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General Information

Journal of Kolkata Society for Asian Studies is a double blind peer reviewed publication. It is an International Journal dedicated to the development of all branches of Social Sciences with special reference to Asian Studies. The Journal accepts theoretical and empirical papers on interdisciplinary studies. The Journal occasionally publishes special issues which mediate on a single topic. It also publishes research notes, reports, book reviews, etc.

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Editorial

The present issue of the Journal of Kolkata Society for Asian Studies, Volume 9, number 2, contains a total number of fifteen articles. The first article entitled, "Ethical Dilemmas in Anthropology: Issues and Concerns", was outcome of a lecture delivered by Professor Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri in memory of Late Professor Vinay Kumar Srivastava, online, on December 17, 2022. The lecture was based on ethical issues connected with research in social Science, especially with study mankind and its socio-cultural factors.

Pot making is a very old tradition for human being. It started as early as prehistoric times but the earthen pottery is still being made and used by humans. In India although the technique of manufacture is more or same from prehistoric to present day; types, colour and decorations and its motifs varied with different cultural regimes. Pottery also is an important marker for culture. The authors Abhishek Bhowmick and Debasis Kumar Mondal of Calcutta University had studied potsherds collected from the site at Garh Panchakot at Purulia district, West Bengal with a view to reconstruction of the past culture of the area.

There are some legal rights granted to women by the constitution of India. The paper by Subasini. N and N. Sasikumar, from Alagappa University, Karaikudi, entitled, "Awareness of legal rights and its practices among prospective women teachers", is result of research conducted among women who are admitted in colleges in Tamil Nadu, with the prospect of being women teachers after graduation. The result of the data collected show that there is need for making prospective women educators aware of their own rights at the time of their own education.

Newspaper is an important medium for making people in a democratic and developing country aware of the process of development. Mahendra Prasad Gurung, from the discipline of Mass Communication and Journalism, Sikkim University, had studied the role of the press with the help of content analysis of four major newspapers of Eastern Himalayan region, with a view to understanding information on development issues in Sikkim. He stated in the article, "Development Issues and Media Attention in Regional Press: An Evaluation of Eastern Himalaya Newspapers with a Special Focus on Coverage of Development Stories in Sikkim", that though Sikkim is a fast developing country, there is hardly any contribution of the press to make people aware of the development that is taking place in the region.

The paper entitled as "Education Loans in South India: Trends and Flows and Beneficiaries' Perceptions" is result of research done in Kozikode and Ernakulam districts of Kerala by Krishnan Chalil and Md Asraul Hoque, Central University of South Bihar. For primary data they had taken samples from several branches of State Bank of India. They have made suggestions regarding loan for education on the basis of their study regarding rapidly privatization of education system.

In a patriarchal society like India, a girl child in general, is not welcomed with open arms. The paper "Different Stages of Elimination of the Indian Girl Child" by Poonam Magu, Institute of Home Economics, University of Delhi, is outcome of a study from secondary data. She has divided the process of elimination of girl in several stages, beginning with the natal stage to adulthood. She has delved into reasons for such practice. The process of elimination is heinous and the author has suggested that measures are to be taken to protect the female children.

Priyanka Guha, in her paper, "Malabar Woods: Colonial Encirclement for Scientific Conservation or Systematic Exploitation?" discussed the policy regarding teak forest of Malabar coast during colonial regime. The woods were used for ship building. In the name of promotion of the forest and ecology, the teak plantation was created for commercial exploitation. She has discussed the process of destruction of the sacred forest and marginalization of the tribals of the area by creating teak forest.

Ujjwala Sadaphal from Wardha wrote the article. "A Study of Aggression and Academic Procrastination among Students". The study is based on primary data collected from school students at ninth class in the sessions during the years of 2021 - 2022. The findings suggested that academic procrastination has direct impact on students, leading to aggression.

The joint paper entitled, "Reading Orientalism in John Tallis's map of Northern India", is written by Deepak Kumar, Ravindra Kumar and Nilkamal Singha, from Bhopal, New Delhi and Assam respectively. Of all the atlases of Tallis, the authors have concentrated on Tallis's illustrated map of Northern India. The article shows how the British presented their own view of Orientalism through such maps, with specific illustrations.

Several women authors from Manipur University, namely, Diana Naorem, Ngasepam Cinthoibi Chanu, Oinam Sarita Devi and Chitrabala Sambanduram, have written the paper, "Women and election in Manipur: Some notes from the field". The focus is on women candidates contesting and women voters. The work is mainly based on primary data. The study shows that there are a number of hindrances for women to be active in politics in Manipur; even then it is found that there is increase in participation of women in politics in the state.

Women are victims of violence in many societies. The paper, "An Exploration of the causes of domestic violence against married women" by Disari Roy of Diamond Harbour Women's University, West Bengal, has taken the case of violence against married women. She has pointed out that marital violence is a universal issue, which is continuing from historical times in India. It is not restricted among uneducated low income group of men but also among men who are educated and placed in higher wrung of the society. In the latter case, it happens behind the closed door. The author has given several reasons about why women in all societies bear with the atrocities.

Lindy Lou Goodwin in her paper, "Illuminating Dark Spaces: The American Baptist Women Missionaries and the Zenana System in Assam", pointed out role of Women Missionaries of American Baptist Mission in Assam, in spreading education among the women, who were cloistered in zenana quarters in their homes. The author has given a poignant description of the endeavour of the so called 'Bible' women from the records and history of such missionary works. She has shown how the efforts of those women had opened up the doors of the zenana quarters and the women of such seclusion could avail of education. This was mainly for the women of high caste Hindu, Muslim and some highly patriarchal hill tribe families.

The paper, "Low Skilled Labour Migration Corridor: A Study on Jangipur Sub Division, Murshidabad District, West Bengal, India", by Sandip Tah is about migrant labours, who are residents of Jangipur sub division of Murshibad district but migrate to different states in India also to Saudi Arabia. There is a route, which the migrants follow. The author called it Faracca corridor and has given information on reasons and other factors related to migration through this corridor.

There are two papers written in Bengali. The one is entitled, "পূর্ব ডুয়ার্সের সামাজিক পরিবেশ ও তিলোত্তমা মজুমদারের উপন্যাস" : meaning, 'Social Environment of Eastern Dooars and the Novel of Tilittama Majumdar'; written by Dipika Barai of Panchanan Barma University of Coochbihar. The author has discussed about Tilottama Majumdar's novel, written in the backdrop of the Dooars region of eastern Himalayas, which reflected the environment of the said zone. The adibashi's/ tribals of tea plantation together with their culture, both material and social, largely featured in the novels.

The other article in Bengali is by Bablu Murmu, a Post Graduate student of Burdwan University, West Bengal. Title of the article is "সাঁওতালদের লোককাহিনী ও প্রকৃতির সন্তান হিসাবে সাঁওতালদের অধ্যায়ন", which in English may be translated as Folklore of the Santals and Study of the Santals as sons of Nature". Murmu has critically discussed the Santal folklore, their customs and belief system. He has shown that the Santals living in close proximity with nature looks at it with the same respect and regard as they look up to their parents who gave birth to them.

Present volume covers a wide range of subjects of social science. Each article is result of intensive research. The editors are grateful to the authors for contributing their research findings and enriching this volume. Editors thank the reviewers, who have taken time from their valuable schedule and had gone through the article, reviewed them and had suggested relevant modification, which the authors of the articles had complied with.

Ranjana Ray
Sarmistha De Basu

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Ethical Dilemmas in Anthropology: A note on Issues and Concerns

Sarit K. Chaudhuri

Abstract

This paper deals with the notion of ethics and its implications in the context of the discipline of anthropology and how it operates across the existing institutional mechanisms. This paper also deals with the comparative locations of the anthropologist beyond the binaries of 'insider' versus 'outsider' discourse. Taking cues from the Indian North East, this paper finally tries to shed some light on the post-modern ethical concern in the context of the evolving discipline of anthropology.

Key Words: *ethics, morality, philosophy, ethnography, emic, etic, postmodern.*

The concept of ethics and the discipline of anthropology is critically interlinked in multidimensional ways. Of course, this is true not only for anthropology but also for almost all the social science disciplines having linkages with fieldwork tradition. Moreover, most of the higher academic institutions have various forms of ethical committees to deal with the researches which have wider ramifications for living beings irrespective of broader categorization into various faculties or schools of research. However, I like to limit myself with the discipline of anthropology here for the present purpose.

Conventionally, we gave much emphasis on the issues concerning fieldwork where anthropologist got engaged with the "other" for writing ethnography or various other forms of end products though with the growth of the discipline it doesn't remain confined to a one segment of the human population whom we call tribe or Adibasis or Indigenous people as globally the discipline has expanded it areas of study since long for which anthropology is perceived as the science of mankind.

In the present paper, I like to deal with the notion of 'Ethics' in the context of fieldwork tradition which constitutes the soul of the discipline of anthropology in general or even in the context of Indian anthropology in particular. Moreover, I also like to shed light on how this concept has gained space or articulated across the existing institutional mechanisms. In fact, ethical concern also has implications in order to deal with the comparative locations of anthropologists beyond the binaries of 'insider' versus 'outsider' discourse (emic and etic views). Taking cues from Arunachal as well as India's North East, finally, I should try to

*Prof.Vinay Kumar Srivastava Memorial Lecture delivered on December 17, 2022 in virtual mode, organized by Kolkata Society for Asian Studies

touch on the post-modern ethical concerns within the discipline of anthropology, which may have larger ramifications for other social sciences that have embraced fieldwork as an important methodological tool for analyzing emerging social realities.

The fundamental question remains: what do we mean by the concept of ethics? We know that a scholar of moral philosophy can raise a critical discourse on the notions of 'Ethics' and 'Morality' though sometimes the delineation of boundaries between the two may be difficult as they are used interchangeably. In other ways one can place morality on a higher philosophical ground than the idea of ethics and vis-ë-vis. For instance, the philosopher Bernard Williams (2006) proposes that ethics is in any way of answering the question 'How ought one to live?' while morality is a certain kind of answer to that question, namely one involving moral obligations, such as, rules, rights, duties, commands etc. David Pocock (1988) has suggested that ethics and morality are increasingly pulling apart, and that ethics has moved to fill a moral vacuum whereas Caplan raises very pertinent questions (2003),

"Is there then a sense in which we can see morality as more fundamental than ethics? Can morality have claims to truth and universal applicability while ethics is culturally and historically viable? If so, what are those claims of morality and to what extent do ethics change and why?" Such multiple questions can inundate our fundamental premise of social science research.

Ethical concerns in anthropology (specially in social anthropology) is largely relates to the fieldwork tradition as we were taught in college and university days which means that in our course curriculum, it was primarily linked with the methodological domain or learning methodological craft in social anthropology rather than production of knowledge base, framing researchable issues, universe of our study or even modalities of producing anthropological text or 'Ethnography' as an end product. Though, there can't be any denial of the fact that the ethical concerns are actually intertwined with every stages of our disciplinary journey starting from the selecting researchable issues, fixing the universe of study and subsequently prioritizing each and every stage of our methodological endeavors to the writing the end product of various ways or forms.

According to Srivasatava (2004), ''Ethical questions start surfacing as the research work begins. Should one inform the people about the true nature of one's study or should one resort to 'covert methods', or what has come to be known, after Douglas (1976) as 'investigative social research'? Is it possible to seek the 'informed consent' of people in all cases, even when they have no knowledge of social sciences or research activity, for example in a pre-literate community? Should one publish one's findings notwithstanding the furor it may cause among the 'subjects' of the study? Or, should one deliberately suppress those pieces of information and practices that people find embarrassing? Should one hide people's identity under a pseudonym or should one be truthful to everything – the name of the community, the name of the respondents, the exact transcriptions of their interviews? Several other questions of

this type can be raised in every study, although there cannot be a set of pre-formulated answers. Each researcher has to address these issues and questions afresh with every research, keeping in view the contextual specifics."

However, it is a well-known fact that in the context of the USA or UK these ethical questions became a serious concern in the post 1970s since when the allegation was surfaced in clear terms where anthropologists were used to serve the narrow interests of the invading army or the state agencies in different parts of the world. In fact, the 'charter' establishing the interest of anthropologists with ethics begins with a letter by Franz Boas, condemning the use of anthropology as a cover for spying, and starting that persons so using it forfeited their right to be classed as scientists and jeopardized the research activities of honest visiting investigators, for which opinions he was censured by the American Anthropological Association. This was reported by many anthropologists while discussing such historical truth linked with the discipline of Anthropology (Stocking 1968: 273-277; Lobban: 2013).

According to Ellen (1984:134), "The ethical problems facing social scientists have changed over time and probably become more difficult to solve as the contexts of social research have changed and as the balance of power has altered between social scientist, sponsor, gatekeeper, citizen and government. Another cause of these changing power relations is the continually altering social, economic, educational, administrative, legal and political contexts and constraints within which social research occurs; a second is the institutionalization and professionalization of social science research. A third contributory factor is the recognition that knowledge is not only a source of enlightenment but also of power and property and therefore, that it entails the power both to harm and to benefit those studied" (cf. Barnes 1979:22; Cassel 1982: 156-157).

In our Indian context, our National bodies/organizations, like Indian Anthropological Society, or INCAA or other similar national or state level organizations, like Anthropological Survey of India, Tribal Research Institute etc., located in different regions of our country, hardly took any initiative to formulate any literature or textual document(s) on these crucial aspects rather we remained much dependent on what diffused to our country from west through textual mode or through the anthropologists or sociologists who either came to work among the Indian communities or Indian scholars who gained anthropological orientation in West or Europe.

Conventional text books usually refer to our prescribed universities or college syllabus; generally, devote little space on the ethical issues in Anthropology. Rather rewarding knowledge and intricacies of ethical dimensions one can trace while critically reading books related to field experience (Sinha1978, Srinivas, Beteille and Madan) shared by eminent anthropologists/sociologists who worked largely on Indian rural or urban communities. However, within lasts few decades' good number of similar publications (Rasalie H Wax:1985, Kristen Hasturp and Peter Hervik:1994, VeredAmit 2000, Chaudhuri and Chaudhuri:2014

etc.) surfaced which overtly or covertly informed us on ethical concerns during fieldwork in various contexts. Some recent publications have gained much momentum while dealing with various critical issues by taking diverse fieldwork issues by Indian anthropologists (Biswas: 2014 & 2017). It may be mentioned here that recently University Grant Commission, New Delhi, has introduced a mandatory paper on 'Research Ethics and Publication' for all doctoral students as an integral part of their course work in all universities of India which reflects the recognition of the ethical issues in research at higher educational institutions.

During my seven years of tenure in Anthropological Survey of India, both in Kolkata and Shillong, where I had to work for various national projects, including much hyped project called People of India, never provided me any instructional materials or even orientation in relation to any ethical concern related to place, people, content of the project or even in the context of the methodological strategies which were adopted for various projects. However, in contrast to such a state of anthropological inaptness with which Indian anthropology has suffered to groom new generation of knowledge bearers, whereas the American or British Anthropological association developed meticulously distinct guidelines that have shown their concern over the ethical dimensions densely interlinked with the growing discipline. If one goes through the manuals or the text, then one can clearly identify the nature of their ethical concern and in fact, there are obvious common grounds, which such texts emanate and which have wider anthropological validity beyond the political boundaries of a particular nation-state.

However, these documents were published much before the discipline has faced new challenges with the publication of the book "Writing Culture" (1986) along with two other major successive books (Anthropology as Cultural Critique:1996 and The Predicament of Culture:1988), which have given a new twist to the concept of "ethnography" which remain as the lifeline of the social or cultural anthropological enterprise. In fact, these publications surfaced a new movement which popularly known as postmodernism(s) in anthropology, a movement that actually gained ground in the discipline of archaeology but gradually inundated almost all social sciences and even the various other disciplines of arts and humanities.

This new wave never remained uncritical as there are counter arguments about the plight of postmodern ethnographies or the kind of text postmodernism is supposed to indulge. What remains covertly or overtly important is its impact on the ethical consideration which perhaps may be considered as one of the major turns in terms of construction of anthropological end products or its growing epistemological praxis as it talks about a new orientation from our conventional ethnographic writings where the question of polyphony or multi-vocality hardly found any space. This shift in textualization of empirical facts may bring ethnography much closure to people or in other words may make it more people centric, as imagined by its protagonists but at the same time it also became a challenging task to

anthropologists, the practitioners of the discipline, to accommodate contested voices within the existing social strata which is inextricably linked with location of power as well as the notion of marginality within the multilayered social reality, which Clifford Geertz (1973) proposed to capture through his concept of "thick description". Postmodern ethical concern also relegates the notion of ethnographic authority and gives a new lease of life in researching a community/community beyond the established tradition of 'restudies in anthropology'. One of the most crucial issue is to understand or rethink the very concept of community or the ethnic group where we can locate more sharper ethnic divides based on the nature of transformative experience and understanding along with incorporation of wider ideas of social/culture change linked with not only the political economy but also with the political ecology of a nation-state.

Sometimes, the emergence of new coinage such as 'Elite Society' used by the tribal communities themselves and not imposed by the outsiders and the ongoing process of marginalization of some segments of tribal population, even among the various tribal states of Northeast India, raised multiple ethical concerns not only for the so called researchers came from other states but also for the insiders (native or indigenous anthropologists) who chose to work among their own community or state, taking multiple issues into their consideration which they think crucial from their own perspectives. Of course, there are a good number of literatures published within the last few decades which has led to rethink over the stereotyped authoritative notions of 'etic' and 'emic' (Narayana:1993) perspectives. Perhaps, this was inevitable with the shifting of locations within the subjects or objects of study in anthropology across the nation states where globalization and liberalizations emerged as passwords to understand and analyze every day's nuances of life across the ethnic divide. What is evident in the context of the North east and even for many other regions of our country, is the growing factionalism and rise of corresponding interest groups who try to carry forward their hidden agenda by appropriating the so-called notion of "community perspective". These became possible by their proximity to state craft or the existing power structure.

Based on contemporary field experience and available literature, I would rather like to ask whether anything really exists as a community's own or collective perspective which is homogeneous in nature? May be on the issues of finding the markers of group identity, whether expansive or episodic, a given community may like to project certain socio-cultural elements to retain or to consolidate community or clan identity which itself is a very complex process and this may go beyond the question of boundary maintenance process which Fredrik Barth (1998) proposed in his classic work titled 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'. In fact, location of power within the community, which may even change with the passage of time, may work as a deciding force to delineate how community need to be represented and, in the process, they may not bother about the historicity rather may like to superimpose new

realities and may prefer even to decline their cultural past for projection of a new identity. Now how an ethnographer or social scientists look at such overt or covert multilayered emerging realities from ethical standpoints?

To illustrate this point further here I like to fall back on the case study based on my own experience of dealing with an Apatani student of anthropology who decided to write a master's dissertation on Apatani social structure. Being an Apatani (insider) he has mentioned regarding the two-broad division in Apatani society about which not only Haimendorf also wrote (1962) in his seminal volume "The Apatani and Their Neighbours" but even some Apatani scholars (popularly call 'indigenous scholars') also mentioned long back in clear terms in their apparent ethnographic writings (Takhe Kani:1993). Our student wrote on the Apatani social structure where he mentioned about these two strata and added how these divisions were perceived by earlier writers and finally urged upon the need for further rethinking on those narratives from the contemporary perspectives where Apatanis are passing through the phase of transition. He was basically focusing on how with the passage of time such older notions became redundant and how community members started looking at such issues which has lost its functional implications as Apatanis in general became one of the progressive tribes of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. This piece of work was seen by a friend of that student who passed over that dissertation to some of the older members of the society. Then immediately he was summoned by those elder Apatani people belonging to one segment of older divisions and then subsequently they came to meet to the Head of our dept as well as university authority, and expressed their terrible agony for such information written in the form of text which they felt highly derogatory for the tribe and specifically from their perspectives. Most of them were state government officials holding responsible posts in various departments. In fact, they came with a typed document and tried to pursue the university authority to remove those pages from the dissertation so that no negative image of their segment or society as such is carried over to the readers of the dissertation and more importantly, they came with their version of the issue which negate such hierarchical divisions in the evolving social structure which they wanted to incorporate in the dissertation. Being the supervisor, I had to take part in the discourse and finally, after their repeated visits and representation, University authority decided to keep that dissertation in a sealed envelope so that the readers do not access it and in the process university authority also wanted to show mutual respect to the voices of the people.

Now what should be taken as the community's own perspective here, which needs to be respected or deserves ethical consideration? What a native anthropologist learn from the actions of some sections of his own community? As a non-native anthropologist what ethical stand do we need to take to deal with such crucial issues which have a meaning in the changing circumstances? Or should such issues be left out of our contemporary ethical discourse? How do we like to assess the stand, which university authority had taken? Should we move

towards academic activism or promote the idea of social engineering to bridge the gap that emerged out of rigid social norms and values located within the social system itself? These are some of the fundamental questions on which we need to ponder over.

I would like to provide another example, which is related to the issues of ethical discourse along with an anthropologist's relative position in a state where he or she is located. At the end of the year 2011, Arunachal Pradesh had experienced an unprecedented ethnic tension since the achievement of statehood as a result of huge political instability in the state, which didn't gain much required attention of the so-called mainstream media of India. This has resulted in huge loss of property, clashes between ethnic groups in the capital complex leading to virtual collapse of the state craft. As an anthropologist having some understanding over the issues which has its roots in the evolving of inter-ethnic relations of the state, I had to remain silent as we learned from the past experience that even today any publication on such violent acts, which may place some groups or civil societies or even certain individuals etc., to an uncomfortable situation, may have a counter effect on the individual analyst, who may be a social scientists or journalists or any other conscious citizen of India.

Through our silence are we really taking any ethical stand by not hurting the sentiment of a community, civil society or any factions? Are we making our discipline irrelevant in addressing the emergent issues which also need urgent attention? Alternatively, should we maintain a silence and wait for the time when things will lead to a point of saturation with the interventions of state or other agencies and then only, we will formulate a project and look for funding agencies and finally after a few years we will come out with grand narratives as a product of our research project(s). Or should we accept equivocally that such issues need to be dealt with by the journalists and in the process we, the anthropologists will enter into a deep academic slumber in the pretext of maintaining a comfortable ethical norm. We can even take the ongoing crisis in the state of Manipur leading to the worst form of ethnic conflicts in the history of the state or North East region. Unfortunately, we didn't hear any meaningful voices of the anthropologists irrespective of their ethnic affiliation on such a grave crisis which still continues to bleed this bordering state and became a huge concern for our nation-state and even beyond.

Another context which anthropologist in other parts of the world, have started addressing effectively is the plight of the anthropologists working in the conflict zones, may be war or battle affected areas or within the states which are infested with extremist groups and factions, or states where violation of human rights are the essence of every day's existence of common people.

Jeffrey A. Sluka(1996) rightly observes that, 'about one third of the world countries are currently involved in warfare and two third of the countries routinely resort to human rights abuses as normal aspects of their political process to control their population, it is clear that few anthropologists will be able to avoid conflicting situations and instances of socio-political

violence in the course of their professional lives' (Sluka 1996: 276 c.f. Das 2014). Das (ibid) also added, "Therefore, doing fieldwork in politically disturbed fields means negotiating and surviving from dangers that often come without warning. The Anthropological ethics committee in the U.K. as elsewhere is unenthusiastic on setting practical guidelines that could defend the interest of anthropologists doing fieldwork. The conventional ethical requirements in anthropology do not speak of the researcher's safety, security and well-being in violent environments. Anthropologists well-being are often taken for granted as 'common sense knowledge' in violent field site".

Primarily, being social analyst, perhaps anthropologists cannot escape such conflict zones with which even our nation–state is trying to negotiate. Beyond the red corridor, and other disturbed bordering state, India's North east region is also known for such violent conflicts which created an elusive imagery of the region which has otherwise contained so much diversity in terms of biological, physical and human resources.

Concluding remarks

Many anthropologists from the region and beyond are dealing with various issues related to ongoing ethnicity or ethnic movements or other issues related to development, change or transformation etc. Unfortunately, most of them are actually left to their own plight or the predicament they face in risking their lives in the absence of any ethical guidelines to negotiate their academic pursuits in the context of huge disbelief prevailed between the states and armed extremist groups or other agencies. Working in such a precarious field largely depends on the individual's own ability to negotiate with the crisis situation and gaining confidence of both the contending parties and sometimes on their good fortune.

Here, I am in agreement with Das who has done commendable work on the Nagas for his doctoral research from SOAS, U.K., who wrote, (2014), "the possibility of surviving such fieldwork is determined by factors that are beyond human control and comprehension. But we can always take steps that do not stop at the 'common sensual' 'rhetoric', nonetheless, transcend the idiosyncratic standpoints of anthropological research determined solely by professional ethics. I will argue that 'professionalism' should match 'humanism' and our study among the 'poor, marginalized and powerless' contribute to their empowerment". Das further added, "It would be dangerous and utter falsehood to think that there are definite answers to any of these ethical questions". As a practitioner of Social Science, irrespective of our disciplinary boundaries, we need to think and rethink about them in both practical and theoretical terms. Let me quote Caplan (2003:27) from his valuable book to conclude the paper, "In looking at the debates on ethics and anthropology over the last four decades, the issues that recur continually are concerns about, on the one hand, the relations between anthropologists and the subjects of their study and, on the other, the responsibilities of anthropologists towards informants and others. Yet these are never purely internal matters:

debates around them are products of the wider contexts – both historical and geographical – in which anthropology is practised".

Sometimes, there may be a need for academic activism in order to surpass various barriers to resolve such ethical dilemmas in Anthropology or in a larger domain of social science research for the benefit of communities who constitute the universe of our academic journey.

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An Archeological Study of Pot Sherds Found From the Site Garh Panchakot in Purulia District of West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Garh Panchakot is a historical site situated in the foothills of the Panchet hill in the Purulia district of West Bengal, India. It is a famous tourist spot which preserves the remnants of ancient temple complex and fort. During the visit to Garh Panchakot, present authors noticed huge number of pot sherds scattered in nearby jungle areas. These pot sherds bear the ancient features. Present study focuses on this ceramic assemblage found in and around the site. The study is done through systematic study and analysis of the potsherd that are found in the area. Focus has been given on morphological, technological and functional attributes. As an archeological reminiscence, present study may help to shed light on the past activities centering round the temples and some hidden facts of past history of Gar Panchkot.

Keywords: *Archeology, pot sherds, assemblage, activities, history, Garh Panchkot*.

Introduction

For the present study, the site Garh Panchkot is selected. The site bears the remnants of temples and fort. During the visit to Garh Panchkot, a number of pot sherds were noticed towards the northern part on the slopes of Panchet hill. The site is mainly covered by jungle. As there was no earlier works on pot sherds found at the site, the present study is taken up by the authors.

Before going into discussion of pottery and its attributes, it is important to highlight the history of the area. Limited archeological explorations in systematic manner were carried out in Purulia. Earlier the district was known as Manbhum. The area is an important part in Western part of West Bengal (Rarh) from archaeological point of view. Dalton, Beglar and Cunnigham made an extensive study of the archeological heritage and history of the district (Ray 1961). As a part of Chotanagpur plateau, the area also yielded Paleolithic tools belonging to Middle Pleistocene period. Evidences of Neolithic culture also were found, which developed into pre-iron Chalcolithic culture in the area.

Purulia or Ancient Manbhum was known as *Vajra-bhumi* and according to Jain literature it was one of the 16 Mahajanapadas of eastern India. A number of Jain images which were found in different parts of the district and its adjacent areas dated to 10th and 12th Century A.D. Sculpture of Jain images also had been found from different archeological sites along

the river Kasai. The area was under the Pala and Sena dynasty earlier. Purulia came under the jurisdiction of British in 1765, Panchet Sadar in 1779, Jangal (24 Parganas) in 1805, Manbhum in 1833 and Purulia Sadar in 1838.

Earlier Panchkot or Panchet was the head-quarters subdivision of Manbhum district situated in $23^{0}37^{/}$ North and $86^{0}47^{/}$ East at the junction of the Barakar and Damodar rivers which formed a rounded ridge from North to South. The area is situated at the height of 1600 feet above the sea level. At the foothills toward the southern end there is remnant of an ancient fort. Four sets of earthen ramparts of more than five miles was artificially built and defended by deep and wide moats which were connected with the stream nearby. There were a number of gates on the rampart. Only five of which are found at present. These ramparts served two purposes; served as defensive mechanism of the fort and also as water reservoir for irrigation. A temple complex is noticed a little way off the fort.

There is controversy regarding the time period of building of the structure and of the owners of the fort. The inscriptions in Bengali script, found on the gates of Duarbandh and Khoriberi, refer to Sri Vira Hamira at a time of about 1600 A.D. There was no supportive document supporting whether the fort was built by Vira Hamira and subsequently was captured by Panchet Raja or was built by the Panchet Raja for their own protection from Vira Hamira and perhaps against the Muslim nobles. The reason for abandonment of the fort is also not clear. According to the story of Raghunath (1705-1720), a mysterious sickness affected the family. It may also been built in order to avoid the notice of the Muslim Governor or due to pressure from Chitra Sen Rai of Burdwan (Ray, 1961).

Objective

Present paper is an effort to shed some light on the unknown facets regarding the ownership, transfer of power and reason of abandonment of fort. The analysis of pot sherds found in and around the area is one of the effective tools to understand some important aspects of ownership of the fort and further concurrence or invasion by other powers. Main objective of the present study is to analyze the ceramic assemblage of the site Garh Panchkot in order to unearth some facts about the history of the area.

Literature review

The literature review for the present study is broadly divided into two categories. The first part is on the history of Garh Panchkot to understand the context of the pottery. The second part focuses on the understanding of the ceramic and its study in Indian context.

The study of ceramic is further divided into two sub-categories. The first category of the study focuses on understanding of the archaeologically excavated pot sherds. The main attributes taken for the study are stylistics variation, shape and probable use. Purpose also is to establish trade route in case of exotic variety of excavated sherds. Gupta (1988) focused on all the primary factors which helped in increasing the progress of Pottery industries in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India; such as growth, infrastructure of industries, employment, process

and trends, working conditions and all the other related factors (Meadow,1991). A number of study on Harrapan Pottery and its various attributes were done by Richard (1991), Dani and Masson (1992), Satyawadi (1994), Dani and Thapar (1996), Possehl (2002), Pruthi (2004), Chakrabarti (2006), McIntosh (2008) and Schug and Walimbe (2016).These studies not only provide the necessary details of Harrapan Pottery but also its stylistics variation, shape, probable use and also tried to understand trade route of the potteries. Apart from the above literature there are a number reports of excavation which came out in the publications of in Archaeological Survey of India and contain various descriptions of ceramics.

The second category of the studies included the ethnoarchaeological study of pottery and the potters. Ceramics are the most widely studied aspect of Ethnoarchaeology. Notable works were done by Allchin (1959, 1995), Ansari (1964), Biswas (1966), Bose (1982), Das (1961), Das and Ray (1966), Das Gupta and Syamchaudhuri (1966), Gupta (1966), Hashim (1989), Kramer (1990), Nagar (1969), Reddy (1981), Ray et. al (1982), Roux (1985-1986), Sinopoli (1988), Sinopoli and Blurton (1986), Mishra (2006), Nguille (2006), Prakash (2006), and Singh and Devi (2017). Various aspects of ceramics, such as forms (Manibabu, 2005; Miller 1982, 1985); distribution systems (Kramer 1991; Allchin 1995); kin and social relations among the potter communities (Kramer 1991; Ray and Das 1991) were also taken into account. Settar and Korisettar in the book "Archaeology and Interactive Disciplines" (2002) wrote that many ethno-archaeologists focus on ceramic archaeology, which brings technology of pot making into limelight and showcases the potter communities which revealed their lifestyle, social organizations, craft and social institution.

Methodology

The pot sherds were concentrated in some clusters. These were exposed due to erosion of the upper soil. The soil is blackish and sandy in nature. Various clusters have been studied. As the site is a heritage site of West Bengal, no digging was undertaken. Focus was given on surface finds and those which were exposed due to erosion of surface soil. Pot sherds distributed on the site are analyzed on the basis of attributes like colour, shape, firing and texture. Technology is also an important aspect of pottery. Frequency analysis of pot sherds is done. Ethno-archaeological studies have also been conducted to examine the origin of pots sherds and their similarities and differences with contemporary pot sherds.

Area and the site (figure 1 and Figure 2)

Purulia owes its name from a village which became the headquarters of the erstwhile Manbhum district in 1838. It is the westernmost district of West Bengal. The physiographic location of the district is distinguished as a transitional zone between the young alluvial plains of West Bengal and ancient plateau of South-east Bihar.

The Pleistocene and Holocene formation of the district was found in the form of older alluvium and new alluvium. The district is covered by residual soil formed by the weathering of bed rock. Gneissic soil is predominant which is subject to laterization. The color of the soil varies from light red to brown depending on the mineral content.

The site is located in Panchet under the jurisdiction of Nituria Police Station. It is about 55 km. from the Purulia town. It was an ancient kingdom situated at the foothills of Panchet hills at the Jharkhand-West Bengal Border. The River Damodar flows on the North to the North-East direction. Panchet reservoir is also found on the North to North-West direction. The river and water system act as a natural barrier for protection from enemies. The Panchet hill is green and forested. The plateau area of the hill in which the ancient kingdom was situated is on fertile alluvium land. The jungle area is full of *Sal*, *Mahua*, *Palash*, *Simul* trees. Different types of shrubs are also found. Tribal groups are also living in the area.

An ancient terracotta temple, marvelously crafted in "*Pancharatna*" (five pinnacles) style of architecture, is present at the foothills of the Panchet hills in the Purulia district of West Bengal. The walls of the temple are also decorated with various terracotta works. At present, it is being restored by the Archeological Survey of India. Around the main temple there are seven other structures. Among these, there is a structure which is similar to the ruins of platform for festivals, locally known as '*rash mancha*'. There are other ruins also. These are, remnant of another temple, built in *Jor-Bangla* style of architecture; ruin of an ancient gate which is ornated with beautiful works on the wall; and a wall with pillars and arches that can be compared with the ruins of a palace. Adjacent to this palace there is a two storied '*Shikhara*' styled architecture, which can be compared to an ancient watchtower. Along the Panchet hill slopes there is evidence of a stone building which is about 600 meters above the main temple which can be assumed to be a guard quarter or garrison. This is locally known as 'Garh' which means 'Fort' and probably the name Garh Panchkot for the place, came from it.

Around 850 AD this was the seat of powerful kingdom of Shikhara kings of Panchet, who reigned for more than 800 years, in and around the region of Panchet hill and in areas adjacent to the Basin of Damodar River. Presently 'Telkupi' village on the southern bank of river Damodar, is considered as the past capital of the Shikara kindom, known as '*Tailakampa*' and is situated about fifteen kilometers away from Garh Panchkot. It is very unfortunate that after the construction of Panchet dam many such marvelous construction of this great kingdom went under water of the Panchet reservoir, which include beautiful stone and brick temples built in between 800AD and 1200AD. The Panchet Raja was still not much known to the historians who independently ruled a greater part of Purulia but eventually lost their kingdom with the annexure by the British during the late 18th Century A.D. (Biswas 2012).

The ceramics are present in abundance in and around this temple complex. These ceramics are thus very important in understanding some aspects of this kingdom.

Result and discussion

Pot is artificially carved out of clay, which serves human purposes. From pre-historic times the pots are manufactured. Various methods are applied for pot making, from simple hollowing out from a bigger chunk of mud to the complex wheel made glazed ceramic wares (Childe 1934). The craft specialization, hierarchy in society, innovative method like stylistic and color variation that helps to increase the sale is indeed the reasons which induced variety

in pottery. To understand the archaeological behavior, ceramic or pottery plays a vital role. After stone, the pottery is considered as second most important and viable source of information which is less degradable than most of the artifacts used by human beings. Pottery is datable, identifiable and classifiable artifact. It is one of the major elements for studying the daily life of past communities (Settar and Korisettar 2002).

For the purpose of the analysis of the pottery, a total of one hundred sherds are taken into the consideration. The analysis of these potsherds is done on the basis of attributes like colour, texture, firing and decoration.

Colour

At first potsherds were classified on the basis of colour. These are Red Ware, Brown Ware, Black Ware, Black and Red Ware and Grey ware. Within the sample of 100 potsherds, the distribution of each type one basis of colour is identified (Table No 1). Red ware is maximum in number in the assemblage (60 %). Brown ware is of moderate frequency i.e. 28%. Black Ware (6 %), Black and Red Ware (4 %) and grey ware (2 %) are of minimum frequency.

Part of Pottery

Pottery has mainly three parts; rim sherd, body sherd and base sherd. The assemblage of potsherd of Panchkot shows the higher frequency of rim sherds (70 %) and rest (30 %) is body sherd (Table 2). No base sherd was found. In case of red ware and brown ware, rim sherds are more than body sherds. Black and red ware shows the equal frequency of rim sherds and body sherds. Whereas, number of rim sherds is twice than body sherd in black ware. In grey ware only two rim sherds were found.

Technique

The frequency of handmade pottery (66%) is more than wheel made pottery (34%). In case of red ware, handmade pottery (50%) is more than wheel made types (10%). Whereas in brown ware wheel made pottery (18%) is more than handmade pottery (10%). In black and red ware and grey ware, all the potsherds are handmade, whereas in black ware all the pot sherds show that they were wheel made (Table 3).

Fabric

The analysis of the potsherds on the basis of fabric is done by following Orton et.al (2013) and Hunt (2017). Generally, the fabric is of three types Coarse, medium and fine. These are classified on the basis of different types of particles that are mixed with the clay as tempering materials. Pot sherds with fine fabric are made from well levigated clay mixed with fine sand. Medium fabric potteries are made from mixed type of clay tempering with grits and sands. Coarse pottery is made from rough clay which is not properly cleaned and kneaded.

Distribution of different types of fabrics varies in different pottery types. This is represented in Table No 4. In case of red ware medium fabric is of the highest frequency

(70%) and fine fabric is of the lowest frequency (13.33%). In case of brown ware, coarse and fine fabric is of equal frequency (35.71 %) and medium fabric is of minimum frequency (28.57%). In black and red ware all the pot sherds are of medium frequency. In grey ware and black ware all the pot sherds are of fine fabric.

Firing

Firing is an important attribute of pottery. Color of the core area, along the thickness, helps to identify the types of firing done. The color of the core of poorly fired pottery varies from white, grey to black. Well fired pottery has tint of dark orange to red in core part. A well oxidized kiln generally produces red core while the reduced firing may produce a white to grey core and black core. The red ware can easily be identified on the basis of color of the core.

Maximum number of ill-fired pottery is distributed in Red ware (70%) and black ware (66.67%). Among brown ware, 50% are medium fired pottery and 50% are ill fired pottery. Well fired pottery is found in red ware (10 %) and black ware (33.33 %). All the grey wares are well fired (Table 5). Greater control of firing produces higher temperatures and produces more durable pottery (Shepard 1956).

Shape

Shape of the pottery is important to understand the function. Shapes of the pottery are reconstructed with the help of rim sherds (Figure 4).. Bowls are more common compared to *handi (rice cooking pot)*. Bowls are either flared externally or are without flare at the rim.. The *handis* are also with and without externally flared rim. Vase shaped bowl are also found. External flared plate in grey ware is also evidenced. Few designs have been noticed on the neck portion of the pot sherds. These are externally engraved and incised.

Ethno-archaeological study of contemporary pottery

For further clarification an ethno-archaeological study is conducted in the surrounding area to highlight whether these potsherds were discarded by local inhabitants or not. People living in the surrounding area belong to Santhal community, who are totally unaware about those pot sherds which were found in the surrounding areas of Garh Panchkot. These prove that those were not connected with tribal communities of the region.

Some morphological similarities and differences are found in the pot sherds, both in the context of past as well as in the present. Pot sherds found in the archaeological context have minimum similarities with the present ones. At present the communities of the area mostly use Red wares. Varieties of pot sherds found in the temple area include Red ware, Black and Red ware, Brown ware and Grey ware. Except for red ware other coloured types are not continuing at present. The varieties of pot sherds imply diverse use of pottery in the past. Perhaps all of those potsherds were not of local origin and were imported from other areas.

It may also be presumed that the finer textured wares were used by the elites of the societies, where as the medium fabric ones were used by common people.

At present cooking vessels are more in use. When the functional aspects are considered, these are of the medium textured, which has capability of retaining of heat. The potteries used in the past are of medium to fine texture. There are huge number of pitchers, bowls, dishes and vases, which indicate vast use of these compared to cooking and household utensils.

The designs at the neck portion of the pot sherds also indicate that these were not used for cooking. Among present day potteries decorations are almost absent except for a few incised lines. Decorated pot sherds perhaps were used for the ritual purpose or it may be for the aesthetic purposes as well.

In consideration of technological aspects, handmade pottery are greater in frequency in the past, though both handmade and wheel made potteries were found. It is also interesting that contemporary people use cord impressed pottery which is absent in archaeological context of pots in the area.

Conclusion

Analysis shows that red ware is the most common type followed by brown ware. Black and Red ware and grey ware are of minimum frequency. Red wares are mostly handmade. Black wares are also handmade. Black ware and grey ware are of fine texture, whereas, red ware and brown ware are coarse in nature. Maximum number of pottery is ill fired. Medium fired pottery is found among red ware, brown ware and black and red ware. However, all the grey wares are well fired. Pottery found in the site Garh Panchkot resembles the pottery types of Rarh Bengal. No uncommon types or exotic pottery has been observed. This assemblage of pottery perhaps may reveal some aspects of past history and shed light on the controversy regarding the building of the fort by Vira Hamira and subsequently captured by Panchet Raja or built by the Panchet Raja for their own protection from Vira Hamira and perhaps against the Muslim invaders. It is plausible that the fort was built by the local Rajas from the agricultural background as no sophisticated pottery types that are made from exotic clay like porcelain are found. The pot sherds which were associated with the people once living the area for hundreds of years may be interpreted as the marker of their culture beside the historical evidences. The discussion opens up new studies like the origin and dispersal of pottery, their relation with human behavior and past activities to reconstruct the past history of the area. The ethnic identity related with the pot sherds may also be able to be interpreted. Different issues like the origin, development, related human behavior and nature of discard of pottery through time may open new areas of further research in the area.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Frequency distribution of potsherds on the basis of colour

Pottery types	**No (%)**
Red Ware	60 (60.00)
Brown Ware	28 (28.00)
Black and Red Ware	4 (4 .00)
Grey Ware	2 (2 .00)
Black Ware	6 (6.00)
Total	**100 (100.00)**

Table 2: Frequency distribution of potsherds on the basis of parts

Pottery Types	Body Sherds No (%)	Rim Sherds No (%)	Total No (%)
Red Ware	18(30.00)	42(70.00)	60(100.00)
Brown Ware	8(28.57)	20(71.43)	28(100.00)
Black & Red Ware	2(50.00)	2(50.00)	4(100.00)
Grey Ware	0(0.00)	2(100.00)	2(100.00)
Black Ware	2(33.33)	4(66.67)	6(100.00)

Table 3: Frequency distribution of potsherds on the basis of technique of manufacturing

Pottery Types	Wheel made No (%)	Hand made No (%)	Total No (%)
Red Ware	10(16.67)	50(83.33)	60(100.00)
Brown Ware	18(64.29)	10(35.71)	28(100.00)
Black & Red Ware	0(0.00)	4(100.00)	4(100.00)
Grey Ware	0(0.00)	2(100.00)	2(100.00)
Black Ware	6(100.00)	0(0.00)	6(100.00)

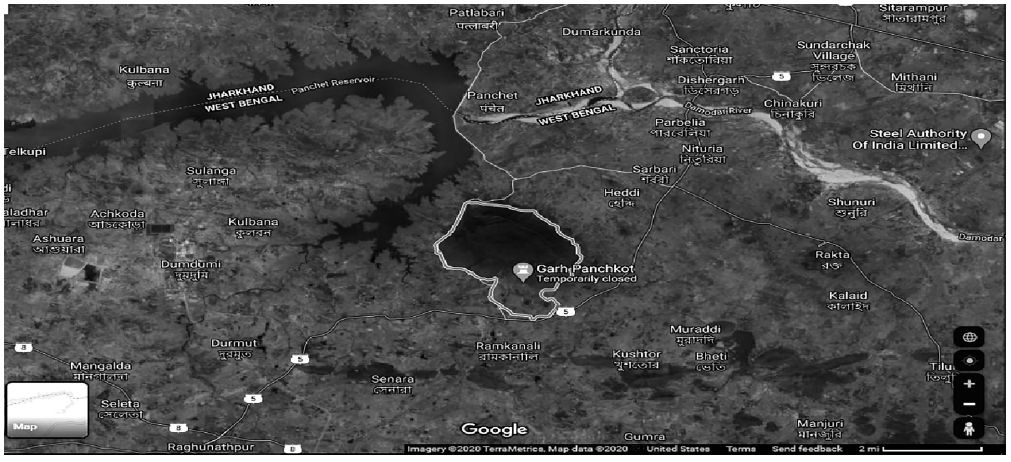
Table 4: Frequency distribution of potsherds on the basis of fabric

Pottery Types	Coarse No (%)	Medium No (%)	Fine No (%)	Total No (%)
Red Ware	10(16.67)	42(70.00)	8(13.33)	60(100.00)
Brown Ware	10(35.71)	8(28.57)	10(35.71)	28(100.00)
Black & Red Ware	0(0.00)	4(100.00)	0(0.00)	4(100.00)
Grey Ware	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	2(100.00)	2(100.00)
Black Ware	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	6(100.00)	6(100.00)

Table 5: Frequency distribution of potsherds on the basis of firing

Pottery Types	Well fired No (%)	Medium fired No (%)	Ill fired No (%)	Total
Red Ware	6(10.00)	12(20.00)	42(70.00)	60(100.00)
Brown Ware	0(0.00)	14(50.00)	14(50.00)	28(100.00)
Black & Red Ware	0(0.00)	4(100.00)	0(0.00)	4(100.00)
Grey Ware	2(100.00)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)	2(100.00)
Black Ware	2(33.33)	0(0.00)	4(66.67)	6(100.00)

Figure 1: Location of Garh Panchkot in satellite map



(Source: http://www.maplandia.com/india/west-bengal/puruliya/garh-panchkot)

Figure 2: A view of the site Garh Panchkot



[* Object too big for pasting as inline graphic. In-line.JPG *]



Figure 3: Potsherds found from the site

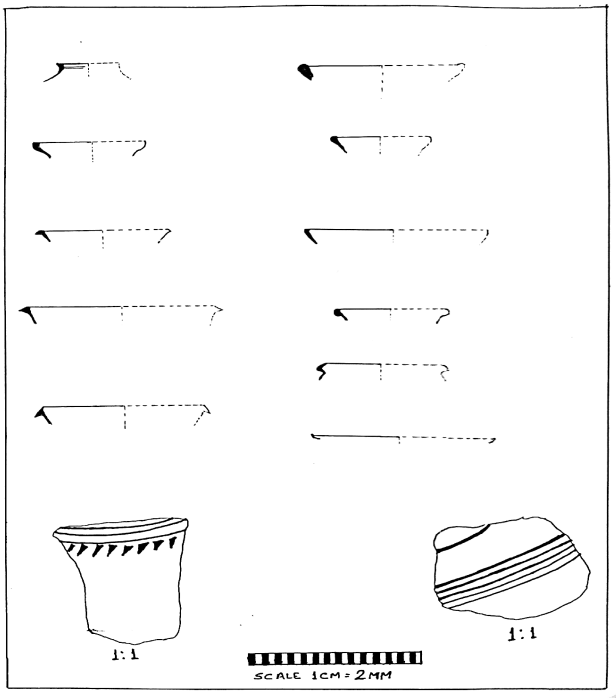


Figure 4: Shapes reconstructed from pot sherds

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Awareness of Legal Rights and Its Practices among Prospective Women Teachers

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Abstract

This study looked at the legal rights and practices of prospective women teachers. The primary purpose of this examination is to identify women prospective educators who are conversant with legal rights and practices. This study's sample included 300 prospective women teachers. In this circumstance, the descriptive method was applied. They were chosen using simple random sampling. According to the review findings, teacher educators' awareness of legal rights and practices varied greatly depending on the college type, location of college, marital status, and parents' education.

Keywords: *Awareness, Fundamental Rights, Legal Rights and Women prospective Teachers.*

Introduction

Each country's citizens have certain legal rights and obligations. The Rights of the Citizens, as well as the related legal framework and processes, should be known to them. (Narayana, 2016:629). The Indian Constitution grants women the same freedom as males and authorises the State to take steps to increase people's propensity for productivity in order to counteract the growing economic, educational, and political disadvantages that these groups face. Fundamental Rights give equality of freedom to all inhabitants in matters relating to labour, reject oppression of any resident, and adjust fairness under the constant examination of the law and equal security of the law. The Constitution's Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), and 39(c) and 42 are of express relevance. (Das and Saibabu, 2014). The challenges the women have faced are innumerable. They may be sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, divorce, and other forms of violence. Therefore, women must have legal rights (Subasini, N., Sasikumar N, Kalaiyarasan G, Ramnath R. and Mahendra Prabhu M, 2021:1418). Compared to women in many other nations in the world, women in independent India have more rights. However, a large percentage of women are especially ignorant about these benefits. Country women with limited education lack moral awareness. The Indian constitution makes an effort to treat women with equality, liberalism, and dignity (Sushma R, Satnarain J, 2018). Gaining legal understanding might be crucial for achieving gender equality in all aspects of social and political life. The legal awareness programme, as its name suggests, aims to help citizens of a nation comprehend the laws, Acts, Rights, and statutory provisions that are provided

for their safety, prosperity, and equal access to opportunity. This promotes a just society where everyone is treated equally by the law, leading to world peace and prosperity for all (Kumar, R. 2018:649). For instance, Article (21A) of the Constitution guarantees children between the ages of six and fourteen, the right to free and compulsory education.

Literature Review

According to Rajwinder Singh, Jaspal Singh, Showkeen Bilal Ahmad Gul, (2014), when it comes to knowledge of and usage of legal rights, working women and non-working women differ significantly. Plans for achieving the aforementioned objectives regarding the Fundamental Rights safeguarded by Parts III and IV of the Constitution have been included in the study's conclusions, which were published (Das S, Saibabu, N. 2014). According to research of Yunus and Varma (2015) different legal provisions for women's wellbeing are strengthening under the Indian Constitution. A sizable section of the public is uninformed of their legal rights A majority of working and unemployed women expressed good attitudes regarding the constitution and legal rights, according to survey of Das (2015). According to study of Ramaiah K, Nagamani K, Latchaiah P and Kishore M (2015), women are perceived as being strengthened by their access to education, employment opportunities, and changes in gender-neutral design. The bulk of the women in the study by Shabhunath (2016), is illiterate, uninformed, and destitute, and is therefore unaware of their legal status and rights. According to Sohal Rahi P, Bhatia R. and Sharma S. (2020) our country's legal system has done its utmost to transform how women live their lives, enabling them to do so with dignity and without being treated as property. According to (Divya M, 2017), The study by Dyvya, M. (2015) would provide advanced understanding on the subject of women's rights and privileges in India. Women educators' awareness of their legal rights in relation to the significance of their subject and locale, differs significantly (Manjula Devi and Ranjithamani, 2017). Finding of the study of Roy C. A. (2002) shows that legal knowledge in such situation becomes all the more crucial and the need for spreading it undisputable. Women's legal rights in the Indian Constitution are studied by Subasini N, Sasikumar N, Kalaiyarasan G, Ramnath R, and Mahendra Prabhu M (2021:1418). The primary goal of this article is to analyse legal rights based on Indian law and conventions.

Methods

Research Instruments

The current review endeavors to discover the awareness on legal rights and its practices among prospective women teachers. Since the issue is combined with "survey" type, they chose the descriptive survey strategy for directing the review using investigator. This review endeavours to bring out significant subtleties of lawful rights and its practices among women prospective teachers in B. Ed colleges. Descriptive survey method was found suitable for this review. In present study the prospective women teachers in karaikudi educational district

will be taken as population. The variable selected by the investigator to study legal rights and its practices among women perspective instructors, the researcher utilized questionnaires on the legal rights and legal practices. Reliability of the Legal rights scale was established by the investigator using Alpha Method. The reliability of the instrument to gauge lawful rights is observed to be 0.84 solid outcomes. Legal rights instrument comprises of upwards of 30 items. Every item has three reactions for example agrees, dislike the ideas, and disagree. The most extreme score for this scale is 90 and 30 is the base score. There is no time breaking point to finish the exploration device. However the majority of the imminent educators finished within 30 minutes. Reliability of the Legal practices scale was established by the investigator using Alpha Method. The reliability of the instrument to gauge lawful rights is observed to be 0.79 solid outcomes. Legal practices instrument comprises of upwards of 30 items. Every item has three reactions i.e. agree, dislike the ideas, disagree. The most extreme score for this scale is 90 and 30 is the base score. There is no time breaking point to finish the exploration device however the majority of the imminent educators finished inside 30 minutes.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The method involved with testing is one of the most crucial parts of the absolute philosophy of continued specific research study. It is a demonstration of deciding the number of components in a populace is to be tested and how they are to be chosen as test, remembering lack of time, cash and assets. The example for the current review comprised of 300 women who are imminent educators in Karaikudi, Sivaganga District, and Tamilnadu, India. The women planned as educators from both provincial and metropolitan regions were considered for the review. The investigator utilized random sampling technique for the current research.

