



GENDER, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES



Edited by :
Dr. Anita Konwar
Dr. Amrita Mech



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Sustainability or sustainable development is a powerful tool which ensures improving the quality of life of the present generation, but without compromising the needs of future generations. This buzzword of recent times has three essential trajectories or elements- economic growth, social development and environment protection which are mutually dependent. The economy is dependent on the society and both are dependent on the environment. Sustainable development can be achieved only when balanced development of these three pillars are achieved. The book *Gender, Society and Environment: Contemporary Perspectives* covers key areas of gender, society and environment. It highlights contemporary perspectives on how gender equality is the foundation of a thriving society and how it fosters a sustainable environment. It also focuses on the relationship of man and environment.

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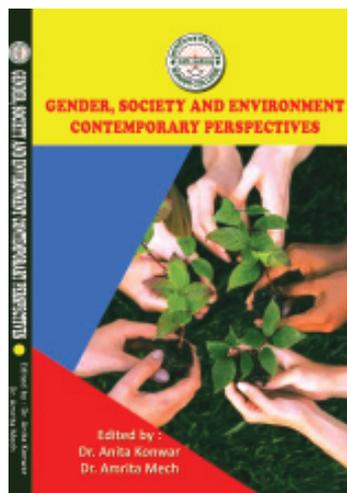
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Gender, Society and Environment : Contemporary Perspectives



Edited by :
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Dr. Amrita Mech
Women Study Cell
Sonari College, Sonari, Assam.

This book entitled ***Gender, Society and Environment : Contemporary Perspectives*** is a compilation of research papers and articles and has been published by Women Study Cell, Sonari College in November, 2024.

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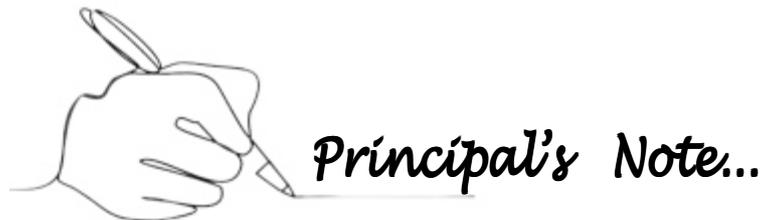
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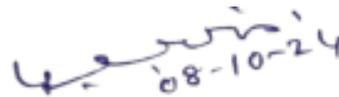
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The contemporary perspectives on gender, society, and environment reveal a multifaceted relationship that underscores the importance of addressing inequalities to create sustainable solutions. Recognizing the gendered dimensions of environmental issues, promoting social justice, and adopting an intersectional approach can help build resilience in the face of climate change and ecological degradation. As societies continue to grapple with environmental challenges, prioritizing gender equality will not only benefit women but will foster collective well-being and sustainable development for communities as a whole. The interplay between gender, society, and environment, therefore, calls for urgent attention and action, ensuring that the path to a sustainable future is inclusive and equitable. In recent years, the interplay between gender, society, and the environment has emerged as a critical area of inquiry across multiple disciplines, including sociology, environmental science, and gender studies. The interconnections between these domains reflect not only the complexities of human relationships and identities but also the challenges faced by contemporary societies.

The Women Study Cell of Sonari College has been continuously engaged in academic pursuits since its inception. In the year 2022, the Cell published a book entitled “Women in Various Fields: Roles and Contributions”. In 2023, a book entitled “Women, Society and Beyond: Challenges and Opportunities” was published by Women Study Cell, Sonari College. Keeping the continuity, the Women Study Cell is going to publish a book entitled “Gender, Society and Environment: Contemporary Perspectives” this year. The book will be comprised of papers/articles pertaining to gender, society and environment. This is a praiseworthy step from the Cell.

I convey my best wishes to the editors for their endeavour to bring out the book on a very pertinent theme which will provide insights and resources for further study and research in the concerned fields.



Dr. Bimal Chandra Gogoi

Principal

Sonari College

Place: Sonari

Date: 08-10-2024

Editor's Note

We are currently in the 21st century and our world has progressed exponentially and transformed tremendously from the last century. Ground breaking developments in Science and Technology have benefitted us in every sphere of our life. The rise of internet in the starting of the century brought the whole world at our fingertips. Then smart phones flourished and became an indispensable part of our so called modern life. The recent emergence and advancements of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotics have potential to revolutionize the industry, enrich creativity and solve problems. Their successful application in the field of medical diagnosis, image analysis, language translation, communication software programming etc. have eliminated errors and risks, increased efficiency and reduced production cost.

But hand in hand with progression, the 21st century has also made us witness and face issues which have immensely affected mankind. The greatest being the three planetary crises- climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The rise of infectious diseases like COVID - 19, swine flu, Ebola virus, Zika virus and SARS-CoV, growing inequality, social instability, growing population,

unemployment and food security are other issues or negative impacts in the century.

Sustainability or sustainable development is a powerful tool which ensures improving the quality of life of the present generation, but without compromising the needs of future generations. This buzzword of recent times has three essential trajectories or elements- economic growth, social development and environment protection which are mutually dependent. The economy is dependent on the society and both are dependent on the environment. Sustainable development can be achieved only when balanced development of these three pillars are achieved.

This book **Gender, Society and Environment: Contemporary Perspectives** covers key areas of gender, society and environment. It highlights contemporary perspectives on how gender equality is the foundation of a thriving society and how it fosters a sustainable environment. It also focuses on the relationship of man and environment.

The learning, labour and leadership of women can lead to her empowerment. The research paper of **Saurish Bhattacharjee** highlights the immense necessity of prioritizing empowering women in the developing countries for promoting sustainable development and ensuring food security. Women represent half of the world's population but even in present times they are confronted by discrimination and inequality. Gender equality and empowering women contributes to sustainable development. It's a consensus social

perception- women are always stereotyped to be emotional, caring, weak, self-sacrificing and submissive to man but some brave women redeem themselves and courageously challenge the traditional gender roles with unwavering determination. **Dr. Shyamolima Saikia** in her paper highlights the life of the protagonist Kaberi from the novel *Rebirth* by Jahnvi Baruah. Kaberi was modest, submissive and passive but her uncertain marriage and single solace for her baby, made her evolve and rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the constraints of gender stereotype, so that she could make right decisions for her future and her child.

Both men and women must work together hand in hand to achieve a sustainable future. Dr. **Pronita Kalita** in her paper has highlighted on the constitutional articles, laws and policies that can help women achieve equality. Tribal people have been living in symbiotic relationship with the forest- they are dependent on the forest for their food and livelihood and in return they have been conserving the forests since time immemorial. Dr. **Lindy Goodwin** in her research paper has discussed how the tribal women of Assam as guardians have been safeguarding the forests and also preserving their traditional knowledge.

Swapnali Saikia and Dr. Nijumoni Changmai in their paper emphasized on the reading habit of girls in the college libraries. Through a survey conducted in 5 colleges of Charaideo district, they found out that though use of social media platforms by girl students, affected their reading and academic performance but on a positive

note it was also recorded that students did visit libraries for academic, entertainment and to create general awareness on current affairs. A significant approach to empowering women is through Self Help Groups. They have been ameliorating the rural women's lifestyle condition and giving them identity and economic security. **Gitika Talukdar** in her paper shed light on how Self Help Groups in Barpeta District of Assam has positive effect on the economic, socio-and political empowerment of women.

Mridusmita Patowary in her research paper emphasized that women's participation in decision making and empowering women through training, aiding with microfinance and developing them as entrepreneurs can result in efficient environment sustainability. Women all around the globe adopt the trait of self silencing. They are are muffled or they struggle to express themselves, living in a patriarchal society. **Kabyasri Hazarika** in her research article discusses the signs and factors which lead to self silencing of women and sheds light on how it leads to disorders of mental and physical health.

Right to health and gender equality are two human rights. Preserving the health of a woman determines the wellbeing and sustainable development of the future. Equitable access of women to technology and media is a game changer for women empowerment as digital equity guarantee equitable access to education and employment. Media plays a huge role in promoting women health. Through a case study, conducted in a rural area of Charaideo district, **Abhita Gogoi** put forth her view that women gather various health related informations and

news of medical facilities and schemes from media. But social media can have a negative impact on the reading habit of students.

Queerness and identity issues have long been a struggle for individuals in traditional society. The rigid expectations and norms of traditional society can lead to discrimination, mental health challenges, and the denial of basic human rights for individuals who do not conform to traditional societal standards. In her paper, Dr. Anita Konwar has discussed the intersection between gender identity and societal stigma through the challenges encountered by transgender individuals in Shyam Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy*.

Heavy metal pollution is a serious threat to man and the environment in recent times. Heavy metals may occur naturally but some are the products of anthropogenic activities. They are toxic to living organisms as they bio accumulate in their bodies and thus is of severe health concern. Biodiversity loss has been also attributed to heavy metal pollution. Phytoremediation is a cost effective and long term environmental restoration technique which uses plants and soil microbes to reduce the heavy metal contaminants from soil. **Suman Gogoi** in her research article reviews the uses and their advantages and disadvantages in using them for phytoremediation.

Dr. Pranati Gogoi in her article has emphasized on the environmental issues and problems created by anthropogenic activities for the sake of development. She points out the necessity to reassess the challenges created

and the measures to counteract them, manage the resources of the planet and achieve sustainable development. Deforestation, encroachment, poaching and urbanization- the acts of man have been destroying the forests. But by destroying nature we men have been destroying ourselves. Our planet Earth is our only home we have and it's high time we do our bit to save our environment. **Dr. Amrita Mech** in her paper has put forth an idea on how we can voluntarily participate in conserving our environment through participatory or citizen science.

Dr. Reeta Dutta in her article discusses the relationship between nature and man as detailed in the novel- *Iat Akhon Aronya Asil* by Anuradha Sharma Pujari. Forests are indispensable for man as they have been providing them with oxygen, food, water, shelter, fuel. The forests have also been supporting other numerous lives and enhancing the quality of the environment. But we humans have been taking the forests as granted. In her research paper **Silpisikha Konwar** made a character analysis of Borduwani- the protagonist of the novel *Borduwani* by Manikuntala Bhattacharya. The novel deals with the various aspects of social life- customs, rites, the chaos, progress and changes in a society with time. She discusses how the lead character Borduwani was strong headed, an epitome of love, sacrifice and tolerance. Though childless, she genuinely loved and cared about her step children and fellow wife.

Like the previous year, Women Study Cell, Sonari College has come forward to publish a book on a very

significant theme this year. We extend our thanks to all the paper contributors for their papers and articles. We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Principal of Sonari College, Dr. Bimal Chandra Gogoi for his guidance and constant support. We also extend our thanks to Dr. Sunil Dutta, Vice-Principal of Sonari College for his valuable suggestions. We would like to extend our special thanks to Dr. Lindy Lou Goodwin for taking the initiative to apply the ISBN on behalf of Women Study Cell, Sonari College. We acknowledge the support and cooperation of the advisors and members of Women Study Cell. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the members of Sonari College Teachers' Unit for their constant support and cooperation in all matters related to Women Study Cell. Last but not the least, we offer our thanks to Mr. Ranju Borah of Kalpataru Publication, Moran for printing out the book on time. It is hoped that the contents of the book will be beneficial for academicians, research scholars as well as students.

Place : Sonari

Date : 4th Nov'2024

Dr. Anita Konwar

Dr. Amrita Mech

The Role of Women's Empowerment in Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Practices and Food Security in Developing Countries

Saurish Bhattacharjee

Abstract :

This research paper examines the critical role of women's empowerment in promoting sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing food security in developing countries. This research paper explores the impact of women's land ownership, access to agricultural inputs and training, and participation in decision-making processes on sustainable agriculture, and argues that women's empowerment is crucial to promoting sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing food security in developing countries.

Keywords: Women empowerment, sustainable agricultural practices, food security, developing countries.

Introduction :

In many developing countries, agriculture is essential to both food security and economic growth.

However, the ability of women farmers to support sustainable agricultural practices is constrained by gender disparities in land ownership, decision-making authority, and resource availability. The impact of women's empowerment in agriculture on food security and sustainability is the primary focus of this study. Research indicates that the ownership of land by women has a positive impact on agricultural sustainability and output. Better land management and investments in sustainable practices are correlated with women having secure land tenure (Agarwal, 2010; Doss et al., 2014). Access to technology, seeds, fertilisers, and training for women is essential for sustainable agriculture. Women's capacity to adopt sustainable practices is hampered by barriers to these resources (FAO, 2013; World Bank, 2020). Sustainability is improved when women are involved in household and community agricultural decision-making. Better resource management and the adoption of environmentally friendly methods are the results of inclusive decision-making (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019; Quisumbing et al., 2014). The effectiveness of agricultural initiatives and women's cooperatives in advancing sustainability is demonstrated by a number of case studies. There are widespread and complex gender disparities in agriculture that impact women's participation in agricultural activities, land ownership, decision-making authority, and resource availability. Though they make up a sizable share of the agricultural workforce, women frequently lack access to basic resources like land, financing, supplies for agriculture,

and training (Doss et al., 2014). Their inability to participate in and support sustainable agriculture techniques is a result of this lack of access. In addition to being an issue of equity, addressing these gender discrepancies is a critical first step in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those that deal with climate action (SDG 13), zero hunger (SDG 2), and gender equality (SDG 5)(United Nations, 2015). Encouraging sustainable farming practices requires that women have secure land tenure. Women who own land have the stability and motivation to make long-term investments like organic farming, soil conservation, and water management. Research indicates that the presence of secure land rights for women leads to higher agricultural productivity and more sustainable land management practices (Doss et al., 2014). Women's bargaining power and family decision-making ability have increased in India thanks to regulations that support shared land titles for men and women, which has enhanced agricultural results (Agarwal, 2010). The empowerment of women in agriculture is also associated with better nutrition and health outcomes for households. According to Quisumbing et al. (2014), women who possess the authority to make decisions regarding agricultural production are inclined to give priority to the growth of varied and nourishing crops, resulting in enhanced dietary choices and well-being for their households.

Objectives of the Study :

The present study aims to study the role of

women's empowerment in promoting sustainable agricultural practices and food security in developing countries.

Data and Methodology :

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on data collected from secondary sources.

Findings and Discussions :

The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between women's empowerment and sustainable agricultural practices. The case studies illustrate how empowering women leads to better land management, resource use, and food security.

Impact of Women's Land Ownership on Agricultural Productivity :

According to research, agricultural output increases and land management techniques become more sustainable when women have secure land tenure. Long-term improvements like soil conservation and water management, which result in more sustainable agriculture practices, are more likely to be invested in by women. Nonetheless, there are substantial obstacles that prevent women from owning land in many developing nations. Thus, policies that support women's land rights can have a significant effect on productivity and sustainability (Agarwal, 2010). Women who have stable land rights are more inclined to invest in their property by creating

terraces or planting trees, both of which promote environmental sustainability (Doss et al. 2014).

Access to Agricultural Inputs and Training :

Women must have training and access to agricultural inputs in order to adopt sustainable farming practices. Access to high-quality seeds, fertilisers, and contemporary farming technologies is frequently restricted for women, which reduces their productivity and impairs their capacity to farm sustainably. Women's needs-specific training programs can aid in closing this gap. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2013) highlights that women's productivity and the sustainability of their farming techniques can be greatly increased by giving them access to agricultural inputs and training. Initiatives such as the World Bank's to assist women farmers in India have shown that more adoption of sustainable practices and greater agricultural yields can result from focused training and resource allocation (World Bank, 2020).

Role in Decision-Making :

Sustainable farming techniques depend heavily on women's involvement in home and communal decision-making processes. A more comprehensive approach to resource management is made possible by inclusive decision-making, which takes into account the special insights and experiences that women may offer. According to research by Meinzen-Dick et al. (2019), the results of agricultural decision-making are frequently more

egalitarian and sustainable when women are included. For instance, sustainable practices that guarantee long-term water supply and quality are more likely to be implemented in areas.

Women's Knowledge and Skills :

Women often possess unique knowledge and abilities about regional farming methods, seed preservation, and biodiversity preservation. This traditional knowledge is invaluable for sustainable agriculture. Innovative and sustainable farming methods can result from fusing contemporary agricultural techniques with the indigenous expertise of women. The significance of women's traditional knowledge in sustainable agriculture is emphasised by Agarwal (2010). For instance, women are frequently in charge of choosing and preserving seeds, which guarantees the variety and hardiness of agricultural products. Through the integration of contemporary farming methods with this knowledge, communities can establish more productive and sustainable agricultural systems.

Economic Empowerment and Investment :

Women who are economically empowered are more inclined to make investments in environmentally friendly farming methods. Women are more equipped to invest in sustainable farming when they have access to loans, income-generating activities, and market opportunities. Women are more likely than males to reinvest their earnings back into their households and

communities, which promotes food security and sustainability (World Bank, 2020). It has been demonstrated that programs giving women access to markets and financial services encourage them to spend more in sustainable farming methods, which raises household food security.

Health and Nutrition Outcomes :

Empowering women in agriculture has positive implications for health and nutrition outcomes. Women who have the authority to decide on agricultural output are more likely to place a high value on growing a variety of nutrient-dense crops, which will benefit their families' diets and general health. The relationship between better nutrition outcomes and women's empowerment is highlighted by Quisumbing et al. (2014). Women advocate for sustainable agricultural methods including crop diversification and organic farming, which improve the quality and variety of food, which is crucial for the health and nutrition of the family.

Climate Change Resilience :

Women's involvement in sustainable agriculture enhances resilience to climate change. In agriculture, women are often at the forefront of creating and putting into practice solutions for climate adaptation, such as agroforestry, water conservation, and the use of drought-resistant crops. The importance of women in enhancing climate resilience via sustainable farming methods is highlighted by IFAD (2011). For example, in Ethiopia,

farming communities are now more resilient to climate variability and change because to female-led projects centred on soil conservation and water gathering. The expertise and creativity of women are essential for creating agricultural systems that effectively adapt to climate change.

Policy Recommendations :

1. **Promote Land Ownership for Women:** Implement policies that provide secure land tenure for women. Ensure that land reform programs include provisions for women's land rights.
2. **Enhance Access to Agricultural Inputs and Training:** Support programs that provide women with access to quality seeds, fertilizers, technology, and training. Develop gender-responsive agricultural extension services.
3. **Support Women's Participation in Decision-Making:** Promote inclusive decision-making processes at the household and community levels. Encourage women's leadership in agricultural cooperatives and resource management committees.
4. **Strengthen Women's Cooperatives and Networks:** Support the formation and strengthening of women's cooperatives and networks. Provide financial and technical assistance to women's groups engaged in sustainable agriculture.

Conclusions :

In order to advance sustainable farming methods and improve food security in developing nations, women's

empowerment is essential. Policymakers can promote sustainable development and enhance food security by addressing gender differences in land ownership, resource access, and decision-making. Future studies should investigate the intricate connections between gender, agriculture, and sustainability in order to facilitate efficient policy-making and practice. ○

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Interrogating Gender Stereotyping in Jahnvi Barua's *Rebirth* in the Light of Performativity

Dr. Shyamolima Saikia

Abstract :

Gender, today, is considered a result of social conduct and practices rather than distinct physical characteristics. As Judith Butler points out, identities are performatively produced, unstable, and far from simple and solitary as they would seem. In fact, language is the only identity that exists, which means that speech or acts are what make up the subject rather than the act of performing it. Aside from the acts it performs, which make up its reality, the gendered subject has no ontological standing. By embodying those fictions in our acts and acting out the norms of reality, we make those manufactured conventions seem necessary and normal. As a result, social reality is constantly constructed through language, gesture, and symbolic social sign; it is never given to us. Although we have the freedom to pick the components of the various gender identities that are available to us to choose, society continuously forces gender upon us, thus we are unable to choose to have no

gender identity at all. Jahnvi Barua's *Rebirth* is about a young Assamese woman named Kaberi—who is submissive, modest, and passive—and her husband who eventually go to Bangalore. The protagonist of the story, who narrates a fantastic story to her unborn child, represents the typical Assamese woman culturally conditioned to behave and act in moderation, restraint and resilience. The aim of this paper, is to interrogate such stereotypes of gender roles in *Rebirth* in the light of performativity and thereby to examine whether it has been possible for the characters to come out of the performative roles they have always played knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly and to adopt flexible and free identities.

Key Words: Gender; Stereotypes; Performativity; Identity.

Rebirth by Jahnvi Barua is an intimate tale of the journey of a young woman, rediscovering herself, while expecting her first baby and simultaneously going through a difficult phase in her marriage. As represented by the central character Kaberi, the typical Assamese woman is culturally conditioned to behave and act in moderation, restraint and resilience. Although they have a natural grace and dignity in their expression and behaviour, yet the result of such conditioning is that they cannot and therefore do not express their emotions, whether happiness or grief, in a loud manner or discuss their personal problems publicly. Gender, today, is not seen as a product of different properties of bodies but is a product

of social behaviour and practices. As Judith Butler suggests, identities are by no means straightforward and singular as they may appear to be but are unstable and performatively constructed. In fact, there is no identity other than language, meaning thereby that actions or speech are not performed by a subject, but these constitute the subject. The gendered subject has no ontological status apart from the acts performed by it and these acts constitute its reality. In the act of performing the conventions of reality, by embodying those fictions in our actions, we make those artificial conventions appear to be natural and necessary. Thus, social reality is not given but is continually created as an illusion by way of language, gesture, and symbolic social sign. While it is true that we can decide which aspects of available gender identities we wish to perform, we cannot choose not to have any gender identity at all because society constantly imposes gender upon us. The aim of this paper, is thus to interrogate such stereotypes of gender roles in *Rebirth* in the light of performativity and thereby to examine whether it has been possible for the characters to come out of the performative roles they have always played knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or unwillingly and to adopt flexible and free identities.

The insights provided by recent developments in theory can show the diverse aspects and hitherto unexplored layers, for instance, the complex nature of contemporary Indian subjectivity as a multidimensional construct. Literary theory, which is broadly speaking anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist, has in recent years

moved away from outmoded terminology and increasingly employed the term “subject” in place of “self”. The term “self” assumes the idea of Unitarian identity, of identity as something unique, coherent and autonomous but the term “subject” is relatively open and marked by difference as it takes into account various socio-political, linguistic and cultural factors that constitute subjectivity. The subject is no longer regarded as a definite, coherent and fixed construction but as a flexible structure open to change, moulding and remoulding by a variety of factors. Subjectivity thus can be examined as to how it is fashioned by language, discourse, power, culture and ideology (Saini 10-11). Based in large part on the writings of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and other late twentieth-century theorists, early modern subjectivities have come to be considered as provisional and performative cultural constructs.

Judith Butler revisits the question of identity from a somewhat different position but one which is situated within the Derridean and Foucauldian territories of Poststructuralism. Butler is also influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis, phenomenology, structural anthropologists and speech-act theory, particularly the work of John Searle in her understanding of the “performativity” of our identities. A speech act can produce that which it names, however, only by reference to the law or the accepted norm, code or contract which is cited or repeated and thus performed in the pronouncement (Felluga, pars.1-2). She also links gender with linguistic performativity. She explores the ways in

which linguistic constructions create our reality in general through the speech acts we participate in every day. By endlessly citing the conventions and ideologies of the social world around us, we enact that reality; in the performative act of speaking, we incorporate that reality by enacting it with our bodies, but that “reality” nonetheless remains a social construction (at one step removed from what Lacan distinguishes from reality by the term, “the Real”). In the act of performing the conventions of reality, by embodying those fictions in our actions, we make those artificial conventions appear to be natural and necessary. All of these theories explore the ways that social reality is not given but is continually created as an illusion “through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign” (quoted in Felluga, pars.1-2).

The root of Butler’s argument in *Gender Trouble* is that the coherence of the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality—the natural-seeming coherence, for example, of masculine gender and heterosexual desire in male bodies—is culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts in time. This is the way in which Butler famously theorizes gender, along with sex and sexuality, as performative. The performance of gender, sex, and sexuality, however, is not a voluntary choice for Butler, who locates the construction of the gendered, sexed, desiring subject within what she calls, borrowing from Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, “regulative discourses.” These, also called “frameworks of intelligibility” or “disciplinary regimes,” decide in advance what possibilities of sex, gender, and sexuality

are socially permitted to appear as coherent or “natural.” Regulative discourse includes within it disciplinary techniques which, by coercing subjects to perform specific stylized actions, maintain the appearance in those subjects of the “core” gender, sex and sexuality the discourse itself produces (171-90).

Butler argues that the category of the subject is a performative construct and there are ways of ‘doing’ one’s identity which might trouble the neat binary oppositions of male/female, masculine/feminine etc. She claims that gender identity is a sequence of acts, but she does not mean that there is a pre-existing performer who performs these acts. However, this does not mean that there is no subject: it merely means that the subject does not come before these acts. She believes that sex, gender and sexuality do not exist in relation to each other. Generally, sex is seen to cause gender and gender is seen to cause desire, but Butler’s attempt is to show that gender and desire are not fixed but flexible. It is possible to be female by sex and yet display masculine traits. Gender, according to Butler is a “choice”. However, by “choice”, Butler does not mean that a subject is an entirely free agent who can select her/his gender; this is not possible because the choice of gender is always limited from the start. But she suggests that it is possible to “do” these constructions differently (2).

Thus, the idea that the subject is an effect rather than a cause lies at the basis of Butler’s theory of performativity. Gender then, according to Butler, is constructed and not naturally determined by sex. Further,

questioning the distinction usually made between sex and gender, Butler says that both these categories are performative: Gender is not a noun but it proves to be performative, that is constituting the identity it is purported to be. Since gender identities are constructed and constituted in language, there is no gender identity that precedes language. And if there is no identity outside language, the existence of an inner core or essence is thrown open to challenge. Butler suggests that gender acts are not performed by a subject, but these acts constitute the subject performatively. Gender is not what we are but what we do at particular times within the possibilities of discourses. Thus, any identity acquired through the repetition of expected acts is not truly coherent and stable. Its coherence and stability are only illusions and can be deconstructed to reveal their constructed nature. Butler suggests that certain cultural configurations which have come to seem natural in our culture are only effects of discourses. As such, these cultural configurations are not fixed and can be changed. Butler calls for action to change gender norms and the binary understanding of masculinity and femininity. Since there is scope for combining and recombining certain markers of gender and sexuality, gender is open to re-interpretation and resignification. Yet, even this subversion and re-signification will be determined by dominant discourses, since there is nothing outside discourses and therefore the freedom of choice is hopelessly limited. Yet, Butler is optimistic about the possibility of redoing gender identities to reveal the

constructed nature of heterosexuality. She, thus, examines subjectivity on a performance axis, calling for subtle actions to subvert pre-existing gender norms gradually. She erodes the last vestiges of the Cartesian self and inaugurates a conception of the performative subject as both free and unfree (Saini 65-66).

