडेर, गाँसेर, घटनाहरू बङ्गाएर-बटारेर त्यसलाई एउटा अर्को सिङ्गो रूप दिने प्रयास गर्छ । पाठसँगै कृतिकार पनि प्रत्येकपल्ट विनिर्मित र नवसिर्जित भइरहन्छ । आफ्नोमा अरू दसजनाका विचार र सिद्धान्तहरू गाँसेर त्यसमा क्रमिकता खोज्नु परिचयमा अपरिचयमा जानु नै अन्तर्पाठीयता हो । (नेउपाने:२०६७, पृ.६५)

समकालीन भारतीय नेपाली कथाको सन्दर्भमा उत्तरआधुनिक लेखन: साक्ष्य र सूच्य सन्दर्भ-

नेपाली साहित्यमा इन्द्रबहादुर राईको *भ्रान्तिहरू र लीलालेखन* शीर्षक लेख *रूपरेखा* (अङ्क-२००)-मा छापामा आएपछि यस किसिमको चेतनाको बीजारोपन भएको हो । राईको **कठपुतलीको मन** (१९८९)-मा विधाको विनिर्माण गरिएको छ । विनिर्माणले सैद्धान्तिक-व्यवहारिक रूपमा कुनै पनि स्थापित साहित्यिक विधाको अस्तित्वलाई स्विकार गर्दैन । कुनै पनि लेखन शुद्धरूपमा कथा, कविता, नाटक, निबन्ध, समालोचना नभएर त्यो विधाहरूको मिश्रण हुन पुग्छ भन्ने विनिर्माणवादको मान्यता छ । **कठपुतलीको मन**-मा लेखकको मृत्युबोध गराइएको छ । लेखक इन्द्रबहादुर राई प्रथमतः मैनालीकृत *परालको आगो* कथाको बौद्धिक पाठक हुन्, जसबाट एउटा नवीन कृति चारवटा विपाठमा कठपुतलीको मन सिर्जना भएको छ । विनिर्माण पद्धतिमा प्रत्येक बौद्धिक पाठक प्रत्येक पल्ट नै नयाँ लेखकको रूपमा जन्मिदै जान्छ र पुरानो लेखकको मृत्यु भएर जान्छ । अनिश्चितता, अनिधार्यता, पुनरावृत्ति, अर्थ वैयक्तिकता, ज्ञानको सीमिततालाई यी कथाहरूले बोकेर ल्याएका मूलभूत प्रवृत्तिगत विशेषताहरू हुन् ।

साक्ष्यः (क) '... यसलाई बुझ्नुपर्छ यौनकथाको रूपमा । देख्नुभएन, गौथली बिहा हेर्न गएको । फ्रायडीय प्रतिनियुक्त सुखानुभूति हो त्यो । चामे हलो बोकेर घर आउँछ पुरुषको यौनकामनाको प्रतीक ।... गौथली गाग्रो गर्भाकारमा तृष्णा मार्ने पानी लिएर, पानी भरेर आएको थिइन् । दुईबीचको लडाइँ हो यौन ।...

पत्रकारः क्षमा अधिबाटै माग्छु, चामे दाइ, अलिकति विषयान्तर होला, तर पनि सोध्ने परेको छः लिन त पोढे भए जाउँला भनेकोमा तपाईँ पछितक अडिनु नै होला कि ? पोढेवर्गमाथि तपाईँको समाजवैज्ञानिक मन्तव्य ।

चामेः(निकैबेरपछि) अरूले भनेकै मैले पनि भनेको । (राई, कठपुतलीको मन, सन् १९८९, पृ.६३)

(ख) तपाईँ अझै कितापै लेख्ने? सोध्ने तिने । अरू क्यै काम नगर्ने?

काम यै मेरो ।

तपाईँहरूको किताप लेख्ने राम्रो काम हो, तर जुनी त्यसैमा फ्याँक्नु ?

तपाईँहरूलाई देख्दै पनि किताप लेखिराको मान्छे जस्तो लाग्छ । (राई, कठपुतलीको मनः घाँसीसँग)
सूच्य सन्दर्भः प्रस्तुत कथामा कथाकार राईले भनेझैं 'कथा छ, नाटक छ, औपन्यासिक छ, यसमा समालोचनाहरू छन्, निबन्ध छ, कविता छ । विधाको विनिर्माण । र यसलाई कृति भनेको । कृतिलेखन ।' कथामा निर्माणको निम्ति गरिएका विभिन्न भत्काईहरू बहुअर्थी छन् र त्यी उत्तरआधुनिक लेखनका महत्वपूर्ण सूचकका रूपमा देखा पर्छन् । प्रस्तुत कथामा पराख्यानानात्मक शैली र स्वर, विधामिश्रण र विधाभञ्जनको लोभलाग्दो तकनिक, आत्मपरावर्तक प्रस्तुतिका साथसाथै फ्रायडीय र समाजवैज्ञानिक अध्ययन-अनुशीलनका विविध प्रसङ्गहरू, अन्तर्वार्ता र नाटकीय स्वरूपका प्रयोग ठाउँठाउँमा एकालाप, कवितात्मक अभिव्यक्ति र समीक्षात्मक निबन्धको शैली भेटिन्छ । अतः **कठपुतलीको मन**मा कथा छ, समालोचना छ, कविता छ, समीक्षात्मक निबन्धचेत छ । सोही क्रममा शरद् छेत्रीले पनि *कथा जो दोहोरिने हुन्छन्* शीर्षक कथामा कथाअन्तर्गत समीक्षात्मक टिका-टिप्पणी राखेर कथाको मौलिकतामाथि शङ्काको दृष्टिले निर्व्योम गर्नु खोजेका छन् । (ख) 'घाँसी' कथामा कवि भानुभक्त र घाँसीमाझको प्रसिद्ध संवादलाई विपठनको माध्यमबाट यहाँ विनिर्माण गरिएको छ, संवादको अनुकृति र अनुशीलन गरिएको छ । (राई, कठपुतलीको मनः घाँसीसँग,)

प्रवीण राई जुमेलीको **ऋतुखेल** अन्तर्गत *खेलिरहन्छु खेल कति, खिल्ली, इमेलिया नाचको एउटा रूप, समय देशको एक इ-मानव, वर्जन आ क का ती पा सि, आइकोनोक्लास्ट पात्र, भ्रान्ति नाटकको सफलतापूर्वक प्रदर्शन, कला इडोस्योपिक गाउँ र भोक अनन्त कथाको पुनःपठन* शीर्षक दस कथाहरूमाथि क्रमशः जय क्याक्ट्स, पेम्पा तामाङ, कविता लामा, सुधीर छेत्री, वत्सगोपाल, राजा पुनियानी, वासुदेव पुलामी, उदय थुलुङ, राजेन्द्र भण्डारी र पारसमणि शमका कथाबारे गहन र गम्भीर

विमर्शहरू राखिएका छन् । नेपाली साहित्यमा यो सर्वथा नौलो प्रयोग हो। पाठक प्रतिक्रिया सिद्धान्तलाई आधार मानी सङ्ग्रहीत कथाहरूबारे उत्तरआधुनिक शैलीमा कथाविमर्श प्रस्तुत गरिएका छन् । कथाको विमर्शक्रममा सुधीर क्षेत्री लेख्छन्- ‘साइबर र वैश्विकरणमाथि कथा लेखेका कथाकार जुमेली भारतीय नेपाली साहित्यमा लगभग एक्लो हुन् ।’ आजको साइबर संस्कृति (टेक्नोकल्चर)-ले भित्र्याएको सामाजिक मूल्यहीनता तथा दिनप्रतिदिन क्षीण बन्दै गइरहेको मानवीय संवेदनालाई पनि यी कथाहरूले आत्मसात गरेको छ। कथाकारको लेखनलक्ष्य निर्योल्दा आफूले लेख्न भनेर शुभारम्भ गरेको कथामा के लेख्ने (विषयगत सन्दर्भ) र कसरी लेख्ने (रूप अर्थात् शिल्पशैलीगत सन्दर्भ) भन्ने कुराहरूमा कथाकार जुमेली निकै गम्भीर बनेका देखिन्छन् । आधुनिक नेपाली कथाको विकासप्रक्रियामा एउटा नौलो प्रवृत्ति, विचार, चेतना र शैलीमा लेखिएका कथाको रूपमा कठपुतलीको मनलाई मान्दा नमान्दै कथाकार जुमेलीका अझ नितान्त बेग्लो प्रयोग र प्रवृत्ति, नितान्त नौला शिल्पशैलीका बान्कीहरू बोकेर ऋतुखेल आजका पाठकको हातमा आइपुग्यो ।

साक्ष्य: ‘ बाँचिरहेको व्यवहारिकताकै स्मृतिमा प्राप्त छ आवेग क्षेत्र लेखनको । चिमोट्दा दुःख, दुःखेकोले पिरोलिन्छु-अभ्रान्ति त्यै होला लेखिनलाई अनेकौं भ्रान्ति । घटनाहरू साना-ठूला अभ्रान्ति सबै त्यो अनिश्चितता लेख्नु मात्र भ्रान्ति ।’

‘सत्य त भोक पो रहेछ मानिसको । शब्दका अरबपतिहरूले यहाँ बनाएका रहेछन् भुलभुलै असीम । शब्दहरूले आ-आफ्नै आनुभूतिक प्रक्षेपहरूको चक्रव्यूह बुनिएको भ्रम छ । आ-आफ्नो ज्ञानको अहम आ-आफ्नै शाब्दिक अडान,आह । तर जो अन्य शब्दहरूको सहयोगबिना अर्थवान हुँदैन । विचार वा अनुभूतिको तीव्रताले आकार खोज्ने होड गर्छ-भाषा स्मृतिमा जडित छ तमाम शब्दहरू डोको-डोकोमा राखी । सम्बेदन वा बोधको अमूर्तता त्याग्दै शब्दहरूसित मिली स्वरूपको संसार एउटा रचिदिन्छ । सोंच्छ ।’ (जुमेली, ऋतुखेल: खेलिबस्छु खेल कति, पृ.३-४)