Sample Distribution

The researcher selected five colleges located in and around karaikudi area for the study. They are listed in table 1. The distributions of the sample chosen for the current review are given in table 2.

Table 1

Sl. No.	Name of The College	Sample
1	Alagappa College of Education	60
2	Sri Raaja Raajan College of Education For Women	60
3	Tkac of Education For Women	60
4	Vivekananda College of Education	60
5	St Joseph College of Education	60
	Total	**300**

Showing the distribution of sample in college wise

Table 2

Showing the distribution of sample in variable wise

S. No	Type Of Sample	Sub Samples	Size of Sample
1	Nature of College	Women	121
		Co-Education	179
2	Type of College	Government	59
		Private	241
3	Location of student Teacher	Rural	205
		Urban	95
4	Location College	Rural	240
		Urban	60
5	Instruction of medium	Tamil	221
		English	79
6	Marital Status	Married	80
		Unmarried	220
7	Parental Education	Literate	197
		Illiterate	103

Procedure

The researcher chose prospective women educators in five colleges utilizing random sampling strategy. From every college, women, who planned to be instructors were chosen in a random manner. From Karaikudi gathered 300 samples from the prospective women teachers in B. Ed colleges. The reactions of the respondents are recorded. Points of interest of the individual ladies are gathered through survey. The investigation of information is utilized for collecting information.

Result And Discussion

Legal Rights from various Mediating Variables

For the first research with legal rights tool , prospective women teachers responded to the Likert scale from 1 to 3 for each item of the questionnaire that consisted of 30 items of legal rights developed from the bottom-up approach along with their mediating variables mean and standard deviation, which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

't' values of prospective women teachers with regard to legal rights among various Mediating variable.

S. no	Mediating Variables	Number of teachers (N)	Mean(M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	"t" test Value
1	Women	121	80.21	7.18	6.08*
	Co-education	179	84.79	5.78	
2	Government	59	84.44	4.45	
	Private	241	82.58	7.17	1.90
3	Rural	205	82.50	7.01	
	Urban	95	83.91	6.08	1.68
4	Rural	240	82.53	7.17	
	Urban	60	84.60	4.41	2.13*
5	Tamil	221	82.62	7.26	
	English	79	83.84	5.01	1.36
6	Married	80	84.08	7.02	
	Unmarried	220	82.53	6.62	1.75
7	Literate	197	83.33	6.57	
	Iliterate	103	82.20	7.07	1.37

(Note. * = p <0.05)

From the above table, it is seen that the first variables women college prospective women teachers' mean score (80.21) is found to be less than that the co-education college prospective women teachers mean score (84.79). The determined 't' test value 6.08 is more prominent than the basic worth 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

For the second variables, it is seen that in the Government college prospective women teachers mean score (84.44) is found to be greater than that in the private college prospective women teachers mean score (82.58).The determined 't' test value 1.90 is not exactly that the basic worth 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

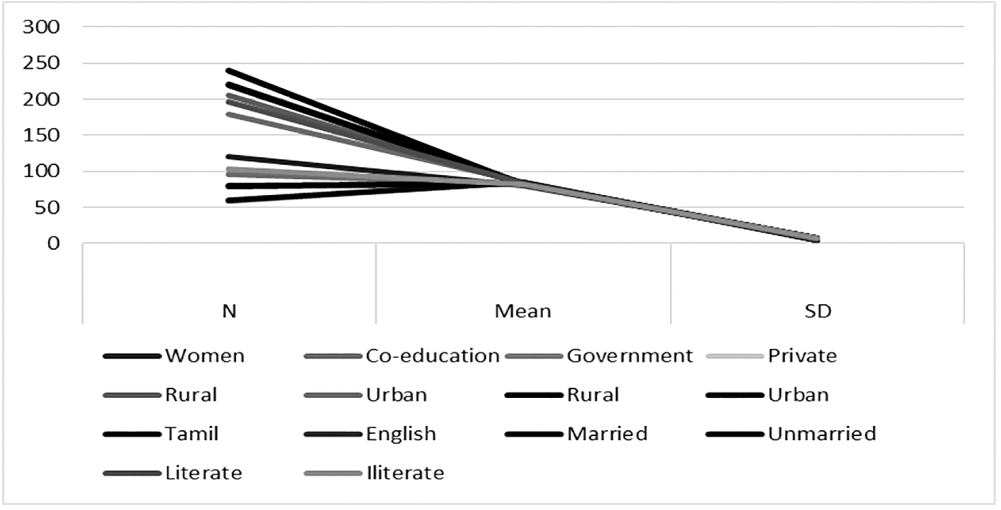
For the third variables, it is seen that the Rural college women prospective teachers mean score (82.50) is found to be less than that the Urban college women prospective teachers mean score (83.91).The determined 't' test value 1.68 is not exactly that the basic worth 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

The fourth variables, it is seen that the Rural location college of women prospective teachers mean score (82.53) is found to be less than that the Urban location college of women

prospective teachers mean score (84.60). The determined 't' test value 2.13 is more prominent that the basic worth 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

The fifth variable, it is seen that the Tamil medium college of women prospective teachers mean score (82.62) is found to be less than that the English medium college of women prospective teachers mean score (83.84). The determined 't' test value 1.36 is not exactly that the basic worth 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

Figure 1. Prospective women teachers with regard to legal rights from various Mediating variable



In the sixth variable, it is seen that the married women prospective teachers' mean score (84.08) is found to be greater than that the unmarried prospective women teachers mean score (83.84). The determined 't' test value 1.75 is not exactly that the basic worth 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

In the seventh variable, it is seen that the literate parents' education qualification of prospective women teachers mean score (83.33) is found to be greater than thaose of Illiterate parents education qualification, mean score (82.20). The determined 't' test value 1.37 is not exactly that of the basic value 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

Legal practices from various Mediating Variables

For the second research on legal practices, prospective women teachers responded to the Likert scale from 1 to 3 for each item of the questionnaire that consisted of 30 items of legal practices developed from the bottom-up approach along with their mediating variables mean and standard deviation, which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

't' values of prospective women teachers with regard to legal practices among various mediating variables

S. no	Mediating Variables	Number of teachers (N)	Mean(M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	"t" test Value
1	Women	121	69.33	10.73	6.0*
	Co-education	179	76.73	10.27	
2	Government	59	76.86	8.22	
	Private	241	72.98	11.53	2.43*
3	Rural	205	72.79	11.53	
	Urban	95	75.82	9.71	2.22*
4	Rural	240	72.94	11.53	
	Urban	60	76.97	8.27	2.54*
5	Tamil	221	73.06	11.58	
	English	79	75.66	9.24	1.79
6	Married	80	75.93	11.40	
	Unmarried	220	72.95	10.85	2.06*
7	Literate	197	75.34	10.58	
	Iliterate	103	70.71	11.36	3.50*

(Note. * = p <0.05)

From the above table, in first variable it is seen that the women college prospective women teachers mean score (69.33) is found to be less than that the co-education college prospective women teachers mean score (76.73). The determined 't' value 6.0 is more prominent that the basic value 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

In Second variable, it is seen that in the Government college prospective women teachers mean score (76.86) is found to be greater than that the private college women prospective teachers mean score (72.98). The determined 't' test value 2.43 is more prominent that the basic value 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

In third variables, it is seen that in the Rural college prospective women teachers mean score (72.79) is found to be less than that the Urban college women prospective teachers mean score (75.82). The determined 't' test value 2.22 is more prominent that the basic value 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

In fourth variables, it is seen that in the Rural location college prospective women teachers mean score (72.94) is found to be less than that the Urban location college of prospective

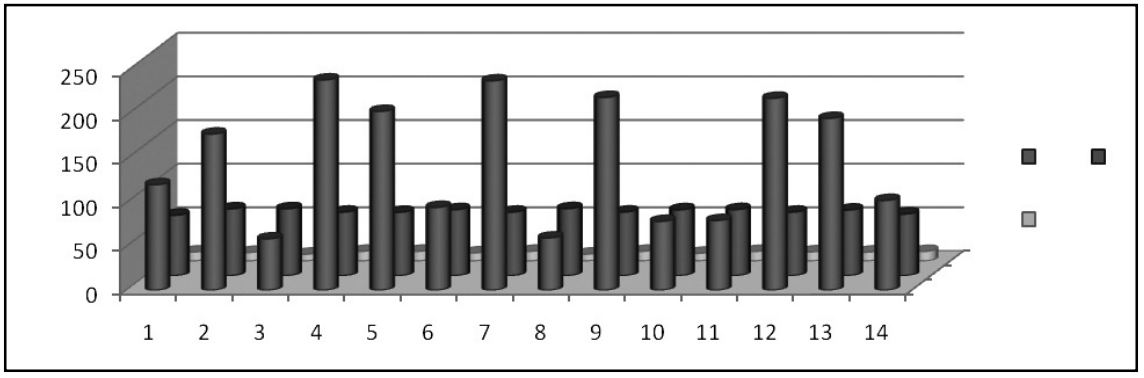
women teachers mean score (76.97). The determined 't' test value 2.54 is more prominent that the basic value 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

In fifth variables, it is seen that in the Tamil medium college prospective women teachers mean score (73.06) is found to be less than those in the English medium college prospective women teachers mean score (75.66). The determined 't' test value 1.79 is not exactly that of the basic value 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

In sixth variables, it is seen that the married women of prospective teachers mean score (75.93) is found to be greater than that the unmarried prospective women teachers mean score (72.95). The determined 't' test value 2.06 is more prominent that the basic value 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

In seventh variables, it is seen that the literate parents' education qualification of prospective women teachers mean score (75.34) is found to be greater than that of Illiterate parents' education qualification of prospective women teachers mean score (70.71). The determined 't' test value 3.50 is more prominent than the basic value 1.96 at 0.05 degree of critical.

Figure 2 Prospective Women teachers with regard to legal practices from various Mediating variables.



Educational Implications

- The students of the various institutions have got awareness on legal rights, which will reduce gender inequality
- The university and college students have come to know about legal rights and its practices which lead their family education and professional environment successfully.
- The knowledge of women on various rights will promote their social and economic status.
- The women who knows the rights will eliminate the violence against women physically, mentally and socially

- Women perspective teachers with legal rights awareness become self-dependent.
- Women perspective teachers will foster their dynamic force in friendly, political and monetary parts of the life.
- In general, the legal rights strengthens the women teachers way of living
- Awareness of the legal rights and its practices reduces the teacher's problems in political, economic, social and cultural aspects.

Thus, this study has many implications towards the upliftment of the women students in various aspects.

Conclusion

The Legal Rights and its Practices and the knowledge are improved among the prospective women teachers under various social settings. It is understood that awareness of the prospective women teachers on women rights are high level on various aspects, since women's interest towards education based on their Legal Rights Practices are low. The women students are equipped through the schemes and concessions by the government of state and central. If they are made conscious of legal rights at all the levels of Educational Institutions, there will be awareness among prospective women teachers about their Legal rights, which is not up to the mark. Hence, the study recommends the governments of state and central to concentrate on the awareness of the prospective women teachers on their various rights. They can vividly see better performance in their future activities on the Legal Rights Practices.

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Development Issues and Media Attention in Regional Press: An Evaluation of Eastern Himalaya Newspapers with a Special Focus on Coverage of Development Stories in Sikkim

Mahendra Prasad Gurung

Abstract

The role of the newspaper in introducing a democratic corner of discussion in societies whether developing or developed is well established. The ability of newspapers in pointing fingers at the lopsided developmental process as well as the uneven distribution of developmental resources is well recognized in a liberal society with democratic norms firmly in place. While the role of newspapers in societal development is firmly entrenched in the collective discourse, the discursive role of print media in development through information supply or cultivating appropriate attitudes towards development is yet to take a concrete shape in many developing societies. Therefore this work tried to explore the role of the press in the Eastern Himalayan region of India in situating development as a part of the societal narrative through an analysis of the contents of four major newspapers of the region with a primary focus on the coverage of development issues in Sikkim, the newest state of Indian Union and the eighth member of North Eastern Council. The study has adopted content analysis as a method and finds out that the newspapers of the region consider development as an also-run narrative, depend mostly on agencies or government sources for news collection, offer no editorial direction, and publish mostly event based stories with a pro-government orientation.

Keywords: *Issue salience, Editorial prominence, Sources of news, Slant in news stories, Orientation,*

This article is an outcome of an ongoing Ph.D. thesis on print media and development in Sikkim.

Introduction

There are multiple facets to the development of human society, as proponents of development have regarded many spheres to be improved for the overall development of society. The multi-faceted development also takes within its ambit the social, cultural, and political implications leading to a democratically governed multicultural society. While GDP or HDI are often considered the tangible aspects of development, the development and nurturing of a culturally diverse society without compromising its centuries-old ethos are difficult to measure. It can be felt in the tangible actions and the pattern of reaction of a given society.

Sikkim is a curious example of a society with multi-ethnic and religious pluralism that has retained and nurtured its Buddhist traditions while embracing Hinduism practiced by the majority of Nepali people. The amalgamation of religious values has helped to retain and allowed for the flourishing of a multicultural society that has no history of religious clashes or ethnic conflicts like many other states in the Northeast. The history of democracy in Sikkim is relatively new and its experience of democracy for four decades has been largely guided by its traditional ethnic communitarian and religious values and mostly lacks any history of violence.

This work explores the role of media in a developing society which has been largely restricted so far to understand if the measurable indices of development are flourishing or floundering. Development has been defined by different scholars in various different ways, however, the basic idea of development in a scientifically modern and developing society is to bring about a significant positive change in the life of an individual as well as the whole society. The development can be made in the areas of per capita income, education, health, skill development, and employment opportunities, to give them economic freedom, by building infrastructures such as transportation, irrigation, communication, etc., and making these facilities accessible to the poorest of its citizens. It has also been observed that several approaches can be adopted to improve measurable indicators of social changes like education or health services, especially in developing ones. Development, according to Rogers (1974) is "...a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capita incomes and levels of living...". The development can also be seen as "...the acquisition of new knowledge and skills..." (Moemeka, 1994). In the process of achieving developmental goals, the role of communication has been well established, from the earliest development scholars like Rogers, Schramm, and many others have argued enough about its efficacies. The role of adequate and effective communication has been hailed, which will eventually help in sharing required knowledge among people who need it the most (Schramm, 1964). The print medium has been considered a powerful medium mostly because of its durability where readers can refer to it anytime they want (Moemeka, 1994).

Related Literature: In their effort to understand the media's role in a developing society, Gugsa, et al (2016) examined media coverage of three different developing countries of the world applying content analysis as a research technique. Their work was premised on the "United Nations Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG 5)" which is directed toward improving maternal health. With the objective of examining the newspaper coverage of maternal health, the researchers "analyzed the leading national English-language newspapers from Bangladesh (The Daily Star), Rwanda (The New Times/The Sunday Times) and South Africa (Sunday Times/The Times)" and the selection of the newspapers were made on the basis of the highest circulated English newspaper and published both in print and on the internet. During the study period from "1 October 2010 to 31 March 2013 a total of 190 articles were collected." The 'constructed week' sampling technique was adopted for the selection of

samples and with the help of quantitative content analysis, the researchers quantified the articles based on "the number and nature of articles, purpose, and regional focus of the articles, length, and types of articles such as news vs. editorial."

The Daily Star with 61% of its news reports in the area of creating awareness in regard to maternal health published the highest. The other newspapers had a considerably low coverage of 39% suggesting similar awareness (p.7). On discussing MDG 5 in regard to maternal health, The Daily Star had 36% whereas only 9% of articles were found from Rwanda and no article from South Africa.

With the objective of ascertaining the "role of regional print media in publishing development news", Vani (2014) analyzed Eenadu, Deccan Chronicle, and Andhra Jyoti newspapers, and the data was collected between March to August 2013. Their work discussed the developmental news published in the three leading newspapers in major cities of Andhra Pradesh, India. Exposing the data to content analysis techniques, the study took news reports, editorials, and letters to the editor as units of analysis. A total of 52 stories qualified from all three newspapers during the study period of six months, wherein the data was collected randomly with three issues every month on the 4th, 14th, and 24th of each month for all the newspapers. Post analysis, it was understood that not much importance was given to development news by any of the newspapers under study. The result reflected that "very few editorials were published while not a single letter to the editor was found and the majority of the stories were published in the inside pages." The photographs were fewer on developmental news. English newspapers were better in terms of coverage of developmental news than the language press. Instead of giving importance to development news, the newspapers concentrated on subjects like politics, economics, sports, arts, etc. Hence, it can be summed up that "the newspapers failed in helping to shape public opinion on issues of development."

Moshrefzadeh, et. al. (2013) evaluated the coverage of the implementation of smoke-free bylaws in the city of Vancouver. The work attempted "to understand the potential influence of news media on public perception of the bylaw", by their frequency, approach, and the slant of their stories. Their qualitative analysis of the media content reflected the "the coverage of the local newspapers was low considering only 90 stories were found over the period of two years from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2011." However, the majority of stories related to bylaws were presented with a positive slant with 38.9%, 30% neutral, and 22.2% negative. The slant analysis in two different categories of news articles and letters showed that half of the news articles held a positive slant and only 7.4% were negative. All the letters to the editor were negative towards the bylaws but considering the very low numbers of letters against the more positive slant of news articles, the researchers concluded that the "readers were left with an overall generally supportive slant towards the smoke-free bylaw."

A.K. Singh (2011) looked into the trend of coverage of Government development programmes in a newspaper by analyzing the content through qualitative indicators. The 10

samples of the newspaper Hindustan (Hindi) from June and July 2010 were considered and randomly selected. The stories on subjects of Health, Education, Agriculture, Rural Development, Urban Development, and Environment have been considered developmental news. However, subjects like sports, business, and economics were excluded. After observing the contents, the researcher found that the newspaper had ignored the developmental news comprehensively, instead, the newspaper covered the topics like crime, accidents, forgery, strikes, and politics on most pages. Only during the time of controversies, the newspaper has given coverage to development stories.

Kayode and Adeniran, (2012) attempted to understand the media's role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals of Nigeria through the analysis of *The PUNCH,* and *The Guardian,* two national newspapers of Nigeria. The study period was from 1st January to 30th June 2008 wherein the contents of a total of 364 editions from two selected newspapers were analyzed for the study. The selected stories for the analysis were limited to stories on the MDGs only and all the other stories were excluded. They selected straight news, news analysis, features and opinions, and editorials published on the MDGs as units of analysis.

The study sought to answer the research question, "How do Nigerian newspapers acquire the information they publish on development issues?" They used 'source' as a variable "to examine whether reporters identify the source of the stories." The results showed that most of the news came from event coverages and happenings, which reflected the newspapers' reliance on events for the coverage. The investigative reports were lacking and no critical analysis of development reports was presented. The researchers summed up that "the Nigerian media failed to set an agenda for public discussion and failed to raise issues for both government and the public for a larger discussion of issues pertinent to the development of the country."

Shah (1990) examines, "the factors influencing the production of development news" with the help of three top newspapers published in New Delhi. All three sample newspapers were daily and they were; the Economic Times (English), The Hindustan Times (English), and Navbharat Times (Hindi). The samples were collected from the 1985 calendar year and randomly chosen days from each month were analyzed. Almost the entire published items in newspapers except for photographs, advertisements, weather forecasts, etc. were analyzed. The specific research question relevant to the current study addressed in his study were; "What are the characteristics of development news: the topics, actors, and setting most frequently covered, and sources most frequently used? What proportion of the total news content is development news?" Shah (1990). The results of the data showed that "from the 2,382 news stories, features, columns, editorials, and letters to the editor, there were only 378 (or about 16 percent) that fit the definition of development news" Shah (1990). On categorizing, "55% of the actors were from the established order (heads of state, legislators, members of the ruling party, ministers, ambassadors, members of the armed forces, police, and industry and corporate officials). Only three percent of the items covered actors belonging to political opposition groups" Shah (1990). The news sources too mostly were from the people in power.

The coverage of the news reports revealed that only 11% of the items covered major developmental works from rural areas.

Contextual Issues: It becomes pertinent to explore the potential of print media to contribute to development discourse and in particular the role of the regional press in the Eastern Himalayan region of India which primarily is constituted by the state of Sikkim and the two hill districts, Kalimpong and Darjeeling of the neighboring state of West Bengal. The region is populated by a majority of Nepali language-speaking people though the official language of Sikkim is English as it is a state of multi-ethnicity as well as of multiple languages. The newspapers exclusive to the region including Sikkim have a history of more than fifty years but there has rarely been an attempt to interpret the role of the newspaper as a democratic institution with a stake in holistic development in the context of Sikkim. The history of democratic politics in the state is of recent origin and print media is considered generally a positive contributor to the process. But other than advancing the causes of democracy, the media also have a very serious role in outlining the contours of development as well as integrating the process with a larger democratic discourse. Therefore the current work has undertaken the study of the four highest circulated newspapers, namely, The Sikkim Express, and Himalayan Mirror, both English dailies, and two Nepali dailies, Samay Dainik and Hamro Prajashakti. Sikkim Express and Samay Dainik are published from Sikkim while Hamro Prajashakti and Himalayan Mirror are published from Siliguri and cater to the entire region with a special focus on Sikkim.

The following research questions have been framed to understand the extent and nature of coverage in select newspapers.

R. Q. 1. What are the most widely covered developmental issues in select newspapers in the context of Sikkim?

R. Q. 2. What percentage of sources and actors (individuals described in news stories) are represented in the Press in the context of the state of Sikkim?

R. Q. 3. What percentage of development stories in the selected newspapers is positive or encouraging, and what percentage is negative or neutral?

R. Q. 4. How is the developmental priority determined by the newspaper?

Method: The content analysis technique has been employed to analyze the contents of the newspapers. It is preferred as a research technique to analyze "texts, images, and expressions that are created to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted on for their meanings" (Krippendorff, 2004: 13). Replicability is one of the most important benefits offered by content analysis as a research technique (Berelson, 2000). The newspapers were chosen over a period of 12 months after constructing a week in every month randomly on the basis of each week starting on the next day of the preceding weekday of the previous month to eliminate bias

and provide the opportunity for equal representation of each day of the week in accordance with the method of systematic randomization. If the random week in January started on a Monday, the random week in February started on a Tuesday. The construction of the week was expected to be a collection of 84 issues of each newspaper though because of holidays and other geographical constraint-related issues, 299 newspapers could be collected and the collected newspapers published a total of 790 news stories excluding editorials. The unit of analysis is news stories and editorials. Editorials have been analyzed separately.

Health, education, women empowerment, employment opportunity, and sanitation and safe drinking water have been identified as parameters of development in the context of this article, and stories published in the select four newspapers in the context of Sikkim exclusively have been coded for the purpose of the current work. The coding of the sample was done by two coders. To assure reliability, the researcher has conducted inter-coder reliability. It was done using Holsti's method (1969), which counts up the decisions which are unanimous and these sum of unanimous decisions are then divided by the sum total of coding decisions made by the coders. Holsti's method (ibid) is considered appropriate for the percentage analysis of coding agreement between two coders assigned to code the units of analysis. Holsti's reliability index is $2M \div N1 + N2$ where 2M stands for the percentage of agreement between two coders. N1 and N2 are the numbers of two coders' consensus decisions, where 'M' stands for sum total of unanimous decisions, and N1 and N2 are the numbers of judgments the coders have made respectively. Coders were assigned to code mainly the total number of news published each day in the newspapers taken up for the study and the stories published that fit the parameters of development news. For ascertaining inter-coder reliability, both the coders interchanged the issues of four newspapers *Himalayan Mirror*, *Samay Dainik*, *Hamro Prajashakti*, and Sikkim *Express*. 68 copies of newspapers were coded which consisted of more than 20% of the total sample size of 299 issues of four newspapers together. Coding reliability is considered adequate if it is around 10% of the sample (Pamela J. Shoemaker et. al. 2003). Intercoder reliability agreement is important to understand "the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion" (Lombard et al., 2002). Category reliability measures a researcher's ability to operationally define the categories to help independent coders to agree on coding decisions (Kassarjian, 1977).

The current work takes within its ambit the quantitative technique to measure the most widely covered category of developmental stories in the context of Sikkim exclusively to analyze 299 issues of four leading newspapers of the region and including two highest-selling English newspapers and two highest circulated Nepali newspapers as Nepali is one of the most important languages used in the region. Print space given to each category of development issues has been identified as the variable for quantitative analysis and total space devoted to five coded categories of developmental stories was exposed to multiple regression as well as qualitative variables like Source, Type, Slant, Orientation, and analysis of the editorial.

The source refers to if the story has been collected by an employed reporter or correspondent which underlines the newspaper's interest in the given issue or from an agency feed.

Type is defined as the tool to identify stories published as positive for the issue or negative and whether these are proactive meaning the story was collected by the newspaper reflecting its positive interest or reactive which means the story reports something which has happened and reached the editorial desk through correspondent or agency feed and neutral means which the newspaper has published to fill the space and without any additional points added to it.

Slant as a qualitative variable identifies the stories as pro-development which in this context is defined as stories highlighting the deficiencies in implementing a developmental programme, stories as pro-government which means the story lauds government agenda, and also defines some stories as neutral.

Orientation as a qualitative indicator or variable identifies the stories published on five identified categories of development as policy declarations, or types of reporting which includes event announcement, recurring news, mixed news, and recurring item to indicate the flavor of an item of reporting and finally orientation also refers to nature of reporting meaning if the story was an article, feature article, syndicated column, post-editorial or editorial and identifies the relative importance of development stories vis-é-vis other stories published in the newspaper.

Data Interpretation:

Multiple regression was adopted as a statistical technique since it's a parametric test to understand the relative importance of different developmental stories in the context of Sikkim. It was important to see how out of the 790 printed items including features, editorials, and hard news stories on the five identified areas coded as developmental stories, which category of developmental sectors turned out to be statistically significant.

The multiple-regression technique was applied as a controlled operation to compute the association between two variables while regulating the impact of other variables. Moreover, the following tables explain the degree of linear relationships between the criterion variables like Education, Sanitation and Water, Health, Employment Opportunity, and Women Empowerment and a number of other predictors (or control variables) like the newspapers, the months, and the week. Thus, it can be further derived that the coefficients are to measure the quantum of alteration in the criterion variable with the change of any unit in the predictor while regulating all other variables in the equation.

Multiple regression was used by the researcher to make the relationship non-spurious so that the exact empirical relationship between predictors and criterion variables is maintained. The predictor variable as an independent variable is here known for the purpose

of regression analysis is the newspapers, weekdays, and months whereas the dependent or criterion variables are the developmental stories as coded under the research scheme of the current work.

Education vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1.	139[a]
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

ANOVA[a]				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	2.173	.091[b]
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a.	Dependent Variable: Education			
b.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month			

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	13.018	11.519			1.130	.259
	Papers	5.994	2.877	113	2.084	.038	
	Month	.171	.133	.070	1.287	.199	
	Weekday	1.052	1.616	.035	.651	.516	
a.	Dependent Variable: Education						

Interpretation: From the above table, Education is found to be significant in the newspapers which are taken for analysis like Hamro Prajashakti, Himalayan Mirror, Samay Dainik, and Sikkim Express. The above multiple regression was applied as a controlled operation to compute the connection between two variables while controlling for the effect of others. Moreover, the above table explains the degree of linear relationships between the dependent variable Education and a number of other independent (or control variables). Thus, it can be further derived that the above coefficients measure the quantity of change in the dependent variable with one unit change in the independent variable while regulating for all other variables in the equation. Multiple regression was used by the researcher to make the relationship non-spurious so that the exact empirical relationship between predictors and criterion variables is maintained.

While keeping the other predictors constant here, the above table clearly indicates that the criterion variables are significantly correlated with only one predictor like the newspapers. The select newspapers are significant variables and a powerful cause for coverage of issues related to Education. Moreover, it showed an insignificant relationship between the weekdays and months with education. The other two predictor variables, weekdays and months have no role in deciding the coverage of issues related to education.

Health vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1	69[a]
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

ANOVA[a]				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	3.259	.022b
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a.	Dependent Variable: Health			
b.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month			

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	12.516	7.767			1.611	.108
	Papers	2.774	1.940	.077	1.430	.154	
	Month	-.156	.090	-.094	-1.741	.083	
	Weekday	2.462	1.090	.122	2.260	.024	
a.	Dependent Variable: Education						

Interpretation: The above multiple regression was applied as a controlled operation to measure the relationship between two variables while regulating the influence of others. Moreover, the above table explains the level of linear relationships between the dependent variable Health and a number of other independent (or control variables). Thus, it can be further derived that the above coefficients measure the amount of change in the dependent variable and at the same time regulate other variables in the equation. Multiple regression was used by the researcher to make the relationship non-spurious so that the exact empirical relationship between predictors and criterion variables is maintained.

Having kept the other predictors constant here, the above table clearly indicates that the criterion variables are significantly correlated with only one predictor like the Weekdays i.e. the weekdays are significant variables and a powerful cause for coverage of issues related to Health. Moreover, it showed an insignificant relationship between the newspapers and month with Health. It means Health is significant on weekdays irrespective of newspapers and months which have no role in deciding the coverage of issues related to Health.

Women Empowerment vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1	.103[a]
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

ANOVA[a]				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	1.196	.311[b]
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment.				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month				

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	4.013	4.823			.832	.406
	Papers	2.194	1.204	.099	1.822	.069	
	Month	-.028	.056	-.028	-.506	.613	
	Weekday	-.062	.676	-.005	-.092	.927	
a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment.							

Interpretation: The above table shows that when it comes to 'Women Empowerment' as a dependent variable, there is no significant relationship between the predictor variable and criterion variables like women empowerment.

Women Empowerment vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1	.111[a]
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

ANOVA[a]				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	1.370	.252[b]
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a.	Dependent Variable: Employment Opportunity			
b.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month			

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	23.723	6.624			3.581	.000
	Papers	.599	1.654	.020	.362	.718	
	Month	-.028	.056	-.028	-.506	.613	
	Weekday	-1.522	.929	-.090	-1.638	.102	
a.	Dependent Variable: Employment Opportunity						

Interpretation: From the above table, it is found that in the case of employment opportunity as a criterion variable, there is no significant relationship with predictor variables like newspapers, weekdays, and months.

Sanitation and Water vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1	.264[a]
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

ANOVA[a]

Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	8.303	.000b
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		

a. Dependent Variable: Sanitation & Water

b. Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	15.605	5.490			2.843	.005
	Papers	3.101	1.371	.120	2.262	.024	
	Month	-.275	.063	-.231	-4.348	.000	
	Weekday	.904	.770	.062	1.174	.241	

a. Dependent Variable: Sanitation & Water

Interpretation: The above multiple regression was applied as a controlled operation to find out the relationship between two variables while regulating the influence of others. Moreover, the above table explains the level of linear relationships between the dependent variable (Sanitation and water) and a number of other independent variables (or control variables). It can be further summarised that the above coefficients measure the quantity of change in the dependent variable with any fluctuation in the independent variable and at the same time regulate other variables in the equation. Multiple regression was used by the researcher to make the relationship non-spurious so that the exact empirical relationship between predictors and criterion variables is maintained.

With the other predictors constant here, the above table clearly indicates that the criterion variables are significantly correlated with only two predictors like the newspapers and months i.e., the select newspapers and designated months are significant variables and a powerful

cause for coverage of issues related to sanitation and water. Moreover, it showed an insignificant relationship between the weekdays with sanitation and water i.e., weekdays newspapers have no role in deciding the coverage of issues related to sanitation and water.

Qualitative Analysis of the Stories:

Newspapers	Correspondent/ Reporter	Agency/Press Releases	Percentage (%) of stories respectively
Sikkim Express	93	175	35% - 65%
Himalayan Mirror	9	96	9% - 91%
Hamro Prajashakti	15	164	8% - 92%
Samay Dainik	31	207	13% - 87%
Total Stories	148	642	19% - 81%

Sources (Correspondence/Reporters & Agency/Press Releases)

The sources of the news of the four newspapers considered for the study revealed in the above table that for all the newspapers the majority of sources have been agencies or Press releases as a total of 81% have been agencies and only 19% was from Correspondence. Only Sikkim Express has more news reports from their correspondents with 35% against 65% of reports emanating from agencies. Samay Dainik followed with 13% against 87% of the reports coming from agencies. Himalayan Mirror and Hamro Prajashakti had the least percentage of news coming from correspondence with just 9% and 8% against 91% and 92% coming from agencies respectively.

Type of Reports (Hard News/Features/Policy Announcements)

Newspapers	Hard News	Features	Policy Announcements	Percentage (%) of Stories by Each Newspaper
Sikkim Express	38	225	5	14% - 84% - 2%
Himalayan Mirror	18	86	1	17% - 82% - 1%
Hamro Prajashakti	16	160	3	9% - 89% - 2%
Samay Dainik	31	204	3	13% - 86% - 1%
Total Stories	103	675	12	13% - 85% - 2%

The Type of Reports table above reveals that the majority of news articles have been features, followed by hard news and policy announcements. In aggregate, features occupied 85% of total developmental stories, hard news contributed only 13%, and policy announcements a mere 2%. Among four newspapers Himalayan Mirror has more hard news than others with 17% against 82% for features and 2% for policy announcements articles. Sikkim Express has 14% of hard news against 84% of features and 2% of policy announcements. Samay Dainik has 13% of hard news against 86% of features and 1% of policy announcements. The lowest among these, Hamro Prajashakti has only 9% of hard news against 89% of features and 2% of policy announcement articles.

Orientation of the Stories (Proactive/Reactive/Critical)

Newspapers	Hard News	Features	Policy Announcements	Percentage (%) of Stories by Each Newspaper
Sikkim Express	4	263	1	1% - 98% - 1%
Himalayan Mirror	3	100	2	3% - 95% - 2%
Hamro Prajashakti	6	161	12	3% - 90% - 7%
Samay Dainik	7	231	0	3% - 97% - 0%
Total Stories	20	755	15	3% - 95% - 2%

In the above Orientation of the Stories table, the Sikkim Express has only 1% of proactive stories and 1% of critical stories whereas it has 98% of reactive stories. Three other newspapers have a slightly more percentage with 3% of proactive stories during the study period. However, in critical stories, Hamro Prajashakti has a maximum number of 7% and Samay Dainik has no critical stories at all.

Slant

Newspapers	Pro-Development	Neutral	Pro-Government by	Percentage (%) of Stories Each Newspaper
Sikkim Express	28	236	4	10% - 88% - 2%
Himalayan Mirror	11	94	0	10% - 90% - 0%
Hamro Prajashakti	18	161	0	10% - 90% - 0%
Samay Dainik	30	190	18	13% - 80% - 7%
Total Stories	87	681	22	11% - 86% - 3%

The Slant table above reveals that Samay Dainik has more pro-development articles with 13% and the other three newspapers contributing 10% each. Hamro Prajashakti and Himalayan Mirror had no articles related to pro-government whereas Sikkim Express contributed 2% of it and Samay Dainik contributed the most with 7% of their news articles.

Editorial Analysis

The fourth research question refers to the determination of the priority area by the newspapers in terms of coverage of news. The number of editorials published on a set of issues determines how proactive the newspapers are with regard to those issues. Therefore an analysis of editorials published during the study period has been undertaken. Since the focus area of the work happens to be Sikkim and has looked into the developmental coverage of regional newspapers on the basis of a few chosen parameters of development, the editorial analysis also has been kept limited to the coverage of those parameters only. A total of 66 editorials have been published during the study period by select four newspapers. The editorials were selected and analyzed on the basis of parameters like; editorials written on the matters of the state of Sikkim, and the editorials written on the selected development parameters like Education, Health, Women Empowerment, Employment Opportunity, and Sanitation and Safe drinking water.

Editorials (Issues- 299 : Editorials-66)

Newspapers	**Total Editorials during the study period**	**Total issues collected**	**% of editorials against the total issues**
Sikkim Express	04	76	5%
Himalayan Mirror	00	74	0%
Hamro Prajashakti	16	77	21%
Samay Dainik	46	72	64%
Total	**66**	**299**	**22%**

Categories	Newspapers				
	Sikkim Express	Himalayan Mirror	Hamro Prajashakti	Samay Dainik	Total Editorials
Education	0	0	3	2	5
Health	1	0	1	2	4
Women Empowerment	0	0	2	0	2
Economic Activity & Employment	0	0	2	2	4
Sanitation	1	0	1	4	6
Environment	0	0	0	2	2
Rural Economy & Agriculture	0	0	0	5	5
Politics	0	0	5	12	17
Policy	2	0	1	11	14
Infrastructure			1	1	2
General Human Interest	0	0	0	5	5

From the total of 299 issues collected over 12 months of the study period, only 66 editorials from four newspapers considered for the study were found to be eligible for the analysis of this research. The majority of newspaper editorials were from Samay Dainik has published 46 editorials followed by Hamro Prajashakti with 16 editorials, Sikkim Express with four has minimal editorials though it is published from Sikkim and Himalayan Mirror did not have any editorials that fit in the context of selected categories. Sikkim Express and Hamro Prajashakti have skipped editorials on all Sundays. The editorials on national and international issues not concerning development issues were not considered for this analysis. All the editorials concerning the state of Sikkim are selected and analyzed individually. Editorials on the selected five parameters for this research from national and international issues were also selected for the analysis.

From the above segregation of editorials into different categories, it is found that the majority of editorials, 17 were published on politics, followed by 14 on policy. The development issues considered for this research received very little attention from editorials as is established by education having been mentioned on five days, health on four days, women empowerment on two days, economic activity and employment on four days, and sanitation on six days.

Final Words: While measuring the issue salience, the parametric statistical test reveals that women empowerment and employment opportunity are the least important parameters for select newspapers. While health, water and sanitation, and education are found to have some resonance as developmental issues, it is revealing that in a state like Sikkim which has a higher number of women employed in the government sector and also holds a higher

percentage of the workforce, women empowerment related stories occupy a significantly unimportant place in the press. Employment opportunities or in a way the stories which could offer the youth some idea of how to prepare themselves for the job market are also nearly absent or insignificantly present in terms of space in the newspapers with a reader base in a state which suffers the reputation of having a huge unemployment rate even in terms of the Northeast.

As far as the Sources of the story is concerned, it clearly reveals the unwillingness of the select newspapers to spend on the collection of news which in fact is a national trend. Investigative stories or rather proactive stories which can be found in the table for Orientation of the stories clearly delineate that newspapers analyzed for this study have published three percent of stories on average. The qualitative variables like source and orientation together reveal the complete reliance of the select newspapers which also happen to be the leading newspapers of the Eastern Himalayas region on the agencies or information and public relation departments of the state government. It should also be mentioned that this is a governing trend in regional newspapers as the media market and concomitant revenue is significantly low. While this is one explanation for not being willing to spend on news collection, it also identifies the natural apathy of newspapers to go beyond popular categories like politics, sports, or entertainment. Developmental stories essentially refer to dry statistics and an evaluation of the calibrated approach of the government and other funding agencies to identify the lacunae in the system of delivery and presentation of this evaluative work requires not only skill but also a willingness to serve the reader which is virtually absent in select newspapers.

The stories published by the select newspapers have a slant that is predominantly neutral which essentially means that these stories have been used to fill the news space and the newspapers have no stake in reporting a story on development. The pro-government stories in HamroPrajashakti and Himalayan Mirror are virtually absent and they had been known to be sharp critics of the government during the study period. But, even then, the number of critical stories published by them is not significant. So far as the editorial policy is concerned, in reality, 21 editorials were published by four newspapers together on the issues identified as developmental stories out of 299 editorials during the study period which do not constitute even 10% of the total editorials. Chalkley and Mercado as stated by Lent (1975) opined that journalists have to involve the local people in the process of development and their role are to inspire this process of participation. The state of Sikkim is undoubtedly a fast developing state in many aspects of NITI AYOG criteria or Human Development Index (HDI), but the press in the Eastern Himalayas region has clearly failed the state to appropriately contribute to the process of measurable and tangible development in terms of creating an environment of development consciousness for the larger community.

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Education Loans in South India: Trends and Flows & Beneficiaries' Perceptions

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Abstract

The development of "Education Loan" as a substitute source of finance for higher education in India results from the rising demand for higher education and the Government's financial constraints. Commercial banks have stepped up to finance higher education on a larger scale since the Model Education Loan Scheme was unveiled in 2001. Even though student loans have dramatically increased over time, the programme has encountered several difficulties. This study primarily focuses on the growth and trend in commercial banks' educational loans, as well as beneficiaries' perceptions of the conditions required to qualify for loans for higher education and overall perceptions of educational loans. Both primary data and secondary data were used to support this investigation. 120 randomly selected State Bank of India education loan borrowers who are presently enrolled in professional education in the three professions of engineering, management, and nursing at independent colleges in Kerala's Kozhikode and Ernakulam districts provided the primary data.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Financing Education, perceptions, Education loan, Model education loan scheme*

Introduction

The knowledge, skills, and health people have acquired over their lives, allowing them to reach their full potential as contributing members of society, are referred to as human capital. Human capital refers to the production abilities that employees possess. Investment in education creates human capital as a result. One can make more money due to the higher productivity of those who are more educated or trained, which helps build human capital. It is common knowledge that investing in human capital through education guarantees higher rates of economic return in the future due to the rising standard of labour. The education standards of the member nations have been improved via the efforts of international organizations and nations. The fourth Sustainable Development Goal (S.D.G.) of the United Nations calls for all children, adolescents, and adults to be at least minimally literate and numerate by the year 2030. More educational resources are needed in order to achieve these goals.

How human capital can be developed is the next concern. The explanation above makes it evident that education is the cornerstone of human capital development. According to

theories of economic growth, a nation's growth is inversely correlated with its level of education. Therefore, every Government has increased its spending on health and education. However, in developing nations like India, where numerous other developments must be attended to, the percentage of national G.D.P. set aside for education and health falls short of the necessary amounts. The government cannot support education, particularly higher education, on its own. It is now generally accepted.

Additionally, in the era of New Economic Reforms, higher education is viewed as good of "non-merit." As a result, financing higher education has given rise to several alternative mechanisms such as education loans, scholarships, and other funding options. Banks and other financial organizations are stepping up to create bankable products for financing higher education. Through further policy announcements, the Reserve Bank of India and Commercial banks are collaborating in India to guarantee access to education for all people in general and underprivileged populations in particular. As a result, the banking sector has significantly influenced our country's financing of higher education.

Significances and rationale of the study

In order to solve the difficulties of deficit financing and cost recovery, alternative types of higher education funding are being researched and implemented. One is the increasing acceptance of student loans as a substantial funding source. Keep in mind that student loans have developed into a way for the Government to transfer financial obligations to people who are pursuing higher education. Commercial banks in India are carrying out the 2000–01 educational loan programme (Indian Banks Association, 2011).

The fact that financial institutions are being used to fund education is therefore intriguing, and a new banking portfolio has resulted as a result. Consequently, it presents a chance for the banking industry to participate actively in human capital growth. A student loan programme aims to give education to deserving but underprivileged students. It implies that no deserving poor student should be denied enrollment in his chosen courses because of financial hardship. However, there are several disadvantages to student loans. For instance, lenders and borrowers might favour programmes that could lead to employment. Those who are unable to meet the conditions set forth by lending institutions may not be eligible for educational loans in nations with developing markets for academic credit, such as India. All of these might also have an impact on equity. Almost two decades have passed since our country introduced education loans. The critical question is whether the new education loan scheme successfully provides access to higher education to poor but meritorious students. Are the interest rates and other expenses to avail the facility affordable to economically backward communities? Do the bankers find the loan product marketable without any hassles like N.P.A.? Are the borrowers finding this facility to fulfil their dreams of getting a valuable education and finding jobs? This research project tries to attempt answers to a few such questions.

The government and institutions' current financial struggles serve to emphasise the significance of the research issue. The demand for higher education is enormous on the one hand. In contrast, the Government is unable to satiate this desire. The demographic dividends seen in countries like India show that a sizeable percentage of the budget should be set aside for higher education in particular. Thus, student loans from financial organizations are becoming more popular among the many alternative sources that augment government efforts to support higher education. In the areas of commercial banks and student loans, there are a lot of studies.

Nevertheless, this study focuses on whether the education loan is a true alternative to ensuring equity and higher education access. The study's outcome may have great relevance in a state like Kerala, where we have a well-developed banking system and increasing demand for higher education. So, one must understand the efficiency of education loan to supplement the governmental efforts in providing higher education to all desirous of pursuing higher education.

Emergence of The Problem

There is now more demand for professional courses than for humanities, arts, and other liberal arts courses because the purpose of higher education has shifted from "knowledge development" to "skill creation." The improvement of employability through on-the-job training, developing soft skills, and fostering linkages between academia and business have assumed a central role. Because earning a professional degree nowadays is more expensive than pursuing a general degree, education loans are considered as a tool to enhance access to and equity in higher education. To help the poor and economically disadvantaged students, government-supported loan programmes have been developed and put into place in several nations to increase access to higher education. Nevertheless, they are no longer profitable due to rising administrative costs, high default rates, and low recovery rates. In order to promote equitable access to high-quality higher education, the Reserve Bank of India (R.B.I.) has directed all commercial banks in India to offer qualified but financially challenged students significant financial support through education loan programs.

On August 15, 2015, the Finance Ministry unveiled the "Vidya Lakshmi Portal Education Loan Scheme." In cooperation with the Department of Financial Services, the Department of Higher Education, the Indian Banks Association, and the Ministry of Human Resource Development, NSDL e-Governance Infrastructure Limited developed and maintains this portal. All students have access to funding through this site and information on government educational loans and scholarships. Students can submit a single form to apply for loans or scholarships on this one-window platform, which is provided. The website lists 36 banks' 111 different student loan programmes. A student can locate and apply for the right scholarships through the built-in link to the National Scholarship Portal. There haven't been many studies done to assess whether India's present student loan programmes are an effective

replacement for the nation's traditional methods of funding higher education. This made it necessary to critically examine the commercial banks' financing of student loans. In a nation like India where the demand for education is increasing, the influence of education loans, its equity implications, and similar issues are significant. The main issue is whether student loan financing has really developed into a viable option. This question is very relevant in the wake of the financial shortage faced by the country's Central and State Governments. The question is not only about the volume of education loans, but also its distributional aspects viz., equity, access and adequacy.

Objectives of the Study

- To Analyze the Southern region's growth and trend through commercial banks' Education Loans.
- To examine beneficiaries' perception about the requirements insisted for availing education loans
- To examine beneficiaries' perception about educational loans

Methodology of the Study

On both primary and secondary data, this study is built. Beneficiaries of education loans from Kerala's Commercial Banks provided the primary data needed to analyze the study's goals. We used a two-stage sample methodology to pick the recipients of the student loan payments. The state's higher education institutions are designated in the first phase. Government colleges, Aided colleges, Universities offering professional courses, and Self-financing/unaided colleges are the different categories of institutions. Very few students use Government and aided universities for educational loans, so this study does not apply to them. As a result, the informants are the students who received educational loans from unaided/self-financing colleges. Engineering, nursing, and management were found to be the most popular courses among those for whom student loans are disbursed. As a result, the current study samples are sample borrowers from these three programmes. A random sample of 120 students who were continuing their education loans in the three aforementioned programmes at self-financing colleges was chosen for the study. The sample borrowers were students of institutions working in Ernakulum and Kozhikode districts, two districts of Kerala known for their concentration of unaided higher education institutions. All the sample borrowers were the beneficiaries of the S.B.I. Education Loan Scheme. We have used a structured interview schedule for collecting primary data.

The R.B.I., I.B.A., and other connected websites' reports provided the secondary data needed for the study. A few Bank managers were consulted in order to assess the plan from their viewpoints.

Limitations of the Study

This study is also beset with several limitations. First of all,

- The study is confined to the state of Kerala.
- The sample borrowers were limited to educational institutions of two districts, and that too very few in number. Secondly, the courses selected for the study are also too limited.
- We have included only borrowers from self-financing colleges. Despite these limitations imposed on us, we have made all our efforts to analyze the issue under consideration most scientifically.

Review of Research-related Literature

The Study by David, Onen et.al (2015) investigated the administration of the student loan programmes in three African nations. It was designed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of such programmes in order to draw lessons for more recent loan programmes, such Uganda's loan programme, which has been in place for just 1.5 years. The study was inspired by the ongoing challenges that younger lending schemes face, even though there are lessons to be learned from older loan schemes. Through a desk study and a literature search, information was gathered. The study came to the conclusion that common issues with student loan programmes include poor targeting, insufficient administrative controls, and poor collection efforts. The lending schemes, however, can be more efficient and effective if a clear legal framework, rules, and administrative structure are in place. They also benefit from a certain amount of autonomy to minimise excessive political involvement and legal power in the administration of the loan schemes. It should be mentioned that the student loan programme will probably continue to spread throughout Africa as long as there is a need for higher education. However, if Uganda's new student loan programme takes inspiration from other African countries' best practices, it might be more successful.

Johnstone (2002) assessed the student loan policies of a number of nations, including those in Central America, Europe, and Africa, as well as the United States, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Kenya. Shen and Li (2003) for China, Kim and Lee (2003) for Republic of Korea, Ziderman (2003) for Thailand, Chung (2003) for Hong Kong, and Kitaevetal (2003) for Philippines explore the experiences of student loan programmes in Asian nations.

In a research on student loans in Ghana, Atuahene (2008) noted that for the student loan programme to be successful, policymakers needed to strike a balance between providing aid to deserving students and making the programmes financially viable. To ensure the viability of the programme, a balance should be struck between lowering lenders' risk and student aversion.

Zainal and Ismail (2012) opines that an increase in the cost of higher education and insufficient family income lead the parents to take education loan. The study concludes that in the Malaysian higher education environment, students from private colleges and universities borrowed more than public colleges and universities.

Tilak, J.B.G and N. V. Varghese (1991) thought that Long-term funding higher education primarily using public tax money may not be a desirable course of action. Consequently, some of the alternative policy options are examined, including student loans, graduate taxes, student fees, public funding of higher education, and the role of the private sector. It is claimed that compared to the other possibilities, a discriminating pricing mechanism would be more efficient and fair. Due to socioeconomic and political realities, the Government must continue to carry a sizable percentage of the cost of funding higher education; nevertheless, attempts should be made to create a funding model that integrates a number of funding choices rather than relying only on one. Additionally, it is asserted that laws governing fees and subsidies must distinguish between different levels and types of higher education.

Ismail (2011) conducted research on students' attitudes regarding repaying their student loans in Malaysia's public universities. He used the Theory of Planned Behavior to create a model of students' attitudes toward loan repayment. According to the study, students' attitudes about loan repayment are directly correlated with parental influence and perceived quality.

In a study done in Tanzania, Nyahende (2013) claimed that the Higher Education Students Loans Board's (HESLB) recovery strategies, which include raising public awareness of loan repayment, publishing the names of untraced loan recipients, following up on job postings in print media, and enforcing loan repayment in the minds of student beneficiaries and their employers, lead to successful student loans for funding higher education because it was found.

In his investigation on student loans in Hong Kong, Chung (2003) discovered that the programme was founded on the principles of equality, efficiency, and sufficiency. Students from lower-income families are given more financial aid. The system's aim is to guarantee that no competent student is denied access to higher education due to a lack of funding that satisfies social goals. It's interesting to note that the government's financial support for higher education has not decreased as a result of the student loan programme.

Research gap

The financing of higher education has always been debated across countries. The literature mentioned earlier reveals that various sources have been used to finance higher education within and outside the country. Public funding for higher education is on the decline. New funding sources such as education loans, graduate taxes, contingent income schemes, and the like are adopted in various countries. In India, however, public funding is the most sought-after method. But, with the increasing demand for funds and the limited availability of resources, governments have directed the universities to raise se fees and generate internal resources.

Analysis and Interpretations

Education Loan in Priority Sector

Examine the circle. Education loans up to the ceilings of Rs. 7.50 lakh for studies in India and Rs. 15 lakh for studies abroad, respectively, as indicated in the Model Scheme, will be counted under priority sector advances in order to encourage banks to lend more to the poor and needy students, according to the R.B.I.'s communication RPCD.PLNFS.No.BC.44 /06.12.05/ 2003-04 dt.04-11-2003. According to a previous R.B.I. circular, loans to persons for educational purposes, including vocational courses, up to Rs. 10 lakh, regardless of the sanctioned amount, will be considered eligible for the priority sector commencing in 2015. In this light, we want to look into the distribution of education under the public sector banks' priority sector advancements. The allocation of loans to priority sectors and education for 2018–19 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: State-wise Distribution of Priority Sector Advances and Education Loans by Scheduled Commercial Banks -2018-19

(No. of Accounts in absolute terms; Amount in Ē ' Crore)

State/Region	Total Priority Sector		Education Loan	
	No. of Accounts	Balance Outstanding	No. of Accounts	Balance Outstanding
Southern Region	57278170	1075234.29	1391900	33972.70
Andhra Pradesh	9452325	194780.44	92299	3387.28
Karnataka	9614160	209922.33	195411	4744.91
Kerala	8578482	163388.67	294479	7957.76
Lakshadweep	2838	39.21	24	0.77
Puducherry	467614	6354.14	12166	273.34
Tamil Nadu	24747427	381227.30	742740	15017.51
Telangana	4415324	119522.20	54781	2591.14

Among the various regions, the Southern Region has seen the highest in terms of the number of education loan accounts and amount of education loans. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka have absorbed higher education loans for the last several years.

Commercial Banks and Education Loans

Public sector banks have handled a sizable portion of the nation's loans to the education sector. According to a recent R.B.I. study, public sector banks (PSBs) account for 91.42 percent of all lending to the education sector. In an increasingly privatizing economy like India, private sector banks' extremely low participation in human capital development through

education loans is a matter of serious concern. In terms of the quantity of accounts and the dollar amount, the State Bank of India (S.B.I.) is the public sector bank that lends the most money for student loans.