Indian and for that matter, an Assamese society has always been a phallogocentric one, steeped into stereotypes, where any deviations on the part of gender or sexuality is a source of ridicule or scorn. One always finds men to be at the zenith of power and hegemony, while the women remain at the background, either as a moral support to their men or as an innocent confidante, of course with certain exceptions. Even today, the society represented by these patriarchs, denies accepting any deviations on the part of a woman. Thus, as Butler says, gender, along with sex and sexuality are performative and certain cultural configurations which have become natural in our culture are only effects of discourses. Male and female identity within the patriarchal discourse is acquired through repetition of expected acts but as Butler opines these identities are not truly coherent and can be deconstructed.

As depicted in the novel, Kaberi, a woman of the verdant hills, valleys and tea gardens of Assam, shifts to the concrete and mortar space in Richmond Road of cosmopolitan Bangalore city after her marriage to Ranjit (Ron). She blends (or tries to) in a corporate culture, which her husband is part of. As a homemaker, she engages herself by picking the right wooden furniture,

arranging the living area in the most sophisticated combination of colours, fabrics and flowers on every table. Kaberi is expecting a longed-for baby about whom, except her gynaecologist, no one knows, not even her estranged husband, her parents in Guwahati, her few friends in her adopted city or her domestic help. Her second trimester has begun, and soon she will not be able to hide her expectant state. Misfortune knocks with another harsh truth for Kaberi when her husband walks out on the marriage for another woman. Speaking to her unborn child she laments, "You certainly took your time to show up...your father had given up and was drifting away from me..."(Quoted by Mitra). Ron's behaviour towards Kaberi changes unpredictably; often when Ron wants something from Kaberi, she usually complies with little protest, but he does not refrain from using physical violence on her from time to time. She wants him to return to her not because of the baby, but because he still loves her. Actually, Kaberi hasn't mentioned Ron's absence from their home to anyone; the one childhood friend named Joya, in whom she may have confided early on was killed in a bus explosion during an insurgency in Assam. Joya is someone who dominates Kaberi's consciousness throughout the novel. Her unfortunate death leaves an ineffaceable mark on Kaberi. Kaberi just fibs that Ron's company frequently sends him away on business. It is quite amazing to discern how little respect a man has for his wife. Once Ranjit makes up his wife's inability to beget a child, he abandons her only to make a selfish return on learning about her pregnancy later.

Talking about betrayal and insensitivity imposed on women by the male characters, author Jahnvi Barua herself explains the psyche of such men in society who easily deceive a woman's heart on the pretext of the latter's infertile womb. "Not all men are of Ron's disposition for who the family line is important. The lost regard for his wife resurfaces when she confirms being the bearer of his child," Jahnvi opines. (Quoted by Mitra).

Butler suggests that gender acts are not performed by a subject, but these acts constitute the subject performatively. Gender is not what we are but what we do at particular times within the possibilities of discourses. For instance, Kaberi speaks of the role expected of a woman: "Years ago, my mother had said that if I gave in to my baser instincts I would reap nothing but trouble. The way she said it, her lips compressed together, her eyes boring into mine, searching for signs of shiftiness, immediately provoked an intense feeling of guilt deep inside me. I was instantly and permanently convinced that there was something not quite savoury within me that I had to keep tamped down. It made me feel unclean all the time and I could hardly bear to meet Ma's eyes after that. The nuns at school only reinforced and perpetuated this burning feeling and I would blush if by accident I met someone's eye. Surely they could all see the darkness that lay dormant inside me. Some day I would be discovered for what I was"(Barua 47). At another occasion, Kaberi reiterates: "Those days, in our lives, there was no time or place to be alone: I was always

surrounded by people- at home, in school, in college, on the street—there was nowhere I could be alone. Being alone was viewed with suspicion: was the girl growing moody, did this mean she was in love and planning to run away with a boy? No, being alone was not a good thing” (109).

Kaberi adopts a stereotypical female role - that of a woman who is docile and self-sacrificing - being brought up in a society which has upheld such values in women. This role is revealed as when she says: “Your father and I had very separate spaces too, only I did not want mine. I wanted always to give it up and immerse myself in the other”(60). Again, she says: “Your father and I had no such reason to develop a rift. I never gave him a reason. And yet maybe I should have been more assertive, more argumentative, less willing to acquiesce, but that has never been my way”(28). Jahnavi explains that Kaberi is very much an Assamese woman in the sense that she emotes and behaves exactly how women in Assam are culturally conditioned to. Women are not encouraged to talk about personal problems and crises openly and are extremely dignified, modest and restrained in expressing both sorrow and happiness. They never succumb to extreme behaviour, mannerisms or hysteria even under extreme circumstances (Das). That is why Ron does not approve of women like Preetha as we come to know when Kaberi tells her unborn child of her husband’s view of women: “Your father does not like Preetha. Among other things he has called her ‘subversive’. He thinks she is too strident for a woman” (120). Once Kaberi’s husband comes back

from his lover and unapologetically demands that she host a dinner for his friends, Kaberi obediently swings into action. It is here that one wonders as to how and why, she is so undemanding and so willing to please (Datta). Ironically, considering her violent marriage, there is a sense of calmness and serenity in Kaberi's world view as one finds here: "Ron clenches his fingers; I can feel the bruise forming already, the small capillaries popping and flooding the tissue with blood. It will blaze forth in rich colours tomorrow, but it is almost winter and I will be wearing long-sleeved jumpers" (79). Her language is never strong, never sharp, rarely angry. Linguistic constructions create one's reality through the speech acts one partakes in everyday. Thus, Kaberi's gender identity as a composed, calm and submissive woman is constructed and constituted in language itself.

But there is Kaberi's gradual transformation from a vulnerable, almost apathetic wife to an independent woman who refuses to succumb to her husband's self-centred demands. When Ron comes to her to ask for a divorce, he expects that she will give in to his request, but Kaberi realizes that now she is in a position of strength and can take control of her life. When the pregnancy is no longer a secret and a salvaging of the marriage is being negotiated, then Kaberi begins to regard the unborn baby as an entity to whom stories must be told, and a sort of rhetorical distance emerges. Until that point, the baby is but an extension of her psyche, and her single source of solace. Over the course of her pregnancy, she acquires the strength to support both her child and the needs of

her own evolution. Rebirth is a journey of a mother who narrates episodes of her life and vivid memories to her unborn child and in doing so over a period of nine months, is herself reborn in many ways, many times (Manivannan). Although Ron has offered to leave Lakshmi and come back, yet Kaberi informs that she has “to think things through- decide what I want for Baby and me”(200). She now is stronger enough to declare that she can manage without Ron’s financial support and even full of resolve to finish her book completely by the time her baby arrived. She also makes a revelation regarding her inclination towards Bidyut, Joya’s husband. So, when Ron informs her that he has moved out of place while she was away in Guwahati, Kaberi is relieved no doubt but she is “also aware of crossing a line that I cannot step back across”(202). Towards the end when her labour pain begins, she does not call Ron, among other people, but Bidyut and firmly solicits his help in that time of need.

Thus, Kaberi’s evolution can be summed up in her own words describing the yellow tabebuias in bloom: “I marvel at this otherwise nondescript tree, with mediocre foliage, that sheds all its leaves only to be covered with golden blossoms that transforms its very character. There is so much hope in those bare branches that wait patiently for the flowers to conceal their nakedness” (198). She too, comes out of a darkness and moves with stoicism towards hope, a new beginning, a rebirth. In other words, Kaberi attempts to come out of the stereotypical role of an Assamese woman and adopt a flexible identity by not acquiescing to her husband’s ways and letting others

decide what is right for her but by charting her own and that of her baby's course of life, letting her desire rule and choosing her love. Therefore, in keeping with performativity, the performative subject in the novel subverts pre-existing gender norms and tries to emerge free within the dominant patriarchal discourse.○

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Gender Inequality: Articles, Laws and Policies to Bring Gender Equality

Dr. Pronita Kalita

Abstract :

Gender equality and gender inequality both words are used in our day-to-day life and society. Gender equality is the term which is used to explain a social condition or treatment where both men and women are provided equal rights and facilities without any bias. But in reality, there is an unequal treatment and perception in the patriarchal society towards women. In this article an attempt has been made to highlight the main aspects of gender inequality theoretically and the author focuses upon different articles, laws and policies to bring gender equality.

Key words: Gender Inequality, Articles, Laws, Policies, Gender equality.

1.0. Introduction :

The progress of the society depends upon the contribution of both men and women. But in our patriarchal society women face different types of injustice in their day-to-day life. So, to establish a respectful position of women the concept of gender equality has

been introduced. Gender equality is a social and political concept that emphasizes equality between gender. There are multiple causes and factors in the society which play a prominent role to create gender inequality. Education is the powerful mean to bring consciousness among people about gender equality. ICT and mass media have a great role to play in this context.

2.0. Objectives of the paper :

The main objectives of this article are –

- 2.1. To highlight the concept of gender equality and gender inequality.
- 2.2. To discuss about different Articles, Laws and Policies to bring gender equality.

3.0. Significance of this topic :

In the present socio-political scenario, the concept of gender inequality and gender equality has been given a great emphasis to meet the criteria for proper development in the society. In the patriarchal society men are the dominant agent and they control the big and significant decisions. Consequently, their female counterparts face prejudices and unfair judgements in day-to-day life. So, it is the high time to create awareness in the society to abolish the causes of gender inequality and to set up a free environment for gender equality.

4.0. Methodology of this article :

In this article descriptive and analytical method is used to discuss the concept and other articles, laws and

policies. All concept and information are collected from secondary sources– books, articles, journals, online sources etc.

5.0. Gender Inequality: Meaning, Characteristics and Causes -

Gender is a well-known concept found in the society. The concept of gender was first developed by Lill Mathews in 1984 in her study of construction of femineity. According to Mathews, the concept of gender gives recognition to fact that every known society distinguish between men and women. The Term gender is a systematic way of understanding men and women socially and the patterning of relationship between them. The concept was popularised in the early 1970 which explained the differences of men and women, the role and responsibilities and social expectations on behaviour of men and women. According to World Health Organization (WHO) – “Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, girls and boys such as norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man girl or boy as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.”

Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. Gender binary system may reflect the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Regards of one’s socio-economic condition or class, there are gender differences or inequality. In patriarchal society, gender inequality is started first at home and slowly it spreads to the society.

Characteristics of gender inequality :

1. Gender inequality refers to the unequal behaviour or attitude of individuals on the basis of gender.
2. Gender inequality is different in time to time and society to society.
3. It arises from different socially developed gender role and gender stereotype.
4. Gender inequality originates from distinctions whether empirically grounded or socially constructed.
5. Gender inequality generally refers to inequalities between men and women in education, health, economic, politics and in social status.
6. In patriarchal society, gender inequality favours men most of the time.
7. Gender inequality has negative impact on women's professional as well as personal development.
8. Gender inequality is not prevalent in one generation. It has transferred from one generation to next generation.
9. Gender inequality leads to psycho-social impact on men and women.
10. Gender inequality can be removed through proper education and bringing awareness to established equality regarding gender in the society.

Causes of gender inequality:

There are different causes and factors which instigate in gender inequality in society. The causes are varied in time to time and place to place. These are-

1. Illiteracy of the people.
2. Poverty of the people.
3. Lack of awareness – social and personal.
4. Unemployment problems.
5. Oppression.
6. Social prejudice against women.
7. Lack of knowledge about laws and Acts.
8. Traditional beliefs and rituals of the society.
9. Inadequate and incomplete Govt. policies.
10. Social customs, such as- dowry, child marriage etc.
11. Lack of security for women social, economic and personal.
12. Misuse of mass media to spread unethical and inadequate content in society.

6.0. Articles, Laws and Policies for gender equality :

Positive development of the society depends on development of both men and women. The co-operation and co-ordination of both men and women lead to progress of the entire society. The reality in our society is that women are facing discrimination, neglect and inequality from past to till date in different sphere of their life. For this reason, several laws, policies and constitutional articles have been taken to maintain gender equality in the society basically for the improvement of conditions of women. As a matter of fact, the concept of women empowerment has been introduced. With a view to empowering women socially, economically and educationally and to strengthen the processes that promote all round development of women through coordination

and convergence of schemes/programmes of participating Ministries/Departments, the National Mission for Empowerment of Women was launched by the Government on 8th March, 2010. The purpose of this mission is to give the women a sort of confidence which would enable them to live with dignity and value. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women has a mandate to achieve inter-sectoral convergence of all pro-women and women centric programmes across Ministries. The Mission aims to provide a single window service for all programmes run by the Government for Women under aegis of various Central Ministries. It is an attempt by the Government to put women's concerns at the very heart of public policy and governance.

Constitutional Provisions or articles related to Women

The Constitution of India is a controlling machinery of Indian Democracy. It promises to bring social, economic and political justice and guarantees to establish equality by equal status and opportunity for all. Indian Constitution contains a number of provisions for women's welfare and protection. These are –

Article 14: Equality before law :

This article is related with the idea that State shall not deny equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws to any person within the territory of India.

Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth

- The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them.
- No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to-
 - a) Access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or
 - b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.
- Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment

- There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.
- No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty :

No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

Article 23: Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour :

- Traffic in human beings and beggar and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be a punishable offence in accordance with law.
- Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from imposing compulsory service for public purposes, and in imposing such service the State shall not make any discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste or class or any of them.

Article 39: Certain principles of policy to be followed by the State

The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing-

- that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;
- that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;
- that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength
- that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

Article 42: Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief :

The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

Article 45: Provision for free and compulsory education for children :

The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

Article 46 :

The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation

Article 47 :

The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people.

Article 51(A) (e) :

This article is related to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article 243 D (3) :

Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled

Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Article 243 D (4) :

Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women.

Article 243 T (3) :

Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

Article 243 T (4) :

Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may provide by law.

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women. Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which

are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

(1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- (i) Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
- (ii) Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)
- (iii) Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
- (iv) Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
- (v) Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
- (vi) Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
- (vii) Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

(2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

- (i) The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
- (ii) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
- (iii) The Family Courts Act, 1954
- (iv) The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- (v) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- (vi) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005

- (vii) Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- (viii) The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
- (ix) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- (x) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- (xi) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
- (xii) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- (xiii) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- (xiv) The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
- (xv) The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
- (xvi) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- (xvii) Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- (xviii) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

There are some special initiatives for women to empower them. These are -

National Commission for Women

In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats

for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)

The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

7.0. Conclusion

Women are inseparable part of the society. They have some physical limitations in respect to men, but they have a more determined temperament, greater power to endure. Women are the wonderful creation on this earth. They should be given their part of open sky to breathe freely. In present context, gender equality is one of the major essentialities to enhance development of the entire society. Gender equality is achieved when men and women enjoy the same rights and opportunities in all sphere of their life. The government has introduced constitutional rights, articles, revised laws, awareness

programs to ascertain a respectable position for women. But the worrying aspect is that besides all these articles, laws and policies gender equality has not been attained yet. In fact, gender equality will be viable only when the individual concept, irrespective of gender and age, would change about the role and significance of female in the social spectrum. ○

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Women and Forestry in Assam and Their Contribution to Sustainability and Conservation

Dr. Lindy Lou Goodwin

Abstract:

This paper explores the intricate relationship between tribal women and forests in Assam, highlighting their roles as custodians of ecological knowledge and cultural heritage. Assam's dense forests provide essential resources for various tribal communities, including the Bodos, Karbis, and Misings, emphasizing the interdependency between people and nature. Women actively engage in sustainable practices, from collecting non-timber forest products to crafting and traditional agriculture, which not only sustain their families but also preserve cultural traditions. Additionally, their involvement in environmental movements and grassroots activism reflects a commitment to forest conservation and sustainable resource management. The impact of various forest policies on women's access to resources and participation in decision-making processes is critically analyzed, revealing both challenges and opportunities. The paper emphasizes the significance of recognizing and

supporting tribal women's contributions to the environment Assam with special reference to forests.

Key Words: Ecological knowledge; Cultural heritage; Sustainable practices; Forest conservation

Introduction:

Assam has always been one of the most forested regions of India. The state's dense forests are not just ecological treasures but also hold deep cultural and economic significance for its inhabitants. The state is home to numerous tribes who have always shared a close relationship with nature and the forests. Tribal women play an important role in preserving the intricate relationship between people and the forest. For these women, the forest is a vital source of sustenance, tradition, and identity. Tribal women in Assam, representing diverse ethnic groups such as the Bodos, Karbis, and Misings, share a multifaceted relationship with the forests. Historically, these women have been custodians of traditional ecological knowledge and practices that sustain their communities. Their roles are deeply embedded in rituals, subsistence strategies and conservation efforts. In fact the relation is one of interdependency where the forests provide the resources for sustenance and the women serve in conserving the environment by acting as the guardians or stewards of the forests. Women and their relation with forests assumes a special importance in the view of the emerging field of 'ecofeminism'

Forests in Assam provide essential resources—

ranging from medicinal plants and food sources to materials for crafts and construction. Tribal women's expertise in utilizing these resources is not only a testament to their intimate knowledge of the forest but also a critical factor contributing to the latter. Their daily lives are intricately linked with the forest and this relation is evident in their economic activities, social structures, and spiritual practices. The traditions, festivals, cultures of the various tribes have a close connection with the nature. For example: Bihu festival of Assam, Bathou Puja of Bodos, Ali Aai Lrigang of Mising, Baitho of Kacharis etc.

This paper attempts to study the relationship of women and forests in Assam through time and the contributions of both in preserving and supporting each other.

Discussion:

The intersection of gender and forest management in Assam reveals a complex dynamic where tribal women are both key beneficiaries and stewards of forest resources. Women often have to bear the brunt of environmental changes and challenges however, their traditional roles in forest conservation and management are gradually being recognized as pivotal. This relationship puts emphasis on the need for inclusive approaches to forest policy and conservation incorporating women as one of the major stakeholders. While Assam's national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are often highlighted, the state's extensive forest cover

also extends beyond these protected areas. These forests encompass a variety of ecosystems, including dense rainforests, semi-evergreen forests, and moist deciduous forests, which provide resources and sustenance for the local populations. Some of the significant regions of Assam under forest cover are- The Mikir Hills, located in the central part of Assam, characterized by dense forest cover and hilly terrain. This region is part of the larger Karbi Anglong district and includes a mix of evergreen and semi-evergreen forests. The Mikir Hills are vital for local tribal communities, providing resources like timber, bamboo, and medicinal plants. The Naga Hills and Karbi Anglong which straddle the Assam-Nagaland border, are rich in biodiversity and traditional resources. These areas are known for their varied forest types, including subtropical and temperate forests. The local tribes rely heavily on these forests for their daily needs and cultural practices. The Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hills) located in the southern part of Assam, features a diverse range of forested landscapes, from moist deciduous forests to grasslands. The forests of Dima Hasao are crucial for the local tribes, offering resources such as wild fruits, nuts, and medicinal plants. In Upper Assam, the forested areas of Tinsukia and Jorhat are a mix of subtropical and tropical species. These areas, though not formally protected, are integral to the local economy and culture.

The forests In Assam support various tribal communities through the provision of forest products and services. Some of the major tribes dependent on forests are the Karbi people, residing primarily in the Karbi

Anglong district. They have a deep connection with their forest environment and practice shifting cultivation, also known as jhum. They rely on the forest for a range of resources including bamboo for building and crafting, as well as various medicinal plants. Their traditional rituals and ceremonies are also closely linked to the forest. The Bodo tribe, mainly located in the Bodoland Territorial Region, utilizes the forests for subsistence agriculture and the collection of non-timber forest products. They harvest bamboo, cane, and wild fruits, and the forest plays a central role in their traditional crafts and housing. The Bodo's forest management practices are informed by their traditional knowledge and customs. The Mising people, who live in the floodplains and foothills of Assam, depend on forests for a variety of needs. They practice a form of agriculture called 'Dibru' and rely on forests for timber, bamboo, and wild edibles. The Misings have a strong tradition of using forest resources in their daily life and cultural practices, including weaving and constructing their unique traditional homes. In the Dima Hasao district, the Dimasa tribe engages in shifting cultivation and depends on the forest for a range of resources. They collect forest products such as wild honey, medicinal plants, and bamboo. The Dimasa also incorporate forest elements into their cultural and spiritual practices, reflecting a deep-seated reverence for their forested environment. The Hmar people, who inhabit parts of the Mikir Hills and other regions, rely on forests for agriculture, crafting, and traditional medicine. Their shifting cultivation practices and dependence on forest resources for daily subsistence

and cultural practices highlight the integral role of forests in their lives.

The forests of Assam, extending beyond the confines of protected areas, are vital to the livelihoods of various tribal communities. These forests provide essential resources for agriculture, crafting, construction, and cultural practices. The intricate relationship between these tribes and their forest environment underscores the importance of sustainable forest management that respects both ecological balance and traditional ways of life.

Role of Women in Forests of Assam: In Assam, women from tribal and rural communities are deeply engaged in a range of livelihood activities that rely heavily on forest resources. These activities not only provide a way of sustenance but are also a medium of preserving traditional practices and cultural heritage. The diverse uses of forest resources by women reflect a profound understanding of the forest ecosystem and demonstrate the need of sustainable resource management. Here is an overview of key livelihood activities undertaken by women in relation to forest resources.

Women play a pivotal role in the collection and processing of non-timber forest products. These products include medicinal plants which women gather use in traditional healing practices. These plants are crucial for community health and are often used to prepare traditional remedies. The knowledge of traditional systems of healing using local medicinal herbs is considered part of the intellectual property rights of women. Forests also provide

wild fruits like jackfruit, mangoes, and berries, as well as nuts such as walnuts and cashews. Women collect these items for personal consumption and sale in local markets. In forested areas, women harvest wild honey from beehives. This not only provides a nutritious food source but also serves as an important economic commodity.

Women are adept at utilizing forest materials to create various crafts and handicrafts, which include bamboo and cane crafts which are extensively used to create items such as baskets, mats, and furniture. Women are skilled artisans who weave intricate patterns into these crafts, which are both functional and decorative. In tribes such as the Misings and Bodos, women weave traditional textiles using natural dyes and fibers obtained from the forest. These textiles are often used in ceremonial attire and everyday clothing.

Women contribute significantly to agricultural practices that are closely linked to forest ecosystems. In regions where shifting or *jhum* cultivation is practiced, women assist in clearing forest land, planting crops, and managing the agricultural cycle. This traditional practice involves moving cultivation areas periodically to allow the forest to regenerate. Women also engage in agro-forestry, which combines agricultural crops with forest trees. This practice enhances soil fertility and provides additional resources such as fruits, nuts, and timber.

Women are also involved in activities related to the use of timber and other forest products. In many communities, women participate in the process of gathering timber and preparing it for construction or

crafting. This includes building homes, tools, and various household items. Women are responsible for collecting wood for fuel, which is essential for cooking and heating. They often travel long distances to gather wood from the forest.

The collection of forest resources is complemented by various food processing and preservation activities. Women engage in drying, fermenting, and preserving wild fruits, mushrooms, and other edibles. These preserved foods are used throughout the year and contribute to food security. Forest resources are integral to traditional recipes. Women use forest plants, wild meat, and fish to prepare traditional dishes that are central to cultural practices and community gatherings.

The connection between women and the forest extends into cultural and spiritual realms. Women often conduct and participate in rituals that involve forest resources, such as offerings made from forest products. These practices are vital for maintaining cultural traditions and spiritual connections with the forest. Women play a key role in passing down traditional knowledge about forest resources, including their uses and significance, to younger generations.

In summary, the diverse livelihood activities of women in Assam are intricately linked to the utilization of forest resources. From collecting medicinal plants and wild fruits to crafting with bamboo and engaging in traditional agriculture, women's activities not only sustain their families but also preserve and perpetuate cultural practices. Their deep-rooted knowledge and skills in

managing and utilizing forest resources highlight the vital role of women in maintaining the ecological and cultural integrity of their communities.

Women's Participation in Environmental Movements in Assam

Women in Assam have been at the forefront of various environmental movements, advocating for the preservation of natural resources, forest conservation, and sustainable practices. Their involvement spans a range of activities, from grassroots activism to organized campaigns, reflecting their deep connection with the environment and their commitment to safeguarding it for future generations. Here are some notable examples of women's participation in environmental movements in Assam.

While not exclusively in Assam, the anti-dam movement in the Narmada Valley, which is a significant environmental and social justice movement in India, has inspired similar activism in Assam. Women from Assam have joined broader national campaigns to prevent large-scale dam constructions that threaten local ecosystems and communities. These protests have emphasized the rights of indigenous peoples and the need for sustainable development.

The Mising tribe, known for their traditional dependence on forest resources, has seen significant involvement from women in conservation efforts. Women in the Mising community have been active in advocating for the protection of their forest lands from illegal logging

and encroachment. They have organized community meetings and educational campaigns to raise awareness about sustainable forest management and the importance of preserving their traditional lands.

In Karbi Anglong, women have played a crucial role in movements aimed at conserving the region's rich biodiversity and protecting it from deforestation and land encroachment. The Karbi women have been involved in local initiatives to prevent illegal activities in the forest, such as logging and poaching. They have also participated in community-based programs focused on reforestation and the sustainable use of forest resources.

Women from various tribal communities in Assam have actively participated in biodiversity conservation initiatives. For instance, women in the Bodoland Territorial Region have been involved in efforts to protect the region's diverse flora and fauna. They have collaborated with NGOs and government agencies to promote sustainable agricultural practices that do not harm the forest ecosystem.

The increasing expansion of coal mining in Assam, particularly in areas like the Karbi Anglong district, has led to environmental and social issues. Women have been at the forefront of protests against coal mining operations, which threaten to displace local communities and degrade forest lands. They have organized rallies, community discussions, and campaigns to highlight the adverse effects of mining and to demand more stringent environmental regulations.