सूच्य सन्दर्भ: इन्द्रबहादुर राईले **कठपुतलीको मन**-मा ‘कथा कहिल्यै नपत्याउनु, कथामा म एउटै सत्य बोल्छु, एउटै र माया सत्य ।’ भनेका कुरा कथाकार जुमेली अनि जुमेलीपछिका केही कथाहरूमा गम्भीर रूपमा उत्तरआधुनिक विमर्श गर्ने प्रशस्त ठाउँहरू रहेका देखिन्छन् । जुमेलीका पछिल्ला समयमा लेखिएका यी कथाहरूमा विधाभञ्जन, विधामिश्रणका साथसाथै जादुमय यथार्थ र स्वैकल्पनाको प्रयोग निकै प्रभावकारी र कलात्मक ढङ्गमा गरिएको पाइन्छ । जुमेलीको खेलिबस्छु खेल कति शीर्षक कथामा कथाको विषय नै खेल छ, जीवन बाँच्ने खेल, सत्यताको अनेक खेल, भ्रान्तिहरूको खेल । यी खेलहरू नै विभिन्न सन्दर्भ विभिन्न परिप्रेक्ष्यमा विभिन्न स्वरूपमा खेलिन्छ । कथाको पठनक्रममा पनि विभिन्न कथारूपहरू सिर्जन भइरहन्छ र पाठकहरूद्वारा यो काम स्वतः भइरहेको हुन्छ । फेरि कुन

पठनलाई पत्याउनु, एकै परिप्रेक्ष्यबाट गरिएका विभिन्न पठनहरूमा केही केही साम्य हुन्छ तर कुनै पनि पठन सर्वसम हुँदैनन्, कारण कुनै दुइ परिप्रेक्ष्य सर्वसम हुँदैनन् । (राई, सन् २०१४, पृ.१३२)

सतीश रसाइलीको कथाकृति **ऐनाको मेघ** अन्तर्गत *ऐनाको मेघ* शीर्षक कथामा पुरूष अनि उ मेरी कथामा स्त्री-स्त्रीमाझको समलैङ्गिक सम्बन्धलाई देखाउन खोजिएको छ । कथाकार रसाइलीको *मैले पुण्य मनपराएँ, भोक साम्य भएको थिएन, हाम्रै जीवनमा, मेरो पनि सलाम छ* शीर्षक कथाहरूमा उत्तरआधुनिक लेखनशैली र प्रविधिको निकै विकसित रूप देखिन्छ भने *मरुद्यान खोज्नुपऱ्यो, भोलि उठी कहाँ जाने, आफ्नै अनुहार चिनेनौ* भने शीर्षक कथाहरू भारतका नेपालीहरूको आस्तित्विक सङ्कटलाई लिएर आन्दोलित स्थितिको अभिधातीय विद्रुपता र मानसिक पीडाका सबल कथाहरू हुन् । सङ्ग्रहको भूमिकामा मनप्रसाद सुब्बाले पनि उनका अधिल्ला कथाहरू आधुनिकतावादी अझ उच्चआधुनिकतावादी प्रकृतिबाट बढी प्रभावित अनि उच्चआधुनिकतावादीहरू अधिकतर जीवनको विसङ्गति, उहापोह, निरर्थकता तथा जीवनको गूढार्थान्वेषण जस्ता कुराहरूबाट आक्रान्त भएको कुरा औल्याएका छन् । सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक सरोकार राखेर लेखिएका उनका अधिकांश कथाहरूमा कथको नवीनतम शिल्प प्रविधि र युगीन चेतनाको प्रखर स्वर सुनिन्छ । समालोचक जीवन नामदुङले कथाकार रसाइलीका कथामा अत्याधुनिकता र उत्तरआधुनिक सन्दर्भको विमर्शमा विषमता मात्र होइन तर त्यसको सामाजिक सरोकार र मूल्यनिरूपण नै कथाकारको अभिष्ट रहेको ठहर गर्दै उनको *भोक साम्य भएको थिएन, साम्यकता नभएका आखाँहरू, मैले पुण्य मनपराएँ, मेरो पनि सलाम छ* जस्ता कथाहरू नेपाली कथा साहित्यमा चुनौती र चुचुरा भएर रहेको छ भनी सही मूल्याङ्कन गरेका छन् ।

साक्ष्य: ‘ मैले आफैलाई जिउँदो राख्नलाई अभिनय गरेको छु- मान्छे । कस्तो हुनुपर्छ मलाई थाहा छैन । बाजे, बाबु, काका, मामा सबैको अनुहार हेर्ने तर कोही पनि मान्छे जस्तो भएन । यिनीहरू सबै काट्ने हतियार भएर जन्मिए, कसैको हुकुममा मार्ने र मरिदिने, यसरी नै मरे मरूभूमिमा तिर्खाएर । दाजु पनि त वीर हुन्छु भन्छ, मलाई डर लाग्छ हाम्रो वीरतामा । हेर कति भार छ मलाई र नै म कति कमजोर भएको छु । मैले घरै बसेर आमा, दिदी, बहिनीलाई जीवनको मूल्य बताउनु परेको छ, घरभित्रकाहरूसित जोगाउनु परेको छ । विश्व, हामी सबैलाई इज्जत दिन्छौं, एकदमै छिटो बुझिदिन्छौं र नै त हामीले आफ्नो घरमा बास दिएकाहरूले टेकिसक्यो । यसैले हामी त उदाहरण बन्नुपरेको छ, भावी सन्तानको लागि हामी हतियार होइनौ, मान्छे हौं भने र । (रसाइली, ऐनाको मेघ: मरुद्यान खोज्नुपऱ्यो, पृ.२९-३०)

सञ्जय विष्टका **अस्ताचलतिर** (२००७) र **जूनजस्तै घाम** (२०१५)-मा समाविष्ट *पूल, वर्तमान, परै भाग्यमानीहरू, कथाकारको आखाँ, अन्डियाज् गट् ट्यालेन्ट* शीर्षक कथाहरूमा भूमण्डलीकरणका प्रभाव, उपभोक्तावाद र उत्तरऔपनिवेशिक बजारवाद, बहुसांस्कृतिक समय चेतनागत प्रभाव र

छापहरूलाई सङ्कथनमा ल्याइएको छ । (जय क्याक्ट्स:२०१४, पृ.१२७) हाम्रो जातीय सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक गतिविधिप्रति सरोकार राखेर सङ्कटमय त्रासदीय स्थितिले ल्याएको सामाजिक विडम्बना र विद्रुपता तथा त्यसप्रतिको श्यामव्यङ्ग्यात्मक विरोध र विद्रोह उनका केही कथामा पाइन्छ भने किनारीकृत हाम्रो जातीय स्वअस्तित्व र अस्मिताको तीव्र स्वर, उत्तरफ्रायडीय यौनमनोविश्लेषणात्मक स्वर र चेतना एवम् नारीमनको विमर्श आदि जस्ता समकालीन सन्दर्भहरू उनको कथ्यकथनशिल्पका केही मुख्य प्रवृत्तिगत अभिलक्षणहरू हुन् । यसैले विष्टका अधिकांश कथाहरूमा इतिवत्तात्मकताको झर्कोलागदो लम्बेतान सङ्कथन भेटिँदैन ।

साक्ष्य: ‘ तर एउटा कथाले स्वरूप पाउँदैछ मस्तिष्कमा । विचार बिस्तारै कथामा अनुवाद हुँदैछ । कलागत मूल्यको स्थापनाको मूलोद्देश्य र सामाजिक विकृतिको विरोधको गौणोद्देश्यमा लेख्न सकिन्छ क्या हो एउटा कथा तिनै र त्यस्तै गतिछाडाहरूमाथि? लेख्न सकिन्छ क्या हो एउटा सुन्दर कथा असुन्दर वस्तु?’ (विष्ट, जूनजस्तै घाम: कथाकारको आँखा, पृ.२२)

सूच्य सन्दर्भ: प्रस्तुत कथा पराख्यानमात्रक शैलीमा लेखिएको एउटा सफल दृष्टान्त हो यसमा कथाभिन्नै एउटा अर्को एउटा सबल कथाले बास गरेको छ । यथार्थको भ्रम सिर्जना गर्न र वैचारिक द्वन्द्वका चर्चामा डा. दिवाकर प्रधान, डा. राजेन्द्र भण्डारी, सचिन खवास, सुरज रोसूरी, उमेश उपमा आदि जस्ता जीवित सहभागीहरूले कथा कथ्यनिर्माणमा समेत प्रत्यक्ष-परोक्ष रूपमा कार्यकारी चारित्रिक भूमिका निर्वाह गरेका छन् । अतः ती जीवित पात्रहरू चरित्रमा अवतरित भएका छन् । कथामा पराइतिवृत्तात्मक शैलीको प्रयोग भए पनि लेखक-कथक-पाठकको सोझो सम्पर्कमा कथा यथार्थपरक इतिवृत्त बन्न पुगेको छ । कथाका पात्रहरू आफ्ना स्थिति र अवस्थाबारे सचेत पनि छन् साथै कथकले पाठकसित वार्ता गर्नु र पाठक प्रतिक्रियाको अपेक्षा गर्नु, कथानकलाई अरैखिक र विखण्डित इतिवृत्तमा प्रस्तुत गर्नु यी सबै उत्तरआधुनिक आख्यानलेखनकै मूलभूत विशेषता र अभिलक्षणहरू हुन् ।

उदय थुलुङको **एकान्तवास**मा सङ्गृहीत प्रायः सबैजसो कथाको कथ्यभावभूमि प्रष्ट पार्नका निम्ति प्राक्कथनको रूपमा प्रत्येक कथाअघि नेपथ्य राखेका छन् । ती कथ्यका नेपथ्यहरूले कथाको यथार्थिक पृष्ठभूमि बुझ्नमा सहयोग पुऱ्याएको छ भने कथाको भावभूमिसित काल्पनिक कथातत्वको सम्मिश्रणतिर पनि यसले सङ्केत गरेको छ । कथाको कथ्य बुझ्नका निम्ति कथ्यको नेपथ्य पनि राख्नु भारतीय नेपाली कथालेखन क्षेत्रमा यो एउटा नौलो प्रयोगको रूपमा देखिन्छ ।

साक्ष्य: ‘ त्यही घरभित्र छु, जुन घरभित्र सकम्बरीले मलाई कतिचोटि स्वागत गरेकी थिई । अहिले पशु-प्राणी, चरा-चुरूङ्गी नभएको उजाड चिडियाघर जस्तो देख्दैछु यो घरलाई । पहिले शिवराज, त्यसपछि कुनै एक अदृश्य, अव्यक्त शक्तिद्वारा तानिएर म यहाँ आएँ । पछि बिस्तारै बोध गरेँ, सकम्बरीलाई मैले ढुङ्गालाई जस्तै, बनकाँढालाई जस्तै माया गर्न थालेछु । म प्रेमको प्रासङ्गिकतालाई परिभाषित गर्थेँ