It is interesting to have a look at the trend and pattern of education loans extended by the S.B.I. for the last few years. Tables 2 and 3 examine the contribution of S.B.I. in financing higher education through education loans both in India and abroad. A review of table 5.11 makes it clear that in Kerala and India, the disbursement of education loan by S.B.I. for Study in India has been falling consistently. The total distribution of education loans in Kerala was ₹ .207.73 crores in 2016-17, while it steadily fell to ₹ 133.82 crores in 2018-19. During the same period, the education loan disbursement fell from ₹ 2008.42 crores to ₹ 1609 crores in India. This sharp fall in the distribution of education loan, despite the increasing demand for education loan in a country with a high demographic dividend, need a revisit. The S.B.I., the leader in the disbursement of Education Loan, seems t follow a policy of precaution while granting and disbursing E.L.

Table 2: Sanction and Disbursement of Education Loan by S.B.I. for Study in India

Year	Kerala					India		
	Sanctioned		Disbursed		Sanctioned	Disbursed		
	No. A/cs	Amount (₹ Crore)	No. A/cs	Amount (₹ Crore)	No. A/cs	Amount (₹ Crore)	No. A/cs	Amount (₹ Crore)
2016-17	6989	281.42	6767	207.73	49127	2542.28	47616	2008.42
2017-18	4999	219.79	4913	143.64	49360	2756.04	48280	1895.64
2018-19	6608	309.70	6373	133.82	54109	3544.54	52689	1609.08

Source: www.sbi.co.in

Disbursement of education loans for study abroad from S.B.I. showed a positive trend in Kerala. The amount disbursed increased from ₹ 109.66 crores in 2016-17 to ₹ 150.79 crores in 2018-19. While in India, the disbursement showed a declining trend. It was ₹ 1697.71 crore in 2016-17 but fell to ₹.1465.36 crore in 2018-19.

Table 3: Sanction and Disbursement of Education Loan by S.B.I. for Study Abroad

Year	Kerala					India		
	Sanctioned		Disbursed		Sanctioned	Disbursed		
	No. A/cs	Amount (₹ Crore)	No. A/cs	Amount (₹ Crore)	No. A/cs	Amount (₹ Crore)	No. A/cs	Amount (₹ Crore)
2016-17	861	151.10	820	109.66	11941	2546.11	11169	1697.71
2017-18	842	183.39	801	112.37	10154	2456.29	9719	1536.13
2018-19	1465	362.39	1383	150.79	13025	3430.85	12439	1465.36

Source: www.sbi.co.in

Borrowers' perception about the requirements insisted for availing E.L.

Any borrowings from financial institutions need some formalities. For education loans also, the banks insist on specific documentation. When an enquiry was carried out among the sample loan beneficiaries and the details are provided in Table 4. The table shows that about 69.2 percent of the borrowers feel the requirements insisted by the banks are reasonable. Only 9.2 percent of them find the conditions difficult to meet by them.

Table 4: Opinion of borrowers about the formalities of getting an education loan

Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than expected	9	7.5	7.5
Reasonable	74	61.7	69.2
Excessive	26	21.7	90.8
Difficult to meet	11	9.2	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

Source: Sample Survey

Beneficiaries' Perceptions about Education Loans and its characteristics

The major motto of the Education Loan Scheme is to provide financial support to meritorious but economically poor households to carry out their preferred education programme. Since its floating, the education loan scheme has been found to be one of the commercial banks' most sought-after loan portfolios. The scheme was introduced keeping in mind many avowed objectives. It is interesting to examine the stakeholders' perceptions about these features of this loan product. Here we use perception analysis for this purpose. Perception is the way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted by the beneficiary group. It is the way one thinks about or understands someone or something. This analysis is of high usefulness, and hence it is attempted.

In order to analyze the perceptions of the education loan borrowers about the characteristics of education loans, a Likert-type scale has been used. Twelve statements were provided, and the sample beneficiaries were asked to use a five-point scale to mark their agreement or disagreement to each of these statements. The five-point scale ranges from Strongly Agree (5 points) to Strongly Disagree (1 point), and borrowers were asked to rate their opinion towards these statements. Table 5 provides a snapshot of the perceptions of the borrowers about the given statements.

Table 5: Perceptions of Education Loan Borrowers (figures are in percentages)

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	E.L. is to be seen as an investment in human capital formation	64(53.33)	35(29.17)	15(12.5)	5(4.16)	1(0.83)
2	E.L. is introduced to reduce subsidy earmarked for education	46(38.33)	37(30.83)	13(10.83)	14(11.67)	10(8.33)
3	E.L. borrowers generally anticipates loan waiver	30(25.00)	35(29.17)	11(9.17)	26(21.66)	18(15.00)
4	Weaker sections won't get increased access to education without E.L.	28(23.33)	38(31.67)	23(19.17)	19(15.83)	12(10.00)
5	E.L. helps the meritorious but economically weaker students to realize their dream of higher education	16(13.33)	38(31.67)	21(17.50)	35(29.17)	10(8.33)
6	Interest rate of education loan is affordable	30(25.00)	38(31.67)	20(16.67)	27(22.50)	5(4.17)
7	Fearing N.P.A., the Bankers discourage E.L. borrowers	24(20.00)	44(36.67)	10(8.33)	25(20.83)	17(14.17)
8	Political and other influences are necessary to get E.L.	4(3.33)	13(10.83)	15(12.50)	59(49.17)	29(24.17)
9	I will repay E.L. only when I get a permanent government job	20(16.67)	41(34.17)	13(10.83)	31(25.83)	15(12.50)
10	Do you subscribe to the view that "E.L. is a preferable alternative to traditional financing of higher education in our country"?	11(9.17)	24(20.00)	13(10.83)	55(45.83)	17(14.17)
11	E.L. interest should be charged according to the economic status of borrowers	7(5.83)	21(17.5)	16(13.33)	65(54.17)	11(9.17)
12	Those who promptly pay E.L. should be given some incentives like interest subsidy	20(16.67)	64(53.33)	16(13.33)	14(11.67)	6(5.00)

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages to row total

Source: Sample Survey

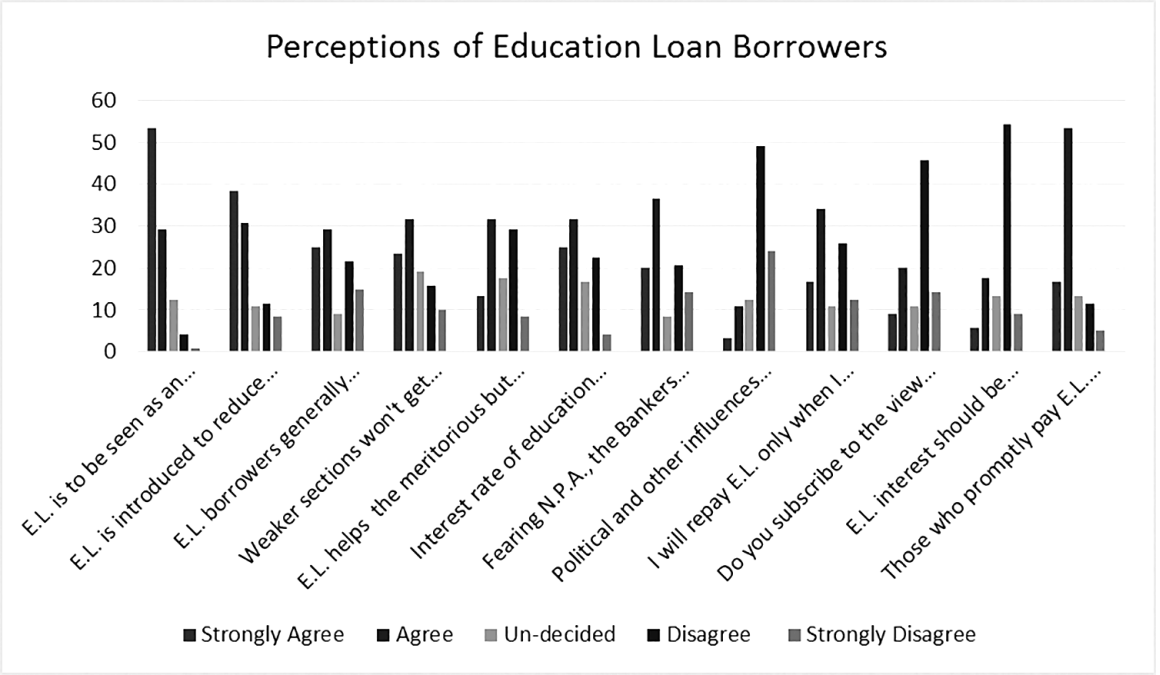


Fig 1: Perceptions of Education Loans Borrower

Let us now discuss the perception of the sample borrowers about various statements given.

(a) E.L. is to be seen as an investment in human capital formation

Education is key to human capital formation is an accepted norm everywhere. So, the provision of education in general and higher education, in particular is paramount in all countries, especially developing countries like India. But, the financial considerations and increasing demand for funds from other sectors have constrained many governments' ability to earmark a sizeable portion of their total educational allocation. This has led to experimenting with many different ways of financing higher education, and education loan have become one of those innovative mechanisms. The sample beneficiaries were sought to express their agreement or disagreement in this regard through a statement that "education loan is to be seen as an investment in human capital formation". The information in this regard shows that 53.33 percent strongly agree with the statement, and another 25.17 percent agree. That means 78.50 percent of the total sample beneficiaries view education loans as an investment from their part to develop human capital.

(b) E.L. is introduced to reduce subsidies earmarked for education

Another argument for the introduction of education loans is that the Government wants to reduce the subsidy for all sectors including education. When the contributions are reduced,

it will affect the allocation of funds to such sectors. As a solution to offset the shortfall in allocation to the education sector, education loan is suggested to a certain extent. To understand the beneficiaries' perception in this context, we asked them to mark their level of agreement or disagreement to the statement, "education loan is introduced to reduce subsidy earmarked for education", 38.33 percent strongly agreed to the statement. Similarly, 30.38 percent agreed to this statement.

(c) E.L. borrowers generally anticipate loan waiver

To the statement that "education loan borrowers generally anticipate loan waiver", one-fourth of the respondents strongly agreed, while 29.17 percent agreed. The increasing N.P.A. of education loans and the reluctance of the bankers to promote education loans are to be seen in this background. The culture of loan waiver and writing off has been a custom in our country for the last several decades. Anticipating such a waiver for education loans is rampant among the borrowers is a matter of serious concern.

(d) Weaker sections won't get increased access to education without E.L.

The motto of the Government in an era of inclusive development is that the weaker section should not be denied of education opportunities. In a situation of mushrooming growth of private unaided professional colleges, only those who have the capacity to pay the high fee could get admission. This will exclude the poor and weaker sections from accessing higher education. Whether education loan is a panacea to this cause is to be understood. So, we have placed a statement that "Weaker sections won't get increased access to education without education loan" and asked the sample respondents to mark their level of agreement or disagreement. The information showed that 23.33 percent strongly agreed and 31.67 percent agreed to this statement. It means that around 55 percent feel that weaker sections could not get access to education without the provision of education loans.

(e) E.L. helps the meritorious but economically weaker students to realize their dream of higher education

The fundamental objective behind evolving a model Education loan scheme in India is the provision of financial assistance to the poor and needy to carry out higher education/ professional education on reasonable terms. The policy's main tenet is that no eligible student would be denied the chance to pursue higher education due to a lack of financial aid. Keeping this aim in mind, the sample borrowers were given a statement that, "E.L. helps the meritorious but economically weaker students to realize their dream of higher education" and asked to mark their level of agreement or disagreement. The result shows that only 13.33 percent strongly agreed to this statement, while about 31.67 percent agree to the statement. The proportion of disagreed group doubts this statement was 37.5 percent.

(f) Interest rate of education loan is affordable

Providing education loans at reasonable interest rates is another important aspect of the education loan scheme. This is the main reason it is included in the priority advances category. Information was elicited from the sample borrowers through a statement that the "Interest rate of education loan is affordable". To this statement, 56.67 agreed, meaning the interest rate charged for education loan is affordable to most sample borrowers.

(g) Fearing N.P.A., the Bankers discourage E.L. borrowers

The cooperation of bankers is a prerequisite for the success of any government scheme. In the context of the increasing amount and percentage of N.P.A. of education loans, we have stated, "Fearing N.P.A., the Bankers discourage E.L. borrowers" to the sample borrowers for their agreement or disagreement. It was revealed that about 20% strongly agreed, and 36.67 agreed with this statement. The literature survey has also brought out such a revelation that banks are discouraging education loan borrowers.

(h) Political and other influences are necessary to get EL

Getting a loan from the bank requires many qualifications, including recommendations from politicians or other influencing factors. In this background, knowing from the experience of the sample borrowers, a statement such as "Political and other influences are necessary to get E.L." was given to mark their agreement or disagreement. It is clear from their opinion that about 24.17 percent strongly disagreed and 49.17 percent disagreed with this statement. It means that the borrowers need not approach the influential members of society to get an education loan from the bank.

(i) I will repay E.L. only when I get a permanent government /private salaried job

Repayment of education loans is a ticklish issue, as seen from the increasing proportion of N.P.A.s. In repaying a loan, the borrowers' mindset is essential. The Model Education Loan Scheme envisage that loan repayment should start after completing one year of the course or getting a job, whichever is earlier. In this context, to understand the borrowers' view on repayment of their loan, a statement was given, such as "I will repay E.L. only when I get a permanent government job", for their level of agreement or disagreement. It was seen that about 16.67 percent strongly agreed to this statement, while 34.17 percent agreed to. It means the borrowers are mentally prepared to repay education loans only after getting a permanent government or private sector job.

(j) Do you subscribe to the view that "E.L. is a preferable alternative to traditional financing of higher education in our country"?

An alternative to the conventional method of paying for higher education is regarded to be an education loan. The policymakers suggested education loans as a viable alternative to meet the increasing demand for higher education in the context of decreasing government allocation to this sector. When the sample borrowers were asked to comment on their views

on this statement, only 9.17 percent strongly agreed, and 20 percent agreed. It means that most of the sample beneficiaries did not feel that an education loan was a genuine alternative to the conventional way of financing higher education.

(k) E.L. interest should be charged according to the economic status of the borrowers

Currently, education loan is sanctioned to all borrowers at the same interest rate. The economic backgrounds of the borrowers are not considered for this purpose. In this context, the sample borrowers were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement to the statement that "E.L. interest should be charged according to the economic status of borrowers", only 5.83 percent strongly agreed, and 17.5 percent agreed. It means that most borrowers do not subscribe to charging a different interest rate for the same loan for other borrowers.

(l) Those who promptly pay E.L. should be given some incentives like interest subsidy

In order to promote the repayment of education loans, several measures are adopted by bankers. In this connection, we placed a statement such as "Those who promptly pay E.L. should be given some incentives like interest subsidy" for the opinion of the borrowers. Among the borrowers, 16.67 percent strongly agreed, and another 53.3 percent agreed to such a proposition.

What would have happened if you would not have received E.L.?

One of the exciting questions posed before the respondents were, "what would have happened if they would not have received an education loan?". To this question, 63.3 percent of the sample respondents opined that 'they would change their course of study. This answer reiterates the importance of education loans in ensuring the most desired course of study among higher education aspirants. About one-fourth of the respondents replied that they would not have joined for any course is also secondary support to the education loan system. This information is provided in Table 6.

Table 6: Role of Education Loan in deciding whether to study or not

Opinion	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Would not study	31	25.8	25.8
Change my programme of Study	76	63.3	89.2
Would not finish my programme	7	5.8	95.0
No effect	6	5.0	100.0
Total	**120**	**100.0**	

Source: Sample Survey

Recommendations & Conclusions

The R.B.I., I.B.A., and other connected websites' reports provided the secondary data needed for the study. A few Bank managers were consulted in order to assess the plan from their viewpoints.

- Given that India's banking industry is well developed, commercial banks from both the public and private sectors should step up and offer loans to help pay for higher education.
- There should be a rigorous investigation into the unequal distribution of student loans among the states and regions. States in south India account for the majority of loan accounts and loan amounts. In comparison, the percentage of larger states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh is not in line with their population.
- Under priority sector lending standards, there should be an obligatory portion for education loans in order to secure a steady flow of cash from the banking sector to finance higher education.
- Despite the prospects in the education sector, the expansion of the portfolio of student loans has been modest. Higher delinquencies faced by banks and the lack of specialist lending institutions in this market could be a significant contributing factors. The decision-makers should seriously consider these restrictions.
- Many bankers believed that different tracking methods should be employed in other nations because it becomes challenging for banks to find and pursue students after the course and the moratorium period.
- The recipients were found to have relatively little knowledge of the various loan features. Therefore, before approving the loan, bankers should provide the applicants with sufficient awareness-raising training.

It is clear that most borrowers still believe that taking out an education loan is not an excellent way to pay for college. The plan needs to be adjusted to meet the clients' needs better.

Those who cannot afford tuition and other costs can borrow money to pay for their higher education through a loan programme supported by public funds or the banking system and repay the loan when they can later take advantage of better job prospects and higher earnings due to their qualifications. According to economists and others who support loans as a cost-sharing strategy, financing higher education through loans will allow people unable to pay for tuition and other costs to continue their studies. Such a policy approach is also visible in the Indian setting. Because the sum of private and public benefits are almost always equal, education is no longer a public good or merit good; according to the Ministry of Finance's Discussion Paper, there is a strong case for shifting the student burden. The Prime Minister's Task Force on Education argued for 100% cost recovery in higher education in a paper published in April 2000, among other things. According to the study, only academic fields that are not market-oriented should receive funding from the federal and state

governments, and parents and students should be responsible for covering the costs of higher education.

Many nations around the world, including India, have adopted student loans as an alternate source or supplementary mechanism of higher education financing because higher education is an effective private investment and it was reasonable to expect students and graduates to contribute to the cost of their education by repaying loans after they had graduated from university. When analyzing the Model Education Loan Scheme that the Indian Banks Association created in 2001, the basic framework must be taken into account. Since this concept was proposed in our nation, almost two decades have passed. Therefore, one must consider the program's success in achieving the educational goals of deserving but impoverished students. They have no choice but to receive loan aid in our rapidly privatised higher education system.

Scope for further research

Education Loans and their suitability in developing countries is a goldmine of research. This small project has touched upon some micro-level aspects of the loan. So, there is enough Scope for future research in this area; a list of potential locations for further investigations is given here.

- Role of Education Loans in improving Higher Education Enrolment in India
- A Study of Drop-outs and Wastage among the Education Loan Beneficiaries
- Can Education Loans address the Demographic Dividend of India?
- Role of NBFCs in Education Loans in India
- Role and Scope of the Co-operative sector in the Education Loan segment in India
- Impact of Education Loans on Marginalized Communities
- Repayment Behaviour of Education Loan Borrowers
- Sustainability of Education Loan in India-A Study
- A Study to address the Increasing Level of N.P.A. of Education Loans
- Inter-state Disparity in Education Loan and its impact on Enrolment

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Different Stages of Elimination of the Indian Girl Child

Poonam Magu

Abstract

The paper focuses on various issues related to the killing of a girl child in India. A declining sex ratio is an indication of this heinous act still being carried out in the modern world. The uniqueness of this situation is that the killing is done by the family members themselves. In some cases, it could be the mother too! What makes a mother want to take the life of her own child? Are the reasons linked to her own journey from herself being the 'unwanted' girl to a woman whose main purpose is to give the family a male? A male who will carry on with the patriarchal system with the woman as his chief ally? The paper looks at the various stages of elimination of the girl child starting from killing of the desire to bear a female child to the killing of the foetus - female foeticide, then the newborn baby- female infanticide and finally killing the girl child by neglect. The girl who manages to survive becomes a woman - now ready to give birth. The cycle starts again! Should she bring her own version into this world so that she too is subjugated to all that she herself had to endure? Or is there another way? The paper looks at some of the options that the parents resort to in India.

Keywords: *Indian girl child, patriarchal system, female foeticide, female infanticide, sex ratio.*

Introduction

The killing of the girl child is an age-old tradition carried out by many communities in different parts of the world. This unfortunate tradition is perhaps the reason for the low child sex ratio in India. According to United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), "India is the only large country where more girls die than boys, with the inverse sex ratio at birth being 900 girls born for every 1000 boys. Globally 7 percent more boys die under the age of 5 compared to girls, but in India, 11 percent more girls die under the age of 5" (UNICEF, 2020 para.4). The report on "Vital Statistics of India based on the Civil Registration System" for the year 2018, shows the sex wise distribution of registered births as 52% registered male births as against 47.9% of registered females births (Ministry of Home Affairs, India 2018: 40).

Of all the questions that any researcher can ask a respondent, perhaps the most difficult one could well be, "What made you kill your own child - your daughter?" It would be just as difficult for any respondent to give an honest answer. Most certainly, the decision is not an easy one. Yet it culminates in to something, which can be considered no less than a homicide and that too of one's own flesh and blood. What compels a family to take such an action?

The present paper is not looking at the reasons behind such a heinous act. This has been the focus of many papers. Each one of them gave its own theories and making its own assumptions. The present article tries to identify the different stages in the journey of an Indian woman from the mother's womb till the time she herself is ready to deliver a baby. Then she may deliver a girl child! For a society to make her kill her own child, it takes years to implant the idea, nourish it and then finally make her actually commit it. It could be the result of years of socialization and numerous other factors, which reduce the importance of a female child and make her, appear "worthless" in the eyes of her own mother.

The need to "do away with the girl child" is so strong that the society tries to eliminate her at the different stages of her growth.

Stages of Elimination of the Indian Girl Child

Various stages of elimination are given below.

- Killing the Desire for a Girl Child
- Killing the Thought of a girl child during the Preconception and conception stages
- Female Foeticide
- Female Infanticide
- Killing the Girl Child by neglect

The details of the above points are discussed below:

1. Killing the Desire for a Girl Child

The society not only kills the child but even kills the desire in a woman to have a girl child. There are various factors that contribute to this.

I. Personal Factors

These factors concern the woman herself. Her perception of her own self, her satisfaction with her role as a woman and the self-image which she develops over a period of time. As a little girl she observes her mother and other younger female members of her family bowing down to the wishes and commands of the men and a few senior women. She rarely hears any voice of dissent and learns very early in life as to how her own behavior has to be different from her brothers. She observes and gradually absorves the image of a 'dependent' individual.

Kumar (2015) writes in the book on the nature and extent of development and gender disparity in Haryana, a state which has the lowest sex ratio in India –that is 876 females per 1000 males (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2021).

> "Women are dependent on the men folk in all occupations. It is a common saying in the countryside, that female as daughters are dependent on their fathers and brothers, as a wife on their husbands and as mothers on their son. In addition, women are generally not given importance in family decision making ...The decisions of all male bodies are binding upon women" (Kumar 2015: 76).

This is true, unfortunately, even for women living in the cities. The urban women are no doubt more educated but the family set up remains largely patriarchal. She must do well in

her studies as well as learn to do domestic work. Thus, they are told that their education means that they should excel in studies and do well in the examinations, but it does not mean that they can take decision regarding their lives. The type of occupation that the girls can take up is also decided for them.

Bahadur (2009) on the basis of the results of the study, "Psychological Factors as Predictors of College Girls' Orientation towards Marriage and Career", reported,

> "The results indicated that girls autonomy regarding matters related to self, choice of marriage partner, making friends, decision related to taking up jobs are important areas for them. But they do not feel that they can fully exercise control over these areas as they are still seeking parental approval"(Bahadur 2009:166).

Unfortunately, parental approval is influenced greatly by social rules and norms. Thus, a daughter is encouraged to do her graduation and post-graduation studies but is told to limit her choice of occupation to school teachers and college lecturers.

John (2018) who conducted a multi stage and multi sited study of sex ratio in Haryana and Maharastra during 2015-17, reported a difference in parental aspirations regarding education and future employment opportunities for their children. A university degree "with teaching as a possible job opportunity" was preferred for daughters as against "professional aspirations for sons" (John 2018: 88).

The hand that reaches out to them and gives them education pulls back at the mere mention of giving them their rights. Further, if she has been discriminated with her brother, the matter only becomes worse. She must come home early before dark, although her brother can stay out as long as he wants. In addition, if the choice of life partner is not given to her and she is forced to carry the traditional *tray of tea to the drawing room* for the future groom and his family, which result in a very poor self-image. Dowry adds to the misery and instills in the girl a feeling of worthlessness and of being an economic burden on her parents.

Kaur (2007) analyses the socio-economic reasons behind the decline in the juvenile sex ratio and writes,

> "An important aspect of the perpetuation of son preference is the socialisation of girls in an atmosphere of familial discrimination. The differential care and affection within the family is registered by girls, percolating at the psychological level into a mindset that favours boys over girls. The low value placed on a girl by family, society and by cultural norms instills a sense of her own inferiority and her brother's superiority in the mind of the girl. She then grows up to be a wife and mother with the same values" (Kaur 2007: 236 - 237).

The most dreadful thing is if the girl has been sexually exploited at some point of her life and carries horrible memories of it. Needless to say, such experiences would probably suffocate any desire for a girl child.

The condition of a rural girl is also pathetic. As Jahan (2015) writes in her article "The Social Construction of 'Self'and Womanhood in a Hindu Village of Bangladesh", a country not very different from India;

> "In a crude Hindu society like Khankhanapur ...the essence of 'self' develops in the women's heart as they continuously encounter diverse factors that are external but related to them... From the childhood, a village Hindu girl is expected to perceive herself as a little woman incorporating into her character the womanly traits. She is socialised not to behave like a boy, go here and there and escape household duties. Alongside her school education, as a 'little woman,' she is expected to spend her time in learning the house work from her mother. This is thought to set a stage for her to act her role of a wife and mother in her life-long social drama... During her girlhood, a village Hindu woman incorporates within her the very notion of womanhood that resonates around marriage and childbirth." (Jahan 2015: 42-43).

The only important event in the life of a woman is her marriage and later childbirth. All throughout her maiden years, she has to prepare herself for her life after marriage.Once married, she must use her years of training to placate the new family, irrespective of how they treat her. Even if things do not work out, there is hardly any option available to her. Divorce is seldom an option for an Indian woman.

As per India Today report (2018, November 20), although the global divorce has increased to 251.8% since 1960, it is less than one percent in India. But this does not really mean that all is well in the marriage. As Dommaraju concludes, "The comparatively low level of marital dissolution in India might seem to represent a desirable situation if marital stability was underpinned by marital satisfaction, symmetrical gender power relationship, an equitable socio-legal system and egalitarian values. For many women, however, staying in or leaving a marriage is not necessarily dependent on any of these values" (Dommaraju 2016: 215).

Even if she has a bad marriage she must continue to live with her husband. A large number of women experience domestic violence and marital rape but very few of them, even in educated urban India reach out for help.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) of India for the period 2015 -16 reported that one-third of married women were subjected to some type of emotional, sexual or physical violence by their husbands. It was also found that only 14% of women who had faced physical or sexual violence had tried to get help, but a large percentage i.e. 77% had neither told anyone about the violence that they experienced nor asked for any kind of help. This does not mean that the family is not aware of the problem. A study on domestic violence in India by International Clinical Epidemiologists Network (INCLEN) reported that 58 % women subjected to domestic violence said that their immediate family was aware of the situation (INCLEN 2000: 27). The family simply looks the other way and chooses not to reach out to help the victim. In a highly patriarchal society even the violent behaviour of men is justified. Karp, A. *et al.* (2015) reported a survey conducted by Population Reference Bureau, revealed that 26 % of males in India and surprisingly a slightly higher percentage of females (30 %) agree that "wife beating is acceptable". Even pregnant women are not spared. The above mentioned survey conducted by INCLEN also reported that of the 50 % women who underwent physical violence, also experienced it during their pregnancy (INCLEN 2000: 10). In the existing scenario

of discrimination, no attempt is made to hide the notion of a girl child's "uselessness". No thought is given to the feelings of the child and its effect on her emotional development. A study conducted in rural Maharashtra, revealed that a number of people had named their daughter *Nakusa / Nakoshi,* which in Marathi means "unwanted". Most of these girls were the third or the fourth daughters of the parents and the parents hoped to get a son after having named the daughters so. According to the researchers, "a woman who herself had a bad childhood experience in terms of discrimination and mobility, naturally feels insecure in her married life, thus leading to a vicious cycle of gender deprivation and discrimination towards her daughter"(Shijith and Sekher 2015, p.75). The researchers reported that a woman was explaining the reason behind the name that they gave to their daughter in front of the latter and least affected by the fact that tears were rolling down *Nakusa's* eyes (Shijith and Sekher 2015: 77).

Giriraj (2004) conducted a study in Kadayampatti Panchayat of Salem district on 42 "rescued"families who were given facilities, assistance and awareness with the intention of changing their views regarding female foeticide by the organization named, "World Vision". The women respondents "regretted being women" and 83.33% believed that they would have killed their baby girls if the voluntary organisation had not come in at the right time. A female child was considered a liability by 90.48 % of the respondents (Girirraj 2004, as cited in Tandon and Sharma, 2006, Female foeticide and female infanticide section).

When such a girl, who is considered a "liability" by her family and has the idea firmly implanted in her mind grows up to be a woman, will she be able to look at her daughter differently? Will she be able to shake off the burden of "being unwanted" and reach out and "want" a girl child?

In the poem "When I (your daughter) was born Ma", a daughter asks her mother a very pertinent question - a question which many Indian mothers may not be able to answer honestly.

When I was born Ma
When I was born Ma,
Did you distribute *ladoos* (Indian sweet)?
Did *dadi* (paternal grandmother) sang songs
And *bua* (father's sister) danced along?
Was there partying and merrymaking
And bursting of crackers too?
Or was there silence?
Just as there was today...
When *chotti* (younger sister) was born?
Tell me,Ma...
Tell me,Ma...
Tell me, Ma...
Did you not want me???

ii. Economic Factors

India is basically a poor nation with a large number of Indians living way below the poverty line. Getting a girl married is an expensive proposition in most parts of the country. However, even if the parents are able to marry their girls off somehow, the fear that what has been given might not satisfy the in - laws keeps haunting them. Unfortunately, a number of brides are put to death simply because the insatiable greed of the in-laws. Deaths in India related to dowry demands have increased by almost 15 times since the mid-1980s. It rose from 400 women a year to around 5,800 a year by the middle of the 1990s. For the year 2019, the National Crime Bureau of India (NCBI) reported that majority of cases under crime against women (30.9%) were registered under the category "Cruelty by husband and or his relatives" (NCBI 2019: xii); and a total of 7115 dowry deaths were reported all over India (NCBI 2019, Table 1.2:2). The rising number may indicate that more cases are being reported as a result of efforts put in by the women's organizations.

Bose (2001) points out that even the much educated and financially well-off nurses from Kerala have to save money for dowry. It was found in a study conducted in Delhi by Damodaran (2013), that nurses found it difficult to save anything for their "different" needs which included "paying for the marriage and dowry expenses of younger women in the family" (Bose 2001:192).

iii. Social Factors

A young daughter is always told that she has to go to another house and only the son is capable of looking after the old parents. This way the idea of uselessness of a daughter is again infused in her. In fact, there are many very derogatory sayings in most cultures and subcultures. A common saying is, *''raising a daughter is like watering your neighbour's garden".*

The society places immense importance to the son. According to Desai (2015),

> "Sons are more likely than daughters to provide family labour on the farm or in a family business, earn wages and support their parents during old age. Upon marriage a son brings a daughter-in-law who brings rewards in the form of dowry" (Desai 2015: 140-141).

Singh *et al.* (2014) gave three major reasons for preference of male child-economic, socio-cultural and religious. The economic utility of the son is being an earning member whose earnings remain within the family. The daughter on the other hand has to be married and given a "dowry" because of which she appears to be a financial liability. The socio-cultural utility is ingrained in the minds of the members of patriarchal families which strongly believes that only the son carries forward the family line. There is also a belief that certain religious duties, such as lighting the funeral pyre of the parents, so that they can hope to achieve salvation, can be performed only by the sons. One wonders as to whether salvation is indeed possible in such cases where the parents have themselves killed their own daughters so as to get this son for lighting their funeral pyre. For society, the women are "simply good for nothing".

As Chibber,B. (2018) writes, "In a patriarchal society, women often suffer in silence, often deprived of personal liberty and bound by rules made by the allegedly superior males" (Chibber. 2018: 123).

All the above factors - personal, social and economic, simply add up to give the female a poor self-image and a sense of immense dependency on others. This perception perhaps, gets transferred to the way she interprets the importance of a girl child, even one of her own!

2. Killing the Thought during the Pre Conception and Conception Stages

Whatever little thought that might be left in the mind of a young bride is further brutally murdered during the pre-conception and conception stages. A married woman is blessed to be "*saubhagyawati" (*perpetually married) or "*dhudho nahao, puto phallo"* (May you bathe in milk and bear many sons). The phrase - bathing in milk, signifies not only the economic prosperity of the woman but that she should have enough milk to feed her many sons. There are no blessing for a girl child. The whole atmosphere in the house of a newly wed is filled with the talk of a male child. There are innumerable non-medical practitioners who give "medicines" for conceiving a male child. Some even recommend what should be done during conception to have a boy child.

There are verbal threats from the in-laws and the woman fears that she might be disowned if she gives birth to a girl. Any desire that might be there in the heart of the newlywed to bear a girl child is stifled. Pavithra, Dhanpal and Lokanath (2015) in a study on gender preference among 100 pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in Bangalore, reported preference for a son by 53% of women. In a similar study carried out in Bangalore on gender preference and anxiety among pregnant women, it was found that a high percentage i.e., 64% of respondents having two daughters seriously wanted a son. Only 6% of respondents with boys wanted a daughter. In terms of level of anxiety, 93% of pregnant women with two female children had high levels of anxiety as compared to 67% of those having one male and one female child and 27% having two male children (Yadav and Badri, 1997).

3. Female Foeticide

In the story of women's struggle, even science and technology seem to be playing a negative role. Today, it is possible to determine the sex of the child even before birth, thus making the task of killing the girl child even easier. 57% of the respondents gave modern sex determination methods and female foeticide as the reason for falling sex ratio in Mehsana district of Gujarat (Sharma, 2014).

There are a variety of methods available for determining the sex of the unborn child. The most common and popular one, well within the means of most families living in India, is the method of conducting ultrasound. The ultrasound technique has proven to be fatal for the female foetus in the country. The medical community was fast to recognise the money - making opportunity which the technique offered. The portable ultrasound machine allows doctors to

go from house to house in towns and villages, imploring people to make use of its services in doing away with the female foetus. Cousins (2017) reported on the comment of a doctor, who worked in a reputed medical institute in Haryana as, "The ultrasound was India's biggest curse. A doctor wants money and a woman wants to know the sex of her child - it's a mutual benefit and both keep their mouths shut" (Cousins, 2017:1). Presently, ultrasound has become an efficient sex-selection device. (Warade, 2013, Conclusion section, para.1). The next step after an ultrasound and detection of a female foetus, abortion is done in many cases.

Chandan (2008) conducted a micro demographic study among Punjabi communities of Gurdaspur district in Punjab and reported that 55.3% of respondents went for ultrasound to detect the sex of the unborn baby and 83.3% of female foetuses were aborted.

Sahni et al. (2008) collected records and analyzed data from 33,524 deliveries at one hospital from1900 to 2006, over a time period of 10 decades and concluded that the sex ratio dipped significantly after 1980. This coincided with the ultrasound machines coming in use. It was found that up to the year 1979 the sex ratio was 935 and post 1980 it came down to 892. In those cases where the first born was a girl, the ratio further fell down to 716.

Even in a place like Delhi which has a high percent of educated population and supposed to be "broad minded Indians"; the picture is dismal. A study titled "Analysis of Trends of Sex Ratio at Birth of Hospitalized Deliveries in the state of Delhi", looked at the entire phenomenon of declining sex ratios in the capital between the years 1993 and 2002. The study revealed that if the first born was a boy, then the sex ratio at birth was 959 per 1000 males. When the first born was a girl it came down to almost 50% i.e. 542 girls per 1000 boys. For the third order of birth, when the first two were daughters, it came down drastically to 219 girls per 1000 boys (Verghese, Aruldas and Jeemon, 2005).

The Hindustan Times, a popular Indian newspaper, reported on October 16, 2016, that eighty-nine (89) hospitals and nursing homes in Delhi had reported sex ratio at birth of 800 girls or less for 1000 boys; and were issued a show cause notice to explain the abnormal ratio. The Delhi health minister, Mr. Satyender Jain said that in some nursing homes the sex ratio at birth was even as low as 300 girls per 1000 boys (Eighty-nine hospitals in Delhi get notices over poor sex ratio, 2016, October 16, The Hindustan Times). This short newspaper report speaks volumes about the status of the girl child in urban India.

Action AID (2008) reported an interview conducted with some medical practitioners who "justified sex selection abortions as being a 'social duty', which prevented the ill treatment of unwanted daughters and helped with population control" (Action AID, 2008:15).

Chakraborty and Sinha (2006) used "fixed effects model of pooled least squares for the last four decennial census data across fifteen major states of India" and examined the determinants of declining child sex ratio in India. They reported that factors such as female literacy, female work force participation and economic growth do not result positively in reducing problems related to female survival.

> "It is alarming to note that sex ratio of age cohort 0-6 is inversely related to female education and female economic activity rate with relatively higher elasticity coefficients

for urban India; catalysed by the spread of sex determination tests and sex selective abortions, which played a key role in worsening the juvenile sex ratio" (Chakraborty and Sinha, 2006 :16).

Yadav (2018) in the study of socio-economic aspects of child sex ratio, since 1991 with special reference to Uttar Pradesh, found the impact of female literacy rate on the child sex ratio negative. As the female literacy rate increased the child sex ratio decreased.

The situation is showing no signs of improvement. Unfortunately, the policies of the government also do not provide much relief. As Follett (2020) points out in the article, "Neo -Malthusianism and Coercive Population Control in China and India" that, "State based two child policies have increased sex selective abortions and neglect of female children contributing to a skewed sex ratio"(Follett, 2020:23).

4. Female Infanticide

Female infanticide is the deliberate killing of baby girls because of the preference for male child. It is mainly because of the low worth associated with the birth of females. In a study carried out in ten villages of Tirupati, Rural Mandal in Chittoor district, it was found that as high as one-third of the respondents were unhappy at the birth of the girl child (Ramana and Rani, 2015). Another study which compared knowledge, attitude and behaviour of working and nonworking women towards foeticide, reported that 56 % of working women and 43.2 % of working women considered a "girl child still a curse" (Malviya, 2010). Rana (2013) reported that 40 % respondents expressed happiness at the birth of their first daughter. This percentage declined to 10.46 for the second daughter and nil at the birth of the third and fourth daughter (Rana, 2013:144). Some mentioned that the arrival of the third daughter gave them heartache" (Rana, 2013:146). Others said that it was like a "bolt from the blue" (p.146). One respondent reported that when her third daughter was born her mother-in-law said, "*ek aur jalaha aa gaya*" (one more burden has come) and nicknamed her *Pasourre,* meaning trouble (Rana, 2013:149).

There are various cruel methods by which a female child is put to death. Aravamudan (2007) describes many cruel methods in her book, "Disappearing Daughters". Many research studies have also given details of the horrific methods used either by the mothers themselves or by family members.

5. Killing the Girl Child – Death by Neglect

The problems faced by a girl child are many. The so called "lucky" girl, who is not killed in the womb or soon after she is born, is less likely to receive immunization, nutrition or medical treatment as compared to a male child.

In a study conducted in Himachal Pradesh (Rana, 2013), it was found that 52.66 % of the respondents breast-fed their female children for a period of six months or less and only three percent were fed for more than eighteen months. But when it came to the male child, 9.67 % were fed for less than six months or less and 37.67 % for more than 18 months. The study also

reported that 83.66 % respondents took their sons to hospitals for treatment. The percentage of parents taking their daughter to hospitals was only 41.33%. Similarly, 82.48 % sent their sons to private schools for education as compared to 58.76 % of respondents who sent their daughters to private schools. In the report "Health in India" based on National Sample Survey on Household Social Consumption related to health for the period July 2017 to June 2018, it was found that in the age group of 0 – 4yrs, 9.5 % male children were hospitalized as compared to only 4.9 % females in this same age group in the rural areas. In the urban area, 7.9 % of male children got hospitalized as compared to 4.7% females. Similarly, for the age group 5 – 14yrs, 11.8 % males in rural areas and 10.8% in urban areas were hospitalized as against 7.1 % females in rural and 6.9 % in urban areas (National Sample Survey Office, 2018 Statement 3.9: 33).Another study used the data from India's National Family Health Survey of earlier years i.e. 1992-93, 1998-99 and 2005-06. This was to research on the discrimination among children aged 0 - 35 months and concluded that daughters do undergo discrimination in comparison to sons, irrespective of the sibling composition and at all levels of birth order (Rajan and Philip, 2018: 249).

It is almost as if the parents and society are punishing the girls for being born.

There are also issues related to the safety of a girl child. According to Karlekar (1995),

> "Control of her sexuality and its safe transference into the hands of the husband is of primary importance. Concern over the conduct of the sexually vulnerable girl is responsible for the continuance of the practice of early marriage. Well over 50% of girls continue to be married below the legally permissible age of eighteen years, as has been recorded in successive census reports and substantiated by field studies. Though the age of marriage is rising gradually, a large number of girls are barely out of their teens when they leave their natal homes for another unknown residence. Subsequent expectations and relationships are often stressful and confusing for those who are essentially still children. Most important, of course, is adjustment to the conjugal relationship. Marital rape, which is not recognized as a crime under Indian law, is nonetheless widespread. It is quite possible that many victims of marital rape are often unsuspecting children" (Karlekar 1995: 56-57).

The survey of 2019 of National Crime Bureau of India (NCBI) reported that 35.3% of all crimes against children were in the category of "protection of children from Sexual Offences including child rape"(NCBI, 2019: xii). Out of 73,138 children reported missing in 2019; 52,049 were females (NCBI, 2019: xv).

Conclusion

Therefore it appears that a girl child throughout her life is made to feel "unwanted" and "useless". As she grows up in a deprived and uncaring environment, the notion that she is a "burden" is strongly ingrained in her mind. The only way by which the parents can lighten this "burden" is by getting her married. But marriage does not come cheap. There is dowry which has to be given to the boy's family; perhaps as a token for relieving the parents of their

"burden" and taking it on their own shoulders. Since the new family has "obliged" her by taking her into their fold, she must pay back by carrying forward the family lineage and name. That unfortunately, in an Indian society, only a son is eligible to do. This might appear to be the reason behind the killings. But it could well be a sum total of all the experiences that the "unwanted" girl child has had as she grew from a child to a woman, irrespective of the income group of the family she belonged to or the education that she might have had the fortune of receiving. At present the sex ratio in India stands at 934 females to 1000 males (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2021).A lot needs to be done to stop the inhuman practices and the efforts are to be made at all levels; individual, family, society, national and international.

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Malabar Woods: Colonial Encirclement for Scientific Conservation or Systematic Exploitation?

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Abstract

Malabar forests had been known in India's forest history as producing high quality of Teak. But these teak trees were mercilessly cut and destroyed for ship building purpose during the company administration in Malabar. The article appears interesting in the sense that this was done much before the promulgation of Forest acts which supposedly claimed to have been legislated to implement 'scientific forestry' for Indian forests which were being denuded and destroyed by the pre-colonial administration. So the Malabar forest destruction opens up a new arena of study in the forest history of India. That calculated forest destruction for colonial interests was the main intention of forest administrators and this was carefully concealed underthe notion of scientific forestry. Malabar forests were first among the equals in regard to the realization of this motive. Thus the essay offers a separate niche to the study of colonial ecological history in the way of mapping the destruction of Teak forests of Malabar.

Keywords: *Colonial administration, East India Company, Industrial Revolution, Ship Building, Malabar Teak, Scientific Conservation, Forest Rangers, Teak Felling, Forest Exploitation, Ship Building*

Introduction

Malabar offers great resource potential as an ecological resource hub for teak timber, which attracted colonial investors seeking to artificially regenerate timber trees. These resources included forest resources, human resources, and even the environment itself. During the first few years of Colonial administration, there was the shameless cutting of Teak trees which disrupted the ecological balance and biodiversity. Nevertheless, systematic exploitation of forest resources in Malabar began during the late 18th century.

The Reasons That Led To the Survey.

Scientific Forestry, however, began under the excuse of pre-colonial Indian forests being destroyed. A study by Richard Grove (Grove, 1995: 467) explains that the primary motivation for forest conservancy in India was the threat posed by a changing climate, which results in extensive state forest control and the exclusion of private investment in forestry. His view is that desiccation poses a serious threat to Indian Environment, which was successfully propagated by East India Company surgeons like William Roxburgh, Alexander Gibson,

Edward Balfour, John Ellerton Stocks and John McClelland. This continued to pre-occupy the official mind of Government between the period 1850-39, and 1877-78 which were period of serious droughts, and are rapidly followed by the initiation of a state program designed to strengthen forest protection and legislation But these legislations only legitimized forest destructions as the East India Company was the chief manipulator of Timber trade which was a major part of Mercantile economic relation that England had with India at that time. This led to the conducting of several surveys to identify strong timber yielding trees, and Malabar was no exception to this as it is a chief Teak yielding region. These surveys assuredly were conducted primarily to carry on the process of exploitation under the guise of conservation or scientific forestry.

What The Foresters Actually Intended?

With the onset of the Industrial Revolution and British territorial expansion in India, forests came to play an increasingly crucial part in the colonial economy. The watchword of the time was to bring more extensive forest areas under cultivation, and the whole policy tended in that direction (Ribbentrop, 1900: 59). This was naturally a transitory stage. The demands of both trade and population increased, and in consequence, the forests diminished in size. An indication of the escalating demand in Teak is evident in the increase in tonnage of British merchant ships from 12,78,000 tonnes in 1778 to 49,37,000 tonnes in 1860, and a large portion of it came from India. Actually, these changes brought about by the British have to be viewed in the context of social changes within Britain. The new rulers came to India with a specific history which to a large extent influenced their attitude to the extensive forests of India. Woodlands were often viewed negatively by the English. The cutting down of trees and forests was seen as a sign of progress. Forests represented a place of struggle between landlords and the disorderly crowd. The clearing of forests for agriculture was also a sign of improvement. The woods were regarded as a managed and controlled landscape rather than an untamed forest. In British India, the British ruler's attitude to forests was to clear the land for cultivation and progress. They wanted to gain control over forests through cultivation. These forests thus became a place to be 'controlled', power enforced, and a place where progress could be demonstrated by extending cultivation in these forested zones. The theories were new, but the effects were the same, thus obscuring the true transformation of ecology and forest dwellers, who were depended on it.

Colonial India thus witnessed such assertion of controlling trend. Many administrative changes in the last two decades of the eighteenth century actually strengthened the nascent imperial rule to the extent of exerting 'control'. This 'control' was established through implementation of strategic and commercial moves, revenue generation, and through the subjugation of forest lands for timber generation. Therefore the object of Forest administration as clearly stated by R.S. Troup, the Assistant Inspector General of Forests in 1917 (Troup,1917:10) was mainly to conserve and improve the forests in the first place; and secondly to secure to the taxpayers the greatest immediate benefit from their commercial working.

Daniel. R. Headrick has regarded science and technology as 'tools of empire' building process and also pointed out that these worked to shape the real motives of the European imperialists for gaining control of Asia (Headrick:1981). This science and technology was applied to gain control over the forest lands of Asia. Malabar was no exception to this process. The earliest efforts at some protection of timber resulted in the formation of a timber syndicate in Malabar in 1796, though it collapsed after some time. However colonial authorities felt that something must be done to keep up supplies and Ribbentrop regarded this period as the first approach to our present system of Forest conservancy, which was surely to conceal the intention of exploitation (Ribbentrop,1900).

Malabar Teak and Its Extraction

Malabar witnessed an intensification of the destruction of its forests to meet the demand for timber for shipbuilding. No supervision was exercised over the felling operations and a large number of trees were felled and lay rotting on the ground (Stebbing, 1922:4). Private contractors, both European and Indian, were chiefly responsible for this destruction. In fact over 6.500.000 deadar sleepers were extracted from Yamuna forests only in the years between 1869-1885 (Paul, 1871:122). Timber requirements were 'the first and by far most formidable' of the forces thinning Indian forests in Malabar as well (Cleghorn,1860: 60).

Entering into the main theme requires looking at the world politics of the time, which may take us to situate the crux of the situation. Modernization in the mid 18th century has its credibility to the development of the Industrial Revolution in England. But modernization is remotely sensed or remains unprogressive when it is not accompanied by scientific innovation. Scientific innovation led to the invention of machines and consequent surplus production and extraction of natural commodities. In the end, over the ensuing decades, England became the dominant force in Europe and began expanding its colony worldwide. In addition to dumping finished products and mining raw materials to satisfy the growing factories, timbers were also needed to build ships. Thus Shibi Jhonson mentioned that there were some other reasons behind this expansion (Johnson, 2010: 509). The making of the large vessels became very exigent by the 1790s (Johnson, 2010). The East India Company was seeking a new supply line of shipbuilding materials. Malabar appeared to be the only answer (Johnson, 2010). The British Empire had thus far managed to retain its monopoly on colonial expansion. This changed when France entered the fray. English interests in India lay not only in the raw materials it provided, but also in the Timbers it produced. Back then, Malabar Coast was known for its vast teakwood reserves (Johnson:2010). Teak had a very demanding role in England. But surprisingly this teak was supplied to Bombay dockyard for shipbuilding (Johnson, 2010). Napoleon Bonaparte's rise did have an important impact on Britain's internal policies, but intensified however the production of warships rapidly in Bombay (Rodriques, 2012:809). In the wake of British political hegemony over the Malabar region, the ratio of supply of shipbuilding teak was heavily reduced in the country. As an active and powerful constant for colonies, there was a huge demand for merchant vessels and warships in England.

Thus in view of the growing deficiency of Oak in England the court of Directors in 1805 in a dispatch enquired about the King's Navy's requirement of permanent supply of Teak from Malabar (Stebbing, 1922:6). This inquiry led to the immediate appointment of a forest committee whose reports showed that the capacity of forests in mature timber had been overrated. Royalty right in Teak was vested in the company prohibiting all further unauthorized felling of such trees. Decision was taken to appoint a special officer acquainted with forests for preservation and improved production of Teak and other timbers suitable for Shipbuilding. Before this growing demand for teak, Malabar as a colony had to face shameless exploitation of the teak forest. If we observe on a statistical report we can form an idea of how much timbers were cut in a year on an average. "The total tonnage of English merchant ships increased about fourfold during the period between 1788 and 1860. An average sized ship swallowed up to 3000 loads of timber, which comes to 1, 50,000 cubic feet. In a 120 gun-three decker, about 5000 loads of timber, and in an 84 gun large two-decker, about 4,000 loads of timber would be required. A 74 gunship, therefore, clear the timber of 50 acres, a considerable plot of woodland. The average consumption of navy during the 1790s was estimated at 50,542 loads of timber." (Johnson, 2010) As Louiza Rodrigues showed, "in 1800 a frigate named Cornwallis of 1363 tons with 50 guns was built and launched by British for the first time at Bombay Dockyard" (Rodrigues, 2012). This incident was the pioneer of large shipbuilding industry. Mainly the British warships were made of abundant timber and it was available especially in Malabar Coast region (Rodrigues, 2012).

Scientific Surveys and Deep Enrouteinto Malabar Forests:

Malabar, a major timber-producing region, was delivered to the English East India Company in 1792 after the Third Mysore War marked the defeat of Tipu Sultan. Only after this had all necessary decisions been made in order to adequately document and find out the major wood resources of the Malabar Forest (Rodrigues,2012: 809). Lord Wellesley carried out successive surveys of the forest and provided information on the timber resources to the Company (Rodrigues, 2012). Captain Watson of the Police was appointed in 1806 the first conservator of forests, who within a couple of years established a timber monopoly throughout Malabar and practically annihilated more or less all private rights in the forests. However, due to general discontent among proprietors and traders, the post of Conservator was abolished in 1823. The benefits accrued to the forests were annihilated and unrestricted felling increased. Within a few years, the available supply of really first-class timber had reduced and prices had risen as a result of large forest areas being too heavily exploited by Governments and others. The first tangible step was taken in 1842 when Mr. Conolly, the collector of Malabar, created a seed farm and framed some simple rules in the interest of Forestry. He also started the practice of artificial regeneration of teak plants. This indeed marked the beginning of artificial teak plantations in Colonial India (Cleghorn, 1858). The years 1847 and 1856 saw the appointments of Gibson and Cleghorn as conservators of the Forests of Bombay. They both submitted reports in which, for the first time, the physical

value of Malabar's forest was highlighted. Both strongly urged that the Government claim and exercise the proprietary right to all of these forests, as well as enforce stricter controls and above all, enforce a ban on shifting cultivation. The seriousness of the situation was however not recognized. Louiza Rodrigues (2012) made a geographical description of the Malabar Coast region,

"The forests of Malabar were divided into those of north and south Malabar... the forest of north Malabar were divided into the Begur, Chedleth, Kanoth ranges. These forests comprises in all an area of 164,928 acres or nearly, 259 square miles. The forests of south Malabar were divided into three ranges of Nilambur, Amarambalam and Mannarghat. These comprised in all an area of 170.351 acres of 266 square miles." [29] (Rodrigues, 2012: 811)

East India Company exercised exclusive monopoly rights by taking under its control the entire Forest Administration of Malabar. In fact, Surveyor John Thomson gave his full report about the Malabar Coast. In this report, he described the importance of Teak trees as a major timber resource that could supply timber to the Bombay shipyard. Despite finding that teak trees were in abundance, his report was extremely valuable to the Company as it opened up a new path (Rodrigues, 2012: 812) More surveys were carried out which resulted in the classification of straight timber and its multiple varieties.