In Assam, women have actively participated in

movements aimed at conserving the state's rivers and wetlands, which are crucial for maintaining ecological balance and supporting local livelihoods. For example, women from the communities around the Brahmaputra River have engaged in campaigns to prevent pollution and encroachment of the riverbanks. They have also been involved in cleaning drives and awareness programs to protect these vital water bodies.

Women have been instrumental in running environmental awareness and education programs within their communities. These programs often focus on sustainable practices, the importance of conserving natural resources, and the impact of environmental degradation. Women leaders and activists have conducted workshops, community meetings, and school programs to foster a culture of environmental stewardship. Women in Assam have actively participated in afforestation and reforestation projects aimed at restoring degraded forest lands. In various districts, women have been involved in planting trees, maintaining nurseries, and monitoring forest health. These efforts are often part of broader community initiatives to combat deforestation and promote ecological balance.

From fighting against large-scale industrial projects to leading local conservation initiatives, Assam's women are crucial players in the state's environmental landscape. Their contribution and participation in the forests is influenced by government law. The impact of forest acts and government forest policies in Assam on women is multifaceted, affecting their livelihoods, access

to resources, and involvement in forest management. Key legislation and policies have both positive and negative implications for women in different regions of Assam. The Indian Forest Act of 1927 laid the groundwork for forest management in India, including Assam. It established the framework for classifying forests and regulating their use. The Act often led to restricted access to forest resources for local communities, including women, who traditionally relied on forests for subsistence. Women faced limitations in collecting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and accessing resources needed for their daily lives and livelihoods. The restrictions imposed by this Act affected women across Assam, particularly in forest-dependent communities such as the Bodos, Karbis, and Misings.

The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 aimed to protect forests from diversion for non-forest uses. It imposed restrictions on deforestation and forest land conversion. While the Act contributed to forest preservation, it also restricted local communities' access to forest resources. Women, who relied on forests for daily needs and traditional practices, faced challenges in accessing these resources for subsistence and livelihood activities. In Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao women were affected by restrictions on shifting cultivation and resource collection due to the Act's emphasis on forest conservation.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, aimed to recognize and vest forest rights to indigenous

communities, including individual and community rights to forest land and resources. The FRA provided a significant positive impact by acknowledging the rights of women as forest dwellers. Women gained greater access to forest resources and a role in decision-making processes related to forest management. However, implementation challenges and bureaucratic hurdles sometimes limited the Act's effectiveness. Women in the Bodoland Territorial Region and Karbi Anglong have seen improvements in access to forest resources and increased participation in forest management due to the FRA.

The National Green Tribunal Act 2010 (NGT) Act established a tribunal to handle environmental disputes and issues related to forest conservation. The NGT has provided a platform for addressing environmental grievances, including those related to forest conservation. Women from forest-dependent communities have used this forum to raise concerns about environmental degradation and resource access. Women across Assam have utilized the NGT to address issues related to deforestation, pollution, and encroachment affecting their communities. The Assam Forest Policy of 2019 focuses on conservation, sustainable management, and biodiversity preservation, while also recognizing the needs of local communities. The policy includes provisions for community participation in forest management, which benefits women by promoting their involvement in decision-making and ensuring access to forest resources. It aims to balance conservation efforts with the needs of forest-dependent communities. The

policy impacts women statewide by promoting more inclusive forest management practices and acknowledging the role of women in conserving and managing forest resources. The positive impacts of these numerous acts are that enhanced rights and access to resources for women in forest-dependent communities. It promotes community participation and recognizes women's role in forest management. While the negative impacts are that these restrictive policies historically limit women's access to forest resources and impact their traditional livelihoods. Women in specific regions such as Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, and the Bodoland Territorial Region have experienced both the challenges and benefits of forest policies, reflecting the need for tailored approaches that address local contexts and ensure equitable access to forest resources. These policies and acts have shaped the relationship between women and forest resources in Assam, influencing their livelihoods, rights, and roles in environmental conservation.

Women in Assam play a pivotal role in the conservation and preservation of forests and the environment through a variety of activities and initiatives. Their contributions are deeply rooted in traditional knowledge, community practices, and active participation in environmental movements. In the Bodoland Territorial Region, women have been actively involved in managing community forest resources under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006. They work to protect these forests from illegal logging and encroachment. Women form Forest Management Committees (FMCs) that oversee the

sustainable use of forest resources and ensure that traditional practices are respected. According to emerging researches, Bodo women in Assam conserve around 48 different plants for socio-cultural and religious purposes within the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) area. In Karbi Anglong, women have led local campaigns to prevent illegal logging and deforestation. They organize community patrols and educational workshops to raise awareness about the importance of forest conservation. Their efforts have contributed to the protection of crucial forest areas from encroachment and exploitation. Women in the Mikir Hills have participated in afforestation projects, planting trees to restore degraded lands. They collaborate with NGOs and local government bodies in organizing tree-planting drives, often involving schools and community groups. These projects aim to combat deforestation and enhance local biodiversity. In the Dima Hasao district, women run community nurseries that grow saplings of native tree species. These nurseries provide plants for reforestation efforts and educate community members about the importance of tree cover for ecological balance and climate regulation. Individually too women have taken initiatives to protect and conserve wildlife. Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, widely recognized as “Hargila Baido” (Miss Hargila), is a prominent environmental activist in Assam. As a member of the NGO Aranyak, she is dedicated to protecting the Greater Adjutant Stork, known as Hargila in Assamese, and is actively working to prevent its extinction. Women in Assam have been active in environmental education, conducting workshops

and awareness programs on topics such as waste management, pollution control, and sustainable practices. These programs aim to educate both adults and children about the importance of environmental conservation. Women have been involved in advocacy efforts to influence forest policy and environmental regulations. They participate in dialogues with policymakers, contribute to policy discussions, and push for the inclusion of community perspectives in conservation strategies. In the flood-prone regions of Assam, women participate in projects aimed at building climate resilience. They engage in activities such as planting flood-resistant vegetation and implementing soil conservation techniques to reduce the impact of climate change on local ecosystems. Women in the floodplains use sustainable agriculture practices that integrate forest and agricultural systems. By adopting methods that enhance soil health and reduce environmental impact, they contribute to the long-term health of both agricultural lands and surrounding forests.

Conclusion:

In essence, the forests of Assam and the tribal women who inhabit them share a bond that is both ancient and evolving. As stewards of their environment, these women embody a living heritage that bridges traditional knowledge with contemporary conservation challenges. Understanding their relationship with the forest offers critical insights into the broader discourse on gender, ecology, and sustainability in the region. ○

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**Reading Habits among the Girl
Students of College Libraries in Assam:
*A Study with Special Reference to Charaideo District***

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Abstract :

Reading habits are crucial in our daily lives as they enhance our minds, impart extensive knowledge, and provide valuable life lessons. They aid in better understanding of the world around us, keep our minds active, and boost our creativity, thought power, vocabulary, and communication skills. Moreover, the reading habits of girls are particularly significant in promoting healthy and productive lives. Education among girls has the potential to address social issues such as child marriage, the dowry system, and child labour. This study aims to explore the reading habits of female students and identify the factors influencing these habits. The findings indicate that many of the female students surveyed in various colleges exhibit a positive attitude towards reading Assamese language novels, magazines, and fiction. This positive inclination towards reading among female students is a promising indicator for society.

Additionally, many female students prefer reading materials related to their own disciplines.

Keywords: Reading habit, Girl Students, Students, Library, College Library.

Introduction :

Developing a reading habit is immensely beneficial in life. Good books can enlighten and guide us, serving as invaluable companions. Moreover, reading is essential for our overall wellbeing. Once we cultivate a habit of reading, we enter a world full of new perspectives and knowledge, often becoming addicted to the joy it brings. Reading enhances language skills, enriches vocabulary, and provides a means to relax and reduce stress. Books offer insights into culture, traditions, arts, history, geography, health, and various other facets of life, imparting a wealth of knowledge and information. However, the primary focus of this paper is to explore and emphasize the reading habits of female college students. Women constitute a significant portion of the global population, and the prosperity of society hinges on their development. Encouraging reading habits among girls is particularly crucial because education plays a pivotal role in shaping their lives. It empowers them to make informed decisions regarding their careers, marriages, and families. Education also instills awareness of their rights, enabling them to confront social injustices such as child marriage, dowry, and domestic violence with confidence. Educated girls can contribute effectively to

societal progress by challenging gender discrimination in various spheres, including the workplace. The reading habits of female college students not only foster personal development but also contribute to societal advancement. Regular and systematic reading sharpens intellect, refines emotions, and elevates personal tastes, thereby enhancing opportunities for success. College libraries play a vital role in promoting a conducive reading environment by providing access to a wide array of books, periodicals, journals, and online resources at no cost. This is especially significant in Charaideo, an administrative district in Assam known for its tea gardens and rural areas, where many students, particularly from tea tribes and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, rely on college libraries to support their academic pursuits and broaden their knowledge horizons. In conclusion, enhancing the reading habits of girls is imperative for their enjoyment and personal growth. It not only equips them with knowledge but also empowers them to contribute meaningfully to society. Therefore, fostering a reading culture among female students, especially in underprivileged areas like Charaideo, is essential for their holistic development and societal progress.

Review of Literature:

Clark and Foster (2005) revealed that girls tend to enjoy reading more than boys, whereas boys often exhibit a negative attitude towards reading. Hassell and Rodge (2007) reported that females read for pleasure more frequently than their male counterparts. Studies also

indicate that students generally spend less than 2 hours per day reading (Blackwood, 1991). Azad (2019) examined the reading habits of female collegiate students across different academic disciplines, highlighting several factors influencing these habits. The study found that female students often prefer reading in English rather than their mother tongue. Factors such as lack of time, social media distractions, and social interactions with friends significantly impact their reading habits. Additionally, about 70% of the students find the atmosphere in college libraries conducive to reading. In a related study, Nashath and Akram (2023) explored gender differences in the reading habits of university students in Sri Lanka, focusing on reading preferences, frequency, and enjoyment. Their findings indicate that female students generally exhibit a more positive attitude towards reading compared to their male counterparts. The study suggests that universities should actively promote and guide male students to develop better reading skills. These insights underscore the importance of understanding and addressing gender-specific factors that influence reading habits among college students, aiming to foster a more inclusive and supportive academic environment for all.

Objectives of the Study :

- To understand the reading habits of female students.
- To cultivate and nurture the recreational interests of female students.

- To encourage female students to achieve their full potential as independent learners and foster a positive attitude towards lifelong learning.
- To ascertain the factors influencing reading habits among female students.

Research Methodology :

The methodology employed in this research utilizes the questionnaire method. Prior to drafting the questionnaire, relevant literature was reviewed and analyzed to inform the study. Data was collected via random sampling from 100 female students across five college libraries in Charaideo district. The questionnaire comprised 5 open-ended and 10 multiple-choice questions designed specifically for the sampled female students. The surveyed colleges included Moran College, Sonari College, Sonari Commerce College, Sapekhati College, and Borhat College.

Data Analysis :

Table 1: Response Rate

Questionnaire Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Respondents	85	85.00%
Non-respondents	15	15.00%
Total	100	100

Table 1 shows the response rate is 85% and non-response rate is 15%.

Table 2: Distribution of Age Group

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
15-17	25	29.41%
18-20	55	64.71%
21-23	05	5.88%
Total	85	100

Table 2 identifies that 64.71% of respondents come under the 18-20 age group. Again, 29.41% of respondents come under 15-17 age groups. On the other hand, 5.88% of respondents come under 21-23 age groups.

Table 3: Frequency of Library visit

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Everyday	33	38.82%
Once in two days	45	52.94%
Weekly	4	4.71%
Monthly	2	2.35%
Rarely	1	1.18%
Total	85	100

Table 3 presents 52.94% of respondents' frequency of library visits once in two days. Again, 38.82% of respondents visit the library every day. Likewise, 4.71% of respondents visit the library weekly. On the other hand, 2.35% of respondents visit the library monthly. Again, 1.18% of respondents visit the library rarely.

Table 4: Reasons for Reading

Reasons for Reading	Number of Respondents	Percentage
For entertainment	05	5.89%
For information	21	24.70%
Love reading	34	40%
For knowledge	25	29.41%
Total	85	100

Table 4 shows that 40% of respondents love reading. Again, 29.41% of respondents read for knowledge. On the other hand, 24.70% of respondents read for information. On the other hand, 5.89% of respondents read for entertainment.

Table 5: Reading Preferences

Reading Preferences	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Magazine	21	24.71%
Journals	3	3.52%
Competitive Examination Books	7	8.24%
Textbooks	12	14.12%
Novels	25	29.42%
Reference Books	2	2.35%
Newspapers	15	17.64%
Total	85	100

Table 5 shows, 29.42% of respondents' reading preferences for novels. This is followed by 24.71% preferring Magazines, 17.64% preferring Newspapers,

14.12% preferring textbooks, 8.24% of respondents prefer Competitive Examination Books, 3.52% of respondents preferring Journals, and 2.35% of respondents prefer Reference Books.

Table 6: Language Preferences

Language Preferences	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Assamese	65	76.47%
English	15	17.64%
Hindi	05	5.89%
Total	85	100

Table 6 shows that 76.47% of respondents prefer Assamese language. Again, 17.64% of respondents reference the English language. On the other hand, 5.89% of respondents prefer Hindi Language.

Table 7: Literature Preferences

Literature Preferences	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Fiction	60	70.59%
Non-Fiction	25	29.41%
Total	85	100

Table 7 identified, 70.59% of respondents prefer fiction. On the other hand, 29.41% of respondents prefer Non-Fiction.

Table 8: Factors Affecting Reading Habits

Factors Affecting Reading Habits	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Social media	21	24.71%
Busy schedule at college	46	54.12%
Want to spend time with friends	18	21.17%
Total	85	100

Table 8 shows, that 54.12% of respondents' factors affecting reading habits due to busy schedule at college. Again, 24.71% of respondents' factors affect reading habits due to social media. On the other hand, 21.17% of respondents were affected due to their preferences to spend time with friends.

Conclusion :

Many female students in all surveyed colleges exhibit a positive attitude towards reading, particularly in Assamese language novels, magazines, and fiction. This positive inclination towards reading among female students is a promising sign for society. While many female students prefer to read within their own academic disciplines, there is a call to encourage them to explore diverse fields of knowledge beyond their specialties. However, findings reveal that 24.71% of female students use social media, which negatively impacts their reading habits and academic performance. This trend poses a significant challenge to fostering strong reading habits among girls. The new Education Policy aims to be more inclusive for female students, challenging prevailing

gender stereotypes in society. It is crucial for us to recognize the importance of cultivating reading habits among girls, as the development of society hinges on the education of its female population. Girls form the core of families, and strong families contribute to a stronger society, which in turn aids in nation-building. In conclusion, an African proverb aptly states, “If you educate a man, you educate an individual; but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.” This underscores the transformative power of educating girls and emphasizes the critical role of reading in their personal and societal development.○

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**Role of Self- Help Groups in
Empowerment of Women and Social
Recognition:
A Study in Barpeta District of Assam**

Gitika Talukdar

Abstract:

Women empowerment is viewed as a continuum of several interrelated and mutually reinforcing components such as awareness building about women's situations, discrimination, rights and opportunities as a step towards gender equality, collective awareness building, provides a sense of group identity and the power of working as a group, capacity building and skills development especially the ability to plan, make decisions, organize, manage and carry out activities to deal with people and institutions in the world around them, participation and greater control and decision making power at the home, community and society, action to bring out greater equality between men and women. Self Help Group is an initiative of government to make women empowered through micro loans so that they are able to engage in money generating activities. It helps the unreached poor access to financial services, raise disadvantaged and marginalised women in the society

and advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The main objective of the present study was to study the effectiveness of Self Help Groups (SHGs) for socio economic development of the rural people particularly in the Barpeta District of Assam.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Self Help Groups, Respondents, Micro loan, Socio- Economic Development.

Introduction :

A self- help group is a village based financial intermediary committee usually composed of 10 to 25 local women. The members make small regular saving contributions for a few months until there is enough capital in the group for lending. The very existence of SHGs acts a great boost to make the poor self-reliant and to give them hope. The harsh reality is that rural poverty and unemployment still persist in the society and women's earnings positively and directly affect a family's financial condition. Self-Help Group is an initiative to eradicate poverty and empower women has increased tremendously.

Objectives of the Studie :

The present study has some specific objectives:

1. To study the socio- economic background of the women beneficiaries.
2. To make a comparison of their annual income before and after joining SHGs
3. To analyse the utilization of loans and subsidy by respondents.

4. To suggest some measures for the better performance of SHGs in the district.

Research Methodology :

The study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. The study has been conducted in Barpeta District of Assam. From the district, Chenga block has been selected for the present study and 100 women have been selected as a sample from the entire population. Purposive sampling has been selected as a sampling technique for the study. Both primary and secondary data have been collected for the study. For primary data an individual questionnaire has been prepared for these SHG members and secondary data have been collected from books, journals, official sources, reports, statistical hand book of Assam, published and unpublished data etc.

Analysis : Socio-Economic Background of the Women Beneficiaries

Table: 1 Classification of SHG members on the basis of their age

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 25 years	08	8
26-30 years	60	60
31-35 years	22	22
36-40 years	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Field Study Data.

From the above table (1) it is very clear that most of the women beneficiaries belong to the age group of 26

to 30 years. Age is very important factor for work efficiency and productivity. Young people are more energetic than older one. In our present study we have seen a very positive sign of work efficiency among the SHG members.

Table: 2 Educational Qualification of Women Beneficiaries

Educational Qualification	No. of beneficiaries	Percentage(%)
Under Matriculation	20	20
Matriculation	45	45
HS	20	20
Degree	15	15
Post-Graduation	—	—
Total	100	100

Source: Field Study Data

Women's general education and literacy are important if they are to reach their full potential and become empowered. Women can be empowered only when they are literate and educated. Education is the strong weapon to unlock the golden door of freedom for development.

From the above table (2), we have seen that most of the beneficiaries are of matriculation level, it accounts for 45%, 20% are of HS level, 20% of under matriculation level, 15% of Degree Level and none of them are of post graduation level.

Table: 3 Occupational Background of Women Beneficiaries

Occupational Background	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Labour	40	40
Housewife	30	30
Self employed	10	10
Others	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: Field Study Data

From the Table (3), We have seen that out of 100 respondents, 40% respondents are employed as labour in different sectors, 30% are of housewives, 10% are self-employed workers and 20% are involved in other activities.

Table: 4 Annual Income before joining Self Help Groups

Annual Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Nil	30	30
10,000-15,000	12	12
15,001-20,000	20	20
20,001-25,000	15	15
25,001-30,000	15	15
30,001-35,000	08	08
Total	100	100

Source: Field Study Data

From the Table (4), it is very clear that before joining SHGs most of the women beneficiaries had no income and only 8% of women have income above 30,001 to 35,000. It is a serious matter of concern. Here SHGs play a crucial role for developing the habit of saving and using banking facilities among the members. The saving habit thus strengthens the bargaining capacity of the

women and they are in a better position to acquire loans for productive purposes.

Table: 5 Annual Income after joining Self Help Groups

Annual Income	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Nil Income	—	—
10,000-15,000	10	10
15,001-20,000	25	25
20,001-25,000	25	25
25,001-30,000	30	30
30,001-35,000	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Field Study Report

Comparison of Annual Income before and after Joining Self-Help Groups :

The income level of the respondents have increased and with the help of increased income level they could provide financial assistance to their family to some extent. Thus, SHGs are not financial system but they are formed with a view to social and economic change of the rural women. Income brings economic and social empowerment in women specially in rural areas, the income and earning status of a homemaker can lead to many positive changes in a woman's life.

As shown in the table (5), majority of the respondents (30%) had no income before joining in SHG and only very few respondents had income before joining SHGS and after joining SHGs as shown table (6), 30% of the respondents had income between 25,001-30,000

from the economic activity carried out in their groups. The average income of the respondents in monthly basis was found to be highly significant after joining SHGs.

Utilisation of Loans and Subsidy by SHG Members:

The rural people usually have very less income and many of them are unable to save money for future needs such as sudden health crisis, financial crisis, family occasion etc. they are forced to take money from local money lenders at a very high interest rate. Loan facility is available for all the members without any restriction. In our study we have found out that 100% of the beneficiaries have taken loans through SHGs.

Table: 6 Utilization of loans by Self Help Group Members

Utilization of loan	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Poultry Activities	15	15
Tailoring	25	25
weaving	30	30
Goat Farming	10	10
Cake making and dairy product	10	10
Family Expenses	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

After joining SHGS, 15% of women beneficiaries utilize their loans for poultry activities, 25% utilize their loans for tailoring, 30% utilize their loans for weaving purpose, 10% utilize their loans in goat farming and 10% utilize their loans in cake making and dairy product and 10% utilize their loan amount for family expenses.

From the above analysis most of the women beneficiaries utilize their loan amount for productive activities only and very less number of beneficiaries utilize their loan for family expenses. The micro- credit through SHG loans to members has provided a good relief and there was good progress in the reduction of dependence on money lenders by the vulnerable sections of the society. The responses of the SHG members covered by the study indicated largely location based SHGs in the study area. Majority of the SHG members felt that loan amount was adequate and the loan amount obtained through SHGs was totally utilized for the purpose for which it was given. The loan repayment performance of the members of the SHGs was broadly at a lower side.

Opportunities and Suggestions for Better Performance of SHGs in Barpeta District :

1. Active involvement in different SHG initiatives helps members to grow leadership skills and self confidence level.
2. The Government and NGO's should have to take necessary steps to popularize the benefits of Micro loan Programme among the poor women in rural areas of Assam.
3. The procedure of the banks in sanctioning credit to SHG should be simple and quick.
4. Meeting and seminars should be organized on a regular basis where the members will get a chance to exchange their views and be able to develop their group strength by interactions.

5. A large number of Self Help Group members are using subsidy for unproductive purposes like household expenses. But the banks and financial institutions should make some strict rules and regulations in utilizing the amount for the productive works only.
6. The Government should play the role of a facilitator and promoter create a supportive environment for the growth and development of the SHG movement.
7. SHG monitoring cell in every state should be established and the cell should have direct links with district and block level monitoring system. The cell should collect both quantitative and qualitative information.

Conclusion :

SHGs often appear to be instrumental in rural poverty alleviation. Economic empowerment through SHGs provides women the confidence for participation in decision making affairs at the household well level as well as at the community level. Un- utilized and underutilized resources of the community can be mobilized effectively under different SHG- initiatives. SHGs have a positive statistically significant effect on women's economic, social and political empowerment. It works positively such as financial services, income generating activities, sound physical and mental health, communication skills, confidence level and so on. It's really a door step for empowering women socially,

financially and mentally which gives them an identity, social recognition, economic security.○

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Economic Impact of Gender Inequality on Environmental Sustainability

Mridusmita Patowary

Abstract :

This study examines the complex relationships between environmental sustainability and gender inequality, with a focus on the economic ramifications. It looks into how differences between genders in economic possibilities, decision-making authority, and resource access affect environmental outcomes. The study makes policy proposals to include gender issues into environmental economics and emphasises how gender equity has the ability to lead to sustainable development.

Keywords: Gender inequality, Environmental sustainability, Environmental Economics, Gender Equity, Economic impact

Introduction :

In modern economics, the relationship between environmental sustainability and gender inequality is a crucial field of research. In addition to social and

economic consequences, gender inequality has an impact on sustainability and environmental health. This study examines the ways in which gender dynamics effect environmental policies and practices in order to assess the economic impact of gender inequality on environmental sustainability. Gender Inequality has been shown to have an impact on a number of social and economic outcomes in numerous studies. Less research has been done on the precise connections between environmental sustainability and gender inequality, though. This section examines the links between economic development, environmental health, and gender equity. Environmental policies may be less successful as a result of women's under-representation in environmental policies. Research indicates that nations with greater gender parity typically implement stricter environmental laws (Agarwal, 2010; UN Women, 2021). Industries that are exclusive to a gender, like textiles and agriculture, have distinct environmental impacts. In industries like agriculture, where they frequently practise more sustainably, women are under-represented in decision-making and lack access to resources (World Bank, 2020). Sustainable management techniques are hampered by gender disparities in access to natural resources. Women are disproportionately affected by the gendered effects of climate change, which worsen environmental degradation and restrict their access to economic opportunities (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020). Better environmental stewardship and sustainable development results follow from women's economic

empowerment. Initiatives spearheaded by women in the fields of sustainable agriculture and renewable energy show how gender parity benefits environmental sustainability (Agarwal, 2010; Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019). Research indicates that the inclusion of women in decision-making processes leads to the creation of policies that are more ecologically sustainable and inclusive. As an illustration, nations with greater gender equality typically enact stricter environmental laws (UN Women, 2021; Sultana, 2014). In India, women are more involved in agriculture than men are, and they frequently use more environmentally friendly farming methods. Nevertheless, their inability to make decisions and obtain resources makes it difficult for them to expand these practices (Doss, 2014; Quisumbing et al., 2014). Industries like textiles, where women make up the majority of workers, can have very different environmental impacts than industries controlled by men. If given the right resources and assistance, women working in these fields can promote more environmentally friendly behaviours (Kabeer, 2015). Women are disproportionately affected by the gendered effects of climate change, which worsen environmental degradation and restrict their access to economic opportunities. Women are particularly susceptible to the negative consequences of climate change because they have less access to resources (Dankelman, 2010; Terry, 2009).

Objectives of the Study :

The present study aims to assess the economic

impact of gender inequality on environmental sustainability in India.

Data and Methodology :

The study is descriptive in nature and is based on data collected from secondary sources.

Findings and Discussions :

Environmental policies and practices tend to be more effective in regions where gender equality is higher. The case studies show the obstacles women experience as a result of gender inequality and demonstrate the crucial role they play in advancing sustainable development.

Gender Equality and Environmental Policies :

Studies reveal a robust association between gender parity and the efficacy of environmental regulations. States with comparatively greater rates of gender equality, such as Kerala and Maharashtra, have enacted stricter and more efficient environmental laws. Long-term environmental health and community well-being are often given precedence by women in leadership roles above immediate financial gain. Policies in these states that prioritise conservation, community-led resource management, and sustainable development make this clear.