प्रतीकहरूमा, बिम्बहरूमा। ऊ भन्ने गर्थे- प्रेम निस्सार हुँदैन सुयोगजी, निस्सार त मान्छे हुन्छ । (थुलुङ, एकान्तवास: *इन्सेक्ट किलर*, पृ. ४१)

सूच्य सन्दर्भ: प्रस्तुत कथा *इन्सेक्ट किलर* पारिजातको **शिरीषको फूल** उपन्यासको पुनर्लेखन र पुनर्सिर्जन पनि हो । पारिजातका पात्रहरू सुयोगवीर, शिवराज, सकमबरी आदि पात्र-चरित्रका औपन्यासिक घटना-प्रसङ्गलाई यस कथामा विपठन प्रविधिद्वारा पुनर्निर्माण गरिएको छ । पारिजातको शिरीषको फूलको आख्यान विसङ्गतिवादी प्रवृत्तिलाई अँगालेको देखिन्छ भने कथाकार थुलुङको *इन्सेक्ट किलर*को कथात्मक वस्तुविन्यासले सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक चासोलाई औल्याएको स्पष्ट देखिन्छ । प्रस्तुत कथाको रचनाविधानमा प्रयोगधर्मिता छ । अधिआख्यानमात्मक स्वरूप लिएको यस कथामा जीवनबोध र समयचेतनाको आख्यानमात्मक सङ्कथन रहेको पाइन्छ । मानवीय मूल्यविघटनको सन्दर्भमा कथाको संरचनात्मक स्वरूप विनिर्मित छ, संवादको नाटकीयता छ, भ्रम र यथार्थको परिवेश सिर्जित छ ।

सुरज धडकनको **घर** सङ्ग्रहका कथाहरू शृङ्खलाबद्ध शैलीमा लेखिएका कविताहरूझैं शृङ्खला शैलीमा लेखिएका छन् । कथाकार परशु प्रधानले **सीताहरू** शीर्षकमा शृङ्खला कथाहरू प्रकाशनमा ल्याएका थिए त्यसैको प्रभाव र प्रेरणाको फलस्वरूप सुरज धडकन, प्रकाश हाङखिम आदि कथाकारहरूले पनि यस शिल्पशैलीमा केही राम्रा कथाहरू लेखेका छन् । युवा कथाकार सुरजको **घर** अन्तर्गत *भुईँ, आधार, छाना, धुरी, कोठा, झ्यालहरू:पदर्हरू, ढोका, भित्ता, परिवार, घर* लगायत परिशिष्ट कथाको रूपमा *भूमिका* शीर्षकका कथाहरू समाविष्ट रहेका छन् र प्रत्येक शृङ्खला कथामा देवेन्द्र र निलुलाई प्रमुख सहभागीको रूपमा चयन गरेर नेपाली कथा लेखनमा नौलो लेखनशैली र परिपाटी कायम गरेका छन् । कथाकार सुरजले आफ्ना कथाहरूमा हाम्रो जातीय सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक-राजनैतिक विसङ्गति र विडम्बना, विश्रृङ्खलता, परम्परागत रूढीवादी मान्यता, व्याप्त अराजकता र विद्रुपतालाई यथार्थवादी तथा स्वैरकल्पनात्मक प्रविधिको मिश्रित प्रयोगद्वारा निकै धारिलो तरिकाले प्रहार गरेका छन् ।

साक्ष्य: 'सत्य चाहे जस्तोसुकै होस्, लेखान्त लेखकको लेखन र समय निर्देशकको निर्देशन चाहे जस्तोसुकै होस् तर एउटा सत्य यो पनि हो कि, अभिनय गरिदिने पात्र-पात्राहरू चैं हामी हौं ।...जिन्दगी भन्नु साँच्चै एउटा नाटक मात्र रहेछ । जहाँ थुप्रै पात्र-पात्राहरू आ-आफ्नो भूमिकासित पृथ्वीको यो भव्य मञ्चमा सल्बलाइ बस्दरहेछन् र समयको निर्देशानुसार इच्छा अनिच्छा जाहेर नगरी सबैले एक न एकपल्ट खेलै पर्दोरहेछ-सुखको हुन्छ कि दुःखको, द्वन्द्वको हुन्छ कि प्रेम-प्रीतिको, पारिवारिक हुन्छ कि सामाजिक, भ्रान्तिको हुन्छ कि क्रान्तिको, शिक्षा, साहित्य एवम् अर्थशास्त्रको हुन्छ कि धर्म, दर्शन तथा राजनीतिशास्त्रको । नाटक तर खेलैपर्दोरहेछ ।' (धडकन, घर: *भूमिका*, पृ. ६२-६३)

सूच्य सन्दर्भः प्रस्तुत कथामा केही कथा छ सीता, सुजता, देवेन्द्र र निलुहरूको पनि । कथाभित्रै ठाउँठाउँमा कवितामय सौन्दर्यात्मक अभिव्यक्तिको प्रयोग पाइन्छ ।

ध्रुव चौहानको **खोल** कथासङ्ग्रह अन्तर्गतका अधिकांश कथाहरूले जीवन जगतका कति अलिखित पक्षहरूलाई कथ्यभावभूमि बनाएको छ । चौहानको *जयमाया र ठूली दुवै दाजीलिङ आइपुगे* शीर्षक कथामा इन्द्रबहादुर राईको *जारः भएकै एउटा कथा*की ठूली र *जयमाया आफूमात्र लिखापानी आइपुगी* कथाको जयमायालाई प्रस्तुत कथामा पुर्नसिर्जन गरिएको छ । राईका अघिल्ला दुइकथाको विपठन र अन्तरपठन गरिएको यस विनिर्मित कथा वास्तवमा कथाकार चौहानको कथात्मक सिर्जना र समालोचना दुवै हो । चौहानका अधिकांश कथाहरूमा समय र युग सापेक्ष सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक, राजनैतिक परिदृश्य तथा समसामयिक विचारहरूलाई सूच्य र साक्ष्यका रूपमा लिएको पाइन्छ । कतिपय कथाहरूमा स्वैकल्पनाको कलात्मक प्रयोग भेटिए पनि कथागत चरित्रहरू भने हाम्रै समय र समाजका, वर्ग र जातिका प्रतिनिधिका रूपमा उपस्थित छन् । यिनका कथाहरू नाटकीय, सूत्रात्मक र विनिर्मित प्रकृतिका छन् ।

साक्ष्यः 'जयमायातिर देखाइएका ठूलीका हत्केलाहरूलाई मैले चोर आँखाहरूले हेरेँ । ती हत्केलाहरूले उसका सबै कथाहरू भन्थे ।

'अनि इन्द्र सरकोमा नि, किन जानुहुँदैछ त ?

'अब म बेसी दुःख गर्न सक्तिनँ बहिनी । मृत्यु लेखिमाग्न ।'

कसरी ?

त्यही ' जारः भएकै एउटा कथा'-सितै मेरो वर्तमान प्रसङ्गलाई अलिकता जोडेर ' अन्तमा साह्रै दुःख पाएर ठूली मरी भनेर लेखिदिए पुगिहाल्यो त । हामी पात्र-पात्राहरूको लागि लेखक नै हाम्रा विधाता हुन् । उनको हातमा नान्ने कठपुतली हौं हामी । जिन्दगीको अभिनय गर्दागर्दै अब त साह्रै थाकिन्छ बहिनी । म अब मुक्ति चाहन्छु, मुक्ति।...

यी सबै दृश्यहरूको साक्षी, माथि उभिरहेको थिएँ म ।

एकक्षणमा आईबी सरको घरको मूल दैलो घन्याक्क गरेर खोलियो ।' (चौहान, खोलः *जयमाया र ठूली दुवै दाजीलिङ आइपुगे*, पृ.२०-२१)

सूच्य सन्दर्भः प्रस्तुत कथामा इन्द्रबहादुर राईको *जारः भएकै एउटा कथा* र *जयमाया आफूमात्र लिखापानी आइपुगी* शीर्षक कथाको विनिर्माण गरी त्यी दुवै कथाको प्रमुख नारी पात्रहरू ठूली र जयमायालाई पुर्नसर्जन गरिएको छ । अतः यस कथामा अधिकल्पना छ, दर्शन र बहुलवादको छनक छ । कथारचना-विधान अपारम्परिक र उत्तरआधुनिक प्रवृत्तिको छ ।

निमा निची शेर्पाको **दम्को गाउँ**का प्रायः सबै जसो कथाहरूमा समकालीन आख्यान चेतना र इतिवृत्त-दर्शनमा समेत केही मौलिकता आएको स्पष्ट देखिन्छ । सङ्ग्रहका अधिकांश कथाहरू परम्परागत सरलरेखीय इतिवृत्तको घेराभित्र सिमित नबनी विविध संरचनावृत्तहरूको संयोजनबाट पूर्ण बनेका छन् । सूत्र-प्रयोगात्मक कथानकहीन कथा तथा स्वैरकल्पनात्मक शैलीमा लेखिएका उनका कथाहरूमा युगीन सन्दर्भका साथसाथै विधाभञ्जन र विधामिश्रणको स्थिति निकै प्रभावकारी रहेको देखिन्छ । विशेष गरी उनको *लीला*, *नमरेको ईश्वर*, *भिरै भिरमा ईश्वर* शीर्षक कथाहरूलाई सफल दृष्टान्तका रूपमा अधि सार्न सकिन्छ । *भिरै भिरमा ईश्वर* कथामा प्रयुक्त काव्यात्मक पंक्तिहरूले कथालाई कवित्वमय बनाएको छ, कहीं नाटक हेर्दैछु, कहीं लेख-निबन्ध पढ्दैछु, कहीं भने निबन्धसित रूमलिँदै अधि बढ्दैछु भन्ने आभास हुँदछ ।

कथाकार शमसेर अलीका कथाहरूमा विषयगत विविधता, ऐतिहासिक रहस्यमय घटनाहरूको वस्तुपरक मूल्याङ्कन गरिएको पाइन्छ । उनको **बिउ भाले** अन्तर्गतका *अली सर जिन्दावाद*, *कैदी नम्बर ५१३-बाबु घोष* शीर्षक कथाहरू तथा दोस्रो कथाकृति **सोल्दाती गोर्खा मोल्तो ब्योनी** अन्तर्गतका कथाहरूमा सामाजिक-राजनैतिक तथा युगीन विसङ्गति र विडम्बनाको निकै प्रभावकारी ढङ्गमा सग्लो तस्वीर खिचिएको पाइन्छ । *सोल्दाती गोर्खा मोल्तो ब्योनी* शीर्षक कथामा दोस्रो विश्वयुद्धमा वीर गोर्खा सैनिकहरू अङ्ग्रेज सरकारको पक्षमा जर्मनी हिटलरको सैन्यसँग युद्ध गर्न इटाली पुगेको अनि त्यहाँको युद्धकालीन परिवेशको शैल्पिक सचेतताका साथ ज्वलन्त चित्रण गरिएको पाइन्छ ।