Finally, to enable control over the Malabar forest, the government passed an Act claiming that, "all private extraction of wood became an offence and punishable by law" (Rodrigues, 2012) Due to the increasing demands of timber another phase of exploitation was visible. The government convinced local proprietors to waive their claim over the land; in return they would be paid money as compensation (Rodrigues, 2012).

Smoothening of Extraction by Indian Agents

The English East India Company never worked alone to undertake this extraction process, but Indian merchants who worked to smoothen the supply of timber from Malabar to Bombay Dockyard assisted them. According to Public Department Diaries, the names of contractors in the early nineteenth century in Bombay were Bayon Chacooty, Chacora Moussa, Nusserwanji Jamsheiji, Ardeshir Dady, and Shapurji Callabhoy and Dadabhoy Rustamji (Rodrigues, 2012). Alexander Adamson, Forbes and Company, James Tate, and Taylor and Agnew were principal agency houses that also played a significant connecting role (Rodrigues, 2012). While timber merchants and local rulers could not supply timber in enough quantities when necessary for building ships, these agency houses were able to supply timber in huge amounts between the East India Company and timber merchants. Sometimes timber was purchased by brokers for the Bombay merchants. For transport of timber from the jungle to the riverside, elephants were used, as labour was very expensive in Malabar (Rodrigues, 2012: 813).

Yet, the trend of the colonial economy resulted in an enormous demand for more timber, as more connecting agents provided it, resulting in mass extraction. Within a few years,

timber-producing areas were located and timber extraction was facilitated. Lots of contracts between the East India Company and timber merchants were also signed. Timber was therefore available at very low prices during that time. Meanwhile, a decision was taken by the Bombay Government to remove the private trade and impose monopoly rights to the leading timber merchants of Malabar (Rodrigues, 2012:814).

Among several contractors, ChacoraMoussa was most influential in the timber monopoly. On 27 June 1806, Chacora Moussa signed an agreement that resulted in Chacora getting twelve years of monopoly rights to transport timber in all districts of Tellicherry. Though Moussa was given the monopoly rights there were some restrictions imposed on him. It was his responsibility to take great care of the forests and fallen trees and to prevent anyone from felling other trees. In every hundred trees felled, seven were crooked and corresponded to the mould. After he was entrusted, the government believed that reckless cutting of timber could be prevented. But it never happened. By 1807, the forests of Malabar already showed signs of depletion of huge trees. The British government took all the conservancy measures but no arrangements were made to situate, manage or regulate the forestfelling (Rodrigues: 2012).

However, this discussion raised pertinent questions. In the first place, was the monopoly system established in Malabar successful in keeping steady the process of conservation? Also, did conservation and the cutting of trees go hand in hand? Was the conservation of forests followed to conceal the real intention of making a profit through timber extraction and trade? After examining the statistical table we can say that timber woods were cut recklessly and there was no doubt about it. Other than that, these legal processes as well as the intermediation of local trades had accomplished nothing.

But the most significant thing is that the Malabar Forest destruction signaled the consciousness in Government that conservation was needed to carry on the process of exploitation. This started the process of conservation resulting in the promulgation of Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878 for other forest zones later on. Nonetheless, reckless cutting continued unabated, but in a more stringent way. Forests being divided into three classes namely; reserved, protected and village; now began to be more systematically exploited. Because of England's unfamiliarity with conservation culture, the government realized that to make a good profit from forestry they should conserve first.

Forest Conservation policy in Malabar: Conserving Only to Exploit.

The evolution of the British Forest policy in India spanned roughly over a period of seventy years (1880-1947). It also endeavored to explore the displacement and devastation of the forests and subsequent execution of several forest legislations. A country's forest policy is not framed by one stroke of the pen but it grows and evolves with time. The advent of the colonial framework led to a strange interplay of events that played a vital role in the setting up of well-knit administrative machinery for looking after the forest reserves of India. Indian

forestry faced great change and gradually denuded with the onslaught of Colonial conservation techniques and thus Malabar forests were no exception in this regard too. The writings of Ramchandra Guha and other environmental historians proved that British rule marked a vital role in the environmental history of India'(Guha and Gadgil, 1989: 141). The changed pattern of land use system, increasing deforestation, wildlife destruction, and change in ecological cycle appear to be the major studies of colonial ecological History. The present essay too, offers a significant contribution to the history of forestry in India in the sense that Colonial Forest History suffers from a great paradox in the way it claims to preserve the Indian forests but only follows rules that are destructive to the forests and led to its gradual denudation. Germany however is well known to have developed the concept of Forest Conservation and generated training in that direction. All the British Forest Rangers who were appointed to Indian Forests as Forest Inspector Generals were trained in Germany. So in general, the forest conservation system came from Germany. In supporting early forest policy, B. Ribbentrop said, "earlier administrators never thought of the significant part forests have always played" (Ribbentrop, 1900: 59). In the context of Malabar forest conservation, "the earliest record of these attempts is the formation of a timber syndicate in Malabar in 1796" and again he remarked, "Such effort did not improve matters, and led to the ruin of many valuable forests"(Ribbentrop,1900). Thus the depletion of teak resources led forest rangers to think and this added to their growing unrest. This has been expressed by Ribbentrop "A feeling of unrest sprang up and it was felt that something must be done to prevent the ultimate drying up of supply"(Ribbentrop, 1900:63). In his words, teak was considered a royal tree. Its regeneration appeared to be the first step. Thus, the motive of conservation of forests on behalf of the government led to the issue of an order by Bengal- Bombay Joint Commission, appointed to enquire into the internal circumstances of Malabar and to make regulations prohibiting the felling of teak below 21 inches in girth. Till 1805, everything was fine but after receiving the dispatch of the court of directors the situation changed. The order mentioned, "Kings Navy might, in view of the growing deficiency of oak in England depend on the permanent supply of teak timber from Malabar"(Ribbentrop, 1900: 64). This inquiry in fact appointed a new Forest Committee that enforced forest laws. The protection of Teak also became the priority of the Government. The teak trees were adequately guarded. Captain Watson was the special inspector who was in charge of this. In fact, it was Captain Watson who succeeded in getting the monopoly for Teak timbers. This monopoly was established throughout Malabar, Travancore and also abolished private rights completely (Ribbentrop, 1900;65). In 1831 the Indian Navy board recommended the re-establishment of the post for forest conservatorship.

As far as the record is concerned, Mr. Conolly the collector of Malabar, succeeded in creating the local forest department and framed local rules (Ribbentrop, 1900:67) and got surprised when he noticed that teak was vanishing rapidly. The preservation of forests became the prime intention of the British Government. These incidents proved that there was a heavy

need to preserve forests by any means. Finally, the Bombay Government appointed Dr. Gibson as the conservator of forests, after he had served for some years as an interim conservator in addition to his duties in connection with botanical gardens (Ribbentrop, 1900: 69). Dr. Gibson's report showed that the whole destruction happened during the early years through felling. On the contrary, the rapid increase of shifting cultivation aggravated the event. Dr. Cleghorn's report mentioned that the proprietary right should be claimed by the government in Malabar (Ribbentrop, 1900: 71). The year 1841 it was stated that all old leases and contracts stood cancelled and new agreements having suitable conditions that protected and safeguarded the future forest development in Malabar were issued (Ribbentrop,1900).

Conclusion:

It may be or as was considered, forest conservation was a great boon for colonial India. But was it really true? What was the actual truth behind this conservation? If it is supposed that the government was much concerned about deforestation, why did they not stop the commercialization of the timbers? Another point is, there was a huge demand for timber for royal naval ships, and just because they enforced the law against private extraction of woods that only supported their extraction further, although extraction of wood by private parties was prohibited that too only to make available the timbers for colonial extraction. Of course, private extraction of wood cannot be supported, but this was allowed to those contractors who supplied timbers to the East India Company and the contractors profited greatly in the process. Thus colonial infiltration to manipulate resources was initiated mostly being facilitated by the compradors and the ecological resources were no exception. So, social forestry with the employment of tribals was strictly not followed so that the *Dikus* or agents and outsiders could easily make the Teak timbers available to the company agents. Thus 'Scientific Forestry' was only a problem and never was a solution because pre-colonial forestry meant utilization of forest by the state authority without hindrance to primordial rights of the denizens of forests. State rights and community rights never clashed in the past. The state had its due share of forest products and the tribal community drew its sustenance without difficulty. But the colonial control over 'woodlands' gave the whole scenario a new colour. In the name of conservations, rapid colonial exploitation happened. The sacred forest was torn apart by vulgar commercialization. Over the two decades, Malabar had to face the huge timber extraction, ecological imbalance, and shameless colonial policy of forest destruction. In the twenty-first century, we cannot even think of this kind of rapidity of obliteration. Hopefully, the post-independence phase saw a huge trend of Forest conservation and joint forest management being projected, which is characterized by the growing ratio of the plantation. But this artificial plantation as a substitute for rapid deforestation can hardly replace thousands of plant species of micro-organisms as well as animals of varying sizes destroyed in the past. To this day we do not even have a complete list of all living organisms from a single hectare of any tropical, humid forest. We do not have complete knowledge of

how populations of these thousands of species interact with each other. Our knowledge about the growth patterns of tropical forest trees, or of the timing and periodicity of their seed production is limited. How can then one apply the scientific method in deciding on how to manipulate a resource base such as a tropical humid forest? The question remained unsolved more during colonial times. This is mainly because as Marc Bloch in his great study of French Agriculture remarked that "there are times when for once the formulations of problems are more urgent than their solution". The problem was "scientific forestry" and no native foresters were capable enough neither to identify this problem nor to resist its development. The tribals realizing it to be a great danger protested but they were systemically marginalized and their struggle gradually shaded off to the mainstream movement.

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A Study of Aggression and Academic Procrastination among Students

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Abstract

In the prehistoric age, aggression helped our ancestors in their survival struggle. Although considered a negative character in modern society, it is still prevalent. Aggression is a behavior directed to harm others but the other one tries to escape from such harm. Personal, environmental, and situational factors influence aggression. Procrastination is an intentional delay by choosing one activity over the other. Delaying work earlier and making a last-minute rush for completing the task may cause aggression among students. The study explores the relationship between aggression and four areas of academic procrastination and assesses the aggression among students with high and low levels of academic procrastination. In this quantitative study, the normative survey method was used. The sample of 248 ninth-class students was collected using the convenience sampling method. Data was collected in the academic session 2021-2022 immediately after the COVID-19 lockdown. The tools used were Aggression Scale by R. L. Bharadwaj (2008) and the Academic Procrastination Scale by Ashok Kalia and Manju Yadav (2015). There is a significant and positive relationship between aggression and academic procrastination in four sub-areas. Students with high and low levels of academic procrastination differ significantly in aggression.

Key Words: *Aggression and Academic Procrastination*

In the prehistoric age, aggression helped our ancestors in their survival struggle. But in subsequent evolutionary stages when social groups started forming, more and more pro-social behavior, team efforts, and interdependence ensured successful survival. This reduced the importance and acceptance of aggressive behavior. In modern societies, although aggression is looked at as a maladaptation and a negative personality character, the prevalence of aggression is still a common phenomenon. It is present in one form or the other. This may be attributed to the complexities of modern life. Life in the 21st century is full of tensions, instability, cut-throat competitions, and power struggles. Materialism, consumerism, and the commercialization of every aspect of life have changed social structures. It has changed the way individuals think and behave in societies. Individual desires are mounting higher and higher all of which cannot be fulfilled. Thus, unfulfilled desires, fears, and increased societal demands are common experiencesof people, including adolescents. Masaeva and

Lechieva (2016)[1] have pointed out that alienation, anxiety, and spiritual emptiness are also experienced by children.

Adolescence is a transition phase of one's life. Physical, psychological, and social changes are taking place simultaneously at this age. Adolescents can face adjustment problems in this phase of life. And this probability of facing adjustment problems increases even more in the present socio-economic scenario. There are so many rapid changes taking place in this technology-driven 21st century that these changes baffle adolescents resulting in maladjustment and aggression. Veeraraghavan (2006)[2] has noted that unfulfilled desires, interruptions in activities, and constant unfavorable comparisons give rise to aggression among adolescents. Studies have found that personal, environmental, and situational factors influence aggression. Aggression is a study area for many social psychologists as it has long-lasting effects on an individual's health as well as health of the society.

Aggression

The meaning of the term aggression differs widely for the general public and social psychologists. As aggression can appear in varying forms and degrees, it becomes increasingly complex to define the construct. It can cover minor to more serious actions, likeyelling, criticizing, insulting, kicking, and poking to actions like shooting, or killing. As a psychological construct, it is defined as aggression is a behavior that is directed to harm others but the other one tries to escape from such harm. (DeWall, et al. 2012) Thus, it is clear from this definition that aggression is essentially a behavior. It is neither a thought nor an emotion alone. Aggression is also intentional. It is intended to cause harm. Aggressive behavior can be expressed physically or verbally or through gestures. Both physical and verbal aggression can be direct or indirect in nature. Aggression is direct when the object of aggression is physically present but it is termed as indirect when the object of aggression is not physically present. (DeWall, et al. 2012)[3] Aggression can be a displaced aggression where the target is substituted with someone else, especially an innocent person and he becomes the victim. Here the aggression gets displaced from the actual target to a substituted target. Active aggression and passive aggression are also one type of classification of aggression. Aggression is active when the individual gets involved in harmful behavior. And it is called passive aggression when an individual although in a position to help, withholds the help to the target. (Bushman & Huesmann 2010)[4] based on motives or function aggression can be reactive aggression or proactive aggression.

Aggression has a social context and is related to others in society i.e. it is interpersonal in nature. It can involve certain emotions towards the object that is intended to be harmed or has a certain motive for the behavior. Social norms are often neglected in aggression. Aggression, physical as well as non-physical has negative outcomes. Apart from other forms of aggression, verbal aggression, and hostility are found to have more detrimental effects (Nevill, et al. 2022)[5]. The nature of aggression can change with age and can differ with gender. Even though aggression helps an individual in the short run, in the long run, its effects are

detrimental, hence social psychologists are interested in understanding the factors responsible for aggression and tried to study various forms of aggression and its functions.

Factors responsible for developing aggressive behavior can be categorized into the following heads. (Rajdeep Kaur 2020)[6]

1) Biological factors: like biological characteristics, hormone levels, etc.
2) Situational factors: unpleasant events, provocation
3) Personal factors: personality, poor emotional control
4) Interpersonal factors: family relations, peer relations, mass media
5) School factors: classroom context, school environment
6) Cultural and community environment

There are many theories developed for aggression. They provide a theoretical framework for studying the causes and consequences of aggression. The frustration–aggression theory states that frustration occurs when goal-directed behavior is hindered or blocked which leads to aggression. There is an association between aggression and frustration. Novaco, R.W. (1991)[7] has noted that an individual will tend to be aggressive when his efforts or wish to reach his destination in time are obstructed. Aggression is also explained by behaviorist theories as a learned behavior conditioned by reinforcement or through stimulus-response bonds. A general aggression model is developed which has incorporated biological, social, cognitive, personality, and other processes in its framework. (DeWall, et al. 2012)[3] The latest theory proposed for aggression is I^{3}Theory. This is a broad meta-theory. The theory states that the urge for aggression in an individual is increased in situations where more provoking and threatening factors are available but at the same time,adequate restraint is lacking. Students tend to be aggressive when it is perceived that aggression is the easiest way to get desired things quickly. Understanding aggression among students is very important for teachers and parents as it can affect their academic performance and career prospects.

Academic Procrastination

Procrastination is a Latin word meaning delaying or postponing. Postponing certain activities or decisions intentionally can be termed procrastination. Procrastination is an intentional or conscious choice of one activity over the other. It is a commonly observed trait among people. Even after knowing the consequences of the delay, individuals put off doing certain work. This tendency is called procrastination. Procrastination is a behavioral trait. It is a person's disposition to delay actions. (Hussain & Sultan 2010)[8] Procrastination is studied as a personality trait and/or as a conditional response by researchers. When procrastination is done in academic work, it is known as academic procrastination. Academic Procrastination is recurring, studentstend to procrastinate in most tasks and continue postponing one or the other tasks. The procrastinator fails to do the right work at the right time. He either did not start the task or was unable to continue the task. This may lead to failure, stress, or emotional disturbances. Ferrari & Pychyl (2008)[9] have found that procrastination has increased physical and psychological problems for students. When students fail to set a pace with their course

of study or could not meet high-performance expectations, they tend to procrastinate. Students procrastinate academic work for indulging in pleasurable activities. Earlier studies have noted that Students procrastinate academic work for several reasons. Academic procrastination is generally in four areas of procrastination namely procrastination in homework, procrastination in preparation for exams, procrastination in project work, and procrastination in co-curricular activities

Delaying work earlier and making a last-minute rush for completing the task may cause aggression among students.They can exhibit aggression in one or the other form. Aggression can be direct or indirect. It can be hostile or instrumental or displaced aggression. It can take any other form too. Thus it will be interesting to study the relationship between academic procrastination and aggression and if there is any significant difference in aggression among students with high or low levels of academic procrastination.

The pandemic period was marked by the rise in psycho-social problems of the population as reported by the research and official records of these periods. One such problem is an increase in aggression among adolescents. It is a cause of concern and requires immediate attention. There are some studies on aggression among children but few on school students of adolescent age. Although aggression and academic procrastination have been focused on by very few researchers, the question of how aggression and academic procrastination are related remains unclear. A study exploring the relationship between aggression and academic procrastination among school-going students particularly after the COVID-19 lockdown is rare. This points to the need for the study. Thus, the present research aims to study the relationship between aggression and academic procrastination among students. The study also explores the relationship between aggression and four areas of academic procrastination. It will be interesting to assess the aggression among students with high and low levels of academic procrastination after the COVID-19 lockdown. The present study will extend the past research and provide a further understanding of the role of academic procrastination in instigating aggression among school-going students. Past research has demonstrated the negative effect of both aggression and academic procrastination in the overall development of the personality, present study will provide guidelines to work further on these variables. It will be beneficial to the stakeholders too.

Objectives:

The objectives of the present study areas follows

1) To study the relationship between Aggression and Academic Procrastination in four sub-areas (homework, preparation for exams, project work, and co-curricular activities).

2) To study the difference in aggression among students with high or low levels of academic procrastinationin four sub-areas (homework, preparation for exams, project work, and co-curricular activities).

3) To compare differences in aggression across gender and area among students with high or low levels of academic procrastination

Methodology

This was a quantitative study. The normative survey method was used for the study. The Nagpur and Wardha Districts of Maharashtra state in India were the geographical areas under study. The sample was selected using the convenience sampling method. Students studying in the ninth class were selected as samples. Data was collected in the academic session 2021-2022 immediately after the COVID-19 lockdown was over and the students started going to schools in Maharashtra. A total of 248 students were selected as a sample. The tools used for the data collection were Aggression Scale by R. L. Bharadwaj (2008)[10] and the Academic Procrastination Scale by Ashok Kalia and Manju Yadav (2015)[11]. The data was tabulated using the test norms and descriptive statistics were used to find the results. Finally, the findings and conclusions were drawn.

Findings and Discussions

Relationship between aggression and academic procrastination

The relationship between aggression and academic procrastination and between aggression and four areas of academic procrastination is shown in Table 1.

The value of 'r' to be significant for 246 degrees of freedom at the .05 level is .127 and at the .01 level is .166 calculated by interpolation. The obtained 'r' values are more hence they are significant at both levels. The calculatedvalue of the 'r' between aggression and academic procrastination of students is .75, this indicatesa significant and positive relationship between aggression and academic procrastination. The coefficient of correlation 'r between aggression and procrastination in homework is .71 which is positive and significant. Thus, it can be said that the more procrastination in homework by students, the more will be aggression among students. The correlation between aggression and procrastination in preparation for exams is found to be .61 which is significant and positive. A significant positive correlation between aggression and procrastination in project work is identified and the same is identified between aggression and procrastination in co-curricular activities. Thus, it can be summed up that there is a significant and positive relationship between aggression and academic procrastination and its four areas, the more academic procrastination the more aggression, and the less academic procrastination the less aggression.

Aggression among students with high and low levels of Academic Procrastination

Table 2 exhibits the comparison of aggression among students with high and low levels of academic procrastination in four sub-areas namely homework, preparation for exams, project work, and co-curricular activities.

The significant t-value at 0.01 level indicates that students with high and low levels of academic procrastination significantly differ in aggression and the difference is in favor of high academic procrastinators. The difference in Aggression is also found to be significant between students with high and low levels of procrastination in homework, procrastination in preparation for exams, procrastination in project work, and procrastination in co-curricular

activities. Students with high and low levels of academic procrastination and procrastination in four sub-areas differ significantly in aggression

Differences in aggression across Gender and Area among students with high or low levels of academic procrastination

Differences in aggression across Gender and Area among students with high or low levels of academic procrastination is shown in Table 3

There is a marked significant difference across gender and area in aggression among students with high and low levels of academic procrastination. Both boys and girls exhibit significant differences in aggression when compared between high and low academic procrastinators. High and low academic procrastinating students from both urban and rural areas are found to differ significantly in aggression levels. Thus, across the demographic variables of gender and area, aggression levels differ significantly between high and low academic procrastinators and procrastinators in four sub-areas.

Conclusions:

The present study focused on finding the relationship between aggression and academic procrastination in four areas. The results showed that the coefficient of correlation between aggression and academic procrastination is 0.75 and between aggression and four areas of procrastination are 0.71, 0.61, 0.62, and 0.60 respectively. Hence it is concluded that there is a positive and significantly higher level of relationship between aggression and academic procrastination. The positive value of correlation indicates that aggression and academic procrastination tend to move in the same linear direction. When academic procrastination is more, the aggression level is found to be more and when academic procrastination is less, the aggression level is also found to be less. This finding is substantiated by the findings of Chandwani, (2022)[12] who noted a moderately positive relationship between aggression and procrastination.

Further academic procrastination in four areas namely, Procrastination in homework, preparation for exams, project work, and co-curricular activity are also found to be positively and significantly correlated to aggression. The obtained coefficient of correlation indicates a higher degree of correlation. The Changes in all four areas of academic procrastination are affecting the same type of changes in aggression. When the procrastination in homework, preparation for exams, project work, and co-curricular activity is more, the aggression level among students is found to be more, and when academic procrastination in four areas is found to be less, the aggression level is also found to be less among students. This result is similar to the resultsof Kiamarsi & Aryapooran (2015)[13] have identified a positive correlation between academic procrastination, aggression, and internet addiction.

The study further aims to compare the difference in aggression levels between high and low academic procrastinators. The obtained t - values, as shown in Table 2 are significant at 0.01 levels. Thus it is concluded from the results that students with high and low levels of

academic procrastination differ significantly in their aggression levels. The mean difference is in favor of high academic procrastinators which denotes that high academic procrastinators have higher levels of aggression than aggression levels of low academic procrastinators. The mean difference in the levels of Aggression is also found to be significant between students with high and low levels of academic procrastination in four areas namely procrastination in homework, preparation for exams, project work, and co-curricular activities. It signifies that students with higher procrastination in four areas have higher aggression levels than students with lower procrastination. The findings are similar to the theoretical framework of the constructs. The study of Zvereva et al. (2015)[14] has pointed out the presence of procrastination and different levels of manifestation of indirect aggression at a young age. In a meta-analysis Steel (2007)[15] has found that academic procrastination and irrational thoughts were positively correlated and procrastination has an effect on mood, a negative effect on happiness, and state agitation.

Another aim of the study was to find out the differences in aggression levels across gender and area among students with high and low academic procrastination. The conclusion can be drawn that high and low academic procrastinating students are found to differ significantly in aggression across gender and area. The mean difference in aggression scores is in favor of high academic procrastinators. This implies that high academic procrastinators across gender and area are higher in their aggression levels as compared to low academic procrastinators. The conclusion so arrived at is all categories boys, girls, urban and rural students, show significant mean differences in aggression when high and low academic procrastination students are compared on aggression, and irrespective of gender and area, the high and low academic procrastinators certainly differ in their aggression levels.This finding is in line with Hussain & Sultan (2010)[8] who have noted that procrastination is not a gender-based trait or gender restricted but works across the gender and has its effect on both sexes. Ucar et al. (2021)[16] also reported that academic procrastination did not show gender differences in online learners.

Thus, the study concludes that academic procrastination has a clear impact on the aggression of students. Similarly, Hussain & Sultan (2010)[8] reported in their study that procrastinating students develop hostile and intimidating attitudes resulting in insulting and aggressive temperament. The study has wide implications for all those engaged in the educational sector. Strategies for controlling academic procrastination will go a long way in controlling aggression too.

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Table 1

Correlation between Aggression and Academic Procrastination and four sub-areas

	Mean	S D	'r'- value
Aggression	68.41	12.23	
Academic Procrastination	56.05	11.91	.75**
Procrastination in Homework	21.58	5.25	.71**
Procrastination in Preparation for Exams	12.71	2.93	.61**
Procrastination in Project Work	11.35	2.86	.62**
Procrastination in Co-curricular Activities	10.41	2.59	.60**

Note: N = 248 d. f. = 246 ** significant at 0.01 level

Table 2

Aggressionamong students with high and low levels of Academic Procrastination

			Aggression				
		Levels	N	Mean	S D	d. f.	t-value
Academic Procrastination	High	54	83.40	11.73			
	Low	37	54.81	6.18	89	15.12*
Procrastination in Homework	High	60	81.7	12.29			
	Low	32	55.47	7.27	90	12.86*
Procrastination in Preparation for Exams	High	41	81.02	11.16			
	Low	32	55.94	6.79	71	11.83*
Procrastination in Project Work	High	38	82.42	12.91			
	Low	38	55.34	6.97	74	11.38*
Procrastination in Co-curricular Activities	High	50	80.36	12.7			
	Low	28	57.29	8.50	76	9.57*	

*Note:**significant at.01 level

Table 3

Differences in aggression acrossGender and Area

			Aggression			
Gender	A. Pro Levels	N	Mean	S D	d. f.	t-value
Boys	High	32	86.19	12.33		
	Low	14	55.14	5.59	44	11.76*
Girls	High	22	79.36	9.69		
	Low	23	54.61	6.63	43	9.94*
Area						
Urban area	High	31	84.61	12.48		
	Low	17	57.06	5.86	46	10.39*
Rural area	High	23	81.78	10.67		
	Low	20	52.9	5.93	41	11.15*

*Note: A. Pro stands for Academic Procrastination**significant at.01 level

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Reading Orientalism in John Tallis's Map of Northern India

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Abstract

Cartographic history, in the last couple of decades has witnessed an increasing influence of Edward Said's Orientalism. Colonial discourses created an image of India that reflected its own prejudices and stereotypes. Colonial Maps of India as part of this discourse reflect this perception, and intent. Deriving from 'orientalism' in general and 'imagined geographies' in particular the present essay explores the vignettes in John Tallis's, Map of Northern India. It is argued that in these imaginative geographies Europeans represented a distorted, oriental, 'other' image of India.

Keywords: *cartography, vignette, orientalism, colonialism, Eurocentric, binary*

Introduction

The present article attempts to explore and infer imagery of India in the maps collected in John Tallis's, *The Illustrated Atlas, and modern history of the world,* following Said's concept of 'orientalism' in general and 'imagined geographies' in particular. 'Orientalism' was a binary opposition created by European as 'superior', 'western', 'themselves', and the 'inferior', 'orient', 'other'. It was created to represent and control the east or non-western. From this, emanated the notion of 'imagined geographies' which refers to perception of space and subjects represented in texts, images, and cartographies articulating sense of fantasy, mystery, and wonder, by their producer, as an outside observer (Desbiens, 2017: 1-6).

Maps are among the oldest forms of human communication. They are basic tools for helping our mind to comprehend the surrounding world. Even before the arrival of maps as physical artifacts, it is assumed that there must have existed, a cognitive mapping of spatial information (Harley, 1987: 1). The animals also have the ability to convey information about spatial relationships, as studies of animal behavior have revealed examples of mapping procedures (Lewis, 1987: 50). Alongside the trajectory of human history, we can observe and trace the development of cartography from prehistoric to the modern period (Smith, 1987) (Schwartzberg, 1992). The progress of modern cartography coincided with the maritime expeditions of Europe in the 15th century and grew exponentially during the colonization of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. During the period of colonization, cartography became an instrument for expansions and control, while concurrently; on the other hand, cartography

also shaped the direction of colonization (Tally, 2016: 1). In the 19th century, cartography embodied, in its process and product, the dominant colonial authority. This phenomenon was best evident in India where European powers, specifically the British, 'defined their current holdings and laid the ground for expansionist ambitions' (Chester, 2000: 256-257) (Kalpagam, 1995: 87-88).

Critical Cartography

Since the Middle Ages the cartographers aimed to represent spatial features and relations through abstraction in maps. Maps were considered truth documents accurately representing the real physical world. However, in the 1980's, cartography witnessed a paradigm shift and this view of map, being objective truth, was challenged by various scholars. Critical Cartography is an explanatory framework and methodological approach that postulates maps as reflecting relations of power. In the past few decades, researchers have moved away from the earlier focus on geographical accuracy to interpreting maps themselves in their historical milieu (Kitchin, Perkins & Dodge, 2009: 4-9). The ongoing multi-volume *History of Cartography* project (Harley et al, 1988) is one such example of this paradigm shift. The editors, Harley and Woodward stressed on content instead of the form of maps. Many chapters in this book discuss the indigenous, pre-modern maps or map like objects found in different cultures throughout the history. The notion that maps are texts or discourses that need to be read was used by researchers in late 1980s, deriving from various already existing theories from philosophy, literary theory, sociology etc. For J. B. Harley, maps are meaningful images, he asserts that maps need to be understood within the historical contexts they were created in order to delineate the interests of its makers (Harley, 1988: 278-303). As opposed to the normative perspective, Harley viewed maps as social constructions, thereby, expressing power. Harley's work (1988, 1989, 1990), drawing specifically from Michel Foucault and Derrida, were one of the early works that discussed power, ideology and surveillance in relation to map and map-making (Crampton and Krygier, 2006: 16). Harley's work drew criticism from many scholars. Harley states that he owed most of the ideas in his essay to writings by Foucault and Derrida (1989, 2-3). While, Dennis Wood (1993: 53-54) has criticised Harley's work in detail, Barbara Belyea (1992: 1-2) point out that Harley's 'knowledge of Derrida and Foucault was gained largely from commentaries on their work rather than from their own writing'. Kitchin, Perkins & Dodge (2009: 11), citing Denis Wood (1993) and Jeremy Crampton (2003), also agree that Harley's 'application of Foucault to cartography is limited'. Dennis Wood's book *The Power of Maps* (1992) claimed that maps contrary to general belief can never be sterile and unbiased, in reality they are always full of intent, and how map-maker hide advancing this intent. He argues that maps, when closely inspected, could reveal the power inherent in them. Wood with John Fels and John Krygier, in *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (2010), an extension and rework of his *The Power of Maps*, explores and examines maps, and their meaning. They demonstrate that maps are propositions; they diffuse information,

myths, and articulate authority. Jeremy Black's *Politics and Maps* (1997) deals with how objectivity and ideology play a significant and crucial role in defining the contents of maps. He asserts that maps are innately political. He does not accept the idea that maps can be neutral and objective records of a territory and demonstrates that they are political tools.

There are many works that studied colonial cartography of India as one of the European knowledge creating projects, and the vital role these projects played in the construction of the 'colonized orient', following Edward Said's thesis of 'orientalism'. Kapil Raj (2007) in his book *Relocating Modern Science* devoted two specific chapters on mapping and surveying in which he studies how modern cartography in India was founded with the efforts of British and Indian subjects. The work of Mathew Edney (1997), *Mapping an Empire* is also significant. He examines the 19th century British projects on the line of J. B. Harley's belief that map are not true images rather when deconstructed they can reveal complex rhetoric and distortion. In order to explain the nature of British imperialism in India, Edney's work as he claims, extends the work of other South Asianists such as Ronald Inden, demonstrating how British created the oriental 'other', C. A. Bayly showing that the British representations were preserved in myths of rationality, order, and accuracy, and Thomas Metcalf's view that British created the difference between them and Indians to justify their rule (Edney, 1997: 33-34).

'Orientalism' in India

Edward Said (1978), in his magnum opus, *Orientalism,* reveals the prejudices against East, the 'Orient', that existed in the western imagination. It describes the process of how European colonial powers in the 19th Century constructed the Orient in order to dominate and obtain authority over the East (Koefoed and Haldrup, 2020). Said's primary critique was that Westerners generalized, and stereotyped the society and culture of the East as primitive, barbarian, unchanging, and exotic who were stuck in the past; while the West or 'Occident' is modern, developed, and mundane. During this process, he created the binaries of West/East, us/other, and superior/lesser (Culcasi, 2006: 688).

The term 'Orient' comes from the Latin word *oriens*meaning east or facing east in relation to Europe. Before Edward Said's work 'orientalism' had a positive connotation, it referred to study of Eastern society, history, language, and culture (Fox, 2001) (Heehs, 2003: 169). The basic premise of Said's 'Orientalism' was that since the Europeans, throughout its history, engaged mostly with themselves therefore, their culture and worldviews were very Eurocentric. So, when European interaction with the East grew exponentially, they split the world into Europe and the Orient. In doing so, this term 'orient', now represented anything that is not European, including the regions of the world which were not even part of the east. Europeans held their society as 'superior' and the East or the 'other', as inferior, so 'Orientalists' or European colonizers used it to justify colonizing the East. The differences of the 'orient' were seen as 'weakness' and they assumed that they were doing 'lesser' a favour. For Said orientalism as a discourse was vindictive, a-historical and totalitarian. Said's critique was

influential in the development of postcolonial theory which flourished in literary studies, history, anthropology, sociology, etc. (San, 1998: 29) (Hamadi, 2014: 39). The focus of post-colonialism is on the struggles of newly independent countries, who threw off the colonial order post WW II, at the level of identity, culture, and history and not just the political or economic issues they confronted. It studies the impact of colonialism and its processes on both the colonizer and the colonized (Culcasi, 2006: 688). While Edward Said's work focused on Middle East, however his method is acceptably appropriate to other regions of the world. A number of scholars have extended Said's orientalism to India (Jouhki, 2006: 6).

Ronald Inden, in his *Imagining India* (2000) divides the Western discourses on India into commentative, explanatory and hegemonic accounts. He argues on the lines of Said's thesis, that over the past two hundred years, these discourses have illustrated 'orient' as 'other' and 'inferior' to the west. He shows how India was 'imagined' as incapable to know and act itself rationally. In Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer's *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* (1993), a number of essays follow the concept of orientalism. Van der Veer in his essay goes further from Said's position and shows how 'orientalist discourse' sometime also empowers the colonised in order to pursue self-identity. Kyoko Matsukawa's (2000) doctoral thesis is worth mentioning who also applies this extrapolation of orientalism to India. The focus is on the period between the first arrival of Portuguese in India towards the end of the 15th century, and witnessing the rise of modern orientalism in the first half of the eighteenth century. Matsukawa's in his work explains the historical process of the European categorising of Indian as the 'Other'.

Historians of cartography has also engaged with orientalism implicitly and explicitly from focusing on the imperialist cartography of halcyon colonial period to 20th century cartographic material embedded with orientalist notions (Culcasi 2006: 688). In India a significant body of research addressed orientalism in British cartography. In this direction a significant work is Mathew Edney's*Mapping an Empire* (1997). Although, we have already discussed this work earlier in the paper however, one instance in this book is worth noting here, as it is very relevant to the theme of this article. Edney analysis a cartouche of James Rennel's, 1782 map of *Hindoostan*, an allegorical scene, full of oriental imagery, in which Britannia is shown receiving Hindu sacred texts from Brahmins in protection from Muslims.Thomas Trautmann says that 'every intellectual project derives its meaning in relation to larger, collective projects that long preceded...' (Trautmann 2006: 3). He distinguishes New Orientalism focusing on India, Sanskrit and Vedas from Old Orientalism that learnt Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish, etc. Therefore, this new Orientalism appeared from the old since Europeans explored India through Persian language. Tracing dynamic patterns in *longue durée*, he identifies that it was Claudius Ptolemy who initiated 'locational project' of mapping of the earth in his *Geography*. He further reasons that modern mapping of India was not a product of colonialism instead it was carried forward by the 'Ptolemaic space' project of the deep past (2009: 155-188). Michael Mann's (2003) paper, *Mapping the Country: European Geography and the Cartographical Construction of India, 1760-90,* is an important work in this

direction. He argues that British cartographic works led to its economic, political and finally military development in India and maps, unlike scientific cartography in Europe for administrative objectives, were used as a tool for control and dominance. Another noteworthy work is by U. Kalpagam, she also argues and demonstrates how modern cartographic representation of India and colonial projects of conquest are entangled by studying major British surveys that were initiated during colonial period of India (Kalpagam, 1995). Baijayanti Chatterjee, in her paper, sees mapping of Bengal by Britishers and French, as a development of colonisation and imperial expansion. Unlike many scholars who viewed colonial cartography as rectilinear practice of control, she shows the interplay between Indian and colonial cartography (Chaterjee, 2021). Tarun Kumar Mondal, also in his paper has examined the how dynamics of Indian cartography has played from colonial to a post-independence period (Mondal, 2019).

Decorations in Maps as 'Imaginative Geographies'

Europeans, through oriental discourse, created imaginative geographies, 'othering' or representing places, people, and cultures, expressing power dynamics. The imaginative geographies produced images which mirrored the prejudices, stereotypes, and desires of their authors. These images, within in their layers, can reveal the dialectic power between authors and the subjects. Imaginative geographies are both a tool and an outcome of orientalism in which 'self' and 'other' is realized (Al-Mahfedi, 2011: 9). Although, the tradition of decorating maps has been there since early times however, as the knowledge grew deeper and deeper during the exploration era, we see an outburst of these decorations in and around maps. These decorations took the form of cartouche, marginalia, vignettes, and borders. Cartographers filled the previously blank spaces and started depicting, cultures and people of new territories. Often, the maps of newly discovered territories and mystical east were decorated with imaginary animals, monsters, ruins of buildings, native inhabitants in traditional attire, flora and fauna. The nature and form of these decorations and images were shaped and reshaped as colonial discourse changed through time. In the case of India, traveller's accounts of Magesthenes, Marco polo and others were used to produce images to decorate maps. These decorative images make maps as 'cultural texts' and 'ideological image' (Clarke, 1988: 455-456).

John Tallis's Illustrated Atlas of the World

John Tallis, an English Publisher, was born at Stourbridge, Worcestershire, on 7 November 1817, the eldest son of John Tallis and Lucinda Chance. He is well regarded for his cartographic publications in the 19th century (Jackson, 1969: 19). He inherited his father's business of bookselling and publishing and expanded it to include many other aspects of book production. During his lifetime he published various views maps, and atlases under various business names including Tallis and Co, John Tallis& Company, and later the London Printing and

Publishing Company (Jackson, 1969: 25-26).The Crystal Palace or the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was held in Hyde Park in London from May 1 to October 15, 1851, to commemorate the industrial and technological progress of Great Britain (Kallen, 2018: 1). This captured Tallis's attention and he published *Tallis's History and description of the Crystal Palace and the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851*(Tallis et al, 1852) (Jackson 1969: 23). He also published *The Illustrated Atlas, And Modern History of the World Geographical, Political, Commercial & Statistical*. His *Illustrated Atlas of the World*, published for the Great Exhibition of 1851, is regarded as the last decorative atlas to be published in England (Jackson, 1969: 21). The *Tallis's Illustrated Atlas* includes eighty-two maps which were drawn by John Rapkin, and the vignettes were engraved by various artists. All maps have borders decorated with intricate foliage patterns and some vignettes of buildings, animals, birds, or local people. Although, three maps depict India and its parts but, our focus is on one map that is *Northern India Including Presidency of Calcutta.*

Map of Northern India

The map of *Northern India Including Presidency of Calcutta* is a very decorative map showing various places of northern India and Bengal Presidency with places of Nepal and Bhutan. It has vine pattern border and shows around six inset vignettes, The Seal of the East India Company on top left, Car of Juggernaut on top middle, The British Residency – Hyderabad on top right, Tiger Hunt on bottom left, Ruins - Old Delhi on bottom right, and Hindoos on right side. A sole Muslim figure is shown standing in action, in between the vignette of Car of Juggernaut, and British Residency, while a decorative vine surrounds these three images. At the bottom of the map, inside the decorative border, it shows legends which specifies that British possessions with pink colour, states under British protection in yellow colour& independent states in green colour. At the bottom outside the decorative border the name of the publishing company is shown, J&F Tallis, London, Edinburgh, & Dublin. On the bottom right outside the decorative border it reads The Illustrations by A. H Wray & Engraved by J. H. Kernot. The latitude and longitudes are written on the decorative vine pattern border.

Now we focus on analysing these decorations as oriental imagery. The inset vignette, Car of Juggernaut is very striking in many ways. It shows a procession or *rathayatra*with a massive chariot or *ratha* with a large crowd surrounding it and mountains in the background. The famous annual festival of Jagannath Temple of Puri, involves public procession of a chariot in the form of a temple, carrying idols of Hindu *deities, Jagannath, Subhadra, and Balabhadra.*The term 'Juggernaut' is the anglicized form of Lord Jagannath. The earliest description of this event is found in account of Friar Odoric of Pordenone (1274? –1331) who travelled many parts of Asia and stayed in China between 1316 and 1327. Later this work was copied and expanded by Sir John Mandeville, in his work *The Voyage and Travels of Sir John Mandeville, Knight* (Moseley, 2015: 14-19). Mandeville described this procession emphasizing on a particular part where sometimes pilgrims die under the huge wheels of

the chariot. He says, 'Many pilgrims also put themselves under the chariot wheels, to the end that their false god may go over them... every year, there die under the said filthy idol more than 500 persons' (Mandeville, 1997: 333). Later during the colonial period, as seen in the writings of Rev. Claudius Buchanan (1843), and many others, Juggernaut, came to be associated with violence, death, and bloodshed. Buchannan's description speaks of how Europeans viewed Indian rituals as savage, primitive and wrong and how Indians can be saved from this 'cult' by Christianity. The 'othering' is visible in the description and popularization of the term Juggernaut to portray Indian culture in a binary opposition. By the mid nineteenth century Juggernaut still referred the Jagannath Temple of Odisha but, slowly with the time the actual meaning of Juggernaut kept shifting towards anything that was in opposition to Europe (Altman, 2017: 30-34). The vignette of the Tiger Hunt, drawn on bottom left, depicts a jungle scene, in which people mounted on elephants are hunting tigers, one of which is being attacked and the other is shown in the foreground hiding in the grasses. Elephant and tiger were emphasized by Europeans in their paintings and fiction for a long time since their arrival in India. Europeans used these animals while describing India so much that they sometimes symbolised India. These were the oriental animals and in this hunting scene both are shown as something that needs to be controlled and dominated. These hunting scenes became site of power and dominance projections. For Europeans India was mysterious and adventurous land where they can express masculinity (Torri, 2013: 45). Another vignette is the seal of the East India Company, drawn on the top left register of the map is quite different from the 17th century and later 19th century seals. It shows the one stage of evolution of the East India Company's seal as it coursed its path from being a trading company to a behemoth trade, administrative and military power.

The vignette of Ruins, Old Delhi is quite interesting as it displays the nineteenth century European desire, for ruins that signifies the remoteness in time and space. There are many maps and paintings drawn in colonial period that depicts these images of old building in ruins (Bozdogan, 1986: 53-54). Bozdogan, while discussing orientalism and architecture argues that through orientalist discourse Europeans 'reconstructed' the East 'verbally and visually'. By producing images of historical buildings Europeans 'us' created Indian 'their' history and culture in a narrow, stereotypical, and biased approach.

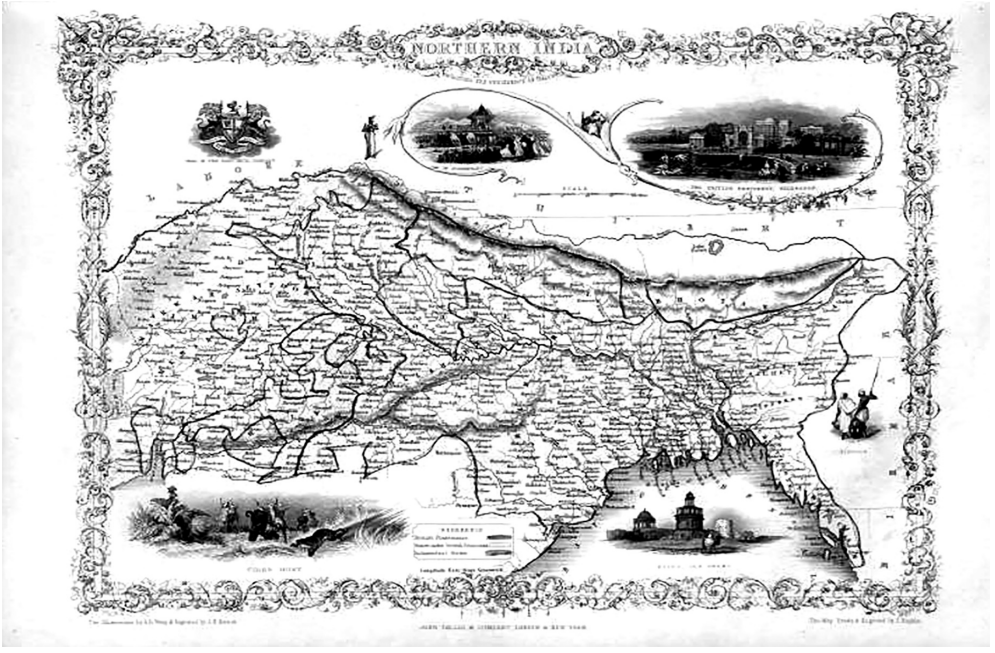
Similar preconception and categorization of cultures as 'other' is seen in the vignette of Hindoos, where a soldier is conversing with a woman, both of them are shown in their traditional attire signifying poor, traditional, and strange. The sole Muslim figure in traditional attire shown on top exemplifies same emotions of 'othering' and 'strange'.

The vignette in the top right register labelled, British Residency, Hyderabad showing British Residency complex on the banks of the river Musi with a procession of some sort passing through its gates with elephants. It was built in 1803–1806 as a Palladian palace by Col. James Achilles Kirkpatrick and was designed by Lieutenant Samuel Russell of the Madras Engineers. It was a residence of the officer of Indian Political Service (Khalidi, 2008: 115). The site was grandiose symbolising the power and supremacy of the British Empire. The rising

economic influence demanded new buildings with western elements signifying triumph of British over India

Conclusions

Imaginative geographies were utilised by European powers for representation, othering India and its culture through recourse to specific imagery reflecting and enabling relations of power. The images used as an example of this 'orientalist discourse' are only a small part of the images that were created throughout the 18th and 19th century. With the above, discussion it become apparent that maps in general are not mute and sterile but they are verbose and signify the meaning of their authors. The particular map of Northern India from the maps collected in *Tallis's, The Illustrated Atlas* is one such example which through its drawn vignettes displays the oriental imagery of India by the British.



Map of Northern India Including Presidency of Calcutta in *Tallis's, The Illustrated Atlas, And Modern History of The World Geographical, Political, Commercial& Statistical*.
From David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries

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Women and Election in Manipur : Some Notes from the Field

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Abstract

The paper aims to highlight the reality of women's participation in electoral processes in Manipur and focuses on several issues that women encounter during their participation. Based on preliminary field research, it looks at some factors, perceived or otherwise,that hinder women in their effective and meaningful participation in elections. Women are mobilised as women in elections and gender remains an important parameter in determining the choice of voters and political workers in respect to supporting or not supporting women candidates. This paper highlights the role of women's networks in contributing to the massive participation of women as voters in Manipur; a feature that is exploited effectively by candidates during times of elections.

Keywords: Women, election, political participation, party workers, representation, Manipur.

Introduction:

Women in Manipur are best known for their proactive presence in society, with their engagements spreading over a wide spectrum of activities in the socio-cultural, economic, and political realms. Their predominant presence in economic activities is frequently revered in academic and journalistic exercises. Their collective mobilisation against the colonial British forces, in the first and second *Nupi Lal*[1] not only shaped the course of history of the state but also remained instrumental in instilling a tradition of potent women's agency in terms of countering unjust forces.Women's collective force under the banner *Meira Paibis*[2] also remains in the popular psyche, due to their relentless and sustained fight against state violence under AFSPA, and many other issues that confront the people of the state.

In the political sphere, numerous women are engaged in activities related to elections. They participate as workers, campaigners, and voters, at various levels and capacities. Despite these, the political participation of women in the state remains an insignificant reality. Only a few women participate and even fewer manage to be representatives in formal politics. The state has 9 women members of the state legislative assembly and an MP in over five decades of electoral politics from 1972-2022. In the 2022 state assembly election 17 women candidates contested elections from various political parties, out of which only 5 were elected

(Government of Manipur, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer). This remains so far, the highest number of women elected in the state legislative assembly of 60 members. On the contrary, political participation of women as voters in Manipur has always been high in numbers (87.99 percent in the recent assembly election of 2022), in most cases outnumbering the male voters.

This paper is an attempt to examine and highlight some reality of the political participation of women in Manipur. It focuses on women's engagement in politics, specifically in elections, as candidates, representatives, party workers, and voters. The paper is basedon a preliminary field study in Assembly Constituencies (AC) having women candidates; namely, Oinam AC, Patsoi AC, Naoriya Pakhanglakpa AC, Yaiskul AC, in the 12th Manipur Assembly Election heldduring February and March 2022, to focus on the gender aspects of participation and support during elections.The paper used semi-structured interviews as a means to collect data from women political workers and voters. The paper also refers to interactions with intending candidates of the upcoming municipal and *panchayat* election scheduled in June 2023 and their political workers at the grass-root level to unearth stories of women in elections.

Election and participation of women:

Reasons for the low participation of women in politics are continuously discussed and deliberated in many academic literatures. While many of the postulated explanations for women's low participation hold relevance in different contexts, there is a need for continuous exploration of local and specific ways in which the dynamics of participation concerning women unfold. The most upheld primary reason behind the low participation of women in politics is the socio-cultural and ideological hindrances. Women have been socialized to believe that politics is a dirty game and primarily a coveted male domain. Decisions are meant to be taken by men and followed by women. They are expected to follow the line made by men (Khanna 2009: 57). Memma (name changed), a woman worker, remarked that if women work outside their homes, they must first deal with their husband, their family members, and then society (Personal interview, 25 Jun. 2022). Women are still looked down as not suitable for running elections. For engagements in the political sphere, women therefore, need to disentangle societal hindrances. The perception that women should act gentle, modest, humble, and obedient to their husband's commands continues to persist in the social and cultural milieu of Manipur. Society tends to question the morale of women once women are increasingly visible outside the house, but men are free to fulfill all their wishes, alleged by Ng. Bimola, an active worker in Oinam Constituency (Personal interview, 18 Oct. 2022). While interacting with women voters from Oinam constituency, it was also observed that they were reluctant even to express their views freely in front of their husbands and were less likely to give an opinion of their own.

a) Interest, knowledge, and resources:

Lack of interest, lack of education, political knowledge, family support, etc. have contributed to the low level of participation of women in politics. However, as expressed by some women

voters, the prevailing political environment also has thwarted the public, especially women from openly participating in activities relating to elections. It was found that there is consistent inhibition among several housewives that their government-employed husbands would face repercussions if they openly campaign for a candidate other than the ruling parties' candidate. For instance, Leima (name changed), was concerned that her husband might get transferred to far-off hill districts in case she openly support and campaigned for candidates contending against the ruling party MLAs (Personal interview, 1 Oct. 2022). Thus they show little or no interest in involving themselves in election-related activities. While the same wives of employed husbands are categorized as privileged (in the economic sense) by most women political workers, who opined that these women do not need to actively participate as political workers. The trend of associating women political workers with lower economic backgrounds is largely seen in this context; whereby the motive and interest for involvement, among other things, is their practical concern for direct economic benefits for their households.

It is worth mentioning that several women campaigners started to participate only when their husbands started to endorse a candidate for the election. Most women are influenced by their husbands in deciding their political choices of candidates, level, and nature of involvement in political activities. Ibemhal Devi (name changed), said, "We do not have proper knowledge about the electoral process; we just follow the advice of our husband and family who are more experienced than us" (Personal interview, 9 Jun. 2022). Apart from the dependent choice factor, the determining role of the family support factor in women's active participation is also largely visible among women workers. "If we do not get help from them, we might not even come forward; they help us when we are in doubt", added Babita Devi (name changed), another women worker from Oinam AC (Personal interview, 12 Jun. 2022). A general lack of political awareness and exposure among women, not only makes women dependent on the rationale and choice of their male counterparts but also limits them from fully participating in political activities and exercising full individual agency.