For instance, women's participation in Panchayats, or local self-governments, in Kerala has resulted in more efficient waste management and water management practices. These policies have been inclusive, supporting sustainable practices and taking into account the needs

of underserved populations. Similarly, women's participation in environmental decision-making has enhanced the way climate adaptation programs are carried out in Maharashtra.

Economic Empowerment and Environmental Stewardship :

In India, the economic empowerment of women significantly improves environmental stewardship. Women are more likely to practise resource management and agriculture in more sustainable ways, especially in rural areas. As they gain economic strength, they can increase these activities, which will benefit the environment more broadly.

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Gujarat is a noteworthy instance of how women have been empowered by education and financial independence. These ladies have led the way in organic farming and water conservation through their activities in sustainable agriculture. Their financial independence enables them to make investments in environmentally friendly activities and technologies that improve their standard of living while simultaneously promoting environmental sustainability (SEWA, 2018).

Initiatives driven by women have revolutionised the renewable energy industry. Initiatives such as the Barefoot College in Rajasthan provide women with training in solar engineering so they may empower their communities with renewable energy. By putting in and maintaining solar lighting systems in their villages, these

women have greatly decreased their reliance on fossil fuels and enhanced the health of the environment.

Barriers to Gender Equity in Environmental Sustainability :

Although women have a beneficial impact on environmental sustainability, there are major impediments that impede their full participation in this field. Gender stereotypes frequently restrict women to conventional roles and reduce their ability to participate in decision-making. Discussions on resource management and environmental regulations, which are dominated by men, often exclude women in many parts of India.

Another factor is discrimination, which occurs when women's contributions are disregarded or underestimated. This is seen in the agricultural sectors, where women work mostly as labourers but have limited authority over resources and land. It is impossible for women to successfully implement sustainable practices without ownership and decision-making authority.

Women's participation is further hampered by structural obstacles including restricted access to economic and educational possibilities. Compared to men, girls and women in many rural communities have lower literacy rates and less possibilities for skill development. This makes it more difficult for them to participate in fields like environmental governance and renewable energy, where financial resources and technical know-how are essential.

Targeted policies that support gender parity in

economic participation, resource ownership, and education are necessary to remove these obstacles. Women can be empowered and play a more significant part in environmental sustainability through programs like microfinance for female entrepreneurs, land ownership rights efforts, and vocational training programs.

Education and Environmental Awareness :

The role of education as a catalyst is significant in raising women's environmental consciousness and empowering them to adopt sustainable habits. Women who have completed more education tend to be more involved in environmental conservation efforts (Nellemann et al., 2011).

Women-focused community-based education initiatives have been successful in increasing environmental consciousness and encouraging sustainable behaviours. These initiatives give women the knowledge and skills necessary to adopt sustainable practices while also assisting them in realising the value of conservation (FAO, 2013; WOCAN, 2016). The significance of gender equality in attaining environmental sustainability is highlighted by these findings. India can fully utilise its people to address environmental issues and advance sustainable development by empowering women and incorporating gender concerns into environmental policies.

Policy Recommendations :

In order to improve gender parity and environmen-

tal sustainability in India, the following policy suggestions are put forth:

1. Boost the representation of women in environmental decision-making bodies in order to promote gender equality in environmental governance. Adopt policies on environmental governance that take gender equality into account.
2. Make sure that women have fair and equal access to natural resources, education, and employment opportunities. Encourage female business owners in environmentally friendly sectors.
3. Encourage gender-responsive climate adaptation by creating plans that take into account the unique requirements and contributions of women. Encourage female leadership in projects aimed at resiliency to climate change.

Conclusions :

In India, attaining gender parity presents noteworthy obstacles to the attainment of environmental sustainability. Addressing gender inequality, however, can have significant positive effects on the economy and environment. India can encourage sustainable development and build a more resilient and inclusive society by advancing gender equity. In order to guide successful policy-making and practice, future research should carry out further explorations of the complex linkages among gender, economy, and environmental sustainability. ○

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Self Silencing In Women

Kabyasri Hazarika

Abstract :

Self silencing is a construct adopted by most of the human being to avoid conflict or to maintain a relationship which they consider to be important. People of all gender self silence, but women do it more often because of cultural or societal pressure for women to be agreeable, nice and self sacrificing. Self silencing is not a mandatory trait to be followed by any gender but is used to ensure that relationship remain intact. Sometimes remaining silent in certain circumstances may be an intelligent move but bringing this tendency as the only mechanism to survive in the society is a threat indicating oppression. Self silencing for a longer period of time can call grounds for both physical and mental disorders. This paper therefore primarily attempts to study signs of self silencing, various factors of self silencing and its impact on physical and mental health in women. To fulfil the objectives of the study, a descriptive cum analytical method is used and secondary data including relevant books, journals, articles, websites etc have been used as the tool for collecting data for the study.

Keywords: Self silencing, Physical health, Mental health, Women.

Introduction:

Self silencing, the restriction of self expression with intimate relationship, is the product of a gendered society (Jack,1991). The construct of self silencing which represents concern for the other above self, was originally developed among women whose experience of depression were attributed to the silencing of their authentic selves in relation to men (Jack 1991). Research found that women are predominately driven to engage in self silencing. Self silencing is maintained in order to preserve or foster an intimate relationship (Remen Chamblers & Rodebaugh,2002). Women's self silencing can be attributed to the societal belief that women have an inherent responsibility to care for those who are around them and therefore are conditioned to think women as relationship beings as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers. To ensure that a relationship remain intact, women who self silence censor themselves and devalue their experiences even when they feel anger and resentment. It is observed that, women especially mothers may put their needs on the back burner to the point of exhaustion. Fear is considered as one of the primary reason why young women extinguish their voices in relationship. In order to prevent rejection, they hide their feelings due to low self esteem. And if they are financially dependent on their partners, they will prefer to suppress

their feeling and thoughts troubling them rather than expressing it as it may threaten the relationship.

Signs that indicates one is self silencing :

We all know that staying quiet in some situation is a healthy and self protecting choice. But suppressing thoughts and feeling for a longer period of time to avoid fights, rejection, conflicts and threats is totally unhealthy to a person's psycho physical state of well being. Therefore, it is necessary to identify or detect symptoms or signs that reflects self silencing behaviour. Some of the signs are as follows:

- Easily influenced by others opinions or doesn't have a strong self point of view or opinion.
- Blaming oneself or feeling responsible for other people's feeling.
- Unaware of one's feeling or doesn't know how one feels as he/she is extremely focussed on how others feel about their action.
- Not speaking up in intimate relationships for fear of inviting conflicts.
- Finding it difficult to be oneself in a close relationship.
- Pretending to be happy when agitated inside or feeling angry.
- Consistently putting others needs before own .
- Fear of ever appearing selfish.

Self silencing is not an inborn trait or construct. It is a tendency that arises because of suppressing one's feeling in order to maintain relationship as well as to avoid

rejections and conflict. There are multiple factors that compels a person to self silence oneself. Some of the reasons are as follows:

1. Dominating family members:

Family is considered to be the most powerful support system of everyone. It is the family who nurture the child to be a good human being. It is in the family where people can live life without pretending. But this is not a universal characteristic of every family. There are members in the family who dominates their child and never let them express their wishes or desires or dreams. They behave in a way which scares the child and as a result of which they self -silence.

2. Misunderstanding among family members:

Expressions are easy but expressing oneself in the right way without hurting or troubling others is a difficult task. Hence in order to avoid fights, and misunderstanding, one may avoid expressing oneself or speak in the fear of misjudgement or conflicts.

3. Lack of appreciation from family members:

Encouragement and appreciations are positive reinforcements that contribute in the creation of healthy relationships. On the contrary, taunts, sarcastic comments and unappreciative nature of family members can compel a person to self silence.

4. Lack of support from husband:

Husband and wife must play their role well for a successful married life. Husbands who are supportive, kind and helpful can bring peace and happiness in the family or else a women will start to self silence if she

feels disrespectful and gets unsupportive gestures from her husband.

5. Fear of losing the relationship:

Relationships are precious. A healthy relationship can boost a person's both physical and mental well being. In a healthy relationship a person grows, adapts and makes necessary changes for balancing life. There is no fear but comfort to express one's heart out. In self silencing situation, women hesitates to speak out, to express or share as she fears that any word or speech of her may hamper the relationship.

6. Fear of societal judgement:

Judgement on others is one of the easiest task. Many people due to fear of what others will say keep themselves away from many things in the fear of judgements. For instance, a woman who is suffering in her own home or in her in laws may choose to remain silent and suffer rather than speaking up and standing for herself.

7. Fear of physical assault:

There are families where women are being tortured physically. They are assaulted and abused in a way that in this fear they self silence themselves. They remain quiet in every situation. Even if they suffer, they cry in closed rooms and don't speak up.

8. Fear of abandonment:

Girls after being married are considered to be a permanent member in her husband's home only. But there may arise certain situations where she may not be able to adapt well or is being mentally harassed where she may

feel like going back to her parents. But what if due to societal pressure or in the fear of judgement of what is right and what is wrong, her family doesn't accept her back. In such fear, women tend to self silence.

Effects of self silencing on physical and mental health of women:

Holding thoughts and emotions in, can lead to various physical as well as mental health issues. Some of their effects on physical health are as follows:

1. **Insomnia** is one of the major effects of self silencing as women are occupied with thoughts at night which they strive to express.
2. **Eating disorder** as in eating too little or too much is also an effect of self silencing in people especially women.
3. **Fatigue syndrome** as well as feeling lethargic is another common physical impact of self silencing.
4. Self Silence can also cause **digestive issues or bowel tendencies** such as irritable bowel syndrome.
5. Research also found that sometimes self silencing may also **grow cancer cells** among people who are doing it for a longer period of time.

Mental effect of self silencing:

Self silencing oneself can cause extreme mental trauma on a person. It can call grounds for severe mental disorders. Some of it are given below:

1. **Loneliness and sadness** is one of the major effects of self silencing among women. They feel extremely

lonely as they fear to speak out or express themselves.

2. **Panic attacks and anxiety disorder** are most common among women who self silence.
3. **Depression** is another effect of self silencing among women. Depression can bring down a person to the lowest point of his/her life and may **provoke suicidal thoughts**.
4. **Bipolar disorder** with frequent mood swings are also common among women and it happens more with women when they start to PMS.(Premenstrual Dysphoric Syndrome)
5. **Hysteric episodes** may also appear as a result of prolong self silencing in women.

Strategies to deal with self -silencing:

Self silencing is not a desirable trait of any gender. Because one must have the freedom to speak, express their feelings and emotions. Holding on to it hampers a person's entire well being. Hence some strategies are required to deal with and eliminate self silencing nature among people. Some of the strategies are enumerated below -

1. Increasing self awareness:

First and foremost step necessary for self silencing is through increasing self awareness among people. Awareness regarding what is right and wrong, knowledge regarding what is acceptable and adjustable and on the contrary what can't be ignored or entertained.

2. Honor emotions, even anger:

As human beings, we are bound to feel 14 different types of emotions (According to Mc. Dougal) and anger is one of them. These emotions are instinctive. Hence we all will feel it. Thus in the fear of anger one should not suppress their feelings and self silence.

3. Setting healthy boundaries:

Self silencing can be decreased if one keep herself within healthy boundaries or among mentally healthy positive beings. Thus before involving oneself in any new relationship one must be very committed and precise about what they want in life and make efforts to bring positivity for maintaining healthy boundaries.

4. Prioritize one's own need:

People who self silence focusses only on others needs and feelings. They are in constant fear of disagreement, conflict or fight. They never prioritize their own need. But in order to remove this tendency one must know their worth and must consider their own need to be important.

5. Being independent:

Becoming financially independent can help a woman a lot to decrease the tendency to self silence. Many people don't speak up in the fear of their partner. They fear if they say something, their partner may feel annoyed and stop providing them with the necessities.

6. Professional support:

As self silencing may cause many psycho physical disorders. Therefore to decrease or eliminate this tendency, help from counsellors, psychologist, psychiatrist can be

taken to live a life without the fear to speak or express.

Conclusion :

Self silencing is one of the most adopted trait of women who choose not to speak due to fear of conflict, fight or disagreements. It is a very serious issue that is caused mainly due to societal judgements, fear of abandonments, fear of losing relationship, fear of misunderstanding etc. As self silencing impacts a person's both physical and mental aspect, it requires measures and strategies to sort out their difficulties it creates. Taking professional support, becoming financially independent, setting healthy boundaries can help a woman eliminate this construct and become a confident, ethical and purposeful person. ○

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Media and Women Health:

A Study on the Role of Media in Promoting Women Health

Abhita Gogoi

Abstract :

Media is a tool of communication which has countless benefits. Apart from connecting to people media plays the role of a guide for many people. It facilitates and disseminates information to the user about something in the real time. Media is a tool for empowerment and creates knowledge that leads to awareness about availability of health facilities in the region that can be utilized for better living style. The study focuses on the role media is playing for disseminating information about health to the rural women of Borahi, Charaideo district. The study tries to understand how media affects the health of women. The study found out that women are not aware of health schemes aided by government from time to time. A simple random sampling method has been used for the purpose of the study.

Keywords: Media, Health, Government, women, information, aware.

Introduction :

Health is one of the most important indicators of human development at personal, social and national level. All the countries of the world and their government are concerned with the development of health facilities for every citizen. The government of India provides free medical facilities for many health problems and cost of effective medical treatments for other health problems. To expose such initiatives of Government of India, media such as television, radio, and newspaper, social media etc are the good platforms to disseminate such information. Media has such potential to disseminate information regarding health care services that can help women with limited educational attainment. Women require appropriate information about health care services and this need can be fulfilled by media providing information through various platforms. Mass media plays a vital role in decision making for individuals, families and organizations in addition to being a source of news and entertainment (Katz, Haas, and Gurevitch, 1973; Viswanath, Ramanadhan, and Kontos, 2007). Media can help women to understand the significance of health care services and health education utilization by providing information through visual appealing, audio messages, and written reports. According to World Health Organization Report (1954) Health Education like general education is concerned with changes in knowledge, feelings and behavior of people. In its most usual form it concentrates on developing such health practices as are believed to bring almost the best possible state of well

being. Thus the study determines what role media is playing for disseminating information about health to the tea garden women of Teok tea estate of Charaideo district.

Classification of Media :

Media is considered as fourth pillar of Indian democracy. The democracy is balanced by the three pillars of democracy namely the executive, the legislature and the judiciary but in the present day context democracy is lined towards the fourth pillar that is Media. The basic purpose of media is to aware us about various social, political and economic activities. Media is regarded as a mirror to the world which reflects the true and harsh realities of the world. It acts as a vehicle for delivering message with information to the public. The Public can reach that information by using media like television, radio, print, outdoor signs and the internet. Media can be classified into different types such as Print Media, Electronic Media, Folk Media, Broadcast Media, outdoor or out of home media, Internet etc. Here the selected media types for discussion are only the print and electronic media :

- **Print Media-** It is a form of Mass media which is in form of publications that are available on printed paper and are distributed and termed as Print Media. Printed media is considered as one of the oldest means of sharing information or news. In this type of media the news or information is published in hard copy and then it is released to the public which is more reader friendly. The different forms of print media are -

1. Newspapers- In this form of print media, authentic news, articles and advertisement are provided in regular manner in an attractive way to grab readers attention.
 2. Magazines- Magazines are available on various subjects such as fashion, cars, health, academic etc. Most of the magazines comprise feature articles, interviews, interpretation, research and analysis content
 3. Books- Books are also printed media and it also comes in variety of formats including textbook, picturesque books, literary works and many more.
- Electronic Media- It is one of the modern way of providing information or news through electronic means. The news or information in electronic media is uploaded or broadcast and then, it is viewed through electronic mediums which are more pleasing for viewers.
 1. Television- It has become most popular electronic device from providing information to wholesome entertainment.
 2. Radio- It provides information through audio sound. Sometimes this kind of media has become charming and successful than television, it doesnot hold the listeners attention in the same way that visual advertisement do.
 3. Internet- It is that type of media where means of communication are through the internet. It can include personal communications such as text, images, videos, voice etc.

Review of Literature :

The rapid development of internet has resulted in various significant changes to the lives of every human. As M Lebow et al (1993) in an article titled “Womens Health and the Mass Media” studies the role of mass media regarding women’s health risks issues. This article describes the portrayal of women’s health risk news and how that news is presented is significant for those women who use it to make decisions regarding her health. Liette Lapointe et al(2014) in the paper entitled “Creating Health Awareness: A social media enabled collaboration” discussed regarding the space for health institutions to use social media as a tool to make people aware of diseases. The social media platforms are suitable for health organizations to use the platform to inform, educate, support, share, and raise funds which finally help user in prevention, detection and to take necessary steps for the treatment.

To increase womens health status K Parkavi (2016) analyses the health status of rural women in India. The study finds that many women were still unaware regarding the diseases that can be cured at times. Regarding women’s empowerment Sharmila Kayal(2018) describes that media has been playing effective role in disseminating health messages for women empowerment. A Burcee et al (2013) in the paper titled, “ The role and influence of mass media tools on womens health promotion” studies women indulgent on mass media and its impact upon women’s perceptions . The paper suggested that to what extent mass media affect the

behavior of women regarding health in our society. The present researchers found that no study came up with media and knowledge about health facilities. Therefore this topic is undertaken for the study.

Objectives :

The proposed study is based on the following objectives-

1. To study women uses of media and knowledge about health facilities.
2. To analyze how media is influencing rural women of Borahi, Charaideo district

Methodology :

This study is exploratory in nature and was conducted to assess the knowledge regarding health facilities through media platforms among rural women of Borahi gaon, of Charaideo district. Data were collected from 50 respondents who use media platforms.

Results and Discussions :

Media platforms play a vital role both in positive and negative way. It can turn negative to positives and vice versa. It can change the negative thoughts regarding health issues in the minds of people and can create awareness about health issues and solutions. Hence it becomes necessary to explore the views of tea tribe women regarding media on health facilities.

The objectives were analyzed with the help of table

Table1. Number of media platforms used by women

Number of Media platforms	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	10	20%
2	26	52%
3	11	22%
4 and above	3	6%
Total	50	100

The above table shows that different media platforms are used by the respondents. The most 52% two media platforms are being used by the respondents followed by three platforms, one media platform and 4 and above media platforms used respectively by the respondents.

Table 2. Awareness of women regarding government medical facilities -

Medical Facilities	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	30	60%
Not aware	20	40%
Total	50	100%

Table 2 shows that the majority of 60 percentage of women are aware of government medical information and 40 percentage of tea tribe women are not aware of health related information provided by government. It is observed that the majority of the respondents were aware of health information through various types of media platforms which helps to understand their attitude towards health consciousness.

Table 3. Health Information through Media -

Health information	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Sharing	29	58%
Not sharing	21	42%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 shows that the majority of 58 percentage of women are receiving health related information and 21 percentage of women are not receiving health related information. It is observed that the majority of the respondents were receiving health information through various types of media platforms which helps to understand their attitude towards health consciousness.

Table4. Importance of using media

Reason	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Very Important	8	16%
Important	12	24%
Reasonably Important	25	50%
less Important	5	10%
Total	50	100%

The above table describes importance of media to the respondents life. 50 percent of them said it is reasonably important for day to day life. For 24 percent it is important and very important are 16 percent. It is seen that 10 percent of the respondents mention that media as seemingly less important as its cost is very expensive.

Findings and Conclusion :

From the above discussion it is found that there is

significance of using media as platforms are used by them for various purposes. The study reveals that maximum women are aware of government aided medical facilities through news or internet. It is through media women are able to get health related informations, schemes, subsidies aided by government. They revealed that media nowadays has become a part and parcel of life and are very significant for everyone's day to day life. The study shows the various benefits of media networks for getting health related informations. It also shows that they are exchanging useful information with others and they educate themselves. But the study shows that there is still a gap that has to be filled in regarding the digital literacy of women so that they are able to estimate the potency of media related to positive or negative information. The government also takes various measures and methods in providing health related informations through mass media and social media as well. However necessary steps should be taken by the government in curbing the wrong information provided by the media.○

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Queerness, Identity Issues and Social Stigma: A Study of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*

Dr. Anita Konwar

Abstract :

Identity issues have long been a matter of contention for queer individuals in a traditional society. The rigid expectations and norms of traditional society can lead to discrimination, mental health challenges, and the denial of basic human rights for individuals who do not conform to traditional societal standards. In the novel *Funny Boy*, Shyam Selvadurai's nuanced portrayal of the intersection between gender identity and societal stigma offers a compelling insight into the multifaceted challenges encountered by transgender individuals. Arjie, the protagonist navigates the complexities of his identity, his family, and the world around him. The objective of this paper is to discuss queerness, identity issues and social stigma in the light of the novel *Funny Boy*. The methodology applied in the paper is analytical method.

Key-Words: Queerness; Identity Issues; Social Stigma; Discrimination; Mental Health

Introduction:

Identity issues have long been a matter of contention for queer individuals in a traditional society. The concept of queerness, which encompasses a wide range of non-heteronormative sexual orientations and gender identities, often clashes with the rigid expectations and norms of traditional society. This clash can lead to feelings of alienation, discrimination, and the denial of basic human rights for individuals who do not conform to traditional societal standards. In traditional societies, there is a strong emphasis on binary notions of gender and sexuality. These societies often reinforce the idea that there are only two genders, male and female, and that heterosexuality is the only valid sexual orientation. This narrow understanding of gender and sexuality can be incredibly damaging to individuals who do not fit within these categories. For example, individuals who identify as transgender, non-binary, or queer may face immense pressure to conform to the gender assigned to them at birth, and may experience rejection from their families, communities, and institutions.

Furthermore, traditional societies often perpetuate harmful stereotypes and prejudices against queer individuals. These stereotypes can lead to discrimination, violence, and psychological harm. Queer individuals may also face barriers to accessing healthcare, education, and employment due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition to discrimination and violence, queerness and identity issues in traditional society can have a profound impact on an individual's mental health.

The constant pressure to hide or suppress one's true identity can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, and low self-esteem. This can lead to higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among queer individuals compared to their heterosexual counterparts. The lack of acceptance and support from traditional societal structures can exacerbate these mental health challenges even further.

Despite these challenges, there has been progress in recent years towards greater acceptance and understanding of queerness and identity issues in traditional society. Many countries have passed legislation to protect the rights of queer individuals, such as anti-discrimination laws and the legalization of same-sex marriage. Additionally, there has been a growing movement to challenge traditional gender norms and advocate for greater representation of queer individuals in media, politics, and other public spheres. It is crucial for traditional societies to continue to evolve and become more inclusive and affirming of all gender and sexual identities. This can be achieved through education, open dialogue, and the promotion of empathy and understanding. Individuals and communities must work together to create safe and supportive spaces for queer individuals, and to fight against discrimination and prejudice in all its forms.

Objective and methodology:

The objective of this paper is to discuss queerness, identity issues and social stigma in the light of the novel

Funny Boy. The methodology applied in the paper is analytical method.

Discussion:

Shyam Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy* provides a poignant portrayal of the complexities and challenges faced by individuals who identify as queer particularly within a society that is rife with social stigma and prejudice. The story is set in Sri Lanka during a time of political turmoil and societal unrest, and it follows the journey of Arjie, a young boy who grapples with his own identity and struggles to navigate the societal expectations and limitations placed upon him. The novel offers a raw and intimate exploration of the impact of social stigma on the lives of transgender individuals, shedding light on the emotional and psychological toll that discrimination and marginalization can have. The portrayal of Arjie's experiences highlights the pervasive nature of social stigma and its profound influence on one's sense of self-worth and belonging. Through Arjie's journey, Selvadurai skillfully captures the internal conflict and external pressures faced by queer individuals living in a society shaped by rigid gender norms and prejudice.

Selvadurai's nuanced portrayal of the intersection between gender identity and societal stigma offers a compelling insight into the multifaceted challenges encountered by transgender individuals. The novel serves as a powerful commentary on the need for greater understanding, empathy, and acceptance within society. It underscores the importance of dismantling harmful

stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals of all gender identities. Arjie, the protagonist of *Funny Boy* is a young boy growing up in Sri Lanka during a time of political and social unrest. The novel follows Arjie as he navigates the complexities of his identity, his family, and the world around him. One of the main themes of the story is Arjie's struggle with his sexuality. From a young age, Arjie realizes that he is different from the other boys in his school. He is more interested in playing dress-up and reading romantic novels, much to the dismay of his conservative family. This is indicative of his preference for spending time with girls and his disinterest in conforming to traditional gender roles. It also reflects his desire to defy societal expectations and express himself freely. The bride games also serve as a medium for Arjie to explore his own identity and desires, as he navigates his childhood and adolescence in a conservative Sri Lankan society. Overall, the playing of bride games reveals important aspects of Arjie's character and the challenges he faces in the novel. As he grows older, he becomes more aware of his attraction to other boys, but he struggles to understand and accept his own feelings in a society that condemns homosexuality.

Arjie's family and society treat him with a mixture of acceptance, confusion, and rejection because of his queer identity. While Arjie's mother and sister are more understanding and supportive of him, his father and other family members are less accepting. They try to force him into conforming to traditional gender roles and expectations, which causes conflict and tension within

the family. In society, Arjie faces discrimination and prejudice for being queer. He is bullied and ostracized by his peers, and the wider community views him with suspicion and judgment. This treatment causes Arjie to feel isolated and misunderstood, adding to his struggles in coming to terms with his identity. Despite the pressure to conform, Arjie finds solace in his relationships with his family, particularly his strong-willed and independent aunt, Radha, who becomes a source of comfort and support for him. However, as political tensions in Sri Lanka escalate, Arjie's family becomes increasingly divided, and Arjie is forced to confront the reality of the world around him. Throughout the novel, Arjie learns to embrace his identity and find his place in a society that often rejects those who are different. *Funny Boy* is a coming-of-age story that explores the complexities of identity, love, and acceptance in a tumultuous time and place.

Arjie, navigates the complexities of his identity in a society that is deeply traditional and conformist. The novel delves into themes of family, sexuality, and the profound impact of societal expectations and norms. As Arjie begins to understand and accept himself, he faces resistance and discrimination from his family and community. The novel explores the challenges and emotional turmoil that Arjie experiences as he grapples with his true identity and seeks to find acceptance and belonging. Through Arjie's journey, the novel sheds light on the complexities of gender identity and the profound impact of societal expectations and prejudices.