युवा कथाकार प्रकाश हाङखिमका **सुनपसिना** र **ह्याङमेनको चिट्ठी**का कथाहरू जातीय अस्मिताको सङ्घर्ष, समाज-सांस्कृतिक अर्थहरूमा अस्तित्व सङ्कट तथा मानवीय अवमूल्यानलाई नै विशेष कथ्यवस्तुको रूपमा प्रयोग गरिएको छ । स्वैरकल्पनाको प्रयोग गरि लेखिएका अत्यन्तै लोभलाग्दा कथाहरूमा *सुनपसिनालाई* दृष्टान्तका रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ भने *मिसल एसएलजी*, *प्रजातन्त्रको हार*, *आफ्नो हिस्साको जिम्मेवारी* शीर्षक कथाहरूमा गोर्खाल्याण्ड आन्दोलनको समयमा दार्जीलिङ पहाडी अञ्चलमा भए- गरेका विभिन्न विभत्स घटनास्थिति, दार्जीलिङको अन्तर आवाज तथा जातीय उन्मुक्ति अनि चिन्हारीको आन्दोलनको विद्रुप स्थितिलाई देखाइएको छ । कथाकार असित व्यङ्ग्य शैलीको प्रयोग गर्दै यसप्रकार लेख्छन्- ‘सरकार प्रजा मारेर प्रजातन्त्रको रक्षा गरिरहेको हुन्छ । कतिपय कुराहरूमा सरकारले संविधान खुट्टाले टेक्छ अनि संविधानको जयजयकार गर्छ ।’ (हाङखिम, *सुनपसिना*, पृ.१२७)

छुटेन काविमो युवापिँढीका एकजना उदीयमान प्रतिभा हुन् । उनको भर्खरै एघारवटा समसामयिक विषयकेन्द्रित कथाहरूको सङ्ग्रह **1986** शीर्षक बोकेर प्रकाशनमा आएको छ । काविमोका विचारप्रधान कथाहरू समसामयिक समयचेतनाले उद्बोधित छन् र ती कथाहरू आजको हाम्रो

समाजका वास्तविक छाँया हुन् । ब्रिटिश शासनकालदेखि चर्किँदै आएको दार्जीलिङको भुइँँ इसाब्द १९८६-मा अझ देखिने र दुःखे गरी पटपटी फुटेको हो । यहाँको सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक, वैचारिक-मानसिक, आर्थिक-राजनैतिक भूगर्भले साँच्चै वास्तविक रूप देखाएको हो । यस्ता विषयहरूमा योजनागत साहित्यिक अभिलेखन नभएकैले साँचो साहित्यिक मूल्याङ्कन पनि हुन सकेन भन्ने कुरा कृतिको भूमिकामा राजा पुनियानीले पनि सङ्केत गरेका छन् । अतः कथाकार छुट्टेनको कथालेखनमा समयचेतनाको पीडा, इतिहासबोधको उज्यालो प्रकाश तथा समाज-सांस्कृतिक चासोका समसामयिक विविध सन्दर्भहरूको निकै लोभलाग्दो ढङ्गमा प्रस्तुति पाइन्छ ।

साक्ष्यः ‘वास्तवमा बल्दैबल्दै आएको ८६ लाई जल्दैजल्दै जानु थिएछ । यो कुरा कसैले बुझ्नै सकेनन् ।... गाउँकाहरू निकै सतर्क भइसकेका थिए । उनीहरूको सतर्कता सहरको निम्ति थियो । सहरले के भन्छ गाउँहरू निर्देश पखिने भए ।

अब भित्तामा लेख्नुपर्छ रे, मिटिङमा नयाँ कुरा सुनियो, सहरमा अरूले अस्ति लेखिसके ।... वाल पेन्टिङले गाउँ रङ्गिन बन्दै थियो । अचानक बन्दको हल्ला आयो । कोइलाले भित्तामा लेखेको भोलिपल्टदेखि त स्कुल बन्द भो । पहाड बन्द भो । मलाई बित्तामा भित्तामा लेखेँ जस्तो लाग्यो । स्कुल बन्द भएपछि एक किसिम रमाइलो भो । हामीलाई फुर्सद नै फुर्सद थियो ।’ (काविमो, १९८६, पृ.८-९)

जीवन-जगत्मा घटित समसामयिक घटनाहरूलाई नयाँ परिप्रेक्ष्यमा हेर्ने दिशातिर समकालीन भारतीय नेपाली कथालेखन उन्मुख रहेको देखिन्छ । समकालीन नेपाली कथामा मानवीय मूल्यको खोजी तथा मृत्युचिन्तन र भयाक्रान्त स्थितिलाई पनि सग्लो रूपमा समेट्न खोजिएको भेटिन्छ । साहित्य लेखनको पनि आफ्नै किसिमको राजनैतिक परिवेश हुन्छ र यसले कुनै न कुनै रूपमा पाठक र समाजमा विद्रोहको आगो सल्काइदिन सक्छ । परम्परागत मूल्यहरू दिनप्रतिदिन विघटित हुँदै गएको कथाको यस नितान्त नयाँ अर्थबोध र संज्ञानलाई हेर्दा समकालीन भारतीय नेपाली कथामा रैखिक ढाँचाका गणितीय वा श्रेणीबद्ध र कथानकको अनुपस्थिति रहेको, पात्र-चरित्रको अल्पतम प्रयोग तथा प्रस्तुतीकरण, मिश्रित प्रकारको खकुलो कथांशको संयोजन, स्थानविशेषभन्दा विश्वजनीन स्वभाव (Global Nature)-का हुने सांस्कृतिक सम्मिश्रणको आग्रह रहेको देखिन्छ । (श्रेष्ठ:२०५९, पृ.२२)

अतः माथि उल्लेखित कथाकारका अतिरिक्त शरद् छेत्री, गुप्त प्रधान, विन्दा सुब्बा, प्रदीप गुरूङ, समीरण क्षेत्री प्रियदर्शी, नीना राई, कालुसिंह रनपहेंली, खड्कराज गिरी, निरङ्कर थापा, सञ्जीव छेत्री, बिनीता छेत्री, सन्ध्या आचार्य, निरज थापा प्रभृति कथालेखकका कथाहरूमा परिलक्षित समकालीन विविध सन्दर्भहरूले भारतेली नेपाली कथाको स्वरूप-संरचनालाई नवीन दिशातिर डोर्‍याउनमा केही भूमिका निर्वाह गरेको देखिन्छ ।

मूल्याङ्कन एवम् उपसंहार

आज भारतमा लेखिँदै आएका समकालीन नेपाली कथामा केही लोभलाग्दो, ग्रहणयोग्य र गहिरो अध्ययन-अनुशीलन योग्य पक्षहरू देख्न पायौं र यी समकालीन प्रवृत्तिहरू नै उत्तरआधुनिक चेतनाका मूलभूत प्रवृत्ति र विशेषता, सम्भावना र अभिप्राप्तिहरू हुन् । वास्तवमा रोलॉ वार्थले लेखकीय मृत्युको घोषणा गरेपछि नै लेखकको सट्टा पाठकहरूको भूमिका निकै महत्वपूर्ण मानिन थाल्यो । एउटा पाठको विपठनबाट धेरैवटा विपाठहरू विनिर्मित हुन थाले । पाठमा निर्देशित, निश्चित तोकिएका अर्थहरू भक्तिन थाले र अनेक अर्थहरूको खोजी हुन थाले । परम्परागत कथाहरूको स्थानमा अकथा, कथानकहीन कथा, विकथा अर्थात् विनिर्मित कथाहरूले विस्तारै आफ्नो अस्तित्व कायम गर्न थालेको स्पष्ट देखिन्छ । अतः अन्य साहित्यिक विधाहरूको सापेक्षतामा समकालीन भारतीय नेपाली कथा लेखन पनि नवचेतनावादी स्वर र शिल्पशैली तथा समसामयिक चिन्तनको अन्तर्निश्चरणबाट सबल हुँदै आइरहेको अवस्था देखिन्छ ।

अन्ततः आज भारतमा लेखिएका धेरैजसो नेपाली कथामा सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक, आर्थिक-राजनैतिक व्यवस्थाप्रति तीव्र व्यङ्ग्य गरिएको र व्यङ्ग्यमा विद्रोह र विद्रोहमा विसङ्गतिलाई कथ्यआधार बनाइएको भेटिन्छ । स्वैरकल्पनालाई अतिकल्पनात्मक अर्थात् अयथार्थका माध्यमले यथार्थको प्रस्तुतिको रूपमा लिइने गरिन्छ । स्वैरकल्पनालाई कथामा प्रयोग गरी कथा लेख्ने भारतीय नेपाली कथाकारहरूमा समीरण क्षेत्री प्रियदर्शी, शरद छेत्री, सूर्यकुमार सुब्बा आदि कथाकारका पछिपछि आज हामीले प्रवीण राई जुमेली, सुरज धडकन, प्रकाश हाङखिम, निरज थापा, सन्ध्या आचार्य सञ्जीव छेत्री, छुदेन काविमो प्रभृति कथाकारहरूलाई पाएका छौं । तर आजका यी कथाकारका कथामा सम्पूर्ण रूपमा अयथार्थ, अतिकल्पनात्मक कथ्यप्रस्तुति नभएर कुनै कुनै अङ्गलाई मात्र अयथार्थ बनाइएको भेटिन्छ । जसको फलस्वरूप पाठकहरूलाई पटक-पटक यथार्थको भ्रम भइरहन्छ । आजको लेखन भनेको समकालीन लेखन हो तर आज लेखिएका सबै लेखनलाई समकालीन साहित्यअन्तर्गत राखेर मूल्याङ्कन गर्न सकिँदैन । लेखिएको र छापिएको तिथिमितिले मात्र कुनै पनि कृति समकालीन हुन सक्तैन । समकालीन लेखन हुनका निम्ति कृतिमा समकालीनता भने हुनैपर्छ ।