Availability of resources is another key criterion that determines the participation of women in politics. Time and money remain the deciding factors for a candidate to contest an election. Needless to reiterate that the time-consuming work associated with household activities is carried out solely by women coupled with child-rearing responsibilities. Corrin and Chhibber remarked that women still perform the lion's share of domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning and are the primary caregivers for children; patterns that may deprive women of the free time required to participate in politics (qtd. in Paxton et al. 2007: 267). These factors continue to be liabilities for women who want to participate in politics. While interviewing women workers, it was found that only a few of them aspire to contest the election, but never really worked to actualise it due to a lack of resources. It is also important to point out that their aspirations soared only as high as the local-level elections. Ngasepam Bimola Devi, Takyel Zila Parishad under Patsoi AC, expressed that resources are always lacking. At the same time, the question of financial assistance and sponsorship remains bleak. Most women join politics at a later age when they are comparatively free from household

activities and commitments (Personal interview, 18 Oct. 2022). The likeliness to engage in public works is more when they complete their 'essential and fundamental' familial role. Some of the respondents also hold the view that unmarried women are better positioned to involve in politics because of the absence of compulsory household responsibilities. They are therefore perceived to be comparatively free to engage in political works, having more liberty to decide on theiraffairs. Nongthongbam Promo, Zila Parishad from Lamsang AC, chose to remain single as she wanted to be in politics from childhood (Personal interview, 18 Oct. 2022). This rationale reflects the magnitude of traditional and cultural responsibilities women are subjected to, whose weight deters women from engaging in any other expression of their free will and effective association with activities and aspirations outside the home.

b) Role of Political parties

The role of political parties in encouraging and supporting women's political participation and representation should also be taken into account. Women are more prone to be treated as campaigners and voter mobilisers by political parties during elections. As a result of which women participate as attendees in huge numbers in political rallies and meetings. It is rather not new to assert that political parties practice discriminatory and gender exclusion policies in allocating seats for contesting elections. Indian electoral politics reveals the exclusionary trend in providing space to women to participate as a candidate in national and state level election that causally stem from their marginalization within the party hierarchy and structure (Rai 2011:50). The decision not to allot the seat to women by political parties at the national and state level electoral has been contributed to lack of winnability of women (Deshpande 2004: 5433). At another level, the elected candidates, including women, at the state legislative assembly are accused of being hesitant to sponsor women candidates in the local level election within their constituency. In many instances, aspiring women local leaders are used as voter mobilisers in state assembly elections by candidates with the promise of supporting her during a local election. Despite such promises, women political workers have been rarely supported outside reserved seats. Sumila Ningthoujam, a social and active political worker from Oinam constituency, revealed the same situation even though they sincerely displayed their capabilities of not just mobilizing voters during the general election but through their prolonged engagement with people and electoral process (Personal interview, 12 Jun. 2022). The preference of male candidates over women candidates is manifested at various junctures which not only kills the initiative and political interest of women at large but also induces a sense of incompetence and lack of agency if not supported by the elected MLA in their candidature at the local level election.

The absence of political role models or efficient candidates within political party structures and outside, who can instigate interest among women to engage in politics, can also contribute to the low participation of women. Role model candidates are those who can mobilize, inspire, and educate persons to participate in electoral activities. In many instances, it is visible that the support of women voters to women candidate is widely absent because of the lack of personality to inspire women and lack of common women agenda. It is

worthwhile to note at this juncture that speeches given by ThounaojamBrinda, a candidate from Yaiskul assembly constituency, intrigued many by her personality especially her ability to straightforwardly place her opinion without any fear of repercussion. The fact that she served as a Police officer in the Government of Manipur, who contributed significantly to the 'war againstdrugs' campaign is still fresh in the minds of the people. She emerged as a role model for many women during her campaigning days and was seen by many as strong-willed, fearless women who can speak her mind in the face of great power. Such a figure also repents the limitation of being a woman candidate and noted that only a few women contest the election because women lack money and muscle power. Women do not have the goon or *gundagiri*background (Bhattacherjee 2022).The fact that such parameters still hold precedence in Indian electoral politics, denies women their accessibility and free expression of democratic rights.

c) Networks of women

Political participation of women in Manipur is found to be mainly concentrated at the grass-root levels as one observes a large number of women participating as voters, active workers, campaigners, voter mobilizers, etc. Seeing the large number of women coming out in public, one might perceive that women in the state, especially in the valley areas, seem to effectively exercise their political rights. However, this number does not correlate with the reality of women actually and consciously enjoying political agency. It would not be wrong to state that most of the women remain as 'shadow supporters'. The rationale is that most women choose to support the political scene rather than take an active leading role. They mostly prefer to work in assisting other members in election-related works and take pleasure in working as voter mobilizers i.e., party workers or campaigners.

It needs to specially highlight here that women can impressively gather a crowd in a short period even though many women workers remain passive followers and without much agency. One needs to take note of group dynamics that are at play when it comes to women voters, supporters, and workers. The existence of old social linkages of kinship and recently developed networks like self-help groups, *meirapaibis*, and other associations play an instrumental role in influencing women's choices. The decision to attend a political meeting is not always about individual choice but rather a group decision that can mobilise a certain number of women who are interlinked by certain group dynamics mentioned above. Women are more likely to be influenced by close neighbours, relatives, and friends to join as active workers, voter mobilisers, etc., and remain within their network. The multitude of women participating in activities related to elections does not necessarily equal the qualitative political participation of women. The real sense of political participation comes into the picture when those women understand the politics and rationale behind their choice of action or inaction.

To exploit this network of women during elections, many candidates encourage the formation of short-term women groups, either taking the name of the *meira paibis* or otherwise. These small groups of women were seen mostlyenacting the role of a vigilante force in their respective localities and streets, claiming that they are keeping a check on any miscreants

and anti-social elements during election campaigns. Basanti Devi (name changed), from Oinam AC, remarked with humour that they were not just sitting idly in camps and *meira shangs* but were trying to find out who supports who (Personal interview, 12 Jun. 2022). The candidates often target the already existing *meira paibi* groupsof each locality or form new ad-hoc groups with the promise of granting them financial support for their group endeavours. It has been observed that the ad-hoc groups will eventually take the name of the *meira paibi* in their activity of sitting at *meira shangs,* (make shift huts, where *meira paibis* sit) every night religiously only until the elections. In some assembly constituencies, women were encouraged to form groups, and submit their names to the candidate. For instance, in Wangkhei AC, candidates will help open a group account with the promise that once he/she wins, he/she will ensure the granting of financial support for the group members in their small self-help economic ventures (Ebenungshi [name changed] personal interview, 17 Sept. 2022). Most of these women are either ill-informed or not informed at al,l about the actual benefits that they are being promised (Emem, personal interview, 12 Jul. 2022). Women fall prey to a meagre sum of money that they get during their short membership of the above-mentioned ad-hoc groups. This meagre sum is attractive and convincing enough for many women to sway their political choices.

Political parties and candidates used different tactics or strategies to influence women. More women are seen participating in the election campaign and related activities. Many have argued that the increased participation of women as voters and campaigners or worker is the result of the political party's mobilization techniques. It was observed from the preliminary fieldwork that there are numerous women's organisations or committees formed during election times mainly in support of candidates or political parties. National political parties like Congress and BJP have their own women committees like Manipur Pradesh Mahila Committee and BJP Mahila Morcha. Several candidates also formed their own women's committees in their constituencies based on locality or wards. For instance, in Patsoi assembly constituency, former MLA Akoijam Mirabai has forty-eight units of women's committees under her attention. According to her party worker, the broad umbrella women's committee is popularly known as Congress Mahila Committee. It is bifurcated into Blocks Mahila Committee and Units. The members of the Block Mahila Committee meet regularly on the first Sunday of every month even after the end of the election. The women put up several issues to the attention of their political leaders. In one way, these committees make direct communication links between their political leaders and the women. A similar women's organisation also exists in Naoriya Pakhanglakpa constituency namely Langthabal Lep Awang Leikai Nupi group. While the women's committees of Patsoi are affiliated to the Manipur Pradesh Mahila Committee, the woman committees of Naoriya Pakhanglakpa are reportedly not formally attached to any political party, but rather fashioned by S Kebi (candidate, now MLA) for communication convenience in her constituency.These women's committees get financial aid from the candidates to create livelihood opportunities for themselves. Candidates would buy weaving machines, sewing machines, etc. which can serve as income sources for its members. In consideration of the above benefits, the members are prepared to present

themselves wherever the candidates require them. The women's committees' leaders would send out information about political meetings and rallies and its members would assemble themselves for the meetings or rallies.

d) Role of Gender

Gender does have a certain role in terms of motivating women voters and political workers and in the choices they make. Seltzer et al., Dolan, Smith, and Fox have pointed out that the gender of a candidate matters more to women voters as they prefer to see women as candidates more than male voters(qtd. in Paxton et al. 2007: 272). The gender of a candidate can be one parameter of deciding whether one wants to actively associate as a worker for that candidate, especially concerning women. Many women became workers because they wanted to support women candidates. The most commonly used statement by women workers is '*Nupi na nupi support tougadabane*' (A woman should support women) while justifying their decision to support women candidates. During fieldwork in Oinam assembly constituency, it was found that women workers tend to view that women candidates could easily relate to women's issues and problems which are frequently undermined by male candidates. It is also believed that women candidates could bring more women-centric agendas which were previously ignored by male candidates.

There are also instances when the gender card seemingly gave an edge to women candidates. The former MLA Akoijam Mirabai had been contesting elections since 2000. In her initial years, she was defeated thrice before her first win in 2012. After her third defeat, the larger visible public perception in the constituency was thatshe, being a woman, would stop contesting elections because of her continuous defeat. However, people were astounded by her undeterred efforts, when she contested the fourth time. People became sympathetic towards her, about her being a woman and that too an unmarried woman. This sympathetic attitude of voters, especially elders and women voters, gave a big push that helped her win the election in 2012, among other factors. Contrary to this public perception, her election defeat in 2022 can mostly be attributed to anti-incumbency and the rising BJP wave. However, it was observed that certain sections of the people alleged her of poor performance, and the reason for such inefficiency is again attributed to her gender. Again in Oinam assembly constituency, sections of the voters expressed similar opinions regarding the inefficiency of women candidates. The prevailing notion is that even if women candidates are elected, they cannot perform significantlyin a legislative house full of men. One of the respondents, Tombi Devi (name changed), interviewed on 12 June 2022 expressed that although she supported a women candidate in the recent 2022 assembly election, at times she feels that it is better to elect a male candidate as the capability and efficiency of elected women candidates remains doubtful in a male-dominated arena.

On the other hand, most of the elected candidates (both women and men) in the state legislature are reluctant to support and stage women candidates in the local level elections outside reserved seats. Sumila Ningthoujam alleged that even when the elected representative is a woman, they are hesitant in supporting women candidates outside the reserved seats in

the local election citing the winnability factors (Personal interview, 20 Jun 2022). Women, therefore, are not given the chance to develop a sustained political career and constituency, due to the rotation in reserved seats and also the general unwillingness to nominate women candidates in unreserved seats. Even proxy women candidates do start acquiring political knowledge and interest in the process. However, her opportunity to continue her interest and career is cut shortas she has to give up the seat to her husband when it becomes an unreserved one in the next election. Keeping this short-lived prospect in mind, one of the respondents, Ibethoi (name changed) from the Naoriya Pakhanglakpa AC who was also a former member of the *Panchayat* claimed that it is better to enjoy a peaceful, stable family rather than to stand against her husband in power politics (Personal interview 29 Jun.2022).

Acquiring Political Skills

Requisite skills for a political career are often acquired through engaging in non-electoral activities such as serving as a volunteer in civil society organisations and social movement activism. Fallon, Bauer, and Britton remarked that women's participation in women's movements and in grass-root activism also imparts them with political experience and political ambition (qtd. in Paxton et al. 2007: 268). Nameirakpam Sunita Leima, an intending candidate in the upcoming Municipal corporation election, reflected that being an Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) worker has allowed her to travel every nook and corner of her locality, thus gaining awareness of problems that people face directly (Personal interview, 1 Oct. 2022). Such engagement had given her a direct impetus to contribute something to the people, which for her, is translated into her willingness to contest elections. On the other hand, Ngasepam Bimola Leima, a Zila Parishad member, born and brought up in a conservative family, expressed her love for reading books, reciting poems, and writing articles for the local newspapers. However, she realised that writing about social issues without going out of her four walls was absurd. This realization gave her a push to proactively participate in local issues and thus became Secretary for their locality *meira paibis* organisations. Gradually the public prompted her to contest the *Panchayat* election after seeing her active engagement (Personal interview, 27 Aug. 2022). She won the local level election numerous times, but she feels she lacks not only time and resources but the confidence required for contesting state assembly elections. Therefore she continues to contest in *Panchayat* elections with her aspiration soaring only as high as serving the role of the local representative of her area.

The women's committees which were formed during assembly election times also provide a platform for women to acquire the necessary skills to mobilize the public if one desires to contest in local elections. The field interaction reveals that most of the active women political workers tend to have the desire to contest in the local elections. They gave public speeches, campaigned for their candidates, and mobilized the public for political rallies, meetings, and house-to-house campaigns. They acquire the necessary skills and political networks which can be employed in the future. One respondent from Patsoi AC, Kshetrimayum Shanti Devi narrated how she used to be a shy person before engaging as the political worker for a candidate. In the process of following the candidate, she started to

attend political meetings, awareness programmes, and skill training programmes. As she started listening to speeches given by renowned personalities in public meetings, she experienced her confidence being boosted, and later prompted her to give speeches in local political meetings. Gradually she became the Secretary of her locality *meira paibi* organisations with her newly acquired confidence and speaking skills (personal interview, 13 Jun. 2022).

Concluding Remarks

The participation of citizens in democratic processes is crucial for developing a viable democracy. Ideally, both males and females are expected to equally partake in influencing political decisions and policies that affect their lives. Despite this women have been historically excluded, and even with the same political rights the number of women engaging in formal politics remains low. Moreover, the scanty participation in politics is also mostly concentrated at the grass root level.

There are various hindrances to the active engagement of women in politics.Women have been demoralized to engage in electoral politics but ironically they are also sent out by their families to attend political meetings and rally as representatives of the family. While lack of resources, interest, and confidence remain key reasons for women's low participation, the general perception ofthe winnability of men over women contributes further to the problem. Despite the obstacles, more women are starting to engage themselves as active workers and voters in elections wherein many cases their political participation is seen to be hugely motivated by the ad-hoc fulfilment of the sustenance needs of their family. Nonetheless, one cannot deny the fact that women have increasingly begun to take cognizance of their political rights. Not only did they develop political ambition, but many women also picked up the courage to contest in elections, neglecting many counter currents. The engagement of women in voluntary organizations and social movements has helped them to acquire the necessary political skills, confidence, and awareness significantly. The increasing number of women engaging in politics is a good indication of a desirable social change. However political empowerment has a long way to go.

Notes:

[1] The first *Nupi Lan* (1904) and second *Lupi Lan* (1939) meaning 'women's war' were organized women's resistance actions against the British colonial forces in Manipur. In 1904, women collectively protested against the order issued by the British authority to revive a system of Lallup (a form of forced labour), wherein men will be forced to perform free labour. Thousands of women gathered at the Khairamband bazaar and protested forcing the government to reconsider the order. The second Nupi Lal was triggered by the overall nature of the administration of the British, however, the immediate cause can be attributed to the administration's facilitating the over-export of rice irrespective of the shortage for domestic consumption, thus inducing an artificial famine in the state.

[2] The Meira Paibis meaning 'women torch bearer' denotes a form of collective mobilisation of women which started in 1980 against increasing state violence upon the civilian population in the name of counter-insurgency operations. This mobilisation became a sustained movement that continues to fight

the issue untill today. The Meira Paibis now constitute a viable and proactive civil society component in Manipur, which engages with any issues of the collective.

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An Exploration of The Causes of Domestic Violence Against Married Women

Disari Roy

Abstract

Domestic violence takes place both urbanized and developing countries. The issue of domestic violence gained prominence in the wake of the women's movement of the 1970s, and from that time concerns about wives being beaten by their husbands took on greater importance. Crimes of domestic violence are underreported. Reasons for reluctance to report a case of domestic violence include lack of vigilance with the legal system, an inability to pay legal fees, and societal reaction when a woman decides to end a violent relationship. Violence against women and girls hurts and harms people physically, psychologically, financially and sexually. Domestic violence can take many forms, including physical, sexual, financial, emotional and verbal. Violence manifests itself in female foeticide, female infanticide, dowry death, abduction, eve teasing, and sexual harassment of women in the workplace. Focusing on victims and perpetrators, this paper attempts to examine what constitutes domestic violence, and provides an in-depth analysis of the factors that contribute to domestic violence against married women.

Keywords: *Domestic violence, Married women, Patriarchy, Gender Inequality, Cultural norms*

Introduction

Violence against women is a result of patriarchal interpretations of cultural norms. The concept of violence against women is both women's issue as well as a societal issue. The issue of domestic violence received attention in the wake of women's movement during 1970s, when concern about wives being beaten by their husbands gained attention. Emphasis has always been on women as the primary victims of domestic violence. The family is often believed to be a place of safety and security that is supposed to provide refuge from the tensions of the outer world. However, evidence shows that home is the breeding ground of all sorts of cruel and barbaric acts of violence and such violence are mostly perpetrated by the male members of the family and the easy targets are the female family members. It has been found that in majority of cases the violence is inflicted by men who happen to hold positions of power and intimacy — husbands, boyfriends, fathers, father in laws, uncles, sons, brothers or other male relatives. The crime of domestic violence is both under reported and under recorded. The reasons behind this reluctance to report incidents pertaining to domestic violence include

lack of awareness about the legal system, inability to bear the legal costs, feelings of fear and guilt as to how the society would respond when a woman decides to come out of a marriage by putting an end to the troublesome relationship. Violence against women and girls injures and damages a person physically, psychologically, economically and sexually. The violence manifests themselves in female foeticide, female infanticide, dowry deaths, abduction and kidnapping, eve teasing, sexual harassment of women at workplace. As crime against women like, rape, kidnapping, abduction, wife battering, wife abuse, dowry death, murder, eve teasing, molestation have been reported more frequently since late 1960s and early 1970s, the issue of violence against women has been transformed from a private issue into a public problem (Ahuja, 1998).

Defining Domestic Violence

Domestic violence occurs in both developed and developing countries alike. Earlier it was considered a private matter between individuals by the Governments. The issue of the growth of women's rights has concerned the United Nations since the organization's origin. However the issue of female targeted violence was not recognized by the international community until December 1993, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. In view of the alarming growth in the number of cases of violence against women globally, the Committee on Human Rights adopted resolution 1994/45 of March 1994, in which it decided to adopt the Special Rapporteurs on Violence against women. As a result the problem of violence against women has been getting ever-increasing attention. A preliminary report submitted by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women in the year 1994, focused attention on three areas of concern where women are particularly vulnerable to violence. Women are susceptible to violence within the family (including domestic violence, female infanticide), within the community (including rape, sexual assault, trafficking in women, labour exploitation) and by the State (including violence against women in detention centres as well as in situations of armed conflict, violence against refugee women) (Singh, et.al. 2009). More precisely, in the United Nations' Special Report, 1996, on Violence Against Women, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy identified various kinds of violence committed against women, namely, a) physical, sexual and emotional violence occurring within the family, including wife battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation, b) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment at workplace, intimidation in educational institutions, trafficking in women and forced prostitution and c) physical sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs. In 1996, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Ms. Radhika Coomarswamy in her report to the Commission on Human Rights concentrating on domestic violence defined domestic violence as, "violence that occurs within the private sphere,

generally between individuals who are related through intimacy, blood or law and is perpetrated by both private and state actors... domestic violence exists as a powerful tool of oppression... and is used to control women in one space traditionally dominated by women, the home" (Misra, 2007,p.62).

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in its resolution on the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. One plus point of this broad definition is that it establishes violence against women in a wider social perspective and facilitate the interested parties to take into account the majority of violations against women's human rights, categorizing them under the heading of gender based violence. Article 2 of the UN Declaration states that violence against women encompasses, but is not limited to, the following, a) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; b) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; c) physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs (Shukla & Phookan, 2015, p.5).

Major forms of abuse

Violence against women is a cycle of abuse that manifests itself in many forms throughout their lives (Figure 1). At the very beginning of her life, a girl may be the target of sex-selective abortion or female infanticide in cultures where son preference is prevalent. During childhood, violence against girls may include enforced malnutrition, lack of access to medical care and education, incest, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and forced prostitution or bonded labour. Some go on to suffer throughout their adult lives – battered, raped and even murdered at the hands of intimate partners. Other crimes of violence against women include forced pregnancy, abortion and harmful traditional practices such as dowry-related violence, sati, and killings in the name of honour. And in later life, widows and elderly women may also experience abuse.

Figure 1 (Mukhopadhyay, 2007, pp.26-27)
Examples of Violence against Women throughout the Life Cycle

Phase	Type of violence
Pre-birth	Sex-selective abortion; effects of battering during pregnancy on birthoutcomes.
Infancy	Female infanticide; physical, sexual and psychological abuse.
Girlhood	Child marriage; female genital mutilation; physical, sexual and Psychological abuse; incest; child prostitution and pornography.
Adolescence and Adulthood	Dating and courtship violence (e.g. acid throwing and date rape) economically coerced sex (e.g. school girls having sex with "sugar daddies" in return for school fees); incest; sexual abuse in the workplace; rape; sexual harassment; forced prostitution and pornography; trafficking in women; partner violence; marital rape; dowry abuse and murders; partner homicide; psychological abuse; abuse of women with disabilities; forced pregnancy.
Elderly	Forced "suicide" or homicide of widows for economic reasons; sexual physical and psychological abuse.

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men. The World health Organization (WHO) in its research on violence against women categorised it as occurring through five stages of life cycle – pre-birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence & adulthood and elderly. Incidence of crimes against women is on the rise in India. For many women across the globe, home is a place of fear. The worst kind of violence happens at home and the wife suffers dishonour in silence accepting the violent episodes as her fortune. Sadly enough, the issue failed to gather attention that it deserves in the light of the devastating effects on women, children and society, as a whole. The reasons behind this neglect may be attributed to a huge range of factors like, lack of knowledge about the gravity of the issue, universal approval of man's superiority over woman, denial of violence by women themselves owing to their societal concern, religious values and conservative upbringing. The most common form of harassment of a woman in her in-laws family, unfolds in the form of taunts, abuses and threats, which generally escalate into battering, abetment to suicide or even murder in some cases. Women suffer terrible psychological stress due to lack of economic, social and emotional security in a patriarchal world. The threat of violence and controlling behaviour by their spouses tends to lower women's self-esteem. They are incapable to take their own decisions, voice their own opinions or protect themselves and their children for fear of further

consequences. Domestic violence can take a number of forms including physical, sexual, economic, emotional and verbal.

a. Physical abuse

Physical violence is the deliberate use of physical force with the potential for resulting in injury, harm, disability or death. Acts of physical violence by the husband against his wife includes pushing, shaking, slapping, arm twisting, hair pulling, punching, kicking, dragging, beating, trying to choke or burn her on purpose, and threatening her or attacking her with a weapon.

b. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is forcefully compelling a woman to engage in sexual acts against her will. Acts of sexual violence by the husband include physically forcing the wife against her will to have sex or perform other sexual acts that she did not want to perform.

c. Economic abuse

Economic abuse takes place when the perpetrator has total control over the victims' money and other economic resources. Acts of economic abuse includes controlling access to money , withholding money at will, preventing the victim from finishing education or preventing the victim from taking up employment.

d. Emotional abuse or psychological abuse

Emotional abuse means intentionally humiliating the victim either privately or publicly, isolating the victim from family and friends, purposely detaching the victim from social contacts, threatening to harm someone of whom the victim is extremely fond of. Acts of emotional violence by the husband against the wife includes jealously, anger, intimidation, controlling, neglect, humiliation, threats, isolation and verbal abuse.

e. Verbal abuse

Verbal abuse might involve threats, name-calling, blaming, ridicule, disrespect, and criticism.

Causes of domestic violence against married women

Gender is a system of social practices that produces differences between men and women. Research has made it evident that violence against women is related to traditional gender role expectations and masculine ideologies (White and Chen, 2002). The reason as to why women are repeatedly subjected to discrimination and abuse within the home may be ascribed to patriarchy and unequal power relations that exist between men and women. The general perception is that men are superior to women and the process of socialization helps both men and women internalise such views and gender role expectations. This is one of the principal reasons for which women silently endure the violence that is meted out towards them at home. Physical and other acts of violence are inflicted by the powerful men on the

less powerful women so as to ensure absolute obedience from them. The causes of domestic violence are multi - faceted. Multiple forces determine it at multiple levels; the individual (onto genic factors), the family level (the micro system), the community level (the exo system) and the cultural level (the macro system) in which all the factors are linked with each other. The following figure 2 is indicative of the causes of domestic violence and it is based on Belsky's (1984) theory of maltreatment. The figure includes the emotional disturbances through which an abusive husband passes, provoking characteristics of the wife or children, dysfunctional forms of family interaction, stress factors and abuse promoting cultural norms. The figure also indicates that causes of maltreatment cannot be explained on the basis of a single factor. In fact it may be triggered by multiple factors (Pandey, 2008).

Figure 2
The causes of domestic violence

Ontogenic factors	Micro system factors	Exo system factors	Macro system factors
History of abuse	Marital discord, conflict	Inadequate health care facilities	Economic recession
Alcohol abuse	Single parenthood		Cultural acceptance of corporal punishment
Stressful experiences	Premature or unhealthy child	Social isolation Unsafe neighbourhood	View of females or children as possession
Low I.Q. Psychiatric and physical illness	.....	.....	Patriarchy

Traditionally women are considered to be the keystone of the family. A woman creates life and then nurtures, protects and strengthens life. If the foundation stone is not cautiously preserved the society is bound to get dissected. Violence against women within the four walls of the home is as old as the world in myths or legends. The rate of recurrence, intensity and kinds of violence differ from place to place. The social construction of the divide between public and private underlies the hidden nature of domestic violence. The domain of the household was believed to be under the control of male members of the family and much of the violence in the home was directed by the male members of the family against the female members of the family. The causes of domestic violence are manifold. Foremost among them are patriarchal system of society and male superiority complex. An issue relating to violence against women entails an analysis of gender and its centrality to the family where norms of gender disparity exist. Domestic violence, dowry deaths, marital rape are the materialization of gender inequality within the structure of family system. Research has shown that any social structure that considers women to be inferior in status and subservient to men provides

an environment that is conducive towards violence against women. Violence against women in marital home depends on the kind of relationship that a husband and a wife share with each other. The cultural factors relating to marriage, status of women and power structure relationship between men and women in the society are vital while analyzing violence against women in the family context. An abuser uses violence on his wife or partner in order to show his dominance and keep her under control. There is no denying the fact that poverty, addiction to alcohol and drugs, frustration owing to unemployment or lack of job opportunities can trigger violent behaviours. These factors have the potentiality to create emotional and economic stress and this may take a toll on the relationship where sometimes even small conflicts may escalate into violent crimes. However research has shown that domestic violence is perpetrated even by men belonging to well to do families as well as those who are non-alcoholics. Sometimes certain action on the part of the wives might trigger violence. Such actions include: refusal to obey the orders of the husband, disobeying the orders of the in-laws, questioning attitude regarding husband's whereabouts, raising suspicion about husband's sexual fidelity and also refusing to succumb to the pressure of marital family for dowry demands. The crime of domestic violence is often justified by both men and women on certain grounds. Certain extent of violence is considered common and accepted as is evident from the ensuing opinions and perception expressed by both men and women (Jejeebhoy, 1998, p.858).

A husband in a Brahmin household in Uttar Pradesh: "Beating is for the woman's own good, to make her understand when she misbehaves."

A wife in a Brahmin household in Uttar Pradesh: "It is a way a man shows his love for his wife. If he doesn't correct her who else is there?"

A Jat householder from Uttar Pradesh: "You should not beat your wife but if the food is not ready, if the rotis are not hot, what choice do you have?"

A woman from Gujarat: "One does sometimes feel like running away from it all. But where does one go? The only place is parental home but parents will always send you back....Also, when there are children, where does one go?"

A woman from Tamil Nadu: "Every day passes in fear. If I dare to talk back, I will get beaten more. I have now learnt to keep my mouth shut. Where will I go if he throws me out? Over the past few months I have gone close to taking poison three or four times. Then I think of the children. Who will take care of them if I die?"

Violence is inflicted against women as punishment in the name of correcting her wrong behaviour. It seems as if there is an informal and powerful system of jurisprudence that is followed by families, which is not accountable to formal systems of justice. For instance, in a study conducted in Gujarat, women commonly attributed an outburst against them owing to causes such as mistakes in running the household. Most frequently cited reasons include: failure to prepare meals on time, not cooking meals properly, not taking proper care of the

children and economic stress. Another study found that the most commonly stated reason behind wife abuse was disobeying husband's orders or failing to meet his requirements and expectations. So called disobedience may be failure in serving hot meals, quarrelling with the mother in law, drinking or behaving improperly with outside men. Disobedient behaviour on the part of a woman would result in punishment by the husband. Violence and cruelty due to dowry demands is another major factor of domestic violence in Indian society. Abusers rarely feel remorse for their act and instead put the blame on the innocent victims of violence. The abusers are rarely punished even after committing brutal acts on their partners. There is also the trend to ignore the offences committed by men on women by projecting the men as powerless victims of poverty or drinking or drug addiction. This indicates that men are prone to be pardoned from guiltiness and reprimand. Strangely enough the husband instead of being a defender of rights turns into a violent perpetrator who initiates all sorts of vindictive acts on his wife. For the wife, the home ceases to be the safest place and turns into a prison where she is just a sufferer of physical and mental torture. It is probable to see the marks of violence on a woman's body but what remains largely concealed is the mental scar and psychological harm that are the effects of violent episodes. This emotional distress takes a long time to mend and it also toll on a woman's health and overall well-being of the family. Violence emerges from the notions of ownership over a woman's body, sexuality, reproductive rights, mobility as well as level of autonomy. To put it simply, the unequal power relations between male and female in society is due to a range of factors: men's control over women's body and sexuality, belief in inherent superiority of males, cultural sanctions that uphold male supremacy over females and that deny both women and children an independent legal and social status. The crime of wife abuse has received social and religious sanction from the society. The state promotes the culture of violence by adopting the role of onlookers to the incidence of domestic violence. The Indian society views women as objects rather than subjects and accords women a low position in society. It is this society that accords men a higher status giving men the right to exercise dominance over women and even chastise and beat them, whenever necessity arises. Traditional society enforced the view that only men are capable of fulfilling the needs of women and only a man can provide identity to a woman. Women are conditioned to believe that after marriage, in laws place is their actual home and they are duty bound to serve their husband and in laws unconditionally. In other words, absolute obedience is demanded from the women. Cultural norms encouraged the belief that the failure of the marriage indicated the failure of the women as individuals. The result is that women try to save their marriage at all costs, and in the process gets trapped in the tumultuous relationship where the women are made to suffer all sorts of physical, psychological and even sexual abuse. In rural India girls are forced to get married much before reaching marriageable age. This can happen either with or without the consent of the girl. Early marriage undermines the health and autonomy of millions of young girls. Early marriage leads to teenage pregnancy and also has adverse impact on the health of the new born child, for example- low birth weight babies are born. Other ill effects include depriving

the young girls from getting education and employment opportunities. In India, women are always encouraged to sacrifice their own ambitions and needs for the needs of other members of the family including husband and children. The Indian culture glorifies the image of a woman who is tolerant, obedient, and submissive by nature and who looks upon her husband and in laws with reverence. If any woman attempts to leave her abusive husband's home and decides to live independently that would mean she is defying established customary standards and the woman might end up inviting society's wrath and dishonour. It is evident from the above discussion that there are various causes of violence against woman. Another area of concern is that an Indian middle class woman is seldom aware of her legal rights as a wife. Instead of making her legally aware, she is made to believe that marital family home is her only alternative (Epstein, 1996; Segal, 1999). Lack of awareness about legal rights is a disadvantage for women. The seriousness of the crime of domestic violence has not received the attention it deserved. This is mainly due to the fact that society tries to treat it as an acceptable for the purpose of maintaining harmony within homes. Another reason is, however, the non-availability of data to disclose the scale and frequency of such violence. This unreliability or unavailability of data is mainly due to under reporting and faulty statistics. This under reporting of crime is due to social and cultural factors, insensitive police force and an intimidating judicial process (Gangoli, 2007).

Violence against women is an allegory that exist the world over. In India the menace of violence against women is as old as Sita who was abducted by Ravana, or Draupadi who was publicly humiliated by the Kauravas or Ahalya who was turned into stone by her husband. Domestic violence as a human rights issue was recognized at key international conferences during the 1990s, including the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). In India it was only during the early 1980s, in the wake of dowry and related problems, those crimes against women came to be recognized as an important social problem.

In Indian society, a woman enters an already structured household as strangers where they are susceptible to abuse. This household is the breeding ground of domestic ideologies that distributes gender specific roles and accords the wife a low status in family. Karlekar differentiates between family and household. Family is seen as greater kinship alliances spread over time and space. The household can be viewed as a physical structure that is an assemblage of financial and emotional relationships among its members. The household may be referred to as functioning unit that may be looked upon as a platform for a working out of family ideologies around specific roles and expectations (Karlekar, 1998). Women are considered second class citizens and are seen as inferior to men. The Indian tradition and custom has never treated women equal to men. Women are well-regarded in Vedas and Puranas but in reality women are accorded low status in society. Women are assigned the role of child bearing, child rearing and home making and unconditional and lifelong service to male members of the family is expected from them. Women should never indulge in any act that

might have the potential of bringing shame to family prestige and women should always be governed by male family members. This tradition has its roots in the Laws of the Manu, whose author Manu is regarded by the Hindus as the supreme law giver. In India, rules and regulations for women which are laid down by Manusmriti are both discriminative and derogatory to the status of women. Laws of the Manu start with the dictum which states that women are created by God in order to bear children. The Laws of the Manu predetermined that a woman ought to be under the protection and control of her father in childhood, her husband in youth and her sons in her widowed old age, and furthermore that a women does not deserve independence. In other words, starting from childhood to the end of her life a woman has to be under the control of father or husband or the son. It is evident from the violent acts committed against women that men have taken full advantage of Laws of the Manu to keep women under control. Manu is however kind enough to women for it ordered men to take care of them because women are needed to propagate the mankind. A well-known verse from the Laws of the Manu states that a righteous wife should continuously serve her husband like a God, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges in his lust and is devoid of any good qualities (Walsh, 2004). This implies the fact that in her in-law's home, a woman's husband was her God; her loyalty and dedication to him was unconditional, dependent on neither his character nor his behaviour.

Conclusion

It is a myth to think that domestic violence is restricted to women who belong to poor section of society. In reality, women of all classes are equally prone to violence at home. However, women belonging to middle class and upper class are subjected to abuse behind closed doors. Similarly it is a myth to think that violence is only perpetrated by men who belongs lower strata of society because in real life it is also practiced by successful men belonging to highly successful profession like medicine, engineering as well as corporate. It is often believed that victims of violence are helpless nonworking women. But the fact is that educated women and women holding responsible jobs as doctors, engineers or those who are doing government jobs are also subjected to abuse. Another myth is that women are themselves responsible for the beatings to which they are subjected in marital home. Many believe men tend to get violent only due to provocation. Women are always made to bear the brunt of guilt, shame and provocation. Another myth is that women do not leave their abusive husbands because they get accustomed to the beatings and assaults. The truth is that women fail to come out of the violent relationships owing to a number of factors, like, economic dependency on husband, lack of support from natal family and lack of education or absence of awareness about legal procedures. It is wrong to think that men who incite violence at home can change with the passage of time. The reality is violence continue to happen both in severity and frequency. And the victims continue to live with fear and insecurity because it is difficult to predict the onset of violence (Pandey, 2008).

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Illuminating Dark Spaces: The American Baptist Women Missionaries and the *Zenana* System in Assam

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Abstract

The system of seclusion of women in closed quarters called *Zenanas* was practiced throughout India including the north-eastern state of Assam. This practice was followed in India since early times which continued in the colonial period. The missionary women of the American Baptist mission in Assam endeavored to reach the women confined in the *Zenana*s and provide them with basic education and health care facilities. The interaction between the secluded women and the missionary women had a profound effect on the condition of the former. The paper explores the struggles of the missionary women to improve the lot of the women confined in *Zenana*s in Assam amidst a strongly patriarchal atmosphere. An attempt to highlight the changes brought about in the lives of the native women as result of the *Zenana* mission has also been made. Further, the complexities of the imperialist notions of missionary women and the impact which the *Zenana* mission was able to make on their lives have also been touched upon.

Keywords: *Women, American Baptist, Assam, Missionaries, Zenana, Patriarchy.*

Introduction

Towards the turn of the eighteenth century, the British rule came to be firmly established in India. This in turn encouraged Christian missionaries of different denominations to enter India and attempt to spread their faith having been granted formal sanctionto carry out proselytizing activities in the country by the Charter Act of 1813. Assam was one of the most remote provinces of the North Eastern dominion of the British in India. It remained relatively isolated from the rest of the country because of limitations of transport and communication and unfavorable climate especially during the rains. However, gradual inroads into the region by the British led to the opening up of the province which was further intensified by the discovery of the Tea plant in 1823. This region also drew the attention of the Christian missionaries because they viewed it as a potential entry-point to the untouched far-eastern countries as they aspired to spread Christianity to China, Burma and Japan etc.

Though many different missionary denominations worked in the region at various times, it was the American Baptist Mission which was the most active. The impact of this particular mission was varied and enduring and not confined to conversions alone. Education, language, literature, and health facilities were some of the spheres which the mission revolutionized in the region. The American Baptist Missionaries worked for over a century in Assam since their arrival in 1836 and from the very beginning women missionaries were at the helm of educational, health-related and humanitarian services undertaken. Missionary women played an equal if not more significant role than men in propagating Christianity through various mediums in Assam. These women missionaries were not only a great support to the evangelist and educational mission undertaken in general but also towards the development of education and social conditions for the native women in particular. Nearly every mission center had at least one woman-missionary and some centers were left entirely in the hands of the women. It was at the initiative of the women missionaries that schools for girls were opened in several places. However, these tasks were not achieved easily. Missionary women had to work amidst even more restrictions than the men. Women had to make sacrifices of not only their own comforts but also that of their families and children. Missionary women were further burdened and limited by the patriarchal differences prevalent in the society of Assam and also ingrained deep in the policies and system of the American Baptist Mission itself. Despite these limitations, motivated by religious zeal and dedication, the missionary women continued their services in the face of all odds.

At the same time the condition of native women in erstwhile Assam was also quite pitiful. It is often assumed that the egalitarian tribal society of the north- eastern region accords a better status and position to women incomparison to other parts of India. But on studying the accounts left by the missionaries as well as other sources, the situation is found to be far from ideal. It was seen that both tribalor lower caste women as well as women of the higher castes were usually not educated. Social norms relating to women were generally aimed at dominating and controlling her. These norms were even stricter in case of the higher caste families. One of the most demeaning practices applied to women all around India and in Assam was the practice of seclusion. Women were kept away from the public eye in separate quarters of the home where no males other than those of the household were allowed to enter. These quarters were referred to as *Zenanas.* The custom was mostly upheld in the name of maintaining honor and respect of the womenfolk but in effect led to women being considered as inferior creatures devoid of intellect or self-will.So, any contact with these women could not be made by the missionary men. In such a situation, it was soon realized that the education of these women could be achieved through women alone. The practice of recruiting missionary women specifically to reach the native women relegated in the *Zenana*s was started in earnest. Missionary women took it upon themselves to improve the condition of the *Zenana* women and encourage the women and the family members to give up this

repressive practice. This paper is a study of the *Zenana* system in Assam and the efforts of the American Baptist women missionaries to help the women affected by this system.

Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are to study about the prevalence of the *Zenana* system in Assam, to highlight the efforts of the *Zenana* mission of the American Baptist Mission in this regard in general and the contributions of the missionary women in particular, to discuss about the obstacles faced by the missionary women during the mission and to analyse the changes brought about the missionary women in the lives of the *Zenana* women. The paper will also attempt to study the effect of the patriarchal restrictions of both Western and Indian society on the efforts of the missionary women as well as their own restrictive notions of superiority.

Review of Literature

Previous research writings have made several references to the *Zenana* system in Assam. For instance, Dr. Sheila Bora's paper titled "Impact of the American Missionaries on the Women of North-East India 1836-1900," published in the Proceedings of the North East India History Association in 1990, (Bora:1990) provides insights into the condition of women in Assam and the North-East during the arrival of American missionaries. The article also offers a brief overview of the *Zenana* system of education adopted by women missionaries due to the lack of formal educational opportunities. Furthermore, it highlights the social conditions and the transmission of Christian ideas to indigenous women. In another study, Adani Nguille's doctoral thesis, "Christian Missionary Perspective and their Role in the Transformation of Lotha Naga Women in North East India 1885-1950", (Nguille:2010) extensively examines the impact of Christianity on Lotha Naga women. Although focused on Lotha Naga women, this study provides valuable insights into the social impact of Christian education on women in general. The positive effects of Christian education include the abandonment of superstitious beliefs and the elimination of social evils that adversely affected women's status, particularly among various tribes. Moreover, there are numerous primary sources that shed light on the early history of the American Baptist Mission in Assam and the development of theological education. To name a few, Harriet Bronson Gunn's "In A Far Country," (Gunn 1911) Mary Mead Clark's "The Whole World Kin," (Clark 1907) and Mrs. P.H. Moore's "Twenty Years in Assam," (Moore 1901), "Further Leaves from Assam," (Moore 1907), "Autumn Leaves from Assam."(Moore 1910) and "Stray Leaves from Assam," (Moore 1916). These accounts offer vivid descriptions of the historical context and provide insights into the reactions of both local or native people and missionary women. Notably, these first-hand narratives written by women offer glimpses into the lives of not only the missionary women but also the native women of that era.

Discussion

The first part of the discussion centers mainly around two points i.e. what the *Zenana* system implied and what the approach of the missionaries towards it was. According to Helen Montgomery Barett, "The general meaning of the word '*Zenana*' is the living quarters within a household, occupied exclusively by women especially of high caste families. However, it popularly refers to any kind of enforced seclusion of women in the *Zenana*, *purdah, harem, anpang*, and the like, wherever practiced. The *Zenana* system was enforced in an extreme form among the aristocratic Muslim and Hindu families of India. No interaction with any outsider was permitted to these hidden ladies." (Barrett 1910: 107) Mrs. Marianne Lewis has described the actual condition of the *Zenana*s as follows, "In every respectable Hindoo house a range of apartments is found set apart for the occupation of women. This is called the *Zenana* from the Persian word 'zen', meaning woman. To this part of the house no man has access except the fathers, husbands and sons of the family; and from it no female member of the family beyond the age of childhood is allowed to pass unguarded. The apartments of the *Zenana* are usually dreary, ill-lighted, ill ventilated and miserably furnished rooms - these poor women enjoy little of their husband's society, they do not even sit or eat with them."[1](Lewis 1866) These women have also been referred to as *Purdah* women. The Christian missionaries undertook a mission for the upliftment and education of the women in the *Zenana*s. It is said that the *Zenana* mission was envisaged by Thomas Smith a Scottish missionary in 1854. It was formally started by John Fordyce in 1855. (Dey 2017: 110) The Church of England *Zenana* Missionary Society was established around 1880. It was initially a part of the interdenominational Indian Female Normal School Society which had been founded in 1852. The objective of this newly formed society was basically to spread the word of God among Indian women through various means. These included education imparted through schools or institutes for teacher training, medical and health services, visits to *Zenana*s, by setting up separate schools for Hindu and Muslim women and by employing Bible women.[2]The society had been managed by the Church of England till 1957 when it was amalgamated with the Church Missionary Society.[3]The American Baptist Mission first started *Zenana* work in Balasore in Orissa, India. Work under this mission was first started by Mrs. Smith in 1869 for educating the married girls at Balasore. One hundred and twenty-six women were taught in their *Zenana*s by Mrs. Smith and her assistants.[4] (Bernard 1873)

Like in other parts of India and elsewhere, the *Zenana* mission was undertaken in Assam as well. Though we know that the *Zenana* system existed in Assam however there are very few official records attesting to the same. Amongst the single women missionaries who served in Assam special mention may be made of a few. Maria Bronson and Orrell Keeler both contributed a great deal to educating women of the *Zenana*s. (Keeler 1886). It was because of the untiring efforts of these women that missionary women came to be allowed to interact with the women confined in the *Zenana*s of high- caste orthodox households. Many women of conservative families would have been denied the privilege of education had they not

been helped by these two missionaries. The involvement of many other missionary women in educating women in the *Zenana*s can also be gathered from various sources. Elizabeth Vickland wrote that Mrs. Whiting had approachedthe Assamese women in Sibsagar (Vickland 1924, 1935). She is also said to have visitedthe Ahom queen's palace at Jorhat. Vickland also mentioned that Mrs. Barker had called on women living in Gauhati.[5](Keeler 1886)

The problem of the *Zenana* system in Assam came to be noticed when the missionaries began their efforts of educating women. The primary objective of educating women was the fact that they had a critical role to play in the spread of religion and the belief that concrete changes in the faith and beliefs of the people would only be possible through the involvement of women. Another reason for educating women was the chauvinistic notion that Christian men would be useful only if they have wives with high ideals. These women were expected to take care of the homes perform the roles of mothers who would train their children with Christian ideals. So training prospective wives for Christian men was also an important consideration when educating women. The establishment of schools for girls was therefore given utmost importance.[6]

The missionaries found that in Assam it was not difficult to meet with and connect with tribal women and women of the lower castes in society. Interacting with these women was also not a problem as they were allowed to venture out of their houses since they had to contribute to the earnings of their households. However, the scenario in case of women of the higher castes was not as simple. Generally high caste families were financially well-off; thus their women were not required to earn a living. Lack of contribution to the economy of the family caused them to be restricted to the 'inner sphere' or the household. The extent to which this was followed was evident in the *Zenana* system. Missionary men were not allowed to meet the women in the *Zenana*s on any account. Thus, missionary women were consigned the task of entering these secluded spaces and provide the native high caste Hindu and Muslim women with primary education and in the process familiarize them with the ideas of Christianity. At first, access to women of the higher castes could only be gained on the pretext of teaching them some kind of needle-work or domestic skill.

The missionary women started educational efforts in Assam both in the formal and non-formal manner. It was hoped that with the help of education, women would be able to bring about changes in society starting from their individual homes by influencing their own families.The missionaries realized that the girls required the knowledge of basic home skills which could be taught through non-formal education. Vocational training of this sort would prepare the girls for the roles which they would eventually take up. Therefore,in the hostels of schools set up by the mission, girl students were trained to stitch and knit clothes, taught about bodily hygiene, how to prepare different kinds of food and to live a life of dignity.[7](Nguille 2010:12) This non-formal education was not resisted by the native people as they didn't consider it a threat to their religious and social beliefs. This form of education was also supported by the missionaries who supported the view that women must be trained

in domestic skills to take on the roles of home makers. But the same cannot be said of formal education. Most people were not open to the idea of sending their girls to school where science, mathematics and other subjects were taught. They did not support the idea of women being taught these subjects and considered it unnecessary. Most opposition to education of women is seen to have come from high caste Brahmins (Hindu priests) and Mohammadens.[8]These sections were not willing to send their girls out of the homes to be educated by the missionaries, be it non-formal education or formal. The native people were apprehensive that the missionaries would convert their women to Christianity. Their fears were not unfounded because the underlying objective of all missionary activities was the spread of Christianity. The prejudiced attitude of the missionaries was in fact quite evident at times. For instance, once a Babu (Indian clerk) wanted his wife to be taught to read and sew. But Ms. Keeler refused unless he allowed his wife to have religious instruction as well. The Babu had to eventually agree.[9] This attitude of the missionaries may have further discouraged the native population to allow women to be educated. The tribal people of the hills also were not supportive of women's education. In the year 1840, Mrs. Bronson approached a Naga village to meet the women. On being questioned about the purpose of her visit by the chief, she informed him that she had come to educate the women. In reply he said, "You cannot teach our females. They were trained to bear burdens, to bring wood and water, and to make the salt by which we gain our subsistence. If they learn to read and sew, they must give up these labors and remain at home; then who will do this work; as it is our business to watch the village, hunt deer, and fight our enemies? Our young men can learn, but not our women; it is not our custom"[10] (Nguille 2010: 70)This discriminatory attitude existed amongst the Garos of Meghalaya which was part of erstwhile Assam. Social stigma towards women extended beyond with holding them from educational privileges. It was noted that a man could beat his wife at his will, but if she protested or reciprocated, he had the right to abandon her. A woman did not even have the right to be seated equally with men. Women werealso usually not permitted to eat before their husbands had taken their meals. So though *Zenana*s were not maintained by the hill tribes, but the condition of the women there was no better than that of the confined women. In this regard, Miriam R Burdette said "The freedom of the Garo woman differs from that of the Purdah-woman of the plains in kind rather than in degree. In both cases, the word of the man is the law that governs her actions. In many instances the Purdah-woman is hardly more bound to her apartments, than is a Garo woman to her work."[11](Burdette 1866:192) The missionary women tried to bring about a change in this attitude towards women. When visiting the homes of the people the missionary women tried to make not only the men but also the women folk aware about gender discrimination.

The second part of the discussion revolves around the methods adopted by the American Baptist missionaries for carrying out work in the *Zenanas*. For this work there were no fixed or ideal methods adopted. In most cases, Bible women were first sent out to speak with the *Zenana* women. Since the beginning the Bible women were indispensable for the *Zenana*

mission and their roles are just as important as the missionary women. Isabella Watson's report states as follows, "A great deal of visiting has been done in the *Zenana*s and surrounding villages. The Bible woman first makes her visits, and before I enter these homes, permission is first had from the man of the house. I have made it a point never to enter a house unless permission is given. I have, however, made a few exceptions when the women have sent a special request."[12] The women were usually not receptive to Christian teachings as they followed the orders of their husbands to not encourage missionaries to influence them religiously in any way.[13] From the 1860's *Zenana* work gradually opened up. Wives of missionaries sent appeal for more missionaries to be sent or at least funds to be sent so that national women could be employed for this work.[14] In 1872, Frances Bronson, second wife of Miles Bronson on her return to Assam after fourteen years was much encouraged by progress in the *Zenana* work. She considered it a radical change and was motivated to continue working amongst the women of the *Zenana*s.[15] Maria Bronson Cotes, daughter of Miles Bronson was directly involved with the *Zenana* work. She said, "It was thought a shame to educate girls; so, they are left in perfect ignorance, to do all the hard work in the burning sun. Higher classes keep their women shut up in small apartments. Oh, what a life these poor creatures lead and how unfit they are to train their own children. Even the educated are unwilling to send their wives to us."[16] Missionary women not only encouraged women to come out of their homes but also to become organised and to stand up for their rights. One such example is the change in women's condition amongst the Lotha Nagas. This occurred mainly due to the educational efforts of Mr. & Mrs. Howard Houston. They came to Nagaland in 1949. Lotha Naga women who were so far confined to the homes began taking active part in the school, churches and societies. The American Baptist women missionaries actively supported the organization of women into associations in each church. Miss Bronson wrote that,it was in these associations that women got their first exposure to authority out of their homes. They learnt to lead othersand gained knowledge of management. For the first time they could make decisions which was had so far not been allowed in Naga society before the coming of colonialism.[17]

In order to encourage the women of the *Zenana* to mingle with them and also to expose them to an environment outside the closed walls they were subjected to, the single women sent to Assam used to organize *Zenana* and 'purdah' parties[18]. Elizabeth Vickland narrated about the purdah parties held for *Zenana* women in the mission compound. She said the parties were great occasions for the secluded women, for they could come out and away from their apartments and be exposed to new surroundings. They visited the mission bungalows and were entertained by mission school girls. They were exposed to the many novel things during these visits. They got to see stereopticon slides of places in India, England and other places. They were shown Bible stories and sometimes slides about baby care. They were allowed to tour through the house, touch the piano, listen to records playing, handle knives and forks, china ware and so forth.[19](Vickland 1924:151-157) Therefore, the motive of these parties was to obviously expose women to western lifestyle. It also showed that

missionary women had a superiority complex and felt that indigenous culture needed to be transformed to meet Christian standards of civilization. In the *Purdah* or *Zenana* parties women of both religions were invited, but Muslims women were always a minority and there was no evidence of these women taking leadership. The women's clubs that were being organized among the *Zenana* women in the early 1900's were emphatic about not making religious distinctions.[20] Work in the *Zenana*s was considered an important part of missionary work. It was seen that generous grants were made by the mission for *Zenana* work. This was clear from the resolutions taken in Missionary Conferences. For instance, in one of the conferences it was voted to approve the recommendation that rupees seventy be granted for a woman-teacher in the girls' school while rupees four hundred and fifty was granted for *Zenana* work.[21]

Another point which is very relevant to the discussion is the problems and mindset of the missionary women. Even though missionary women made inarguable contributions to uplifting the condition of women in the *Zenana*s and in general however they were often not given their due share of recognition. The mission board was reluctant in the beginning to assign the title of missionary to the women workers. On visits to the *Zenana*s they were clearly demarcated from the Bible women whom accompanied them. It was the Bible woman who first approached the family and asked the permission of the male members to meet the women of the household. Only then were the missionary women were allowed to come forward. They were usually referred to as 'lady visitors' rather than missionaries by the mission boards and societies. (Semple 2003: 33) It was only later that single women began to be sent out into the field by theWomen's Baptist Foreign Mission Society (WBFMS) prior to 1913 and by the Women's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (WABFMS) from 1914 to 1950. Even when women were finally appointed as missionaries they had to work under the supervision of a male missionary and were often paid less salary in comparison to their male counterparts. Never the less, *Zenana* work also had a positive impact on the missionary women. As stated by Geraldine Forbes, "The greatest impact of this plan was on the women missionaries themselves who, drawn from the 'surplus' of genteel single women in England, would otherwise have been competing for the few available positions of governesses." (Forbes 1986: WS2) So, the *Zenana* mission provided the missionary women with a way to break away from the stereotypical roles and responsibilities expected of them. Through this way they were able to make a difference not only in their own lives but also of those many native women who were languishing in the *Zenana*s.