In the novel, Arjie's identity as a queer individual is shown through his struggles with conforming to traditional gender norms. He is shown to be sensitive, creative, and not interested in typical "boy" activities. This is evident through his love for dressing up in his aunt's clothes and his preference for playing with girls rather than boys. Arjie's relationship with Shehan also serves as a way to explore his gender identity. Shehan is understanding and supportive of Arjie's differences, and their close friendship eventually develops into a romantic relationship. Their bond challenges societal expectations and norms, and highlights the complexities of navigating gender and sexuality in a conservative and traditional society.

Through these interactions and experiences, the novel effectively portrays Arjie as a queer individual who struggles to find acceptance and understanding within his community, while also highlighting the importance of supportive and loving relationships in a person's journey towards self-discovery and acceptance.

Conclusion:

Arjie's queer identity is a source of strife within his family and society, and he faces numerous challenges in being true to himself in a world that does not fully accept or understand him. *Funny Boy* serves as a poignant reminder of the impact of social stigma on the lives of queer individuals and the urgent need for greater awareness and advocacy. By delving into the personal struggles and triumphs of its characters, the novel offers

a compelling narrative that resonates with readers and prompts crucial conversations about the pervasive effects of social stigma on queer individuals. Selvadurai's masterful storytelling illuminates the complexities of the transgender experience and underscores the imperative of challenging societal prejudices and fostering a more compassionate and inclusive society for all.○

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A Review on Phytoremediation Potential of Certain Plant Species in Removing Contaminants from Agricultural Land

Suman Gogoi

Abstract :

Phytoremediation is a sustainable and economical method of decontaminating the environment, which uses the inherent powers of plants to clean up contaminated soils and waterways. Studies demonstrate how different plant types may effectively remove different kinds of pollutants. While hyper accumulators like *Brassica* and *Portulaca* species show potential for metal-rich soils, synthetic chelates improve the uptake of heavy metals by plants. Water pollution is monitored and remedied by aquatic plants like *Nelumbo nucifera*, while energy crops like hemp and peanuts offer dual benefits of reducing contamination and producing biofuel. *Axonopus compressus* works well for soils contaminated with hydrocarbons, whereas *Typha angustifolia* and other wetland plants treat lead contamination in wastewater. Furthermore, Marigold and Vetiver grass provide remedies for particular contaminants and stabilize the soil. Depending on the kind and degree of contamination,

choosing the right plant species and phytoremediation methods is essential to maximize the process.

Key-Words: Phytoremediation; Sustainable; Environment; Pollutants

Introduction :

Rapid industrialization and modern agricultural practices leads to the addition of different types of contaminants in the agricultural land. Soil contamination is the alteration of the natural composition of the soil through the addition of toxic substances like Petroleum hydrocarbons, Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH), solvents, pesticides, lead, and other heavy metals (Chromium, Lead, Arsenic, Mercury, Copper etc.). These substances are added to the soil through various natural or anthropogenic ways. Copper, Nickel, Zinc, Manganese and Iron are generally present in trace amounts in the soil and are utilized by plants for their metabolic activities. However, increased concentrations of these elements have toxic effects on plants and humans as it gets accumulated in food chain (Panda and Choudhary, 2005).

Natural weathering processes sometimes releases heavy metals that occur naturally in soil parent materials into the agricultural soil system. Industrial, agricultural and household effluents etc. contain various pollutants which gradually find their way into the agricultural lands and finally enter the food chain. Fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides etc. used in agriculture contain significant amounts of contaminants which in certain amount pose serious threat to living beings and also effect soil health and its productivity.

Table 1. Sources of heavy metals in soils

Name of the contaminant	Source
Arsenic (As)	Timber treatment, paints, pesticides, geothermal, geogenic/natural processes, smelting operations, thermal power plants, fuel burning etc.
Cadmium (Cd)	Electroplating, batteries, fertilizers, Zinc smelting, waste batteries, e-waste, paint sludge, incinerations & fuel combustion.
Chromium (Cr)	Timber treatment, leather tanning, pesticides, dyes, Mining, industrial coolants, chromium salts manufacturing.
Copper (Cu)	Fungicides, electrical, paints, pigments, timber treatment, fertilizers, mine tailings, electroplating, smelting operations.
Lead (Pb)	Batteries, metal products, preservatives, petrol additives, paints, e-waste, Smelting operations, coal- based thermal power plants, ceramics, bangle industry.
Manganese (Mn)	Fertilizer.
Mercury (Hg)	Instruments, fumigants, geothermal, chlor-alkali plants, thermal power plants, fluorescent lamps, hospital waste (damaged thermometers, barometers, sphygmomanometers), electrical appliances etc.
Molybdenum (Mo)	Fertilizer, spent catalyst.
Nickel (Ni)	Alloys, battery industry, mine tailings, smelting operations, thermal power plants.
Zinc (Zn)	Galvanization, dyes, paints, timber treatment, fertilizers, mine tailings, smelting, electroplating.

Source: Lone et al., 2008

Phytoremediation refers to the use of various types of plants to extract, mitigate or destroy contaminants in the soil through natural plant metabolic activities. The term phytoremediation was coined in the year 1991 by Ilya Raskin of Rutgers University, New Jersey, in a grant proposal to the Superfund Program of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (Beans, 2017). Plant species vary in their ability to accumulate elements in roots, stems and/or leaves. Phytoremediation indicates the levels of bioaccumulated contaminants within the tissues of organisms, which show the net amount of pollutants integrated over a period of time (Lovett-Doust *et al.*, 1994). Studies have revealed that accumulation of such metals in the foliage may allow hyperaccumulator species to evade predators including caterpillars, fungi and bacteria (Pollard and Baker, 1997).

Hyperaccumulators are plants which can concentrate the pollutants in a minimum quantity depending on the pollutant involved (Backer *et al.* 1994). These plants are able to bioaccumulate (Lasat *et al.*, 1998), degrade, or render harmless contaminants found in natural resources such as soils, water, and air.

Accumulation of heavy metals in excess amounts in soil can have deleterious effects on soil fertility, ecosystem functions and constitute significant negative effect on animals and human health (Turan and Estringu , 2007). Accumulation of high concentration of Trace metals in the soil becomes toxic to plant, animal and human health (Dotaniya *et al.* 2018). Major risk from exposure to agricultural contaminants is faced by the

population of the developing nations.

In higher plants the process of hyperaccumulation of heavy metals by involves several steps, such as transport of metals across the plasma membrane of root cells, xylem loading and translocation and detoxification and sequestration of metals at the whole plant and cellular levels (Lombi et al., 2002).

Review of Literature

The literature on phytoremediation emphasizes how different plant species, particularly heavy metals, are excellent in cleaning up different kinds of pollution. A discussion based on the studies presented is provided below:

Synthetic chelates have been shown by Khan et al. (2000) to greatly increase the accumulation of heavy metals in plant shoots, indicating that chelate-assisted phytoextraction is an economical cleaning method. The bioavailability of heavy metals can be enhanced by synthetic chelates such as ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA), which increases their accessibility for plant uptake. When treating soils contaminated with metals like lead (Pb), cadmium (Cd), and chromium (Cr), this technique is especially helpful. *Portulaca oleracea* and *Portulaca tuberosa* are effective hyper accumulators of Cd, Cr, and As, according to Tiwari et al. (2007). When these plants were exposed to industrial effluents, their roots acquired greater amounts of Cr. The ability of some plant species to tolerate and collect hazardous metals is highlighted by this discovery, which is important

information for developing focused phytoremediation techniques.

Brassica napus (canola) and *Brassica juncea* (Indian mustard) were reported by Turan and Esringu (2007) to benefit from chelating compounds such as EDTA in order to improve phytoextraction. These plants demonstrated their potential for large-scale soil decontamination initiatives by successfully removing heavy metals from contaminated soils. Chelating compounds make metals more soluble in the soil, which facilitates plant uptake. *Nelumbo nucifera*, or lotus, is useful as a biomonitor for heavy metal deposition in aquatic environments, as noted by Kumar et al. (2008). In addition to being useful for monitoring metal pollution, aquatic macrophytes like lotus can aid in cleanup by stabilizing sediments and storing pollutants.

Shi & Cai (2009) investigated how resistant different energy crops were to cadmium pollution. They discovered that peanut, hemp, and flax were especially good at accumulating Cd, which qualified them for use in phytoremediation as well as the production of biofuel. This shows that energy crops have the potential to be both a cleaner soil and a source of renewable electricity.

Lead (Pb) may be effectively removed from contaminated wastewater by *Typha angustifolia* and *Ipomoea carnea*, as demonstrated by Adhikari et al. (2010). Wetland plants are useful for cleaning up contaminated water bodies because of their reputation for controlling nutrient loads and pollutants. *Axonopus compressus* was investigated by Bordoloi et al. (2012) in

relation to the cleanup of hydrocarbon-contaminated soil. They discovered that it was efficient in halting the spread of pollutants, reducing soil erosion, and breaking down hydrocarbons. This implies that it might be applied to places that are highly contaminated by crude oil.

In their assessment of heavy metal pollution in aquatic plants, Kumar et al. (2012) proposed *Eichhornia crassipes*, or water hyacinth, for Cu and Ni and *Marsilea minuta* and *Hydrilla verticillata* for Cr and Pb. The efficacy of each plant species may vary depending on the particular pollutants present and the surrounding circumstances. The potential of marigold (*Tagetes erecta*) to remediate soil contaminated with Cd and Ni was noted by Singh et al. (2013). This implies that local flower crops may be useful in lowering soil metal concentrations and lowering food chain hazards. Vetiver grass (*Vetiveria zizanioides*) has been shown by Suelee et al. (2017) and Otunola et al. (2022) to be effective in eliminating a variety of heavy metals, such as Cu, Fe, Mn, Pb, and Zn. They observed that the length of the roots affected the uptake of contaminants and suggested intercropping and amendments to improve the effectiveness of remediation. Because of its strong root system and capacity to maintain soil while eliminating impurities, vetiver grass is especially prized.

Discussion

A variety of toxins introduced by modern agriculture and rapid industrialization have drastically changed agricultural regions. Petroleum hydrocarbons,

polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), pesticides, solvents, and heavy metals like mercury, lead, chromium, and arsenic are some of these contaminants. Both natural processes—like the weathering of the parent elements of the soil—and man-made ones—like industrial discharges, agricultural runoff, and residential effluents—can contaminate soil. Because they enter the food chain, these compounds have the potential to build up in the soil and pose major threats to plant health, soil fertility, and human health. Phytoremediation uses plants to eliminate, break down, or neutralize pollutants in the soil. This method makes use of a variety of plant species that have varying capacities for accumulating contaminants. Hyper accumulators are very good in removing heavy metals from the soil, such as arsenic (As), chromium (Cr), and cadmium (Cd). Examples of these plants are *Portulaca oleracea* and *Portulaca tuberosa*. Pollutants can be collected and appropriately disposed of from the tissues these plants are able to concentrate them in.

Metals are transported across root cell membranes, xylem loading and translocation, and the metals are detoxified and sequestered inside the plant throughout the accumulation process in hyperaccumulators. Studies have indicated that the application of synthetic chelates, including ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA), can augment heavy metal accumulation by elevating their bioavailability for plant absorption. This technique works very well to remove metal contamination from soils, such as lead, cadmium, and chromium. When given chelating chemicals, some plants, such *Brassica napus* (canola) and

Brassica juncea (Indian mustard), have been shown to be successful in large-scale soil cleaning initiatives. These plants show that heavy metals from contaminated soils can be effectively removed. Furthermore contributing to environmental remediation are aquatic plants such as *Nelumbo nucifera* (lotus), which act as biomonitors for heavy metal pollution and stabilize sediments.

Energy crops that can be utilized for both soil remediation and the generation of biofuels include peanut, hemp, and flax. These crops have demonstrated resilience to cadmium pollution. In a similar vein, lead contamination in wastewater can be effectively removed by wetland plants like *Typha angustifolia* and *Ipomoea carnea*. *Axonopus compressus* is effective in lowering soil erosion and decomposing contaminants. It was studied for its capacity to clear hydrocarbon-contaminated soil. The unique capacities of other plant species to deal with different pollutants have been investigated. For instance, *Marsilea minuta* and *Hydrilla verticillata* are good at removing chromium (Cr) and lead (Pb), while water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) is good at removing copper (Cu) and nickel (Ni) from aquatic habitats. The robust root system of vetiver grass (*Vetiveria zizanioides*) is known for its effectiveness in eliminating a range of heavy metals, including copper (Cu), iron (Fe), manganese (Mn), lead (Pb), and zinc (Zn). Marigold (*Tagetes erecta*) has the potential to reduce soil concentrations of cadmium (Cd) and nickel (Ni).

All things considered, phytoremediation offers a viable, green method of treating soil contamination. The

kind of contamination, the type of plant utilized, and the environmental circumstances all affect how effective this method is. Phytoremediation is a sustainable way to improve soil health and reduce pollution in the environment by using plants' inherent capacity to detoxify and collect contaminants.

Conclusion :

All of the research works show the different plant species that can be used for phytoremediation. Each species has advantages and disadvantages based on the kind of contamination and the environment. These approaches provide a variety of choices for treating contaminated soils and waters, ranging from chelate-assisted extraction to the application of particular crops and macrophytes. For best outcomes, plant species and treatments should be selected with consideration for the particular pollutants present as well as the site's characteristics.○

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Environment or Development: What We Need to Prioritize

Dr. Pranati Gogoi

Abstract :

The present study aims to focus on some of the important elements of environment and their significance in our lives along with the major environmental issues that are caused by human activities and how we can overcome them by developing conservative measures and sustainable way of living. For the sake of development and modernization, a lot of destruction is done to the environment deforestation, industrialization, pesticides and fertilizers, dam construction, nuclear explosion and many more that have become havoc to the environment. The only way to stop this is to protect our natural vegetation and eliminate the things that are harmful to our environment. Incorporation of some incentive mechanisms or benefit sharing mechanisms in the community conserved areas and protection of valuable natural resources would be an encouraging step towards conservation and management of environment.

Keywords: Sustainable; modernization; industrialization; nuclear explosion

Introduction :

Trees, the most important component of Nature, have enough potential to protect the environment and hold all other components of the nature firmly together. Trees are serving our planet and protecting it before human beings came into existence. It is because of them that we are able to live on this planet. All creatures on this planet are some way or the other dependent on trees. Starting from bacteria to fungus, both associates with plants to form symbiotic relationship and gives rise to some important biological processes like Nitrogen fixation, Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhizae (VAM) respectively, this helps in regulating the biological system. From food to shelter and medicine to furniture, they are highly valuable and irreplaceable. A single tree can be a home to thousands of insects, a place of shelter to migratory birds and can work like an “ecosystem” in nature. So when a tree is chopped down it is not just number of logs that are wiped off but a whole ecosystem is devastated. So we can simply imagine how many ecosystems are being devastated daily just for the sake of human pleasure. We cut them; destroy them because trees do not express their feelings and emotions when they are hurt as we do. We have become so selfish and carried away by the hues of “modernization” that we have forgotten our main source of livelihood. Although Science and Technology has achieved great advancement but they can never feed us or fulfill all our basic needs. The modern advancement in the name of industrialization and materialization is the creation of super brain and it was not something that

existed in nature. Trees, the primary source of oxygen has enough to provide us but we fail to understand their importance.

Deforestation, one of the major environmental issues and the primary cause of global warming has become a matter of higher concern these days. Due to deforestation, the air pollution is increasing at an alarming rate. In the big cities, people are more drawn towards the tall buildings and motor vehicles and overlook the level of pollution that is emitted by them enormously on daily basis. And they know it well that this pollution is neither good for their health nor for the environment. And this is evident from the change in climate of a place and the extinction of species from the environment. Both developed and developing countries tries to hide the impact of pollution on the environment due to the fear for loss of economic growth and development. Some of the major culprits of the environment like overpopulation, deforestation, industrialization, pesticides and fertilizers, dam construction, nuclear explosion and many more have become havoc to the environment. Overpopulation, one of the major issues in developing countries like India, is the primary cause of food crises. Large population needs higher food production and for this, large scale cultivation is carried out by clearing trees and forests in order to meet our need. For better production pesticides and fertilizers are sprayed on the crops to kill the pest. These chemicals kill the pest but at the same time reduce the quality of the top layer soil and gradually the fertility of the soil is lost. Once the soil is contaminated, it is not

only the soil that gets affected but also affects the living particles dwelling on soil. Over the years, the hydro-projects have contributed significantly to the economy of the country but it is not carried out in a responsible manner. Hydroelectric projects make the river water contaminated and harmful to the aquatic organisms to a larger extent. All these factors are the harbingers of environmental degradation. Economic development is good but it should be done without depletion of natural resources. Sustainable development and environmental management strategies has become the need of the hour for the conservation of the remaining natural resources. The present scenario of our world environment is deteriorating like never before and the one that will suffer the most at the end are the humans. Humans, the superior amongst all has crossed the limit of cruelty and morality. We have failed to protect our mother earth being the advanced being and still moving towards a direction which will lead to the destruction of human civilization. The only way to stop this is to protect our natural vegetation and eliminate the things that are harmful to our environment. More awareness programs should be conducted in the public places related to major environmental issues. All these problems can be solved by us if we develop the simple understanding in individual level and make a contribution towards the betterment of our planet. Inculcating some good habits like planting trees, use of paper bags instead of polythenes, proper disposal of plastics and garbages, proper use of water and electricity, can be cultivated in individual level if we really

care to protect our environment. Usage of household materials that are eco friendly and discharge less toxic to the surroundings, recycling bio-degradable waste products etc will really help in making a difference towards protecting our environment from degradation in coming years. Many NGOs have come up in many parts of India which are taking active role in paving young minds in a proper direction. They have proved to be a platform for us to gain an in depth understanding of some of the issues that plague India today. The NGOs conduct internship courses and programs, where they discuss the major environmental issues and its impact on our social life. They not only focus on the environment and development issues but also teach how to deal with the problem in a meaningful way. Many school and colleges have also taken initiatives by introducing environmental science as a compulsory subject and conducting workshops on environment day (5th June) to raise awareness among students. Implementation of these steps will definitely bring a positive outlook amongst us towards our environment. We must realize that environment is not limited to fancy protocols and conventions in Cancun and Copenhagen but is a part of our daily lived experiences.

UN Environment, the leading global force in the field of environment, provides leadership, inspires nations and people to improve the quality of life. World Environment Day (WED) is a UN Environment- led global event, which is celebrated every year on June 5. In order to improve our environment, every individual

should have the knowledge on various causes of pollution, only then prevention is possible. Without knowing the cause, we are contributing to environmental pollution through various activities. Industry needs energy, which is derived from coal burning power plants or diesel generating sets, both of which contribute to air pollution. Transport sector emits energy related to CO₂ (carbon dioxide), particulate matter and many gases which are harmful for all. In agriculture, the burning of agricultural waste produces black carbon. Open burning of trash releases harmful air pollutants like dioxin, furan, methane and black carbon into the air. On the other hand, particulate matter is one of the major elements for polluting air. Particulate matter (PM) also originates from vehicular emission, earth cutting on the hills, bad street condition, building construction activities, windblown dust from river banks, open burning of waste and also from industries. We can make out that every single step towards progress in the development sector has a negative impact on the environment because of unawareness among the people. We are continuously repeating the same mistakes over and over again without realizing the outcomes which our future generation has to face.

The survival of man is intimately dependent on the availability of different plant resources. The plant wealth of a country is its pride and conserving it should be our prime responsibility. Nature provides human enormous benefits economically and plays a prominent role in modulating ecosystem function and stability. Forests constitute the most diverse plant communities and

also contribute in regulating the environment to larger extent. These forests are disappearing at an alarming rate because of deforestation for extraction of firewood and other forest products. The problem of forest disturbance because of anthropogenic activities is increasing day by day as a result, the plants or ecosystem do not get time to recover adequately. The forest ecosystem is very diverse and rich in natural resources, enriched with many medicinal, rare, endemic and threatened categories of plants. As forests are the resources for medicine, agriculture, it needs to be conserved for us and for the coming generation. Due to industrialization and mining, forests are degraded at an alarming rate. The degradation of tropical forests and destruction of habitat due to anthropogenic activities are the major causes of decline in the global biodiversity. To meet the increasing demand of the growing population, forest and hill slopes are cleared to a considerable rate for agricultural use, affording no chance for natural regeneration and soil fertility.

Incorporation of some incentive mechanisms or benefit sharing mechanisms in the community conserved areas and protection of valuable natural resources would be an encouraging step towards conservation and management of biodiversity. For reclamation of degraded forest lands and riparian sites, plantation and eco restoration program must be initiated. In riparian sites, plantation of bamboo and various species of grass can be initiated to check erosion. Eco-sensitive zones in the valley should be demarcated and regulations may be

imposed on developmental projects like mega dams, industrial activities and mining in such areas are other important measures of conservation.

All these initiatives are fruitless unless and until the local communities are not involved. It should be made clear that the community training and capacity building are necessary prerequisites to local biodiversity conservation programme. It is imperative to raise awareness among the local communities of the benefits of nature conservation. They must be imparted with technical, financial, managerial, marketing and training support so that they will have a new economic incentive to conserve the resource base of environment. There is an urgent need to reassess the challenges and opportunities of sustainable development and managing the bio resource of the country.○

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CITIZEN SCIENCE : AN ANSWER TO HOW WE CAN PASSIONATELY VOLUNTEER TO CONSERVE OUR NATURE

Dr. Amrita Mech

Abstract :

Climate change, pollution, overexploitation of species, resources and changes in land use are the biggest threats to Earth's biodiversity. Human actions are causing these devastating and irreversible effects on the environment, which has plummeted biodiversity and so nature conservation must be taken seriously and we as citizen scientists can passionately volunteer to conserve our nature.

Key- Words : Citizen science, biodiversity, conservation, volunteer, monitoring.

Introduction :

Our Earth's biodiversity has been plummeting and the recent data from Red Data List 2024, published by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), proves it. It has reported that out of a total of 166,061

species assessed till date, 46,300 i.e. 28% of species are threatened with extinction (IUCN 2024). Habitat destruction, global warming, climate change are considered to be the chief causes which have been threatening life on our planet. Many scientists ever believe that we are in the midst of the 6th Great Mass Extinction or Holocene Extinction, which has also been termed as the Anthropocene Extinction as it is driven by the intense human activity. We have been selfishly exploiting the nature and its resources and degrading our environment and disturbing the ecological harmony of our planet. But we always speak of our moral obligations and responsibility towards our environment. It's high time; we work for the conservation of our nature, so as to ensure a sustainable future for ourselves and our future generations and citizen science is an answer to how we can passionately volunteer to conserve our nature. Also known as participatory science, it is a tool or project through which we common citizens, though amateurs can collect data which can be documented in platforms, which help build scientific data and knowledge, that help scientists in making discoveries, tackle challenges and improve life on our planet Earth.

The objective of this paper is to review on how we as citizen scientists can volunteer and commit ourselves in conserving our nature.

Discussion :

As citizen scientists we can conserve our nature by documenting our biodiversity, by trying to save

endangered and other endemic species from roadkills, by tackling challenges of nature like landslides, floods, volcanoes, earthquakes and evils like air and water pollution which all take tolls on biodiversity and our nature.

Citizen Science in Biodiversity Documentation:

When data or records of biodiversity of an area are deficient, as the area is unexplored due to remoteness, then citizen science can play the role of a supplementary tool in providing data on the diversity. Local people have access to the study sites all-round the year and data and records collected by them on any species, their occurrence and distribution, can help researchers generate ideas and plan for their management and conservation. Pradhan et al., 2003 documented butterflies in the Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalaya which is a hotspot for butterfly diversity harbouring about 46% of all butterflies found in India. They self-surveyed and also used the data of butterflies recorded in the same area from online citizen science platform <http://www.inaturalist.org/>. iNaturalist is a global online platform where people share information about biodiversity and help each other learn about nature. It is aimed to connect people with nature. The India Biodiversity Portal (<https://indiabiodiversity.org/>) is a repository of biodiversity information of Indian Subcontinent. Citizens can participate by contributing data or accessing information of biodiversity of India. 58,348 numbers of species have been recorded.

Any citizen who cares about nature can help generate biodiversity information and document them in

platforms like Biodiversity Atlas (<https://www.bioatlasindia.org/>). Under the umbrella of Biodiversity Atlas India Projects there are sister websites which documents diversity of birds- Birds of India (<https://www.birdsofindia.org/>), butterflies– Butterflies of India (<https://www.ifoundbutterflies.org/>), moths- Moths of India (<https://www.mothsofindia.org/>), odonata- Odonata of India (<https://www.indianodonata.org/>), amphibians – Amphibians of India (<https://www.indianamphibians.org/>), reptiles- Reptiles of India (<https://www.indianreptiles.org/>) and mammals- Mammals of India (<https://www.mammalsofindia.org/>). Highest number of species recorded is of butterflies and moths. A total of 1127 number of butterfly species, recorded by 8223 number of contributors are documented in the Butterflies of India website, while 3015 species of moths were recorded by 3599 contributors in Moths of India website. The documentation of biodiversity is the foundation of conservation.

Citizen Science in Decision Making for Mitigation of Wildlife-Highway Conflict :

Highways and other roadways bifurcates National Parks, Wild Life Sanctuaries, Forest Reserves and other protected areas and they have been triggering innumerable road kills, which have been posing serious global conservation issue. Sur et.al., 2022 did a case study to record seasonal variation in road kill mortality on National highway 715 (new) which bifurcates the in Kaziranga National Park of Assam, India and reported the death of

6036 number of animals during 2016-2017, with the highest recorded during the monsoon season.

Citizen Science projects help in mitigating wildlife and highway conflicts to a great extent and improve decision making. A study made by Paul et al. 2014 in Alberta, Canada used data collected by volunteers who monitored wildlife along a 46km segment of a highway. 3 hotspot areas were recorded which could be used in decision making for mitigating wildlife-highway conflict.