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सारांश

साहित्य अनि समाजको सम्बन्ध अन्योन्याश्रित हुन्छ। समाजमा जे घट्दछ त्यसबाट उपन्यासकार पनि प्रभावित नभई रहन सक्तैन। यस्तै घटनाहरूलाई नै लिएर ऊ उपन्यासको सिर्जना गर्दछ। समाजको संरचना परिवारमा आधारित हुन्छ, र परिवारभित्रको स्थायित्व तथा सन्तुलनको मूल आधार दम्पतीबीचको सम्बन्ध हो, जसले पारिवारिक एकता तथा सामाजिक अनुशासनलाई कायम राख्न महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्दछ। प्रत्येक व्यक्ति प्रत्येक क्षण दाम्पत्य जीवनको मध्यमा नै जेलिरहेको हुन्छ। प्रत्येक स्थानमा प्रतिदिन, प्रत्येक पल जिउन पर्ने दाम्पत्य जीवनको उपेक्षा उपन्यासकारले गर्न सक्तैन। समाजमा दाम्पत्य जीवन केन्द्र अनि परिधि दुवै नै हो यसकारण उपन्यासहरूमा दाम्पत्य जीवनलाई विशेष महत्व दिइन्छ।

भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यासको क्षेत्रमा विन्ध्या सुब्बा एक अन्यतम, सशक्त र प्रभावशाली उपन्यासकारका रूपमा चिनिन्छिन्, जसले स्त्री जीवन, सामाजिक संरचना र पहिचानका प्रश्नहरूलाई केन्द्रमा राखेर लेखे भारतीय नेपाली उपन्यास साहित्यको क्षेत्रमा विन्ध्या सुब्बा एक अन्यतम, सशक्त र प्रभावशाली साहित्यकारका रूपमा चिनिन्छिन्, जसले स्त्री जीवन, सामाजिक संरचना र पहिचानका सवालहरूलाई केन्द्रमा राखेर लेखे गरेको देखिन्छ। उनका **फूलहरू पहाडहरू अनि धर्साहरू**, **अथाह**, **निर्गमन** अनि **सीमान्त** गरेर चारवटा उपन्यासहरू प्रकाशित छन्। यी चारैवटा उपन्यासमा विभिन्न प्रकारले दाम्पत्य जीवनलाई देखाउन खोजिएको छ। यस प्रपत्रमा यिनै दाम्पत्य जीवनको विश्लेषणात्मक अध्ययन गरिएको छ।

उनका उपन्यासहरूमा विवाह संस्थाले आजका नारीहरूलाई के कस्तो समस्या, मर्कामा पारेको छ अनि यसको निदान के हुनसक्छ भन्ने आफ्नो जीवनदर्शन पनि देख्न सकिन्छ। दाम्पत्य जीवन समाजको यस्तो आधारभूत संस्था हो जो सामाजिक, धार्मिक, आर्थिक तथा राजनैतिक परिवर्तनबाट पूर्णतः प्रभावित रहेको हुन्छ। यस्ता विविध घटनाहरूले आजको दाम्पत्य जीवनमा के कस्ता परिवर्तनहरू ल्याएको छ भन्ने तथ्य पनि यी उपन्यासहरूका सन्दर्भमा विश्लेषण गरिने प्रस्तुत प्रपत्रको उद्देश्य रहेको छ।

सार शब्द – दाम्पत्य जीवन, विवाह संस्था, नारी पुरुष सम्बन्ध।

१. विषय प्रवेश

विन्ध्या सुब्बाका उपन्यासहरू नेपाली साहित्यका अमूल्य निधिहरू हुन्। उनका चारवटा उपन्यासहरू अहिलेसम्म प्रकाशित छन्। ती मध्ये **अथाह, निर्गमन** अनि **सीमान्त** उपन्यास नारी समस्या केन्द्रित छन्। नारीहरूका विविध समस्या अनि दाम्पत्य सम्बन्धले जन्माएका विविध समस्या, असन्तुष्टि अनि सङ्घर्षहरू देखाइएका छन्। **फूलहरू पहाडहरू अनि धर्साहरू** उपन्यास पनि पुरूष पात्र केन्द्रित जस्तो लागेता पनि नारी जीवन कै सेरोफेरोमा लेखिएको छ। यी चार उपन्यासहरूमा दाम्पत्य सम्बन्धका विविध पक्ष देखिए पनि दाम्पत्य जीवनले नारीहरूलाई कसरी कज्याएर राखेको हुन्छ अनि आफ्नो परिवारलाई बँचाई राख्न उनीहरूले कस्तो मूल्य चुकाउनु पर्छ भन्ने सामाजिक यथार्थ देखाउन खोजिएको छ। नारी अस्मिता अनि स्वतन्त्रताको निम्ति नारीले कठोर निर्णय पनि लिन सक्छे तर परिवारको हितमा ऊ सधैं स्वार्थत्यागको मार्गमा हिडिरहेकी हुन्छे उपन्यासकारले यसलाई पुरूषवादी मानसिकताबाट माथि उठेर मात्र देख्न सकिन्छ भन्ने सन्देश दिन खोजेकी छन्।

२. निर्गमन उपन्यासमा दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध

निर्गमन उपन्यास एउटी बौद्धिक नारीको जीवनलाई लिएर लेखिएको छ। लेखकीय स्वतन्त्रताको निम्ति उपन्यासकी मूल पात्रा तृष्णाले आफ्नो पति, पुत्र अनि घरसंसारलाई समेत त्यागेर बाहिरिएकी छन्। अक्षय अनि तृष्णामाझ सुमधुर सम्बन्ध छ तापनि पुरूषवादी मानसिकताले ग्रसित समाजमा तृष्णा घरिघरि आफू जेलिएको अनि आफ्नो स्वत्व विलिन भएको अनुभव गर्छिन्। आफूलाई समाजकै साँचोमा ढाल्ने प्रयास पनि गर्छिन् तर अन्तमा गृहत्याग गरेर परम्परागत समाजको व्यवस्थालाई चुनौति दिन्छिन्। अक्षय उच्चशिक्षित अनि उच्च सरकारी पदाधिकारी हुन्। उनमा मानवीय गुण भरिपूर्ण छ। तृष्णाको प्रत्येक कुरोलाई उनी सहजतासाथ स्वीकार गर्छन् तर कहिलेकाहीँ पुरूषको हैकम जमाउन पनि पछि पर्दैनन् तापनि धेरैजसो ठाउँमा उनले मायालु पतिको व्यवहार नै देखाएका छन्।

पारिवारिक बन्धनले तृष्णा आफ्नो लेखकीय कर्तव्यलाई घरिघरि जितेको अनुभव गर्छिन्। अक्षयलाई पनि यो कुरा भन्न सकिदैनन्। सिर्जनाको क्षणमा आफू पनि हराएको अवस्थालाई देखेर अक्षयलाई तृष्णा मानसिक रूपले विकृत पो बन्दैछिन् कि भन्ने पनि लाग्छ। उनलाई आफ्नो श्रीमतीमाथि पूर्ण विश्वास छ तर आफूलाई भन्दा साहित्यलाई बढी प्रमुखता दिने तृष्णाको बढ्दै गइरहेको आकांक्षामाथि उनी धरिधरि विराम लाउन चाहन्छन्। यो कुरा तृष्णालाई पनि थाहा छ तर पारिवारिक कलहको भयले नै तृष्णा चुपचाप बस्न मनपराउँछिन्। व्यक्तिगत अनि पारिवारिक स्वार्थको निम्ति सामुहिक अनि वैश्विक स्वार्थलाई तिलाञ्जली दिन्छिन्। परमार्थको निम्ति निस्किएको आफ्नो पाइलालाई रोकेर राख्छिन्। घर परिवारलाई सम्हाल्छिन्, आफ्नो पेशागत जीवनलाई न्याय दिन्छिन्। उनलाई लाग्छ यी बन्धनहरूले

उनको परम स्वतन्त्रताको चाहनालाई बाधा पुऱ्याउँदैछ। परिवार अनि समाजलाई छोडेर बाहिरिनु नारीको निम्ति गाह्रो काम हो तर तृष्णाले यो कदम चालेर नारी स्वतन्त्रताको उदघोष गरेकी छन्।

विश्वमै चलिरहेको नारी स्वतन्त्रताका विविध पाटाहरू वर्तमान समाजले परिलक्षित गर्दै आएको छ। नारीले नारी भएर जन्मनु उसको आफ्नोभन्दा वंशानुगत कारणहरू अनि जैविक कारणहरू रहेका हुन्छन्। समाजमा नारी भएर जन्मिसकेपछि नारी बनाइनुमा उसको घरपरिवार, समाज, देश पुरुषतन्त्रले बनाएको पुरुषोन्मुखी मानसिकताले ग्रस्त नारी-पुरुष अनि उनीहरूद्वारा पोषित व्यवस्थाको ठूलो हात रहेको हुन्छ। दाम्पत्य जीवनका दुई पाङ्ग्राको रूपमा रहेको नारीको पत्नीरूपी अस्तित्व वास्तवमा बराबर हो भनिए तापनि उनी चुनाउमा र निर्णयमा दोस्रो दर्जाकी देखिन्छन्। वर्तमान समाजले आत्मसात गरिरहेको तीव्र परिवर्तन वास्तवमै अत्यन्त द्रुततम रहेको छ। पल पलमा नयाँ नयाँ घटनाहरूले नयाँ नयाँ आयाम थपिरहेको कुरा पल पलमै सामाजिक सञ्जाल, मिडिया आदिले हामीसम्म पुऱ्यारहेको छ। पूर्वाग्रहहरू क्षीण हुँदाहुँदै भक्तिदै गइरहेको यस अवस्थामा एउटा नयाँ व्यवस्थाले ठाउँ बनाइरहेको छ र नारीले नयाँ 'स्पेस' अनि नवीनतम अधिकार पाइरहेका छन्- नव समाजशास्त्रीहरूको भनाइमा सो नवीनतम अधिकार हो र नारीको एकलै हुनुको अधिकार (freedom to be alone, freedom to be self) पनि हो। यस अधिकारलाई वर्तमान नारीहरूले अधिकारपूर्वक उपयोग गर्दै आएका छन्। समाजले नारीलाई समाजभित्र, घरभित्र, चारभित्ताभित्र राख्ने पूर्वयोजनालाई सरासर नकार्दै नारीले समयानुकूल आर्थिक अधिकार, राजनैतिक अधिकार, सम्प्रेषणको अधिकार हासिल गर्दै आज थोरै मात्रामा भएपनि उपलब्ध यस अधिकारको प्रयोग गर्नपनि उनीहरू पछि परेका छैनन्। आज नारी चारभित्ता र घरमात्र नभएर समाजबाट पनि फुक्का छन्। उनीहरूले आर्जन गर्न सकेको शैक्षिक अधिकार अनि आर्थिक अधिकार नै यस नव स्वतन्त्रताको मूलमा रहेको छ। **निर्गमन** उपन्यासको नायिका तृष्णाले यसै नव स्वतन्त्रताप्राप्तिको दिशातर्फ पाइला चालेको देखिन्छ।