Despite all the humanitarian work undertaken by the missionary women, it was seen that they were deeply influenced by the racial differences. Geraldine Forbes states that, 'Significantly, women missionaries of the period were not only the helpmates of the imperialists but were themselves imperialists reenacting the drama of the colonizer and the colonized within the confines of the *Zenana*.'[22] (Forbes 1986 WS2-WS8) This is a very important observation. When we consider the methods employed by the missionary women in working

with the women confined in the *Zenana*s, their prejudice towards native women is evident. The missionary women though in pursue of noble objectives were not free of the occidental cultural superiority attitude which considered Indian people and culture as inferior. So, instead of recognizing the traditions and ways of native women as unique and different, the missionary women tried to impose western notions and mannerisms on them in an attempt to modernize and civilize them. They introduced native women to ideas of feminity and housekeeping which the latter were not familiar with. In addition to conversion, the task of the missionary wives was "to remake 'native' women into 'good wives and mothers' modeled on the norms of metropolitan and evangelical norms of femininity." (Haggis 2008: 110) Evangelization was linked with the idea of civilization and being brought into social equality with Western women and into positions of respect in their own societies through Christianity. (Roberts 1997, 130) The idea of meeting and speaking with Naga women always interested the missionary women. However, they were shocked upon actually meeting them because Naga women were often naked as it was their way of life. The appearance and behavior of these women was often viewed as immodest which offended the Western sensibilities ofthe missionary women who considered their views of feminity as ideal and did not recognize those of the Naga women. Mary Mead Clark who was a missionary in Nagaland wrote that Naga women encouraged men to participate in violent practices such as 'head hunting'.[23] So, she tried to instill in the Naga women ideals of being good wives. Housework was portrayed as ideal work for women while work in the fields was seen as undignified. The native women were taught about Western ideas of home making, midwifery and cookery.On one hand missionary women praised Naga women for being unrestricted like the women in the plains, on the other hand they wanted women to be devoted and tied down to their homes. These ideas were contrary to each other and served to only to decrease the freedom of Naga women.[24] (Pathak 2014: 12) This in a way may have led to further difficulties on part of the native women indiscovering and asserting their identities on their own terms. Bringing an end to the *Zenana* system was not an easily achievable feat and missionary women toiled hard to remove deep rooted discrimination. In addition to opposition from the natives overcoming their own biased notions and allowing a more liberal perspective in educating women were some of the hurdles which the missionary women struggled with. However, the missionary women tried their best to provide education, basic skills and primary medical and maternity aid to women within the *Zenana* itself.

Conclusion-

The efforts of American Baptist missionary women in implementing *Zenana* work undoubtedly brought about significant transformations in the lives of native women who were previously confined to seclusion. These women faced isolation and the denial of rights due to the rigid orthodoxy upheld by high caste Hindu and Islamic families in the plains, as well as the patriarchal clan structures prevalent among the hill tribes of Assam. Through the dedicated

endeavors of these missionary women, particularly those associated with the American Baptist Mission, native women were provided access to primary education and became aware of their fundamental rights and privileges.

The missionary women not only imparted knowledge in subjects such as literature, mathematics, and science but also provided training in practical skills like needlework and knitting. By introducing native women to aspects of Western culture, the missionary women instilled a sense of liberation, enabling them to recognize the possibilities it offered. Consequently, the women missionaries not only motivated native women to assert their rights but also encouraged men to embrace the concept of education for women and understand the detrimental effects of female seclusion.As a result of the *Zenana* education efforts, many higher caste families began sending their daughters to attend schools established by the missionaries. Gradually, women were allowed to step out of their homes and even engage in various forms of employment. They began to organize themselves and assume public roles, a concept previously inconceivable before the arrival of the missionaries. The *Zenana* system of education initiated by the American Baptist Mission proved beneficial for both native and missionary women. The missionary women gained recognition in their own right, breaking free from stereotypical roles and pursuing work of their choice. This made a substantial difference not only in their own lives but also in the lives of countless secluded women in India.

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2 *Catalogue of the Papers of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society*, University of Birmingham, 1987, p.1.

3 *Ibid.*

4 C. Bernard., *General Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1871-72*, Calcutta, 1873, p.380.

5 OrrellKeeller., *Report on Women's Work in Assam* in *The American Baptist Missionary Union's Jubilee Conference* held in Nowgong, December, 1886. p.187.

6 *Report of the Secretary Treasurer*, Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Fifteenth Session, Sibsagar, 1917, p.56.

7 Adani Nguille., *Christian Missionary Perspective and their Role in the Transformation of Lotha Naga women in North East India 1885-1950*, Unpublished Phd Thesis, Assam University, Silchar, 2010. p.12

8 *Letter from Mrs. Scott,* Baptist Missionary Magazine, May 1872, pp.180-181.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Journal of Mrs. Bronson, 22nd March, 1848* as quoted in Adani Nguille *Christian Missionary Perspective and their Role in the Transformation of Lotha Naga Women in North East India 1885-1905*, Unpublished Phd thesis, Assam University, 2010, p. 70.

[11] Miriam R. Burdette., *Work for Garo Women*, Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Jubilee Conference, Nowgong, 1886, p. 192.

[12] *Isabella Wilson's Report*, Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, Gauhati, 1907, p.44.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] F.H. Bronson., *Assam after Fourteen Years*, Baptist Missionary Magazine, 1872, pp. 492-495.

[16] *Letter from Miss Bronson*, Baptist Missionary Magazine, 1872. p.181.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Purdah* refers to the practice of women donning veils to protect them from the eyes of outsiders. Purdah is practiced by both Hindu and Muslim communities. It is a practice believed to preserve and protect the dignity and purity of women.

[19] E. Elizabeth Vickland, *Through Judy's Eyes*, Judson Press, Philadelphia, 1924,pp. 151-157.

[20] E. Elizabeth Vickland., *Daughter of Brahma: A Tale of the Brahmaputra Country,* (ed and introduced by Liza Das) Anwesha, Guwahati, 2005 (first published in 1935), pp.158-161.

[21] *Article Seven of the Assam Baptist Missionary Conference Report*, Ninth Session, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta,1907, p.3

[22] Forbes, Geraldine H. 1986. 'In Search of the 'Pure Heathen': Missionary Women in Nineteenth Century India', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 21, No. 17, WS2-WS8, Review of Women Studies.

[23] Forbes, Geraldine H. *The Most Manly and Virile Missionary Ground In the Empire, American Missionaries amongst the Nagas,*J.P. Naik Memorial Lecture, Centre For Women's Development Centre, p.12

[24] Suryasikha Pathak., *Less Freedom Equals Emancipation: Femininity and Sexuality in Colonial Northeast India*, paper presented at Association of Asian Studies Conference, Philadelphia, March, 2014 as quoted in Geraldine Forbes., *The Most Manly and Virile Missionary Ground In the Empire, American Missionaries amongst the Nagas,* J. P.Naik Memorial Lecture, Centre For Women's Development Centre, p.12.

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Low Skilled Labour Migration Corridor: A Study on Jangipur Sub Division, Murshidabad District, West Bengal, India

Sandip Tah

Abstract:
According to the HDI Report (2014) Murshidabad is a backward district. Majority of the local impoverished people are willing to leave their homes in search of jobs that will support their family because of less jobs opportunity in this area. Since the previous few decades, a considerable number of people from the study area have migrated both domestically and internationally. This paper mainly examines the fact that local migrants are taking specified routes to travel between their points of origin and their final destinations, creating specific migration corridors.The systematic explorations of these migration routes and the connections or intermediaries involved in their ongoing operation have received particular attention. Remittances have been thoroughly investigated as a topic.The entire region is regarded as a pocket of ongoing outmigration.In its entirety, this paper explores several particular aspects of out-migration from Jangipur Sub Division, Murshidabad district, West Bengal.

Keywords: *Migration Corridor; HDI; Jangipur Sub Division; Out migration; Domestic and International destination.*

Introduction:

In figuring out the socioeconomic circumstances of rural India, migration has always played a substantial part. In general, people migrate from economically underdeveloped areas to developed ones. The flow of individuals during the process slightly negates the regional economic imbalance (Hazra, 2012). The males of rural India prefer to emigrate for economic reasons (Basu, 2019). A study conducted by the CMID (Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development) revealed the fact that Murshidabad district is one of the primary sources of migrant workers in Kerala. Not only Kerala the rest of India and the Gulf nations are the most prominent pull sector of migrant work force from Murshidabad district (Peter and Narendran, 2017). Ali (2018) has also researched the roots and outcomes of migratory labour. Kundu (2012 & 2013a, b) and Basu (2019) both are trying to find out the level of migration, migration corridors and their characteristics in Murshidabad district. According to the West Bengal Human Development Report (2004), the district's Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.46 shows that it is the least developed among West Bengal's districts. Lots of studies have been done in the recent past, but none has focused on Farakka in the Jangipur Sub Division, in spite of the fact that it is one of the most significant migration corridors for low-skilled workers from Murshidabad to the rest of India and the international marketplace. By

using both theoretical as well as empirical analysis of the migrant corridors' ability to contribute such continuous operation for a long time with rising volume, this research also aims to investigate the complicated and sometimes contradictory character of the particular migration corridor. Only the economic factors that influence migration in the Murshidabad district are considered in this study. River bank erosion, riots related to NRC, ethno-religious conflict, political views, international trafficking etc. are kept out from the present study.In order to examine the profile of out-migration in Murshidabad, both primary and secondary data are utilized. Secondary data are taken from the 2011 Census, NSS 64th cycle and UNDP Human Development Reports (2004,2011, 2015). Stratified sampling is used to get primary data for our survey. The survey comprises 200 villages (from seven CD blocks) and the Jangipur sub-divisions of the Murshidabad District. A total number of 5000 respondents were considered for sample. Those samples are offering an extensive framework for investigating the local realities of the migration in Northern part of Murshidabad.

Using an independently designed schedule, personal interviews were used to collect data from the selected individuals. In this paper Farakka is considered as migration corridor (Photo -1) on the basis of the following criteria –

- Nature of long term migration in operations.
- The travel distance between the origin and destination is more than 500 kilometers.
- The entire migration procedure is informally organized.
- There is no difficulty in connecting between the origin and the destination.
- Travel migrants along desired paths are mostly set in various waves.

Objectives:

I. To identify the major destination of migrant labour from northern part of Murshidabad district.
II. To show the causes of migration and migration profile of migrant labour.

Study area:

The area selected for study is Jangipur Sub division on the northern mostpart of Murshidabad district, West Bengal, (Fig.1).The Jangipur sub district is locatedwithin 24°13′20" and 24°53′15"NL and 87°47′25" to 88°14′39"EL, respectively. The River Ganga and its major tributaries, the Bhagirathi, are the principal rivers in the study region. According to the 2011 Census, the subdivision has a total area of 1097.82 sq. km. The Indo-Bangladesh border area is located fairly near to the study area.According to the census of India report (2011), the Jangipur sub-division now includes 7 C.D. blocks, 2 municipalities, 254 *gram panchayets*, and 2,210 *mouzas*. The Murshidabad district and the Jangipur sub-division are similar in terms of their physiographic character. According to the Statistical Handbook (2010 to 2011) of Murshidabad District, the River Bhagirathi splits the district into two wide geographical zones of about equal extent but there is a large difference in their geological formation. Western

tract is known as *Rarh* region. It is made up of a sequence of lateritic clay laid down in the Sub-Vindhayan period.The surface is slightly undulatingand soil is reddish gray in colour with high content of lime and iron-oxide. The slope of the study area ranges from 0 to 61 degrees. Climatic conditions of the area of research are hot and humid throughout the year. Rainy season is from June to September as a consequence of the south-west monsoon. According to the Murshidabad district statistics handbook (2010–2011), the bulk of the population is engagedin farming. Only a small percent is engaged in industry.

Destination of Migrant Labour:

As reported by the NSSO (64th round, 2007-08), nearly 7% of male out-migrants from rural regions, have settled abroad.The primary field survey data shows that Saudi Arabia is the main country to which migrants travel from Murshidabad. The Human Development Report (2011) by the UNDP estimated that there are 28.1 million people living in Saudi Arabia. Because of less population size with high source of natural oil resources, the standard of living is relatively high (Kundu, 2019). Therefore, Saudi Arabian citizens are unwilling to perform low-skilled physical labour by themselves; rather they depend on hiring personnel for this kind of jobs. Emigrants from countries like India are forced to work in some informal sectors, such as, cleaning, maintenance, and as labourers in construction work. According to primary data, the majority of migrants are found in Riyadh and Jeddah city. Kerala is another most important place for the migrant labour of Murshidabad. High wages of this state is the pull factor for the migrants. The areas mostly preferred for immigration include Ernakulum, Malappuram and Idukki. Another large portion of the migrants from other States also go to Gujarat. There are high concentration of industries and constructional activities. Maharashtra is another most important hub in India for low skilled or unskilled migrant labour of Murshidabad district. There is no doubt that migration has played a significant role in Mumbai's economic growth and development. Mumbai, the 'financial capital' of India, is a major destination for immigration from other places around the nation. There are huge job opportunities for all skilled and low-skilled labours. An additional factor in the hosting of migrants is the growth of Delhi's conurbations and the emergence of large industrial towns (NCR priority towns) like Gurgaon, Faridabad, Sonipat, Noida, Ghaziabad, and Meerut, among others. In absolute terms, the number of migrants was expected to be 1.31 lakh, whereas the natural increase in Delhi's population was anticipated to be 2.31 lakh (Kundu, 2019). Major destinations of migrant labours form Jangipur sub division along Farakka Corridor, covers places all over India and also throughout the World (Fig.-2).

Diagrammatic representation (Fig.3) shows the percentage shares of migrant labour from study area to other parts of India. From this primary data it is observed that nearly 18 % of the migrant labours is recorded in Kerala. It is the highest. 4% of the inter-districtmigrant labour is recorded in Bardhaman- Asansol region from Purba and Paschim Bardhaman districts.

Socio-economic profile of Migratory People:

I. Age

According to Census data of 2011, the majority of the population of Murshidabad belongs to Muslim community, making up 66.3% of the entire population. The share of young migratory people in this area consists of large number of Muslim young men, who have learned artisanship from the predecessors of their family. There exists a huge unemployment in the place of origin of the migratory wave. As a district Murshidabad provides minimal opportunity for employment to the potential working forcedue to lack of significant industry in this area. Jangipur sub division also suffers due to frequent shifting of river course and frequent erosion of their banks. This is another issue for migration. The Muslims have migrated to various regions because they learned the art of masonry from their ancestors, which has given them employment and earning. The ancestral migrants created the path for next generations; so that they take advantage of these corridors and discovered various routes along which they may travel to places, where there is demand for their expertise. For this reason the present generation finds these passageways approachable and familiarizes the ways to the newer destinations. It is apparent from our analysis that individuals falling in the age group of 15–30 are more likely to migrate, than other age groups (Fig.4). Humans are most productive and efficient within the above mentioned age ranges.

In general employers prefer lower wage grade employees with higher rate of productivity. Moreover, men of this age group are often quite daring, able to make reckless decisions, suffer the hardships of travel and have the flexibility to adjust to even in the most difficult situations. Our results therefore, match a typical pattern of human behavior and an inclination to face unknown challenges.

II. Earning

Those who have traditional or ancestral expertise often earn more than others. Minimal-skilled or unskilled migrants who lack connections and are employed as common labour receive minimal wages. Generally, migrants in Maharashtra and Delhi earn approximately ten thousand to twenty eight thousand rupees per month (Table no.-1). Most masons make more money than the workers in other fields. Very recently, a phenomenal change is observed among the migrants from Mushidabad that they sign an initial contract for a job in Saudi Arabia for more than three years.The bulk of them reside in tenements or workers' camps. Depending on the size of the room, often there are four to six (rarely eight) persons, who share a room mutually. Although some of these tenements are deteriorating, but almost all of them are permanent buildings. Most of the *Murshidabadi* migrants (domestic and foreign) put in 8 to 12 hours of labour every day. Some of them received overtime compensation for additional work, but there is now an excess of labour, which limits the possibility for those who are prepared to work more hours to make more money.

III. Occupation:

Primary data survey shows that majority of Murshidabad migrants work as manual labour (69.22%) and masons (22.95%) in Kerala. There are also individuals who work in a variety of skilled crafts (7.83%). These include mosaic and tile artists, colour and paint artisans, electricians, carpenters, embroidery artists etc.The majority of immigrants earn Rupees ten to forty thousand per month. Majority of these travelling employees never settle down in one region or hold to one type of permanent employment. They find newer opportunity by almost wondering throughout the year in major and several minor construction works. In Saudi Arabia, in the non-agricultural sector, a job share of (81.45%) is made by Murshidabad immigrants, as manual workers and masons. It goes without saying that it is pretty evident that agricultural or farm operations are minimum in scale in a place like Saudi Arabia, where greenery is practically nonexistent. The majorities of the migrants work in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and earn nearly Rupees Thirty to forty thousand per month (Fig.5). Besides as masons or as labour, people work mostly in numerous menial professions; such as, cleaning tasks, mosque servicing, at shopping malls, operating the elevators and such other jobs. .

Causes of Migration:

In this part the causative factors of labour migration are classified into four categories. These are, better earning, poverty, unemployment and others. During the field survey, unemployment and poverty jointly, recorded as highest in responses, nearly as high as 81% of total responses(Fig.-6). Other values on cause of migration are recorded on the basis of property loss due to river bank erosion, school dropout etc. The lack of employment is the main cause of this massive outflow. In our study area, 91.22 percent of the respondents opined that better wages were in favour of migration from Murshidabad to Saudi Arabia. Minor portion of migration occurs due to poverty and unemployment which are nearly 3.78% and 5% respectively. Nearly 60.47 percent migrates to Kerala due to unemployment. Unemployment is also the main reason for migration to Mumbai, Delhi, Gujarat, Chennai and Bhubaneswar. Statistics of our finding also support that poverty is the fundamental push factor for people to leave their hearth and home in search for better opportunities. At the same time poverty is also the main reason for migration to cities like, Kolkata, Patna, Ranchi, Bardhaman and Asansol. The actual case of migration from a source location to a destination is of specified reasons (Fig.-7). Short distance migration occurs basically due to poverty but long distance migration is basically based on unemployment.

It has been demonstrated that the networks and linkages in a given area have a significant impact on migration to that area. When a given agency or contractor operates in that location, many eager migrants will move with them. Additionally, because of specific linkages, if a certain group of migrant workers relocate from a village to a city; the other residents may also be tempted to follow suit.The new immigrants would find it reassuring to travel with some known faces (Hirway et al. 2014). It is seen in the present research that majority of

migrants who went to Saudi Arabia, left with the aid of contractors or agents by following the already established migration routes. A lot of people move out in groups with contractors or agents. According to our primary data, the migrants themselves cover the cost of travel, food and lodging. Only for a few number of people in small groups, the contractors and a tiny group of people made payment for the trip. The migrants often do not have the opportunity to obtain a "formal loan" to pay for the expenditures of travel, lodging, and boarding until they find a job and a payoff. Therefore, they are compelled to borrow money from their relatives or from others who have their best interests in mind in order to pay the initial cost. Things get even worse, when they borrow money from money lenders, who often demand exorbitant interests. As for an example, the cost of migrating from Murshidabad to Saudi Arabia is unquestionably high. The first out-migrants' outlay ranges from nearly one lakh to one lakh twenty thousand rupees depending on the length of the travel and the destination they intend to move to. On an average, more than a thousand migrant labourers leave India each day in search for employment in Saudi Arabia. Annually they send back to India over INR500 billion (Kundu, 2019). According to our analysis, a significant portion of immigrants have sent money back home to their individual family. Common frequency for migrants to send remittances back home is five to six times in a year.

According to our research, the majority of migrant families use the remittances for basic living expenses. In other cases, they use them to sell their livestock or at the cost of education expenses and accumulated money for repair their homes. If they move from one state in India to another state, they will have to come for the festival once in a year. At present due to high connective cellular network migrants labour also connected with family over to voice call or video call.

Conclusion:

This study reveals the unique features of migration from Jangipur sub division in Murshidabad district, West Bengal. In the framework of our research, I looked into the causes of migration as well as the many factors that affect people's choices. We have given careful consideration to the reasons behind the migrants' choice of various locations as their final destination. Our analysis demonstrates that migration from Murshidabad occurs not only in large numbers, but also with a significant number of regular and casual labourers, who travel often over known paths that connect their places of origin and destinations, creating a migration corridor. We have made an effort to investigate the migratory corridors from both an intra-border and a cross-border perspective. According to our findings, Saudi Arabia, Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Delhi (NCR) are the most popular long-distance destinations for migrants leaving Murshidabad, while Bardhaman-Asansol, Kolkata, and Jharkhand are the leading short-distance destinations. One point that supports our findings must be made here, namely that migrants are frequently the target of apathy. At neither the origin nor the destination, the local government adequately looks after them. This is clearly seen during the lockdown phase of COVID pandemic.

Although some migration-related works have identified a few anomalies regarding the migrants' obvious deprivation and made some recommendations regarding their ease of communication and stay, at least within the country, as well as for resolving some key issues for the improvement of migrants' conditions generally, there is still much to be done on this front. To solve it, we still have a long way to go.

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Photo 1: Farakka as a Migration corridor in Murshidabad District

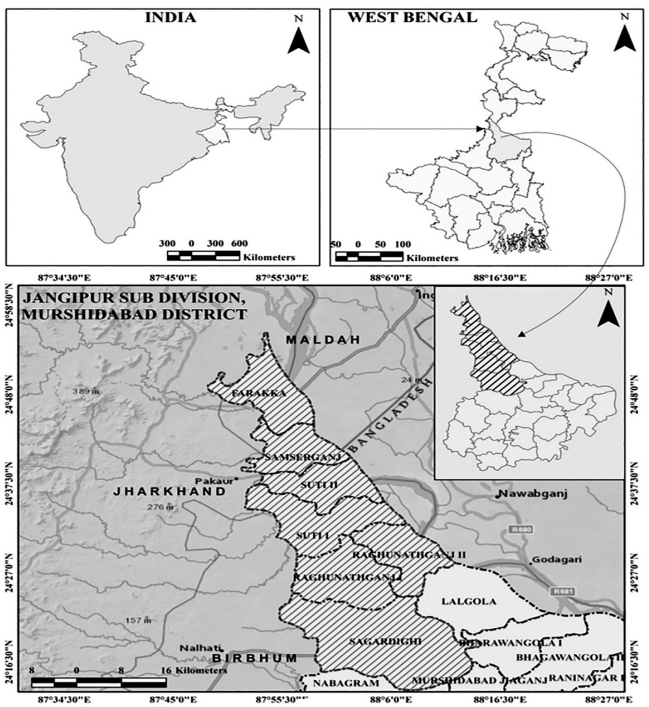


Fig.1: Location map of the study area

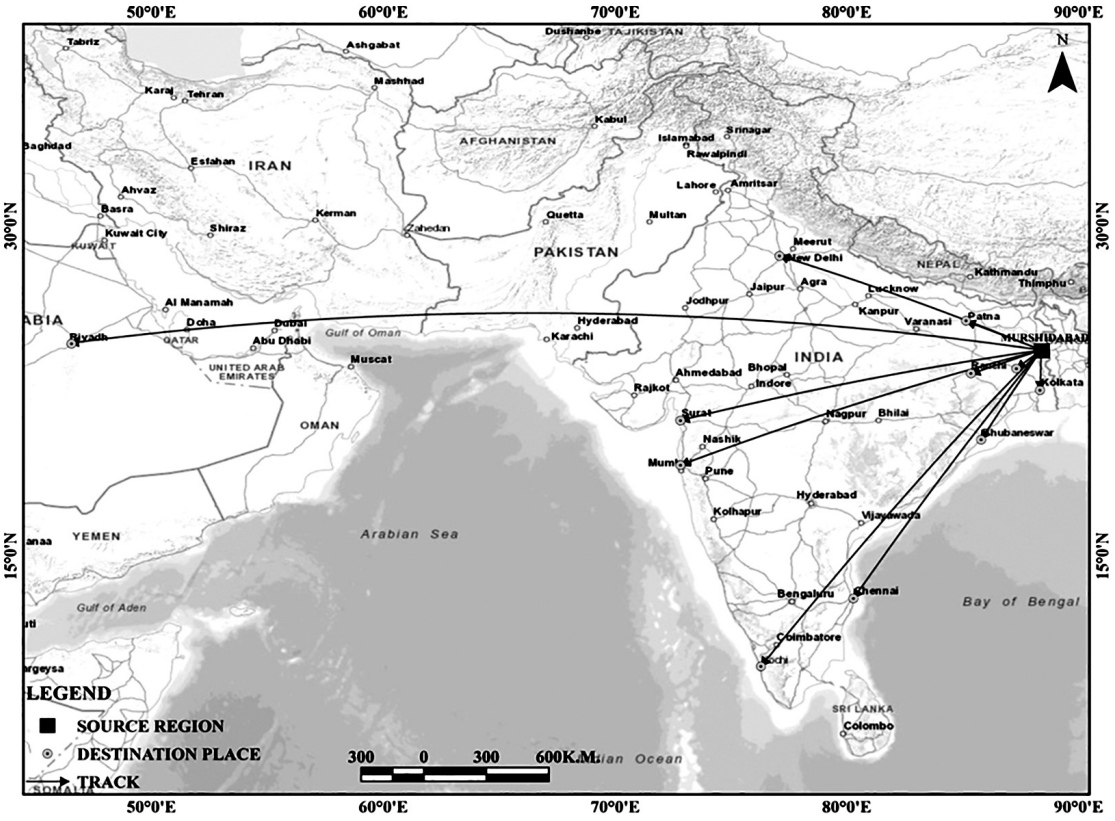


Fig.2: Main destination of Migrant labour from Jangipur Sub Division

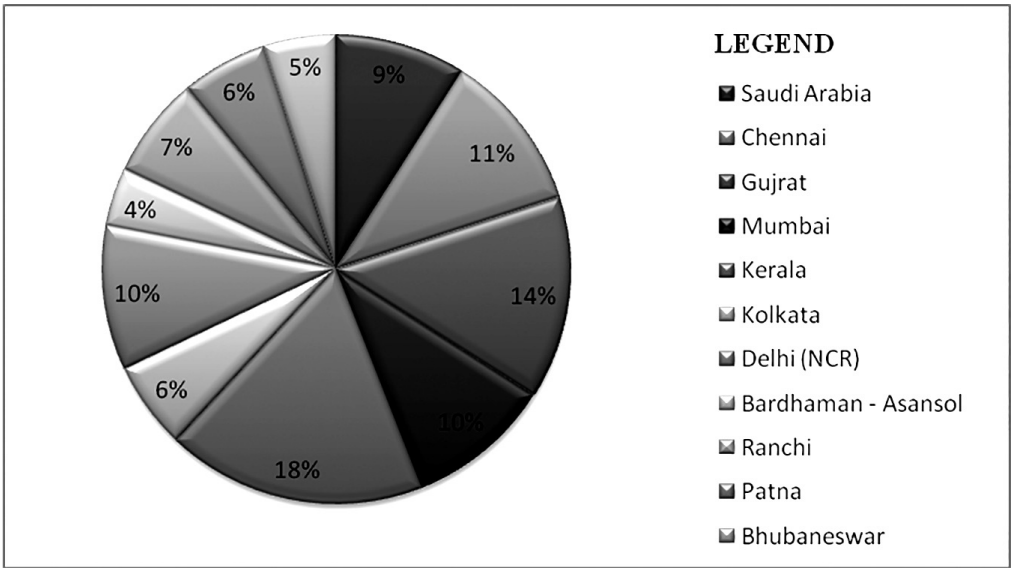


Fig.3: Pie graph showing the Values of Migrant labour from Jangipur Sub Division

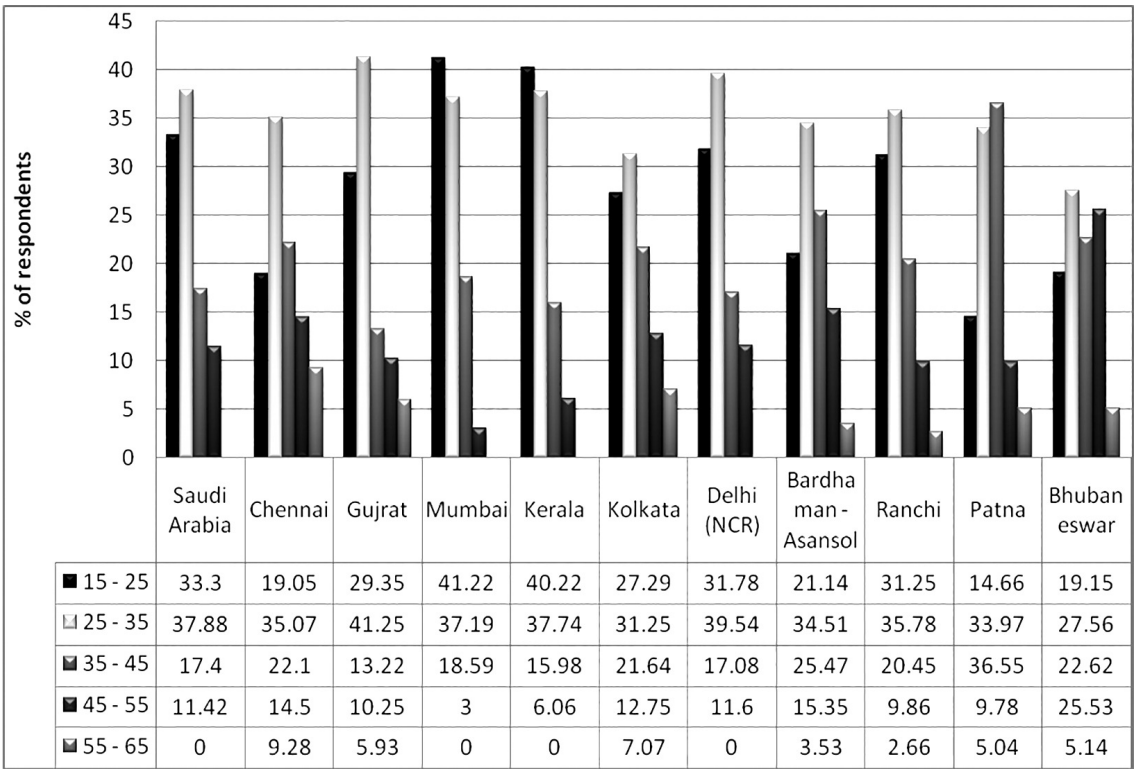
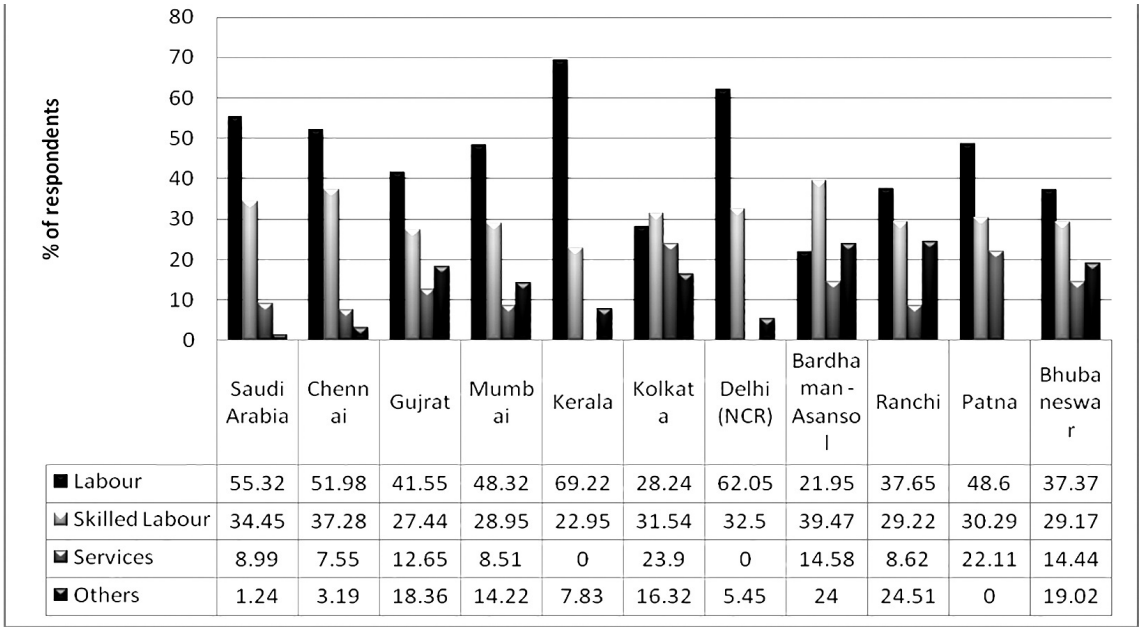


Fig.4: Bar graph showing the Distribution of Migrants according to age
Source –Primary Field Survey, 2022-23

Table1: Distribution of Migrants According to Earning

Destination	Average Salary (Inr)
Saudi Arabia	30000 - 40000
Chennai	25000 - 30000
Gujrat	15000 - 25000
Mumbai	10000 - 28000
Kerala	11000 - 40000
Kolkata	10000 - 20000
Delhi (Ncr)	25000 - 30000
Bardhaman - Asansol	10000 - 18000
Ranchi	12000 - 25000
Patna	11000 - 26000
Bhubaneswar	10000 - 25000

Source: Primary field Survey, 2022-23



	Saudi Arabia	Chennai	Gujrat	Mumbai	Kerala	Kolkata	Delhi (NCR)	Bardhaman - Asansol	Ranchi	Patna	Bhubaneswar
Labour	55.32	51.98	41.55	48.32	69.22	28.24	62.05	21.95	37.65	48.6	37.37
Skilled Labour	34.45	37.28	27.44	28.95	22.95	31.54	32.5	39.47	29.22	30.29	29.17
Services	8.99	7.55	12.65	8.51	0	23.9	0	14.58	8.62	22.11	14.44
Others	1.24	3.19	18.36	14.22	7.83	16.32	5.45	24	24.51	0	19.02

Fig.5: Bar graph showing the Distribution of Migrants according to occupation
Source –Primary Field Survey, 2022-23

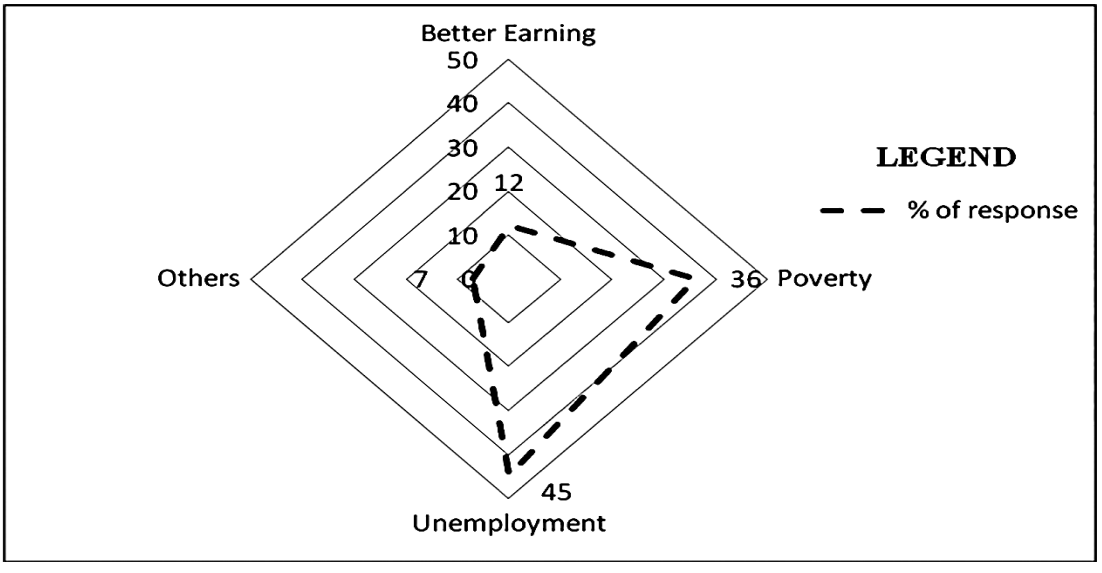
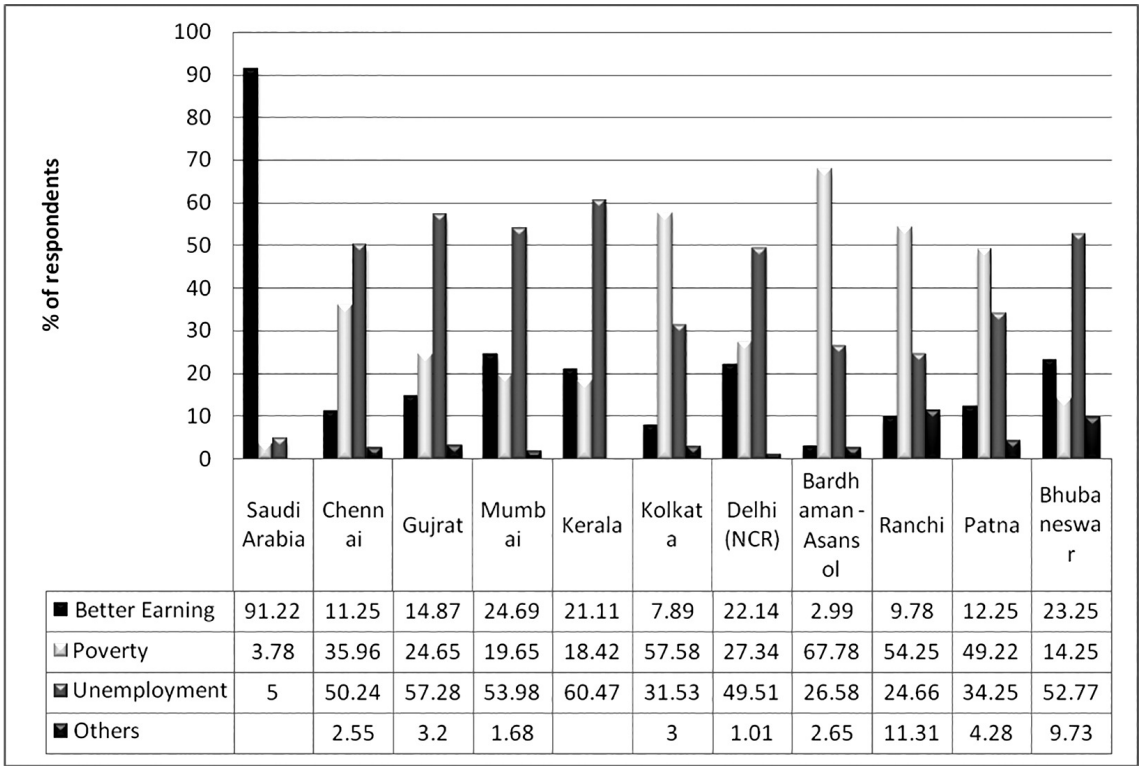


Fig.6: Radar graph showing the main causes of migration
Source –Primary Field Survey, 2022-23



	Saudi Arabia	Chennai	Gujrat	Mumbai	Kerala	Kolkata	Delhi (NCR)	Bardhaman - Asansol	Ranchi	Patna	Bhubaneswar
Better Earning	91.22	11.25	14.87	24.69	21.11	7.89	22.14	2.99	9.78	12.25	23.25
Poverty	3.78	35.96	24.65	19.65	18.42	57.58	27.34	67.78	54.25	49.22	14.25
Unemployment	5	50.24	57.28	53.98	60.47	31.53	49.51	26.58	24.66	34.25	52.77
Others		2.55	3.2	1.68		3	1.01	2.65	11.31	4.28	9.73

Fig.-7: Bar graph showing the main causes of Migration from source to Destination
Source –Primary Field Survey, 2022-23

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পূর্ব ডুয়ার্সের সামাজিক পরিবেশ ও তিলোত্তমা মজুমদারের উপন্যাস

দীপিকা বাড়ই

সারসংক্ষেপ:

জীবন সম্পর্কে লেখকের মনের অনুভব বা অভিজ্ঞতালব্ধ উপলব্ধির কথাই হল সাহিত্য। আর লেখকের এই অনুভব বা উপলব্ধির ক্ষেত্রে বিরাট জায়গা নিয়ে রয়েছে তার চারপাশের পরিবেশ বা পারিপার্শিক অবস্থা। কেননা মানুষ কখনোই প্রকৃতি ও পরিবেশ ভিন্ন নয়। ফলত লেখকের মনোভাব বা মননের বিকাশে পারিপার্শিক পরিবেশের অতি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রয়েছে। সাহিত্যের অন্যতম শাখা উপন্যাস রচনার ক্ষেত্রেও একটি অন্যতম উপাদান পরিবেশ বা পটভূমি বা অঞ্চল। সমালোচকেরা সময়ের প্রবাহমানতায় উপন্যাস রচনার ক্ষেত্রে এই পরিবেশের গুরুত্ব নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তুললেও এবং জীবনজিজ্ঞাসা বা জীবনবোধ প্রকাশ করাকে মূলকথা মনে করলেও, পরিবেশের ভূমিকা একেবারে ফেলনা নয়। বরং পরিবেশ নির্বাচন এবং উপস্থাপন কৌশল একজন লেখকের নিজস্বতাকে স্পষ্ট করে। যার শিল্পীত প্রয়োগ শিল্পকর্মটিকে নির্দিষ্ট স্থান, কালের হয়েও কালোত্তীর্ণ স্তরে পৌঁছে দেয়।

বিশ শতকের নব্বইয়ের দশকের কথাসাহিত্যিক তিলোত্তমা মজুমদারের ক্ষেত্রেও এর ব্যতিক্রম হয় নি। তিনি জন্মসূত্রে উত্তরবঙ্গের প্রান্তীয় অঞ্চল ডুয়ার্সের কালচিনি চা বাগান ব্লক এলাকার নিবিড় স্পর্শ লাভে বেড়ে উঠেছেন। বর্তমানে তিনি কলকাতার বাসিন্দা হলেও শৈশব, কৈশোর, তারুণ্যের কাটানো দিনগুলিতে গাছ-পালা, ছোট-বড় অসংখ্য নদী-ঝোরা, পাহাড়-অরণ্য, পশু-পাখি, জীব-জন্তু ইত্যাদি প্রাকৃতিক বৈচিত্র্যে সমৃদ্ধ যে ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চলকে দেখেছেন তার নিবিড় প্রতিফলন ঘটেছে তাঁর প্রথম দিককার রচিত উপন্যাসগুলিতে। তাছাড়া উত্তরবঙ্গের ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চলে বিশেষত পূর্ব ডুয়ার্সে (যার সীমানা তোর্ষা নদী থেকে আসাম ঘেঁষা সংকোশ নদী পর্যন্ত) এমন অনেক জনগোষ্ঠীর বসবাস রয়েছে, যারা যুগ যুগ ধরে শত বাধা-বিপত্তি, পরিবেশ-পরিস্থিতির প্রতিকূলতা, পরিবর্তনের মধ্যেও স্বজাতির পরম্পরাগত রীতি-নীতি, বিশ্বাস-সংস্কার, আচার-আচরণ, ভাষাচর্চা ইত্যাদির নিরিখে জীবনধারণ ও জীবনযাপন করে চলেছে। তাদের যাপিত এই জীবনে জড়িত প্রকৃত-লগ্ন আদিম সমাজের বিভিন্ন উপকরণ, যা এখনো তার কুমারিত্ব বা মৌলিকতা হারায় নি কিংবা 'অন্য' সাংস্কৃতিক উপাদানের সঙ্গে মিশে যায় নি, তাকে কৌম বা আদিম জনজাতির উপাদান বলা হয় যা তাঁর উপন্যাস থেকে বাদ যায় নি। এই অঞ্চলের বিচিত্র উপাদান নিয়ে রচিত হয়েছে তাঁর আখ্যানবিশ্ব এবং আখ্যানসূত্রে পাওয়া যায় নতুন জীবনের ঘ্রাণ। তিনি কীভাবে এবং কেমন করে ডুয়ার্সের এই সামাজিক পরিবেশকে উপন্যাসে তুলে এনে শৈল্পিক প্রতিভার স্বাক্ষর রেখেছেন তা অনুসন্ধান করাই এই গবেষণা-নিবন্ধের মুখ্য বিষয়।

মুখ্য শব্দ: *কৌম—জনগোষ্ঠী, গিরমিটিয়া-চুক্তিবদ্ধ কর্মী, কন্দ—খাবার বিশেষ, পিলুয়া—চা গাছের ক্ষতিকারক কীট, কুকরি--মাটি খোঁড়ার যন্ত্র, ফারুয়া—কোদাল, তবল—কুঠার, ডিববি—কুপি, টোকরি—পাত্রবিশেষ, পোষ্টি—খাবার বিশেষ (গরম ভাতে জল ঢেলে কাঁচকলা মেখে খাওয়া)।*

মূল প্রবন্ধ:

যে কোনো লেখক তাঁর সৃষ্টির মধ্যে দিয়ে নিজস্ব উপলব্ধিজাত জীবনজিজ্ঞাসা, জীবনদর্শনের কথা বলতে চান, যার শিল্পিত রূপ রচনা করার জন্য লেখক ঘটনা, সংলাপ, চরিত্রের আশ্রয়ে বাস্তবের মাটি থেকে রসদ খোঁজেন, সেই সূত্রে রচনারীতিতে দেখা যায় নানা প্রকরণের বিস্তার ও বিন্যাস—দৃষ্টিকোণ, চরিত্র-পরিকল্পনা, সময়-ভাবনা, ভাষারীতি, কথনভঙ্গি-সহ সাহিত্য-সৃষ্টির রামধনু আকাশ, অনিঃশেষ প্রকৃতি-পরিবেশের স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত বিকাশ থেকে বিস্তার। যার জল-হাওয়ার রসদ নিয়ে ঘটনা বা কাহিনি, চরিত্র, সংলাপ ইত্যাদি উপাদান পুষ্টি লাভ করে এবং জন্ম দেয় আধুনিক জীবনের মহাকাব্য স্বরূপ উপন্যাস এবং তারই খণ্ড রূপ ছোটগল্প। যে কারণে অঞ্চল বা স্থান বা পটভূমি একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয়। তবে সময়ের অভিঘাতে উপন্যাস স্রষ্টার 'চিন্তারাজমূলক বৃক্ষে' এর গুরুত্ব নিয়ে নানা মতপার্থক্য তৈরি হয়েছে, প্রাধান্য পেয়েছে জীবনজিজ্ঞাসা, মনোভূমি। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও, অঞ্চল বা স্থান বা পটভূমি অনেক সময় তুচ্ছ মনে হলেও একেবারে ফেলনা নয়। এর গুরুত্ব অপিরিসীম। পটভূমি নির্বাচন ও উপস্থাপন নৈপুণ্য লেখকের ব্যক্তিত্বে নিজস্বতা দান করে। সুকৌশলী লেখকেরা পটভূমি নির্বাচন এবং উপস্থাপন কৌশলের মাধ্যমে তাকে স্থান-কালের গণ্ডি অতিক্রম করিয়ে সূক্ষ্ম জীবনদর্শনের উপলব্ধিতে নিয়ে যায় এবং তা সর্বজনীন মাত্রা পায়। ফলত বিশিষ্ট সমালোচক কুন্তল চট্টোপাধ্যায় 'সাহিত্যের রূপ-রীতি ও অন্যান্য প্রসঙ্গ' গ্রন্থে বলেছেন :

'একটি নির্দিষ্ট সময়-কাঠামোয়, একটি প্রাকৃতিক ভৌগোলিক-সামাজিক প্রেক্ষিতে কাহিনি রূপবদ্ধ হয়, পাত্র-পাত্রীরা ক্রম-বিকশিত হতে থাকে। প্রতিবেশ বা 'milieu' পটভূমির বস্তুগত তাৎপর্যকে অতিক্রম করে এক বিশদ ও গভীর প্রেক্ষাপটের ইঙ্গিত দেয় ঘটনা ও চরিত্রের শেকড় থাকে পটভূমি বা প্রতিবেশের মাটিতে।'[১]

এই তাৎপর্য্যের পটভূমি স্বরূপ অঞ্চল বা স্থান বা সামাজিক ও প্রাকৃতিক পরিবেশ উপন্যাস বা ছোটগল্পের একটি উপাদান রূপে কালে কালে উপস্থাপিত হয়েছে। যার দৃষ্টান্ত বাংলা সাহিত্যে আমরা বহু পেয়েছি। সেই সূত্র ধরে আমরা উত্তরবঙ্গের এককোণায় অবস্থিত ডুয়ার্স-অঞ্চলকেও সাহিত্যের আকাশে পেয়ে থাকি। নারায়ণ গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়, অমিয়ভূষণ মজুমদার, সমরেশ মজুমদার প্রমুখের কথাসাহিত্যে তার নির্জন স্বাক্ষর আছে। তেমনি এই ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চল তথা এখনকার মাটি-মানুষ-প্রকৃতি- পরিবেশ- জীবিকা- ইতিহাস-সংস্কৃতি-ঐতিহ্য-সহ একটি ভূখণ্ডের সামগ্রিক পরিচয় বা রূপ, দেশজ আচার-সংস্কারের বিন্যাস, কথাসাহিত্যিক তিলোত্তমা মজুমদারের ছোটগল্প-উপন্যাসের ভাববস্তু ও রচনারীতিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অংশভাক্ হয়ে উঠেছে।

ডুয়ার্স। যার অর্থ দুয়ার বা দরজা, অর্থাৎ প্রবেশদ্বার। মনে করা হয় পাহাড়ি দেশ ভুটান ও ভারতের প্রবেশ পথে ছোট বড় ১৮টি দুয়ার ছিল, ইংরেজরা সেই দুয়ারকেই বলত 'ডুয়ার্স'। সম্ভবত বাংলা শব্দ 'দুয়ার' এবং ইংরেজি শব্দ 'Door' সমার্থক হওয়ায় ব্রিটিশ শাসকরা মুখে মুখে দুই ভাষার এই শব্দের মেলবন্ধন ঘটায়---যা থেকে তৈরি হয় ডুয়ার্স বা Dooars. ভূগোলের মানচিত্রে এর অস্তিত্ব নেই কিন্তু চা-প্রেমী সকল দেশি-বিদেশি মানুষের কাছে পরিচিত শব্দ এই 'ডুয়ার্স'। তবে ইতিহাসের বহু সংযোজন ও সংকোচন-সম্প্রসারণের ফলে ভূগোলে ম্যাপে এর অনেক পরিবর্তন ঘটে গেছে—বর্তমানে বাংলার উত্তরে অবস্থিত একফালি ভূমির সীমানা মোটামুটি দাড়িয়েছে পূর্বে আসাম ঘেষা সংকোশ নদী থেকে পশ্চিমে তিস্তা নদী পর্যন্ত। এই ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চলের আবার দুটি ভাগ রয়েছে —পূর্ব ডুয়ার্স ও পশ্চিম ডুয়ার্স। তোর্ষা নদী ডুয়ার্সকে এই দুটি ভাগে ভাগ করেছে। তিস্তা নদী থেকে তোর্ষা নদী সীমানা পর্যন্ত পশ্চিম ডুয়ার্সের বিস্তৃতি এবং তোর্ষা নদী থেকে আসাম ঘেষাঁ সংকোশ নদী পর্যন্ত পূর্ব ডুয়ার্সের বিস্তৃতি। প্রাকৃতিক বৈচিত্র্যের পাশাপাশি