Tasmanian Devils are endangered marsupials which became extinct in Australia and now found only in Tasmania. These scavengers are attracted to dead animals in road caused due to accidents and in turn they also become victims of roadkills. Tasmanian Devil Roadkill Project and Tasmanian Roadkill Reporter App are citizen science projects developed by Save the Tasmanian Devil Programme by Tasmanian Government in 2018, where public can report any roadkill data of Tasmanian Devils or other native animals. This way the hotspots were identified which further helped in mitigating or develop strategies to reduce death tolls of animals in roadkills. As reported in August 2021, there were 59,900 roadkills and 950 deaths of the Tasmanian Devils reports collected by the App which was a huge concern (Podwinski and Dunlevie., 2022).

ArRM(Application for rescue and Roadkill Mapping), a citizen science project, is a roadkill monitoring program launched in 2018, in Amravati, Maharashtra, India. Conducted through a Mobile App and website, citizens could voluntarily collect data or conduct

survey on the road accidents in the roadways of Amravati district and register them in the App or website. Data recorded by the citizen scientists and the efforts of the initiators of the Project from 2018-2024 (2020-2021, excluded due to Covid Pandemic) showed that 364 animals belonging to 70 different species lost their lives in accidents in about 10,000kms of highways of Amravati district. The aim of this project was to document roadkills in the district and make available for public and conservationists, authority and policy makers with the help of which they could take effective measures and mitigate wildlife- highway conflicts (Pawgi et al., 2024). Roadkills and Roadwatchers are two citizen science initiatives in India which were developed by Wildlife Conservation Trust of India and Wild Life Trust of India respectively. These apps are downloadable from Google Play Store and they also have their websites. Public as citizen scientists can report any roadkill cases they have encountered in the form of photos and mention the location and time of the record. Roadkills App aims to minimise the death of wild animal in roads, railway tracks and irrigation (Pariwakam., 2018) and Roadwatchers aims to be a reliable system to collect roadkill information with great accuracy (WTL., 2018). Both the citizen science projects help identify the hotspot locations of roadkills and the species most affected and the data collected by them are useful to researchers, infrastructure planners and scientists in assessing existing mitigation measures and also help in reducing wildlife mortality and thus enhance biodiversity conservation.

Citizen Science in Environmental and Ecological Sciences :

Efforts on conserving and managing the natural resources can be greatly driven by citizen science. A huge number of datasets gathered by volunteers on their works on forests, wetlands , rivers and any plant or animal species etc. is available in the internet today which can be accessed by researchers and scientists to design projects and tackle the challenges of conservation. Involving greater no of people can help provide better and feasible ideas in solving problems. (McKinley et al., 2017)

Citizen science can also be used for improving Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) of projects. The scientific community and the public join hands to review them. In 2021, scientists and citizens in Lakshadweep formed the Lakshadweep Research Collective which reviewed the Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation and found it to be problematic as it could affect the fragile ecosystems, livelihood, rights and culture of the people. The citizens of the Union territory protested against the State and wrote to the President seeking intervention.

In recent times, anthropogenic activities has greatly affected the environment and with increasing concerns over climate change, every project design and development requires conduction of an EIA which is accepted by governments, legal communities, funding agencies and every stakeholder. EIA s are important as they check and limit the potential impact of the development projects on the environment and biodiversity

(Morgan., 2012). And in order to make an EIA effective, public participation is integral as it democratises policy making (Faircheallaigh., 2010).

Air and water pollution are environmental health hazards. Citizen scientists can contribute in monitoring the air and water quality. The study conducted by Yevenes et al., 2022 in the coastal area of Nuble in Chile from May 2016-September 2021 demonstrated that community and academia can mutually cooperate to monitor water quality. This type of grass root science can help in identifying the probable and potential sources of pollution in the local and regional watersheds and help in creating awareness and improve understanding for water conservation and finally in policy making. Interested volunteers can be trained in monitoring of the basic water quality or air quality parameters. Through educational programs like AQTreks and Global Ozone (GO3), ozone and weather monitoring stations are set up in schools and the data shared by citizen scientists and the students is used for scientific research and for creating awareness about air quality issues (Ellenburg et al., 2019). There are a number of platforms through which we as citizen scientists can contribute to air quality data and raise public awareness like Witness Pollution Map, IVAN program, Air Watch Bay Area, Smell my city, European Air Quality index.

Citizen Science in Disaster and Natural Calamity Risk Management :

Citizen science plays a huge role in disaster risk reduction. It helps increase scientific knowledge, give

forecasting and warnings and help in development of principles and frameworks for those vulnerable to the disaster so that they can improve resilience during or after such hazards (Hicks et al., 2019). Citizen Science proves to be a help in better planning of policies and mitigate hazards as local knowledge of citizen volunteers who previously faced such problems and how they coped up can be integrated with science in better planning. Cieslik et al., 2019 conducted citizen science activities in two sites in Western Nepal which were prone to devastating landslides and found that plights from the sufferers can help in building resilience to landslides.

European Network of Observatories and Research Infrastructures for Volcanology (EUROVOLC), a research and innovation citizen science project funded by the European Commission is a platform where volunteers can contribute their observations of volcanic events in Europe. This tool and data greatly raises awareness on the hazards and risks of volcanoes. (Sandri et al., 2023). *myVolcano* app is another citizen science project developed by British Geological Survey (BGS) which collect observations and records of volcanic eruptions from citizen scientists from any part of the world. The app focuses on mainly the trans-boundary hazards-the volcanic ashes and gases (Duncan et al., 2017). Cooperative Open Online Landslide Repository (COOLR) is a research project and a platform where we can obtain landslide reports from all round the globe collected by citizen scientists and scientists which is shared through the Landslide Reporter Web application.

The data collected in COOLR help NASA scientists and other researchers in developing scientific models and emergency responses to mitigate landslide disasters and also create awareness.

Flood is a natural or man-made recurrent disaster which has been creating havoc all-round the globe, taking tolls of lives and damaging properties and livelihoods. Citizen scientists can contribute their historical observations, meteorological, topographical and land use data in flood hazard assessments which is important for flood risk management. Citizen scientists can help collect crucial parameters which characterize flood hazards like water depth, flood duration, rainfall, flow velocity and water rise (Sy et al., 2019). Collecting hydrological data from remote and challenging locations like Nepal, for accurate flood predictions requires robust data collection. Pandeya et al., 2020, put forth that integrating of Citizen Science and low-cost sensors could be highly valuable for flood risk reduction programmes. A citizen science project Crowdwater collects and shares water level data of streams and rivers worldwide using virtual scales via 'CrowdWater' mobile app (Myftari et al., 2024). This data is used by scientists for flood forecasting. The Department of Civil Engineering of IIT Delhi developed an app called the AabPrahari app where citizens could share real time flood incidents which is used for developing flood management strategies (TNN, 2024).

Citizen scientists can report their observations about impacts of earthquakes and damages in platforms like 'Did you feel it'. This crowdsourced information on

integration with works of expert scientists can help in emergency management (Sandronet., 2021). For a citizen seismology to be efficient, the experiences and cultural context of citizens and scientific communication of scientist should be taken into account (Fallou et al., 2020).

Conclusion :

This study demonstrates how citizen science can help in conservation of nature. We can volunteer and collect data and photos of plants and animals that we encounter and document their diversity in online citizen science platforms or repositories which helps in conservation. Documenting roadkills in highways can help identify accident hotspots which can help mitigate and reduce wildlife mortality and thus enhance biodiversity conservation. Air and water pollution, infrastructures and developments projects that can cause damage to ecosystems can also be checked by citizen science. ○

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অসমীয়া অধ্যায়

“ইয়াত এখন অৰণ্য আছিল”

উপন্যাসত প্ৰকৃতি আৰু মানুহৰ সম্পৰ্ক

ড° ৰীতা দত্ত

১.০ প্ৰস্তাৱনা :

অসমীয়া উপন্যাস জগতত ২০২১ বৰ্ষৰ সাহিত্য অকাডেমি বঁটাৰে আগ্ৰাসন ল'বলৈ সক্ষম হোৱা ঔপন্যাসিকা অনুৰাধা শৰ্মা পূজাৰীৰ “ইয়াত এখন অৰণ্য আছিল” এখন পৰিৱেশ প্ৰধান উপন্যাস। উপন্যাসখনৰ নামকৰণতেই বিষয়বস্তুৰ গভীৰতা উপলব্ধি কৰিব পৰা যায়। উপন্যাসখনত ঔপন্যাসিকাই প্ৰাকৃতিক পৰিৱেশ, প্ৰাকৃতিক দুৰ্যোগ, ৰাজনীতি, অৰ্থনীতিৰ সংকট, গৃহযুদ্ধ, গোষ্ঠীসংঘৰ্ষ, বিপদগ্ৰস্থ অৰণ্যসমূহ, জলাশয়সমূহ, মৰুভূমিকৰণ, খাদ্যসংকট, জীৱকূলৰ নিৰাপত্তাহীনতা ইত্যাদি অনেক বিষয় তথা সমস্যাৰ চিত্ৰ অংকন কৰিছে। প্ৰকৃতি আৰু মানুহৰ অভিন্ন সম্পৰ্ক, পৰস্পৰ নিৰ্ভৰশীলতা, মানৱসৃষ্ট পৰিৱেশৰ গৰাহত মৃতপ্ৰায় পৰিৱেশ ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন বিষয়বস্তুৰে উপন্যাসখনক অনন্য মাত্ৰা প্ৰদান কৰিছে। “ইয়াত এখন অৰণ্য আছিল”— কেৱল উপন্যাস নহয়; এয়া যেন লেখিকাৰ তীব্ৰ প্ৰতিবাদৰ স্বাক্ষৰ।

২.০ পূৰ্বকৃত অধ্যয়ন :

আলোচনাটো মৌলিক। এই লেখাটো যুগুত কৰোঁতে মূল উৎস হিচাপে কেৱল উপন্যাসখন লোৱা হৈছে। ইতিপূৰ্বে এই শিৰোনামৰ লেখা আন ক'বাত প্ৰকাশ হোৱাৰ কথা আমাৰ অৱগত নহয়।

৩.০ অধ্যয়নৰ পদ্ধতি :

লেখাটোত বিশ্লেষণাত্মক পদ্ধতিৰ সহায় লোৱা হৈছে।

8.0 মূল আলোচনা :

ঔপন্যাসিকা অনুৰাধা শৰ্মা পুজাৰীৰ নিজৰ ভাষাৰে— “এই সময় ঠিকনা হেৰুৱাৰ সময়। মানুহ, জীৱ-জন্তু সকলোৱেই এক নিৰাপদ বাসস্থানৰ সন্ধানত বিচলিত হৈ পৰিছে। প্ৰাকৃতিক দুৰ্যোগ, ৰাজনীতি, অৰ্থনৈতিক সংকটৰ বাহিৰেও গৃহযুদ্ধ, গোষ্ঠীসংঘৰ্ষৰ বাবে মানুহ পদে পদে গৃহহাৰা হৈছে। অৰণ্যসমূহ, জলাশয়সমূহ, মানুহে দখল কৰিবলৈ বাধ্য হৈছে। অৰণ্য হৈ পৰিছে মৰুভূমি।”

উপন্যাসখনৰ পাতনিতে লেখিকাই নিজে বাসকৰা মহানগৰৰ বাসগৃহৰ পৰিৱেশৰ কথা মনত পেলাইছে। সেইখন ঠাইত এসময়ত অজস্ৰ চৰাই আছিল, শীতকালতহে হাতীয়ে জনাঞ্চলত বিচৰণ কৰিছিলহি। বৰ্তমান পূৰ্বৰ দৰে চৰাই-চিৰিকটি নহা হ’ল। বছৰজুৰি হাতীয়ে জনাঞ্চলত খাদ্যৰ সন্ধান কৰিবলৈ ল’লে। ইয়াৰ প্ৰধান কাৰণ হিচাপে লেখিকাই নিজেই প্ৰত্যক্ষ কৰা ‘উচ্ছেদ’ অভিযানেই ঘাইকৈ জগৰীয়া বুলি ক’ব বিচাৰিছে। য’ত ‘এখন অৰণ্য আছিল’; বৰ্তমান সেয়া এক ইতিহাসলৈ ৰূপান্তৰিত হ’ল।

প্ৰকৃতিয়ে মানুহক যিমান দিছে, মানুহে তাৰ বিনিময়ত একো দিব পৰা নাই। কেৱল Oxygen - Carbon dioxide ৰ বিনিময়েৰে এটা সম্পৰ্ক বৰ্তাই ৰাখিব পৰা সম্ভবনে ?

প্ৰকৃতিয়ে আমাক প্ৰাথমিক প্ৰয়োজনখিনি প্ৰদান কৰিছে। খাদ্য, বস্ত্ৰ, বাসস্থান, বায়ু, পানী সকলো প্ৰকৃতিয়ে আমাক বিনামূল্যে দান দিছে। আমি মানবজাতিয়ে সেই আশ্ৰয়দাতা প্ৰকৃতিকেই ধ্বংস কৰি মৰুভূমিলৈ ৰূপান্তৰ কৰিছোঁ। উপন্যাসখনৰ মূল বক্তাগৰাকীৰ দুৰ্ঘটনাগ্ৰস্ত হৈ ভৰিখন ভাগিল। সেই যন্ত্ৰণাময় সময়ছোৱাত লেখিকাৰ ঘৰৰ দক্ষিণৰ খিৰিকীখন খুলি দিয়া হৈছিল আৰু সেই খিৰিকীৰে তেওঁ যেন নতুনকৈ প্ৰকৃতিক উপলব্ধি কৰিবলৈ আহৰি পাইছিল। তেওঁ অনুভৱ কৰিলে—“মহানগৰত ধূলি-ধোঁৱাৰ প্ৰদূষণৰ স্বাভাৱিক বাতাৱৰণৰ মাজত এয়া সঁচাকৈয়ে অস্বাভাৱিক সেউজ আৰু প্ৰশান্ত নিৰিবিলি ৰূপ।”

প্ৰকৃতিয়ে মানুহক এটি সু-স্বাস্থ্য প্ৰদান কৰিব পাৰে। এটা সুন্দৰ প্ৰাকৃতিক পৰিৱেশে মানুহক মানসিকভাৱে শক্তিশালী কৰি তুলিব পাৰে। অন্যথা

মানুহ ৰোগগ্ৰস্থ হৈ পৰিলহেঁতেন। লেখিকাৰ এনে ভাবনাক শ্ৰুকুটি কৰি চৰকাৰে উচ্ছেদ অভিযান আৰম্ভ কৰিলে। পাহাৰৰ দুখীয়া-নিছলা মানুহে কৰা অবৈধ দখলত প্ৰশাসনৰ চকু পৰিল। চৰকাৰ-প্ৰশাসন আৰু সংবাদ মাধ্যমৰ অহিনকুল সম্পৰ্কত জাহ গ'ল খাটিখোৱা মানুহৰ স্বপ্ন। পাহাৰৰ অবৈধ দখলকাৰী বুলি কোৱা মানুহবোৰে অতদিনে সমতলৰ মানুহৰ বহুত ঘৰুৱা প্ৰয়োজন পূৰ কৰি আহিছিল। “ঘৰুৱা কাম কৰা, দিনহাজিৰা কৰা, দমকলৰ মিস্ত্ৰী, ড্ৰাইভাৰ, ৰাজমিস্ত্ৰী, কাঠমিস্ত্ৰী” সকলো সমস্যাৰ পৰা এওঁলোকেই উদ্ধাৰকাৰী। ‘মাধুৰী’ও তেনে এটি চৰিত্ৰ-যাৰ সহায়ত মূৰ তুলি আছে লেখিকাৰ আভিজাত্য। পাঞ্জাবাৰী পাহাৰ বা বতাহঘূলি পাহাৰ-যি নামেৰেই নামাতো কয় তাৰ পৰাই উৰি আহিছিল “আজাৰ ফুলৰ পাহি, কেতিয়াবা অনামী শিল্পীয়ে বজোৱা বাঁহী, পাহাৰৰ মানুহৰ হাই-কাজিয়া, কোহাল, বিয়াৰ বেগুপাটী, কেতিয়াবা শুভ কাপোৰৰ শৰদেহ যাত্ৰাৰ সৈতে ভাহি অহা কান্দোন।” কি যে এক পাহাৰ-ভৈয়ামৰ অপূৰ্ব অদেখা সম্বন্ধ!

এনেকৈয়ে স্বাবলম্বী হৈছিল পাহাৰৰ মানুহবোৰ। উচ্ছেদ অভিযানত অঘৰী হৈ পৰা মানুহবোৰৰ বুকুৰ যন্ত্ৰনাৰ সম্বাদ লেখিকাই খুব গভীৰকৈ উপলব্ধি কৰিছে। দুৰ্ঘটনাগ্ৰস্থ হৈ সংবাদসেৱাৰ দৰে কৰ্মৰ পৰা আঁতৰি থাকিবলগীয়া হোৱাত লেখিকাৰ মন ভাৰাক্ৰান্ত হৈ পৰিছে। সেয়ে তেওঁৰ বাবে উক্ত ঘটনাবোৰ আবেগ হৈ পৰিছে। “সাংবাদিকৰ কৰ্মৰ আঁৰৰ বৰফ হৈ থকা চকুপানী গলিবলৈ আৰম্ভ কৰিছে...।” বন্যপ্ৰাণীবোৰ নগৰলৈ সোমাই আহিছে, কাৰণ “মানুহৰ অত্যাচাৰ, দা-যাঠি-জোঙৰ বিপক্ষে যুঁজিবলৈ সিহঁতৰ ধাৰাল নখ আৰু দাঁতৰ বাহিৰে একো নাই।”

প্ৰকৃতিয়ে মানুহক সাংস্কৃতিক পৰিচয় প্ৰদান কৰে। চাহ-শিল্প, মূৎ-শিল্প, বস্ত্ৰশিল্প, স্থাপত্য-ভাস্কৰ্য সকলো প্ৰকৃতিদত্ত বৈভৱ। পাহাৰ-ভৈয়ামৰ সাংস্কৃতিক সমন্বয়, ভাবৰ আদান-প্ৰদান, উৎসৱ-পাৰ্বনৰ সম্প্ৰীতিৰ মূলতে প্ৰকৃতি। উপন্যাসখনত লেখিকাই তেনে এটি সংস্কৃতিৰ আভাস এনেকৈ দিছে— “পাহাৰত নেপালী মানুহৰ চুবুৰি আছে। তাত পূজা পাতিলে এনে কাঁহ বজোৱাৰ দৰে শব্দ ভাহি আহে। নিশা বাঁহীৰ মাতো পাহাৰৰ পৰা আহে। যোৱা কেইবাদিনো ধৰি বাঁহীৰ মাত শুনা নাই।” য'ত নেকি জীৱনৰেই নিৰাপত্তা

নাই, তাত বাঁহী বাজিব কেনেকৈ! কিন্তু পাহাৰৰ শক্তি একত্ৰিত শক্তি। যি হয় সকলোৰে হ'ব। সকলোৰে একেলগে যুঁজিব। এই শক্তিলৈ ৰাজনীতিকৰ ভয়। নিৰ্বাচনৰ আগে নেতাবোৰ পাহাৰলৈ উঠে চাউল, আঁঠুৱা, কম্বল বিলাবলৈ। তেতিয়া পাহাৰীয়া মানুহৰ দিনবোৰ ভাল হয়। ভাল নহয় যাতায়াত, আৰম্ভ নহয় জল যোগান আঁচনি, যোগান নাপায় বিদ্যুৎ, ঢুকি নাপায় কোনো চৰকাৰী আঁচনিয়ে। ভোটৰ অংকত পাহাৰক-অৰণ্যক ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা মানুহেই সিহঁতক উচ্ছেদ কৰিবৰ সময়ত সিহঁতক চিনি নাপায়। বৃদ্ধ পিতৃ-মাতৃ, সন্তান-সন্ততিৰ কান্দোনৰ ভাষা সিহঁতে বুজি নাপায়।

মাজে মাজে লেখিকা বিবুধিত পৰে। অৰণ্যত মানুহ বাস কৰিবলৈ লোৱাৰ বাবেই পশুখনলৈ ঠাই নোহোৱা হ'ল। জীৱ-জন্তুবোৰৰ থাকিবলৈ ঠাই নোহোৱা হোৱাৰ বাবেইতো জনাৰণ্যলৈ নামি আহিল। ঔপন্যাসিকাৰ ভাষাত—“ মানুহ হত্যা কৰা বাঘ, হাতীৰ বাবে কান্দিব খোজো, প্ৰশাসনক গৰিহণা দিওঁ। কিন্তু জীৱন-সংগ্ৰামে জুৰুলা কৰা মানুহবোৰৰ উচ্ছেদো চাব নোৱাৰো। আমি মধ্যমপন্থী মানুহ, সমস্যা আমাৰ বাবেও সৃষ্টি হৈছে। সাপো নমৰক লাঠীও নাভাগক।”

এসময়ত আমচিং অৰণ্যখন মহানগৰীৰ বাবে উশাহ আছিল। আমচিং কামৰূপ জিলাৰ অন্যতম বন্যপ্ৰাণীৰ অভয়াৰণ্য। অসমৰ বিভিন্ন জিলাৰ পৰা মানুহ আহি এই অভয়াৰণ্যত থাকিবলৈ লোৱাৰ পৰাই অৰণ্যলৈ ভাবুকি আহিবলৈ ধৰিলে। অতদিনে মনৰ মাজত জমা হৈ থকা দুখ আৰু ক্ষোভ 'ৰাজবংশী' নামৰ চৰিত্ৰৰ সংলাপৰ দ্বাৰাই ঔপন্যাসিকাই ব্যক্ত কৰিছে। তেওঁ বনধ্বংসৰ বাবে আৰক্ষী প্ৰশাসন, বনবিভাগ, ৰাজহ চক্ৰ, মন্ত্ৰী-বিধায়ক প্ৰায় সকলোকে দোষাৰূপ কৰিছে। মহানগৰৰ সমস্ত প্ৰদূষণ সেৱন কৰা অৰণ্যখন, পানীৰ উৎস এই অৰণ্যখন, Oxygenৰ যোগান ধৰা অৰণ্যখন— শেষ হৈ গ'লে ভৱিষ্যত প্ৰজন্ম জীয়াই থাকিব নোৱাৰিব। এনে এক শংকাৰে উপন্যাসখন সামৰণিলৈ গতি কৰিছে।

৫.০ সামৰণি :

“ইয়াত এখন অৰণ্য আছিল” উপন্যাসৰ কেন্দ্ৰীয় অৰণ্যখনৰ নাম আমচিং বা আমচাং। এই নাম মানুহৰ মুখে মুখে বাগৰি আহিছে। জনশ্ৰুতিমতে,

পাহাৰখনত প্ৰচুৰ আমগছ আছিল। কোনো কোনোৰ মতে, পাহাৰৰ সমতলৰ ফালে আছিল কেবাখনো আমবাৰী। যি কি নহওক, সেয়া বৰ্তমান ইতিহাস। বৰ্তমান সেই 'ৰামো নাই, অযোধ্যাও নাই।' কৃত্ৰিম বানপানী, বৃহদাকাৰৰ অট্টালিকা, যানজটৰ সমস্যা, দুনীৰ্তি পৰায়ন মানুহৰ অবাধ স্বাধীনতা, দালাল-ভূ-মাফিয়াৰ দপদপনি, চোৰাং-চিকাৰীৰ দপদপনি, ভ্ৰষ্ট নৈতিকতা, অসুৰক্ষিত মহিলা, মদ-ভাং-জুৱা-ড্ৰাগচৰ অবৈধ বেহা, বনৰীয়া জন্তুৰ আক্ৰমণ আৰু বিচৰণথলীলৈ ৰূপান্তৰিত নগৰ, কল-কাৰখানা-গাড়ী-মটৰৰ ধোঁৱা নিৰ্গত প্ৰদূষণ, উত্তপ্ত গৰম, চোৰ-দকাইতৰ অবাধ বিচৰণ, আৰক্ষীৰ বিফলতা, ভাতৃ সংঘৰ্ষ, হত্যাকাণ্ড, আত্মজাহৰ অনেক ঘটনা-পাৰঘটনাই মহানগৰীক মৰিশালীলৈ ৰূপান্তৰিত কৰিছে।

উপন্যাসখনৰ শেষলৈ লেখিকাই অতি কাৰুণ্যেৰে জীৱাশ্মৰ এখন ইতিহাস কল্পনা কৰিছে। যিখন অৰণ্যত থাকিব লাগিছিল পৰ্যটনৰ প্ৰচুৰ সম্ভাৱনা, অৰ্থনৈতিক স্বাৱলম্বিতা, দেশৰ ভৱিষ্যৎ— তাত হয়তো এদিন প্ৰকৃতি জয়ৰ উন্মাদনত উন্মাদ এচাম মানুহে বসতি কৰিব। “ কাৰ জয়, কাৰ পৰাজয়, সময়ে ক'ব, মৃত্যুশ্ৰান্তা মহানগৰে ক'ব। হয়তো এদিন ইতিহাস লিখিবলৈও কোনো বাচি নাথাকিব।” লেখিকাই পুনৰ শংকা প্ৰকট কৰি কৈছে—“ বিগুহ বায়ুৰ বাবে, পানীৰ বাবে, ৰ'দৰ বাবে সংগ্ৰাম কৰাৰ দিন আহিছে। অৰণ্য, নদী, নিজৰা, বিল, পাহাৰক যদি নিৰাপত্তা দিব নোৱাৰে মানুহে-মানুহ নিজেই হৈ পৰিব এদিন জীৱাশ্মৰ ইতিহাস।”

এয়াই ঔপন্যাসিকাৰ ভৱিষ্যতবাণী। এয়াই দৰ্শন। ○

গ্ৰন্থপঞ্জী :

শৰ্মা পূজাৰী, অনুৰাধা : ইয়াত এখন অৰণ্য আছিল, বনলতা, ২০১৮।

বৰকটকী, অৰিন্দম : অনুৰাধা শৰ্মা পূজাৰীৰ ৰচনা সমগ্ৰ, প্ৰথম খণ্ড, ক্ৰান্তীকাল প্ৰকাশন, ২০০৭।



বৰদোৱানী উপন্যাসৰ কেন্দ্ৰীয় চৰিত্ৰ : এটি অধ্যয়ন

শিল্পীশিক্ষা কোঁৱৰ

সংক্ষিপ্ত সাৰ :