तृष्णाको यो निर्णयले उनको धरका अन्य सदस्य, आफन्त, छिमेकी अनि चिनारूहरू सबै अचम्भित छन्। उनलाई भएभरको आरोप लगाउन तयार छन् तर अक्षयमा उनीप्रति कुनै क्षोभ छैन, कुनै क्रोध छैन। तृष्णा फर्केर एकदिन आउनेछिन् भन्ने उनलाई ठूलो आशा छ। तृष्णाको वियोगपछि उनलाई तृष्णालाई अझ बढी बुझ्नेको अनुभव हुन्छ। उच्चशिक्षित अनि सभ्य व्यवहारले उनलाई बढी मानवीय बनाएको छ। यस्तो आदर्श दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध विरलै पाइन्छ।

केही विद्वानहरूले परिवारका तीन प्रकार मानेका छन्- न्यासधारी (Trustee), गृहस्थ (Domestic) अनि आणविक (Atomistic). न्यासधारी परिवारमा सदस्यहरूको स्थिति एक न्यास जस्तै हुन्छ व्यक्तिगत स्वार्थको स्थानमा परिवारको स्वार्थ प्राथमिक हुन्छ। भारतीय संयुक्त परिवारलाई त्यसको उदाहरण मान्न सकिन्छ। गृहस्थ परिवारमा व्यक्तिको स्वार्थ एवम् परिवारको स्वार्थको मध्यमा एउटा

सन्तुलनको स्थिति हुन्छ। दुवैको स्वार्थलाई ध्यानमा राखिन्छ। आणविक परिवारमा व्यक्तिको स्वार्थ प्रमुख हुन्छ। परिवारको स्वार्थ गौण हुन्छ। आणविक परिवारलाई व्यक्तिवादी परिवार पनि भनिन्छ। यस प्रकार गिभरमेनले आफ्नो यस परिवारको वर्गीकरणलाई आनुमानिक नमानेर आदर्श प्रकारको मानेका छन्।

निर्गमनको चित्रित परिवार जिमरमेनले भने जस्तो गृहस्थ (Domestic) जस्तो पनि छ। तृष्णाको व्यक्तिगत निर्णयले यसलाई आणविक परिवारमा पनि राख्न सकिन्छ तर बृहत्तर स्वार्थको निम्ति तृष्णाको गृहत्यागले तृष्णाको निर्णय व्यक्तिगत होइन सम्पूर्ण मानवताको निम्ति छ जस्तो प्रतीत हुन्छ। तृष्णा अनि अक्षय दुवै उच्चशिक्षित अनि उच्च पदाधिकारी भएकोले उनीहरूको परिवारलाई यङ्ग अनि विलेटले भने जस्तो समितिमिक (Symmetrical Family) परिवारमा पनि राख्न सकिन्छ। यस्ता प्रकारका परिवारमा सदस्य आफ्ना सम्बन्धीहरूबाट कुनै प्रकारको सहायता लिँदैनन्। उनीहरू अनुसार यस्तो परिवारमा पतिपत्नी दुवैको वैवाहिक भूमिका समान भएर पनि विस्तारै अधिकाधिक मात्रामा समान बन्दै जान्छ।

यति हुँदा हुँदै पनि तर तृष्णाको परिवारले तृष्णाको स्वतन्त्र क्रियाकलापलाई पटकै मन पराउँदैन। उनकी सासुआमाको उनीप्रतिको व्यवहार अनि घर छोडेर गइसकेपछि उनीप्रति लगाइएका आरोपहरूले यो कुराको पुष्टि हुन्छ। तर आमा अनि बहिनीको तृष्णाप्रतिको कठोर भावले पनि अक्षयको मनमा तृष्णाप्रति कुनै द्वेष पलाउन सकेको छैन।

पुरुष दाम्पत्य जीवनमा बाँधिँएर पनि अर्ध स्वतन्त्र जीवन बिताउँछ तर नारी विवाह पछि पूर्ण रूपमा गृहस्थ जीवनमा जेलिनुपर्ने हुन्छ। तृष्णाको स्वत्वले यसलाई स्वीकार्न सकेको छैन। उनमा परम्परागत स्त्रीको स्वरूप नपाइने पनि होइन। भारतीय परम्परागत नारीको आफ्नो पतिप्रतिको आस्था उनमा पनि छ र उनी भन्छिन् -

तपाईं नै मेरो जीवनको श्रेष्ठपुरुष, ती एकमात्र पुरुष जसले मेरो अस्तित्वको, जीवनको एकभाग मेरो नारीत्वलाई दमन गरेको छ। मभित्र जो नारी छे उसको आफ्नो समुचित मनले, नारीमनको कोमल भावले स्वीकार गरेकी छ तपाईंलाई।¹

मार्क्सवादी दृष्टिकोणमा परिवारको अध्ययन आलोचनात्मक रूपमा गरिन्छ। मार्क्सवादीहरू परिवारलाई सामाजिक वर्गको विशेषताको रूपमा हेर्दछन्। सामाजिक वर्गको समाप्तिपछि परिवारको पनि समाप्ति हुन्छ। मार्क्सको मान्यता थियो समाजवादी समाजमा परिवारको अस्तित्व हुँदैन।

मार्क्सवादीहरू विवाह संस्थालाई नारी शोषणको व्यवस्था मान्छन्। नारीहरूले विवाह पछि आफ्नो स्वतन्त्रता पूर्ण रूपमा त्याग गरेर परिवारको निम्ति बाँच्नुपर्ने हुन्छ। उसको व्यक्तिगत इच्छाको कुनै मूल्य हुँदैन। उपन्यासमा परिवारको इच्छालाई सर्वोपरि मान्दै आफ्नो लेखकीय व्यक्तित्वलाई गौण बनाउनु

परेकोमा तृष्णामा एकप्रकारको असन्तुष्टि विवाहकै दिनदेखि नै रहिआएको देखिन्छ । तृष्णा दोधारे स्थितिमा बाँध्न बाध्य छिन्। यो बन्धनलाई चुँडाउन सहज छैन।

शोधकर्ताहरू जस्तै लीचले परिवार संस्थालाई निराशावादी दृष्टिकोणबाट विश्लेषण गरेका छन्। उनका अनुसार नाभिकीय परिवार एक अतिभारित विद्युत परिपथ (overloaded circuit wire) जस्तै हो, जसमा अत्यधिक दबाव तथा तनाव सञ्चित हुन्छ। लीचको तर्क छ कि परिवारभित्रको निजता (privacy) नै डर र सङ्घर्षको प्रमुख स्रोत हो। उनी भन्छन्, "राम्रो समाजको आधार बन्नुपर्ने परिवार, वास्तवमा, आफ्नो सङ्कीर्णता र तुच्छ गोप्यताहरू (tawdry secrets) का कारण मानिसको असन्तोषको कारक बन्छ।"

यस्तै, समाजशास्त्री डेभिड कूपरले पनि परिवारलाई एक **निरर्थक संस्था** का रूपमा चित्रण गरेका छन्। उनका अनुसार परिवार यस्तो संरचना हो जसले न त व्यक्तिको स्वतन्त्र विकासलाई प्रोत्साहन दिन्छ, न त व्यक्तिगत पहिचान निर्माणमा सघाउँछ। बरु, परिवार आफैं र यसको सदस्यहरूलाई व्यक्तिगत स्वतन्त्रता र पहिचान विकास गर्नबाट रोक्दछ।

परिवारको भारी थाम्दा थाम्दा तृष्णाको परमार्थीय बाटोमा तगारो लागेको छ। उनको व्यक्तिगत स्वतन्त्रताको पखेटा काटिएको छ। यस उपन्यासमा दाम्पत्य जीवन अझ बढी उदार हुनपर्ने सङ्केत रहेको छ।

३. अथाह उपन्यासमा दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध

अथाह उपन्यास **निर्गमन** उपन्यासको पहिलो भाग हो जस्तो प्रतीत हुन्छ। यहाँ दाम्पत्य जीवनको विविधता देखाइएको छ। 'म' पात्रको आफ्नै दाम्पत्य जीवन छ जो निर्गमनको तृष्णाकी दाम्पत्य जीवनसँग झण्डै मिल्छ। म पात्रको पतिमा पनि निर्गमनको पात्र अक्षयको झल्को पाइन्छ। म पात्र एक ठाउँ भन्छिन्-

*"बडो गम्भीरतापूर्वक लिएँ मैले यो जीवनलाई, आम अर्थमा मैले यसलाई स्वीकार गरिँ, नियतिको निम्ति मैले आफूलाई समर्पण गरिँ। शायद यही नै मेरो जीवनको ठूलो त्रासदी पनि हो, हिउँदु र भाग्य धेरै, बिसाउनु थोरै, बडी चोटहरू, अत्यन्तै थोरै सुस्ताउनु रमाउनु। फेरि मेरो जीवनको एउटा सुखद अनुभूति पनि यही हो जीवनसाथी कि तिमीले पनि मलाई आम अर्थमा स्वीकार गरेनौं र आम स्वास्थ्यमा न्छेको नियति बाँच्ने माग गरेनौं। शायद यही नै हाम्रो एडजस्टमेन्ट यहीनै समर्पित हामी एकाकमाथि।"*²

अथाहको 'म' पात्रको पतिमा पनि अक्षयको जस्तै पुरूष अहम्को झल्को देख्न सकिन्छ जसले नारीलाई पुरूष भन्दा केही निचो र अलिकति असचेत मान्छ। कलकत्ता पुन्याएर फर्कदा म पात्रलाई नानीहरूलाई जस्तो ऊ उपदेश दिइराख्छ-

“केही असुविधा भए फोन गरिहाल्नु मलाई। गर्मी जताततै छ नखानू। फिल्टरको पानी मात्र खानू र फलफूल नटुटाउनु।”³