উত্তর বাংলার এই ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চলে এমন অনেক জনগোষ্ঠীর বসবাস রয়েছে, যারা যুগ যুগ ধরে শত বাধা বিপত্তি, পরিবেশ-পরিস্থিতির প্রতিকূলতা, পরিবর্তনের মধ্যেও স্বজাতির পরম্পরাগত রীতি-নীতি, বিশ্বাস-সংস্কার, আচার-আচরণ, ভাষাচর্চা ইত্যাদির নিরিখে এখনও 'গোষ্ঠীবদ্ধ' মনোভাবে জীবনধারণ ও জীবনযাপন করে চলেছে। তাদের যাপিত এই জীবনে জড়িত প্রকৃতি-লগ্ন আদিম সমাজের বিভিন্ন উপকরণ, যা এখনও তার কুমারিত্ব বা মৌলিকতা হারায় নি কিংবা 'অন্য' সাংস্কৃতিক উপাদানের সঙ্গে মিশে যায় নি, সেই সমস্ত আদিম উপকরণগুলিকে কৌম বা আদিম জনজাতির উপাদান বলা হয়। এই অঞ্চলে অবস্থিত স্থানীয় আদিবাসী (মেচ, রাভা, ধিমাল, বোড়ো, ধাঙর প্রভৃতি) এবং অভিবাসী আদিবাসী (সাঁওতাল, ওঁরাও, মুণ্ডা, খাড়িয়া, চিকবরাইক, মালপাহাড়ি প্রভৃতি) প্রধানত কৌম উপাদানের আশ্রয়ে জীবনধারণ করে থাকে। যার জন্য সমীর চক্রবর্তী বলেছেন, 'আদিম যাযাবরী জীবন পরিত্যাগ করে সব মানুষ একই সময়ে কৃষিজীবীতে পরিণত হয়নি। এই পরিবর্তন এসেছে ধাপে ধাপে আংশিকভাবে। কেউ অনেক আগেই যাযাবরী জীবন পরিত্যাগ করতে শুরু করেছে, কিন্তু অরণ্য ও পশুশিকারের আকর্ষণ কাটিয়ে উঠতে পারেনি এবং আদিম গোষ্ঠীবদ্ধ জীবনের 'কৌম সমাজ ও সংগঠন' বিনষ্ট করে ফেলেনি। আদিবাসী সংস্কৃতি তাই মূলত লোকসংস্কৃতি হলেও 'কৌম চেতনা'ই এর মুখ্য বৈশিষ্ট্য।'[২] আবার যারা সামাজিক-অর্থনৈতিক ভাবে দুর্বল কিন্তু আদিবাসী নয় বরং 'অন্ত্যজ' জাতি হিসাবে রয়েছে, যেমন—রবিদাস, কূর্মী, ডোম, নমঃশূদ্র, এমনকি রাজবংশী—তাদের জীবনযাপনও কৌমের বৈশিষ্ট্য মুক্ত নয়। তাদের আচার-আচরণ, বিশ্বাস-সংস্কার, প্রথা, পূজা-পার্বণ, খাদ্যাভাস, নাচ-গান প্রভৃতি জীবনযাপনের প্রতিদিনের উপকরণের মধ্যে সেই ছাপ স্পষ্ট। যার জন্য গবেষক সমীর চক্রবর্তী বলেছেন, 'দ্রাবিড় ভাষাভাষীগোষ্ঠী, প্রোটো-অস্ট্রোলয়েডগোষ্ঠী ও মঙ্গোলয়েড গোষ্ঠী এইসব জনজাতির সঙ্গে রাজবংশী বাঙালির পূজাপার্বণ ও কৌম আচারগত মিল অবিভক্ত বাংলার প্রত্যন্ত গ্রাম ও প্রান্তবর্তী জেলাগুলির বিভিন্ন বাঙালি সম্পদায়ের মধ্যে অনুসন্ধান করলেও খুঁজে পাওয়া অসম্ভব নয়।'[৩] তাই বলা যায়, ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চল গাছ-পালা, নদ-নদী, ছোট-বড় ঝোরা-পাহাড় অরণ্য নিয়ে প্রাকৃতিক বৈচিত্র্য সমৃদ্ধ হওয়ার পাশপাশি মানবজীবনের বৈচিত্র্য নিয়েও তাৎপর্যময়। এই ডুয়ার্স অঞ্চল যখন সাহিত্যিকদের রচনার প্রেক্ষাপট রূপে চিন্তারাজ্যে ধরা থাকে স্বাভাবিক কারণেই প্রকৃতি ও মানব সম্পদে সমৃদ্ধ ডুয়ার্স সমগ্র রূপে এসে পড়ে। যার কারণে আমরা ডুয়ার্সের এমন সামাজিক পরিবেশ আশ্রয় করে অমিয়ভূষণ মজুমদারের (১৯১৮-২০০১) 'দুখিয়ার কুঠি' (পত্রিকায় প্রকাশ ১৯৫৭, গ্রন্থাকারে প্রকাশ ১৯৫৯) 'মহিষকুড়ার উপকথা' (পত্রিকায় প্রকাশ ১৯৭৮, গ্রন্থাকারে প্রকাশ ১৯৮১), 'মাকচক হরিণ' (১৯৯১), 'বিনদনি', দেবেশ রায়ের (১৯৩৬-২০২০) 'তিস্তাপারের বৃত্তান্ত' (১৯৮৮), সমরেশ মজুমদারের (১৯৪৪-)— 'উত্তরাধিকার-কালবেলা-কালপুরুষ' (১৯৭৯-১৯৮৯) প্রভৃতির মতো কালজয়ী উপন্যাস পেয়ে থাকি। শুধু তাই নয়, তারই প্রবাহধারা বিশ শতকের নব্বইয়ের দশকের অন্যতম কথাসাহিত্যিক তিলোত্তমা মজুমদারের লেখনীতেও পাওয়া যায়। তাঁর রচিত 'ঋ' (১৯৯৬), 'মানুষশাবকের কথা' (১৯৯৮), 'জর্মের চোখ' (২০০৬), 'জোনাকিরা' (২০০৮), 'স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে' (২০১৫), 'জল ও চুমুর উপাখ্যান' (২০১৭) প্রভৃতির মতো উপন্যাস এর সার্থক দৃষ্টান্ত।

তিলোত্তমা মজুমদারের উপন্যাসে ডুয়ার্সের কৌম জীবন ও কৌম জীবনে অভ্যস্ত জনগোষ্ঠীর সংস্কৃতিগত উপাদান প্রধানত দুইভাবে উপস্থাপিত হয়েছে—

প্রথমত, বর্তমান সময়কথা, জীবনযাপনের বাস্তবতা, অন্তর্মুখ সন্ধানে তিলোত্তমা, তাঁর আখ্যানে কৌম উপাদানকে, যেমন---প্রথা, মিথ, কিংবদন্তি প্রভৃতি রূপক বা প্রতীক হিসাবে ব্যবহার করে উপন্যাসের কাহিনি বুনেছেন। যেমন--'জর্মের চোখ'।

দ্বিতীয়ত, মানবজীবন কথা বলতে গিয়ে সমাজ বাস্তবতা ও জীবনের যে উপলব্ধির কথাই বলা হোক না কেন, তার সঙ্গে ডুয়ার্সের পটভূমিতে প্রবহমান মিশ্র সংস্কৃতির ধারা ও ধারাবাহিকতা পরিস্ফুটনে তিনি, বিভিন্ন কৌম জনগোষ্ঠীর জীবনযাপন তথা বৃহত্তর অর্থে তাদের ইতিহাস-প্রথা-সংস্কৃতির নানা স্তর ও দ্যোতনা তুলে এনেছেন আখ্যানের খাঁজে-ভাঁজে। যেমন---'স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে' উপন্যাস দাঁড়িয়ে আছে ছোটদের চোখে দেখা বড়দের রহস্যময় জীবন সন্ধানে। কিন্তু ডুয়ার্সের বালিবিনি চা-বাগান তার পটভূমি হওয়ায় ওঁরাও, মুণ্ডা এবং অন্যান্য সম্প্রদায়ের জীবনচিত্র নৈপুণ্যের সঙ্গে আখ্যানে ব্যবহার করে তিলোত্তমা মজুমদার, নিজের প্রতিভার স্বাতন্ত্র্য পরিস্ফুট করেছেন।

...এবারে আমরা তাঁর উপন্যাসে যেভাবে কৌম সমাজের বিচিত্র উপাদান শৈল্পিক প্রয়োজনে ব্যবহৃত হয়েছে এবং রচনাকে কীভাবে স্থান-কাল উৎত্তীর্ণ করেছে সেই আলোচনায় প্রবৃত্ত হব।

ডুয়ার্সের আদিবাসী চা-শ্রমিকদের মধ্যে চা-গাছের জন্ম নিয়ে প্রচলিত এক বৌদ্ধ মিথ কাহিনি অবলম্বনে তিলোত্তমা মজুমদার রচনা করেছেন 'জর্মের চোখ' (২০০৬) উপন্যাস। এই মিথ কাহিনির সত্যতা সম্পর্কে সমীর চক্রবর্তী বলেছেন— 'বুধিমারা নামে কোন এক বৌদ্ধ সন্ন্যাসী অনিদ্রাব্রত গ্রহণ করে তপস্যায় রত হয়েছিলেন। কিছুদিন তপস্যা করার পর তিনি আর চোখ খুলে রাখতে পারলেন না, একসময় ঘুমিয়ে পড়লেন। ঘুম থেকে জেগে উঠে নিজের ব্যর্থতার জন্য রাগে দুঃখে নিজের চোখের পাতা দুটি কেটে ফেলে দিলেন। আর অমনি ঐ চোখের পাতা থেকে তৈরি হল একটি গাছ, যার পাতা গরম জলে সেদ্ধ করে ঐ জল পান করলে আর ঘুম আসতে পারে না। সন্ন্যাসী বুধিমারা এর নাম দিলেন চা।'[৪] সমীর চক্রবর্তী ইতিহাসের তথ্য এনে দেখিয়েছেন খ্রিষ্টীয় ষষ্ঠ শতকে ভারতের বিভিন্ন প্রদেশ থেকে চীনদেশে বৌদ্ধধর্ম প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্যে যারা যারা গিয়েছিলেন তাদের মধ্যে 'বোধিধর্ম' ছিলেন অন্যতম ব্যক্তি, যার সঙ্গে বুধিমারার সাদৃশ্য রয়েছে। আর 'ধর্ম'র উচ্চারণ বিকৃতি 'জর্ম' কিনা এ বিষয়ে গবেষকদের সন্দেহের কথাও জানিয়েছেন যাকে নিয়ে চীনদেশে চা গাছের জন্ম ও চা পাতার প্রথম ব্যবহার তাকে নিয়েও মিথ কাহিনির প্রচলন রয়েছে। লেখিকা চায়ের প্রথম ব্যবহারের কাহিনি নিয়ে প্রচলিত এই কাহিনিকে রূপক হিসাবে ব্যবহার করে বর্তমান জীবনালেখ্য লিখেছেন। নিরপেক্ষ দৃষ্টিতে লেখিকা উপন্যাসের শুরুতেই সেই মিথ কাহিনির বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন'শেষ পর্যন্ত রাজকুমার জর্ম ধর্ম যাত্রায় দূরগামী হওয়াই মনস্থ করলেন। তাঁর লক্ষ্য চিনদেশ।'[৫] তারপর ডুয়ার্সে চা-বাগানের পত্তনের ইতিহাস তুলে ধরেছেন, চা-শ্রমিকদের শোষণের চিত্র বর্ণনা করেছেন এবং মাটিবাড়ি চা-বাগানের অতীত-বর্তমানের প্রেক্ষাপটে বিজু-কমল-পিয়ালি-বুলুদের জীবন আখ্যান রচনা করেছেন। মহাপুরুষ জর্মই যেন উপন্যাসের কমল, যে মহাপ্রাণ জর্মের মতোই চিরকালের শোষিত, বঞ্চিত, অবহেলিত আদিবাসী চা-শ্রমিকদের মধ্যে জ্ঞানের আলো, নিজ অধিকারবোধ জাগানোর তপস্যায় রত। একদা তপস্যায় রত জর্ম যেমন কেটে ফেলেন ক্লান্তিতে বুজে আসা চোখের পাতা আর সেই পাতা থেকেই জন্ম নেয় চা নামক গাছ যার পাতার রস সকলের ক্লান্তি দূর করতে সক্ষম তেমনি কমলের আকস্মিক মৃত্যু ও তারই ফলশ্রুতি যেন লাগাতার শ্রমিক ধর্মঘট ও মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর হস্তক্ষেপে চা-বাগানের আপাত শান্তিস্থাপন— যার জন্য বিজুর লেখা ও ছিঁড়ে ফেলা সেই কাগজকুচি যেন মনে হয় কমলেরই চোখের পাতা। যাতে লুকিয়ে রয়েছে আরো সমৃদ্ধ ও স্বাস্থ্যবান চা গাছ তৈরি হবার সম্ভাবনা--'বিজু হাসল। তাকাল আকাশের দিকে। ভোর স্পষ্ট হচ্ছে। তার ভালো লাগছে। সে এখন নিশ্চিত, এইসব চোখের পাতার থেকে আবার জন্ম নেবে অধিক স্বাস্থ্যবান চা-গাছ।'[৬] —এইভাবেই লেখিকা নির্দিষ্ট একটি অঞ্চলের ও সমাজের মধ্যে প্রচলিত এই উপাদান ব্যবহার করে শাসক-শোষিত শ্রেণীতে বিভক্ত বর্তমান ঘুমন্ত, নির্জীব, অসহায় সমাজব্যবস্থার ঘুম ভাঙ্গাতে চেয়েছেন।

ডুয়ার্স এমন এক অঞ্চল যা জঙ্গল, ঝোরা, হ্রদ, খাল-বিল, বৃক্ষ নদী ইত্যাদি প্রাকৃতিক বৈচিত্র্য নিয়ে রহস্যময় সৌন্দর্যে ঘেরা। প্রাকৃতিক এইসব উপাদানের উৎপত্তি নিয়েও মানুষের মধ্যে কৌতূহলের সীমা নেই। যার সমস্তর উৎপত্তির পিছনে এই অঞ্চলের মানুষের মধ্যে 'সত্য-মিথ্যা ও সম্ভাবনা' কে আশ্রয় করে প্রচলিত রয়েছে বিভিন্ন কিংবদন্তি, তেমনি এক কিংবদন্তিকে প্রতীক হিসাবে ব্যবহার করেছেন 'স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে' উপন্যাসে। লেখিকা বলেছেন বালিবিনি চা-বাগানের আদিবাসী চা-শ্রমিকেরা জঙ্গলের ধারে থাকা গভীর এক কুয়োকে বলে 'ডোম্বীতাল'। তাদের ডোম্বীতাল নিয়ে প্রচলিত কিংবদন্তি হল—'মদেশিয়ারা বিশ্বাস করে, এই জায়গাটা স্বর্গের টুকরো। এখানে শিব আর পার্বতী ডোম্ব আর ডোম্বী হয়ে জলকেলি করত। ডোম্বীদেবী ভক্তের পরিত্রাতা আবার শিব পার্বতী খেলা করত বলেই এখানে জলের উপর মুখ বাড়ালে যে যাকে ভালোবাসে তার মুখ দেখতে পায়। প্রেমিক-প্রেমিকারা এখানে ভালোবাসা যাচাই করতে আসে।'[৭]

উপন্যাসে বহুবার এই কিংবদন্তির প্রসঙ্গ ব্যবহৃত হয়েছে। চরিত্রের আলাপ আলোচনায়, দেখতে যাওয়ার প্রসঙ্গে এই কিংবদন্তির কথা এসেছে। কিন্তু কেন? আসলে লেখিকা এই কিংবদন্তি ব্যবহার করে মানবমনের চিরন্তন এক রহস্যকে জীবন্ত করে তুলেছেন। প্রতিটি মানুষ চায় তার ভালোবাসার মানুষের চোখে তার প্রতি ভালোবাসার পরিমাণ যাচাই করতে। কিন্তু জীবন এবং সমাজ আত্মসর্বস্বতার চিত্র, হিংসা, দ্বেষ নিয়ে এতটা প্রকট যে কে কাকে কতটা ভালোবাসে বা বাসে কিনা এই প্রশ্ন সংশয়ের। তবুও মানুষ আপ্রাণ চেষ্টায় অন্যের চোখে নিজের প্রতি ভালোবাসা খুঁজে ফেরে, অগাধ বিশ্বাস নিয়ে ভরসা করতে চায়। মানবজীবনের এই সত্যই ব্যঞ্জিত হয়েছে 'ডোম্বীতাল' এ। উপন্যাসের চরিত্রেরা রিনি, ঝিনি, পল্টু, কালুয়া, এমনকি দীপ্তেনও তাই বারবার ডোম্বীতাল বেড়াতে যেতে চেয়েছে, প্রত্যেক বার মুখ বাড়িয়েছে অন্যের প্রতিবম্ব দেখতে কিন্তু দেখতে পায় নি। তাই কালুয়া উপলব্ধি করেছে--'যে প্রেম এমনকি নিজের চেয়েও বড় করে তোলে প্রেমাস্পদকে—তেমন বিরলতম ভালোবাসার জনও আসলে কোনও প্রতিবিম্ব দেখতে পাবে না।'[৮] এই উপলব্ধি সত্বেও তাদের কাছে পরম আকর্ষণ এই ডোম্বীতাল। তাই উপন্যাসের শেষেও তারা কবে দেখতে যাবে তার প্রসঙ্গ এসেছে। এভাবেই বিশেষ সম্প্রদায়ের ব্যবহৃত উপাদান লেখনী শক্তিতে সর্বজনীন মাত্রা পেয়েছে।

আমাদের নির্বাচিত উপন্যাসগুলিতে ডুয়ার্সের প্রান্তিক জনগোষ্ঠীর জীবনযাপনে জড়িত উপাদান কেবল রূপক বা প্রতীক হিসাবে ব্যবহৃত হয় নি। বরং এই অঞ্চলকে পরিপূর্ণ ভাবে উপস্থাপিত করতে, প্রবাহিত মানবজীবনের মূলস্রোতের পাশে তাদের স্বতন্ত্র জীবনযাপন ও সংস্কৃতি, তার বিবর্তন, সমাজ সভ্যতায় তার প্রভাব আলোচনা সূত্রেও ব্যবহার করেছেন। যা আলোচনা করলেই স্পষ্ট হবে।

ডুয়ার্সে অবস্থিত সাঁওতাল, ওঁরাও, মুণ্ডা প্রভৃতি প্রান্তিক মানুষেরা প্রকৃতির সঙ্গে অচ্ছেদ্য সম্পর্ক অনুভব করে। তাই এরা এখনও প্রকৃতির গাছ-পালা, নদ-নদী, পাহাড়-পর্বত, পশু-পাখি, মাটি- আকাশ, সূর্য্যের সমস্ত উপাদানকে পবিত্র জ্ঞানে, শ্রদ্ধা সহকারে, কৃতজ্ঞ চিত্তে পূজা করে থাকে। উপন্যাসগুলিতে তেমনি কিছু বৃক্ষপূজা সম্পর্কে বর্ণনা রয়েছে। তাদের দেবতা মারাংবরু, বোঙ্গা, জাহের এরা প্রভৃতি প্রসঙ্গ এসেছে। যেমন- 'শারহুল উৎসব', 'করম পূজা', 'জিতিয়া পরব', 'এরঃকশিম পূজা'। শারহুল প্রধানত মুণ্ডাদের উৎসব, কিন্তু এখন সাঁওতাল ও ওঁরাওরা এই পূজা করে থাকে। এই পূজা না হলে সাঁওতাল, মুণ্ডারা শাল ফুল, মহুয়া ফুল স্পর্শ করে না, পরেও না। ওঁরাওরা এই পূজা না করলে ভুমি কর্ষণ করে না। লম্বা সময় ধরে এই অঞ্চলের মদেশিয়াদের মধ্যে প্রচলিত রয়েছে বৃক্ষপূজা করম গাছের পূজা বা করম জাওয়া বা করম পরব বা করমসূন বা জিতবাহন পূজা। 'স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে' উপন্যাসে আদিবাসী চরিত্র

সোমারি ও বুখলা ওঁরাওয়ের সূত্র ধরে এইসব পূজা-পার্বণ সম্পর্কে জানতে পারি। পূজা পার্বণগুলি যে একে অপরের মধ্যে আদান প্রদান সূত্রে প্রাপ্ত —এই সত্যও প্রকাশিত হয়েছে বুখলা ওঁরাও এর কথায়— 'এরঃকসিম পূজা ঠিকঠাক হলে মারাংবুরু, জাহের এরা, মঁড়েকো দেবতারা খুশি হয়ে বৃষ্টি দেয়। তারা থাকে পাহাড়ে পাহেড়ে, মেঘে মেঘে, জমির আলে, মাটির ভিতর, জমিজমার চারিদিকের চারসীমায়। এছাড়া আছে করম পূজা। জিতিয়া পরব। ভাদরে করম পূজা শুরু হয় আর আশ্বিনের দিন জিতাষ্টমীর ব্রতপালন। কি বলব মাইজি, মানুষ কেন কোন পূজা করে, নিজেই ভালো জানে না। করম পূজা করলে চাষবাস ভালো হবে, জিতিয়া করলে শস্যও ফলবে, বাচ্চা-কাচ্চাও হবে। এরঃকসিম আগে শুধু সান্তালরা করত। এখন আমরাও করি। আমরা করম জাওয়া করি ভাদুইয়ের শুক্লা একাদশীতে, মুণ্ডারা করে করমসূন। ওদের করম শীত বসন্তের উৎসব। তাতে কি? কামনা তো সেই একই। যেন ভালো শস্য হয়। সন্তান-সন্ততি ভালো থাকে। দেবতারা প্রসন্ন থাকে।'৯ আজ তারা চা-শ্রমিক। ফলে জীবন নিয়ম এবং সময়ের গণ্ডিতে বাধা। তাই বন-জঙ্গল থাকলেও শিকারে যেতে পারে না, চাষ বাস করার জমি পায় না। কিন্তু তবু তারা পূর্বপুরুষের করে আসা এইসব পূজা-পার্বণগুলি ভুলে নি। বিশ্বাস- সংস্কার থেকে সরে আসে নি।

ডুয়ার্সে এইসমস্ত প্রান্তিক মানুষেরা মন্ত্র-তন্ত্র, ঝাড়-ফুঁক, তাবিজ- কবজ, ওঝা- কবিরাজ-ডাইন, গাছ-গাছড়া, জড়িবুটিতে বিশ্বাস করে। তাই দেখা যায়, বুখলা মৃত বাখের নখ, চুল সংগ্রহ করেছে তাবিজ বানাবে বলে। সোমারি ঝিনির শুভ কামনায় ধনেশ পাখির পালক ছুইয়ে দিয়েছে। আদিবাসীরা রেবেকা মুণ্ডাকে ডাইন ভেবেছে। এরা ভূতে বিশ্বাস করে। উপন্যসগুলিতে ব্যবহৃত মন্ত্র তার পরিচয় বহন করে, যা তাদের মধ্যে প্রচলিত নিজস্ব ভাষা মুণ্ডারি এবং সংযোগকারী ভাষা 'সাদরী' তেই উপস্থাপিত হয়েছে। যেমন—

(ক) পলায়ন রত সাপকে ধরার মন্ত্র—'উয়ার বান্ধো শুয়ার বান্ধো
হট্টর মট্টর মাটি .....'[১০]

(খ) ভূত তাড়ানোর মন্ত্র— 'ছন ছন করুয়া ছন ছন দাড়ি
বাম হাতমে সোনে কাটারি'[১১]

(গ) সাপের বিষ ঝাড়ার মন্ত্র— 'শিরি শিরি শিবশঙ্কর গুরু
মহাতপস্বী একইশো চন্ডী
যোড়ে পাট নাওলাখ...'[১২]

মন্ত্রগুলির ব্যবহার তাদের আদিম বিশ্বাসকে যেমন তুলে ধরেছে তেমনি এসব মন্ত্র যে বাঙালি জীবনকে প্রভাবিত করছে তার দৃষ্টান্ত বহন করছে। কেননা আমরা দেখি, এইসব মন্ত্রের প্রতি কালিকাপ্রতাপ, সুপূর্ণা, ঝিনি, বিজু সকলের বিশ্বাস জন্মেছে এবং সেই আগ্রহ থেকে শেখার প্রবণতাও তৈরি হয়েছে এবং শিখেছে।

ডুয়ার্সের এইসব মানুষের জীবনে অচ্ছেদ্য অঙ্গ হিসাবে জড়িত রয়েছে গান, নাচ। 'ডমকচ' গান নামে এক বিশেষ ধরনের গান প্রচলিত রয়েছে এখানকার ওঁরাও, সাঁওতাল, মুণ্ডা, খারিয়া প্রভৃতি সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে। সমীর চক্রবর্তীর কথায়'দুঃখ-বেদনা, শোক-তাপ, বিরহ, ব্যর্থতা, মৃত্যু, কঠোর জীবন সংগ্রামএই সব বিষয় নিয়ে রচিত হয় 'ডমকচ' গান। একথায় দুঃখের গান ডমকচ গান। অনেক সময় মহাকাব্য বা পৌরাণিক ঘটনা বা চরিত্র, ডমকচ গানে রূপক হিসেবে ব্যবহৃত হয়। কিন্তু ডমকচের মূল লক্ষ্য সাধারণ মানব-মানবীর হৃদয়ের আর্তির প্রকাশ।'[১৩] তেমনি একটি সাদরী ভাষায় (বাংলা, হিন্দি মিশ্রিত একটি ভাষা, যা এই অঞ্চলের অভিবাসী এইসব আদিবাসীরা ব্যবহার করে থাকে) রচিত 'গান

বাংলা অর্থসহ 'স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে' উপন্যাসে ব্যবহৃত হয়েছে 'একে জাগা জনম পালি/ বাড়লি যনে তনে/ জিতিয়া পতইয়া লেখে/ ভেলি ছিতি ছান।/ আয় গেলয়ঁ আন্ধিধুকা/ গির গেলয়ঁ খেড় কুটা/ শুখা পতইয়া লেখে/ ভেলি ছিতি ছান।'[১৪]

অর্থাৎ 'সব ভাইবোন আমরা এক জায়গায় জন্মেছিলাম। কিন্তু বড় হতেই জীবনে এল অন্ধকার ঝড়। খড়কুটোর মতো ছত্রাখান হয়ে গেলাম আমরা। শুকনো পাতার মতোই ঝরে গেলাম।'[১৫] দূরে শীতের সন্ধ্যায় জুট লাইন থেকে ভেসে আসা এই গান ঝিনিকে তার মৃত দিদির স্মৃতি, মৃত বন্ধু পল্টুর স্মৃতিতে জড়িয়ে দেয়। ভুতোকে পল্টুর কুকুর শেরুর স্মৃতিতে জড়িয়ে নেয়। তেমনি সাধারণ পাঠককে জীবনের কঠিন সত্য অনুধাবনে একাত্ম করে দেয়। তাই গানটি একটি গোষ্ঠীর ব্যক্তিক হৃদয়ের উপলব্ধি হয়েও হয়ে ওঠে সর্বজনীন।

এছাড়াও বিবাহ, বিভিন্ন পূজা, উৎসব, আচার-অনুষ্ঠানকে আশ্রয় করেও গানের ব্যবহার রয়েছে। ওঁরাও সম্প্রদায়ের বিবাহরীতির 'বর দেখাউনি' পরবের তেমনি তাদের একটি ব্যবহৃত গান হল- 'এহেন বিশিকি নায়ো/ নেও পুত্রিয়ার ভানু/ হন্যে মালা বাঃ নায় দীয়া গো।'[১৬] এটি একটি বড় গান, যার বাংলা অর্থও তুলে দিয়েছেন লেখিকা'আমায় তুমি বিকিয়ে দিলে মাগো/ অনেক দূর গভীর নির্জনে/ অলুক্ষণে এমন কথা/ আনতে নেই মনে।/তোর আপনজনা রইল আগে পিছে/কেন তুই এমন করে কাঁদিস মিছেমিছে?...'[১৭] গানটি মা ও মেয়ের, পরিবারের সঙ্গে বিচ্ছেদের এই বেদনা সর্বস্তরের মা-মেয়ের বিচ্ছেদ বেদনাকেই প্রকাশ করেছে।

তিলোত্তমা মজুমদার বাস্তব জীবনের রূপকার বলেই ওঁরাও সম্প্রদায়ের বিবাহরীতি, অতিথি আপ্যায়নের বিশেষ দিক তুলে এনেছেন। ওঁরাওদের মধ্যে বাড়িতে অতিথি এলে একটি থালায় জল নিয়ে অতিথির পা ধুয়ে দিয়ে গামছা দিয়ে মুছিয়ে সেই জল ঘরের চালে ছিটিয়ে দেবার রীতি রয়েছে। 'স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে'র ঝিনি ও দীপ্তেন মউলের বিয়েতে অতিথি হয়ে গেলে যা দেখতে পেয়েছিল এবং নিজেরাও সেভাবে আপ্যায়িত হয়েছিল।

এসকল নির্বস্তুগত ও প্রয়োগকলামূলক উপাদান ছাড়াও উপন্যাসগুলি থেকে আদিবাসী সমাজ সংস্কৃতির যে সব বস্তুগত কৌম উপাদান পাওয়া যায় সেগুলি হল---

খাদ্য : মেটে আলু, কচু পাতা, কুঁদরি, ভুট্টা, কন্দ, গোরুর খাবার ভুসির মন্ড, পোষ্টি, শুটকি, পিলুয়া, চিঁড়ে, খিচড়ি, সাপ, ব্যাঙ, বাঁশের গায়ে লেগে থাকা আঠা।

অস্ত্র : তির, ধনুক, বল্লম, হাঁসুয়া, কুকরি, ফারুয়া, লাঠি, প্রভৃতি।

তৈজসপত্র : মাটির হাড়ি, টোকরি, বাঁশের ঝুরি, ডিবরি (কুপি) প্রভৃতি।

লোকনেশা : হাঁড়িয়া, ছাঙ, বিড়ি, গাঁজা, মহুয়া, চুল্লু।

যানবাহন : গোরুর গাড়ি, মোষের গাড়ি।

ঔষধ পত্র : রক্তপাত থামাতে— পোড়া ন্যাকড়ার ব্যবহার, গাঁদা পাতার রসের ব্যবহার।

উকুন তাড়াতে— পান পাতার রসের ব্যবহার।

কৃমি দমনে— আশ শ্যাওড়ার পাতার ব্যবহার। ইত্যাদি।

রক্তপাত বন্ধে— পোড়া ন্যাকড়ার ছাইয়ের ব্যবহার। গাঁদা পাতার রসের ব্যবহার।

মাথা পরিষ্কার করতে— রিঠা সেদ্ধ জলের ব্যবহার।

সর্দি-কাশির উপশমে— বাসক, তুলসী, দারুচিনি, লবং, তেজপাতা, গোলমরিচ, আদা আর মিছরি দিয়ে তৈরি পাচনের ব্যবহার।

লোকাভরণ: প্রকৃতির ফুল, পাতা আদিবাসীদের সৌন্দর্যচর্চায় ব্যবহৃত হয়। এরা সৌন্দর্য বৃদ্ধি করতে পশু, পাখি, জীবজন্তু প্রভৃতি অঙ্কিত চিত্র কপালে, গায়ে, পায়ে আঁকে (সাঁওতাল, মুণ্ডা, ওঁরাওরা)।

শুধু তাই নয়, রাষ্ট্রীয় আকাঙ্ক্ষা, দারিদ্র্য, বিবাহ, উত্তরাধিকার সূত্রে প্রাপ্ত এমনকি পাশাপাশি ভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠীর বসবাস প্রভৃতির কারণে সময়ের সাথে সাথে এইসব সাংস্কৃতিক উপাদানগুলির মধ্যে সংকরায়ন ও বিবর্তনের দিকটিও তিলোত্তমা মজুমদারের উপন্যাসে স্পষ্ট। যেমন- কৌম জীবনে অভ্যস্ত আদিবাসীরা সময়ের পালাবদলে আজ শিক্ষিত হচ্ছে ফলে মন্ত্র-তন্ত্রের উপর বিশ্বাস কমে যাচ্ছে। ফলে শিক্ষিতরা তাদের জাতিকে আলোর পথে আনতে তন্ত্র, মন্ত্র, ওঝা, কবিরাজ, ঝাঁড়-ফুক থেকে মুক্ত করার চেষ্টা করছে। 'জল ও চুমুর উপাখ্যান' উপন্যাসে সেই দৃষ্টান্ত পাওয়া যায়। উপন্যাসে দেখা যায়, আদিবাসীরা কুসংস্কার, অন্ধবিশ্বাস দূর করার জন্য সংগঠন গড়ে তুলেছে। সেই সত্য প্রকাশিত পুল্টনের কথায়---'ওদের সঙ্গে বসে দু'পাত্তর হাঁড়িয়া না খেলে ওঝাগুলান যে মুখ খুলতেই চায় না। এদিকে ঐ বস্তিতে আমার যত বন্ধু শনিচ্চর, দুখিয়া, এতোয়ার, স্টিফেন ওরা কেউ ওঝার ঝাড়ফুঁক বিশ্বাস করে না। সব শিক্ষিত ছেলে, কলেজ যাচ্ছে, আমাকে বলে, 'পুল্টন, এসব কী! ঝাড়ফুঁক কুসংস্কারের বিরুদ্ধে লাইনে আমরা প্রচার চালাচ্ছি আর তুই শালা ওঝার সঙ্গে চুতিয়াগিরি করছিস?১৮ বাঙালির সংস্পর্শে থেকে আদিবাসী নারীরা ব্লাউজ পরতে শিখেছে, পরিপাটি হয়ে থাকতে শিখেছে, সাবান ব্যবহার করতে শিখেছে। যেমন---'স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে' উপন্যাসের সোমারি, বুখলা, বেরেকা; 'জর্মের চোখ' উপন্যাসে সোমরি। এরা অন্য সম্প্রদায়ের কাছে আগে দাদা, কাকা সম্বোধন পেত না, কিন্তু এখন তারা শিক্ষিত হয়েছে বলে বাঙালিরাও কাকা, বাবু সম্বোধন করে। যেমন---রেবেকা মুণ্ডাকে কাকিমা বলে এবং চা-বাগানের বাবু হওয়ায় পিটার মুণ্ডাকে পিটারবাবু বলে। আদিবাসীদের মধ্যে জন্মবার অনুযায়ী নাম রাখার রীতি রয়েছে। যেমন---সোমরি, এতোয়া, শনিচ্চরা ইত্যাদি। কিন্তু বাঙালির সংস্পর্শে থেকে থেকে তারাও বর্তমানে নাম রাখার রীতি পরিবর্তন করে নিয়েছে। যেমন---সঞ্চয়, রেবেকা, বুল্টি। স্বাস্থ্য সম্পর্কেও তারা সচেতন হয়েছে, কারণ এখন তারা হাসপাতালমুখী হয়ে উঠেছে।

অন্যদিকে বাঙালিরা আদিবাসীদের সংস্পর্শ থেকে মদ, হাঁড়িয়া, বিড়ি খেতে শিখেছে, তন্ত্রে-মন্ত্রে বিশ্বাসী হয়ে উঠেছে, তাদের নাচ-গানে আপ্লুত হয়েছে। যেমন- বাঙালি পুল্টন, বিজু আদিবাসীদের সংস্পর্শে থেকে মন্ত্র-তন্ত্রে বিশ্বাসী হয়ে মন্ত্র শিখেছে। মুকুন্দ মুণ্ডারি গীত গেয়েছে, নাচে পরবে অংশ নিয়েছে। বাঙালিরা নাকি এদের সংস্পর্শে থেকে থেকে গালিগালাজ শিখেছে, উলকি পরতে শিখেছে। পিয়ালি বিজুকে এবং রিনি তার দাদাকে তাই বলেছে।

এভাবেই তিলোত্তমা মজুমদার ডুয়ার্সের সামাজিক পরিবেশকে তথা কৌম জীবনে অভ্যস্ত জনগোষ্ঠী ও তাদের সংস্কৃতিগত উপাদানকে কোথাও রূপক বা প্রতীক হিসাবে ব্যবহার করে বর্তমান জীবনালেখ্য লিখেছেন। কোথাও তাদের স্বতন্ত্র সমাজ ও সংস্কৃতির পরিচয়, উদারতা তুলে ধরতে, কোথাও ডুয়ার্সকে জীবন্ত করতে, সমাজ সভ্যতার বিবর্তনকে দেখাতে উপাদানগুলির ব্যবহার করেছেন। যা বিষয়বস্তুর বৈচিত্র্য আনার পাশাপাশি তিলোত্তমার শিল্পী প্রতিভার স্বাক্ষর বহন করেছে। সমাজ সভ্যতা যতই পরিবর্তিত হোক মানুষ তার আদিম ঐতিহ্যজাত উপাদান সমূহকে আঁকড়ে ধরেই সমান্তরালভাবে আধুনিক জীবনধারায় এগিয়ে চলছে— তার সত্যতা তিলোত্তমা মজুমদারের লেখনী প্রতিভাত করেছে। আধুনিক জীবনের পাশে প্রান্তিক এইসব মানুষের জীবনের মর্মস্পর্শী উত্থাপন সূত্রে তিনি মানুষে মানুষে বৈষম্য দূর করে সাম্য স্থাপনের বার্তা দিতে চেয়েছেন। যা একটি বিশেষ অঞ্চলের বিষয় হয়েও জীবনবোধের গভীরতায় অতিক্রম করেছে আঞ্চলিকতা।

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৪. তদেব, পৃ.৮
৫. মজুমদার. তি. (২০০৯). জর্মের চোখ, কলকাতা: আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স, পৃ. ৭
৬. তদেব, পৃ.২০৭
৭. মজুমদার.তি.(২০১৭). স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে, কলকাতা: আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স, পৃ. ৫৫৯
৮. তদেব, পৃ. ৫৬০
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১০. তদেব, পৃ. ১৫০
১১. তদেব, পৃ. ২৬৯
১২. মজুমদার. তি. (২০০৯). জর্মের চোখ, কলকাতা: আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স, পৃ. ১০৫
১৩. চক্রবর্তী. স. (১৯৯২). উত্তরবঙ্গে আদিবাসী চা-শ্রমিকের সমাজ ও সংস্কৃতি, কলকাতা: মনীষা পৃ. ২২৮
১৪. মজুমদার. তি. (২০১৭). স্বর্গের শেষপ্রান্তে, কলকাতা: আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স, পৃ. ৬৮৭-৬৮৮
১৫. তদেব, পৃ. ৬৮৭-৬৮৮
১৬. তদেব, পৃ. ৫৭৬
১৭. তদেব,পৃ. ৫৭৬
১৮. মজুমদার. তি. (২০১৭). জল ও চুমুর উপাখ্যান, কলকাতা: আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স, পৃ. ৩৩

সহায়ক গ্রন্থ :

(১) ঘোষ আনন্দ গোপাল, কার্তিক সাহা। ২০১৩। ১৯৪৭- পরবর্তী উত্তরবঙ্গ-১, শিলিগুড়ি, এন, এল পাবলিশার্স।
(২) চক্রবর্তী সমীর, ১৯৯২। উত্তরবঙ্গের আদিবাসী চা-শ্রমিকের সমাজ ও সংস্কৃতি, কলকাতা, মনীষা পাবলিশার্স।
(৩) চক্রবর্তী বরুণকুমার, ২০১৫। লোকসংস্কৃতির সুলুক সন্ধান, কলকাতা, দে'জ পাবলিশিং।
(৪) দেবসেন সুবোধ, ২০১০। বাংলা উপন্যাসে আদিবাসী সমাজ, কলকাতা, পুস্তক বিপণি।
(৫) নাথ প্রমোদ, ২০১৪। প্রান্তীয় উত্তরবঙ্গের জনজাতি, কলকাতা, অর্পিতা প্রকাশনী।
(৬) বাস্কে ধীরেন্দ্রনাথ, ২০১৭। আদিবাসী সমাজ ও পালপার্বণ, তথ্য ও সংস্কৃতি বিভাগ, প. ব., কলকাতা।
(৭) মজুমদার বিমলেন্দু, ২০২০। উত্তরবঙ্গের আদিবাসী, কলকাতা, গাঙচিল।
(৮) রাণা সন্তোষ, রাণা কুমার, ২০১৮। পশ্চিমবঙ্গে দলিত ও আদিবাসী, কলকাতা, গাঙচিল।
(৯) সেন শুচিব্রত, ২০২১। ভারতের আদিবাসী, কলকাতা, বুকপোস্ট পাবলিকেশন।
(১০) সেনগুপ্ত চন্দ্রমল্লী, মিথ-পুরাণের ভাঙাগড়া, পুস্তক বিপণি, কলকাতা, ২০০১।

সহায়ক গ্রন্থাগার :

(১) কোচবিহার পঞ্চানন বর্মা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের কেন্দ্রীয় গ্রন্থাগার, কোচবিহার। (২) উত্তরবঙ্গ রাজ্য গ্রন্থাগার, কোচবিহার। (৩) সুভাষ পাঠাগার, ফালাকাটা, আলিপুরদুয়ার।

লেখক পরিচিতিঃ

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সাঁওতালদের লোককাহিনী ও প্রকৃতির সন্তান হিসাবে সাঁওতালদের অধ্যয়ন

বাবলু মুর্মু

বিমূর্ত:

দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার দেশগুলো সাঁওতাল উপজাতির আবাসস্থল। যদিও তারা বিভিন্নদেশে ছড়িয়ে ছিটিয়ে আছে, তবে বেশির ভাগ সাঁওতাল ভারত ও বাংলাদেশে পাওয়া যায়। সাঁওতাল লোকেরা নিজেদেরকে মূলত প্রাকৃতিক প্রাণী হিসেবে বর্ণনা করে। এই দাবির কিছু পণ্ডিতদের কাছ থেকে সমর্থন পাওয়া গেছে যারা সাঁওতাল আচার-অনুষ্ঠান এবং উৎসব বিশ্লেষণ করেছেন। তবে খুব কম গবেষণাই সাহিত্যিক দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে সাঁওতালদের পরিচয় সংজ্ঞায়িত করার চেষ্টা করেছে। অতএব, তাদের লোককাহিনী পরীক্ষা করে, এই নিবন্ধটির লক্ষ্য এই ধারণাটি প্রদর্শন করা যে সাঁওতালরা প্রকৃতির সন্তান। গবেষণাটি জাতীয় লোককাহিনী তত্ত্ব, সাংস্কৃতিক কার্যকরী তত্ত্ব এবং বাস্তবতার তত্ত্ব দ্বারা পরিচালিত হয়েছিল। গুণগত গবেষণাটি ২৭ টি সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীর পাঠ্য বিশ্লেষণের উপর ভিত্তি করে করা হয়েছিল। এই কাজের যুক্তি হল যে সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনী গুলি তাদের প্রথা, সংস্কৃতি এবং পরিচয় সম্পর্কে জ্ঞানের ভান্ডার হিসাবে কাজ করে। গবেষণার ফলাফল থেকে, এটা স্পষ্ট যে সাঁওতালরা প্রকৃতিতে এবং তার মধ্যে বাস করে। তাদের প্রকৃতির সাথে এমন ঘনিষ্ঠ সম্পর্ক রয়েছে যেমন একজন পিতামাতা বা ভাইবোনের সাথে থাকে। তারা তাদের জীবন ধারায় প্রকৃতির সরলতা অনুকরণ করে। এমনকি তারা যে আত্মাদের উপাসনা করে এবং শ্রদ্ধা করে তারা প্রকৃতিতে বাস করে বলে মনে করা হয়। সুতরাং, সাঁওতালরা প্রকৃতি থেকে জন্মগ্রহণ করে এবং প্রকৃতির অন্যান্য প্রাণীর সাথে পারস্পরিক ভাবে উপকৃত হয় এবং ভাগ করা জায়গায় বিদ্যমান থাকে।

মূলশব্দ: সংস্কৃতি, প্রকৃতির সন্তান, সাঁওতাল পরিচয়, ঐতিহ্য

১.০ ভূমিকা

সাঁওতালরা বাংলাদেশ ও ভারতের প্রধান উপজাতিদের মধ্যে অন্যতম। তারা প্রোটো-অস্ট্রালয়েড (কেরকেটা, ২০১৮) এর বংশধর। তারা দীর্ঘদিন ধরে এলাকায় বসবাস করছে। কেরকেটার মতে, খ্রিস্টের আগে এবং মুসার আগেও সাঁওতালরা সেখানে বাস করত বলে বিশ্বাস করা হয়। যাই হোক, দিওয়ারকার (যেমন কেরকেটা, ২০১৮-এ উদ্ধৃত হয়েছে) দাবি করেছেন যে ভারতে মানুষের অস্তিত্ব ৫০০০-৫৫০০ বছর (পৃ. ২৪) আগে খুঁজে পাওয়া যায় এবং প্রোটো-অস্ট্রেলয়েড আদি মানুষের মধ্যে ছিল। প্রকৃতপক্ষে, পণ্ডিতগণ এই বিষয়ে একমত যে সাঁওতালরা ভারতের প্রথম বাসিন্দাদের মধ্যে ছিল। ভারত থেকে সাঁওতালরা অন্যান্য দেশে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে। কিছু পণ্ডিত সাঁওতালরা মূলত বেবিলনে বাস করত বলে মনে করেন। সাঁওতালরা পারস্য, আফগানিস্তান এবং চীনা টারটারিতে বাস করত। যদিও কোনো প্রমাণিত নথি নেই, সাঁওতাল লোকেরা তাদের জন্মস্থান হিহিরি পিপিরি হিসাবে দাবি করে, বর্তমান পাকিস্তানের কোথাও (কেরকেটা, ২০১৮, পৃ. ২৩)।

অন্যান্য পণ্ডিত যেমন- সোরেন, প্রিয়াঙ্কা ও জামির, ওয়ালুনেবা (২০২১) মনে করেন যে সাঁওতালরা ভারতের বাইরে থেকে এসেছে, যদিও কোনটিই মূল স্থানের সঠিক পরিচয় সম্পর্কে স্পষ্ট নয়। তবুও, সাঁওতালরা বিশ্বাস করে যে তারা ভারতের কোথাও থেকে এসেছে। সাঁওতালদের সৃষ্টি কথায় পৌরাণিক কাহিনী দেখায় যে তাদের প্রথম পিতামাতা একটি পাখির ডিম থেকে বাচ্চা হয়ে বেরিয়েছিল। এই বর্ণনা অনুসারে, প্রথম দিকে সর্বত্র জল ছিল। এই মহাবিশ্বে শুধুমাত্র সমুদ্রের প্রাণী এবং আত্মা ছিল। একদিন, ঠাকুর জিউ (দেবতা) নামে পরিচিত পরমাত্মার কন্যা সমুদ্রে স্নান করছিলেন। গোসল করতে গিয়ে নিজের শরীরের ময়লা থেকে দুটি পাখি তৈরি করলেন। তারপর তিনি পাখিগুলোকে তার বাবার কাছে নিয়ে এলেন যাতে তাদের জীবন দেওয়া যায়। তাঁর বাবা তাদের জীবন দিয়েছেন, এবং পাখিরা মহাবিশ্বের চারপাশে উড়তে শুরু করেছে। পরে, ঠাকুর জিউ পৃথিবী তৈরি করেছিলেন যাতে পাখিরা বিশ্রামের জায়গা পায় এবং বাসা বাঁধতে পারে। একবার তারা বিশ্রামের জায়গা পেয়ে গেলে, স্ত্রী পাখি দুটি ডিম দেয় যেখান থেকে সাঁওতালদের প্রথম পিতামাতা জন্মগ্রহণ করেন (হাসদক, ১৯৮১, পৃ. ২০)। সাঁওতালরা তাদের সংস্কৃতি লালন করে এবং সর্বত্র পালন করে। তাদের সম্প্রদায় বারোটি গোষ্ঠী নিয়ে গঠিত। একই বংশের মধ্যে বিবাহ নিষিদ্ধ। সৃষ্টির শুরু থেকে, সাঁওতালরা কৃষিকাজ এবং শিকারের সাথে জড়িত। তাদের উৎসবের সময়, তারা ভাত খেতে, মদ্য পান করতে এবং নাচতে ভালোবাসে। সাঁওতালরা তাদের সম্প্রদায়ে থাকতে পছন্দ করে, যার প্রত্যেকটির আলাদা প্রশাসনিক কাঠামো রয়েছে। প্রশাসন সম্প্রদায় পরিচালনা করে এবং বিপদের সময় সদস্যদের রক্ষা করে। সাঁওতাল পরিবার সমাজ কাঠামোর বাইরে থাকতে পারেনা। যেমন, কেউ বড় অপরাধ করলে প্রশাসন তাকে সাময়িক ভাবে শাস্তি হিসেবে সমাজ থেকে বহিষ্কার করে। তবুও সাঁওতালরা শান্তি প্রিয় মানুষ। বর্তমানে, সাঁওতালদের জনসংখ্যা অনুমান করা হয়েছে ৭.৫ মিলিয়ন, যা বাংলাদেশ, ভুটান এবং নেপাল ছাড়াও ভারতের বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে ছড়িয়ে ছিটিয়ে রয়েছে। তাদের স্বতন্ত্রতা থাকা সত্ত্বেও, সাঁওতালরা বিভিন্ন সংস্কৃতির লোকেদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করেছে যখন তারা বিভিন্ন জায়গায় চলাফেরা করে এবং বসবাস করে এবং সময়ের সাথে সাথে পরিবর্তিত হয়েছে। যেমন, ভারত এবং বাংলাদেশের কিছু অংশে, তাদের অনন্য সংস্কৃতিগুলি অন্য গোষ্ঠীগুলির থেকে খুব কমই আলাদা করা যায়। উদাহরণস্বরূপ, সাঁওতালরা আনুষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষা গ্রহণ করেছে এবং যদিও তাদের অধিকাংশই তাদের ঐতিহ্যগত ধর্ম ধরে রেখেছে, অনেকেই এখন বিভিন্ন ধর্ম পালন করে, বিশেষ করে হিন্দু ধর্ম এবং খ্রিস্টান ধর্ম (খন্দোকার, ২০০০)।

১.১ সমস্যা বিবৃত

সাঁওতাল সংস্কৃতির ক্রম বর্ধমান পরিবর্তন সময়ের সাথে সাথে সম্প্রদায়ের ঐতিহ্যগত সাহিত্যকেও ধীরে ধীরে ক্ষয় করেছে। শুধুমাত্র কিছু সাঁওতাল এখনও গল্প বলার অনুশীলন, কবিতা আবৃত্তি এবং অন্যান্য সাহিত্যের অভিনয় পালন করে। এদিকে, সাঁওতাল সাহিত্য এবং সময়ের সাথে সাথে এর রূপান্তর নিয়ে সীমিত গবেষণা রয়েছে। এটির আংশিক কারণ আধুনিক সাঁওতালরা সাধারণ ভাবে সাহিত্যের প্রতি উদাসীন বলে মনে হয়। কিছু অ-সাঁওতাল তাদের সাহিত্যের বিভিন্ন দিক সম্পর্কে বহিরাগত দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করেছে (গৌতম, ১৯৭৭)। তবে, অভ্যন্তরীণ দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে সাঁওতাল সাহিত্যের উপর কোন গবেষণা পাওয়া যায়নি। তাই, এই গবেষণায় সাঁওতাল সাহিত্যকে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ এবং অনন্য সমৃদ্ধ মাধ্যম হিসেবে নথিভুক্ত করার চেষ্টা করা হয়েছে। এই গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য হল সাঁওতাল সাহিত্যের গুরুত্ব তুলে ধরা, এটি সাঁওতালদের একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সমস্যার উপর আলোকপাত করে এবং সাহিত্যের মাধ্যমে সমাধান করার

চেষ্টা করে। বর্তমানে অনেক সাঁওতাল পরিচয়ের সংকটে ভুগছে। জাতি হিসাবে তাদের স্বতন্ত্রতা এবং তাদের পরিচয়ের উপর খুব বেশি গবেষণা নেই। অনেকে দাবি করেন যে সাঁওতালরা শান্তিপ্রিয় মানুষ (ক্যাভাল্লারো, ফ্রান্সেস্কো এবং রহমান, তানিয়া। (২০০৯)। এখনও অনেকে মনে করেন যে সাঁওতালরা আনন্দের মানুষ (আলি, ১৯৯৮)। তবে, এই দাবিগুলির মধ্যে থেকে অভিজ্ঞতামূলক তথ্য নেই। তাদের সমর্থন করার জন্য সাঁওতাল বৃত্তি প্রয়োজন। প্রকৃতপক্ষে, সময়ের সাথে সাথে, অনেক সাঁওতাল অন্যদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করার সময় তাদের স্বতন্ত্রপরিচয় হারিয়েছে বলে মনে হয়। সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীগুলি পরীক্ষা করে, এই অধ্যয়নের লক্ষ্য সাঁওতালদের অনন্য পরিচয় উন্মোচন করা এবং উপস্থাপন করা। সম্প্রদায়ের নতুন প্রজন্ম নতুন করে আবিষ্কার করে যে তারা কারা। গবেষণাটি যুক্তি দেয় যে সাঁওতালরা প্রকৃতির সন্তান, তাদের লোককাহিনী থেকে এর প্রমাণ মেলে। গবেষণাটি সাঁওতাল সাহিত্যের সমৃদ্ধতাকে তাদের মানুষের পরিচয়ের অন্যতম প্রধান বৈশিষ্ট্য হিসাবে পরীক্ষা করে।

২.০ সাহিত্য পর্যালোচনা:

সাঁওতালদের ইতিহাস, সংস্কৃতি এবং লোককথার মধ্যে একটি সংযোগ রয়েছে, যা অনেক শিক্ষাবিদ দ্বারা প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছে। উদাহরণস্বরূপ, ক্যানি (১৯২৮), তার লেখায় সাঁওতাল সাহিত্যের গভীরতার জন্য উপলব্ধি প্রদর্শন করেন। লেখক উল্লেখ করেছেন যে, সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনী সাঁওতাল ঐতিহ্যের প্রতিফলন। দত্ত (২০১৮) তাঁর লেখায় সাঁওতাল লোকআখ্যানও পরীক্ষা করেছেন। পণ্ডিতরা সাঁওতালদের সাথে জমিদার ও বিজয়ীদের নিষ্ঠুর আচরণের প্রমাণ প্রদান করেন, যেমনটি কিছু সাঁওতাল আখ্যানে ধরা আছে। দত্ত তারপর উপসংহারে পৌঁছেছেন যে, সাঁওতালদের কিছু লম্বা গল্প তাদেরই ইতিহাসের প্রতিফলন। একইভাবে দেখেছেন যে, সাঁওতাল গল্পে বর্ণিত জাদুবিদ্যার কার্যকলাপগুলি সাঁওতাল সমাজে প্রচলিত সেই অনুশীলনগুলির সাথে সাদৃশ্যপূর্ণ। যেমন, গল্পগুলো স্যাটানাল সংস্কৃতির অভ্যন্তরীণ চেহারা প্রদান করে। সাঁওতাল গল্পের একটি পরীক্ষার উপর ভিত্তি করে লেখক আরও উল্লেখ করেছেন যে, সম্প্রদায়ের ঐতিহ্যগত সংস্কৃতি মূলত পুরুষতান্ত্রিক ছিল যার ফলে সাঁওতাল সমাজ ব্যবস্থায় নারীদের স্থান ছিলনা। তাই, রাজের দৃষ্টিতে, মহিলারা সমাজে ক্ষমতা প্রয়োগের আকাঙ্ক্ষার আউটলেট হিসাবে জাদুবিদ্যার চর্চা করত। সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনী নিয়েও গবেষণা করেছেন, বিশেষ করে সাঁওতাল জনগণের সমষ্টিগত অবচেতনের উপর ফোকাস করে যা তাদের লোককাহিনীতে ধরা পড়েছে। এগুলি ছাড়াও, তিনি বর্ণনাগুলির মধ্যে প্রত্নতাত্ত্বিক উপাদানগুলি চিহ্নিত করেছিলেন। লেখক দেখিয়েছেন যে, সাঁওতালদের সৃষ্টি মিথ তাদের জন্য সাহিত্যের একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অংশ। তাঁর বক্তৃতায় প্রতিধ্বনিত, করম-বিন্তি (যা সাঁওতালদের সৃষ্টি মিথকে আবৃত্তি করে) সাঁওতাল পরিচয়কে পুনরায় সংজ্ঞায়িত করে কারণ এটি সৃষ্টি মিথের একটি উদ্ধৃতি। এটি সাঁওতাল পরিচয়কে বাঁচিয়ে রাখে কারণ এটি এক প্রজন্ম থেকে পরবর্তী প্রজন্মে চলে যায়। করম-বিন্তির অনুরূপ গবেষণায়, ট্যাঙ্ক (২০১৯) আরও লিখেছেন যে সহস্রাব্দ সাঁওতালরা তাদের পরিচয় নিয়ে চিন্তিত। তাঁর দৃষ্টিতে করম-বিন্তী হারানো সাঁওতাল পরিচয়কে পুনঃপ্রতিষ্ঠা করে। সিওয়াকোটি এবং ট্যাঙ্ক উভয়ই দেখান যে করম বিন্তী সাঁওতালদের পরিচয় সংজ্ঞায়িত করার একটি মাধ্যম। রাজ (২০১৮) যুক্তি দেন যে সাঁওতাল সৃষ্টির পৌরাণিক কাহিনী অ-মানুষ, প্রাণী এবং আত্মাদের সাথে সম্প্রদায়ের সম্পর্ককে আন্ডার লাইন করে। এই দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি তার (২০১৮) সাথে অনুরণিত হয় যিনি সাঁওতালদের আত্মা উপাসক হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করেন। সাঁওতালদের মধ্যে পরিচয় হারিয়ে যাওয়ার পেছনে বিভিন্ন কারণকে দায়ী করা হয়েছে। সামাদ বাংলাদেশী সাঁওতালদের অধ্যয়ন করেন এবং একদিকে তাদের ভূমি ও সংস্কৃতির ক্ষতি এবং অন্যদিকে তাদের পরিচয় হারানোর মধ্যে

একটি সংযোগ খুঁজে পান। লেখক আরও লক্ষ্য করেছেন যে চা-বাগানের সাঁওতালদের অবস্থা সমতল ভূমির সাঁওতালদের চেয়ে বেশি শোচনীয় কারণ তাদের সংস্কৃতি ও ঐতিহ্যচর্চার সুযোগ নেই। তারা অন্যান্য উপজাতির মধ্যে এতটাই নিমজ্জিত যে কেউ তাদের অনন্য সাঁওতাল পরিচয় চিনতে পারে না। শরীফ (২০০৮) সামাদ (২০০৬) এর যুক্তিকে সমর্থন করেন যে সাংস্কৃতিক অবক্ষয়ের জন্য সাঁওতালরা বহিরাগত শক্তি দ্বারা লক্ষ্য বস্তু হয়েছে। তিনি বিশেষ ভাবে রাজনৈতিক চাপকে সাঁওতাল সংস্কৃতি ও পরিচয়ের একটি বড় বিঘ্নকারী হিসেবে উল্লেখ করেছেন। বাংলাদেশ সরকার একটি উপজাতি হিসাবে তাদের পরিচয় অস্বীকার করেছে, পরিবর্তে তাদের বর্ণনা করেছে ক্ষুদ্র নৃতাত্ত্বিক জনগোষ্ঠী (একটি বাংলা শব্দ যার অর্থ ছোট উপ-উপজাতি), যা তাদের একটি উপ-উপজাতির সাথে সমতুল্য করে। আকান এটআল (২০১৫) আরও মন্তব্য করেছেন যে সরকার এবং জনসাধারণ শিক্ষা ও সামাজিক উন্নয়নের ক্ষেত্রে সাঁওতালদের ব্যাপক ভাবে উপেক্ষা করেছে। অনেক সাঁওতাল বর্তমানে শিক্ষার প্রতি আগ্রহী হওয়ার কারণে এই দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি ঘটনা গুলিকে ছাড়িয়ে গেছে। বিশ্বায়নের প্রভাবকে সাঁওতাল সমাজের রূপান্তরের প্রধান কারণ হিসেবে উল্লেখ করেছেন। এখন আগের চেয়ে বেশি, বেশির ভাগ লোক তাদের এলাকার বাইরে কাজ করে এবং শহরে বাস করে। তাই বিশ্বায়ন মানুষকে বাধ্য করেছে অন্য সংস্কৃতির সাথে খাপ খাইয়ে নিতে। সাঁওতাল রূপান্তরের কারণ হিসেবে বিশ্বায়ন এবং অভিবাসনকেও উল্লেখ করেছেন। গুহ এবং ইসমাইল (২০১৫) ভারতের পশ্চিমবঙ্গের সাঁওতালদের জীবন নিয়ে গবেষণা করেছেন। গবেষণায় দেখা গেছে যে সাঁওতালরা বর্তমানে বিভিন্ন চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন। তারা এমন একটি জমিতে বহুলাংশে কৃষি-নির্ভর জীবন যাপন করে যা তার উর্বরতা হারিয়েছে। সমসাময়িক সাঁওতাল জনসংখ্যার অধিকাংশই তাদের ঐতিহ্যবাহী নাচ ও গানের প্রতি অনাগ্রহী বলে মনে হয়। যাই হোক, চ্যালেঞ্জ এবং অসুবিধার মধ্যেও, গুহ এবং ইসমাইল আধুনিক সাঁওতালদের সুখী বলে বর্ণনা করেছেন। একই ভাবে, বিশ্বাস (২০১৮) আধুনিক সাঁওতালদের আর্থ-সামাজিক, সাংস্কৃতিক, ভাষা, বিশ্বাস এবং পেশা সম্পর্কে তার গবেষণায় এই সিদ্ধান্তে পৌঁছেছেন যে সম্প্রদায়টি আর প্রাচীন কালের বিখ্যাত ঐতিহ্যবাহী উপজাতি নয়। সাঁওতালরা পাশ্চাত্য সংস্কৃতি ও শিক্ষার সংস্পর্শে রূপান্তরিত হয়েছে। ভারতে অন্য একটি গবেষণায়, রায় (২০১৬) লক্ষ্য করেছেন যে সাঁওতালরা ধর্মীয় লাইনে গভীর ভাবে বিভক্ত। নতুন ধর্ম, যেমন খ্রিস্টধর্ম এবং ইসলাম, পাশ্চাত্য আনুষ্ঠানিক শিক্ষার সাথে, সাঁওতালদের ঐতিহ্যগত বিশ্বাস ব্যবস্থা এবং সংস্কৃতিগুলিকে অনেকাংশে প্রতিস্থাপন করেছে। একই ধরনের গবেষণায়, শামসুদ্দোহা এবং জাহান (২০১৬) আবিষ্কার করেছেন যে, ধর্মীয় শক্তিগুলি সাঁওতাল সমাজকে ব্যাপক ভাবে পরিবর্তন করেছে। এই হিসাবে, লেখক বর্তমানে তিন ধরনের সাঁওতাল চিহ্নিত করেছেন, যথা সাফাহোর (পরিচ্ছন্ন রাস্তার অনুসারী) সাঁওতাল (হিন্দু), উমহর (বাপ্তাইজিত পথের অনুসারী) সাঁওতাল (খ্রিস্টান), এবং বঙ্গাহর (আত্মার পথের অনুসারী) সাঁওতাল (সনাতন ধর্মের অনুসারী)। নৃতাত্ত্বিক শামসুদ্দোহা এবং জাহান আধুনিক সাঁওতালদের রূপান্তরের পেছনের শক্তিগুলিকে গণনা করেছেন: রাষ্ট্রীয় বৈষম্য, খ্রিস্টান ধর্মে ধর্মান্তর, অভ্যন্তরীণ দ্বন্দ্ব এবং জন সাধারণের প্রান্তিকতা। শামসুদ্দোহা এবং জাহান (২০১৬) বর্ণনা করেছেন যে সাঁওতালরা তাদের সংস্কৃতি এবং দেশকে রক্ষা করার জন্য মহান ত্যাগ স্বীকার করেছে। উদাহরণ স্বরূপ, ১৯৫৫ সালে, তারা ব্রিটিশ উপনিবেশকারীদের বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধ করেছিল এবং ১৯৭১ সালে পাকিস্তানের সাথে যুদ্ধ করেছিল। আরও দাবি করে যে সাঁওতালরা ব্রিটিশ উপনিবেশকারীদের বিরুদ্ধে বিদ্রোহের জন্য আন্তর্জাতিক ভাবে সুপরিচিত। দেশের জন্য এই সব আত্মত্যাগ সত্ত্বেও, শামসুদ্দোহা এবং জাহান দুঃখ প্রকাশ করেছেন যে, ভারত ও বাংলাদেশ উভয় সরকারই সাঁওতালদের পুরোপুরি স্বীকৃতি দেয়নি। এই লেখকদের মতে, ঔপনিবেশিকতার বিরুদ্ধে ঐতিহাসিক সংগ্রামে তাদের ভূমিকার জন্য সাঁওতালদের প্রশংসা করা উচিত। সাঁওতালরা তাদের সংস্কৃতি ও

পরিচয় বিভিন্ন উপায়ে উৎযাপন করে। Lea (২০১৬) বাহা উৎসব (ফুল উৎসব) চিহ্নিত করে, স্থানীয় ভাবে এটিকে বলা হয় দিসম বাহা উৎসব (দেশীয় ফুল উৎসব), একটি উপায় হিসাবে সাঁওতালরা তাদের অনন্য সাংস্কৃতিক পরিচয় উৎযাপন করে এবং প্রকাশ করে। Carrin (২০১৫) লুগুবুরু তীর্থযাত্রাকে আরেকটি ইভেন্ট হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করেছেন যা সাঁওতালরা তাদের পরিচয়কে পুনরায় সংজ্ঞায়িত করতে ব্যবহার করে। এই অনুষ্ঠানটি বিভিন্ন এলাকা থেকে সাঁওতালদের একত্রিত করে সংহতি প্রদর্শন এবং তাদের পরিচয় উৎযাপন করার জন্য। বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের (২০১৯) মতে, লুগুবুরু একটি প্রকৃত শারীরিক তীর্থ যাত্রা নয় বরং সাঁওতাল পরিচয়ের পুনর্নিশ্চিত করণ। আচার্য এবং ক্ষত্রিয় (২০১৬) আরও লক্ষ্য করেছেন যে, আধুনিক সাঁওতালরা ওল-চিকির মাধ্যমে তাদের পরিচয়কে পুনরায় সংজ্ঞায়িত করে (১৯২৫ সালে সাঁওতাল পন্ডিত রঘুনাথ মুর্মু দ্বারা উদ্ভাবিত সাঁওতালদের ভাষা লেখার জন্য ভাষার লিপি) এবং সারনা ধরম (সাঁওতালদের অন্যতম ধর্ম) আন্দোলন। পর্যালোচনা করা সাহিত্য দেখায় যে অনেক গবেষণা সাঁওতালদের জীবনের বিভিন্ন দিকের উপর দৃষ্টি নিবদ্ধ করেছে। কিছু অধ্যয়ন তাদের ইতিহাসের উপর দৃষ্টি নিবদ্ধ করেছে, কিছু তাদের জীবন এবং অস্তিত্বের বর্তমান পরিস্থিতির উপর এবং অন্যরা তাদের পরিচয় পুনরায় সংজ্ঞায়িত করার জন্য তাদের প্রচেষ্টা পরীক্ষা করেছে। সাহিত্য থেকে এটা স্পষ্ট যে, সাঁওতালদের নতুন প্রজন্ম তাদের পরিচয় সম্পর্কে একটি স্পষ্টীকরণ চায়। তবুও, পর্যালোচনা করা কেউই প্রকৃতি বা তাদের পরিবেশের সাথে সাঁওতালদের পরিচয়কে সংজ্ঞায়িত করার চেষ্টা করেনি, বিশেষ করে সাহিত্যের দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে। তাই, এই গবেষণায় সাঁওতালদের লোককাহিনী থেকে আঁকা প্রকৃতির সন্তান হিসেবে তাদের পরিচয় সংজ্ঞায়িত করার চেষ্টা করা হয়েছে।

৩.০ পদ্ধতি

প্রকৃতির সন্তান হিসাবে সাঁওতালদের পরিচয় সংজ্ঞায়িত করতে সাহায্য করার জন্য, এই গবেষণাটি সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনী পরীক্ষা করে। গবেষণা প্রকৃতির গুণগত ছিল. পদ্ধতিটি উপযুক্ত ছিল যেহেতু গবেষকরা এর সেটিংয়ে একটি সামাজিক সমস্যা পর্যবেক্ষণ করেছেন। এটি সংস্কৃতি, মূল্যবোধ, মতামত, আচরণ এবং সামাজিক প্রেক্ষাপট নিয়েও কাজ করে। গ্রন্থগুলি ভারতে ধর্মপ্রচারকদের প্রথম সংগ্রহ। গবেষণাটি ২৭টি গল্পের নমুনা সংগ্রহ থেকে গড়ে উঠেছে। নমুনাকৃত গল্পগুলো হল: সিন্দুরা গাঁগারুর গল্প; গুমধাদ্য হিরো; লাখন এবং বন্য মহিষ; শিয়াল এবং চিতাবাঘ; হনুমান ছেলের গল্প; পরিবর্তিত বাছুর; দুখু ও বোঙ্গা বউ; ঘর বঙ্গা; বঙ্গের ভিকটিম; বৃদ্ধ মহিলা যিনি মারা গিয়েছিলেন এবং তার পুত্রকে রেখে গেছেন; কিভাবে নেদারওয়ার্ল্ডের রাজার বার্তা বাহক একজন ধনী বুড়োমানুষ দূরে নির্বাসিত হন; যে যুবক তার মৃত স্ত্রীকে আবার দেখেছে; বাঘের বধূ; বানর এবং মেয়ে; বানর স্বামী; পালো; যখন তারা ভাই ও বোনকে বিয়ে করার চেষ্টা করে; অলসতা নিরাময়; দুইভাই ঝোরিয়া ও ঝোর; বাঘ এবং উল্টার মা; কারা গুজা; দি সিস্টারস-ল; রাজিত বঙ্গ; দ্য হার্ডবয় অ্যান্ড দ্য উইচেস; দ্য সিলি উইমেন; নাথিং মাস্ট টু টোল্ড টু উইমেন, এবং এক সৎমা। অধ্যয়নের জন্য ডেটা নির্বাচিত করে লোক কাহিনীগুলিকে ঘনিষ্ঠ পাঠের মাধ্যমে সংগ্রহ করা হয়েছিল। গবেষণাটি ডেটা প্রক্রিয়ায় করার জন্য পাঠ্য বিশ্লেষণ ব্যবহার করেছিল।

৪.০ তাত্ত্বিক কাঠামো

গবেষণাটি তিনটি তত্ত্ব দ্বারা পরিচালিত হয়েছিল, যথা ন্যাশনাল ফোকলোর থিওরি, ফাংশনাল থিওরি এবং থিওরি অফ

ফোকলোর অ্যান্ড রিয়ালিটি। ডোরসন (১৯৬৩) অনুসারে ন্যাশনাল ফোকলোর থিওরি মনে করে যে জাতীয় উপাদানগুলি মানুষের জ্ঞানের মধ্যে লুকিয়ে আছে। যেমন, মানুষের বিদ্যা একটি জাতিকে সংজ্ঞায়িত করতে পারে বা মানুষকে একটি জাতি হিসাবে নিজেদেরকে সংজ্ঞায়িত করতে সাহায্য করতে পারে। তত্ত্বটি সাঁওতালদের পরিচয় সংজ্ঞায়িত করে এমন গল্পের উপাদানগুলি সনাক্ত করতে গবেষণাকে সাহায্য করেছিল। কার্যকরী তত্ত্বটি ফ্রাঞ্জ বোস (১৯৪০) এবং উইলিয়াম বাসকম (১৯৫৩) দ্বারা উত্থাপিত হয়েছিল। বোয়াস এর প্রকৃতির কারণে একে 'সাংস্কৃতিক প্রতিফলক তত্ত্ব' (লোপেজ, ২০০৬, পৃ. ৬২) বলেছেন। তত্ত্বটি লোক কাহিনী এবং সংস্কৃতির মধ্যে একটি সংযোগ আঁকতে সাহায্য করেছিল। এর প্রধান যুক্তি, লোক কাহিনীর অধ্যয়ন হল মানুষের অধ্যয়ন। অতএব, লোককাহিনী হল 'একজন মানুষের আত্মজীবনী' (লোপেজ, ২০০৬, পৃ. ৬২)। Bascom (১৯৫৩) অনুসারে, লোককাহিনী ১) সংস্কৃতির আয়না হতে পারে; ২) সংস্কৃতির দিক গুলি যাচাই করতে পারে; ৩) শিক্ষার একটি মাধ্যম হতে পারে এবং ৪) আচরণের স্বীকৃত নিদর্শনগুলির সাথে সামঞ্জস্য বজায় রাখার জন্য কাজ। এই তত্ত্বটি এই ভাবে সাঁওতালদের লোককাহিনী এবং সাংস্কৃতিক পরিচয়ের সম্পর্ক পরীক্ষা করতে সাহায্য করেছিল। বোয়াসের দাবি যে লোক কাহিনী হল মানুষের আত্মজীবনী, যা এই গবেষণার জন্য উপযুক্ত ছিল। গবেষণায় সাঁওতাল জনগোষ্ঠীর পরিচয় সংজ্ঞায়িত করার জন্য লোককাহিনী অধ্যয়ন করা হয়েছে। দ্য থিওরি অফ ফোকলোর অ্যান্ড রিয়্যালিটির উদ্ভব হয়েছিল বিখ্যাত লোকসাহিত্যিক ভ্লাদিমির প্রপ (১৯৮৪) এর কাজ থেকে, এটি প্রমাণ করার জন্য যে লোককাহিনীর বাস্তবতার সাথে সম্পর্ক রয়েছে। প্রপ যুক্তি দিয়ে ছিলেন যে ১) লোক কাহিনী বাস্তবতা থেকে উদ্ভূত, এমনকি যদি এটি দুর্দান্ত চিত্র হয়; ২) লোক কাহিনীর স্রষ্টা এবং অভিনয় শিল্পীরা এই ধরনের সাহিত্যের মাধ্যমে বাস্তব জীবনকে উপস্থাপন করতে চান এবং ৩) একজন লোকশিল্পী নিজেকে বাস্তবতার প্রতিনিধি হিসাবে প্রমাণ করার লক্ষ্য রাখেন (প্রোপ, ১৯৮৪, পৃ. ৩৮)। তত্ত্বটি এই গবেষণাকে সাঁওতালদের প্রকৃত প্রকৃতি বুঝতে সাহায্য করেছিল। বিশেষত, এটি গবেষককে তাদের লোক কাহিনীর পিছনে সাঁওতাল পরিচয় সম্পর্কে সত্য উন্মোচন করতে সাহায্য করেছিল।

৫.০ ফলাফল এবং আলোচনা

৫.১ সাঁওতাল গল্পের প্রেক্ষাপট

নির্বাচিত গল্পের ঘটনাগুলো গ্রামীণ প্রেক্ষাপটে ঘটেছে। অতএব, গল্পগুলি প্রকৃতির বৈশিষ্ট্যগুলি বর্ণনা করে, যেমন গ্রাম, জঙ্গল, গাছ, প্রাণী এবং মানুষের সরল জীবন ধারা। চরিত্রগুলি গ্রামের এবং প্রায়শই বনাঞ্চলের চারপাশে ঘুরে বেড়ায়। তারা জঙ্গলের কাছাকাছি বা ভিতরে বাস করে। বেশির ভাগ গল্পের ঘটনা ঘটে বনে, মাঠে বা লোকালয়ে। গল্পে ল্যান্ড স্কেপের প্রাণবন্ত বর্ণনাও সাঁওতালদের বর্তমান এলাকাকে প্রতিফলিত করে। গল্পের সেটিং থেকে থিমগুলিও সাঁওতালদের দৈনন্দিন জীবনের মূল ঘটনাগুলিকে ক্যাপচার করে। এই থিমগুলির মধ্যে রয়েছে প্রাণীদের প্রতি প্রতিশোধ, শিকার, প্রাণী এবং আত্মার সাথে সুরেলা জীবন যাপন, মানুষের চরিত্র, আত্মা, জাদুবিদ্যা, পারিবারিক সম্পর্ক, মৃত্যু এবং মৃত্যুর পরে জীবন, হাস্যরস এবং আরও অনেক কিছু। এই বিষয়গুলি দেখায় যে কীভাবে সাঁওতাল লোক কাহিনী গুলি সামাজিক ভাবে সম্পর্কিত এবং কীভাবে মানুষ প্রকৃতির সাথে যোগাযোগ করে। সাঁওতালরা বসবাস করে এবং বেঁচে থাকার জন্য প্রকৃতির উপর নির্ভর করে। এখানে প্রাসাদ, শহর থেকে আসা মানুষ বা কোনো বৈষম্যের উল্লেখ নেই এই গল্পের মানুষের মধ্যে। এখানকার গল্পগুলো রাজনীতি, খুন, চক্রান্ত বা যৌনতা নিয়ে নয় বরং সাঁওতালদের সংগ্রামী ইতিহাস নিয়ে। তাদের

প্রয়োজনের মুহূর্তে, প্রকৃতি মায়ের মতো তাদের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছে, তাদের জন্য খাবার সরবরাহ করে। সাঁওতালরা জঙ্গল থেকে তাদের খাবার সংগ্রহ করে। চরিত্রগুলো বেশির ভাগই কৃষিকাজের সাথে জড়িত। তারা জানে কীভাবে একটি সংকটময় পরিস্থিতিতে টিকে থাকতে হয়। উদাহরণ স্বরূপ, ''লখন এবং বন্য মহিষ'' গল্পে নায়ক লখন বন্য মহিষের দুধ পান করে বনে বেঁচে থাকে। আবার, ''কারা এবং গুজা'' গল্পে, কারা এবং গুজা, দুইভাই, খাবার জন্য কিছু শিকড় খনন করতে বনে যায়। সাঁওতালরা যখন পরাজিত হয় এবং বিপদের সময় তাদের সাহায্য করার মতো কেউ থাকে না, তখন বন্য পশুরা তাদের সাহায্যে এগিয়ে আসে। সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীতে মানুষ ও পশুপাখি এবং আত্মার মধ্যে বিবাহের গল্পও রয়েছে। 'বাঘের বধূ', 'বানরের স্বামী'এবং 'দুখু ও বঙ্গবউ'-এ এমন গল্প পাওয়া যায়। এই গল্পগুলো দেখায় যে সাঁওতালরা প্রকৃতির কাছাকাছি। এই ঘনিষ্ঠতা প্রকৃতি এবং পরিবেশ সংরক্ষণ সম্পর্কে নিছক অনুভূতির চেয়ে গভীর; এটি একটি আধ্যাত্মিক এবং শারীরিক সংযোগ যা মানুষ এবং প্রকৃতির মধ্যে ভাগ করা জীবন দ্বারা চিহ্নিত করা হয়।

৫.২ সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীর চরিত্রগুলো সরল

গল্পে কোন বিশিষ্ট বা বিখ্যাত চরিত্র বা নায়ক নেই। চরিত্রগুলি সাঁওতাল এবং অ-সাঁওতাল, প্রাণী, প্রকৃতি এবং আত্মা নিয়ে গঠিত, যাদের প্রত্যেকেই প্রকৃতির সাথে এবং প্রকৃতির দ্বারা সংযুক্ত। এইসমস্ত চরিত্রগুলি গল্পে একটি আকর্ষণীয় ভূমিকা পালন করে কারণ তারা সবাই সাঁওতাল ভাষায় কথা বলে। মানুষের চরিত্রগুলির মধ্যে, সাঁওতালরা লোককাহিনীতে সর্বাধিক বৈশিষ্ট্যযুক্ত। বেশিরভাগ নায়কের পেশা হল গবাদিপশু পালন বা কৃষিকাজ, যা প্রকৃতির সাথে সাঁওতালদের সংযোগের উপর জোর দেয়। তারা তাদের গবাদিপশুকে বনে নিয়ে যায়, যেমনটি দেখানো হয়েছে 'সিন্দুরা গাঁগারুর গল্প', 'গুমধা, বীর,' 'লখন এবং বন্য মহিষ' এবং আরও অনেকের মতো। এসব গল্পে চরিত্রগুলো প্রকৃতির কাছাকাছি। তারা প্রকৃতি থেকে তাদের খাদ্য উৎপাদন করে; তারা গবাদি পশুদের জঙ্গলে নিয়ে যায়, কখনও কখনও বন্যপ্রাণীদের সাথে বন্ধুত্ব করে এবং আবার কখনও প্রতিশোধের জন্য তাদের শিকার করে। সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীতে, পশুচরিত্রগুলিও একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। তারা মানুষের সাথে মানুষের ভাষায় কথা বলে। এটি মানুষের অহংকারে পরিবর্তন হিসাবে এই প্রাণীদের প্রতীকীগুণের উপর জোর দেয়। সাঁওতাল গল্পগুলি পশুদের মূর্তিমান করতে পিছপা হয়না। মানুষ সাঁওতাল সংস্কৃতি এবং অস্তিত্বের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ খেলোয়াড় হিসাবে এই প্রাণীদের সম্মান করে। কিছু গল্পে, প্রাণী এমনকি সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণে অংশ নেয়। মানুষ তাদের কথা শোনে। উদাহরণ স্বরূপ, ''পরিবর্তিত বাছুর'', দুটি প্রাণী, নাইট জার এবং জ্যাকাল, গরীব ছেলে সোনার পক্ষে একটি বিরোধ মেটাতে মানুষের সাথে বসে। তারা জনগণের মুখোমুখি হয় এবং তাদের প্রশ্ন করে, যার উত্তর জনগণ দিতে পারেনি। শেষ পর্যন্ত, তারা রায়ে জয়ী হয় এবং জনগণ তাদের রায় মেনে নেয়। আত্মারাও এই গল্পগুলোর উল্লেখ যোগ্য চরিত্র। অনেক সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীতে আত্মারা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। আত্মা মানুষের রূপ নিতে পারে এবং মানুষের সাথে বসবাস করতে পারে। লোক কাহিনীতে দেখানো হয়েছে, আত্মারা পুকুর, নালা (স্রোত) বা যে কোনো জলের উৎসে বাস করে। এই আত্মাগুলো প্রকৃতির বাইরে নয় বরং প্রকৃতির অংশ। লোককাহিনীতে বিভিন্ন ধরনের চেতনা উপস্থাপন করা হয়েছে। তাদের মধ্যে কেউ কেউ দূষিত, যেমন 'রামজিৎবঙ্গ' এবং 'দ্যা সিস্টার-ল-লহু ওয়াইচ'-এর আত্মা। যাই হোক, কিছু আত্মা জাদুকরী সন্ধানকারী থেকে মানুষকে রক্ষা করে। অন্যান্য আত্মা মানুষের সাথে বিয়ে করে। সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীতে, মানুষ, আত্মা এবং প্রাণী সম্প্রদায় গল্পের অংশ। তাদের সবই প্রকৃতির মাধ্যমে সংযুক্ত। তারা সবাই এক সঙ্গে কাজ করে, তারা একে অপরকে সম্মান করে এবং কোন বিচ্ছিন্নতা নেই। এভাবে সাঁওতাল সহ সব চরিত্রই প্রকৃতির সন্তান।

৫.৩ হিরোদের প্রাক-পেশা

সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীতে কোন বিখ্যাত নায়ক নেই; এখানে, নায়করা সাধারণ বা সাধারণ মানুষ। আসলে, কিছু গল্পে, বাকিদের থেকে মূল চরিত্রটি আলাদা করে চিত্রিত করা কঠিন। প্রতিটি চরিত্র অত্যন্ত তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ, যদিও তাদের কাজগুলিও সহজ এবং সাধারণ। সাহসিকতার সঙ্গে প্রতিকুলতাকে জয় করাই হল গল্পের বেশির ভাগ নায়কের প্রধান প্রাক-পেশা। অধিকাংশ নায়ক ছাগল পালনের সাথে জড়িত। 'দ্য স্টোরি অফ সিন্দুরা গন্ডগারু', 'গুমধা, দ্য হিরো' এবং 'লখন অ্যান্ড দ্য ওয়াইল্ড বফেলোস'-এ নায়কদের প্রধান কাজ ছাগল পালন। তবে 'দুখু ও বঙ্গ বউ'-এ নায়ক একজন গোপালক যিনি মহিষের দেখাশোনা করেন। প্রায় প্রতিটি সাঁওতাল লোককথাই প্রকৃতির সাথে মিথস্ক্রিয়া প্রয়োজন এমন কিছু কাজে নিযুক্ত তার নায়কদের উপস্থাপন করে। সাঁওতাল গল্পের আরেকটি উল্লেখযোগ্য কাজ হল কৃষি কাজ। কিছু প্রধান চরিত্র জমিচাষ করে এবং মাঠে কাজ করে। 'হনুমান ছেলে', 'দুখু ও বঙ্গ বউ', 'বানর ও মেয়ে', 'বানরের স্বামী', 'পালো' এবং অন্যান্য গল্পগুলি নায়ক এবং অন্যান্য চরিত্রের কৃষি কাজকে তুলে ধরে। চরিত্ররা ফসল ফলানোর জন্য জমি চাষ করে। কৃষি কাজ ও পশুপালন থেকে জীবিকা নির্বাহ করে তারা সহজ ও সুখী জীবন যাপন করে। এই স্রষ্টাকে বিভিন্ন ভাবে মারাংবুরু (সর্বোচ্চ দেবতা বা আক্ষরিক অর্থে — দ্য গ্রেট মাউন্টেন) বা ঠাকুর জিউ (জীবন দাতা) বলা হয় এবং তিনিই হলেন 'সকল কারণের কারণ', গভীর অর্থে সাঁওতাল ধর্মকে একেশ্বরবাদী এবং সেই সাথে সর্বেশ্বরবাদী করে তোলে। বোঙ্গার বেশ কয়েকটি শ্রেণী রয়েছে: সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বোঙ্গা হলেন - মারাংবুরু, ইনি এর সাথে ঘনিষ্ঠ ভাবে যুক্ত এবং সমস্ত সাঁওতালদের দ্বারা পূজ্য। এছাড়াও অন্যান্য দেব- অর্চনা ও পুজো করা হয়; এর মধ্যে রয়েছে — মারাং বুরু বোঙ্গা, জাহের এরা বোঙ্গা এবং গোসাইকু। অন্যান্য বোঙ্গা, যাদেরকে কম শক্তিশালী বলে মনে করা হয়, তারা হল গ্রামের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ব্যক্তিদের আত্মা, যাদেরকে দেবী করা হয়েছে। এছাড়াও আরও একটি শ্রেণী আছে যারা মন্দের আনয়ক হিসেবে ভয়ের কারণ। এই আত্মাগুলি কোন পুরোহিতের দ্বারা প্রসন্ন হয় না বরং ওঝা নামক একজন ঔষধ-ব্যক্তিদ্বারা প্রসন্ন হয়। যাই হোক, বোঙ্গা এর অর্থ হল বিশ্বের একটি অতিপ্রাকৃত শক্তি এবং ভাল বা মন্দের সাথে এর কোন নির্দিষ্ট অর্থে যোগনেই। তদুপরি, এই বোঙ্গাগুলি নির্দিষ্ট বস্তুকে বোঝায় না বরং সেই অদৃশ্য শক্তিকে বোঝায় যা নিয়ন্ত্রণ করে বা সেই বস্তুগুলির সাথে যুক্ত।

লোককাহিনীতে চিত্রিত সাঁওতাল সমাজের আরেকটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ প্রাক-পেশা হল শিকার। শিকার করা হয় খাবারের জন্য এবং মানুষের ক্ষতি করে এমন প্রাণীর বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিশোধ নেওয়ার জন্য। উদাহরণ স্বরূপ, "দ্য স্টোরি অফ সিন্দুরা গাঁড গারু"র নায়ককে তার পিতার হত্যাকারী একটি বিশালাকার পাখি সিন্দুরা গান্ড গারুর শিকার করতে গিয়ে চিত্রিত করা হয়েছে। একই ভাবে, "লেখন এবং বন্য মহিষ"-এ নায়ক, লখনকে চিত্রিত করেছে বন্য মহিষ শিকার করতে যাচ্ছে এমন রূপে কারণ তারা তার ফসল ধ্বংস করেছে। যাই হোক, সে তাদের বন্ধু হয়ে ওঠে। লখন এবং মহিষের মধ্যে মিলন ঘটতে পারে এমন ঘটনাটি দেখায় যে সাঁওতাল বিশ্ব দর্শনে মানুষ এবং পশু প্রকৃতির মধ্যে একটি পাতলা রেখা রয়েছে। "বোঙ্গার ভিকটিম" ভিন্ন কারণ, এখানে, চার ভাই মাংস সংগ্রহ করতে পশু শিকারে যায়। উপসংহারে বলা যায় গবেষণায় দেখা গেছে যে সাঁওতাল সমাজে করা তিন ধরনের কাজই (পালন, কৃষি ও শিকার) প্রকৃতির অংশ। যদিও পৃথিবীর সব কিছুই বৃহত্তর অর্থে প্রকৃতির অংশ, তবুও সাঁওতালদের সঙ্গে তাদের জগতের ঘনিষ্ঠতা রয়েছে।

৫.৪ সাঁওতাল বিশ্বাস

অধিকাংশ সাঁওতাল এখনও তাদের ঐতিহ্যগত বিশ্বাস মেনে চলে। তাদের সমস্ত বিশ্বাস প্রকৃতিকে ঘিরেই আবর্তিত হয়। সাঁওতালদের মধ্যে আত্মার বিশ্বাস প্রচলিত। তারা বিভিন্ন ধরণের আত্মায় বিশ্বাস করে, যা তাদের গল্পেও প্রতিফলিত হয়। উদাহরণ স্বরূপ, "দুখু ও বঙ্গ বউ"-এ, দুখু একটি আত্মা মেয়েকে বিয়ে করেন। সে একজন মানুষ হিসেবে দুখুর কাছে আসে এবং তার প্রেমে পড়ে। কিছু আত্মা দূষিত হয়, যেমন 'ভগ্নি পতি যিনি একজন ডাইনী ছিলেন' এবং 'রামজিৎ বঙ্গ'-এ উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। সাঁওতালরা এই ধরনের আত্মাদের ভয় পায়। যাই হোক, "দ্য হার্ড বয় অ্যান্ড দ্য উইচেস"-এ বেশ কিছু উপকারী বোঙ্গার উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। সাঁওতাল সম্প্রদায়ের এই আত্মাদের পূজা করার জন্য আলাদা কোনো মন্দির নেই। অরণ্য বা পাহাড়ের মতো প্রকৃতিতে আত্মার পূজা করা হয়। সাঁওতালরাও জাদুবিদ্যায় বিশ্বাসী। বোডিং- এর মতে (যেমন রাজ, ২০১৮-এ উদ্ধৃত হয়েছে), 'এমন কোনো প্রকৃত সাঁওতাল নেই যে ডাইনিতে বিশ্বাস করেনা।' তাই, সাঁওতাল সমাজ অত্যন্ত পুরুষতান্ত্রিক হলেও, ডাইনিরা শক্তিশালী ব্যক্তি হিসাবে বিবেচিত হয়। তা সত্ত্বেও, ডাইনিদের ঘৃণা করা হয় এবং পাওয়া গেলে নির্মম ভাবে নির্যাতন করে হত্যা করা হয়। জাদুবিদ্যাকে কেন্দ্র করে সাঁওতালদের অনেক গল্প আছে। সাঁওতালরা যখনই কাউকে ডাইনি দ্বারা আক্রান্ত বা কোনো রোগে আক্রান্ত হতে দেখে, তখনই তারা কবিরাজের (মেডিসিন ম্যান) কাছে যায়। কবিরাজ সকল প্রকার অসুখ ও ব্যাধির চিকিৎসা করেন; তিনি এমন কি যারা মন্দ আত্মা বা মন্দ আত্মা দ্বারা আবিষ্ট বলে বিশ্বাস করা হয় তাদের বর্জন করেন। কবিরাজ তার ওষুধ এবং প্রতিকারের উৎস তৈরি করেন প্রকৃতি থেকে, যেমন গাছের শিকড় বা বাকল। বেশির ভাগক্ষেত্রে, কবিরাজ আরোগ্য আনতে মন্ত্রপাঠ করেন বা দেবতার উদ্দেশ্যে বলিদান করেন। অতএব, প্রকৃতিই সাঁওতালদের স্বাস্থ্য ও সুস্থতার অনেক উৎস। ভাগ্যের প্রতি বিশ্বাস সাঁওতালদের মধ্যেও প্রচলিত। মাঝিথান— এটি একটি পবিত্র জায়গা (গ্রামের পুরোহিতের পূজার জায়গা), এখানে এইস্থানে গ্রামের পুরোহিত দ্বারা এটির পূজা করা হয় এবং এই পূজার সংস্কৃতি প্রাচীন কাল থেকে অনুসরণ করা হয়। প্রাচীন কালে বিশেষ করে মাধব সিং এবং বিদ্রা সিং-এর সময়ে, যিনি সমস্ত সাঁওতাল উপজাতি সম্প্রদায়কে ডাল্লু পরগণায় নিয়ে যান, এখানে (মাঝিথানের জায়গায়) তারই পূজা অর্চনা করা হয়। তাকে পূজা করা হয় কারণ তারা বিশ্বাস করেছিল যে তিনিই একমাত্র, যিনি তাদের সমস্ত অসুস্থতা এবং বিপদ থেকে রক্ষা করবেন।

জাহের থান (একটি গ্রামের শেষ প্রান্তে অবস্থিত একটি স্থান) এখানে এই স্থানে সমস্ত সাঁওতাল উপজাতি সম্প্রদায় তাদের ঈশ্বরের উপাসনা করতে একত্রিত হয় যেমন, মোর-কু, তুরুই-কু, জাহের এরা, গোসাইকু এবং এছাড়াও পারগানা বোঙ্গা। এই পূজা প্রধানত বাহা পোরাবের সময় করা হয়। এই পূজা প্রধানত জাহের আয়ু দেবী কে দেওয়া হয়-যাতে তিনি তাদের সমস্ত দুঃখ দূর করতে পারেন এবং শান্তিময় জীবন প্রদান করতে পারেন।

সাঁওতাল সম্প্রদায় বিশ্বাস করে যে প্রকৃতিই হল ঈশ্বর এবং তাই তাদের প্রকৃতির সন্তান বলা হয়। যদিও তারা অনেক ঈশ্বর ও দেবীর পূজা করেন, দীর্ঘদিন জঙ্গলে বসবাস করায়, তাদের আশপাশে যা পেয়েছেন সেটাই পূজা ও বিশ্বাস করতেন। এই সম্প্রদায় বিশ্বাস করে যে তাদের চারপাশে সব অন্যায়ের প্রতিকার এবং নিরাময়ের একটি মহান স্বর্গীয় শক্তি রয়েছে। প্রকৃতি যে তাদের খাদ্য এবং আশ্রয় প্রদান করে এবং প্রতিটি বিপজ্জনক পরিস্থিতিতে তাদের রক্ষা করে। বনে তারা অনেক ঈশ্বর ও দেবদেবীতে ও বিশ্বাস করতে শুরু করে যাকে তাদের স্থানীয় ভাষায় বোঙ্গা বলা হয়। এই সমস্ত বঙ্গার পূজা ও আর্চনার কাজটির দায়িত্ব থাকে গ্রামের পুরোহিতের।

জানগুরু, তিনিই মানুষের অশুভ আত্মা বিতাড়িত করে থাকেন। সাঁওতাল সম্প্রদায়ের লোকেরা বিশ্বাস করে যে

সেই সময়ে যখন কোনও ব্যক্তির মধ্যে অশুভ আত্মা আসে তখন সাঁওতাল উপজাতির গ্রামের পুরোহিত বা জানগুরু এই থেকে অশুভ আত্মা দূর করবেন। তারা বিশ্বাস করে যে জানগুরু, যেকোনো ব্যক্তির থেকে অশুভ আত্মাকে দূর করার স্বর্গীয় ক্ষমতা রাখে।

সাঁওতাল উপজাতি সম্প্রদায় তাদের বিভিন্ন উৎসব এবং সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানে ঈশ্বর মারাংবুরুকে পশুবলি দেওয়ার ঐতিহ্যগত সংস্কৃতি ব্যবহার করে। সাঁওতাল উপজাতিরা এই সংস্কৃতি শুধুমাত্র কিছু সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানে করে থাকেন। সাঁওতাল সম্প্রদায় তাদের সমগ্র জীবনে তিনটি বিশেষ অনুষ্ঠানে ধাতুর ব্যবহার লক্ষ্য করা যায়। ধাতুর এই ব্যবহার একটি ঐতিহ্যবাহী সংস্কৃতি এবং তারা তাদের জীবন যাত্রার তিনটি পর্যায়ে এই ধাতু ব্যবহার করেন এবং এই ঐতিহ্যগত সংস্কৃতি তারা প্রাচীন কালথেকে আজ পর্যন্ত প্রবাহিত হচ্ছে। সাঁওতাল সম্প্রদায়ের ধাতু ব্যবহারের ধারণাটি একটি ঐতিহ্যগত ভয়াবহ ঘটনা থেকে এসেছে। প্রাচীন কালে এক মহিলা ছিল যিনি একটি নতুন সন্তানের জন্ম দিয়েছিল, সন্তানের জন্মের কয়েকদিন পর শয়তান (অশুভ আত্মা) এই মহিলার বাড়িতে এসে শয়তান তার সন্তান এই মহিলার সন্তানের সাথে পরিবর্তন করে যায়। এরপর থেকে সাঁওতাল সম্প্রদায় তাদের সমগ্র জীবনে তিনটি অনুষ্ঠানে ধাতু ব্যবহার করা শুরু করে, অন্যথায় শয়তান তাদের ক্ষতি করতে পারে। (১)। প্রথম অনুষ্ঠানটি হল -জন্ম : (২) দ্বিতীয় অনুষ্ঠানটি তাদের বিয়ের সময়, এবং (৩) তৃতীয় অনুষ্ঠানটি যখন নববিবাহিত স্বামী এবং স্ত্রীকে নদী পার হতে বলা হয়।

যদিও তারা বিশ্বাস করে যে কঠোর পরিশ্রম পুরস্কার আনে, সাঁওতালরাও বিশ্বাস করে যে সাফল্য ভাগ্যের ফসল। ''হনুমান ছেলের গল্প''-এ মা যখন হনুমান ছেলেটিকে গর্ভেধারণ করেছিলেন, লোকেরা তার সমালোচনা করেছিল। যাই হোক, তিনি শিশুটিকে পরিত্যাগ করেননি এবং পরিবর্তে স্বীকার করে ছিলেন যে ছেলেটিকে বহন করা তার ভাগ্য। আবার, যখন হনুমান ছেলেটি একটি মেয়েকে বিয়ে করার জন্য অপহরণ করে, তখন মেয়েটির বাবা-মা তাকে মেয়েটিকে মুক্ত করার জন্য অনুরোধ করে। হনুমান ছেলেটি তাকে ছেড়ে দেয়না এবং মেয়েটির বাবা-মা তার প্রত্যাখ্যানকে ব্যাখ্যা করেন যে হনুমানকে বিয়ে করা মেয়েটির ভাগ্য ছিল। এই ধরনের অনেক গল্পে দেখা যায় সাঁওতালরা দুর্ভাগ্যকে তাদের ভাগ্য হিসেবে গ্রহণ করে। উপসংহার, গবেষণায় দেখা গেছে যে সাঁওতালদের বিশ্বাস ব্যবস্থা তাদের প্রকৃতির অন্তরঙ্গ সন্তান হিসাবে চিত্রিত করে। তারা সেই আত্মাগুলিতে বিশ্বাস করে যেগুলি বেঁচে থাকে এবং প্রকৃতিতে প্রকাশিত বা অভিজ্ঞ হয়, যেমন বন, পাহাড় বা গাছে। তারা প্রকৃতিতে এই আত্মা এবং দেবতাদের পূজা করে। যখন তারা অসুস্থ হয়, তারা প্রতিকারের জন্য প্রকৃতির উপর নির্ভর করে। ভাগ্যের প্রতি তাদের বিশ্বাস থেকেও বোঝা যায় যে সাঁওতালরা প্রকৃতির ইচ্ছা অনুযায়ী বাঁচে।

৫.৫ সুরেলা জীবন যাপন এবং প্রকৃতির উপর নির্ভরশীলতা:

সাঁওতাল লোককথার একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বৈশিষ্ট্য হল সুরেলা জীবন যাপন। প্রায় প্রতিটি সাঁওতাল লোককথায়, প্রাণী, আত্মা বা গাছ সহ বিভিন্ন চরিত্র রয়েছে। গল্পগুলির বিভিন্ন প্রজাতির চরিত্রগুলি সুরেলা ভাবে সহাবস্থান করে। তারা একে অপরকে সাহায্য করে, বিপদের সময় এক সাথে দাঁড়ায় এমন কি আন্তঃবিবাহ করে। ''দ্য সিন্দুরা গ্যান্ড গারুর'' এবং ''দ্য জ্যাকাল অ্যান্ড লেপার্ড''-এ প্রধান চরিত্রগুলি মানুষ এবং প্রাণীদের একটি সুরেলা মিশ্রণ নিয়ে গঠিত। 'দুখু ও বঙ্গবউ' চরিত্রগুলো হচ্ছে মানুষ ও আত্মা, আর 'বোন জামাই যিনি ডাইনি ছিলেন' চরিত্রগুলো হলো মানুষ, পশু ও আত্মা। সাঁওতাল লোককাহিনীতে বিভিন্ন ধরনের হাতিয়ার ও বস্তু পাওয়া যায়। তন্মধ্যে তীর-ধনুক, কুড়াল, লাঙ্গল, ঢোল, লাঠি, পাই,

পয়লা, পাওয়া, বাঁশি, মালা এবং জয়ের পাখা অন্যতম। সাঁওতালদের তীর-ধনুক বাঁশ দিয়ে তৈরি। 'দ্য স্টোরি অফ সিন্দুরা গান্ড গারুর,' 'লখন এবং বন্য মহিষ' এবং 'কারা এবং গুজা' উল্লেখ করেছে যে হুতি বুধি (একটি ডাইনি; হুতি এক ধরনের পোকা যা শুকনো বাঁশ খায়) রাতে ধনুক খেত। সাঁওতালরাও তাদের কৃষিকাজে সহায়তার জন্য বিভিন্ন হাতিয়ার ব্যবহার করে। তাদের কৃষিসরঞ্জাম কাঠ থেকে তৈরি করা হয়। তাদের লাঙল ও কাঠ ও বাঁশ দিয়ে তৈরি। তারা বাঁশ থেকে লাঠি, বাঁশি, ঢোল, কুড়াল এবং বিজয়ী পাখার মতো হাতিয়ার ও তৈরি করে। সাঁওতাল মেয়েরাও নান্দনিক উদ্দেশ্যে বনফুল ব্যবহার করে।

৫.৬ সরল জীবনধারা

তাদের লোককাহিনীতে প্রমাণিত, সাঁওতালরা সরল জীবন যাপন করে। তাদের চাহিদার বেশির ভাগই প্রকৃতি থেকে সহজেই পাওয়া যায়। তাই সাঁওতালরা মজুত করে কিছু জিনিস, যেমন গরু এবং ছাগল, যা তারা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সম্পদ হিসাবে বিবেচনা করে। অন্য সব কিছু সরাসরি প্রকৃতি থেকে চাওয়া হয়। সাঁওতালরা জীবনের প্রতি তাদের দৃষ্টি ভঙ্গিতে খুব বেশি আক্রমণাত্মক নয়। তারা প্রকৃতি এবং জীবনের প্রতি তাদের মনোভাব ফিরে পায়। তাদের বেশির ভাগ সময় অন্যান্য ব্যক্তি এবং প্রাণী এবং উপাসনা আত্মার সাথে সাধারণ কথোপকথনে ব্যয় হয়। অনেকটা যেমন হস্তক্ষেপ না করলে প্রকৃতি ফুলে ওঠে, তেমনি সাঁওতালরা জীবনকে সরলতার সাথে নিয়ে যায় এবং ভাগ্যের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণ করে। প্রকৃতপক্ষে, তাদের ঐতিহ্যবাহী আবাসস্থলগুলির বেশির ভাগই জঙ্গলে যা মানুষের আতিথেয়তা সত্ত্বেও তাদের প্রাকৃতিক চেহারা সংরক্ষণ করে। অতএব, প্রকৃতি তাদের ব্যাপক ভাবে প্রভাবিত করেছে এবং কী ভাবে বেঁচে থাকতে হয় তা শিখিয়েছে। গল্পগুলোতে ঐতিহ্যবাহী সাঁওতালদের মধ্যে হিংসা, ক্রোধ, লোভ, বিদ্বেষ, স্বার্থপরতা বা ব্যভিচারের বৈশিষ্ট্য বা অগ্রভাগের দিক নেই। সম্প্রদায়টিকে একটি সহজ এবং সুখী মানুষ হিসাবে চিত্রিত করা হয়েছে।

৬.০ উপসংহার

গবেষণায় আলোচনা করা হয়েছে যে সাঁওতালরা কীভাবে প্রকৃতির সন্তান এবং তাদের লোক কাহিনীতে দেখানো হয়েছে। সাঁওতালরা প্রকৃতির মধ্যে বা প্রকৃতিরই মাধ্যমে বসবাস করে। তারা প্রকৃতি থেকে খাদ্য, ঔষধ এবং বস্তু এবং সরঞ্জাম সংগ্রহ করে। প্রকৃতি সর্বদা তাদের জন্য উদার, তাদের যা প্রয়োজন তা সরবরাহ করে। তারা যে দেব-দেবীদের পূজা করে তারা প্রকৃতিতে বাস করে এবং পূজা প্রকৃতিতেও করা হয়। এই পূজা জাহের থানে করা হয়, একটি প্রাকৃতিক ভাবে গড়ে ওঠা পবিত্র উপবন। সাঁওতালরা বিশ্বাস করে যে জাদুবিদ্যার অস্তিত্ব রয়েছে এবং তা প্রকৃতিতে বসবাসকারী বিভিন্ন অশুভ আত্মার সাথে জড়িত।

প্রাণী, গাছ এবং আত্মার সাথে তাদের পরস্পর নির্ভরশীল সম্পর্ক রয়েছে। তারা প্রকৃতির দিকগুলি যেমন গাছ এবং প্রাণীদের সাথে তাদের ভাই এবং বোনের মতো আচরণ করে। প্রকৃতিও তাদের প্রতি সদয় কারণ এটি তাদের বাঁচতে সাহায্য করে এবং তাদের নিরাপদ রাখে। অনেক গল্প আছে যেখানে প্রাণীরা সাঁওতালদের বিপদ থেকে বাঁচতে সাহায্য করে। তদুপরি, কিছু গল্পে সাঁওতালদের আত্মার সাথে আন্তঃবিবাহ চিত্রিত করা হয়েছে। তারা তাদের দৈনন্দিন জীবনে ব্যবহার করা বিভিন্ন ধরণের সরঞ্জাম এবং যন্ত্রগুলি কাঠ এবং লোহার মতো প্রাকৃতিক উপাদান থেকে তৈরি করে। সাঁওতালরা যেভাবে প্রকৃতির মধ্যে বসবাস করে এবং তাদের প্রকৃতির সন্তান হিসাবে চিত্রিত করে— প্রকৃতির সাথে তাদের সম্পর্ক পিতামাতা এবং সন্তানের মতো, বা ভাই এবং বোনের মতো।

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For example,

a) adʒ ɔnek brʃʈi hoyeʧhe.
today lot rain be-pr.pf.3rd
'Today there was heavy shower.'

b) boneder ʧhobi.
sister-gen.pl. picture
'Sisters' picture.'

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