এখন সমাজ শৃংখলিত ৰূপত গতি কৰিবলৈ হ'লে পুৰুষ-নাৰী উভয়েৰে সমান অৱদান থাকিব লাগিব। আমাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত সকলো দোষ নাৰীৰ ওপৰতে জাপি দিয়া হয়। কথাতে কয়- 'য'ত দোষ নন্দ ঘোষ'। নাৰী জীৱনটোক আঙুলিয়াবলৈ বাঁজী, সতিনী, মাহীমাক, বিধৱা আদি স্পৰ্শকাতৰ বিভিন্ন শব্দ সততে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা দেখা যায়। এনেধৰণৰ শব্দই নাৰী গৰাকীক মানসিক-শাৰীৰিকভাৱে অপদস্ত কৰাৰ লগতে সমাজখনৰো বিস্তৰ ক্ষতি সাধন কৰে। সমাজে দিয়া এনে বিভূষণেৰে বিভূষিতা নাৰীসকলৰ জীৱনত যন্ত্ৰণা থাকে। এই শব্দবোৰে নাৰীৰ জীৱন নৰকময় কৰি তোলে। সমাজে দিয়া সকলো পৰিচয়ৰ উৰ্ধত নাৰীও মানুহ। পুৰুষ-নাৰী নিৰ্বিশেষে মানুহ হিচাপে সকলোৰে মাজত মানৱীয় গুণসমূহ বিৰাজমান।

১.০ অৱতৰণিকা :

অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ বিভিন্ন বিধাসমূহৰ ভিতৰত উপন্যাস অন্যতম। উনবিংশ শতিকাৰ শেষৰ দশকত ভানুমতী উপন্যাসখন ৰচনা কৰি পদ্মনাথ গোহাঞিবৰুৱাই আধুনিক অসমীয়া সাহিত্যত উপন্যাসৰ ধাৰাটোৰ আৰম্ভণি কৰে। পৰৱৰ্তী সময়ত বিভিন্নজনৰ হাতত পৰি ক্ৰমবিকাশৰ মাজেৰে অসমীয়া

উপন্যাসে সমৃদ্ধি আৰু বিকাশ লাভ কৰা দেখা যায়। প্ৰথম সময়ছোৱাত ইতিহাসৰ ঘটনা-পৰিঘটনাসমূহকে উপন্যাসৰ বিষয়বস্তু বা সমল হিচাপে ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা হৈছিল যদিও নতুন নতুন লেখকে বিষয়বস্তুৰ নতুনত্বৰে উপন্যাসৰ ধাৰাটো সজীৱ কৰি তুলিছে। বাস্তৱ সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন কথা বা ঘটনাক কেন্দ্ৰ কৰি ৰচিত সামাজিক উপন্যাসসমূহত সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ নানান দিশ উন্মোচিত হৈছে। সাধাৰণ মানুহে প্ৰত্যক্ষ নকৰা অথচ অনুভৱত বৈ যোৱা সমাজৰ ফোঁহাবোৰ ঔপন্যাসিকসকলে উপন্যাসত তুলি ধৰিবলৈ সক্ষম হোৱা পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। এই আলোচনাত মণিকুন্ডলা ভট্টাচাৰ্যৰ দ্বাৰা ৰচিত বৰদোৱানী উপন্যাসখনত মূল চৰিত্ৰ বৰদোৱানীৰ মাজেৰে নাৰী মনৰ বিভিন্ন অনুভূতি কেনেদৰে প্ৰকাশ পাইছে। সেই বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰা হৈছে।

১.১ অধ্যয়নৰ উদ্দেশ্য :

এই অধ্যয়নৰ উদ্দেশ্য হৈছে -

- ক) বৰদোৱানী চৰিত্ৰটোৰ মাজেৰে নাৰী মনৰ সুকোমল অনুভূতিসমূহ প্ৰকাশ পোৱা আলোচনা কৰা।
- খ) পুৰুষতান্ত্ৰিক সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাত নাৰীৰ স্থান সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা কৰা।
- গ) নিজ গৰ্ভত সন্তান ধাৰণ কৰি জন্ম দিবলৈ অক্ষম হ'লেও নাৰী যে মমতাময়ী সেই বিষয়ে আলোচনা কৰা।
- ঘ) সমাজে কাঠবাঁজী আখ্যা দিয়া নাৰীৰ মানসিক অৱস্থা সম্পৰ্কে আলোচনা কৰা।

১.২ অধ্যয়নৰ পদ্ধতি :

এই বিষয়টি অধ্যয়ন কৰিবলৈ মূলতঃ বিশ্লেষণাত্মক পদ্ধতি ব্যৱহাৰ কৰা হৈছে। প্ৰয়োজন অনুসৰি ব্যাখ্যামূলক আলোচনা পদ্ধতিৰো সহায় লোৱা হৈছে।

১.৩ অধ্যয়নৰ পৰিসৰ :

এই অধ্যয়নৰ পৰিসৰত বৰদোৱানী উপন্যাসৰ বৰদোৱানী চৰিত্ৰটোৰ জৰিয়তে আমাৰ সমাজ ব্যৱস্থাৰ কিছু দিশ অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত হ'ব। ঔপন্যাসিকাই

চৰিত্ৰটোৰ মাজেৰে প্ৰকাশ কৰা নাৰীৰ মনৰ ভাৱ-অনুভূতি তথা সমাজৰ স্পৰ্শকাতৰ কিছু কথা এই অধ্যয়নত সাঙুৰি লোৱা হৈছে।

২.০ উপন্যাসিকাৰ পৰিচয় :

বৰদোৱানী উপন্যাসখনৰ লেখিকা মণিকুন্তলা ভট্টাচাৰ্য্য অসমীয়া সাহিত্য জগতৰ এটি পৰিচিত নাম। তেওঁ একাধাৰে উপন্যাসিক, কবি তথা গল্পকাৰ। কম সময়ৰ ভিতৰতে তেওঁ বহুকেইখন ব্যতিক্ৰমধৰ্মী উপন্যাস ৰচনা কৰিছে। একবিংশ শতিকাত সাহিত্যিক হিচাপে আত্মপ্ৰকাশ কৰা মণিকুন্তলা ভট্টাচাৰ্য্যৰ গল্প পুথি সমূহ হ'ল - প্ৰস্তুৰ কন্যা (২০০২), কবি গংগা (২০০৮), বৰফৰ বেলি (২০০৯), নীলপক্ষী (২০১০), অন্তৰীক্ষ (২০১১), জিৰাফৰ মাত (২০১৪), ৰাজপুত্ৰ (২০২৩) আদি। মণিকুন্তলাৰ কবিতা (২০০৫), মণিকুন্তলা ভট্টাচাৰ্য্যৰ প্ৰেমৰ কবিতা (২০০৯), গুৰুপক্ষ (২০১১), চিত্ৰপট (২০০৭), আজিও জোনাকী পৰুৱা (২০১৭) আদি কবিতা পুথি তেওঁ ৰচনা কৰিছে। শব্দ আৰু সত্য (২০০৯), মণিকুন্তলাৰ অনুভৱ (২০১২), আকাংক্ষা (২০১৭) আদি হৈছে ভট্টাচাৰ্য্যৰ প্ৰবন্ধ সংকলন। মণিকুন্তলা ভট্টাচাৰ্য্যৰ উপন্যাসসমূহত বিষয়বস্তুৰ নতুনত্ব দেখা যায়। বহুকেইখন উপন্যাসত নাৰী মনস্তত্ত্ব প্ৰকাশৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত গুৰুত্ব দিয়া পৰিলক্ষিত হৈছে। সংবেদনশীল লেখিকা ভট্টাচাৰ্য্যৰ উপন্যাসসমূহ হ'ল - সন্ধ্যা (২০০৪), অৰুন্ধতী (২০০৫), মুক্তি (২০০৬), চামিয়ানা (২০০৬), বৰদোৱানী (২০০৬), দস্তখত (২০০৭), ত্ৰিকুটাৰ ঘোঁৰা (২০০৯), দেৱবালা (২০০৯), যমুনা (২০০৯), বাঁহী (২০১০), বন্ধ ঘৰৰ খিৰিকী (২০১৩), মই ডেচডিম'না হ'ব খোজো (২০০৭), চৰাইখানা (২০১৩), অনুৰোধ (২০১৩), মোৰ দেশ (২০১৭), ৰামধেনু (২০১৮), যুদ্ধ অবিৰাম (২০১৮), জলকন্যা (২০১৮), প্ৰিয়বন্ধু (২০১৯), হিন্দোল (২০২১), অংগহাৰ (২০২১), বিশ্বাস (২০২২), শীত (২০২৩), নীলপদ্ম (২০২৩)। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও তেওঁ শিশুসকলৰ বাবে সাহিত্য ৰচনা কৰিছে আৰু বহুকেইটা অনুবাদ কৰ্ম সম্পাদন কৰিছে। ভট্টাচাৰ্য্যই তেওঁৰ ৰচনাত মানৱ জীৱনত সন্মুখীন হোৱা বিভিন্ন সমস্যা অতি সহৃদয়তাৰে আৰু মানৱীয় দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে উপস্থাপন কৰা দেখা যায়। সমাজ জীৱনৰ এক বাস্তৱ চিত্ৰ তেওঁৰ ৰচনাত প্ৰতিফলিত হয়।

৩.০ মূল বিষয়বস্তুৰ আলোচনা :

একবিংশ শতিকাৰ প্ৰথম দশকত ৰচিত বৰদোৱানী এখন সামাজিক উপন্যাস। গ্ৰাম্য সমাজ জীৱনৰ পটভূমিত ৰচনা কৰা এই উপন্যাসখনত গাঁৱলীয়া মানুহৰ জীৱন যাত্ৰা, মানুহৰ সম্পৰ্ক, নিয়তিৰ বিধান, যুৱ উচ্ছৃঙ্খলতা, গ্ৰাম্য সমাজৰ ক্ৰমাগত পৰিৱৰ্তন, চহৰমুখীতা আদি বিভিন্ন দিশবোৰ দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। উপন্যাসখনৰ কেন্দ্ৰীয় চৰিত্ৰ বৰদোৱানীৰ নামেৰেই উপন্যাসখনৰ নামকৰণ কৰা হৈছে।

বৰদোৱানী উপন্যাসৰ মূল চৰিত্ৰটোৰ প্ৰকৃত নাম বৰদোৱানী নহয়। বৰদোৱাৰ জীয়ৰী তথা মাকৰ ঘৰ বৰদোৱাত হোৱাৰ বাবে নায়িকা বিয়াৰ পাছত বৰদোৱানী হিচাপে পৰিচিত হৈছে। উপন্যাসখনত বৰদোৱানীৰ প্ৰকৃত নাম ক'তো উল্লেখ পোৱা নাযায়। বৰদোৱানী নামটোৰ গুৰুত্ব অধিক কৰিবলৈকে উপন্যাসিকাই এনে কৰিছে যেন বোধ হয়। উপন্যাসখনৰ অন্যান্য চৰিত্ৰসমূহৰ তুলনাত বৰদোৱানী চৰিত্ৰটো উজ্জ্বল আৰু গাভীৰ্যপূৰ্ণ। উপন্যাসখন পঢ়িলে পাঠকৰ চকুত বৰদোৱানী সততে ধৰা দিবৰ বাবেই হয়তো উপন্যাসিকাই আন চৰিত্ৰসমূহ অনুজ্জ্বল কৰি ৰাখিলে।

নজনী ভাই-ভনীৰ মাজৰ একমাত্ৰ ল'ৰা পুণ্যধৰৰ লগত বিবাহ পাশত আবদ্ধ হৈ বৰদোৱাৰ জীয়ৰী বৰদোৱানী ঘাঁহীৰ বোৱাৰী হৈছিলহি। কোনোদিন চিনি জানি নোপোৱা আন এখন ঠাইৰ লগত জীণ যাবলৈ বৰদোৱানীৰ বৰ বেছি দিন সময় লগা নাছিল। সহজ-সৰল, মৰম আকলুৱা, ল'ৰামতীয়া পুণ্যধৰৰ আদৰ-যতনে তাইক সংসাৰৰ মায়াজালত কটকটীয়াকৈ বান্ধি পেলাইছিল। বিবাহৰ ছয়টাকৈ বছৰৰ পিছত সন্তানৰ মুখ নেদেখাৰ বাবে সিহঁতৰ মনত দুখ আছিল যদিও আশা হেৰুৱা নাছিল। শয্যাগত শাহুৱেকৰ মৃত্যুৰ সময়ত পুতেক পুণ্যধৰে কথা দিয়া ঘটনাটোৱেই পুণ্যধৰ আৰু বৰদোৱানীৰ সংসাৰলৈ অমানিশা নমাই আনিছিল। মাকৰ মৃত্যুৰ পাছত ঘৰ-পৰিয়ালৰ হেঁচাত পৰি মাকক দিয়া কথামতেই পুণ্যধৰ দ্বিতীয় বিবাহত বহিল আৰু ৰেণুমাইৰ লগত সংসাৰ আৰম্ভ হ'ল। পুণ্যধৰে বৰদোৱানীক কোনোদিনে অৱমাননা কৰা নাছিল বৰঞ্চ বৰদোৱানীৰ প্ৰতি তাৰ মৰম আৰু চিন্তা নুগুচা হৈছিল। দিন যোৱাৰ লগে লগে পুণ্যধৰ আৰু ৰেণুমাই এহাল ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীৰ মাক-দেউতাক হ'ল।

বৰদোৱানীয়েও হৃদয়ৰ সমস্ত আকুলতাৰে ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীহালক নিজৰ কৰি লৈছিল। খেতি-বাতিত ব্যস্ত হৈ থাকিবলগীয়া হোৱাৰ বাবে পামত থকা পুণ্যধৰৰ ওচৰলৈকে বৰদোৱানীয়ে ৰেণুমাইক পঠিয়াই দিছিল। পামতেই সিহঁতৰ ঘৰ-সংসাৰ আগবাঢ়িছিল। পিতৃ পুৰুষৰ ভেঁটিটোক খামুচি ধৰি বৰদোৱানী বৈ গৈছিল। লক্ষ্য আৰু কাস্তাই বৰমাকক বৰ ভাল পাইছিল। কিছূ ডাঙৰ হোৱাৰ পাছত লক্ষ্য বৰমাকৰ লগত থাকিবলৈ আহি দিছিল। লক্ষ্য আৰু কাস্তাক পঢ়াই-শুনাই ডাঙৰ মানুহ কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত বৰদোৱানীয়ে অশেষ গুৰুত্ব দিছিল। সেয়ে কিজানি ইটাখুলিৰ তেঁতেলী তলৰ ভাঙৰ আড্ডাত বহি ল'ৰা নষ্ট হৈছে বুলি মিছাতে সন্দেহ কৰি বৰদোৱানীয়ে খঙৰ ভমকত লক্ষ্যক প্ৰহাৰ কৰিছিল। বৰদোৱানীয়ে লক্ষ্যক শাস্তি দিয়াৰ আচল কাৰণটো গম নাপাই ৰেণু কান্দি কাটি বাউলি হৈছিল। পাছত দুয়োজনীয়ে সত্য কথাবোৰ জানিব পাৰি অনুশোচনাও কৰিছে। গাঁৱৰ উচ্ছৃঙ্খল ডেকা কেইটামানে ৰাতি ৰাতি বৰদোৱানীহঁতৰ ঘৰৰ সন্মুখত ঠাট্টা-মস্কৰাৰে জুৰ-জোলোম কৰা শুনি লক্ষ্যৰ খং উঠিছিল আৰু খেদি গৈ হাতত লৈ যোৱা দুৱাৰৰ দাংডাল ফৰ্মুটিয়াই দিছিল। কোনোবা এটা চাইকেলৰ পৰা বাগৰি পৰিছিল যদিও আন্ধাৰৰ বাবে একো চিনিব পৰা নাছিল। কোব খোৱা ল'ৰামখাই পাছত প্ৰতিশোধ লৈছিল। লক্ষ্যহঁতৰ বাৰীৰ পিছফালে ডকাইতে লুকুৱাই থোৱা বন্দুক আৰু গুলীৰ টোপোলাটোৰ পৰা লক্ষ্যই খঙৰ ভমকত বন্দুক গুলী আনি লুকুৱাই থৈছিল। ডকাইতে নিজৰ বস্ত্ৰখিনি নিবলৈ আহি হিচাপত কম ওলোৱাত পুণ্যধৰ-বৰদোৱানীৰ ওপৰত অত্যাচাৰ চলায় আৰু লক্ষ্যক উঠাই লৈ গৈছিল। ডকাইতৰ প্ৰহাৰত পুণ্যধৰৰ মৃত্যু হয়। লক্ষ্যক হত্যা কৰি বাৰীৰ পিছফালে পেলাই থৈ যায়। পুত্ৰ আৰু স্বামীৰ নিদাৰুণ মৃত্যুত ৰেণুমায়ে মানসিক ভাৰসাম্য হেৰুৱাই পেলায়। ইমানৰ পিছতো বৰদোৱানীয়ে সকলো কষ্ট সামৰি জী উঠিছিল কাস্তাৰ বাবে। পাগলী ৰেণুমাইক আলপৈচান ধৰিছিল, হৃদয়ৰ সমস্ত আশা আৰু প্ৰাৰ্থনাৰে কাস্তাক ডাঙৰ কৰিছিল, পুৰণি ঘৰ-বাৰী আৰু পামৰ দায়িত্ব মূৰ পাতি লৈ সকলোৰে বাবে মূৰৰ ওপৰৰ এখন আকাশ হৈ থিয় দিছিল বৰদোৱানীয়ে। জীৱনলৈ অহা হাজাৰ প্ৰত্যাহ্বান উফৰাই বৰদোৱানী সকলোৰে বাবে সাহস হৈ উঠিছিল।

বৰদোৱানী চৰিত্ৰটোক ঔপন্যাসিকে শক্তিশালী ৰূপত পাঠকৰ আগত

উন্মোচিত কৰিছে। জীৱনৰ খলা-বমাবোৰত উজুটি খাইছে যদিও বৰদোৱানীয়ে এক কঠোৰ আবেষ্টনীৰ মাজত নিজকে নিয়ন্ত্ৰণ কৰিছে। বৰদোৱানী হৈছে আমাৰ সমাজৰ এনে এগৰাকী নাৰী যিয়ে সহিব পাৰে, ভুগিব পাৰে, তিলতিলকৈ নিজকে শেষ কৰি উজ্জ্বলাই তুলিব পাৰে আন এক ভৱিষ্যতক। বংশ ৰক্ষাৰ স্বার্থত বৰদোৱানীয়ে নিজৰ গিৰিয়েকক দ্বিতীয় বিবাহৰ বাবে মান্তি কৰাইছে আৰু সন্তানৰ আশাতেই গোটেই জীৱন পাত কৰিছে। শাহুৱেক মৃত্যু শয্যাতে থাকোঁতে ঘটা ঘটনাটোৱে বৰদোৱানীৰ জীৱনটো সলাই পেলাইছিল। ঘৰখনত যেতিয়া প্ৰথম পুণ্যধৰৰ বিয়াৰ কথা ওলাইছিল তেতিয়া বৰদোৱানীৰ মনত খং ভাৱে ক্ৰিয়া কৰিছিল। তাই পুণ্যধৰৰ সন্মুখত আটাই পাৰি চিঞিছিল - “নুচুব মোক, নুচুব।” (পৃষ্ঠা -২৩) বাঁজী তিৰোতাৰ অপযশ নোহোৱা কৰিবলৈ বাল্টিয়ে বাল্টিয়ে পানী মূৰত ঢালিছিল। পুণ্যধৰৰ পৰা পৃথকে শুইছিল। নিজৰ মানুহটোক আন এজনী মানুহৰ লগত ভাগ-বতৰা কৰিব লগা কথাটোৱে বৰদোৱানীৰ বুকুত জুই জ্বলাইছিল। তাইৰ সপোনৰ আশাৰ ৰাজ্যখনত আন কাৰোবাৰ নিগাজি প্ৰৱেশ সহ্য কৰিব পৰা নাছিল। পোৱালি নিদিয়া কলীগাইজনীৰ কথা কাম নোহোৱা গাইজনী বুলি পুণ্যধৰে কওঁতে বৰদোৱানী ওচপ খাই উঠিছে। কলীগাইজনীৰ দৰে তাইৰো থকা ঠাই সলনি হ'ব পাৰে বুলি বৰদোৱানীৰ অস্তিত্বৰ সংকটত ভোগা দেখা যায়। ৰাতি বাহিৰ ফুৰিবলৈ যোৱা নন্দ লাহৰীৰ কাৰণে বৈ থাকিব নালাগে বুলি কওঁতে বৰদোৱানীয়ে কৈছে - “কিয় কিয় ৰাখিব নালাগে মই এই ঘৰলৈ অহাৰ দিন ধৰি ৰাতি ৰখাহি নাইনে ... এতিয়া কিয় ৰখিব নালাগে মই নে এইকণো এৰিব লাগিব সতিনীলৈ ” (পৃষ্ঠা -২৩) ইয়াৰ পৰাই বৰদোৱানীৰ মনৰ ক্ষোভ আৰু নিজৰ স্থিতি দুৰ্বল হোৱাৰ ভয়ৰ উমান পোৱা যায়।

বৰদোৱানীয়ে সতিনী খাটিব লগা পৰিস্থিতিটোৰ বাবে কেতিয়াও কাকো দোষ দিয়া নাই। সন্তানহীনতাৰ বাবে তাই নিজকে দোষ দিয়ে। পুণ্যধৰৰ প্ৰতি থকা অফুৰন্ত ভালপোৱা আৰু পুণ্যধৰক পিতৃত্বৰ সুখ দিবলৈ তাই ত্যাগ কৰিবলৈ সাজু হয়। যি সুখ তাই পুণ্যধৰক দিব নোৱাৰিলে সেই সুখ আন কোনোবাই দিলে সেয়া তাই গ্ৰহণ কৰিবলৈ মনটোক বুজনি দিয়ে। “মই একো নকওঁ লাহৰী, তেওঁ বিয়া পাতক, সতিনী নহয়, তিৰোতা বুলিয়েই সহিম

সিজনীক, ল'ছালীক ডাঙৰ কৰিম...।” (পৃষ্ঠা -২৬) মনৰ ক্ষোভ, ভয়, বেদনাক গোপন কৰি সকলোৰে কথা মতে বৰদোৱানীয়ে তাইৰ মৰমৰ পুণ্যধৰক দ্বিতীয় বিবাহৰ কাৰণে মান্তি কৰাইছে। ৰেণুমাইক বিয়া কৰাই অনাৰ পাছতো পুণ্যধৰে পত্নীৰ মৰ্যাদা দিব নোখোজাত বৰদোৱানীয়ে মনৰ আবেগক নিলগাই থৈ ৰেণুক আদৰ যতন কৰিবলৈ কাতৰভাৱে অনুৰোধ কৰিছে। কেতিয়াবা দুখ পাইছে, কেতিয়াবা বিৰক্ত হৈছে যদিও বংশ ৰক্ষাৰ স্বার্থত বৰদোৱানীয়ে সকলো কৰি গৈছে।

পুণ্যধৰক ৰেণুমাইৰ হাতত গতাই দিলেও বৰদোৱানীয়ে তাৰ প্ৰতি থকা আকুলতা হেৰুৱাই পেলোৱা নাই। ৰেণুৰ বৰ্তমানত বৰদোৱানীয়ে পুণ্যধৰৰ লগত আন এখন জগত ৰচনা কৰিছে। সেয়ে বাহিৰত নিৰুদ্বেগ হৈ ৰেণুৰ অলক্ষিতে তাই পুণ্যৰ খবৰ ৰাখিছে - “উমান লৈ থাকিলে তাই, যেই ৰেণুমায়ে দুৱাৰত দাং দিয়াৰ শব্দ শুনিলে, নিজৰ দুৱৰা খুলি তাই সোঁ-সোঁকৰে বাহিৰ হ'ল। ... নাই ক'তো নাই সি।” (পৃষ্ঠা -৪৫) দুয়োজনী একেলগে থাকিলে পুণ্যধৰ কাৰো লগত থাকিব নোৱাৰিব আৰু বৰদোৱানীৰ ওচৰত জেদ ধৰি সি সংসাৰলৈ পিঠি দিব বুলি ভাৱি ৰেণুক পুণ্যধৰৰ লগত পামৰ ঘৰলৈ পঠাই দিছিল।

ৰেণু গৰ্ভৱতী হোৱা খবৰটোৱে বৰদোৱানীৰ মনলৈ আনন্দৰ বন্যা নমাইছিল। আন সতিনীৰ দৰে তাই ঈৰ্ষাৰ অগ্নিত দগ্ধ হোৱাৰ পৰিবৰ্তে নিজে নাখাই ৰেণুক খুৱাইছিল। মাক, শাহুৱেকৰ দৰে আদৰ যতন কৰিছিল। ৰেণুৱে ল'ৰা সন্তান এটা প্ৰসৱ কৰাৰ খবৰটো পাই তাই আনন্দ তথা সুখত ক'ব নোৱাৰা হৈ পৰিছিল। দৌৰি দৌৰি গৈ সিদ্ধেৰ জৰিয়তে পামত থকা পুণ্যলৈ খবৰ পঠাইছিল। কণমানিটোক বেয়া নজৰৰ পৰা ৰক্ষা কৰিবলৈ বিভিন্ন লোকাচাৰসমূহ পালন কৰিছিল। ত্যাগ সফল হোৱাৰ আনন্দত উৰি ফুৰা বৰদোৱানীক লাহৰীয়ে যেতিয়া বাস্তৱলৈ ঘূৰাই আনিছিল সৰু ছোৱালীৰ দৰে উচুপি উঠি বৰদোৱানীয়ে কৈছিল ...“বংশৰক্ষা হ'ল লাহৰী ... তেখেতৰ জীৱন পূৰ্ণ হ'ল ... কাকো একো দিব নোৱাৰিলোঁ মই।” (পৃষ্ঠা -৭০) ৰেণুৰ সন্তানটোৰ জৰিয়তে বৰদোৱানীয়ে নতুন এটা পৰিচয় পাব। সেয়ে বুকুত আশা লৈ বৰদোৱানীয়ে কৈছে - “এই কেঁচুৱাকণৰ ওপৰত মোৰো দখল নাথাকিবনে।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ৭০)