अथाह उपन्यासमा दाम्पत्य जीवनको अन्तर्विरोधको कारण अनेक समस्याहरू आइपरेको देखाइएको छ। बाबा र आमा दुवै चाकरीको जीवन बिताउँदा आफ्नो छोरो राजीवमा मानसिक विकार आएको छ अनि अन्तमा राजीव मानसिक रोगीको रूपमा अस्पतालमा आउन परेको छ। दाम्पत्य जीवनकै असन्तुलनको कारण गोपाल मानसिक अस्पतालमा भर्ना भएको छ। उसको अरूप्रतिको अविश्वासले परिवारलाई त आघात पारेको छ नै उसको जीवन पनि नष्ट पारेको छ। उसको विषयमा उसकी स्वास्नी भन्छे-

“ सानी छोरी काखमा हुँदा प्रथमपल्ट उसलाई यस अस्पतालमा भर्ना गरियो, हिराएर मलाई चोट पारेको थियो। काखमा नानी, घरमा रूपियाँ पैसा छैन, सबै लथालिङ्ग र फेरि उसको अस्पतालको खर्च। हरप्रकारको दुःख गरें त्यसबेला। धेरैपल्ट चेष्टा गरें छोडिदिऊँ, अब थाम्न सकिदैनँ यसलाई। उसको परिवारबाट कुनै सहायता छैन, सबै आफ्नो आफ्नो धूनमा। तर यो बिहे भन्ने कस्तो बन्धन रहेछ।”⁴

गंगाको समस्या पनि पारिवारिक नै देखिन्छ। लोभ्रेले आफ्नै बहिनीलाई बिहे गरेपछि ऊ मानसिक रूपले विक्षिप्त बनेकी छ। गंगाकी आमाको पनि दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध सुखी छैन। बाबुको रक्सी खाने बानीले घर लथालिङ्ग बनाएको छ। गंगाकी आमा एकलै परिवारलाई थगैथगै क्षय रोगको शिकार भएकी छन्। गंगा आफ्नी बहिनी सौताको रूपमा आएकोमा भन्दा ऊ राक्षसको पञ्जामा परेकोमा बढी दुखी देखिन्छे।

अथाह उपन्यासकी मूल पात्रा प्रितीको विक्षिप्तता पनि आमा बाबुको अमिल्दो दाम्पत्य सम्बन्धलाई मात्र सकिन्छ। आमाको आत्महत्या अनि बाबुको मुटुको रोगले मृत्यु हुनुले प्रितीको जीवन झन दुरुह बन्न पुगेको छ। संयुक्त परिवारमा प्रितीप्रतिको हेलचेक्र्याइ पनि माता-पिताको असहज दाम्पत्य जीवनकै कारणले मात्र सकिन्छ। अपराजिता मानसिक स्वास्थ्यसम्बन्धी समस्याबाट ग्रसित छिन्। उनको दाम्पत्य जीवन पनि विघटन भएको छ। हाल उनी छोरीलाई पतिको घरमा छोडेर आफ्नी आमासँग बस्न बाध्य भएकी छन्। उपन्यासकारको मतमा -

“यसरी उ लोभ्रे र आमा बीच पीड-पडको गोली भई र फेरि लोभ्रेको घर जाने प्रश्नहरू हराउँदै गए। त्यो सम्भावनाहरू जति कम हुँदै गयो उति उति उसको मानसिक विसंगति पनि बढ्दै गयो र अब उ न लोभ्रेलाई हेर्न सक्थी न आमालाई।”

यस्तो अवस्थामा पनि अपराजिताको मनमा लोभ्रेप्रति भने असाध्य माया छ। कसैले उसको लोभ्रेप्रति नकरात्मक टिप्पणी गरेको उसलाई अलिकति पनि सह्य छैन।

४. सीमान्त उपन्यासमा दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध

सीमान्त उपन्यासमा पनि दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध सफल छैन। उपन्यासका प्रमुख पात्रहरू राधा अनि नवराजको विवाह सफल भएको छैन। नवराज अर्कै श्रीमती विवाह गरेर अलग्गै बस्न थालेको छ। आफ्नो दुइजना सन्तानलाई चाकरीजीवी राधाले दुखसुख राम्ररी हुर्काउँदैछिन् अनि उच्च शिक्षा दिँदैछिन्। लोभेसँगको यस्तो बिछोडले उनको जीवनमा ठूलो उथुलपुथुल ल्याइदिएको छ। यस्तो एक्लो जीवनमा तर उनले हार खाएकी छैनन् बरू जीवनलाई चुनौतिको रूपमा स्वीकार गरेकी छन्।

पारम्परिक संस्कारमा हुर्केकी राधा आफै पनि पुरूषवादी मानसिकताले ग्रस्त छन्। पुरूषले छोडेर गइसकेपछि पनि उनी उही पुरूषको आगमनको झिनो आशा लिएर बसिरहेकी छिन् उनी। यो झिनो आशाले त राधाको जीवन अझ पीडादायी बनाएको छ। उनी पलपलमा प्रताडित मात्र होइन अपमानित पनि बनेकी छिन्। उनको यो द्वन्द्वग्रस्त मानसिकताले उनको सन्तानमा पनि गहिरो प्रभाव पारेको छ। दुवै सन्तानमा पिताप्रति घृणा त छदैन, आमाप्रति पनि वितृष्णा छ। आमाको छोरा-छोरीप्रति अति लगावलाई उनीहरू बिनाकारणको कृत्य मान्छन् र आफूहरूको निजतामा दखल मान्छन्। छोरा प्रतीकको यस सम्वादले यसको पुष्टि हुन्छ-

“तपाईंहरूको द्वन्द्वले हामी पनि साह्रै पिसियौं आमा। जीवनभरि हामीमा पनि द्वन्द्व, द्विविधा, यता जाऊ कि उता जाऊ।”⁵

प्रतीकको बाबुप्रतिको झिनो सहानुभूतिलाई छोरी प्रियम्बदाले भने घरिघरि निरस्त पारिदिन्छे। ऊ भन्छे *“बाल्यकालमा हामीप्रति आफ्नो जिम्मेवारीदेखि भागेर, हामीलाई असहाय छोडिदिए हाम्रो सो कल्ड बाबाले। त्यसपछि अनेक संघर्ष गरेर राम्रो नखाइ, राम्रो नलाइ आफ्नो सुख चैन त्यागेर हामीलाई तर कोहीभन्दा कम राख्नु भएन आमाले शिक्षा-दीक्षा सबै पुरा गरिदिनुभयो, त्यस्ता व्यक्ति र यस्ती स्त्रीमाझको फरक म बुझ्छु, तिमी किन बुझ्दैनौ ?”⁶*

दाम्पत्य जीवनका फलस्वरूप प्राप्त भएका सन्तानलाई हुर्काउनु, पढाउनु अनि राष्ट्रको सचेत नागरिक बनाउनु आमा बाबुको कर्तव्य ठान्छ समाज तर नवराज यो कर्तव्यदेखि चुकेको छ अनि एकली राधाले आफ्नो सन्तानलाई हुर्काइ, पढाई समर्थ बनाएकी छन्। उनलाई आफ्नो कर्तव्यबोध छ। उनी भन्छिन- *“आमाबाबु हुन रहर गरिसकेपछि कुनै हक छैन हामीलाई कि छोराछोरीको जीवनलाई विचलित बनाइदिऊँ। आफ्नो सुरक्षा र आत्म स्वतन्त्रताका निम्ति आफ्ना सन्तानको भविष्य असुरक्षित बनाऊँ।। एउटा कसैको त्याग र कर्तव्यबिना कहीं केही फुल्दैन, केही ठीकसँग फल्दैन। म जे सोच्छु त्यो मेरा छोराछोरीका लागि हो, अन्तमा मानव कल्याणकै निम्ति हो। मेरो धर्म छाडदिनँ, प्रतीक, प्रियम्बदा हुँदै सबै वर्तमान पिढी फलून, फुलून र सुन्दर र सुगम रहोस यो पृथ्वी।”⁷*

पिताको कर्तव्यदेखि चुकेको नवराजलाई पिता हुने अधिकार पनि दिन चाहँदैनन दुवै आमा छोरी। प्रियम्बदा भन्छे-

“एउटी आईमाईलाई गर्भवती बनाउँदैमा कोही पिता भइहाल्छ र ? पिता त उसको हृदय र भूमिकाले पो बनाउँछ त।”⁸

आधुनिक नारी अधिकारप्रति प्रियम्बदा आफ्नी आमा भन्दा अधिक सचेत देखिन्छे । दाम्पत्य जीवनमा दुवैको समान अधिकार, सम्मान अनि भागीदारी हुनुपर्छ । यदि लोभले यस्तो अधिकार दिन अस्वीकार गर्छ भने दाम्पत्य सम्बन्धलाई तोड्न सक्ने सामर्थ्य स्वास्नीमा हुनुपर्छ भन्ने उसको तर्क छ-

“लोभे स्वास्नी मिलेर बस्नुपर्छ एकाकारको दुख सुख बुझ्नुपर्छ जान्दछु, तर मान गरे मान बेइमान गरे बेइमान, बराबरको हकदारी र बराबरको जिम्मेवारी।”⁹

प्रियम्बदाको अन्तर्जातीय विवाहमा मनमनै विचलित बनेकी राधा त्यसबेला सन्तुष्ट हुन्छिन् जब उनले यी दुई दम्पतिको आपस्तमा सुमधुर अनि बराबरको सम्बन्ध देखिन्छिन्। उनको वर्षौंको चाहना पनि वास्तवमा यही नै त थियो। उनी पनि आफ्नो पतिबाट समान अधिकार, सम्बन्धप्रति सम्मान अनि विश्वास चाहन्थिन्।

४. फूलहरू, पहाडहरू अनि धर्साहरूमा दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध

फूलहरू, पहाडहरू अनि धर्साहरू उपन्यास विन्दा सुब्बाको प्रथम उपन्यास हो। पुरूष पात्र केन्द्रित उपन्यास भए पनि उपन्यासमा दाम्पत्य सम्बन्धलाई पनि कलात्मक रूपमा केलाइएको देखिन्छ । ‘म’ पात्र अनि उनकी पत्नीबिचको झिनो भूलबुझाभुझले दुवैको सम्बन्धमा ठूलो तिक्तता आएको छ। ‘म’ पात्र चिकित्साको उच्च अध्ययन गरेपछि कमानको अस्पतालमा आएर कार्य गरेको उसको परिवार सँगसँगै उसको स्वास्नीलाई पटकक मन परेको छैन। अझ विवाहपछि कमानमा आएर एकलास जीवन बिताउँदा उसकी स्वास्नी विरक्त भइसकेकी छे तर ‘म’ पात्र भने कमान छोडेर शहरमा काम गर्न जाने कुनै सुरसार गर्दैन।