কোনো নাৰীয়ে নিজৰ স্বামীক আন এগৰাকী নাৰীৰ লগত ভগাই লোৱাটো সহ্য কৰিব নোৱাৰে। পৰিস্থিতিৰ লগত মুকাবিলা কৰিবলৈ বৰদোৱানীয়ে এনে কৰিছে যদিও কোনো কোনো মুহূৰ্তত তাইৰ মনত বৈ যোৱা ক্ষোভৰ বৰ্হি প্ৰকাশ ঘটে। হাজাৰ চেপ্তাৰে ঢাকি ৰাখিব খুজিলেও মনৰ অশান্ত সাগৰখনৰ কেইটোপালমান পানী ছিটিকি পৰে পুণ্যধৰৰ সন্মুখত। ৰেণু আৰু বৰদোৱানী দুয়োজনীকে পামত একেলগে থাকিবলৈ কোৱাত বৰদোৱানীয়ে অমান্তি হৈ পুণ্যধৰক কৈছে, “ নাজানে কাঁঠবাজী তিৰোতা পিতৃ পুৰুষৰ ভেঁটিত এনেদৰে কিয় বৈ যায় নেজানে আপুনি তেস্তে শুনক, বাৰীচুকত সৌ হেলচৰ তলৰ আই-বোপাইক ৰাখিবলৈ ... এইখন চোতালতে জীৱ বাজ কৰিবলৈ ... বাৰীচুকত চিতা পাতি জাহ যাবলৈ।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ৯৮) দুয়োজনী একেলগে একেটা ঘৰত নথকা কথাটোৱে বৰদোৱানীৰ অন্তৰৰ গোপন অৱস্থাটোকে প্ৰতিফলিত কৰিছে। বৰদোৱানীয়ে পুণ্যধৰৰ পৰা আঁতৰি আহিব নোখোজে। যিজন মানুহক ভাল পায়, যাৰ সুখৰ বাবে তাই চৰম ত্যাগ কৰিলে তেওঁৰ পৰা নিজকে লুকুৱাবও নোখোজে। বাৰে বাৰে পুণ্যধৰক নিজৰ পৰা আঁতৰাই পঠাই যদিও কয় - “মৰি মৰি জী আছোঁ মই আপোনাৰ পৰা আঁতৰি।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ৯৯) পুণ্যধৰৰ বনিয়নৰ বুকুত লাগি থকা ৰেণুমাৰিৰ সেন্দূৰৰ দাগটোৱে বৰদোৱানীক বিচলিত কৰিছে। পুণ্যধৰ বৰদোৱানীৰ লগত অনবৰতে লাগি থাকে যদিও পুণ্যধৰ যে সম্পূৰ্ণ বৰদোৱানীৰ হৈ থকা নাই, সি যে ভাগ ভাগ হৈ পৰিছে সেয়া অনুভৱ কৰি বৰদোৱানীৰ বুকুৰে হুমুনিয়াহ বাগৰিছে ... “ বুকু ফালি পুণ্যধৰক উলিয়াই পঠিয়াব লগা হ’ল। কিন্তু সেই বুলিয়েই, সেই বুলিয়েই এনেকৈ গ’লগৈনে ইমান নিৰ্মমভাৱে।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ১০০) ঘৈণীয়েক মৰাৰ পাছত পৰিয়ালৰ দ্বিতীয় বিবাহৰ বাবে মানুহে দিয়া হেঁচা আঁতৰাই লস্বাদৰে কোলাত কেঁচুৱা লৈ তিৰোতাৰ যতন নোপোৱাকৈয়ে কাল নিয়াব খোজা সিদ্ধান্তটো শুনি বৰদোৱানীৰ বুকুত ডবা বাজিছিল। ঘৈণীয়েকৰ প্ৰতি থকা মৰম ভালপোৱাৰ বাবে ঘৈণীয়েক মৰাৰ পাছতো যদি লস্বাদৰে বিয়া নাপাতে তেস্তে পুণ্যধৰে বৰদোৱানীৰ বৰ্তমানটো দ্বিতীয় বিবাহ কেনেকৈ কৰালে। সিহঁতৰ মৰম-চেনেহবোৰৰ একো মূল্য নাছিল নেকি? ঘৰ-ঘৰোৱাহে দিয়া হেঁচা যদি লস্বাদৰে ওফৰাই পেলাব পাৰিলে তেনে পুণ্যধৰে নোৱাৰিলে কিয়? সেই

সাহস তাৰ নাছিল নে ফল নিদিয়া গছ বৰদোৱানীক এৰি আন এজোপা গছৰ ছাঁত জিৰাবলৈ তাৰ তাৰ ইচ্ছা আছিল। সদায় দেৱতাৰ দৰে জ্ঞান কৰা, আন পুৰুষতকৈ পৃথক বুলি ভৱা পুণ্যধৰ বৰদোৱানীৰ চকুত তললৈ নামি গৈছিল। বৰদোৱানীয়ে নিজকে অকলশৰীয়া অনুভৱ কৰি হৰিনামৰ আশ্ৰয় লৈছিল।

বৰদোৱানীয়ে সতিনী ভাত খাইছে যদিও আন সতিনীৰ দৰে পৰস্পৰৰ মাজত প্ৰতিযোগিতা সৃষ্টি কৰি প্ৰতিদ্বন্দী হ'ব খোজা নাই। ৰেণুমাইৰ প্ৰতি তাইৰ সহানুভূতি আছে - “যিজনী আহিব তায়ো তিৰোতা। তায়োতো বুকুত আঁক এডাল টানি লৈহে আহিব, নিজৰ বুলি ল'ব খোজা মানুহক আগতে অন্যই লৈ থৈছে বুলি।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ২৪) শাহুৱেকে তাইক দি থৈ যোৱা মৰমৰ চিনটোও ৰেণুক দি দিছে। অস্তৰখনে কান্দি উঠিলেও ৰেণুৱে যাতে বেলেগকৈ নাভাবক সেই বুলিয়েই পুণ্যক জোৰকৈ ৰেণুৰ লগত শুবলৈ পঠাইছে। পুণ্যৰ পৰা নিজে আঁতৰি আছে। বৰদোৱানীৰ চৰিত্ৰটোত সততা আছে। পুণ্যই যিহেতু দুগৰাকী তিৰোতাৰ পাণি গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে গতিকে দুয়োগৰাকী তিৰোতাৰে পুণ্যৰ ওপৰত সমান অধিকাৰ আছে। সতিনী বুলি তাই ৰেণুক আঁতৰাই থ'ব খোজা নাই - “তায়ো বহকহি আমাৰ লগতে।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ৪৩) বৰদোৱানীও এজনী তেজ-মঙহৰ মানুহ। হিংসাৰ কোমল বা এছাটিয়ে তাইক যেতিয়া চুই যায় তাই নিজৰ মাজতে বিলীন হৈ পৰে। ৰেণুৰ মাতৃত্বত উথলি উঠা মুখখন, তাইৰ সুখৰ সংসাৰখন চাই থাকিব নোৱাৰে বাবে বৰদোৱানী পামৰ ঘৰখনত বেছিদিন নাথাকে। ৰেণু দ্বিতীয়বাৰ মাতৃ হ'ব খোজা খবৰটোৱে তাইৰ অন্তৰত ঈৰ্ষা আনিছিল। পুণ্য দুদিনমান বেছিকৈ ঘৰত থাকিলে সংসাৰৰ ভালৰ কাৰণে পামৰ খেতিত বেছি গুৰুত্ব দিবলৈ পুণ্যক কৈ থকা কথাটোৱে ক'ৰবাত বৰদোৱানীৰ ঈৰ্ষাৰো প্ৰতিফলন ঘটায়। ঔপন্যাসিকে উদাৰতাৰ সমান্তৰালকৈ ঈৰ্ষাৰ ভাৱনাকো বৰদোৱানীৰ চৰিত্ৰত অংকন কৰিছে বাবেই চৰিত্ৰটোৱে জীৱন্ত মানুহৰ ৰূপ লাভ কৰিছে।

নিজে জন্ম দিয়া সন্তান নহ'লেও লক্ষ্য আৰু কাস্তাক বৰদোৱানীয়ে কেতিয়াও আন চকুৰে চোৱা নাই। এজনী মাকে সন্তানৰ বাবে যিখিনি কৰে বৰদোৱানীয়েও সিহঁতৰ বাবে সকলোখিনি কৰিছে। স্কুল দূৰত থকাৰ বাবে পুণ্যধৰে লক্ষ্যক পঢ়াম নে নপঢ়াম ভাবি থাকোঁতে বৰদোৱানীয়ে ভালদৰে

পঢ়াই শিক্ষিত কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত গুৰুত্ব দিছে। পুৰণি ঘৰত লক্ষ্য সদায় বৰদোৱানীৰ লগত শোৱে। বৰদোৱানীয়ে লক্ষ্যক সাৱটি ধৰি সন্তানৰ সৈতে নিজৰ সংসাৰখন কল্পনা কৰে। পুণ্যধৰৰ অস্তিত্বক অনুভৱ কৰিবলৈ লক্ষ্যৰ কাষত পুণ্যধৰৰ গাৰুটো দি কয় - “বাপেৰ গাৰু এইটো। ভৰিখন তুলিব পাৰিবি।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ১৪০) যেন মাজত সন্তানক বুকুত লৈ পুণ্যধৰ আৰু বৰদোৱানী - বুকুখন ভৰি পৰে তাইৰ। কৈশোৰত ভৰি দি লক্ষ্য সংগদোষত পৰিছে বুলি ভাবি বৰদোৱানীয়ে শাস্তি দিছে। আকৌ পিছমুহূৰ্ততে অনুশোচনাত দক্ষ হৈ বুকুত সাৱটি ধৰিছে। বৰদোৱানীৰ আপোন ককায়েকে লক্ষ্যক বেয়া পোৱাৰ বাবেই তাই মাকৰ ঘৰলৈ যাবলৈ অমান্তি হৈছে। যিখন ঘৰত লক্ষ্যৰ স্থান নাই সেইখন ঘৰলৈ বৰদোৱানী নাযায়। লক্ষ্যই ভৰিত আঘাত পোৱাৰ বাবে মাক-বাপেক হৈ চম্ভালিব নোৱাৰাৰ কাৰণে পুণ্য আৰু ৰেণুক বৰদোৱানীয়ে গালি পাৰিছে, লক্ষ্যক ডাঙৰ স্কুলত পঢ়ুৱাবলৈ সপোন দেখিছে। লক্ষ্যইও বৰদোৱানীক এৰিব নোখোজে। বিনা দোষত মাৰ খাওঁতেও সি বৰদোৱানীক উভতি একো কোৱা নাই। পদূলিমুখত বৰদোৱানীৰ নাম লৈ অসভ্যালি কৰাৰ বাবে কোনোবা দুষ্ট ল'ৰাক মাৰিবলৈ সি খেদি গৈছে। বৰদোৱানীৰ নিৰাপত্তাৰ কথা সি প্ৰতি মুহূৰ্ততে চিন্তা কৰে। লক্ষ্যৰ দুস্তালিত অতীষ্ট হৈ তাক পামৰ ঘৰলৈ যোৱাৰ কথা ক'লে সি কয় - “মোক যদি খেদাৱ, চাবি কি কৰিম মই পুণ্যধৰ নহওঁ তোক অকলে এৰিবলৈ, ... অঁ মই পুণ্যধৰ নহওঁ, সদায় মনত ৰাখিবি।” (পৃষ্ঠা- ২০৮) ঘৰখনলৈ অহা ডাঙৰ ধুমুহাজাকৰ অন্তত কান্তাৰ সকলো দায়িত্ব বৰদোৱানীয়ে লৈছে।

মাতৃৰ মমতাৰে বৰদোৱানীৰ হৃদয় সদায় পৰিপূৰ্ণ। বাৰীখন তহিলং কৰা বান্দৰকেইটা, গাখীৰ নিদিয়া গাইজনী, ছাগলী পোৱালি কেইটা, ওচৰ-চুবুৰীয়া ল'ৰা-ছোৱালীবোৰ সকলোকে তাই মাকৰ মৰম দিবলৈ যত্ন কৰে। সত্যক স্বীকাৰ কৰাৰ সাহস বৰদোৱানীৰ আছে। বকুলে তাইক সন্তানৰ কথা সুধোঁতে তাই নিজৰ নাই যদিও সতিনীয়েকৰ আছে বুলি কৈছিল। চিভিল হস্পিতেলত বৰদোৱানীক যেতিয়া জয়মতী নাৰ্ছে লক্ষ্যৰ মাক ঠিক নহয়, মাহীমাক বুলি চিনাকি কৰাই দিছিল তেতিয়াও তাই একো কোৱা নাছিল।

জীৱনৰ অস্থিৰতাৰ সময়বোৰত বৰদোৱানীয়ে ভগৱানৰ ওচৰত, হৰিনামত শৰণাপন্ন হৈছে। যেতিয়াই তাই দুখ অনুভৱ কৰিছে হৰিনামৰ

মায়াজালেৰে হৃদয় শান্ত কৰিছে। লক্ষ্যক যেতিয়া পুণ্যই পামৰ ঘৰলৈ লৈ গৈছে তেতিয়া তাই নিজকে যশোদা যেন অনুভৱ কৰিছে। কৃষ্ণ গোঁসায়ে যেন তাইক কৈ গৈছে -

“কিয় বাঞ্চিলি মোক মা যশোদা

মিছাতে বাঞ্চিলি মোক।

আছে মোৰ জনমদাতা পিতা-মাতা

এৰি গুচি যাম তোক।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ১৭৯)

হৰিনামৰ বাণীৰে নিজৰ মন-মগজু শান্ত কৰি বিচলিত হোৱা ভৱনাক অতিক্ৰম কৰি বৰদোৱানীয়ে জীৱনটো আগুৱাই লৈ গৈছে।

বৰদোৱানী চৰিত্ৰটো ঔপন্যাসিকাই মানৱীয় দোষ গুণেৰে সমৃদ্ধ এটা শক্তিশালী চৰিত্ৰ ৰূপত অংকন কৰিছে। কেতিয়াবা যদি অলপ ৰক্ষ হৈছে পাছমূহূৰ্ততে তাই নৰম ৰূপ লৈছে। ক’ৰবাত যদি তাইৰ মনলৈ হিংসা আহিছে কিছুসময়ৰ পাছতে তাইৰ উদাৰতাই সকলো ধুই নিছে। অলেখ ধুমুহা তাইৰ মূৰৰ ওপৰেৰে পাৰ হৈ গৈছে যদিও তাই হাৰ মনা নাই। হাঁহি- কান্দোন, সুখ- দুখ সকলো একাঘৰীয়াকৈ থৈ তাই সপোন দেখিছে। যাৰ আশাত তাই গোটেই জীৱন পাত কৰিলে, সকলো শেষ হৈ যোৱাৰ পাছতো তাইৰ যি অৱলম্বন ৰৈ গ’ল সেই বত্ন কান্তক নিজৰ ভৱিত থিয় দি জীৱন জীনা নাৰী হিচাপে চাবলৈ তাই যৎপৰোনাস্তি কষ্ট কৰিছে।

পুৰুষ আৰু নাৰীক আমাৰ সমাজে কেতিয়াও সমান স্থান দিয়া নাই। নাৰী-পুৰুষৰ সমান স্থানৰ কথা সাধাৰণতে কিতাপৰ পাততে সীমাবদ্ধ থকা দেখা যায়। এই বৈষম্য আজিও আমাৰ সমাজত বিৰাজমান। পুণ্যধৰৰ দ্বিতীয় বিবাহৰ সময়ত তাৰ মানসিক অৱস্থাৰ গুৰুত্ব দিছে কিন্তু বৰদোৱানীৰ মনৰ খবৰ কোনেও ৰখা নাই। ফেব্ৰুৱাৰীৰ খুৰাই বৰদোৱানীৰ মনটো বুজন হ’বলৈ সময় দিয়াৰ কথা কওঁতে বায়েকে কৈছে -“এহ, তিবোতা মানুহৰ মন বুজন- অবুজন হোৱাটোনো কি কথা খুৱাদেউ।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ১৫)

পুণ্যধৰ আৰু বৰদোৱানীৰ সন্তানহীনতাৰ কাৰণ কোনেও জনা নাছিল। যদি পুণ্যধৰৰ কিবা অসুবিধা থাকিলহেঁতেন তেনেহ’লে দহবাৰ দহজনী বিয়া কৰালেও সন্তান নহ’লহেঁতেন। দোষ কাৰ সেয়া নজনাকৈয়ে আমাৰ সমাজখনে

পুৰুষজনক দ্বিতীয় বিবাহৰ বাবে বাবে আগবঢ়াই দিয়ে কিন্তু পুৰুষজন দোষী হ'লেও মহিলাগৰাকীয়ে সন্তানৰ বাবে দ্বিতীয় বিবাহৰ সুবিধা নাপায়। সিদ্ধে কৈছে - “ল'ছালী লাগে, ল'ছালী লাগে, নবৌজনী ৰুগীয়াই নে হাত-ভৰিয়েই ভগা বিছনাত পৰি থাকিলেও এটা কথা। দেখেদেখকৈ কাম-বন কৰি খাই থকা মানুহজনীৰ চকুৰ আগতে বিয়া পাত এতিয়া। ইজনীৰো ল'ছালী নহ'লেহে খেল জমিব ...।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ২৪)

বৰদোৱানী জীয়াই থাকোঁতেই পুণ্যধৰে বিয়া কৰাইছে কিন্তু কামদা প্ৰসাদৰ মৃত্যুৰ পাছত জীয়াৰী ঘৈণীয়েকজনীক বিয়াৰ কথা কোনেও কোৱা নাই। উপন্যাসখনত স্বৰ্ণ, তৰামাই আদি কেইবাটাও চৰিত্ৰ আছে যাৰ বিবাহৰ পাছত কিবা কিবি কাৰণত সংসাৰ ভাগিল। এই তিৰোতাসকলেও জীৱনটো নতুনকৈ আৰম্ভ কৰাৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে অকলশৰীয়াকৈ কাল নিয়াইছে। তিৰোতাসকল সদায় পাতৰ তলত থাকে বুলি ভবা হয়। কাৰো মনৰ ইচ্ছা-অনিচ্ছাৰ কথা নাথাকে। গাভৰু কালত দেউতাকৰ আৰু বোৱাৰী কালত গিৰীয়েকৰ কথা শুনিয়েই দিনবোৰ পাৰ কৰিছে। সময়ৰ লগে লগে মানুহৰ মনবোৰৰো পৰিৱৰ্তন হৈছে। উপন্যাসখনৰ শেষত বৰদোৱানীয়ে জীয়েক কান্তাক স্ব-নিৰ্ভৰশীল নাৰী হিচাপে গঢ়ি তুলিবলৈ যত্ন কৰা দেখা যায়। - “বৰদোৱানীৰ চানি পৰিবলৈ ধৰা চকুত কেতিয়াবা তাই চিভিলৰ ডাক্তৰণী হৈ উঠে। কেতিয়াবা হয় থানাৰ মাইকী পুলিচ। মতা পুলিচৰ দৰেই সাজ-পোছাক পিন্ধা সাহসী পুলিচ। নিজৰ ভৰিত থিয় দিবলৈকে কান্তাক তাই সেই কাহিনী শুনায়। সপোন আৰু উছাহ গুঁজি দিয়ে বুকুত।” (পৃষ্ঠা - ২৪৮)

সতিনী, মাহীমাক, বাঁজী এই শব্দ নাৰী জীৱনৰ লগত জড়িত বৰ স্পৰ্শকাতৰ শব্দ। এজন পুৰুষে যেতিয়া এবাৰতকৈ বেছি বিবাহ পাশত আবদ্ধ হয় তেতিয়া তিৰোতা কেইগৰাকীক পৰস্পৰে পৰস্পৰৰ সতিনী বুলি কোৱা হয়। সতিনীৰ মাজত মিলা প্ৰীতি খুব কমেইহে দেখা যায়। অঁৰিয়াঅঁৰি, হাই-কাজিয়া, বাগি-বগৰা আদিয়ে সতিনী নাৰীসকলৰ জীৱন নৰক কৰি পেলায়। জীয়া সতিনী খটাতকৈ মৰা সতিনী খাটিবলৈহে ভাল। নিজৰ প্ৰিয় পুৰুষজন বা স্বামীক আন নাৰীৰ লগত ভগাই লোৱাটো নাৰী জীৱনৰ চৰম যন্ত্ৰণা হৈ পৰে। এগৰাকী নাৰী বিবাহিত পুৰুষৰ লগত বিবাহপাশত আৱদ্ধ হ'লে

গিৰিয়েকৰ আন গৰাকী পত্নীৰ সন্তানৰ মাহীমাক হয়। মাহীমাকে সন্তানক সদায় শাস্তি দিয়ে, ভাল চকুৰে নাচায় বুলিয়ে আমাৰ সমাজত এযাৰ কথা চলি আহিছে। গৰ্ভস্থ সন্তান নহ'লেও এগৰাকী নাৰীয়ে অন্তৰৰ মমতাৰে যে সন্তানক নিজৰ মাকৰ দৰেই প্ৰতিপালন কৰিব পাৰে সেই কথা আমাৰ সমাজৰ বাবে অবিশ্বাস্য। সন্তানে কৰা ভুলটো আঙুলিয়াই দিলে বা শাস্তি প্ৰদান কৰিলে মাহীমাকৰ গাত জগৰ হয়। মাহীমাক এগৰাকীয়ে সন্তানক সম্পূৰ্ণ নিজৰ সন্তানৰ দৰে গ্ৰহণ কৰিব বিচাৰিলেও সমাজে বিধি পথালি দিয়ে। সন্তান জন্ম দিবলৈ অক্ষম নাৰীক সমাজে বাঁজী আখ্যা দিয়ে। বাঁজী তিবোতাই সমাজৰ শুভকামত অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰিব নোৱাৰে। সন্তানহীনতাৰ দুখে নাৰীগৰাকীক কষ্ট দিয়াতকৈ সমাজে অধিক মনোকষ্ট প্ৰদান কৰে। এই শব্দকেইটাৰ লগত জড়িত পৰিস্থিতিয়ে নাৰী এগৰাকীৰ জীৱন নৰক সদৃশ কৰি তোলে। উপন্যাসখনৰ প্ৰধান চৰিত্ৰ বৰদোৱানী ইয়াৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম নহয়।

বৰদোৱানী উপন্যাসখনত গ্ৰাম্য জীৱনৰ সুন্দৰ ছবি ফুটি উঠিছে। গাঁৱৰ ঘৰ, গছ-গছনিৰে ভৰি থকা ডাঙৰ ডাঙৰ বাৰী, নাদ, ধাননি পথাৰ, জেউৰা, চকোৱা, তাঁত শাল, টেকী শাল, লেতেৰী নদী আৰু তাৰ পাৰত কৰা শস্যৰ খেতি, টঙী ঘৰ আদিয়ে গাঁৱৰ পৰিৱেশ পাঠকৰ চকুৰ আগত দাঙি ধৰিছে। অসমীয়া সমাজৰ বিভিন্ন লোকাচাৰৰ বৰ্ণনা উপন্যাসখনত পোৱা যায়। সন্তান মাতৃ গৰ্ভত থাকোঁতে পঞ্চামৃত খুওৱা, সন্তান জন্মৰ পাছত বাজ ওলোৱা, দুৱাৰত বগৰি কাঁইট দিয়া, দুৱাৰদলিত চিৰি থোৱা, তাবিজ-মাদলি আদি পিন্ধা, মানুহ মৰিলে দহা-কাজ কৰা বিভিন্ন ৰীতি-নীতি উপন্যাসখনত প্ৰকাশ পাইছে।

৪.০ সিদ্ধান্ত

এই আলোচনাৰ অন্তত আমি উপনীত হ'ব পাৰোঁ যে -

বাঁজী, সতিনী, মাহীমাক -নাৰীৰ লগত জড়িত এই স্পৰ্শকাতৰ শব্দ তিনিটাই এগৰাকী নাৰীক বিধ্বস্ত কৰে। এই শব্দ তিনিটাৰ ব্যৱহাৰ সমাজে পাহৰি পেলালে সকলোৰে বাবে মংগলময় হয়।

নাৰী-পুৰুষৰ সমান বুলি কোৱা হয় যদিও নাৰীৰ স্থান পুৰুষতকৈও বহু পাছত। বেছিভাগ নাৰী বৰ্তমান সময়তো পুৰুষৰ দ্বাৰা লাঞ্ছিত-বঞ্চিত হৈ আছে।

সাম্প্ৰতিক অসমীয়া সামাজিক উপন্যাসসমূহত সমাজ জীৱনৰ বিভিন্ন কথা তথা মানুহৰ মন-মানসিকতাৰ লগত জড়িত ঘটনাৰ উপযুক্ত প্ৰকাশ ঘটিছে। অসমীয়া সামাজিক উপন্যাস নতুন ৰূপেৰে উজ্জীৱিত হৈ উঠিছে। এগৰাকী নাৰী সন্তান জন্ম দিবলৈ অক্ষম হ'লে তেওঁৰ অন্তৰৰ মমতা নোহোৱা হৈ নাযায়। নিজে জন্ম নিদিলেও সন্তানৰ সঠিক প্ৰতিপালন কৰি মানুহ হিচাপে গঢ় দিবলৈ এগৰাকী নাৰী সদায় সক্ষম।

৫.০ সামৰণি

বৰদোৱানী উপন্যাসখনত সমাজ জীৱনৰ বিভিন্ন কথাই ঠাই পাইছে। সমাজৰ প্ৰগতি, নৱ প্ৰজন্মৰ উশুংখলতা, গ্ৰাম্য সমাজত ব্যাপক পৰিৱৰ্তনৰ ৰূপ ইয়াত ফুটি উঠিছে। মানুহৰ মন-মানসিকতাত চলি থকা বিভিন্ন অৱস্থা উপন্যাসখনত ফুটি উঠিছে। এক ধনাত্মক দৃষ্টিভংগীৰে আৰু আশাবাদী সুৰেৰে উপন্যাসখনৰ সমাপ্তি ঘটিছে। বৰদোৱানী এখন উল্লেখযোগ্য সামাজিক উপন্যাস।○

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