‘म’ पात्रको अतीतले पनि उसलाई घरिघरि पिरोलिरहन्छ। एल्बममा उसको पूर्वप्रेमिका सुधाको तस्बीर देखेदेखि यता उसको स्वास्नीको मनमा जुन प्रकारको अविश्वासले जरा गाढेको छ त्यो उपन्यासको अन्त्यसम्म पनि निर्मूल हुन सकेको छैन । अझ मालीको छोरीप्रति उनको आकर्षणको कारण त्यो अविश्वास अझ बढेको देखिन्छ। यस्तो अविश्वासको धरातलमा उभिएको उनीहरूको सम्बन्ध केवल छोरीको उपस्थितिले मात्र अडिन गएको देखिन्छ।

‘म’ पात्रको पलायन प्रवृत्तिको कारण उसको अतीत हो भन्न सकिन्छ । यो पलायन प्रवृत्तिले उसको परिवारमा पनि अशान्ति सृष्टि गरेको छ जुन कुरा ‘म’ पात्रले उपन्यासको अन्तसम्म पनि बुझेको देखिँदैन। मान्छेका आ-आफ्नै इच्छा, चाहना अनि जीवन जीउने तरिका हुन्छ। दम्पतिका आपसी सुझबुझ अनि उदार सोचाइले दाम्पत्य जीवनमा सामंजस्यता अनि एकाकारप्रति प्रेम भावनाको प्रगाढता ल्याउँछ तर यस उपन्यासका दम्पतिमा यस्तो हुन सकेको देखिँदैन।

उपन्यासकी नायिका एकप्रकारले परिचय सङ्कट पनि बोकेर हिँडिरहेकी छन् । आफू उच्चशिक्षित भएर पनि पतिकै आयमा निर्भर रहन पर्ने बाध्यताले एकप्रकारको मानसिक कष्ट अनि असुरक्षाको भावले ग्रसित छिन् । आफ्नो पतिको समग्र प्रेमको अभाव अनि अतितको प्रेमिकाप्रतिको मोहले विचलित छिन् । उनी जति छिटो हुन्छ यो गाउँबाट भागिहाल्न चाहन्छिन् तर 'म' पात्रलाई भने त्यसको हतार छैन । दुई दम्पतिमा एकप्रकारको फाटो यसै दुई धुवी विचारधाराको परिणाम बुझिन्छ । पतिद्वारा थोपिएको निर्णयले उनी आफूलाई उपेक्षित भएको ठान्छिन् अनि उनको व्यवहारमा यो उपेक्षाप्रतिको तीव्र विरोध पनि देखिन्छ तर उनी साधारण भारतीय नारी जस्तै सम्झौतामा जीवन जीउन बाध्य छन् ।

५. विन्ध्या सुब्बाका उपन्यासहरूमा घरेलु हिंसा अनि दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध

नारी उत्पीडनको समस्या भारतमा नयाँ होइन । भारतीय समाजमा नारीहरू अपमान, यातना अनि शोषणको शिकार बनेको प्राचीन कालदेखि नै हो । आधुनिक समयमा नारीहरू समाजमा शक्तिशाली अनि अर्थपूर्ण भागीदारी दिइरहेका छन् तर पनि घरेलु हिंसाका शिकार भइरहेका छन् । उनीहरू आफ्नो परिवारबाट कुटिन्छन्, अपहृत बन्छन् अनि कहिलेकाहीँ बलात्कार अनि हत्यासम्म पनि गरिन्छ । धेरै जसो यस्ता घटना प्रकाशमा आउँदैनन् ।

डोमिनाक (१९८१) ले हिंसाको परिभाषा दिँदै भनेका छन् -यो एउटा यस्तो कृत्य हो जसले अर्को व्यक्तिको स्वतन्त्रतामा अतिक्रमण गर्छ ।¹⁰

दिल्ली पुलिस ब्युरोले नारीहरूमाथि गरिने हिंसालाई दुइ भागमा बाँडेको देखिन्छ १. भारतीय दण्ड संहिता अन्तर्गत आउने अपराध अनि २. स्थानीय अनि विशेष कानून अन्तर्गत आउने कानून । ब्युरोले प्रथम कोटीमा सातवटा अपराधलाई राखेको छ भने चारवटा अपराधलाई सामाजिक अपराधको कोटीमा राखेको छ । आइपीसी अन्तर्गत आउने अपराधहरूमा बलात्कार, अपहरण, दाइजोको निम्ति हत्या, शारीरिक अनि मानसिक यातना, कामुकतापूर्ण उत्पीडन, महिलाहरूलाई जिस्काउनु, २१ वर्षदेखि मुनिका केटीहरूलाई आयात गर्नु । सामाजिक अपराधको श्रेणीमा भने सतीको निम्ति उक्साउनु, दाइजो लिनु अनि दिनु, नारी बेचबिखन र नारीमाथि निर्लज्ज व्यवहार ।

विन्ध्या सुब्बाको उपन्यास **अथाह**मा नारीमाथि उपर्युक्त अनेक प्रकारका अपराधहरू भएका छन् जसमा प्रत्यक्ष अनि अप्रत्यक्ष रूपमा आफ्नो पतिको हात रहेको देखिन्छ तर धेरै जसो नारीहरू कानूनदेखि अनभिज्ञ रहेकै कारण अपराधी कानूनको घेरामा आउन सकेको छैन । **निर्गमन**मा त्यस्तो किसिमको नारी उत्पीडन देखिँदैन तर पुरूष पात्र अक्षय कुनै समय मदपान गरेर आउनु नारीमाथि हैकम जमाउने अपराधको रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । यसलाई नारीमाथि गरिने मानसिक हिंसाको श्रेणीमा राख्न सकिन्छ । नारी स्वतन्त्रताको पक्षपाती हुँदाहुँदै पनि अक्षयले तृष्णाको साहित्यिक पुरूष साथीहरूसँगको संसर्ग मन पराउँदैन । परिवारप्रतिको यस्ता निराशावादी दृष्टिकोणको सन्दर्भमा,

कहिलेकाहीँ अक्षयले असहमति जनाउने र विद्रोह झल्किने व्यवहार प्रस्तुत गरेको पाइन्छ। अथाहमा यस्तो हिंसा प्रशस्त मात्रामा पाइन्छ। यस्तो हिंसाकै कारण नारी पात्रहरू मानसिक रूपले रूग्ण बनेका छन्।

सीमान्त उपन्यासकी पात्र राधा मानसिक प्रताडनाको शिकार बनेकी छन् । कानुनी प्रक्रियाको जानकारी नभएको अथवा संस्कारवश पतिप्रतिको निष्ठाले उनलाई त्यतातिर जानदेखि रोकेको छ तर उपन्यासको अन्त्यतिर भने राधामा गजबको आत्मविश्वास अनि दृढ निश्चय पनि जागेको छ। उनी नवराजलाई कानुनी मुद्दा लगाउनेसम्म आफ्नो अठोट दर्शाउँछिन्। हिन्दु विवाह कानून अन्तर्गत बहुविवाह गरे अपराधिक क्रियाकलापको कारण जेलसम्म जान पर्ने हुन्छ तर राधाको उदारताकै कारण नवराज बाँचेका छन्। यतिसम्म कि नानीहरूका भरणपोषणको निम्ति पतिबाट प्राप्त हुने आर्थिक सहयोग पनि उनले लिन मानेकी छैनन्। पतिलाई देवता मात्रै संस्कारको अवशेष अझसम्म राधामा रहेको देखिन्छ।

उपन्यासमा नवराज आफ्नी पतिप्रति निष्ठावान नभएकै कारण यस्तो परिस्थितिको सिर्जना भएको देखिन्छ। छोरीलाई भन्दा छोरालाई बडी प्राथमिकता दिनुले उनलाई स्वार्थी पति मात्र होइन स्वार्थी पिता पनि बनाएको छ। आफ्नो छोरालाई आफूतिर तान्नु खोज्ने व्यवहारले उनलाई अझ निकृष्ट व्यवहारको व्यक्ति सिद्ध गरेको छ। छोरीको कन्यादानमा आफू पिताको पूर्ण मर्यादासँग उभिन पाउनुपर्ने उनको इच्छाले अन्त्यसम्म पनि राधाको मानसिक कष्टलाई बुझ्न नसक्ने पतिको रूपमा उनलाई उभ्याएको छ। प्रियम्बदाले कन्यादानको परम्परालाई नै चुनौति दिएको छ। छोरीलाई सम्पत्तिको रूपमा स्वीकार्ने भारतीय पुरूषवादी धारणालाई उनले नमान्ने अनि विवाह पुरूष र स्त्रीबिचको आपसी समझदारीपूर्ण सम्झौता हो भन्ने धारणा व्यक्त गरेकी छ। दक्षिण भारतको एउटा कोर्टले कन्यादानको पक्षमा बाबुद्वारा हालिएको एउटा मुद्दामा कन्यादान अनि बाबु विरुद्ध दिएको निर्णयको घटनाले यससम्बन्धमा समाजलाई सोच्न बाध्य गराएको थियो। प्रतिपक्षीले आफू कुनै प्रकारको कसैको सम्पत्ति नभएकोले कसैलाई दान दिन नसक्ने तर्क राखेकी थिइन्। प्रियम्बदाको तर्क पनि यस्तै छ। दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध भनेको आपसको सम्झौता हुनपर्छ अनि दुवैले यसको निम्ति एकार्कामा सम्मानको भावना विकास गर्नपर्छ भन्ने प्रियम्बदाको तर्कलाई वरुणले पनि मौन स्वीकृति दिएका छन्। राधाको आन्तरिक इच्छा पनि यस्तै हो तर समय प्रतिकूल हुनाले उनले यस्तो स्वतन्त्रता पाउन असमर्थ बनिन्। उपन्यासकारले आधुनिक कालमा दाम्पत्य सम्बन्ध धेरै सहज अनि समझदारीको भएको एवम् सम्बन्ध विच्छेदले पनि नारीलाई जीवन भरको मानसिक कष्ट दिन नसक्ने अवस्था आइसकेको देखाउन खोजेकी छन्।

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